



SUMMARY OF PROCEEDINGS

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

**August 26 - September 1, 2016
Cincinnati, Ohio**

**American Legion Auxiliary
National Officers
2015-2016**

National President

Sharon Conatser, Department of Illinois

National Vice President

Mary Davis, Department of Washington

Division National Vice Presidents

Central: Lynda Lancaster, Department of West Virginia

Eastern: Helen Skelton, Department of Delaware

Northwestern: Judy Twete, Department of North Dakota

Southern: Flora Jean Craig, Department of North Carolina

Western: Linda Workman, Department of California

National Chaplain

Bird Derrick, Department of Idaho

National Historian

Debra Noble, Department of New Jersey

National Secretary

Mary "Dubbie" Buckler, Department of Indiana

National Treasurer

Marta Hedding, Department of Indiana

PRESENT

Pre-Convention National Executive Committee Meeting Saturday, August 27, 2016

National Officers

National President	Sharon Conatser
National Vice President	Mary Davis
Central Division National Vice President	Lynda Lancaster
Eastern Division National Vice President	-
Northwestern Division National Vice President	Judy Twete
Southern Division National Vice President	Flora Jean Craig
Western Division National Vice President	Linda Workman
National Chaplain	Bird Derrick
National Historian	Debra Noble
National Secretary	Mary “Dubbie” Buckler
National Treasurer	Marta Hedding

Past National Presidents

Pearl Behrend
Linda Boone
Phyllis Sickmond
Virginia Hobbs
Kristine West
Katherine Morris
Jan Pulvermacher-Ryan
Desireé Stoy
Miriam Junge (Honorary)
Carlene Ashworth
Nancy Brown-Park
Janet Jefford

National Executive Committeewomen

Alabama	Barbara Mitchell
Alaska	Beverly Eads
Arizona	Jane Shoemaker
Arkansas	Betty Minor
California	Harriet Clendenin
Colorado	Susan Bozella
Connecticut	-
Delaware	-
District of Columbia	-
Florida	-
Georgia	Rosa Scott
Hawaii	-
Idaho	-
Illinois	Kathy Cisna

Indiana	Lisa Liford
Iowa	Ann Crawford
Kansas	Tonia Ison
Kentucky	Lana Goley
Louisiana	Rachel J. Fox
Maine	Mary Jane McLoon
Maryland	-
Massachusetts	Margaret Roy
Michigan	Nancy Knox
Minnesota	Chris Ronning
Mississippi	Mary Barrett
Missouri	Anita Smith
Montana	Jennifer Herman
Nebraska	Barbara Skillman
Nevada	Glynis Seeley
New Hampshire	-
New Jersey	Doreen Gallagher
New Mexico	-
New York	Diane Gerber
North Carolina	Janice MacLeod
North Dakota	Marlys Aubol
Ohio	Martha Setlock
Oklahoma	Linda Keister
Oregon	Pam Seelye
Pennsylvania	Carol Harrison
Puerto Rico	-
Rhode Island	Colleen Flynn
South Carolina	Anne Parker
South Dakota	Laura Clyde
Tennessee	-
Texas	Donna Miller
Utah	Carolyn Stromness
Vermont	Theresa Christie
Virginia	-
Washington	Lorna Deckert
West Virginia	-
Wisconsin	-
Wyoming	Leila Dean

**Post-Convention National Executive Committee Meeting
Saturday, September 1, 2016**

National Officers

National President	Mary Davis
National Vice President	Diane Duscheck
Central Division National Vice President	Carollee Junge
Eastern Division National Vice President	Patricia Lach
Northwestern Division National Vice President	Virginia Nelsen
Southern Division National Vice President	Beverly Mulkey
Western Division National Vice President	Cary Fisher
National Chaplain	Valerie Brown-Debro
National Historian	Coral May Grout
National Secretary	Mary “Dubbie” Buckler
National Treasurer	Marta Hedding

Past National Presidents

Pearl Behrend
Linda Boone
Phyllis Sickmond
Virginia Hobbs
Kristine West
Katherine Morris
Jan Pulvermacher-Ryan
Desireé Stoy
Miriam Junge (Honorary)
Carlene Ashworth
Peggy Thomas
Nancy Brown-Park
Janet Jefford

National Executive Committeewomen

Alabama	Barbara Mitchell
Alaska	Beverly Eads
Arizona	Josephine Herrera
Arkansas	Carol Westergren
California	Susanne Tozier
Colorado	Susan Bozella
Connecticut	Georgia Theriault
Delaware	Carol Freeley
District of Columbia	Lauren Lloyd
Florida	Pearl McIntyre
Georgia	Rosa Scott
Hawaii	Josephine Keanu
Idaho	Toni Gimpel
Illinois	Kathy Cisna
Indiana	Ruth Rairdon

Iowa	Ann Crawford
Kansas	Jeanne Haas
Kentucky	Donna Thurman
Louisiana	Ethel Theriot
Maine	Mary Jane McLoon
Maryland	Paulette Caron
Massachusetts	Margaret Roy
Michigan	Sue Verville
Minnesota	Shirley Frederick
Mississippi	Mary Barrett
Missouri	Gayle Metzinger
Montana	Shirley Miller
Nebraska	Barbara Washburn
Nevada	Glynis Seeley
New Hampshire	Jessie Bernard
New Jersey	Doreen Gallagher
New Mexico	Janet Romero
New York	Janet Mahoney
North Carolina	Linda Laws
North Dakota	Marlene Boyer
Ohio	Martha Setlock
Oklahoma	Carol Blosch
Oregon	Pam Seelye
Pennsylvania	Carol Harrison
Puerto Rico	Haydee Rivera-Almodovar
Rhode Island	Cathy Card
South Carolina	Teresia Hayes
South Dakota	Laura "Susie" Clyde
Tennessee	Anita Darnell
Texas	Paula Raney
Utah	Sherry Wagner
Vermont	Debra Tiernan
Virginia	Janet Renner
Washington	Eva Wallace
West Virginia	Susan Wade
Wisconsin	Laura Calteux
Wyoming	Linda Feezer

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**PRE-CONVENTION
NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING
SATURDAY, AUGUST 27, 2016**

PRESIDENT CONATSER: This National Executive Committee Meeting will now come to order. Please disable all electronic devices or place them in the silent mode. Please rise and remain standing for the opening ceremonies.

(Ringing of the bell.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Bird Derrick, our national chaplain, will lead us in our invocation and a 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 & Bylaws Chairman Martha Lee Thatcher leading us in the Preamble to the Constitution.

Bird, please lead us in prayer.

CHAPLAIN DERRICK: All right. Through convention, I'd like to share on occasion prayers that some of our department chaplains have offered. And so, I will begin with my own prayer. And then I want to share some of what Julie Domingus Acez, from Colorado, has provided for us today. So let's go to the Lord in prayer.

Father, we thank you so much, God, for your faithfulness to bring us here to this place at this time that you've ordained. I thank you for safety. Thank you for all of the provision that comes from your hand of love and grace.

Dear Lord, help us to recognize the purpose you have given to us and the power you've placed within us to accomplish the goals of the American Legion. Help us to respond with gratitude, using our gifts and talents to the fullest and the best of our ability, not just for ourselves, but for the benefit of others. Open our eyes and our hearts to see the needs of others to show love, support, and encouragement to our fellow members in this organization and in our communities.

God, help us to continue to lead by honorable and godly example. And, Father, while we're here in your presence, I just wanted to lift up some of us that have experienced medical problems, health issues in recent months and weeks, Lord. So for Julie, who's had surgery; for Helen, Judy, Linda, anyone here, Lord, who just needs a touch of your healing hand, I pray that you would grant that now in this time. And I pray in the mighty and strong name of God, my Savior. Amen.

VOICES: Amen.

CHAIRMAN COLLINS: Join me in the Pledge.

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.

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, though 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.

VOICES: 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 CONATSER: We are compelled to never forget that, while we enjoy our daily pledges, there are others who have endured and may still be enduring the agonies of pain, deprivation, and imprisonment. Before we begin our activities this morning, we pause to remember our POWs and MIAs.

(Moment of silence.)

(Ringing of the bell.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: You may be seated. This meeting of the National Executive Committee is convened.

Wow, it's hard to believe that we are here in Cincinnati about to begin our 96th Annual Convention. We have a lot to celebrate this year, and it's so great to see all of you again, and thank you for attending.

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. It's the only way your remarks can be heard for the court reporter's transcripts of the meeting.

As many of you will remember, attendance at previous NEC meetings was each member's responsibility. However, thanks to our amazing convention team and National Headquarters office, today we're able to track your attendance electronically.

Did you all get clicked when you came in the door? All right. If you didn't get clicked, be sure you get clicked before you leave.

It's my pleasure to introduce those sitting at the head table. Mary Davis, National Vice President.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Lynda Lancaster, Central Division National Vice President.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: We're missing one of our officers from this convention. Helen Skelton, our Eastern Division National Vice President, underwent some health issues about five weeks ago, and she will not mind me telling you that she had four stents put in her heart. And she was very hopeful

that she would be traveling by this point, however, her doctor said to her, "You cannot fly. You cannot do that."

So when I -- she waited until last Saturday to let me know that the doctor had absolutely said no. So please, keep Helen in your prayers. Please, drop her a note, because I have to tell you there were a lot of tears. She was very upset she couldn't be here.

I'm not sure it was so much that she couldn't run her caucus or her pre-con or she was going to miss seeing her friends. And I think we can all relate to that. I think we can all relate to that. So please, say an extra special prayer for Helen, and drop her a note.

Those NECs that have their Red Book, her address is in there. And I think if we could just flood her mailbox with cards in the next couple of weeks, that would mean a lot to her. She was very sad not to be with us.

Judy Twete, Northwestern Division National Vice President.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: I was waiting for her to look at me, see if she thought I forgot her name. Flora Jean Craig, Southern Division National Vice President.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Linda Workman, Western Division National Vice President.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Bird Derrick, our National Chaplain.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Debra Noble, our National Historian.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Mary "Dubbie" Buckler, our National Secretary.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Now, there is a story. It's Dubbie, and you all know that. But yesterday, I was on the escalator. She doesn't even know this yet. And two people came up and said, "Have you seen Debbie?" I said, "No, but I just saw Dubbie." We love you. I'm sorry. I had to do that.

Marta Hedding, our National Treasurer.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Marta, we're all glad you're back.

MS. HEDDING: Thank you.

PRESIDENT CONATSER: We missed you.

Did you --

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: No.

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Okay.

But we missed her.

Chris Dickey, our Convention Parliamentarian.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Sandra Kirby, one of my personal pages.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Ann Flanagan, personal page.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Deb Lewis, personal page.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: And Ann Rehbein is our -- is the other personal page. I think she's working this morning. She had -- she's working. Okay. So when you see Ann, you all -- I think many of you know Ann.

At this time, I would like to ask the past national presidents to please stand and be recognized.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Did you guys all get the memo that (indiscernible)?

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Yeah, (indiscernible).

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Okay. I didn't get the green memo or the pastel memo.

But I'm with you, Carlene. We got the dark on. Okay.

We will be utilizing a consent agenda. These items are listed on your agenda, and they include the unit charter cancellation since February of 2016; three National Finance Committee policies up for renewal. And they are National Finance Committee Policy Renewal ALA National President Foreign Travel Policy; ALA Unbudgeted Solicitation of Funds Policy; and ALA National Headquarters Check Signing Policy.

And two resolutions -- one, regarding Congress establishing a National Poppy Day and the other on requesting the American Legion research the need to specify widows among ALA membership eligibility requirements. You received information on each of these items prior to this meeting with any updates on your chair today. Information about the consent agenda and how it works was circulated in advance along with the items listed on the consent agenda.

Does anyone wish to remove anything from the consent agenda?

(Pause.)

MS. ISON: I'm not quite that tall.

PRESIDENT CONATSER: That's okay.

MS. ISON: Can you hear me? Is it on?

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Yeah, it's on, but pull it down just a little more, Tonia.

MS. ISON: (Indiscernible.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: It's on.

MS. ISON: Tonia Ison, NEC for Department of Kansas. I move to bring off the consent agenda Item 4, ALA NHQ Check Signing Policy for further discussion.

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Okay. It will come off.

MS. ISON: Thank you.

PRESIDENT CONATSER: We'll discuss that under the other resolutions. Okay.

Anything else?

The Chair will entertain a motion to adopt the consent agenda with

that being withdrawn.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Okay.

(Pause.)

MS. HORN: Madam President, Karyl Horn, Department of New Hampshire. I move that we adopt the consent agenda with the item concerning the check signing policy removed.

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Is there a second?

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: (Indiscernible).

PRESIDENT CONATSER: What department?

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Alaska.

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Alaska. Okay.

All those in favor of adopting the consent agenda, please say aye.

VOICES: Aye.

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Those opposed, say no.

The ayes have it, and the consent agenda is adopted.

I just wanted to share a few things this year before we move on. This year, I've been proud to visit and represent all of you in 8 countries and 46 departments. It's been an amazing journey along with Commander Kevin and Commander Dale in many of those locations.

I want to thank you for giving me the opportunity to do this, and I want to share many memories with you in the years to come. And I love to talk about it. So come see me if you have questions or want to know more.

I received a letter after attending the Girls State Session. And to me, I was a little sad. And I want to share it with all of you, because we have a packed house. And this is what we need to take hold of. And we need to take hold and get our program, ALA Girls State, back in our units.

This young woman said she was extremely nervous going to an interview. She said, "Of course, I was the last girl to be interviewed. So I had plenty of time for anxiety to supersede my thoughts. While sitting outside the closed door, all I could hear was faint murmurs of voices coming from inside."

"When the door finally opened, my heart rate elevated and my palms became sweaty. I have been introverted all my life, and the thought of conversation has always intimidated me. I watched the person who interviewed before me walk out, and I braced myself for when I walked in."

"In the room, there was a table. And around it were three elderly men." This is a good thing, ladies. This part's the good part. I know you're all going, "What?" But it is.

"Then they introduced themselves, and I was taken back. The man sitting next to me was a veteran of World War II. The man across the table from me was a veteran of World War II. And the third gentleman was a veteran of the Vietnam War."

"Now I saw it. My eyes focused on the hat adorned by one of the men, and it justified that they were not bluffing and that this was an important interview. From then on, one of the World War II veterans primarily carried on the conversation."

"We talked about everything from school to horses. Throughout the

interview, these individuals were very caring and sweet. Although they had come to learn about me, I wanted to learn more about them."

They informed me that they were going to send -- and I'm not going to tell you which one -- all three, if the funds were raised. "They told me reluctantly that they'd had some difficulty acquiring the money the previous year. I later discovered that all three girls from my school were sponsored to go. I guess they worked really hard to raise the money."

"One of the World War II veterans called and elaborated that he wanted to put each delegate's photo in the paper so that each could be recognized. Every day, my mom received a call from him asking for my picture. His dedication towards that goal became apparent when he repeatedly called for two weeks for a photo."

"I felt engulfed in guilt for not getting the picture to him sooner, and it took a while because I had to find the means to physically print a picture and then drive it to his house because he didn't have email."

"The work ethic of this veteran with his genuine desire to help others was more than admirable. It gave a social introvert like me the courage to stand in front of a crowd and run for governor. I figured that if these men worked so hard to attain the money and get me recognized, then the least I could do was make the most of the experience. I was informed during the interview that I might have to give a speech when I returned to those that sponsored me."

"While at (redacted), I wanted to attain a great position so when I returned home, I could look those men in the eyes and show them that their efforts were worth it. Thus, I ran for governor. And despite not receiving the initial endorsement, I think the experience itself was enough for me to admire every penny, every phone call, and every second these men contributed to my trip."

"These individuals portrayed qualities that cannot be paralleled. If nothing else, I wish to assert that while these veterans may not remember me, I certainly will remember them."

Now, ladies, this is a sad story, because they have a unit that didn't choose to interview the girls state delegates. We need to make sure that we're doing it. The good thing about this is that American Legion post cared enough to step up and interview those delegates for ALA Girls State.

It's great when we hear these stories. These veterans -- they wanted to hear these veterans' stories. That's what drove her to go and enjoy and grow with our ALA Girls State Program. So, ladies, please take back our program. Don't let the schools pick them.

I've been very amazed visiting the Girls States I visited. How many girls didn't have a clue who sent them? My school sent me. No, they didn't. We sent you.

Take back our program. It is one of our premier programs. We need to have ALA Girls State in front of every girl before they get to that Girls State Program. I guess you can't tell I'm a little passionate about Girls State.

But take it back. I don't want one of you to go to your Girls State Programs next year -- and if Mary's visiting and she walks up to a girl and

says hi, who sponsored you to come here. My school. No, they didn't. We did. It's our program.

So let's go back and put it out there that ALA Girls State is alive and well and our units and our posts work as a family to send the best of the best to that program. So --

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: The Chair is happy to report that the Minutes Approval Committee met and approved the minutes of the NEC meeting from February 2016. This committee is comprised of the NEC members from the Departments of Connecticut, Washington, and Arizona. Thank you, ladies, for doing your job well.

As chairman of the Executive Committee to the NEC, I will now give that report. This committee includes the American Legion Auxiliary National President, National Vice President, National Secretary, National Treasurer, and National Finance Committee Chairman. The Executive Committee is charged with reviewing, researching, and making recommendations to the NEC on matters requiring NEC action. In that capacity, the committee is recommending the two resolutions that are on the consent agenda and the resolution on attendance expectation for department conferences funded by the National Organization that will be brought forward during this meeting.

The second charge of the Executive Committee is to address and act on time-sensitive matters subject to ratification by the NEC. I am happy to report that there were no time-sensitive matters that required any action. Finally, I am most happy to report that we've fulfilled our responsibilities with care and without spending one dime.

Yay, Finance, right? Finance, aren't you happy now?

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Tim's really happy we didn't spend any money. Woo-hoo, I heard it, yeah.

The Chair now calls on Nicole Clapp, Chairman of the National Finance Committee.

Nicole?

(Applause.)

CHAIRMAN CLAPP: Good morning.

VOICES: Good morning.

CHAIRMAN CLAPP: Madam President, Sharon, the American Legion Auxiliary's National Finance Committee, as you know, is comprised of five members and serving five-year terms. Our primary role of this committee is to develop our annual proposed budget and review those monthly financial statements. I'd be remiss if I didn't thank our National Finance Committee, Finance Vice Chairman Judy Hobbs; our committee members, Jan Pulvermacher-Ryan; other committee members, Peggy Thomas; and our newest committee member, Liz Foster, from New Mexico. Thank you, committee. We greatly appreciate your service.

(Applause.)

CHAIRMAN CLAPP: The National Finance Committee, as we talk

about the budget, we also have the time and the opportunity to make adjustments as necessary to reflect new opportunities as well as changing goals. The committee recommends that budget to you, the NEC, for your consideration and adoption.

Also additionally, we oversee the financial policies, as you've heard this morning, of the organization. We also review the annual audits of not only the auxiliary, but also of the ALA Foundation. We make fiscal policy recommendations to the NEC for you to act upon and to ensure that our organization makes sound decisions and looking forward, as we look at our not-for-profit benchmarks that also look at governmental mandates and regulations.

One member of our Finance Committee also serves as a liaison to the ALA Foundation and one also to the Audit Committee. So with that being said, we have a few other obligations. But most importantly this morning, I think you want to hear how are we going along this year. Are we in the black, or are we in the red?

You know, this time of the year, though, it's always a little bit tricky because what is our biggest expense every year?

VOICES: Expenses.

CHAIRMAN CLAPP: And have those expenses come in yet?

VOICES: No.

CHAIRMAN CLAPP: No. So Tim is here to tell you exactly how we're doing. I'll give you a little hint. We're in the black so far.

(Applause.)

MR. BRESNAHAN: Good morning. Can everybody hear me? The fiscal performance of your national organization has been positive as of 7/31, as Nicole just said. Just to give you two numbers to remember today, \$8 million in revenue; \$6.6 million in expense.

And she stole some of my stuff, so I've got to move down a little bit.

I did want to point out also our investments continue -- they're diversified, and they continue to provide us with strong, positive results. As of July 31st this year, we have a 6 percent return on our investments. So that's (indiscernible).

(Applause.)

MR. BRESNAHAN: A woo-hoo. A woo-hoo, please.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Oh, he wants a big woo-hoo on that one.

This year, because of the investments, also playing a major role in it, we were able to continue to underwrite attendance by three department representatives at our department leadership national conference. We were able to maintain the visits by the National Division of Vice Presidents.

And we were -- yeah. Thank you.

And we were able to continue the organizational effectiveness training for the department secretaries at ALA National Headquarters, which is underwritten by ALA National Headquarters, by the way.

(Applause.)

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: That's even (indiscernible), right?

MR. BRESNAHAN: And that's a -- I just want to point out that's been going on -- because we're going on our third year now. And I don't know about the department secretaries. I think they enjoy it. And they get a lot out of it. And it's been really good for National Headquarters staff to work with them as a team. So that's really cool.

Also with reserve funds this year, we were able to resource year two of ALA Centennial Strategic Plan. So thank you. Which included developing the ALA Academy, an organizational effectiveness training program aimed at improving ALA's capacity, our capacity, to deliver our mission. And we also issued 18 Centennial Strategic Plan department achievement awards as of July 31st.

And I just wanted to ask are there any departments in the room that received those rewards.

Could you all stand, please?

(Applause.)

MR. BRESNAHAN: Can you give them a round of applause?

Thank you.

CHAIRMAN CLAPP: I think Tim deserves his own woo-hoo.

All right. Well, with that being said, let's talk about something that women are very good at. Shopping. All right. With shopping, credit cards, USAA credit cards, we have spent -- anyone have a guess?

Since the inception, over \$30 million.

And that's on 6,916 credit cards. We are very good at it. And that means over \$12,500 that will be split in royalties coming back to the departments again this year. So congratulations. But I always have to put that little caveat. Charge, but charge responsibly, of course, ladies.

Then in our direct mail campaigns, we had a net that would be for the ALA and the Foundation. We do three for the ALA and one for the Foundation every year, the direct mail. We had a net of over \$606,000 this year. Wow. So the calendars and the greeting cards -- thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

And now, when you look at that then we look at the calendar year. So calendar year of '15, because that's the last complete year. We had over 153,000 individual donations from people. And 100,000 of those came from members. And 54,000 came from outside, non-members. So once again, tremendous support outside of our organization.

And we look at that as are those potential members or individuals that cannot be members but honestly love our organization. So those are still very important individuals to support our organization. So again, tremendous support.

And so, for us as a Finance Committee, again, we just continue, as Tim said, believe in education, believe in support. And with the Mission Trainings this year, Sharon wanted me to make sure that you heard about the juniors and that, with 98 Junior members attending the Mission Trainings, that was 80 percent of Juniors who had never attended a national meeting before.

So obviously, a huge success in that. And I know you'll hear more about that, I'm sure, in Coral's (phonetic) report this week. So I just wanted to

say that I think the centennial plan and our efforts of funding that through our reserves obviously are in the right direction. And we're looking forward to that resolution coming to Finance later today. So thank you very much.

And, Madam Chairman, that completes our finance report.

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Thank you, Nicole.

If you would both stay on stage, and we'll handle the resolution at this point.

I'm going to read that in case those of you did not bring it with you. It's the check signing National Headquarters policy. It is the policy of the National Headquarters of the American Legion Auxiliary, a national public benefit 501(c)(19) not-for-profit veterans service organization auxiliary, headquartered in Indianapolis, Indiana to maintain check-signing authority parameters as part of its overall system of financial internal controls.

Policies -- 1, checks written manually in the amount of less than 50,000 shall require a single signature of either the national treasurer or the national secretary. 2, checks generated via the automated accounting system in the amount of less than 50,000 shall require the automated and secured signature of the national treasurer. 3, checks written manually in the amount of \$50,000 or more for non-recurring expenditures shall require 2 manual signatures. One of the signatures must always be that of the national treasurer or the national secretary. In the event the national treasurer or the national secretary is unavailable to sign, the second signature may be obtained from a designated director, as authorized by the national secretary.

I need a motion to accept this policy.

(Pause.)

MS. SHOEMAKER: Jane Shoemaker, Department of Arizona. I'll make the motion that the resolution be accepted on the check writing resolution.

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Thank you, Jane.

Is there a second?

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: (Indiscernible.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: I didn't -- what? Texas? Did you second that? I can't see any -- who said it. Ladies, I need to know which department seconded the motion.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: It's in the back. Michigan.

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Michigan did. Okay. Thank you.

Is there any discussion?

MS. ISON: Yes, ma'am. Tonia Ison, the NEC for the Department of Kansas. Department of Kansas has concerns about this policy being renewed as stated. If departments and districts must have two signatures, no matter the amount because of checks and balances, national should lead by example and require two signatures, no matter the amount, as well. Thank you.

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Okay.

Any other discussion on the motion?

(Pause.)

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: (Indiscernible.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Yeah.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Can I stand, and can I speak very loud?

PRESIDENT CONATSER: You can turn that way so they can all hear you, please.

MS. JEFFORD: Janet Jefford, Department of Connecticut. I do have a question, if I may?

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Uh-huh.

MS. JEFFORD: How did this policy change over (indiscernible) and there were no (indiscernible)?

PRESIDENT CONATSER: There were no changes to the policy, except for in the policy statement. And in the header, we have unified all of them to say National Headquarters of the American Legion Auxiliary. So the policy itself has not changed through the years.

MS. JEFFORD: Just a comment (indiscernible) it might be helpful to let us (indiscernible) that (indiscernible) --

PRESIDENT CONATSER: So a red line version? A red line?

MS. JEFFORD: Or even a (indiscernible).

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: If there had been -- if there had been a -- if there had been a change, it would not have been on the consent agenda.

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Okay.

Just so you all know, if there had been any changes, it would not have been on the consent agenda.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Only the ones going on the consent agenda were there are no changes to the (indiscernible).

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Uh-huh. The only ones that -- I feel like I have this little voice.

(Laughter.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: The only ones that go on the consent agenda are the ones with no change.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Yeah.

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Like to the --

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: The body of the policy.

PRESIDENT CONATSER: -- body of the policy.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Policy, yeah.

(Pause.)

MS. SEELEY: Glynis Seeley, Department of Nevada. This would be something that would get signed at National Headquarters. So it would not -- my question would be more about the difficulty of making sure there are two authorized signatories available at any given time. If this is for one person to sign, if people are traveling or if somebody's out sick, do we have the availability of two people that are authorized signatories?

CHAIRMAN CLAPP: Correct, correct. Step number one, the policy is manually-written checks. That is antiquated. That is a backup mechanism. And today the checks are typically handled by step number two, which is the checks go through an automated accounting system. It is only if the system would go down would a check be manually written.

So typically, they come out with the automated signature already on

them. So that would be the one signature automatically done. Only step three would happen if it is above the \$50,000. So it already has one signature. So to go backwards with the handwritten signature, that would be if the system was down, unavailable that we would go back. So the system always has one signature already. So for us to go back and have manually-written checks, that would slow down everyone's processes of getting reimbursements or just getting all our systems of accounts payable on a timely fashion.

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Thank you.

I'm going to have Dubbie explain to you the difference between what we -- what we said we require departments to have two. But this is a little more extensive and probably some backup would clarify a lot.

SECRETARY BUCKLER: At the national level, if -- a check goes through several signature processes before it ever reaches the stage to become a check. So if a -- if a check needs to be manually written -- and I'm going to underscore -- I can only think of maybe twice.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: As a practice.

SECRETARY BUCKLER: Well, I mean, since I've been there. I mean, it just hardly ever happens.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: The flexibility --

SECRETARY BUCKLER: But there are things that you have to pay. So to -- when I'm sitting over here, by the way, I can't see you. So sometimes I can't tell who's talking. So it's not that I'm not -- I just can't see you.

So anyway, by the time it gets to the point where we need a manual signature -- the only time I can recall ever doing it, Marta and I have both signed it and regardless of the amount. But I wanted to explain why the policy is written that way is because what's not in the policy, which is also policy, is that for it to become a check, an authorized check to be written, it has to have the signature of at least four people before it gets to that point. And all those signatures are documented.

And I think that's pretty different from what happens at the department level. So when we are audited at the national level, for example, if the check were to be written under this policy and the circumstance were unusual, it would be an unusual circumstance and it would be written under this policy. There would already be on file to be audited those documents leading up to the request for that check. And there are multiple signatures on those.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: (Indiscernible).

SECRETARY BUCKLER: Oh, okay. Can I use communications? Because that's easier -- that's an easier one for me to --

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Sure (indiscernible).

SECRETARY BUCKLER: So as you know -- well, as you know, publications cost money. So the magazine would be an example. The bills that come in for the magazine are noticeable. You know, that's a lot of money.

That's a lot of money to print it. It's a lot of money for the postage for them. And those are all separate bills that come in. So that process would

start out with a check request to the -- I'm going to use the printing vendor.

So a check request to the printing vendor would start out from the communications manager and would go to the communications director. When that check is over \$2,000, which most of them are, that then comes to me for another signature. And then that has to go to accounting, where there's yet another signature internally in accounting. And I mean real signatures at this point on a real piece of paper that is kept and audited.

So that's the difference in how we do that. Does that -- does that ease anyone's mind about why -- and this policy has been in place for a long time. I think it's been in place since before I came here.

MR. BRESNAHAN: Right, for a long time.

SECRETARY BUCKLER: For a long time. Well, --
(Cross-talk.)

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Marta's legacy.

SECRETARY BUCKLER: But it's a good question, because if you don't know that backend about all the stuff that goes on to get to it -- it is a great question. And I really appreciate you asking it.

So but that's why the policy is written the way it is. Okay. No, I really do want you to know that.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Sure. She did her homework. Yay.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Okay.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: No, it's our own internal checks and balances. They're just at a magnified level.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Right, right.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: (Indiscernible.)

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Absolutely, sure.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: (Indiscernible) right here. And so, (indiscernible).

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: That was a great question.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: My concern was hey, we have to do this.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: That's right. Great question. So you can tell them they have about six or seven more steps.

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Before we vote, ladies, there's some empty NEC chairs. Are there any NECs in the room from Maryland, Alabama, Massachusetts, or DC? Joyce?

(Laughter.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: I just -- if we're voting, I just thought it was better that we --

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Or at least just have her speak from there.

PRESIDENT CONATSER: At least -- you can stay from there, Joyce. Just let me know that you're here. Okay.

Anybody else in the room from those others?

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: One (indiscernible) chair.

PRESIDENT CONATSER: We have three in here?

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Okay.

PRESIDENT CONATSER: There's one here and one there. All right. So we -- they're here. I just wanted to let everybody know those were empty.

Okay. There's been a motion to accept the check-signing policy for National Headquarters. It's been seconded, discussion.

All those in favor, say aye.

VOICES: Aye.

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Opposed, no.

Motion carried. Thank you.

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Thank you, Nicole and Tim.

Appreciate your help this year. Thank you so much.

CHAIRMAN CLAPP: All right.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: The first item under new business is the handling of resolutions previously distributed. They will not be read unless a request is made to do so. If a request is made, the maker will read the resolution. In order for a resolution to come before this body, the maker of the resolution needs to move its adoption.

Does a maker of the resolution to discontinue mid-year reports wish to move its adoption?

(Pause.)

MS. ISON: Tonia Ison, NEC for the Department of Kansas. I adopt this resolution.

PRESIDENT CONATSER: You move to adopt.

MS. ISON: I move to adopt this resolution.

PRESIDENT CONATSER: I'd be glad to adopt it, too, Tonia.

MS. ISON: I'll just take over for you, (indiscernible).

I've been doing this all week.

PRESIDENT CONATSER: I need a second.

MS. SEELEY: Glynis Seeley, Department of Nevada. I'll second.

(Pause.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Yeah, I'm just seeing where I'm at here. Is there any discussion?

(Pause.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: No discussion? Hang on a second. I have a note here I don't understand.

(Pause.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Okay.

Glynis?

MS. SEELEY: Glynis Seeley, Department of Nevada. I do have one quick question. There is -- it says in the resolved section that at its meeting today, to discontinue the requirement for mid-year reports.

When is that effective as of? Would that be this January through January '17? There is no effective date in here.

PRESIDENT CONATSER: When there's no effective date, it's effective immediately.

MS. SEELEY: Okay. Thank you.

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Mary? I'm sorry. Mary?

MS. DAVIS: Madam President? Sharon, normally, the decision to have mid-year reports is an administrative decision as opposed to a decision from the body. For me personally, having been a chairman for a couple of years -- okay. So I started out with brown hair and now I have gray, right?

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Okay.

MS. DAVIS: It gives me a temperature of the units -- or I'm sorry -- of the departments to see how well they're doing and where I might need to change information that I'm giving departments to help them better the rest of the year. So that's just my personal --

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Okay.

Karyl?

MS. HORN: Karyl Horn, Department of New Hampshire. The delegation from New Hampshire is against this resolution. Having been a divisional chairman and responsible for being in contact with the departments in the Eastern Division, it is sometime a struggle to get those mid-year reports. But we believe it is going to take away from the current communication of -- with our departments if we do not continue having these mid-year reports.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Is there any other discussion about this resolution?

(Pause.)

MS. SCOTT: Hi, my name is Rosa Scott, from the Department of Georgia.

Mary, you indicated it's more of administration from the chairperson that to be -- that these reports --

MS. DAVIS: She says --

MS. SCOTT: More of a decision?

MS. DAVIS: Yeah, leadership makes that decision.

MS. SCOTT: Okay. But I wanted to know that -- in other words, the effectiveness of these mid-year reports for other chairmen. I wanted to know, you know, have they been effective enough to be able to a continuation or not?

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Yes.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Yes.

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Okay. I see -- chairmen, would anyone come to the microphone and speak? They are wanting an answer. I can't speak from here.

(Pause.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: The question is does mid-year reports help you as a national chairman. That was the question.

Madam President, Melanie Taylor, from the Department of California. Yes, these mid-year reports that we receive from our departments are invaluable. We need this information as our Vice President Mary stated, to help us with our programs and also gives us an avenue of improvement where we can reach out members throughout the nation. Thank you.

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Uh-huh. Thank you.

Diane?

MS. DUSCHECK: Diane Duscheck, Department of Wisconsin. Periodically, we try to find new programs that we can incorporate into the different chairmanships. And when we do that, we try to send out as much information as we can. At mid-year, we can actually tell by what people are responding to us about whether or not that information has gotten to them, if they have an understanding of what's going on, or if we have totally missed the boat and need to jump on again, send out more information, and sort of regroup. So personally, I found these reports to be absolutely invaluable.

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Thank you.

(Applause.)

MS. CORRIHER: Martha Corriher, Department of North Carolina Leadership Chairman. The mid-year reports probably are more valuable sometimes in the year-end. I know this year with leadership, we -- there were several departments that did not send in a year-end report to their division chairmen. So we had to back up to the mid-year report to be able to report a total year reporting.

So if we can get that one, it really helps us out even more. Because toward the end of the year, people are -- they're tired. They say well, I'm not going to do that next year. And so, we have something.

And so, what we need to remember -- if you want the -- you know, we want to be recognized. We want that pat on the back for doing a good job. And if we don't know what you've done through the entire year, we can't give you those kudos. So those reports mid-year and year-end are very crucial so that we know what you need and what you're teaching.

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Thank you.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Is there any other discussion?

Yes. Shout really loud.

MS. DAUDISTEL: Kathy Daudistel, National Security Chairman. I also agree with everything the previous chairman said. I used the mid-year reports for the same, exact thing. But also it's fresh on your mind, some project or something that you did. And I don't hear about that at year-end. So I just need your reports for year-end and for reporting, too. So I agree that we should keep the mid-year reports. It's not really a formal report. It's more of an update. The formal report goes out at year-end. But I really like the mid-year report, because it does help us, too. (Indiscernible).

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Good. Thank you.

Anita?

MS. SMITH: Anita Smith, from Department of Missouri. I called for the question.

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Okay.

Is there any objection for calling for the question?

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: No.

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Okay. All those in favor of doing away

-- no.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: No, you're voting on (indiscernible).

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Oh.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: (Indiscernible.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: All those in favor of discontinuing mid-year reports, say aye.

VOICES: Aye.

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Opposed, no.

VOICES: No.

PRESIDENT CONATSER: The resolution has failed.

Okay. Does the maker of the resolution regarding the attendance expectation at national funded department conferences wish to move its adoption?

(Pause.)

MS. DAVIS: Madam President, Sharon, I move to adopt the resolution as distributed.

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Okay. It has been moved -- is there a second?

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Maine seconds.

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Maine seconds.

I saw you that time.

It has been moved and seconded to accept the resolution on attendance expectation at national funded department conferences. Is there any discussion?

MS. SEELEY: Yes, ma'am.

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Whoa, that is kind of awkward with that leg sticking out there.

MS. SEELEY: Do it that way. Maybe that way is the best.

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Okay.

MS. SEELEY: There we go.

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Okay.

MS. SEELEY: Madam President, I would like to ask the writer of this resolution to add the following wording on the end of Section 3 -- that failure to attend as expected shall result in the National Headquarters invoicing the department for said expense. I appreciate the resolution. I like the resolution, but there is no teeth --

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Okay. Wait one second. Wait one second. I need a second to accept that amendment.

No, she moved it.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Maine (indiscernible).

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Maine seconded it.

MS. SEELEY: Maine seconded it.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: (Indiscernible).

PRESIDENT CONATSER: I'm sorry.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: She did already.

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Yes, she's going to read it for us. Go ahead.

MS. SEELEY: I just want to add wording.

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Okay. Could you bring us a copy of the wording?

(Pause.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: I'm going to read the wording for you one more time so if there's discussion. She wants to add the following wording to the end. Failure to attend as expected shall result in the National Headquarters invoicing the department for said expense.

Is there any discussion on the amendment?

(Pause.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Okay.

SECRETARY BUCKLER: I just want to ask a question. And again, when I'm sitting over here, I can't -- I can't see this side of the room. Failure to attend as expected shall result in the National Headquarters invoicing the department for said expenses. I think, if I'm getting what you're -- I want to make sure I understand what you want to accomplish. Because we might have to tweak the wording a little bit.

This would be if -- are you saying if people attend -- came to -- for example, if we put on a conference in Indianapolis and people came to the conference but didn't attend -- is that what you're -- is that what you're getting out?

MS. SEELEY: My rationale behind this is a department is expected to attend the leadership conference. They say yes, we're coming. The Section 3 says that they would be excused only with an excused absence from the national president or the national secretary. They say they're coming, and then all of a sudden, they're a no show.

You've -- the National Headquarters has already expended that money for airfare and hotel rooms. And now, a department is a no show with no reason. That's where that --

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Okay.

SECRETARY MS. BUCKLER: Okay. I just want to make sure we all understood. Because if somebody didn't make arrangements to come, then, you know, we're not

-- I wanted to be -- what I wanted to be clear was the expectation was you must be there and, if you can't attend, we're going to bill you for it.

MS. SEELEY: No, no.

SECRETARY BUCKLER: No, no. Okay. Well, --

MS. SEELEY: We're saying you're (indiscernible) --

SECRETARY BUCKLER: I just wanted to make sure that --

(Cross-talk)

SECRETARY BUCKLER: Okay. No, I just want to make sure I was crystal clear on that. Okay. Thank you.

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Okay.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: (Indiscernible).

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Is there any other discussion on the amendment?

Okay. Real loud.

MS. BROWN-PARK: I have a -- Nancy Brown-Park, Department of

California. And I have a question. The way I thought this was written was to make sure that those who were authorized to come, department president, department secretary, are the ones that come so that the department can't say we don't like our secretary, we're not going to send her or you can't send somebody else in that place. Was that the reason this was originally written?

SECRETARY BUCKLER: Yes, and -- yeah. Well, and yes again. I mean, if I may just -- can we -- if we can just talk for a minute. One of the things that you heard in Nicole Clapp and Tim's report was that we have now had two department secretary organizational effectiveness trainings.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Yeah.

SECRETARY BUCKLER: And the real impetus for putting this in here is that, gosh, it takes a lot of work to plan one of those, which -- and if it takes a lot of work, you know it takes a lot of money. I mean, time is money. So it takes a -- there's costs in planning for it. And we don't feel that a department officer ought to just have the discretion to say that a department secretary cannot attend that event unless there's a legitimate reason that that person can't attend that event. If we're going to -- if we're going to implement the Centennial Strategic Plan, if we're going to invest in ourselves, we're going to conduct training. And we are paying for it.

You know, you all are paying for it through your national dues. Then I think it's reasonable to say you're expected to attend, the department president, the membership chairman, and the department secretary for the Department Leadership National Conference. And if we're putting on a department secretary's conference, that the department secretary is expected to attend. And a department shouldn't just say we don't think she should go.

They work their tails off when they get there, and there's just a lot of learning that goes on. So that was -- in plain English, that was the intent behind this.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: (Indiscernible.)

SECRETARY BUCKLER: Yes.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: (Indiscernible.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: The verbiage you gave us, Glynis, you want it to be number four, correct?

MS. SEELEY: Number four would be my recommendation.

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Yes, number --

MS. SEELEY: That would be fine.

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Okay.

MS. SEELEY: I didn't know if there could be a comment added to (indiscernible).

PRESIDENT CONATSER: No.

MS. SEELEY: Or if it would have to (indiscernible).

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Separate.

MS. SEELEY: Okay.

PRESIDENT CONATSER: All right. Thank you.
Yes?

MS. BUJARSKI: Jo Ann Bujarski, Department of Idaho. I have a question about the defining of the no show. Is that two out of three come?

None come? You know, if you have a -- if you have an event where there's more than one person who's expected to be there, what defines the no show of the department? None of them? You know, --

PRESIDENT CONATSER: If the plans are made, hotel, flight, and there's -- they are not excused by the president or the national secretary, that's a no show.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Right.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Right.

(Cross-talk.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: No, no. Any one person. Any one. What I'm -- maybe I don't -- like if we make flight arrangements for three people to come from Idaho --

MS. BUJARSKI: Yeah.

PRESIDENT CONATSER: -- and one of them decides she's staying home, --

MS. BUJARSKI: Uh-huh.

PRESIDENT CONATSER: -- that amount will be due back to National Headquarters.

MS. BUJARSKI: Okay. Because I'm thinking about the -- like the rooms. We have more than one person staying in a room. So --

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Right.

MS. BUJARSKI: -- if one doesn't come, that doesn't --

PRESIDENT CONATSER: The room is the same --

MS. BUJARSKI: Yeah. Okay. Thank you.

PRESIDENT CONATSER: The room is the same price. So that won't be reimbursed. Just the flight.

Just the flight, right?

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Wait.

Jo Ann? Jo Ann? The hotel room is right now -- I'm looking at events -- is the same price whether there's two or three people in it. So that would -- they would owe her flight. Does that make sense?

MS. BUJARSKI: Yes.

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Okay. Sorry. Just trying to clarify.

MS. BUJARSKI: That's (indiscernible).

PRESIDENT CONATSER: All right. Thanks.

(Pause.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Okay. Okay. Hang on one sec.

Glynis? We want to -- does it help clarify if we say failure to attend as expected and registered? Just add those two words?

MS. SEELEY: Sure (indiscernible).

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Is there any objection to just adding those two words, NECs?

VOICES: No.

PRESIDENT CONATSER: That might clarify it a little bit. And it will read failure to attend as expected and registered shall result in the National Headquarters invoicing the department for said expense. So we're

adding and registered. That clarifies it so that if nobody's coming, then no arrangements are made.

Is that all right?

Any objection if we just add those without another motion?

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: That's fine.

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Okay.

MS. HERMAN: Jennifer Herman, Department of Montana.

Basically, it should be stated that any expenses concurred (sic) by the National Headquarters and it's not fulfilled by their commitment to come is to be invoiced to the department. So if you -- you know, if they say we're coming but we're driving and you haven't put any money out for them to come and one of them doesn't come, then, you know, --

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Right, right.

MS. HERMAN: If you have spent money for them, then, yes, that needs to be reimbursed back to the National Headquarters.

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Okay. Okay. Good thank you.

Lorna?

MS. DECKERT: Lorna Deckert, Department of Washington. I just wanted to clarify. We are in discussion at the moment or is this --

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Of the amendment.

MS. DECKERT: Okay. No motion was made for the amendment.

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Yes, it was.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: There was.

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Yeah.

MS. DECKERT: I thought you just asked Mary if she would mind --

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: No, there a motion (indiscernible).

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Mary was the -- yeah.

MS. DECKERT: I'm sorry.

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Yeah.

MS. DECKERT: I'm sorry.

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Okay.

MS. DECKERT: Yes.

PRESIDENT CONATSER: And Maine. Maine. We've got Maine on the books now.

MS. DECKERT: There is no motion that needs seconded?

PRESIDENT CONATSER: It's okay. It's all right. You're open.

MS. DECKERT: No. Okay.

MS. MASTEN: Good morning. Susan Masten, Ohio. I have a little birdie that whispers in my ear also.

(Laughter.)

MS. MASTEN: And the --

PRESIDENT CONATSER: I've got one on each side.

(Laughter.)

MS. MASTEN: Then I'm lucky. I only have one. But the feeling is that this is something there are so many variables on who doesn't come and why they don't come that instead of putting it in writing, it would be better off handled at the discretion of Headquarters.

PRESIDENT CONATSER: It can't.

(Pause.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: The parliamentarian says that if there's not a rule, there's nothing to go back on.

(Pause.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: I forgot to listen to the bird before I said it. Sorry.

Yes. I'm sorry.

MS. EADS: That's okay, Madam President.

PRESIDENT CONATSER: I think I'm supposed to --

MS. EADS: Beverly Eads, from Alaska.

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Yes.

MS. EADS: I would like to call for the vote.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Thank you.

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Is there any objection to calling for the vote?

VOICES: No.

PRESIDENT CONATSER: All -- yeah. Yeah.

We are voting on the amendment piece only.

It's been moved and seconded to amend the Resolution Number 4 read, failure to attend as expected and registered shall result in the National Headquarters invoicing the department for said expense.

All those in favor, say aye.

VOICES: Aye.

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Opposed, no.

The amendment passes.

(Ring of the bell.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Now we are going to vote on the resolution as amended.

Is there any discussion?

(Pause.)

MS. GALLAGHER: Madam President -- I know I'm short. I'm sorry.

PRESIDENT CONATSER: I'm not going to say a word.

(Laughter.)

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: You're not that short.

MS. GALLAGHER: I know. But Doreen Gallagher, alternate NEC, Department of New Jersey. My delegation does have a question and a concern, if that could be addressed. That they would like to know if there's any possibility of flexibility of who can attend if one of the persons cannot attend the DLNC for any reason, in other words, like their membership chairman or their secretary.

Because we -- like, for example, the Department of New Jersey -- we cross-train our secretary and our treasurer for membership. And it would be beneficial for the treasurer to go and experience the conference at some point, if that's possible. So that was one of the questions they asked me to bring forward to you.

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Thanks, Doreen.

(Pause.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: The answer is yes, that they would be happy to work with the departments. And they have in some in the past.

So any other discussion?

All those in favor of the resolution as amended, say aye.

VOICES: Aye.

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Opposed, no.

The resolution passes.

(Ringing of the bell.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Thank you. I'll try to do better on the convention stage.

Dubbie, do you have any convention updates for us?

SECRETARY BUCKLER: One, yes, I do.

(Pause.)

SECRETARY BUCKLER: I do have a question, because it'll impact what I say here versus at the -- at the Constitution & Bylaws Pre-Convention Meeting. For all the NECs in the room, will you all -- well, let me ask it this way. Will any NEC in the room not be at the Constitution & Bylaws Pre-Convention Meeting?

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: I think (indiscernible) myself.

SECRETARY BUCKLER: Well, that -- well, the Constitution & Bylaws Pre-Convention Meeting doesn't conflict with any of the other pre-convention meetings.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: No.

SECRETARY BUCKLER: I just don't want to -- I just -- I just don't want to waste everybody's time and say something twice. If you're all going to be there, then things -- okay. All right.

So a reminder that that meeting is today at 1:00 p.m. And it's in the Hyatt Regency Hotel. Hyatt Regency Hotel, rooms A, B, C. So the Constitution & Bylaws Pre-Convention Meeting today at 1:00 p.m. at the Hyatt Regency Hotel, rooms A, B, and C.

And I'll just remind you again that's scheduled -- in fact, we amended the Constitution & Bylaws several years ago so that that meeting would not conflict with any other meeting so everybody could attend that and hear the discussion. The division caucuses begin at 3:00 p.m. And please, make sure you're checking for where those locations are, because they're not all just in one spot. So you're scattered about this year.

Then the other thing -- how many of you are familiar with a voting challenge that we have to earn a \$6,000 grant for the Foundation? That's really nice. Okay. How many of you are actually voting every day? And how many are noting that we are in competition with really one other entity?

Okay, ladies, we can win this thing here at this convention. We can. So at convention, --

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: (Indiscernible) do it now.

SECRETARY BUCKLER: Well, okay. Everybody pull out your smartphones. You can vote right now. But at convention, on your -- on your

chairs will be this little sheet of paper that will literally tell you how to vote every day and if you've got a smartphone, how to do that. And if your phone is not so smart, then -- if you have a not so smartphone -- at the National Headquarters office -- I'm looking at the -- what floor are we on? Are we on the --

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Second floor.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Third floor.

SECRETARY BUCKLER: Second. The office is up one more, one level?

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Yes.

SECRETARY BUCKLER: Okay. From where we are, the office is up and that way. How do you like that?

We have a computer monitor set up when you literally just walk up to where the office is. And instructions for how to vote every day are going to be on there. So if you don't have a smart phone or a tablet or a laptop with you, you can come to the convention office, and there's a computer there where you can vote and with instructions for how to do it. And I'm going to be announcing this every day.

Now, we're getting down to brass tacks here. I am familiar with the organization that is right now, we're neck and neck with, but who has surged ahead. They are -- they are winning this on Facebook. And they have people all over the country voting on Facebook. And by that, I mean their members are pushing it out, reminding and getting everybody else engaged to vote.

So I'm not -- I'm not going to give you a social media lesson. But those of you who are on -- anybody here on Facebook?

VOICES: Yes.

SECRETARY BUCKLER: The bigger question would be anybody here not on Facebook. Okay.

That is a great way to engage people. I'll tell you how we can win this thing, and that is getting -- if everybody who's currently voting just got one more person to vote every day, we would be surging ahead. Okay, we have a whole lot of --

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: That's just --

SECRETARY BUCKLER: -- Legionnaires here this week. We have a whole lot of Sons of The American Legion here this week. If we got all of them to vote -- and I'm going to remind you all who helped The American Legion win a quarter million dollars from a Pepsi grant?

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: (Indiscernible.)

SECRETARY BUCKLER: Who was doing all that voting, right?

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: (Indiscernible.)

SECRETARY BUCKLER: Okay, this is -- this is minuscule compared to what we helped them do. So be assertive with your Legion friends.

Be assertive with them and tell them it would be very nice if they would return the favor in a very small way and vote every day. Because if we did that, we would -- we would -- we could have this thing literally won here at convention if everybody would do this every day while we're all here. But

we can certainly have it done by the time that the voting ends at the end of September.

So you know, in the overall scheme of things, maybe \$6,000 doesn't sound like a lot of money to some people. When you're a unit or a department applying for a grant to the ALA Foundation, that's a lot of money. So please, help us win this.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Dubbie, can those flyers be put on the Legionnaires' chairs in their convention hall?

SECRETARY BUCKLER: Well, we'll look into it. They have their rules.

And our wonderful national convention parliamentarian just said, "And they can suspend their rules."

(Applause.)

SECRETARY BUCKLER: This is why she is so great. We've actually -- we've actually broached the subject with them. I can't make any promises, other than, yes, we have -- we have tried to find out if there's a way to either get this in as an announcement every day or get something like this. And Sharon's going to be bringing greetings to them tomorrow. And she's going to be challenging them from their podium to do this.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Good luck.

SECRETARY BUCKLER: So anyway, go vote.

(Applause.)

SECRETARY BUCKLER: I think that -- I think -- I think those are the only updates I have at this time.

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Thank you.

SECRETARY BUCKLER: Thank you.

PRESIDENT CONATSER: We're going to learn that word, updates, updates.

And there's one that I am -- announcement for Vice President Mary. Oh, I used the word. Update. There is an update. The candidates for office for 2016-2017 should meet in the back of the room of the Constitution & Bylaws Meeting at like 12:55. And if you know someone that is running for office that is not in this room, NEC, would you please be responsible to let your candidate know?

Any questions?

Did I do the -- is that all?

Okay. Would you please stand as our national chaplain offers the benediction?

(Ring of the bell.)

CHAPLAIN DERRICK: Isn't that great, to be able to conduct business and have fun doing it?

Thank you. Let's pray.

Father, we've heard some really good news today about how our organization is growing. I thank you so much for those who are in oversight of what we do and using the resources, God, that you've provided to us. All honor and glory for what we have and what we do goes to you, Lord. We ask now that you would go before us through the rest of our convention, Father.

Let all that we say, think, and do be all that we need to encourage and support one another and to bring you honor. And I pray in the name of my Lord.
Amen.

VOICES: Amen.

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Thank you for your dedication and your great work. It's been a pleasure serving with you this year. This meeting of the National Executive Committee is adjourned. And have a great convention.

(Applause.)

(Whereupon, the meeting was concluded at 9:11 a.m.)

NATIONAL CONVENTION PROCEEDINGS
MONDAY, AUGUST 29, 2016

ANNOUNCER: Good morning. And welcome to Keeping Our Promise, the 96th American Legion Auxiliary National Convention.

(Music.)

VOICE: I promise.

VOICE: I promise.

VOICE: I promise.

VOICE: I promise.

VOICE: I promise.

VOICES: We promise.

VOICES: Our unit promise.

VOICE: Our department promise.

VOICE: And it's our promise, too.

VOICE: It's an oath of service.

VOICES: It's our privilege.

VOICE: It's our purpose.

VOICE: Our pledge.

VOICE: Our pledge.

VOICE: My pledge, the American Legion Auxiliary's pledge.

VOICE: It's why we exist.

VOICE: It's what I do.

VOICE: It's what I do.

VOICES: It's what we do.

VOICES: It's what Juniors do.

VOICE: It's what Juniors do.

VOICES: It's what we'll continue to do.

VOICE: Today and tomorrow.

VOICE: They kept their promise.

VOICE: And we're keeping ours.

VOICE: As long as veterans --

VOICE: -- active duty military --

VOICE: -- families --

VOICE: -- and even our own members --

VOICE: -- as long as they need our help --

VOICES: -- as long as they need our help.

VOICE: Our support --

VOICE: -- our love --

VOICE: -- our time --

VOICE: -- our compassion --

VOICE: -- we plan to keep --

VOICE: -- we plan to keep --

VOICE: -- I plan to keep --

VOICE: -- the promise.

VOICE: The promise.

VOICE: My promise.

VOICES: Our promise.

VOICES: The American Legion Auxiliary's promise.

ANNOUNCER: Please welcome your National President from the Land of Lincoln, the Department of Illinois, escorted by her husband Marty, Sharon Conatser.

(Music.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Good morning. Please be seated. I'm glad you're here and I'm so happy to welcome you to our 96th American Legion Auxiliary National Convention. As you know, the presidential theme this year is Keeping the Promise. It's our continued pledge, the promise that the Auxiliary brand makes to veterans, servicemembers, their families, our communities, and ourselves. It's a promise we intend to keep, as demonstrated by our opening video. Many of those clips were sent in from across the country and one from across the world.

You may know that the original promise came from Abraham Lincoln's second inaugural address over 150 years ago. The American Legion Auxiliary inherited the promise of Lincoln 96 years ago at the birth of our organization. We chose Keeping Our Promise for this convention, a slight variation of my theme, to demonstrate a collective aspiration yet it's very personal.

Each of us has our own story, while Keeping Our Promise is a personal pledge. It may come from a servicemember who gave you the eligibility to join the Auxiliary or it may come from another experience in your life. That little fire in our hearts that drives us to serve varies with each one of us. And here's why it's personal to me.

Keeping the Promise of our eligibility is how we began the year. Keeping the promise to ourselves. Throughout the year I've witnessed Keeping the Promise across this great nation and in eight countries. To our veterans, at gift shops, ice cream socials, birthday parties, hug fests, just smiles, and of course listening to those awesome stories. Keeping the Promise to our military, shipping care packages to them, USO cookouts, welcome home celebrations, honor flight celebrations even when you're not planned to attend and you arrive in a destination where your plane got diverted and they think you're supposed to be there because you're the National President. Yes! And just helping in the homes and on the bases.

Keeping the Promise in our communities, the American Legion Family Awareness Walks. What a proud moment that was for all of us that celebrated and helped Commander Dale celebrate those. Communities festivals where we set up booths to let the communities who we are and what we do. We spoke to outside organizations who it's so exciting to share our passion with them and get them and get them excited. Show your passion. Keep your promise.

To our children, our high school oratorical, baseball, essay contests, we visited across the nation the hospitals with chronically ill children where we gave them hope. We kept our promise to our kids.

Now it's time that we continue our promise not only to ourselves but most of all to take care of our promise, to nurture yourself, our friendships, to

nurture our mission. We can do this and we will continue to Keep Our Promise.

(Applause.)

(Cheering.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Okay. We are going to have some fun at this convention. Are you ready?

(Cheering.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: First of all, I think this convention needs a secret handshake. What do you think?

(Cheering.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: All right. Would National Vice President Mary Davis please come to the stage?

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Okay. Pinkies, honey, pinkies. Yeah. Okay. Instead of shaking hands when you meet someone new or run into a friend, let's do this. Pinkie swear. Okay? Yes, I know some of you are going, that is really silly. But it's also kind of fun, isn't it?

(Cheering.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: All right. So it's important to share that when we shake this week, this is our shake, okay? Our Promise. Every time you pinkie swear our promise is that we will hope that some non-Auxiliary members will ask what it means. So don't be afraid to tell them. I want to see our handshake all over Cincinnati. Are you ready? Everybody stand up. Lock pinkies on your left and your right and raise your pinkies over your head. All right. Now everybody watch. This is going to be a great photo moment and the camera is above you so everybody go, Pinkie Swear!

VOICES: Pinkie swear!

PRESIDENT CONATSER: I love it! I love it! I love it! Thank you.

VICE PRESIDENT DAVIS: You're welcome.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Now when we do that as a group we're all going to yell, Keeping Our Promise. Let's practice that part.

VOICES: Keeping Our Promise!

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Great job. That was super. Thanks, Mary.

I'm sure you noticed on the chairs your towel. In case you can't tell I wanted to be a cheerleader but I never qualified. Anyway.

(Laughter.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: These were provided by the American Legion Auxiliary and USAA. Throughout the convention when you hear something exciting, motivating, or fun, we're going to give them a whirl. You know, like we --

(Cheering.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Okay, there's a lot of towels not up in the air right here in front of me. Let's go. Come on. Let's do it. All right.

Now here we go. Trying not to hit the person next to your or in front of you when you do this, please.

(Laughter.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: All right. Now I'm going to take a picture of this. So when I get my camera ready, I want all of you to stand up, do your rally towels, and we're going to yell --

VOICES: Keeping Our Promise!

PRESIDENT CONATSER: All right. Everybody on your feet. Are you ready? One, two, three!

VOICES: Keeping Our Promise!

PRESIDENT CONATSER: I love it! I love it! Thank you for having fun. And you all know that when I visited your departments, we had fun. I like to have fun. So we're going to continue it through the convention.

The people that I'm about to introduce have embodied Keeping Our Promise. By decade, please welcome the attending Past National Presidents of the American Legion Auxiliary. From the 1990 decade --

(Music.)

(Applause.)

(Cheering.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Linda Boone, your 1992-93 National President.

(Cheering.)

(Applause.)

National President. PRESIDENT CONATSER: Linda Newsome, your 1994-95

(Cheering.)

(Applause.)

National President. PRESIDENT CONATSER: Phyllis Sickmond, your 1996-97

(Cheering.)

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Virginia Hobbs, your 1998-99 National President.

(Applause.)

(Cheering.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: And completing the decade, Elizabeth Stewart, 1999-2000.

(Cheering.)

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Let's hear it for our 1990s National Presidents.

(Cheering.)

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: From the 2000s.

(Applause.)

(Cheering.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Kristine S. West, your 2000-2001 National President, and the National President I served with as Department President.

(Cheering.)

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Katherine Morris, your 2003-2004 National President.

(Cheering.)

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Jan Pulvermacher-Ryan, your 2007-2008 National President that served with my husband, Marty.

(Cheering.)

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Desiree Stoy, your 2008-2009 National President.

(Applause.)

(Cheering.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Miriam Junge, Honorary National President.

(Cheering.)

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: And Rita Navarreté, your 2009-2010 National President.

(Cheering.)

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: And from the 2010 decade --

(Applause.)

(Cheering.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Carlene Ashworth, your 2010-2011 National President.

(Cheering.)

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Peggy Thomas, your 2012-2013 National President.

(Cheering.)

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Nancy Brown-Park, your 2013-2014 National President.

(Cheering.)

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: And Janet Jefford, your 2014-2015 National President.

(Cheering.)

(Applause.)

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

(Applause.)

(Cheering.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: This morning we have a special treat for you. The Cincinnati Boychoir is one of the premier professional boy choirs in the United States. Located in the urban arts core of Cincinnati at the Aronoff Center for Arts, the Boychoir reaches approximately 200 young men each year from more than 90 schools in Ohio, Kentucky, and Indiana. Since 1965 the Cincinnati Boychoir has been dedicated to the musical, intellectual, and emotional development of these young men and has served as one of the foremost music education and performance organizations in this region. Boys attend weekly rehearsals, retreats, music theory classes, and the annual Songfest Summer Music Camp for boys at Xavier University. Each year the Cincinnati Boychoir presents approximately 30 annual performances in the greater Cincinnati region and has performed concerts and completed residencies both at home and abroad. Six members of the Boychoir have gone on to join the world famous Vienna Boys Choir. Singing a variety of patriotic songs under the direction of Lisa Peters, please welcome members of the Cincinnati Boychoir.

(Applause.)

(Cheering.)

(Choir performance.)

(Music.)

ANNOUNCER: Ladies and gentlemen, the 96th American Legion Auxiliary National Convention will resume shortly as we reset the stage and prepare for our business meeting.

(Music.)

ANNOUNCER: Welcome back to Keeping Our Promise, the 96th American Legion Auxiliary National Convention. Here to begin our business meeting is Convention Chairman from the Department of Ohio Donna Ray.

(Music.)

MS. RAY: Good morning, delegates and guests, and welcome to Ohio for the very special 96th Annual Convention of the American Legion Auxiliary. Before we begin I would like everyone to please take 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 2015-2016 National Officers of the American Legion Auxiliary.

National Historian Debra Noble of New Jersey.

(Applause.)

(Cheering.)

MS. RAY: National Chaplain Bird Derrick of Idaho.

(Applause.)

(Cheering.)

MS. RAY: Central Division National Vice President Lynda Lancaster of West Virginia.

(Cheering.)

(Applause.)

MS. RAY: Our Eastern Division National Vice President Helen Skelton of Delaware is at home recuperating from a heart procedure and we wish her well.

(Applause.)

(Cheering.)

MS. RAY: Northwestern Division National Vice President Judy Twete of North Dakota.

(Applause.)

(Cheering.)

MS. RAY: Southern Division National Vice President Flora Jean Craig of North Carolina.

(Cheering.)

(Applause.)

MS. RAY: Western Division National Vice President Linda Workman of California.

(Cheering.)

(Applause.)

MS. RAY: National Treasurer Marta Hedding of Indiana.

(Applause.)

(Cheering.)

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

(Cheering.)

(Applause.)

MS. RAY: And National Vice President Mary Davis of Washington.

(Cheering.)

(Applause.)

MS. RAY: Please rise as the National Colors are presented by the National President’s personal pages from the Department of Illinois. Afterward, please remain standing for the introduction of our National President.

(Presentation of colors.)

MS. RAY: This morning it is my special privilege to introduce a wonderful lady from the great State of Illinois. Our National President served her entire year keeping her promise to faithfully serve our mission, treating every member of the organization like family while traveling the country to meet and honor those who have fought to protect our awesome United States of America. Ladies and gentlemen, please join me in welcoming our National President Sharon Conatser.

(Cheering.)

(Applause.)

(Music.)

(Laughter.)

MS. RAY: Madam President, I present this gavel so you may officially open the 96th National Convention of the American Legion Auxiliary.

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Thank you.

MS. RAY: You’re welcome. Love you.

PRESIDENT CONATSER: I love you. Thank you for everything.

MS. RAY: My pleasure. I'll be back.

PRESIDENT CONATSER: She said she'd be back. Is that a threat or a promise? She knows I love her. Thank you, Donna. The 96th National Convention of the American Legion Auxiliary will now come to order. Please take a moment to ensure your electronic devices have been placed on silent mode. That's a second reminder.

Please let us begin this morning with a prayer. Bird Derrick, our National haplain, will lead us. Bird?

MS. DERRICK: Let me say another thing, first. Cincinnati, capital C-I-N-C-I-N--A-T-I, Cincinnati, thank you, auto-correct.

(Laughter.)

MS. DERRICK: I thought after last night's storm that this passage from scripture might be appropriate for today. It's based on Luke, Chapter 6, where the Lord said, "I will show you what he is like who comes to me and hears my words and puts them into practice. He is like a man building a house who dug down deep and laid the foundation on rock. When a flood came, the torrent struck that house but could not shake it because it was well-built. But the one who hears my words and does not put them into practice is like a man who built a house on the ground without a foundation. The moment the torrent struck that house it collapsed and its destruction was complete." Please feel free to pray in your faith while I pray in mine.

Light of the world, we have gathered to conduct Auxiliary business, to make decisions that enhance our programs, and just be together as Legion Family in this house. Lord, help us to be sensitive to your leading and guide us toward the purposes that you have in mind. Your ways and thoughts are so much higher than ours. Thank you for bringing us safely to this place. God, we lift before your throne of grace our Legion Family members who have suffered injury, illness, or loss of some kind. We pray for those who serve now in our stead. Be their comfort and source of total supply. Give us wisdom that when economic and enemy torrents, both foreign and domestic, come against our house our foundation will continue to be built on the rock of godly principles as in our forefathers' day. Now Lord, be glorified and honored in all we say and do as we lead by the example of serving. In the strong name of the one whom I call God and Lord, his name is Jesus, Amen.

ALL: Amen.

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Please remain standing as Brenda Collins, Chairman of the National Americanism Committee, leads us in the Pledge of Allegiance, and then remain standing for our National Anthem, performed by the amazing Cincinnati Boy Choir. Brenda, please?

MS. COLLINS: Join me in 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.

(Music.)

CHOIR: (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.

(Applause.)

(Cheering.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Weren't they great?

(Applause.)

(Cheering.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Woo-hoo! As we prepare for the start of our business, our National Constitution & Bylaws Chairman Martha Lee Thatcher will lead us in reciting our Preamble. Martha Lee?

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 of the incidence of our association 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.

(Ringing of the bell.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Well, here we are. I have to tell you one year ago I did not think that it was going to go this fast, but boy, did it go fast. They always say the older you get the faster time goes, right? I really believe it. What an awesome time I've had. And that's thanks to all of you in this room for the welcoming you gave me when I visited your department; for the notes; for the emails; for the pictures; just amazing. And as you heard me say, Keeping Our Promise is what I hope our American Legion Family will continue to do for the next hundred years to take care of our veterans and our military.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: And as a point of personal privilege, I would be remiss if I did not thank my parents, who one year ago we weren't sure they'd get to Cincinnati. But they are, and I'd just like to introduce you or present to you again my parents, Clay and Irene Lofton, my dad, my original eligibility, World War II and Korea veteran.

(Applause.)

(Cheering.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Thank you for your love and support, and thank you for everything. Love you both. Thank you.

And one more thank you, Department of Illinois, where are you?

(Cheering.)

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Thank you. It's been a great year. And without the Team Illinois support, this is not possible. So they deserve a great big thank you from me.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Thank you everyone and welcome to the 96th National Convention. We have much to celebrate and many important things to accomplish this week, so let's get started.

We have some very important guests with us this morning and please join me in welcoming this year's National Convention appointees. Jill Layton, Chairman of Pages.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Sandra Kirby, National President's

Page.

(Applause.)

(Cheering.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Ann Flanagan, National President's

Page.

(Cheering.)

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Deb Lewis, National President's Page.

(Applause.)

(Cheering.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Ann Rehbein, National President's

Page.

(Applause.)

(Cheering.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Kris West, Chairman of Distinguished Guests Committee.

Guests Committee.

(Applause.)

(Cheering.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Jan Pulvermacher-Ryan, a member of the Distinguished Guests Committee.

(Applause.)

(Cheering.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Linda Oakley, member of the Distinguished Guests Committee.

(Applause.)

(Cheering.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: And Chris Dickey, our Convention Parliamentarian.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: I would like you all to remember JoAnn Cronin in your prayers and thoughts. She just was not able to attend Convention this year as she was a very important part of this administration. And please remember JoAnn. I know she'd love to hear from you if you have time to drop a note.

It's my pleasure to invite a few special guests to the stage to bring greetings. Please welcome first Martha Setlock, Department President of Ohio.

(Music.)

(Applause.)

MS. SETLOCK: Madam President, officers, head table, and American Legion Auxiliary members, I bring you greetings from the Department of Ohio of American Legion Auxiliary. We welcome all of you to this great state and the city of Cincinnati. Will the Ohio delegation stand to give a big welcome?

(Cheering.)

(Applause.)

MS. SETLOCK: I don't think we heard it. Let's do it again, a little louder.

VOICES: O-H-I-O, O-H-I-O, O-H-I-O, Ohio!

(Cheering.)

(Applause.)

MS. SETLOCK? Ohio is part of the Central Division, ranking fourth in membership. We rank 18th in the nation with over 40,000 members. During the 2015-16 year, Ohio rocked for veterans and we plan to do some rocking with you at this Convention.

(Cheering.)

MS. SETLOCK: So welcome again, and enjoy your stay and the hospitality of the great State of Ohio membership. President Sharon, did I hear you say you wanted to be a cheerleader?

PRESIDENT CONATSER: One time.

MS. SETLOCK: One time?

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Not now. I'm too old.

MS. SETLOCK: Well today you can.

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Oh! Oh, look at this.

(Laughter.)

(Cheering.)

(Applause.)

MS. SETLOCK: President Sharon, you remember me escorting you around at Buckeye Girls State in a golf cart?

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Yes. You're not going to tell --

MS. SETLOCK: Well there's a --

(Laughter.)

MS. SETLOCK: There is a story behind this. What I'm going to give you, and it's up to you if you want to enlighten the delegates about it and your arrest.

(Laughter.)

MS. SETLOCK: But first, here is the key to the golf cart --

(Laughter.)

MS. SETLOCK: -- that awaits you out front. But first, you have to find this cart. Because the Ohio delegation may have driven it away.

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Ooh. Who took it?

(Laughter.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: I'll bet it was Gwen.

(Laughter.)

MS. SETLOCK: But all joking aside, President Sharon, we wish for you the most successful convention. Thank you.

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Thank you. Thank you. This is awesome.

MS. SETLOCK: And you can tell them why you were arrested.

PRESIDENT CONATSER: I will. Thank you. Quick story behind the stolen golf cart. They have the Ohio State Patrol at their Girls State and Martha was right. She drove me everywhere and did an awesome job. Well, one night she had to get something out of her dorm and parked the golf cart at the front door of her dorm. Well, I forget who was on with us. But anyway, we decided we were going to move the cart. So we moved the cart and hid behind the bushes and when she came out you should have seen the look on her face.

(Laughter.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: And so then later they had me arrested by the Ohio State Patrol --

(Laughter.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: -- for stealing the golf cart.

(Laughter.)

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Thank you.

MS. SETLOCK: You're welcome.

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Thank you. I had a blast. Thank you so much. Next, please welcome back to the state Donna Ray, National Convention Chairman from the Department of Ohio.

VOICES: Ohio.

(Music.)

(Laughter.)

MS. RAY: Good morning, National President Sharon. And again, welcome to Cincinnati. The Ohio American Legion Family and Convention Committee hopes you will enjoy your stay in our beautiful city.

During your stay you can enjoy beautiful sites of Union Station, museums, and the Freedom Center. You could also enjoy the Newport Aquarium and the Cincinnati Zoo where our new rhino sanctuary has just been opened. And yes, there's plenty of shopping, many fine restaurants, river boat cruises, and yes we do have a casino. Leave a little, take a little. Join us at the banks along the Ohio River for nightly enjoyment.

I am Donna Ray, Convention Chairman, and I will be floating all around the Convention Center to assist the local pages and you with any needs or concerns that you may arise. The Convention Committee offices are located on the second floor in room 209. The Flower Committee, mail room, and local pages are in the same room. Have a piece of fudge.

It is my pleasure to introduce to you the chairmen of the local committees and say how proud it has been to work with these fantastic ladies.

The National Convention Vice Chairman Carol T. Robinson.

(Cheering.)

(Applause.)

MS. RAY: Flowers Committee Chairman, Vicki Monroe.

(Cheering.)

(Applause.)

MS. RAY: Vice Chairman of Flowers Terri Crowwait.

(Cheering.)

(Applause.)

MS. RAY: Mail Room Chairman Shelley, E-Y, Riggs.

(Laughter.)

(Cheering.)

(Applause.)

MS. RAY: Vice Chairman Linda Close-Swanger.

(Cheering.)

(Applause.)

MS. RAY: Local Page Chairman Gwen Schroeder-Zulch.

(Cheering.)

(Applause.)

MS. RAY: Vice Chairman Pam Bates.

(Cheering.)

(Applause.)

MS. RAY: To make it easier for you to find your way our local pages will be easy to spot. They will be wearing a red infinity scarf with red, white, and blue stars. We are looking forward to assisting you and making sure you get from one meeting to another. If you need anything, please locate a page or other members of the Convention Committee in our office Room 209. On behalf of our Convention Committee, thank you, Madam President, for giving us this opportunity to assist the Auxiliary members here to experience the National Convention. Madam President Sharon, this concludes my platform remarks.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Thank you.

MS. RAY: Thank you. Thank you. I hope I made you proud.

PRESIDENT CONATSER: You did --

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Thank you. Next please welcome to the stage, Janet Jefford, immediate Past National President from the Department of Connecticut. Janet?

(Music.)

MS. JEFFORD: Madam President Sharon, it is my honor to bring greetings to you on behalf of the Past National Presidents. Your theme this year, Keeping Our Promise, has inspired us to continue to take care of our veterans, their children, and our communities for years to come. I found this quote about promises by Norman Vincent Peale. "Promises are like crying babies in a theater. They should be carried out at once."

(Laughter.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: I love that. I love that.

MS. JEFFORD: You have encouraged us to act now and to keep the promise of Lincoln and to keep this organization strong for another 100 years. And keeping with the baby theme, promises are just like babies: easy to make, hard to deliver.

(Laughter.)

(Cheering.)

(Applause.)

MS. JEFFORD: So when you tell a joke just (indiscernible). No, but your leadership and your love, Sharon, for our Auxiliary have helped us to recommit to deliver on our promises.

Over the past years I have witnessed how passionate you are about the Auxiliary and its mission. I have heard you speak and I have seen you cry. I have sometimes kidded you about crying so easily. But don't every apologize for feeling so strongly about the welfare of our veterans and their families; for loving this organization so much. Oh, and before I forget I thought you might need these. You never can have enough tissues these next --

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Thank you.

MS. JEFFORD: Madam President, don't be embarrassed to cry lots of tears of joy during your Convention as we celebrate and recognize the accomplishments of your year as National President. Please know that we have all benefitted from your leadership and that you have added much to the glorious history of the American Legion Auxiliary. We wish you a wonderful Convention. Enjoy every moment. Make wonderful memories. And when your Convention is over, we look forward to welcoming you to join us as a Past National President.

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Thank you. Thank you.

MS. JEFFORD: Enjoy.

PRESIDENT CONATSER: All right. Thanks. Thank you so much. Thank you.

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 delegation should have already picked up your voting keypads before today's session. Please remember that the Convention Standing Rule 14 states that the voting keypads are not to be removed from the assembly hall. Each department representative is responsible for all keypads issued to their department. Now treasurers out there, listen to this. Departments will be charged \$100 donation to the Auxiliary Emergency Fund for each missing keypad, so be sure to count them before you turn them into 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 on the keypad, wait a moment and then press the correct number. The keypad will register only the last key pressed.

So let's a minute and get familiar with our new electronic voting keypads by doing some practice votes. Would all delegates please stand?

When your vote has been cast, you sit down so that we can ensure everyone's vote has been counted. So here's the first question. If this is your first time at American Legion Auxiliary National Convention, please press the number one key. If you've attended an American Legion Auxiliary National Convention before, press the number two key. Make your selection now.

(Music.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Has everyone cast their vote?

AUDIENCE: Yes.

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Voting is now closed. Please show the results. Oh wow.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: We have -- that's great! Oh, there we go. Welcome to the new members that have never attended a National Convention first. That is great. Thank you. Let's welcome them.

(Applause.)

(Cheering.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Now for our second test question. The American Legion Auxiliary's 2016 National Convention is currently being held in Cincinnati, Ohio. Press one for yes, press two for no, and press three if you have no clue where you are right now.

(Laughter.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Stand up and vote.

(Music.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Voting is now closed. Please show the results.

(Laughter.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: For those 51 people, you are in Cincinnati, Ohio. That was fun. Wasn't that fun? All right. Next question, last question, if you are a delegate from the Department of Illinois, press number one on the keypad. If you are a delegate from a department other than Illinois, press number two. Stand up and vote, please.

(Music.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Voting is now closed. Please show the results. Great job. Everybody got it down now? All right. Let's go on then. You'll be using your keypad to vote later today so keep them with you. Remember at the end of each day you must turn in your keypad to your department representative before you leave. Department representatives, please be sure to count all of your keypads before turning them in.

Our first item of business is the adoption of the reports organizing the Convention. The Credentials Report will be presented by Credentials Chairman Renae Paoletta, Department of Illinois. Renae?

(Applause.)

MS. PAOLELLA: Madam National President, the Credentials Committee met on Saturday, August 27, 2016. The following is our report. Alabama, nine delegates.

Alaska, eight.

Arizona, 15.

Arkansas, eight.
California, 23.
Colorado, ten.
Connecticut, nine.
Delaware, ten.
District of Columbia, six.
Florida, 30.
Georgia, 11.
Hawaii, six.
Idaho, eight.
Illinois, 26.
Indiana, 38.
Iowa, 23.
Kansas, 14.
Kentucky, 11.
Louisiana, 11.
Maine, 11.
Maryland, 22.
Massachusetts, ten.
Michigan, 25.
Minnesota, 31.
Mississippi, eight.
Missouri, 15.
Montana, eight.
Nebraska, 21.
Nevada, seven.
New Hampshire, 12.
New Jersey, 13.
New Mexico, nine.
New York, 34.
North Carolina, 12.
North Dakota, 14.
Ohio, 35.
Oklahoma, nine.
Oregon, 11.
Pennsylvania, 49.
Puerto Rico, seven.
Rhode Island, seven.
South Carolina, nine.
South Dakota, 14.
Tennessee, nine.
Texas, 20.
Utah, eight.
Vermont, 11.
Virginia, 13.
Washington, 11.
West Virginia, 11.

Wisconsin, 24.

Wyoming, eight.

For a total count of the delegation here, 784 delegates.

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

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

The question is on the motion to adopt the report of the Credentials Committee. All -- stand up. All those in favor, please press number one on your keypad. Those opposed, press number two. Please vote now.

(Music.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Voting is closed. Please show the results, 737 yes, five opposed. There is a majority in the affirmative and the motion is carried and the Credentials report for the 2016 National Convention has been adopted. Thank you, Renae.

MS. PAOLELLA: Thank you, Madam President.

PRESIDENT CONATSER: I appreciate you. Thank you.

The Rules Chairman, Pat Kranzow, will read the proposed rules for this Convention. If you would like to follow along -- oops, that's your part. Sorry, Pat! I read the wrong part.

MS. KRANZOW: That's okay.

(Applause.)

MS. KRANZOW: Thank you, Madam President, and good morning all.

ALL: Good morning.

MS. KRANZOW: It is my responsibility to read the 96th Annual National Proposed Convention Standing Rules. Please follow along on pages 146 to 147 in your program book.

Now this is where you pretend to follow along, you take a five-minute mental vacation, you come back, we adopt the rules so we can have a Convention.

Rule No. 1, 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.

No. 2, the Chair may deviate from the printed program when necessary or expedient.

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

Four, the audience shall remain seated during the business of the Convention. Doors will remain open unless noise or distractions interfere with the conducting 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 National Convention Hall without an escort. Smoking is not permitted. All electronic communication devices shall be turned off or silenced.

No. 5, for 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. The National Convention Hall is defined as that area predetermined and set aside for the general business sessions of the National Convention.

No. 6, only authorized photographers shall be permitted on stage during the Convention sessions.

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

Eight, the Chairman of each department delegation shall be charged with the responsibility of ensuring that only 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.

No. 9, only voting delegates of the Convention may make motions and address the National Convention and debate, except when a Chairman of 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 emanating 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 she'll state her name and department.

Ten, all main motions, resolutions, and amendments shall be presented in writing immediately to both the Chair and the Secretary on the motion forms provided, signed with the full names of both the person 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 same question until all delegates who desire to speak on the topic have spoken. During debate, delegates, alternates, and guests are to remain seated with their own delegation or 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 other 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 By-Laws and Standing Rules.

No. 13, voting shall be by voice vote or by an electronic voting keypad 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 device shall be deemed to be a division of the assembly.

Fourteen, when the Chair deems the electronic voting devices are to be used, packets containing electronic voting keypads 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 of the electronic voting packets as instructed. Placed inside of each voting packet envelope shall be, A, the number of electronic voting keypads corresponding to the number of the department's voting delegates, one to be assigned to each voting delegate of the department; B, one certification sheet which shall have the number of votes to be cast as certified by the Credentials Chairman.

No. 15, 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, A, the number of ballots to be cast by each department; one certification sheet, which shall have the number of votes to be cast as certified by the Credentials Chairman.

No. 16, if an 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.

No. 17, 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 assistants. The chairman of the delegation shall place the certification sheet and all the 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.

No. 18, the National President shall appoint an Election and Tally Committee.

No. 19, nomination of candidates for National Division Vice President shall be at the division caucuses on Saturday, August 27, 2016.

No. 20, nomination of candidates for the office of National President, National Vice President, National Chaplain, and National Historian shall be on Wednesday, August 31, 2016.

No. 21, nominations of candidates for national office shall be made from the floor.

No. 22, nominating speeches shall be limited to two minutes for each candidate, except for the candidates for National President who will be allowed four minutes. There shall be no seconding speeches.

No. 23, following nominating speeches for national officers on Wednesday, August 31, 2016, 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, said introduction 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.

No. 24, election of national officers shall be held on Wednesday, August 31, 2016. 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.

No. 25, 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, and 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 considered at this Convention.

No. 26, these rules may be amended during the Convention by a two-thirds vote.

Madam President, by direction of the Rules Committee I move that the Convention Rules be adopted as printed and read.

PRESIDENT CONATSER: The question is on the adoption of the National Convention Rules for 2016 as just read. Is there any discussion?

The question is on the adoption of the National Convention Rules for 2016. All those in favor press the number one on your keypad. Those opposed, press number two. Please stand and vote now.

(Music.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Voting is finished. Please show the results, 741 yes, five no. There being a two-thirds in the affirmative the motion is carried and the Rules for the 2016 National Convention have been adopted. Thank you, Pat, so much.

MS. KRANZOW: Thank you, Madam President.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: The National Secretary Dubbie Buckler will give the Program Report. Dubbie?

(Applause.)

SECRETARY BUCKLER: Y'all have one of these?

ALL: Yes.

SECRETARY BUCKLER: My mother was from Tennessee so I have the liberty of being able to say y'all have one of these?

(Laughter.)

SECRETARY BUCKLER: Well as you know, due to extenuating circumstances the agenda that is printed on pages 150 through 156 of the

program book necessitated some changes. Please refer to the updated agenda that was distributed to all of the delegation secretaries during registration. The delegation secretaries are charged with communicating these updates to their delegates and alternates.

So I will just comment quickly that you all know that we have the two major political party candidates for President of the United States will be visiting joint sessions of the American Legion, American Legion Auxiliary, and Sons of the American Legion. This is quite an honor for this family of organizations to get this kind of national exposure by having both candidates visit. So we're very pleased that they are going to be here. It did necessitate some changes and I'll just say that one of those changes, as you well know, is that installation is now going to be Wednesday afternoon. And I just personally want to say thank you to Sharon and Mary for your flexibility, particularly to Mary who has family coming in from Alaska on Wednesday night.

ALL: Oh...

SECRETARY BUCKLER: So. The other thing I want to mention is occasionally I get comments about the deadlines for getting information in so that this book can be prepared. So in the spirit of goodwill, I will say this takes quite a bit of time to put together and our deadline at National Headquarters is driven by when we have to have this to the American Legion. This uploads to the printer right, literally right after the Fourth of July. So there are a few of us who every year spend the Fourth of July holiday finishing this up so that it can be uploaded. So the only way to change what an inconvenience that might be for some people who when you back this up, as you well know, this thing doesn't write itself would be to change when we publish this document. So I just want to in the spirit of goodwill thank everyone for being understanding about why the deadlines are as they are, and they are very, very tight. And my appreciation and the appreciation of National Headquarters staff for those of you who when we make, send out emails and phone calls that we need more information or we need clarifying information, or occasionally we're missing a report, thank you for your cooperation. This is quite a bit of effort to get this published.

So note that there are changes in the schedule, and Madam President, that concludes my report about the program.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: The Chair would entertain a motion to adopt the program with the updated agenda.

MS. DAVIS: I move to adopt the program as amended.

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Is there a second?

VOICES: Second.

PRESIDENT CONATSER: The question is on the motion to adopt the program as amended. Are you ready for the question? The question is on the motion to adopt the program with changes noted. Please stand and all those in favor press one, those opposed press two. Please vote now.

(Music.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Please show the results, 754 yes, two no. The affirmative has it and the Convention program is adopted. By adoption of these reports the 96th National Convention of the American Legion Auxiliary is officially organized for conducting business. Thank you, everyone.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: I'm so happy to start this morning off with a visit from my friend, Sons of The American Legion National Commander Kevin Collier.

(Cheering.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Kevin was elected as the National Commander for the Sons of The American Legion on August 30, 2015 during the Sons' 44th National Convention. He lives in Anchorage, Alaska, and has been a member of the Sons of The American Legion for 31 years. Kevin comes from an American Legion Family, and his mother, sister, and niece are all members of the American Legion Auxiliary. Please help me welcome your 2015-2016 Sons of The American Legion National Commander Kevin Collier from Alaska.

(Music.)

(Cheering.)

(Applause.)

COMMANDER COLLIER: All right. Thank you very much for that warm introduction there. It's an honor and a privilege to be able to come here and address the Auxiliary once again. And unfortunately I think this might be my last time to get to do this, but I always love coming and talking to the wonderful, beautiful ladies that do such hard work for our veterans and for our youth. Without your support, The American Legion Family wouldn't be as strong as it is today.

As you know this year Madam President had a theme of Keeping the Promise. And throughout the year we've been through a couple of different events together, and we've watched and seen everything that she's done and how excited she is about the programs and how she gets everyone pumped up in the room. No matter where she's visiting, no matter what's going on, no matter what kind of day she's even had, or what might have went wrong on the way there, she is always pumped, excited, and getting everyone motivated to do their very best, to remember their commitment to work those four pillars of the American Legion Family: Americanism, VA&R, Children & Youth, National Security.

She has been such a wonderful lady to work with and I couldn't have asked for a better President to work with. And I know speaking with Dale Barnett, our National Commander with the American Legion, he's on the same wavelength. We're, this year we're not just talking the talk about family, we were walking the walk, literally in a couple of places.

PRESIDENT CONATSER: A couple of places, yeah.

COMMANDER COLLIER: We did the walk, the Veterans Awareness Walk, with Commander Dale. But regardless of where we were at, you could tell that the family was close knit and that's what it's all about.

But I want to thank each and every one of you for your support of your American Legion, but especially of your Sons of The American Legion. As we all know, if it was not -- well, all of the Sons know, if it was not for the Auxiliary members most of the squadrons either wouldn't exist or they wouldn't be as strong because of your support of us. And so we also like to try to show that support and support you in everything that we can do. So when we're out supporting membership we're also trying to help the Auxiliary grow. And this year we took a page from the Auxiliary and from the Legion. As you know, the Legion a few years ago did their strategic plan of how they were going to grow. Just a couple of years ago the Auxiliary started theirs, and you're on your path to your five-year plan for your centennial, right? Centennial, that's what you call it?

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Yes, right.

COMMANDER COLLIER: This year I initiated the same thing with the Sons of The American Legion. We have a strategic plan getting started and we'll be coming up with our five-year plan of how we're going to grow and develop. So everything that we can do, and I took several pages from what the Auxiliary did because I liked your plan. There were several ideas. So keep up the great job.

(Applause.)

(Cheering.)

COMMANDER COLLIER: You know, it's one of those things that if you see something that's working right or looks right, why rewrite the thing? So we're starting with that. We're making a few adjustments, obviously, that need to work. We're not going to reach that one million in five years. But I strongly believe the Auxiliary will do that in five, or maybe less. So --

(Cheering.)

(Applause.)

COMMANDER COLLIER: So one of those things, we're always going to pushing membership and all that. But I wanted to say thank you once again. What a wonderful job. And thank you for allowing me to serve with such a wonderful lady and a true friend and all I can do is say, thank you. Keep up the great job. Remember our commitment, keep it everyday, of serving our veterans, serving our youth, serving our communities, and making sure that this is the best and greatest nation forever. God bless each and every one of you. God bless our troops. And thank you very much. Have a great day.

(Cheering.)

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Kevin, I want to say thank you for an awesome year. Hi, Alaska.

(Cheering.)

COMMANDER COLLIER: I was going to say, I have to say hi to my Alaska group. Shout, big shout out to my Alaska family over there. Thank you, ladies. Wonderful job.

PRESIDENT CONATSER: And I know that you like eagles. So I hope that this one will find a special place in your home.

COMMANDER COLLIER: Oh yes.

(Applause.)

COMMANDER COLLIER: Oh yes. Definitely our friendship will always continue on, Sharon, no matter what. And unfortunately I had a gift for you, and you've seen our jackets that we have up there?

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Mm-hmm.

COMMANDER COLLIER: Well I also ordered one but it came in a men's size with the wrong logo and --

(Laughter.)

COMMANDER COLLIER: -- so I --

PRESIDENT CONATSER: It's in the mail?

COMMANDER COLLIER: It will be coming to you. It's like, I don't want to bring that up there and say, yeah, here, here's one with the Legion logo, the wrong name, the wrong --

(Laughter.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: It's fine.

COMMANDER COLLIER: But somehow they got Georgia and Illinois mixed up. I don't know how --

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Oh, nice.

(Laughter.)

COMMANDER COLLIER: So, and Legion Auxiliary. But anyways, I just wanted to let you know --

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Well thank you. That's so sweet.

COMMANDER COLLIER: -- that your gift, I apologize.

PRESIDENT CONATSER: No problem. Thank you. Thank you so much.

COMMANDER COLLIER: Thank you. Thank you.

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Let's thank Kevin for his service, ladies, please.

(Applause.)

(Cheering.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: 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 the program is USAA's Director of Military Affinity Management Theresa Bilotta. She 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.

(Music.)

(Applause.)

MS. BILOTTA: Good morning.

ALL: Good morning.

MS. BILOTTA: As Sharon said, my name is Theresa Bilotta and I'm here from USAA and I'm so happy to be here again this year. I came and

spoke to you last year as well and it's been a great privilege to be able to do that again. She also stated I'm the daughter of a proud Marine veteran, and an Auxiliary member from the great State of Texas.

(Cheering.)

(Applause.)

MS. BILOTTA: Where's Texas? Hello! USAA and the American Legion Auxiliary have had a great partnership and we look forward to many more years. The USAA Auxiliary credit card is a great way to support the Auxiliary and also earn rewards for yourself for cash back, travel, and merchandise. And something new this year is the ability to donate your rewards back to the Auxiliary.

So if you don't have one yet, make sure you stop by the booth next door and pick up an application. If you do have one, start using it. Because those rewards are earned on dollars spent, not your balances.

I have a quick kind of side note here. Is Mrs. Rozier here from North Carolina, in Unit 67? Is she here? Stand up! Stand up, Mrs. Rozier. Yes. She doesn't want to. So anyway, what I'm going to tell you is that she won \$250 at our drawing at the booth on Friday.

(Applause.)

(Cheering.)

MS. BILOTTA: Her and Unit 67 won \$250. So --

(Cheering.)

MS. BILOTTA: Yes, so congratulations. Yes.

(Applause.)

MS. BILOTTA: So if you haven't stopped by the booth to register yet, make sure you do because you still have two more days for the daily drawing for you to win the \$250 as well as your unit. So make sure you stop by.

We also have some great representatives down there. So if you have any questions about USAA products, services, eligibility, anything at all, please stop by. They will be more than happy to talk to you.

Now for the real reason that I'm here. For the past year you have been working really hard to increase the membership levels for your departments. And working with your National Headquarters, I'm here to announce and reward the top three departments who had the highest percent increase in new members. So starting with third place. This department will win \$250 and 200 poppy bags, as most of you have seen before or have. We've even had a couple of people already stop by the booth and ask for these but this is how you get them. So third place, please congratulate New Jersey. Where's New Jersey?

(Cheering.)

(Applause.)

MS. BILOTTA: Congratulations, New Jersey. Rally towels. Second place, winning \$300 and 300 poppy bags, is South Carolina.

(Cheering.)

(Applause.)

MS. BILOTTA: Congratulations, South Carolina. And now for first place. This department had the largest increase, percent increase, in new members over last year. They are winning \$500 and 500 poppy bags. The winner is the department of Washington, D.C.

(Cheering.)

(Applause.)

MS. BILOTTA: Congratulations, Washington, D.C.

Congratulations to all three departments. If the three winning department presidents have time, please stop by our booth. We'd love to take a picture of you holding your check. It's not actually the real one. You'll receive that check in the mail along with your poppy bags. But it's a large one that's great for photos that you can use in your newsletters, on your Facebook page, anywhere you'd like to. So make sure you stop by.

Great job, everyone. And keep up the great work in getting new members to your departments and increasing the awareness of the Auxiliary. You're doing a great job. And you'll be there in no time for your centennial, meeting those million members.

Thank you so much for having me here again today. And I look forward to seeing you next year. Thank you so much, and God bless.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: For decades our volunteer efforts have supported the programs that bring us the American Legion Family Youth Champions. Please welcome your 2016 American Legion Youth Champions.

Please welcome from Belmont, Vermont the 2015 American Legion Baseball All-Academic team captain Joshua Wasilewski.

(Music.)

(Cheering.)

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: From Springfield, Tennessee, your 2016 Boys National President Anighya Crocker.

(Cheering.)

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: From Salem, Oregon please welcome our Junior Shooting Sports 2016 Precision Champion Taylor Gibson.

(Cheering.)

(Applause.)

(Music.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Representing Freeport, Illinois please welcome our Junior Shooting Sports 2016 Sporter Champion Emma Thompson.

(Cheering.)

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: And from Burlington, Washington and sponsored by Washington Post 91 please welcome your 2016 National Oratorical Contest Winner Benjamin Crosby.

(Cheering.)

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Each youth champion has agreed to share a little bit about themselves, so let's get started with Joshua and then we'll make our way right down this line of great young people. Joshua?

(Applause.)

(Cheering.)

MR. WASILEWSKI: Good morning.

ALL: Good morning.

MR. WASILEWSKI: I would like to take this moment to thank God, Auxiliary National President Conatser, and the entire American Legion Auxiliary Family for having me.

It is with great honor that I stand here before such an accomplished crowd of individuals who have tirelessly worked to preserve the freedom we sometimes forget to cherish. While preparing for this Convention I was constantly referenced as a distinguished guest, but in reality all of those within the audience are truly the distinguished women who have served this country with bravery, charity, selflessness, and sacrifice. You are all the individuals who have put the well-being of others before your own, and for that I will forever be grateful. I am proud to have interacted with you, true American heroes who have served for God and for this beautiful country. I realize again this country, where we are free to achieve our goals, would cease to exist without your tenacious work. So thank you.

When I received notice that I was named the 2015 All Academic Team Captain of the United States, a sense of pride and humility ran through my body, knowing that I would not only have the luxury to represent my hometown post, Castleton Post 50, but my country as well.

(Cheering.)

(Applause.)

MR. WASILEWSKI: Baseball has always been a major part of my life. Frankly, I blame my parents.

(Laughter.)

MR. WASILEWSKI: Seriously, I couldn't be more thankful for my mom, who I know is proudly watching down on me, and dad, for their introduction to the game and unflagging love and support in all that I do. When I tried out that summer of my sophomore year, I knew this was the right fit for me. American Legion Baseball has given me more than just something to do. It has allowed me to make inseparable bonds with teammates and coaches that will last a lifetime.

During those sweltering summer days I always felt compelled to perform at my highest ability. The fundamentals and basic principles taught to us by my coaches were so routinely practiced that it felt like second nature during games. And the best thing was, win or lose, during our post-game talks my teammates and I were always greeted with new aspects of the game to concentrate on as a way to prepare for the next challenges that awaited.

Playing American Legion Baseball has made for some of the best summers of my life because it has taught me respect and enhanced my leadership qualities. For baseball, when the game is on the line you either have the ability to simply be another player or step up for the overall well-

being of the team. I realize that sometimes it's necessary to take a gamble, whether I prevail or not. But in the end knowing I did not stand idly by is what makes a difference.

These ideas absorbed during Legion Ball are exactly the same principles that must be applied in the real world. Although it's hard to believe that there's a world outside of baseball, there actually is. If these same qualities can be applied I believe that myself and others will not act as bystanders but rather as deciding factors in the outcome of real world situations. This program has taught me to accept failure, to recognize what led to my mistakes, and from there to only work toward bettering myself and others around me.

Finally I want to show my gratitude and true appreciation for the monetary award that came along with this prestigious honor. It was something that I did not expect to receive but has supported my ability to attend a university where I can pursue my academic and social dreams without having to be burdened by student debt. As a college student, I am blessed where I can be in a learning environment and still continue my passion to play baseball while traveling all around New England, as well as join a fraternity, FIJI, where I'm able to pursue my desire to serve my community through philanthropy. As a member we have been to raise thousands of dollars for the United Service Organizations, our main philanthropy.

The American Legion has taught me that there are members of society who are less fortunate than myself and it is my civic duty to serve and care for these individuals, especially the ones who have made the ultimate sacrifice for our country. This scholarship has also offered me the opportunity to grow my professional career. With the education I so greatly treasure, I was fortunate enough to land an internship at the end of my freshman year of college. There is nothing more satisfying than being afforded the ability to learn and receive firsthand experience about the career field that I am pursuing, civil engineering.

These opportunities would not be possible without the assistance of the American Legion, and for that I could not be more thankful to know that I am supported by such generous women. The American Legion has offered me a foundation through baseball, Boys State, and various social events, and with that I promise to make it my mission to keep serving both God and our country.

Thank you once again for having me, and God bless.

(Applause.)

(Cheering.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Anighya Crocker, Anighya Crocker, please come forward. Boys Nation President.

MR. CROCKER: Good morning, everybody.

ALL: Good morning,

MR. CROCKER: I've been eager to get to this group because I heard that you all have the most fun, so --

(Laughter.)

MR. CROCKER: Well I would like to say my name again is Anighya Crocker. And I think as many of you can tell I'm from the great State of Tennessee.

(Laughter.)

(Cheering.)

(Applause.)

MR. CROCKER: I would like to thank God, and I would like to thank National President Conatser for giving me the opportunity to be here, and thank all of you for all the things that you do that allow me to stand here today.

Now growing up in Tennessee, and I'm sure that the Tennessee delegation knows this, you grow up hearing lots and lots of stories. Stories about how you should behave, stories about how you should be raised. So today I'm going to tell you my favorite story. It's the story of the wise man and the black bird.

As the story would go somewhere in the mountains of East Tennessee there was said to have lived a wise man, a man that knew all. A man that could look beyond the scope of time to know things far beyond what he should have. And it wasn't long before the word of his prophecies began to spread all throughout the land, until eventually it reached the City of Knoxville where two University students decided that they would go into the mountains and track him down. Not for the purpose of enjoying his prophecy but to attempt to prove him to be a fraud.

The first student says, "I'm going to collect a blackbird. I'm going to take it to the old man and I'm going to say, 'Is this bird alive or dead?' And if he says that the bird is dead, I'll open my hands and the bird will fly away. And should he say that it's alive, I'll crush it."

Well, they got a bird, and they headed on up the trail and they went to the top of the mountain, and there sat the wise man. The wise man said, "Good morning, boys."

And they said, "Wise man, tell us, where are we from?"

"Well, you're from the University down in Knoxville."

"That's very good, sir. And wise man, tell me, what is it that I have in my hand?"

"Son, you have a blackbird."

"Very good." The two students shot each other a look. "And tell me, is this bird alive or dead?"

And the wise man sits back and smiles and said, "Son, I don't know. It's in your hands."

(Laughter.)

(Applause.)

MR. CROCKER: Now as folksy of a story as that is, it has great application because that blackbird is much more than a framing device. That blackbird is the very future of this nation and those two students are all of us, the youth of this nation, standing with our future in our hands, asking and waiting for someone to tell us what of it. And it's not until a wise man comes along, a group of individuals willing to inspire change and inspire us youth

that we can open our hands and let that blackbird fly free because its captivity was being held by us the whole time.

And I can say that that voice, that advocate for the future of tomorrow, is the American Legion and the American Legion Auxiliary.

(Applause.)

(Cheering.)

MR. CROCKER: It is the voice of all of you. And when I say I look into the crowd and do you know what I see? I see mothers, and I see grandmothers, and I see great-grandmothers, and aunts, and sisters. People that have dedicated their lives to rearing and changing the youth. And what can I do as I stand here today than just express my extreme gratitude for all that you have done, as you and yours nurture us for a future of this nation years down the road that you may not even see? It is the faith that you have in all of us that extends far beyond your own self or the care for yourself that makes the work you all do so special to me.

So the scholarship that I receive will help me immensely, and it's a great and wonderful gift. But the thing that I will cherish forever is the knowledge, the compassion, the ability, the opportunity, and the love that have been supplied to me by you all.

(Applause.)

MR. CROCKER: Thank you all for giving me this wonderful opportunity. I look forward to meeting more of you. God bless, thank you.

(Applause.)

(Cheering.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: I think a future President.

(Laughter.)

(Cheering.)

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: I attended shooting sports this year and I will tell you there were 24 young women and six young men in the final 30 of the shooting sports competition.

(Cheering.)

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Please welcome Taylor Gibson.

Taylor?

MS. GIBSON: Good morning.

ALL: Good morning.

MS. GIBSON: I would like to start off by thanking the National President of the Auxiliary, Ms. Sharon Conatser, along with my local post in Salem, Oregon, Post 9.

(Cheering.)

(Applause.)

MS. GIBSON: I see you over there.

Many times when guys learn that I competitively shoot, they often ask if I like to shoot like a girl.

(Laughter.)

MS. GIBSON: I like to respond with, “Of course I do.” You see, shooting isn’t about gender, age, race, or religion. Anyone can do it. Standing here before you I represent every other junior precision shooter in the nation. Someday, I will represent my entire country when I stand at the top of the Olympic podium listening to our national anthem.

(Cheering.)

(Applause.)

MS. GIBSON: It is always important to have goals, and that is my ultimate goal. The generous scholarship granted to me will put me one step closer to that goal by aiding me in college where I may continue to grow and improve my skills. This competition has taught me just how rigorous it will be to make this dream of mine come true, but I’m willing to put in the hard work it will take to get there.

Competition is always tough and you have to make every point count. There will be rocks in my path, but I will learn to overcome them. There will be bumps in the road. And while they may slow me down, they will never stop me.

(Applause.)

MS. GIBSON: I know I have big dreams, and with big dreams come big setbacks. But that is perfectly okay because as long as I have that dream in mind I can keep moving forward. I have been told by many others that I’d never make it to where I am now. They said I’d never be good enough, or that I was too young or inexperienced. But because of the American Legion, the Sons, and the Auxiliary, I can tell them that they were wrong. Your support is what got me here.

(Applause.)

S. GIBSON: You have created endless opportunities for not only me, but families and children all over America. Opportunities that open new doors to our futures. Opportunities to show the world what we are all about and the amazing things that we can do. Opportunities to fulfill our dreams no matter how big and reach for the stars, because not even the sky can limit us.

You give us the tools and motivation to do our best so we thank you. I want to remind you that when I stand here today I’m standing for the kids like me. But when I stand on top of that podium, I will proudly be standing for all of you. Thank you.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Next please welcome Emma Thompson.

(Applause.)

MS. THOMPSON: Good morning, ladies.

ALL: Good morning.

MS. THOMPSON: I’d like to start by thanking the National President Sharon Conatser and the American Legion Auxiliary for providing this wonderful experience and inviting me to be a part of your Convention. It’s an honor to be here and I’m excited to meet all of you.

My involvement with the American Legion and the Auxiliary have been incredible from start to finish. The dedication, kindness, and generosity

shown by all of you has really shown me what it means to be part of the American Legion Family. I start my shooting career through my high schools NJROTC unit. It has undoubtedly been one of the best organizations I have ever been a part of. The program has helped countless cadets to better their lives and understand what it means to be part of a team. The unit teaches students to have a strong sense of self-discipline, self-motivation, and selflessness toward others. It pushes you to do your best, not only for yourself but for your peers. JROTC works together not as a group of individuals but one family striving for the same goal, to be the best American community we can be.

JROTC is run by a student-led staff. Every member of the staff has a job that's essential to the unit. I'm currently the supply officer for our staff and my job is to manage all uniform and equipment issues. The involvement with the staff is very rewarding. We learn how to work together and build each other up instead of tear each other down.

It just so happens that our current commanding officer is the first girl to take that role in four years, and is also the commander of our air rifle team.

(Cheering.)

(Applause.)

MS. THOMPSON: The teamwork and hospitality shown through JROTC has only fueled my passion to join an NROTC unit in college so that I may become a member of the United States Navy.

(Cheering.)

(Applause.)

MS. THOMPSON: I'd like to take this time to thank all of the men and women in our armed forces and to express how important their job is. How important it is to defend American ideals and freedom throughout the world. How important it is to stand side by side, no matter if you are male or female, big or little, young or old. How important it is to stand as one nation, under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

(Applause.)

(Cheering.)

MS. THOMPSON: There has been a growth of inspirational women recently. Some examples are Condoleezza Rice, Michelle Obama, and Hillary Clinton. These women, along with many others, have set the precedent for women around the world. They have especially impacted my all female rifle team. We are making our statement to the country that women can be strong, women can be leaders, whether that be in government, business, the junior shooting sport, or fighting around the world in the armed forces. Those inspirational women motivate us everyday to try our best and become someone you all can be proud of.

Thank you, all of you, for inspiring thousands of people everyday with what you do. Thank you for the wonderful experience here in Cincinnati and for the unbelievable memories that I will carry with me for the rest of my life. I promise to make you proud as a leader in my community, my country, and my world. I hope this is not the last time you see a shooter from Freeport High School standing in front of you.

(Applause.)

(Cheering.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: And next we'll hear from Benjamin Crosby. Benjamin?

(Applause.)

MR. CROSBY: Mahatma Gandhi once said, "The best way to find yourself is to lose yourself in the service of others." For years, the American Legion Family has done just yet and through your service have allowed American youth, like myself, to truly find themselves.

I'd like to begin today by telling you how participating in the American Legion's Constitution Oratorical Contest has personally, has individually benefitted me. See, about a year ago if you were to ask me, what do you want to be when you grow up? I would tell you that I want to be a lawyer. And that would usually merit one of two responses. Either people would say, I'm very sorry to hear that or --

(Laughter.)

MR. CROSBY: -- or they would ask what type of lawyer I want to be. And if that happened I would tell them, you know, I'm really not sure yet. But thanks to participating in the American Legion's programs I can tell you today that I want to be a lawyer specializing in constitutional law and hope one day to defend the people of the United States before the United States Supreme Court.

(Applause.)

(Cheering.)

MR. CROSBY: But the reason that I actually originally got involved in the American Legion's programs, the reason I actually got originally involved in the Constitutional program, wasn't actually because of me. It was because of my sister. My older sister Katie started in the program two years before I did and in the future the four other sisters that I have will follow after.

(Laughter.)

MR. CROSBY: And so this introduces a concept that I truly want to share today, and that's the concept of family. Because for me the American Legion's programs haven't just benefitted me. They've been a family program that has benefitted every member of that family. And in the same way the American Legion so too is not one unit but rather an interconnected unit, as a family. A family is defined as an interconnected group of people who are bound together by common convictions. And that's what the American Legion is. The American Legion is a unit that is tied together by their convictions. The American Legion is not the American Legion. It's not the Sons of The American Legion. It's not the American Legion Auxiliary. But it's The American Legion Family.

(Cheering.)

(Applause.)

MR. CROSBY: And it is that family which I wish to thank here today. Because the family is the most important unit in our society. As former Pope John Paul II once said, "As the family goes, so goes the nation, and so goes the whole world in which we live."

The American Legion Family, as a family, through your gift of these programs have done something for me as an individual which I cannot thank you enough for. But I'm here to tell you today that your programs have not benefitted one young man from Burlington, Washington but all American youth. Your programs have not benefitted five people on this stage but all American youth. Your programs have not even simply benefitted the thousands of American youth that are in the programs but in the end will benefit all American youth.

(Applause.)

MR. CROSBY: Now as I'm here today I'm reminded by a quote by our former President John F. Kennedy. And John F. Kennedy once said that the highest form of appreciation is not simply to utter words, but to live by them. Through your gift of this program you have created an opportunity for me. But I would be remiss if I did not remind you that that opportunity is also a duty and is also an obligation. Through the opportunity which you have given me I truly feel that the American Legion Family by adopting us into this family, by adopting this into this interconnected group whose convictions we share, you've created a duty, an obligation for us to take that message, to take these principles, and to spread them around our nation and around our world.

(Applause.)

MR. CROSBY: And it's that opportunity and that duty which I cannot thank you enough for. And I want to end today by reading a poem. And this poem was by a man called Joaquin Miller. And this poem illustrates how important your role as American Legion Auxiliary members is in this family of The American Legion, how important your role is in the family of America.

And the poem goes like this: The greatest battle that ever was fought! Shall I tell you where and when? On the maps of the world you will find it not; 'Twas fought by the mothers of men. 'Twas fought not with cannon or battle shot, With sword or noble pen; And not by wonderful words or thoughts from the minds of wonderful men! But deep in a walled up woman's heart - Of a woman who would not yield, Who bravely, silently, bore her part - Lo, there is the battlefield.

And so I want to take this opportunity to thank you, to thank you for everything that you've given to this country, to everything that you've given to me, and everything that you've given to the thousands of American youth in our nation today and in our nation tomorrow. And I want to thank you for your gift and for your true heroism. God bless the Auxiliary and God bless the United States of America.

(Cheering.)

(Applause.)

MR. CROSBY: Now as I go around to a lot of American Legion events I find it's always good policy to bring a gift because --

(Laughter.)

MR. CROSBY: -- you end up getting a lot of stuff from very general people. And so this is just a very small token of our appreciation which I'd

like to give to the President of the American Legion Auxiliary, just to say thank you for everything that you've done.

(Laughter.)

(Applause.)

(Cheering.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: I want to tell you before they leave that the Eagle Scout of the Year was not able to attend because he's attending West Point.

(Cheering.)

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Are your parents in the room? Where are our parents? Where are the parents of these fine young people? Stand up and wave to me. There they are!

(Cheering.)

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: I met many of them on my travels. I attended several department oratorical contests, the Junior Shooting Sports Nationals, Boys Nation, Girls Nation, and the American Legion World Series. I want you to know our country is in great hands with young people like these behind me.

(Applause.)

(Cheering.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Thank you all so much.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Another round of applause for our young people.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Thank you to all of our youth champions, and thank you especially to my friend Shane Abrams, Assistant Director of the American Legion's Americanism Division for helping me make this happen. Thank you, Shane, so much.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Thank you. Another great youth. Here with us today is Emerson, Emmy as we call her, Bribiesca, our 2016 Girls Nation President from Texas.

(Cheering.)

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Emmy volunteers with the Christian Community Storehouse and is involved in the Keller High School National Honor Society. She runs cross country and track and is a member of her school's student council. This summer she took part in the West Point Summer Leadership Experience and received the Outstanding Leadership Award. So what amazing career does this talented young lady have in her future? Emmy hopes to receive an appointment to the United States Military Academy and join the Army, woo-hoo!

(Cheering.)

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Please help me welcome Emmy.

(Applause.)

(Music.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Emmy, if you would please tell us a little bit about your Girls Nation Experience and your relationship with the American Legion Auxiliary. Emmy?

MS. BRIBIESCA: Hello to you all, members of the American Legion Auxiliary. Before I go any further, several extremely large thank yous are due to each and every one of you sitting in this room. One thank you is for the incredible service that you provide to our veterans and military members, which goes beyond the call of duty that could be asked of your average American citizen. But you, my friends, are not average American citizens. And just one more example of your great service to this country is the Girls Nation program which is the heart of my second thank you that I owe to you.

I thank you not only for the most memorable week of my life, but also for the complete and wholly positive change that being a part of this country's greatest youth program brought to me. Please, allow me to elaborate.

There is nothing more humbling than arriving in our nation's capital, a city bursting at the seams with history, alongside 99 of the finest young women that American has to offer. What humbled me even more was that these 99 young women got together and elected me to be their representative spokesperson. Because that is what it means to be a President. Yes, to lead, but first to represent, to reflect back the character of the people who put you in the position that you are in. And here is the character that I desire to reflect back to you during my time with you today.

You see, Girls Nation Senators are not inherently more special than your average high school senior. But it is their service to others and their service to this country that sets them apart from anyone else. During my time spent at Girls Nation, I met girls genuinely concerned with the state of America's politics, the expanding of civil rights, and finding the answer to ending plagues of hatred.

Did we find a way to solve these issues while in D.C.? No, not necessarily. But what we did find was the support of like-minded girls. And perhaps that was all that we needed to believe in our own individual ability to collectively lead our nation. It is truly amazing what big a change a little bit of personal courage can bring.

For myself, my own future dreams were solidified. No, I do not want to run for the presidency. And no, I am not particularly apt to run for any other form of public office. However, I firmly believe that civil service to this country goes beyond politics, even if governmental workings was the basis of the Girls Nation program. You see, I want to give back to my country in the form of service to our nation's military. I want to --

(Applause.)

MS. BRIBIESCA: I want to put boots on the ground, on the front lines, where conditions are almost unbearable. I want to lead the men and

women who are placing their lives on the line for the sake of our freedom. And I want to do it despite any challenge or opposition that may arise in the process. Because for many, including myself, the ceiling of my capabilities lies not in my biological limits but in my dedication to that flag.

(Applause.)

MS. BRIBIESCA: I love this country and I love the democratic values that it was founded upon. And as a result not only do I want to fight for that flag, but I would be more than willing to sacrifice my life for it.

(Applause.)

MS. BRIBIESCA: Yes, this intense passion and patriotism has always been inside of me. But I must admit that my time at Girls Nation greatly expanded upon this love of country. And for that I believe the greatest thanks to you is due.

(Applause.)

MS. BRIBIESCA: Not all Girls Nation senators share this aspiration of mine, and frankly I wouldn't expect nor necessarily want them to. See, we need people to run for office and we need people to become doctors and we need people to develop cutting edge technology just as much as we need servicemembers to fight for our safety and our freedom. And that right now just be the most beautiful aspect of Girls Nation and Girls Nation senators: our diversity.

Yes, we share a common goal of leading America for the better but we differ in our contribution to achieving that goal. America needs this multifaceted approach towards progress. America needs a generation to be ready for when the time comes. Well, rest assured, for I have seen the future in the eyes of every Girls Nation senators and they alone represent thousands of more young women who are ready to step up when they are needed. Together we can and together we will do this. Once --

(Applause.)

MS. BRIBIESCA: Once again, I thank you for inviting me out to your wonderful Convention. It has been an honor not only to serve in a large capacity throughout the Girls State and Girls Nation programs, but also to witness the incredible service that you, the American Legion Auxiliary, indulges in. Thank you and I sincerely hope that you enjoy the rest of the 96th Annual National Convention. Bless you all.

(Applause.)

(Cheering.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Emmy, you are awesome. I so enjoyed spending the time at Girls Nation and watching our senators. I'm so glad to hear about your military, which I already knew, but I'm glad you shared it with these ladies. But a small remembrance of being Girls Nation President from our American Legion Auxiliary. It's blue. They tied it tight. Who tied this so tight? It's a Tiffany bracelet with a Girls Nation charm on it, with a sapphire.

MS. BRIBIESCA: Thank you.

PRESIDENT CONASTER: Let's step over here and get our picture taken.

MS. BRIBIESCA: Thank you so much.

(Applause.)

(Cheering.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Thank you so much for being here. We appreciate it.

MS. BRIBIESCA: Thank you.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: For National Chairman Pam Ray, Girls Nation has always been inspirational, educational, and fun. This year as National Chairman she worked to encourage these bright young women to take their places as future leaders of our country and the American Legion Auxiliary. Please welcome our National Girls State and Girls National Committee Chairman Pam Ray.

(Music.)

(Applause.)

(Cheering.)

CHAIRMAN RAY: Good morning.

ALL: Good morning.

CHAIRMAN RAY: Madam National President Sharon, American Legion Auxiliary Girls State programs continue to develop future leaders through the teachings of leadership, citizenship, patriotism, self-confidence, and who the American Legion Auxiliary is, what we do, and why we matter. While each program provides that knowledge in different ways, they all attract strong young women that see the promise of success in our program. Military academies and universities across the country view ALA Girls State and ALA Girls Nation as programs that produce promising candidates for their prestigious programs.

ALA Alaska Girls State held a unit appreciation dinner during their session, inviting the sponsoring unit members to join them for an evening of fun. The unit members shared information about the American Legion Auxiliary and the benefits of membership while the girls shared what they had done during their session. It was a win-win for all involved. Thank you, Alaska.

(Applause.)

CHAIRMAN RAY: The Department of South Dakota --

(Cheering.)

CHAIRMAN RAY: -- wanted to utilize many forms of media to share the American Legion Auxiliary's mission. But inviting all forms of media to their program to interact with the girls, they received newspaper and television coverage. The girls shared their excitement for the program and Director of South Dakota Girls State Cheryl Hovorka shared the goals of the program. This fulfills the promise to teach youth and to the ALA through branding, public relations, and the teaching of patriotism. Yeah. Thank you, Department of South Dakota, for your continued promise to this organization to educate our youth and our communities.

We would like to welcome the Department of Hawaii back to the ALA Girls State program.

(Cheering.)

(Applause.)

CHAIRMAN RAY: For the first time in 34 years ALA Aloha Girls State was held June 6th through the 9th, 2016. The 32 participants elected city and state positions and held state senate at the state capital in Honolulu to debate bills affecting Hawaii. They met with female state senators, representatives, and Hawaii cabinet positions. A special thanks goes to Kiana Stewart --

(Cheering.)

CHAIRMAN RAY: -- a young Hawaiian student that attended the Department of Oregon's Girls State last year.

(Cheering.)

CHAIRMAN RAY: She returned home and spoke to her social studies teacher about it and wondered why Hawaii did not have a program. Mr. Eric Eades [phonetic] contacted the American Legion Auxiliary. A former Missouri Girls State citizen --

(Cheering.)

CHAIRMAN RAY: -- and ALA member Haylie Culp is in Hawaii while her husband is stationed there. She and a devoted group of ALA members, along with Mr. Eades and his wife, put this program together with excellent guidance by the national organization. The ALA Aloha Girls State team is committed to strengthening the program and the Department of Hawaii to sustain this program.

Alton Unit 72 in the Department of New Hampshire --

(Cheering.)

CHAIRMAN RAY: -- worked hard all year on their ALA Girls State program. The ladies see their name on the marquee letting them know how important they are and how happy the unit is to sponsor them. The unit president personally welcomes them to the organization. Way to go, Alton Unit.

The 70th session of the American Legion Auxiliary Girls Nation was held at the 4H Center in Chevy Chase, Maryland from July 23rd through the 30th. An excited group of 100 U.S. senators spent the week debating their bills and resolutions and had some time to take in a few sites during the week as well. Visits to the Monument and Capitol Hill kept the girls very busy. They had the opportunity to tour the interior of the Pentagon and visit the 9/11 Memorial. After a busy week of senate debate we took a relaxed walking tour of the Jefferson Memorial, the FDR Memorial, and the Martin Luther King Memorial. Unfortunately, due to the President's busy schedule and heightened security the ladies did not have the opportunity to meet with President Obama. Many senators stated that while it is a great honor to do that, they did not attend ALA Girls Nation for that reason. This shows the caliber of young ladies you all selected.

Our senators also participated in Socks of Love, a program that fills socks with needed toiletries for the homeless. These were presented to the Executive Director of USVETS, a nonprofit organization providing housing, employment, and counseling services to our nation's veterans.

This year's senators elected their President and their Vice-President. The Vice-President is Alexa Holston from the Department of Colorado --

(Cheering.)

(Applause.)

CHAIRMAN RAY: -- and our President was Emmy Bribiesca from the Department of Texas, who you just met.

(Cheering.)

(Applause.)

CHAIRMAN RAY: Madam President, as you can see the ALA Girls State and Girls Nation programs are working the mission of the American Legion Auxiliary and focusing on the goals of our centennial plan through branding, PR, and mission projects, along with the information about the ALA to encourage them to be part of ALA through membership. Madam President, this concludes my platform remarks.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Are there any resolutions, Pam?

CHAIRMAN RAY: No, Madam President, there are none.

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Pam, I had a great time at Girls Nation. Thank you so much for your report. And I have to say, I am so proud of our Girls Nation committee and Dana Kosco from National Headquarters for being a team. I had lots of emails and comments upon my return from Girls Nation on how awesome their experience was and we thank you and your committee for leading by example. Thank you.

(Applause.)

CHAIRMAN RAY: It is my pleasure -- whoops. Sorry. It's my pleasure to introduce the 2016 Ohio Convention Corporation President Mr. James Morris.

(Music.)

(Applause.)

MR. MORRIS: Madam President, officers of the Auxiliary, delegates, and guests to this Convention, on behalf of the Department of Ohio Convention Corporation I welcome you to the great city of Cincinnati.

(Applause.)

MR. MORRIS: And a great big thank you to all of the Ohio people out here, all you ladies who helped us. Would you please let me know where you're at?

(Cheering.)

MR. MORRIS: Okay. We couldn't have did this Convention without those people who helped with our packets and badges, they helped in the parades yesterday, they've helped us all along. And I just want to say thank you, thank you, thank you to them. And thank you to everybody for showing up in the great City of Cincinnati. I hope you have a great time. This is a beautiful city. There's a lot to do, a lot to see, and a lot of good places to eat. And the casino, we'd love to have you come, so --

(Laughter.)

MR. MORRIS: Thank you very much. I just wanted to tell Sharon I hope you have a great Convention and hope you all enjoy yourselves for the rest of the week in Cincinnati. Thank you very much.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Thank you so much, James.

Joining me next on stage is the leader of the nation's largest veterans organization. National Commander Dale Barnett was elected during the 97th American Legion National Convention. He graduated from the U.S. Military Academy and served as an Army infantry officer from 1974 to 1996, retiring as a Lieutenant Colonel. A member of the Log Cabin American Legion Post 105 in Fayetteville, Georgia, he's -- did I do good, Dale? He's served The American Legion at every level --

(Laughter.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: -- including Department Commander of Georgia in 2007-2008. Dale's decorations include the Legion of Merit, Bronze Star, Army Commendation Medal, the Army Achievement Medal, and many more. I've read you everything that he is. But more than that, he's my friend. Please welcome to the stage our guest, my friend, and our American Legion National Commander Dale Barnett, along with his wife Donna and aide Dewey Moss.

(Applause.)

(Cheering.)

(Music.)

COMMANDER BARNETT: Please, sit down. I'm overwhelmed.

(Cheering.)

COMMANDER BARNETT: I am overwhelmed. Madam President, Sharon has been an incredible, an incredible President.

(Cheering.)

(Applause.)

COMMANDER BARNETT: And I want to welcome all the Past National Presidents, all these great leaders that you've had, and you great members of the American Legion Auxiliary. And I've got one message for you today. The message is family. And I will tell you --

(Applause.)

COMMANDER BARNETT: -- you can applaud.

(Applause.)

COMMANDER BARNETT: When the announcement was made that I was going to be a potential candidate for National Commander, I already knew this great family that has led the organization. Because Marty was my Commander in 2007-2008. And I got to meet the Conatser family. And let me tell you, what a Legion Family they are. What a Legion Family they are.

(Applause.)

(Cheering.)

COMMANDER BARNETT: They exemplify what we should be nationwide. And when the announcement was made that Sharon was going to

possibly be your National President the same year that I was going to be National Commander, I can remember we were at Boonville, Indiana.

(Cheering.)

COMMANDER BARNETT: And we hugged each other and she says, "I want to start the family the very first day we go in office." And we had a joint reception, and that was important. And we fought for the membership shirts that had the ladies cut because she fought --

(Applause.)

COMMANDER BARNETT: -- and she said she wanted to share the message. But I will tell you, what a great message she shared across this nation. And I was so excited to be backstage and listen to a few of the youth award winners. And we went together, together as a family to junior shooting sports, oratorical, Boys Nation, Girls Nation. We went as a family.

(Applause.)

COMMANDER BARNETT: So let's never forget family. And Sharon, we got something for both you and Marty as a token of appreciation. And it happens to be, for you, a family theme. If you would join me up here? It's a small, it's a small box. But it sends a big message. If you would please open it up? It's a very small box.

(Laughter.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: It's okay. Great things come in small packages.

COMMANDER BARNETT: No, no. Open it up. Let me tell you what she just got. She got a locket and inside it is a photo of mom and dad, Clay and Irene. Thank you.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Thank you.

COMMANDER BARNETT: Marty, you're not going to get off that easy. I'm not sure I want to make him cry.

(Laughter.)

COMMANDER BARNETT: But I really do, when he wears this he's probably crying a lot. Marty, if you would open up your present? See, I'm a Big Ten fan.

MR. CONATSER: And so are we.

COMMANDER BARNETT: It's the Fighting Illini. That's why he may cry a lot.

(Applause.)

(Laughter.)

COMMANDER BARNETT: Okay?

MR. CONATSER: Football I might cry about.

COMMANDER BARNETT: Thank you all. Have a great 98th Convention. God love you all. Thank you for what you do. And let's carry on the great traditions of the American Legion as we move forward to our 100th year. God bless you. Thank you.

(Applause.)

(Cheering.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Ladies, I do have a few gifts. First of all for Commander Dale. And you're going to have lots of relaxing time now.

COMMANDER BARNETT: Huh. You haven't talked to Donna yet.

PRESIDENT CONATSER: So --

COMMANDER BARNETT: Oh, I forgot to introduce my wife Donna.

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Shopping. But anyway, this is for you, and I hope that you'll enjoy it in your relaxing time. You can open that.

COMMANDER BARNETT: Okay. Thank you. Cooling tower. Titanium core golf balls. I'll lose them a lot so --

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Here, let me help you.

COMMANDER BARNETT: -- okay. A gift certificate for the Frog, which is a golf course in my area.

PRESIDENT CONATSER: In Georgia.

COMMANDER BARNETT: In Georgia.

(Laughter.)

COMMANDER BARNETT: A cleaning brush, you've got to be clean. (Indiscernible). And I break these all the time, golf tees.

(Laughter.)

COMMANDER BARNETT: And what?

PRESIDENT CONATSER: A card later.

COMMANDER BARNETT: Okay. Thank you. Thank you so much.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Those are heavy. I hope you enjoy that, Commander. Donna, will you join me? Donna and I have had a great time traveling this year. Sometimes her and Marty got in trouble together.

(Laughter.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: But I have to tell you, Donna and I have become fast friends and our friendship will be forever. This is just a little something for you, and there's something inside if it's not -- you can open it first and I'll tell you. She loves backpacks. Now, there should be something in the pockets in there.

MRS. BARNETT: Which pocket?

PRESIDENT CONATSER: I don't know. She asked me which pocket, I told her I don't know. Not that one.

MRS. BARNETT: Not that one.

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Well what it is --

MRS. BARNETT: And there's one more.

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Well, I don't know. Where there is a gift card for her to send a picture to me after she plants all the perennials she's going to buy at Lowe's because she loves to garden. So I have a gift card for you from Lowe's --

MRS. BARNETT: Thank you.

PRESIDENT CONATSER: -- to put some new perennials in, put Dale to work. Oh, you're going to put it on? All right. Yes, there you go.

(Applause.)

(Laughter.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Thank you. Dewey? Come here.

Dewey. Dewey --

ALL: Dewey. Dewey. Dewey --

(Applause.)

(Laughter.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: As you all know, the aide gives up a year of his life also to travel with the Commander. And I have been very proud to call Dewey my friend, and he's been a huge, huge support when Marty wasn't there for me. He tried to train Marty as an aide --

(Laughter.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: He tried to train Marty as an aide on our first trip together, but then there was too long between the first trip and the second trip and he had to start over. Right, Marty?

(Laughter.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Just a little something from me to you, from Marty and I to you.

MR. MOSS: Thank you so much.

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Yeah.

MR. MOSS: Oh, a bow tie.

PRESIDENT CONATSER: He loves bow ties.

MR. MOSS: I love bow ties. I should have worn one today.

PRESIDENT CONATSER: There's something else in there.

MR. MOSS: And a gift certificate.

PRESIDENT CONATSER: For the koi pond.

MR. MOSS: Oh, great. Fantastic.

PRESIDENT CONATSER: He's going to put a koi pond in. So we started off his koi pond in Georgia.

MR. MOSS: Thank you so much.

PRESIDENT CONATSER: You're welcome.

(Applause.)

(Cheering.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: This is our fun handshake for the Convention.

(Applause.)

(Cheering.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Thank you so much for taking time out of your busy schedules to be here, and thank you, honey, for coming over and joining me to thank our Commander, our First Lady, and our aide. Thank you.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: I know that takes a little time but it sure, it's nice to recognize them.

One of our nation's greatest assets is our youth. American Legion Auxiliary departments and units recognize this and are dedicated to protecting, caring for, and supporting our children, especially those of our

military and veterans. Recently I had the honor to present eight-year-old Alan with a certificate to thank him for raising over \$36,000 for Honor Flight.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Florida.

(Cheering.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: He doesn't see it as dollars. He sees it in the number of veterans. Please welcome our National Children & Youth Committee Chair Kathy Dungan.

(Applause.)

(Music.)

CHAIRMAN DUNGAN: Madam National President, units and members kept their promise as they promoted the Children & Youth program this year. I received excellent reports from department chairmen highlighting their units and members' work and dedication for children.

One of those outstanding reports was from Banner Unit 109 North Carolina.

(Cheering.)

CHAIRMAN DUNGAN: They fulfilled their promise to protect, care for, and support veterans and military children, and children in their community. Some of their activities were a back to school bash for National Guardsmen children providing boxes of school supplies. On Military Appreciation Day at their State Fair, unit members donated 100 patriotic toy bags and free ride tickets to military and veterans' children. Members provided Valentine goodies for Guardsmen and their families. Promoting the Star Spangled Kids initiative by raising awareness of the U.S. Constitution, they visited schools and explained the writing and signing of the Constitution using students as actors. They distributed the comic book, Our Country's Flag, patriotic hats, pencils, and candy. Children were taught how to respect the American flag. At Christmas, Unit 109 members take care of their Guard children by decorating the armory and providing entertainment with visits from Mrs. Claus, elves, and Rudolph and they distributed 60 bags of toys. For the Month of the Military Child, large baskets of blankets and cuddly bears were provided to the pediatric ward at Fort Bragg. Tribute certificates and dog tag necklaces were given to military children thanking them for their service. They also provided Easter baskets for Guardsmen's children and the unit donated 15 bicycles and helmets at Christmastime to children in their community. Congratulations, Unit 109 of North Carolina, for an awesome Children & Youth program this year.

(Applause.)

(Cheering.)

CHAIRMAN DUNGAN: Another outstanding unit was Elmore Unit 26 of Idaho.

(Cheering.)

CHAIRMAN DUNGAN: Their unit is located near Mountain Home Air Force Base, giving them the opportunity to participate in the base's Halloween Boo-Bash held for 150 military children. They provided 200 cupcakes for the annual cupcake walk. The children dressed up in costumes

and fun was had by all. At Christmas unit members provided goodies for the children's candy walk at the air force base's winter fest. They donated toys to Mountain State's Tumor Institution's toy barn where children select a toy from the toy barn after receiving their cancer treatments. Unit members sewed and donated pillowcases to three different organizations that help families in crisis. Each child chooses a pillowcase for their very own. Unit 26 of Idaho kept their promise of Service Not Self. Great job, Unit 26.

(Applause.)

CHAIRMAN DUNGAN: There is doubt that Auxiliary members take their duty seriously to protect and care for our children. Units and members across the country did an amazing job this year demonstrating we can make a difference in the life of a child, regardless the size of our unit. To quote Herbert Hoover, our 31st President, "Children are our most valuable resource." Let's continue to invest in their future. Madam National President, this concludes my platform remarks.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Are there any resolutions?

CHAIRMAN DUNGAN: No, Madam President, there are not.

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Thank you. Great report, Kathy. Thank you so much. 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.)

MS. NEWSOME: Madam National President, Keeping Our Promise, 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 foremost philanthropic priority in 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 \$14.4 million, M --

(Applause.)

MS. NEWSOME: -- in grants to assist America's children. During the 2016 calendar year, 138 grant applications were received for consideration by the foundation board. The board's screening committee recommended awarding 24 grants totaling \$640,395.

(Applause.)

MS. NEWSOME: The Auxiliary, together with the SAL, sponsored seven grants. Amongst the recipients is the American Printing House for the Blind of Louisville, Kentucky, which received \$31,000 for its project entitled, Rail Tales, sharing the joy of reading. This grant will help build an enthusiasm for reading and build sighted parents' confidence in the use of accessible reading for their child.

The Auxiliary also co-sponsored a grant of \$10,000 to the organization Defending the Blue Line of Hastings, Minnesota --
(Cheering.)

MS. NEWSOME: -- for its project entitled, Military Kids Scholarship Project, which will provide free equipment for military kids, attendance at summer camps, and other costs associated with athletics.

Located in Chicago, Illinois, \$15,000 was granted to the Kids in Danger for their project Safe from the Start, safety booklet, which will fund a booklet that addresses various safety topics, including tips regarding choking hazards, child-proofing, and how to check for recalls.

The National Children's Alliance of Washington, D.C. was awarded \$60,360 to provide children advocacy centers and caregivers with knowledge and tools to recognize and address children with sexual behavior problems and provide children's organizations with the resources to advocate and implement prevention initiatives in their own communities.

\$27,721 was awarded to the Talk About Curing Autism of Irvine, California for its project Autism Journey Guides, which will provide parents with information, research, and important next steps on treating autism with the intent of recovering.

Young Marines of Washington, D.C. was awarded \$50,000 for its project, Youth Marines Drug Demand Reduction, which will underwrite the purchase and dissemination of anti-drug literature and promotional items.

And as the National President has remarked, and I quote, "it's the little things." An award of \$1,630 for its project, Sharing Fishing Stories with Veterans, was granted.

I urge posts, units, squadrons, and their departments to investigate what grants might aid them in promoting children's projects.

Contributions to the foundation this year totaled just under \$653,970, an increase over last year. Sons of the American Legion led the way again with contributions of \$360,299, bringing them --

(Applause.)

MS. NEWSOME: -- drum roll? Bringing them to just a pinch under \$7 million since their first contribution.

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Wow.

(Applause.)

MS. NEWSOME: Contributions of \$162,115 were received from the American Legion, which was followed by the Auxiliary contributing total \$94,469, an increase of \$5,880 from last year. Good job.

(Applause.)

MS. NEWSOME: Together with other contributions and requests brought our total to the \$653,969. So with these funds and your continued support of the Child Welfare Foundation, we were able to Keep Our Promise in our support and our dollars to help the children of our nation.

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

Jason Kees, Army veteran and Legionnaire from the Department of Illinois, joined the Legion's Headquarters staff in 2002. He currently serves as 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 vet who served in the U.S. Marine Corps from 1966 to 1969. He joined the American Legion at Brauner Post 307 in New Orleans -- did I slosh that enough? New Orleans in 1972. He has been active in the post, district, and department and served as department commander for 2012-13 Legion year. And when I served as National President, he was my unofficial aide, although officially National Commander Bill Detweiler's aide. Herbie served as Chairman of Louisiana Department of Children and Youth Commission for 30 years. In 2004 he received the National Children and Youth Chairman of the Year Award. Herbie currently is a member of the board of directors of the Child Welfare Foundation. Please welcome Herbert Petit, Herbie.

(Music.)

(Applause.)

MR. PETIT: Thank you. Good morning, and thank you for that warm welcome. Madam President, Past National Presidents, distinguished guests, fellow delegates, thank you for your strong support of the American Legion Child Welfare Foundation. Through your generosity our donations together impacted over hundreds of thousands of children throughout our great nation. At this time I would like to recognize the departments that have gone above and beyond in the 2015-2016 donation year.

Our first award is an Excellence Award. It's awarded to the department with the highest per capita contribution average for the contribution year. The winner, Department of Florida.

(Cheering.)

(Applause.)

(Music.)

MR. PETIT: Florida, achieving the highest per capita giving in 2015, American Legion Auxiliary Department of Florida.

VOICE: Florida, I am so proud of you. Thank you for all your hard work.

(Cheering.)

(Applause.)

MR. PETIT: The next award, the Meritorious Achievement Award, is awarded to the top department that experienced the highest increase in per capita giving in the contribution year. The winner, Department of South Dakota.

(Cheering.)

(Applause.)

(Music.)

MR. PETIT: Achieving the highest increase in per capita giving in the year 2015-16, American Legion Auxiliary Department of South Dakota.

(Music.)

(Applause.)

VOICE: I want to thank everyone in South Dakota for all their hard work. This is wonderful.

(Cheering.)

(Applause.)

MR. PETIT: The next award, U.S. "Udie" Grant Legacy Award, is awarded to the top department nationally based on the combined total contributions of the American Legion, the Auxiliary, the Eight and Forty, and SALs. This year's contribution winner, Department of Florida.

(Cheering.)

(Music.)

(Applause.)

MR. PETIT: Presented to The American Legion Family, the Auxiliary, the Eight and Forty, and the SALs, Department of Florida, thank you.

(Music.)

VOICE: We did it, Florida! Thank you for all your work!

MR. PETIT: Our last award, the Garland D. Murphy, Jr. Award, awarded to the most active department in the nation based on actual contributions received during the contribution year. The winner? Department of Florida.

(Cheering.)

(Applause.)

(Music.)

MR. PETIT: The Garland D. Murphy, Jr. Award presented to the American Legion Child Welfare Foundation, the American Legion Auxiliary Department of Florida for the program year 2015-2016 in recognition of its designation as the number one department in total contributions received from their volunteers in support of the annual program designed to meet the physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual needs of our nation's children throughout this productive year. Great job, Florida.

(Cheering.)

(Applause.)

MR. PETIT: All right. Madam President, sit tight.

(Laughter.)

MR. PETIT: As a matter of fact, Madam President, come on up here.

(Laughter.)

MR. PETIT: Before we leave and take some pictures --

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Okay.

MR. PETIT: -- I'd like to present to you the Child Welfare diamond pin. Let me pin it.

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Sure.

(Applause.)

MR. PETIT: Perfect.

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Thanks, Herbie.

MR. PETIT: To all of the Auxiliary departments out there, keep up the good work. Thank you very much.

(Cheering.)

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Thank you, Linda, and Herbie, and of course to Jason. And congratulations Florida and South Dakota. The Child Welfare Foundation was part of a special project when I was Department President and I won the Garland Murphy Award. So I was pretty proud of that. And I will wear this pin proudly as the Child Welfare Foundation means a lot to me. Thank you so much.

Now let's put our hands together as we welcome our 2015-2016 Honorary Junior President Maggie Jones.

(Applause.)

(Cheering.)

(Music.)

MS. JONES: Hello, everyone.

ALL: Hello.

MS. JONES: Madam National President, it has been such an honor to serve as your Honorary National Junior President this year. And I actually thank you for taking time out to listen to all of my concerns.

All we ever hear is about how the Juniors are the future of this organization and they are. But if we don't give the Juniors a reason to be interested and to remain a member, this organization that we know and we love and we cherish, it will be no more. That means no more helping veterans and their families, no more distributing poppies, no more making those little tray favors, and no more learning about the flag etiquette. And I guess we don't need to collect those can tabs for the Ronald McDonald House anymore.

These small things can make a huge difference and these are what the Juniors do. So if you'd like us to have a future and keep doing these things, keep your Juniors interested, keep them engaged, keep them educated about this program and what we do. Remember, they don't have to be active to do any of these things. They can do them at home or with you, the Seniors. Keeping the Promise can mean keeping your Juniors active and keeping this organization alive.

(Applause.)

(Cheering.)

MS. JONES: My project this year is called Stuffed with Love. I have asked Juniors to collect stuffed animals and donate them to your local sheriff departments, police departments, homeless shelters, and DDSS departments. My goal was that if a child is put in a difficult situation, whether it be from a car accident or a situation where they are removed from home, they are given a stuffed animal that has been stuffed with love to hug and to love and let them know that they are being thought of. And I have had huge success with this project and have had great feedback from the different departments as they are going to continue participating in Stuffed with Love.

As I become a senior member this year, I will never forget the reason I am a part of this organization. I am here for my veterans and to assist them

in any way I can to improve their lives. Because of them, I have my freedom. And because of them, you all have your freedom. We don't deserve what they have given us.

To go along with the term Legion Family, my family is truly a Legion family. I am proud that my family has Juniors, Auxiliary members, SAL members, and Legionnaires. But throughout my life my family has extended. Everyone in this room is part of my family. All of you.

(Applause.)

MS. JONES: And I would like to thank all of you for being part of my family. I love you all so dearly, just like I would my mother or my father, or a stranger on the street.

I also would like to thank the great Department of North Carolina, wherever you are. I can't see you.

(Cheering.)

MS. JONES: Stand up where -- there you are. You have always given me your support. And when I said, I want to be the first Honorary National Junior President from North Carolina, and what did they say? Go for it, Maggie! You can do it! And here I am standing on this stage with wonderful, beautiful people, closing one of the best years of my life. So thank you for believing in me and thank you for being there for me. I love you all so dearly.

(Applause.)

MS. JONES: And I also have a gift for Madam President. My hometown, Brevard, North Carolina, we are famous for our white squirrels.

PRESIDENT CONATSER: White squirrels, hey, I love it. Thank you so much. Thank you.

(Applause.)

MS. JONES: So now you have your own little Stuffed with Love.

PRESIDENT CONATSER: I thank you. I love that.

MS. JONES: And also I'd like to give you my North Carolina pin.

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Oh, thank you so much.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: And I have lots to give you so don't go away. I have several things to give her. First of all, my coin to remember our year.

MS. JONES: And not just my pin.

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Exactly. And I have the privilege, from National Commander of the Sons of the American Legion Kevin Collier, he would like to make you his distinguished guest of his convention, and a citation of appreciation is presented to Maggie Jones, Honorary National Junior President of the American Legion Auxiliary in recognition of outstanding contributions and an appreciation for dedicated service to the programs of the Sons of the American Legion. And it's signed by Kevin Collier, National Commander, and Brian O'Hearne, National Adjutant, of the Sons of the American Legion. Okay? So that's for you.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: I still have more.

MS. JONES: Oh, gosh.

PRESIDENT CONATSER: This is a personal gift from me to you, and there's some goodies inside for you.

MS. JONES: Thank you.

PRESIDENT CONATSER: I have a letter for Maggie that says, as National President of the American Legion Auxiliary I'm pleased to present this letter to you confirming that as the Honorary Junior President for 2015-2016, you are in receipt of a scholarship in the amount of \$3,000.

(Cheering.)

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Congratulations. And last but certainly not least, I want to thank Maggie because, as you know, we changed the Juniors program up a little bit. She was very gracious. She shared her ideas with me. And I listened. We are, there's always improvement, as you all know. We change everything every year just a little bit to tweak it, to make it better for our organization. But Maggie, on behalf of the national organization I present to you this lovely gavel that has your name on it, your year, and Honorary National Junior President as a memory of serving your American Legion Auxiliary Juniors.

MS. JONES: Thank you so much.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: You're so welcome. I have to get my squirrel, wait. I have to get my squirrel. I want my squirrel.

(Laughter.)

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: And this is yours, too. Thanks so much for being here. Thank you. Isn't she great?

(Applause.)

(Cheering.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Whew! This year our Juniors had the opportunity to attend not one, but five national Junior meetings, one in each division. Which meant we were able to reach more Juniors. Attendees were enthusiastic as they participated in a variety of leadership activities, including flag folding and poppy making. Here to tell us more is National Junior Activities Committee Chairman Coral May Grout.

(Music.)

(Applause.)

(Cheering.)

CHAIRMAN GROUT: What an amazing year for our Junior members. We received 100 percent department reporting --

(Cheering.)

(Applause.)

CHAIRMAN GROUT: -- and the reports were full of wonderful activities. National Junior meeting results were reported elsewhere, but it's important for everyone to hear about this program. We had 98 registrations with over 80 percent of those Juniors never having attended a national activity before.

(Applause.)

(Cheering.)

CHAIRMAN GROUT: That's the highest attendance since 2005. The training topics were all leadership oriented and easily adapted to the unit or department level.

The patch program really took off. Have you seen the newest patch? Through the collaborative efforts of Cathi Taylor, the artists at National Headquarters, and the Junior Activities Committee, we have an exciting new beautiful history patch.

(Applause.)

CHAIRMAN GROUT: Don't you wish the senior members could win these, too?

ALL: Yeah.

(Laughter.)

CHAIRMAN GROUT: Juniors earned 1,228 patches, an increase over the number earned last year. Kudos to the Department of Alabama's Juniors --

(Cheering.)

(Applause.)

CHAIRMAN GROUT: -- who earned a whopping 624 patches.

(Cheering.)

(Applause.)

CHAIRMAN GROUT: The activities in which our Juniors were involved were extensive and exciting. Let's take a look at a few special activities. Juniors in the Department of Texas --

(Cheering.)

CHAIRMAN GROUT: -- decided to conduct a Texas Purses for Homeless Female Veterans project. This was a collaborative project with the department Community Service Committee. Between Facebook and emails, the flyer announcing the project went viral. Units started collecting purses and items with which to fill them. The Juniors gathered more than 1,500 purses. They then filled the purses at their midwinter conference with donated items, including soaps, shampoo, and other toiletry items. As the Juniors said, there were big purses, small ones, new purses with tags still on them, and even backpacks. Additional purses were distributed back to units to fill and take to local female veterans. Collaborating further with the Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Committee allowed the opportunity for distribution of the purses at various clinics in Texas. Can't you just see this project being introduced everywhere in our country by our Juniors?

(Applause.)

CHAIRMAN GROUT: Our congratulations go out to Savannah Wahrer, Junior member from Mid Florida Lakes Unit 330 who became Miss Teen Texas 2015.

(Applause.)

CHAIRMAN GROUT: Teens throughout Texas learned of her relationship with the American Legion Auxiliary.

The Juniors from the Department of Ohio --

(Cheering.)

CHAIRMAN GROUT: -- were also involved in a myriad of activities, but one really stood out. Blessing Backpacks was Honorary Department President Emmeline Phillips' project, and was supported by the entire Ohio American Legion Family. At department school of instruction, Emmeline presented her project to the Auxiliary and the Juniors. She came prepared with 75 backpacks that the Juniors decorated at the conference and were passed out to members who were asked to fill these backpacks with items that could be bought at Dollar Tree. She asked for socks, hats, gloves, personal items, goodies, card games, and notebooks. Anything that could easily fit into the backpacks. Units could also make monetary donations. At the midwinter conference members returns all the backpacks that were passed out at the school of instruction, plus hundreds more. All were filled with the suggested items. At the conference the Juniors filled over 250 more backpacks with items that were bought and purchased by members. At the department Junior Conference the Juniors filled another 100 backpacks. In case you weren't packing, that's 425 backpacks.

(Applause.)

(Cheering.)

CHAIRMAN GROUT: And each was distributed to a veteran at either a VA medical center or a CBOC, as well as needy and homeless veterans in Ohio. Congratulations for a very worthwhile, interesting project, Department of Ohio Juniors.

(Applause.)

(Cheering.)

CHAIRMAN GROUT: Each year the Junior Activities Committee receives nominations for the Junior Member of the Year. We received many outstanding submissions this year from across the country. Please join me in acknowledging the 2016 American Legion Auxiliary Junior Member of the Year, and she's in the audience, Deanna Woodburn a --

(Cheering.)

(Applause.)

CHAIRMAN GROUT: -- Deanna, who is seated with the alternates at the back of the hall, is a member of Kapperman Unit 44 in the Department of Indiana. Congratulations, Deanna.

(Cheering.)

(Applause.)

CHAIRMAN GROUT: Finally it's my pleasure to announce next year's Honorary National Vice Presidents for the Juniors. They are, drum roll, Central Division Emmeline Phillips from the Department of Ohio, wherever you are.

(Cheering.)

(Applause.)

CHAIRMAN GROUT: Eastern Division, no candidates. Northwestern Division, Jules Efta from the Department of Minnesota.

(Applause.)

(Cheering.)

CHAIRMAN GROUT: Southern Division Anisa Cornett from the Department of Texas.

(Applause.)

(Cheering.)

CHAIRMAN GROUT: And from the Western Division Jessica Vaupel from the Department of Arizona.

(Cheering.)

(Applause.)

CHAIRMAN GROUT: Congratulations, and our best wishes for a terrific, wonderful year.

Madam President, this concludes my platform remarks.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Thank you, Coral. Do you have any resolutions?

CHAIRMAN GROUT: There are none.

PRESIDENT CONATSER: I'd like to present you with a coin. Thank you so much.

CHAIRMAN GROUT: You're welcome.

PRESIDENT CONATSER: They did great. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN GROUT: They did, didn't they?

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Thank you. They did.

Since 1919 the American Legion Auxiliary's story has been one of our members caring for our veterans, military, and their families. Through a collection of documents, books, photos, and artifacts the History Committee conveys our story. Please welcome our National History Committee Chairman and National Headquarters Archivist Cathi Taylor.

(Applause.)

(Music.)

CHAIRMAN TAYLOR: Madam National President, accept from those who have, and share with those who have not. These words from U.S. Marine veteran Mark W. Boyer describe the work of what is the story of the American Legion Auxiliary. They also capture the efforts of the History Committee as we work in a constant cycle of giving and receiving. So that you have a better understanding of that to which I am referring, let's take a look at this year's cycle.

We began the year by giving our department chairmen a question to consider everyday: what have I given today towards keeping my promise to collect, preserve, and share the story of the American Legion Auxiliary? We also provided them with advice, information, and resources, and we answered research question that came to us from within and outside the organization.

But we've also given in a slightly different manner this year by providing two new ways in which our members may take a more participatory role in the collecting and sharing of our story.

First, in collaboration with the National President and National Historian, the Members Remember, where our members may video record their Auxiliary memories and post on YouTube. And in partnership with the

Junior Activities Committee for our 9th through 12th grade Junior members the History Patch. These young ladies now have an opportunity to work with, learn from, and take ownership of the Auxiliary's history.

The receiving side of our cycle brought us many gifts. From the Department of Indiana a black binder containing the partial history, meeting minutes, photos, and newspaper clippings belonging to the Osric Mills Watkins Unit 162. The value of this gift lies in its list of charter members as one name stands out, that of Ms. Pauline Curnick, our first National Secretary.

(Applause.)

(Cheering.)

CHAIRMAN TAYLOR: From the Departments of California and New Mexico, as well as the Legion National Headquarters, a variety of Auxiliary publications dating back to 1922. These gifts not only filling gaps within our collection, but also provide valuable additional copies.

From Units 25, 72, and 130 of South Carolina, and Units 13, 43, 146, and 286 of Tennessee, monetary donations. These gifts augment our annual budget so we may take items such as that black binder from this to this.

And from the Indiana Historical Society with funding from Lilly Endowment, a Heritage Support Grant Award in the amount of \$18,000.

(Applause.)

(Cheering.)

CHAIRMAN TAYLOR: This money enables us to purchase the necessary equipment to begin organizing, cataloging, digitizing, preserving, and sharing online our photo and magazine collections. Everyone will soon be able to access the Headquarters collections and learn our history through the materials we'll provide.

To increase the odds for non-members to discover the Auxiliary, these same digital images will be shared on two other websites, the Indiana Memory Project hosted by the Indiana State Library, and the Digital Public Library of American. In other words, our collections will be accessible on three different websites.

And put your learning caps on, ladies, as the Auxiliary History Blog, where you will learn about our officers, programs, and a myriad of other interesting items, will come to fruition.

So there's the cycle. It's been a busy year. And there is much more work to be done. We thank all those who throughout the years have played a role in the preservation of our history. While we are not a mission outreach committee, the work we do is important. Why? We accept and share pertinent items because learning from our past provides us a greater opportunity to influence our future. We preserve and share the story so you can tell everyone who we are, what we do, and why we matter. And finally, we accept the opportunity to work this cycle because for us it's a labor of love. Best expressed in the words of 19th century American philosopher William James, "The great use of a life is to spend it for something that outlasts it."

Madam National President, this concludes my platform remarks.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Are there any resolutions, Cathi?

CHAIRMAN TAYLOR: No, Madam President, there are not.

Thank you.

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Thank you for all your hard work. I appreciate it. She does a great job for us, ladies.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Through our National Security Program members hope to ease the minds of our deployed servicemembers so they won't worry about their loved ones at home and can focus on the monumental task of protecting our country. Here to tell us more about Auxiliary members stepping up and reaching out to help military families is National Security Committee Chairman Kathy Daudistel.

(Cheering.)

(Applause.)

(Music.)

CHAIRMAN DAUDISTEL: Madam National President, leaving loved ones for a work trip is never an easy thing. But there is added stress when you are a servicemember being deployed or mobilized with limited communication for an extended period of time. Our servicemembers need to know that their families are safe, secure, and supported on the homefront so they can stay focused on their mission. This is where the American Legion Auxiliary comes in, Keeping Our Promise to those who protect us.

Together we implemented and provided programs and activities that eased the worries of our servicemembers while reaching out to helping care for their families. Members answered the call. From deployment to welcome home ceremonies and support for those stateside, members rallied behind our servicemembers and their families, as evidenced by 100 percent of departments reporting.

(Cheering.)

(Applause.)

CHAIRMAN DAUDISTEL: Erica Adams, a veteran and a member of Box Elder Unit 315 in South Dakota --

(Cheering.)

CHAIRMAN DAUDISTEL: -- organized Operation Warm Hugs during the holidays. Having experienced deployment herself, she knew the important of a clean pillowcase at the end of the day. The unit decorated pillowcases and stuffed them full of comfort items before sending to troops overseas.

George A. Fitzgerald Unit 65 in South Dakota also presented pillowcases, these to the Guardsmen of the 196th Maneuver Enhancement Brigade as they deployed. Included with each pillowcase was a note of encouragement and a prayer for their safe return. Members rallied the community in support of their deployed servicemembers. They worked with their Legion Family and community to gather treats and lots of comfort items for their care packages. Local schools provided cards and notes of encouragement. Community members also helped to fill the boxes.

Robin Wexler, Unit 139 in Utah, filled Santa hats full of goodies and cards to send to deployed troops overseas, along with blankets and snack items. They also supplied over 450 items to the local family readiness group to be distributed as needed.

Cookies are very popular with deployed troops, as well as those stateside. A unit in Delaware reached out to a local restaurant for help with their cookie drive. Bob Evans donated the dough and a local high school assisted by baking and decorating the cookies. Auxiliary members, and even the state's adjutant general, were on hand to supervise the project.

(Laughter.)

CHAIRMAN DAUDISTEL: The cookies were packaged up by a different unit with 109 packages of cookies being shipped to our troops.

Members from all over baked dozens and dozens of cookies for stateside servicemembers and military families, too.

The promise to the families of our servicemembers was not forgotten either. Members assisted with daycare, yard work, and other tasks that they needed assistance with. Units hosted back to school parties, as well as Halloween and Christmas parties for the children.

Deployment is especially hard on military kids and our members recognize this. They went above and beyond to make the children feel special and loved while their parent was away. A unit in Virginia implemented a project that takes a photo of the deployed parent, transfers the image onto a pillowcase, and then presents it to the child. If the child is missing their parent they can give the pillow a tight hug, or even talk things out with their huggie.

Many members promoted Red Fridays, or remember everyone deployed by wearing red shirts each Friday. This was a simple yet significant way to show recognition for all deployed personnel and to keep it in the public eye.

Another simple project that members actively worked was the clipping of coupons. With the addition of e-coupons we learned that many commissaries no longer accept paper coupons. With a lot of creativity and diligence, members learned how to find the commissaries, both stateside and abroad, that still accepted coupons and they learned to check the addresses before they send out the packages.

When the deployed servicemembers returned home, members went all out to host welcome home parties and events. Once again, they worked with their local communities --

(Laughter.)

CHAIRMAN DAUDISTEL: -- and made sure that those returning knew they were appreciated for everything they do.

Keeping Our Promise to our servicemembers and their families is who the American Legion Auxiliary is and why we do what we do. Madam President, that concludes my platform remarks.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Are there any resolutions, Kathy? Are there any resolutions?

CHAIRMAN DAUDISTEL: No, Madam President, there are not.

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Thank you.

CHAIRMAN DAUDISTEL: Thank you.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: I kind of fell into a welcome home when I flew into Gillette, Wyoming. They had been gone for a year and when we walked into the terminal here was their families to greet them. So that was a really neat experience, too. So as you see, we are afforded many great opportunities, even when they're not planned.

Thanks to the American Legion Auxiliary's enthusiastic members, the beautiful red poppy, which symbolizes the sacrifices made by our veterans, has come alive across the nation. This year I had the honor to participate in laying a wreath at Moina Michael's grave in Georgia, the poppy lady. A small gesture to help keep her memory alive in the minds of our members and the community. Here to tell us more about connecting the visual image of the poppy with the sacrifices made by our veterans is Lori Skallerud our national Poppy Committee chairman. Lori?

(Music.)

(Applause.)

CHAIRMAN SKALLERUD: Good morning.

ALL: Good morning.

CHAIRMAN SKALLERUD: This has been an exciting year in the American Legion Auxiliary Poppy Program. Our members have been very busy keeping their promise to our veterans by showing their support. We continue to see changes taking place with our poppies. There are now poppies found across the country made of various materials, including the felt poppy that started in California; the sheer fabric poppy of Minnesota; the crocheted poppies that started in South Carolina; and even water bottle poppies that started in New York.

Of course we can't downplay our beautiful red crepe paper poppy. Many other poppy patterns have also been seen on Pinterest, even poppy jewelry.

Our new label tags have also been a great change for our Poppy Program. And yes, units can make their own labels. We also have a newly revised Poppy Program Guide.

Our units have worked diligently this year to keep our Poppy Program in the forefront of our communities and our organization. Unit Chairman Lori Riehl of Unit 210 Waupun, Wisconsin was very creative in making a poppy chair. It is brightly painted with poppies on the seat, and In Flanders Field is painted around the seat. This helped keep the poppy in the public eye while invoking conversation about the story of the poppy.

The story of the poppy, the poem In Flanders Fields, and the story of Moina Michael, the poppy lady, have been told in schools throughout the country. As always, school classrooms were invited to participate in the poppy poster contest. Unit 9 of Brunswick, Georgia made a poppy anchor that was ceremoniously placed in the river to float away, leaving a trail of red, reflecting on the response wrote by Moina Michael to the poem, In Flanders

Fields. The blood of heroes never die, but lends a luster to the red of the flower that blooms above the dead in Flanders Fields.

Norfolk Unit 603 of New York made water bottle poppies. They were displayed in vases and centerpieces with ribbons in honor of past veterans. They also accepted donations for these poppies that were displayed in a field of poppies.

Puerto Rico participated by having a Mrs. Poppy contest along with their Little Miss Poppy and Miss Poppy contests.

The Department of Florida reported that the Charlotte Correctional Facility who are members of a facility American Legion post produced 30,640 poppies for the Department of Florida.

(Cheering.)

(Applause.)

CHAIRMAN SKALLERUD: Poppies were pinned on city, county, and state government officials, along with senators and representatives, and governors across the country. Poppy proclamations were signed by dignitaries in cities and towns.

We continue keeping our promise as we raise funds for our veterans, our active duty military, and their families. Thank you, Madam President. This concludes my platform remarks.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: We have a guest that we would like to introduce to you. Lori, would you like to do the honors?

CHAIRMAN SKALLERUD: I am very proud to present Jasmine Harris as our Little Miss Poppy. She is from the Department of Florida.

(Cheering.)

(Applause.)

(Music.)

MISS HARRIS: Thank you. I was so excited when I got the letter that said I have been picked to be National Little Miss Poppy for 2015-2016. I really need to thank my unit, Pine Castle Memorial Unit 286, Department of Florida, and our unit President last year Sandy Step [phonetic]. And also my mom, Tara Harris, my nana Robin Shelhammer [phonetic], and Ms. Debbie for coming here with me to Cincinnati.

(Applause.)

MISS HARRIS: I loved handing out the poppies to veterans and listening to their stories all year long wherever we were. I thought that it was really cool when I got to present a poppy to the Orlando Mayor Buddy Dyer. I visited veterans in nursing homes in Orlando. I got to help out at the bowling alley where veterans at the Lake Nona Domiciliary got to go and many other places. But my favorite was going over to Melbourne and visiting veterans of Project Suds. That's a project that Ms. Ann started to help the homeless veterans wash their clothes. The kids at my school even bring food in for me to take over to there and at my birthday party we collected over 200 pairs of socks for them.

(Applause.)

MISS HARRIS: Thank you once again for choosing me to represent the whole United States.

(Cheering.)

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Amazing, Jasmine, amazing.

MISS HARRIS: Thank you.

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Isn't she great, ladies? Let's stand right over here and take some pictures.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: I have a coin for you. I think she represents us well, don't you, ladies?

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: And escorting her today from the Department of Florida is the Alternate National Executive Committeeman Art Schwabe [phonetic] 37.

(Laughter.)

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Lori, do you have any resolutions?

CHAIRMAN SKALLERUD: No, there are no resolutions and no recommendations.

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Thank you. Great job. Thank you so much.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Thank you, Lori. We must always remember that poppies are a memorial tribute to all those who shed their blood for freedom. That's all the message we need to be taking to our communities and our future generations. The red poppy symbolizes the price of freedom and your donations support those who have paid the ultimate price. They are doing a great job training those young people, with Alan and now little Jasmine. So good job, Florida.

Every day, our servicemembers are fighting for our freedom. As advocates for our veterans is it our duty to ensure our legislators are thinking about what our military faces while deployed and what they will need when they return. Please welcome to the state National Legislative Committee Chairman Lisa Williamson.

(Music.)

(Applause.)

CHAIRMAN WILLIAMSON: Thank you, Madam National President. Actor and activist Gary Sinise said, "Freedom and security are precious gifts that we as Americans should never take for granted. We must do all we can to extend our hand in times of need for those who willingly sacrifice each day to provide that freedom and security. While we can never do enough to show gratitude to our nation's defenders, we can always do a little more." I think that sums up the legislative program, don't you?

(Applause.)

CHAIRMAN WILLIAMSON: I can't hear you, don't you?

(Applause.)

(Cheering.)

CHAIRMAN WILLIAMSON: Thank you. Our legislative program provides information and assistance to members to advocate the American Legion's legislative agenda. We work as a family, together, undivided and strong. This year strong relationships were key to advocacy. Two-way communication between the national committee and department chairmen was instrumental in obtaining 100 percent reporting, both mid-year and year-end reports.

(Applause.)

(Cheering.)

CHAIRMAN WILLIAMSON: Yes, give all of yourselves a great big pat on the back. Relationships were also forged with elected officials at all levels of the government, local, state, and national. These connections have given Congress, state legislators, and city councils a better understanding of veterans' and servicemembers' trials and tribulations. Being on the same page makes for better policies.

I had the privilege this year to work directly with the American Legion Legislative Commission Chairman Brett Reistad from the Department of Virginia.

(Cheering.)

CHAIRMAN WILLIAMSON: Remember, our legislative priorities are those of the Legion's priorities. We are a team. Each winter our legislative program takes center stage as members of the American Legion Family head to Washington, D.C. for the Washington, D.C. conference. Armed with the Legion's legislative agenda and point papers, Legion Family members storm the Hill, visiting their elected officials en masse. Accountability was the watchword of the National Commander as he testified before a joint session of the Veterans' Affairs Committees on a number of issues, including VA appeals, transitioning servicemembers assistance, and of course protecting the American flag.

Although this conference is when the legislative program is front and center, we continued to foster those relationships and kept the issues facing our veterans and military forefront of the discussion year round. The ALA Mini Council does just that. There are 37 members of Congress between the House and the Senate that sit on the Veterans' Affairs Committees. Should individual contact need to be made with these members of Congress, we have ALA members with an existing personal relationship to each of these congressmen identified and ready to do just that.

Another great tool is the Legion's legislative action alerts. As a side note, I don't know if you received your email on your smart phones this morning, I just received an action alert, please act upon it. Our members continue to utilize this as they write their members of Congress when the vote is near. If you haven't signed up to receive those action alerts, please write this down. Visit www.legion.org/takeaction. It's on your screens right now. I challenge you to do so today and immediately take that action alert that went out this morning.

I cannot stress to you enough how important it is to remain in contact with your elected officials and members of Congress when you are at home. One member in the Department of Florida, Dominique Marie Rieter of John G. Doran Memorial Unit 158, sprung into action when she learned that women Air Force Service Pilots, or WASPs, were being denied inurnment at Arlington Cemetery. Having a relationship with Congressman David Jolly, Dominique contacted him, he co-sponsored a bill to allow this right for women. And on May 20th of this year the bill became law.

(Applause.)

(Cheering.)

CHAIRMAN WILLIAMSON: Not once did Dominique have to travel to Washington, D.C. to meet with Congressman Jolly. She kept it on the front burner just from home, so it can be done. This nicely ties into goal five of the centennial plan about raising awareness, don't you think?

(Cheering.)

CHAIRMAN WILLIAMSON: The Legion Family in the Department of Minnesota, Minnesota where are you?

(Cheering.)

(Applause.)

CHAIRMAN WILLIAMSON: Put the Washington, D.C. conference front and center by dedicating several pages of their monthly newspaper, distributed to over 85,000 Legion Family members.

(Cheering.)

(Applause.)

CHAIRMAN WILLIAMSON: Electronic versions were emailed to their elected officials as well. In home districts members hosted legislative receptions, planned meet the candidate nights, and requested their attendance at community ceremonies. We didn't forget about our state and local elected officials either.

(Cheering.)

(Applause.)

CHAIRMAN WILLIAMSON: Ronald Reagan knew the sacrifices of our military. Supporting our veterans, servicemembers, and their families continues to be the mission of the American Legion Auxiliary. They made a promise to our country. Let's keep our promise to them.

(Applause.)

CHAIRMAN WILLIAMSON: Madam President, this concludes the platform remarks of the legislative program.

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Thank you. Great job.

CHAIRMAN WILLIAMSON: Thank you.

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Are there any resolutions?

CHAIRMAN WILLIAMSON: Thankfully, no.

(Laughter.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Thank you. Love you.

All right. We need to practice. I'm not seeing them. You need to bring them with you everyday. Now let's, you don't even have to stand up, I just want to see them. We've heard lots of great things this morning and I've

not seen by ten towels out of 800 people. Come on. All right? You got it? All right. Okay.

As many of you know, I chose the Auxiliary Emergency Fund as my passion project. The idea of members helping members has always warmed my heart. But the true need for this program really hit home for me when a tornado tore through my home state of Illinois and I personally witnessed the loss and devastation that can happen after a natural disaster or personal tragedy.

Earlier this year I had the privilege of talking on the phone with one of our members who recently suffered a personal tragedy and as a result of her situation she found it impossible to keep a roof over her family's head and food on the table. That's when the American Legion Auxiliary's Auxiliary Emergency Fund stepped up and changed her life for the better. Let's watch.

(Video plays.)

MS. ABERLE: My name is Kerry and I'm an American Legion Auxiliary member, and this is my story.

ANNOUNCER: A relatively new Auxiliary member, Kerry quickly found a home at Unit 62 in Peoria, Arizona.

MS. ABERLE: My husband Steven was an Iraq War veteran and he joined the American Legion a few years ago. Subsequently I joined the Auxiliary and I work in food service so I was happy to volunteer in the kitchen when needed.

ANNOUNCER: Kerry received a phone call from Steven, who was working in the oil fields of North Dakota.

MS. ABERLE: Steven called me at four in the morning and he was upset that he was sick, and he went into the hospital and they ran some tests. And they did a scan. The scan showed that he had a large tumor on his kidney. I flew up there that same day, got there that evening, and the doctors told us that he had stage four kidney cancer that had already spread.

ANNOUNCER: Unfortunately, Steven's cancer was extremely aggressive.

MS. ABERLE: Steven was offered very good medical care through the VA and he was outsourced a few times. He was offered every medication and treatment option available for his type of cancer. Unfortunately with the aggressive nature of his cancer, nothing worked. And we realized that he needed to be making some final plans, decisions, real quick.

ANNOUNCER: Two months before Steven passed away, Kerry received more devastating news.

MS. ABERLE: I was admitted to the hospital with some abdominal cramping and was told that I had stage three colon cancer.

ANNOUNCER: Kerry and Steven's two children, Alex and Kimberly, were 16 and 23 at the time.

MR. ABERLE: So it was really shocking to find out when my father was diagnosed. I didn't really expect anything like that. But when my mom was also diagnosed with cancer, too, I just, I couldn't believe it at all. Like, none of this really processed in my mind. It was just really devastating.

MISS ABERLE: You never think your family is going to be one that's affected by cancer, but when you find out it's your dad you can't help be shocked and sad and everything hits you all at once. And you can't imagine things getting any worse. And then you find out it's not just your dad, it's your mom as well.

MS. ABERLE: I remember the first day of chemo that I had, because that same morning I put my husband in hospice. And that was the day that I went numb.

ANNOUNCER: On September 29, 2015, Steven lost his battle with cancer. Kerry's struggles were only just beginning.

MS. ABERLE: I began my chemotherapy. It was every other Tuesday for six months. My American Legion Family really stepped in to help me, everything from bringing me and my family food to eat, helping to clean my house, driving me to and from a couple of chemo appointments, even getting my hair done. My American Legion Family really stepped in. This is when it all started.

(Music.)

VOICE: Our unit for 28 years has made donations to the AEF fund. This year we were devastated when one of our own truly needed it.

VOICE: When the unit realized the situation that Kerry was in, we immediately thought that the national AEF program would be able to assist her. We were amazed at how fast the money was able to come through because she needed it desperately.

ANNOUNCER: On top of the strain of losing the love of her life and father of her children, Kerry's health struggles were just beginning. Kerry's monthly income decrease significantly. And because the chemotherapy lowered her immune system, she was ordered to limit her exposure with the public. That kept her from working to support her family.

MS. ABERLE: In addition to all the great help that I got from my local unit, the AEF financial help really couldn't have come at a better time. I had two months left before I could return to work and that money from the AEF came in and helped me bridge my house payment and electricity payment until I was able to return to work. I don't know what I would have done without that help.

ANNOUNCER: After remarkable sorrow and hardship, Kerry has developed a new look at life and living.

MS. ABERLE: I am back to work. I am back to working out at the gym, and I am back to actively volunteering at my unit. And I hope to chair a program, hopefully even the AEF.

Whether you are going through an illness or you are healthy, positivity is contagious.

MISS ABERLE: There is only three words I can think of to describe how my mother made it through chemo.

MS. ABERLE: I live my life everyday with love, light, and laughter. And I hope that everyone around me can see it.

MR. ABERLE: I'm really proud of my mom because of what she's done and what she's gone through. I can tell that this has like changed her

attitude, to look at things in like a better way. And it makes me want to look at things in better ways too.

ANNOUNCER: And Alex is honoring his father's memory by joining the military.

MR. ABERLE: I enlisted into the United States Coast Guard and I leave off later in the summer for boot camp. And part of the reason why I wanted to go into the Coast Guard is because my dad was in the military, too. So I kind of just want to keep it going through my generation.

ANNOUNCER: Thanks to the Auxiliary Emergency Fund, Kerry and many other members have received the help they needed to get them through difficult times. Please be generous with your fundraising efforts and personal donations to this worthy program.

(Music.)

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Isn't she amazing? I was honored to do a phone interview with Kerry and --

ANNOUNCER: Please welcome from Unit 62 in Peoria, Arizona, Kerry Aberle.

(Laughter.)

(Music.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: In case you can't tell, I didn't know she was here!

(Laughter.)

MS. ABERLE: Surprise!

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Surprise!

(Laughter.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: What an awesome surprise this is!
Kerry --

MS. ABERLE: I don't have much to say. I just want to thank you for everything that you do. All of you, thank you so much!

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: He's in the Coast Guard, her son is in the Coast Guard boot camp this minute.

MS. ABERLE: Right this minute.

PRESIDENT CONATSER: And I gave her coins for both of her children because of their courage and strength for their family.

MS. ABERLE: Thank you.

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Thank you.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Wow. They said it's hard to surprise you, but when they do they do it big, don't they?

(Laughter.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Okay. For nearly 50 years due to primarily to generous legacy gifts from our members the American Legion Auxiliary has been able to offer temporary grant assistance to members in need. Keeping the Promise not only to our veterans, but to our members. Please welcome National Auxiliary Emergency Fund Chairman Beth McGinn.

(Music.)

(Applause.)

CHAIRMAN MCGINN: All I can say is I'm glad I had my towel with me.

(Laughter.)

CHAIRMAN MCGINN: Once upon a time, there was a kind and special lady named Helen Colby Small who belonged to a growing women's service organization called the American Legion Auxiliary. Helen thought that starting an emergency fund to help other members during difficult times would be the right thing to do. From her estate came the first donation which established the American Legion Auxiliary Fund, or AEF, but this isn't the end of the story.

Fast forward almost 50 years, when another kind and special lady, now National President of the American Legion Auxiliary, decided to keep Helen's promise of helping members and announced that her president's project for 2015-2016 would be the Auxiliary Emergency Fund.

(Applause.)

CHAIRMAN MCGINN: National President Sharon Conatser set a noble goal of \$232,500 this time last year and from that time on departments, units, and members have gone all out to make her proud and to keep the fund sustainable for not only our current members but our future members. And thanks to all of you who have generously donated to the AEF fund, we were pushed over the goal and we are over \$35,000 and you all did it. Wave those flags!

(Cheering.)

(Applause.)

(Music.)

CHAIRMAN MCGINN: Yeah, okay, woo-hoo!

I am happy to report that all 52 departments have donated to the AEF this year.

(Cheering.)

(Applause.)

CHAIRMAN MCGINN: And they have significantly raised the awareness of AEF by educating members about the application process and how members keep their promise to help other members in need. Many departments and units reported using the how-to sheets in the plan of action. Diva events were held --

(Cheering.)

CHAIRMAN MCGINN: -- like the one by Department of Iowa to raise funds. The event was held at their midwinter conference and featured vendors and students from a local cosmetology school. Members of the Legion Family enjoyed the services, especially the hand massages and the event earned \$500.

Also in Iowa, Swisher Unit 671 --

(Cheering.)

CHAIRMAN MCGINN: -- increased their AEF donations by 300 percent just by asking the members to give up a favorite thing for one week

and donating the savings. Amazing how something this simple can increase the donations.

Oak Orchard Riverdale Unit 28 Department of Delaware --
(Cheering.)

CHAIRMAN McGINN: -- held a dinner with a very talented local entertainer, Bryan Clark. The attendees included members of other Eastern Division departments and our Eastern Division National Vice President Helen Skelton, who all enjoyed the evening. The unit was able to increase their previous donation and contributed \$3,000 from the fundraiser.

(Applause.)

(Cheering.)

CHAIRMAN McGINN: Yes, yoo-hoo.

Units organized water bottle coin collections or various of the theme, like piggy banks, paper bags, and teapots, to collect their donations coin by coin. The Department of New York --

(Cheering.)

CHAIRMAN McGINN: -- they went with bigger bottles to collect the coins. They said no dimes for them, they wanted quarters. Water bottle coin collections were also successful in the Department of South Carolina --

(Cheering.)

CHAIRMAN McGINN: -- especially by Unit 15 Sumter and Unit 178 Murrells Inlet. The Department of Indiana --

(Cheering.)

CHAIRMAN McGINN: -- held a pirate challenge and surpassed their goal of \$12,500 with the help of members from Kokomo Unit 6 who sold pies to benefit AEF and their Junior members, like Kelsey Johnson, Milltown Unit 332, and Juniors of Pierceton Unit 258, who together raised \$256 by collecting pennies for the challenge.

(Applause.)

(Cheering.)

CHAIRMAN McGINN: Way to go, girls! There were many postings on the AEF Facebook group depicting how members used unique ways to collect funds while having fun as they continued their promise and commitment for other members. Ruth Patterson, Department of Arizona Unit 19 Yuma, she singlehandedly raised \$972 by selling baked goods once a month at her post. That's a lot of cakes and cookies and pies.

(Applause.)

(Cheering.)

CHAIRMAN McGINN: Way to go, Ruth! The amount she collected was \$300 more than the unit raised the previous year. She is truly an ALA rock star.

(Cheering.)

(Applause.)

CHAIRMAN McGINN: Unit members held informational seminars about how the AEF can help members in need and educated them in the application process and handed out brochures at meetings and during events. AEF lapel pins were given to members who donated \$50 or more and

certificates of appreciation were handed out at department conferences and conventions. The purpose of the AEF is to offer financial assistance through grants for emergency situations. And unfortunately there were many devastating weather related disasters this year all across the country, from floods in Missouri and Texas, and most recently Louisiana, to tornados in central U.S. and fires in California. With your generous donation the AEF was able to award 14 disaster grants.

But weather is not the only thing that affects our members. Life changes can dramatically impact financial circumstances, perhaps due to the death of a spouse, medical issues, or loss of a job. Twenty-three financial grants were presented to ALA members who found themselves needing help. Many notes of gratitude were received by the National AEF Committee for the financial assistance provided to them.

The moral of the story, when you help other people you help yourself. It's impossible not to feel great when you do good for other people. I encourage you to continue Helen's and Sharon's legacy by donating to AEF whenever possible. Consider including a charitable gift in your estate plans which will continue your support for this organization that we all love.

Madam National President Sharon, it has been my honor to serve as the National AEF Chairman this year. It was a rewarding experience for me to see firsthand the generosity and concern of our members for other members in times of need. The American Legion Auxiliary truly embrace your theme of Keeping the Promise, not only to our veterans, military, and their families, but to each other.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: And Beth and I can count, that slide was made before the new total. We are at over \$266,000.

(Cheering.)

(Applause.)

CHAIRMAN MCGINN: Amazing. Aren't they amazing people?

PRESIDENT CONATSER: They are amazing. Thank you for everything. Thank you. The committee did an awesome job this year getting the word out and thank you so much for all of your support of this project. Oh, I forgot, are there any resolutions? I forgot to ask you. Beth? Do you have any resolutions?

CHAIRMAN MCGINN: No, Madam President.

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Thank you. This is exciting, isn't it?

(Cheering.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Okay. We have had a packed morning. Great guests, great reports, and great surprises. Yes. The chair asks the National Secretary to call attention to the rest of the day's events.

SECRETARY BUCKLER: It's nice when you can pull a surprise off on someone.

(Laughter.)

SECRETARY BUCKLER: Okay. I'm cognizant of the time so I'm going to kind of breeze through some of these. So as my late mother would say, listen up.

Installation rehearsal will take place in this room immediately following this morning's session. That includes current national officers and the candidates for 2016-2017 national offices. So hang in this room.

A reminder that we have several strategic, centennial strategic plan break out sessions going on this afternoon. They are 100 percent registered full.

(Applause.)

(Cheering.)

SECRETARY BUCKLER: Another reminder, please when we have speakers at the microphone addressing the delegation, the convention body, please refrain from talking. I've had a few notes come up here that it's really hard to hear when your neighbors are talking amongst themselves. So just be conscious of that, please.

I'm going to take a matter of personal privilege and thank Donna Ray from the Department of Ohio. Donna is --

(Applause.)

SECRETARY BUCKLER: -- Donna is terrific at the care and feeding of National Headquarters staff. And the cookies, cakes, and buckeyes that she brought in are for some of us breakfast and lunch and dinner. We will be on a total sugar high by Thursday.

(Laughter.)

SECRETARY BUCKLER: So thank you, Donna.

Remember we're having an ALA --

(Cheering.)

SECRETARY BUCKLER: Remember we're having an ALA photo contest. Don't forget to use your #auxcon when you post your pictures on Twitter and Instagram, and check your emails daily for updates and instructions.

Meetings. So far the meetings that I know about that will be happening tomorrow, the 2016-2017 Leadership Committee is asked to meet at table 60 following the Woman of the Year Luncheon with Jeri Greenwell. And the 2016-2017 Junior Activities Committee is asked to meet by the Illinois sign, Illinois make some noise.

(Cheering.)

SECRETARY BUCKLER: By the Illinois sign immediately upon the adjournment of this session.

Doors open tomorrow at 7:40. We are still starting at 8:00 tomorrow morning for our session tomorrow morning.

Today the 2016-2017 NEC 101 is in room 252 and it's going to start right at 12:30, or when we all get there. But so to expedite that, you go up the escalator, make a u-turn to your right, and it's the third room on the right. So again, that's in room 252. And National President Sharon reminds me that it's her expectation that every NEC member for next year is expected to attend. And I want to make note, there will be time for NEC 101 attendees to get to the Strategic Plan break out sessions. They are in close proximity so that's not an excuse not to attend NEC 101.

Now States Dinner tickets, there are still a few States Dinner tickets available at the office. Some departments have sent me notes about tickets they have to sell. For the moment, if departments have tickets to sell just leave a message, drop a piece of paper off at the office, Convention Office. Because right now Headquarters still has some tickets available to sell.

This is an important announcement. Tomorrow the Woman of the Year Luncheon is being moved to the Hyatt Regency, to the Hyatt in the Regency, the Hyatt Hotel in the Regency Room. That's where we were for the Constitution and By-Laws pre-convention meeting. We love Ohio and we love Cincinnati, and we love all the hospitality we've gotten. We just didn't get quite on the same page with Mother Nature. And as a result of that the Millennium Hotel has had its own share of problems.

(Laughter.)

SECRETARY BUCKLER: In the spirit of goodwill the hotel has had its share of problems which have affected us, one of which is that the air conditioning in the room which we were to have the luncheon is out. So that, so I want to just give a quick thank you to National Headquarters staff who's been really scrambling to try to figure out a way to make this luncheon come off. And so thank you to the Hyatt. We'll have more details about that tomorrow. But just park that in your brains right now, that we are going to be moving across the street to the Hyatt, and the reception likewise will be over there.

We are live-streaming and we have cameras up above. So this would be a really good time for everybody to look up and let's together say, "American Legion Auxiliary rocks!" One, two, three --

ALL: American Legion Auxiliary rocks! Whooo!

SECRETARY BUCKLER: And to round out my updates for right now, here's now we're going to rock. How many of you found one of these little things on your chair?

(Cheering.)

SECRETARY BUCKLER: All right. We are among the top two leaders vying for this \$6,000 grant, which will be awarded at the end of September. It's a voting thing. It's a voting everyday thing. It's a voting everyday thing with every email address you have thing. And it's putting it as a calendar reminder if you have Outlook, or whatever your desktop program is you use, make a daily reminder so that it pops up and the instructions are right there. You just open the reminder and everything is right there and you don't have to go fiddling to look back for emails.

Now I want to thank the National Adjutant Dan Wheeler. I went over and I talked with him about this and I said is there any way we can get this information to your Legion convention delegates? And I also want to thank National Headquarters staff because very late at night we made 3,500 copies and the Legion delegations now have them. Now --

(Applause.)

SECRETARY BUCKLER: Tomorrow, correct, tomorrow, will have them tomorrow. So here's the deal. How many of you know somebody here in the American Legion?

(Laughter.)

SECRETARY BUCKLER: We can win this thing here at convention if all of us vote everyday and some of us legitimately vote three and four times a day, because that's how many email addresses we have, and we get all our Legion counterparts here, our Legion friends, family, everyday now through September to vote. I'm going to remind you all, we helped them win the quarter million dollar Pepsi grant challenge. They won it because American Legion Auxiliary members were diligent about voting. We're asking for the favor to be returned, asking for all of you to encourage them, be assertive about it, to please help us out and vote. Six thousand dollars may not sound like a lot of money to some people, but I'll tell you it's one or two really important American Legion Auxiliary Foundation grants. So let's, you heard the story about AEF. You know how what seems like a relatively small amount of money can have a huge impact for somebody who needs it. So let's go make, let's go win this thing.

Okay, Madam President?

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Thank you.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Thank you, Dubbie. Before we recess for the day, we all know that our National Convention would not happen without our entire National Headquarters staff. So how about a round of applause? Because as you know, our staff comes and goes to keep both our Headquarters in Indianapolis open and keep our Convention running. Let's let them know how much we appreciate everything we do, not just today but every day.

(Applause.)

(Cheering.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: And one more special recognition to the man behind the curtain. Our production master, the one that makes this whole thing look good, and the one that surprises me. JP, Mr. John Paulsel. Yay, JP!

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Thank you to all the national chairmen who presented and to all of our special guests, including those from the American Legion and the Sons of the American Legion who stopped by to visit today. This concludes the opening session of the 2016 National Convention and we are now recessed, as you heard, until 8:00 a.m. in the morning.

(Whereupon, at 12:02 p.m. on Monday, August 29, 2016, the above-entitled meeting was concluded.)

**NATIONAL CONVENTION PROCEEDINGS
TUESDAY, AUGUST 30, 2016**

ANNOUNCER: The 96th American Legion Auxiliary National Convention. Here to begin our session is your National President, Sharon Conatser.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Good morning.

(Cheering.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Don't forget that we need to practice again rally towels.

(Cheering.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: All right. The 96th National Convention of the American Legion Auxiliary will come to order. Before we begin, I would like everyone to please take a moment and silent your electronic devices. Be sure they're put in the silent mode.

Will our National Chaplain, Bird Derrick, please come forward to lead us in our invocation.

CHAPLAIN DERRICK: Psalm 33 in the NIV says how good and pleasant it is when brothers live together in unity. In the message bible, it says how wonderful, how beautiful, when brothers and sisters get along. Let's pray.

Father, we need the blessing of your presence here today. How it must break your heart to see your children bite and devour one another. How it must bring you joy to see us loving and enjoying one another. Help us to make your heart happy.

If there was ever a time to hold to one another it's now. There's tough stuff out in our world that touches us all. May we genuinely rejoice with one another as we celebrate our accomplishments. Regardless of our political ideologies and religious preferences, help us, Lord, to treat each other with dignity and respect. Grow us up, Father. Strengthen us to honor our commitments and keep our promises.

And, Lord, while we're before you right now, there are some in our family who have been stricken with some medical issues. So, Father, I bring them before your throne of grace today and ask your healing touch upon them. Give them your comfort, your peace, wisdom, and guidance, Lord.

Today, I call you my rock and my redeemer, and I stand on you alone for all of these things. Amen.

VOICES: Amen.

ANNOUNCER: 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 service, not self, by recognizing efforts in planning and implementation of our programs. Here to present is your National President, Sharon Conatser.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: 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 chose to look for stories of projects done as a family where all members had the opportunity to participate, including The American Legion and the Sons of The American Legion.

I also looked for examples of projects and activities that furthered our Centennial Strategic Plan bringing us closer to accomplishing our five goals.

Finally, I looked for stories about mission outreach, those projects that offered services directly to our military, veterans, and their families.

Before we get to today's winners, I would like to recognize all the units and departments working for the Auxiliary's mission and programs every day.

(Applause.)

Your hard work day in and day out is what will help us to achieve the five goals of our strategic plan, which, ultimately, will keep our organization alive and able to carry out its mission, and I applaud all of you.

(Applause.)

Ladies, as I call your names, would you please stand, Western Division National Vice President Linda Workman.

(Applause.)

Central Division National Vice President Lynda Lancaster.

(Applause.)

Northwestern Division National Vice President Judy Twete.

(Applause.)

Southern Division National Vice President Flora Jean Craig.

(Applause.)

And filling in for our Eastern Division National Vice President, Helen Skelton, who's home recovering from heart procedure, is National Vice President Mary Davis.

(Applause.)

Mary, would you please come to the podium to present our first winner.

MS. DAVIS: It gives me great pleasure to announce the first winner of the National President's Award for Excellence. Please help me put your hands together for James P. and Michael Sullivan, Lone Rock Unit 383 in Highland, Wisconsin, Unit President, Lisa Bowen.

(Applause.)

MS. DAVIS: This unit was inactive for many years until 2009 revitalization effort brought them to life, and they haven't looked back since. In fact, this year they exceeded their membership goal by 24 members. Listen to what else this unit has accomplished this year.

Members of Unit 383 have embraced the Centennial's Strategic Plan with a focus on Goal 2, which, of course, is to create internal culture of goodwill. In fact, new members have commented that the unit meetings are fun and positive with a real sense of community. Members have executed fund-raising events for the Auxiliary Emergency Fund and scholarships. In

fact, one of the unit's signature bake sale events raised nearly \$1,000 in just one day.

Every year, these members raise money to help send their hometown veterans to Washington, D.C. so they can visit their war memorials. This year, they organized a benefit dance with food, silent auctions, and a bake sale. This single fund-raising event brought over \$21,000.

Unit 383 members are working the mission and keeping our promise all while creating a culture of goodwill. Congratulations James P. And Michael Sullivan, Lone Rock, Unit 383. We are very proud of you.

(Applause.)

And now, Western Division National Vice President Linda Workman will present the next unit winner. Linda.

MS. WORKMAN: Today I have the privilege of announcing the second unit to receive the National President's Award for Excellence. With a great, big round of applause, let us welcome to the stage Fort Atkinson Unit 348 in Fort Calhoun, Nebraska, Unit President Rennea Jensen-Brown.

(Applause.)

In this unit's award submission, Unit President Rennea wrote a small note saying, and I quote, this past year has been an incredible journey. We are so small and so far out in rural America that sometimes we don't even know what we are doing or if we're doing things right.

Rennea, you're definitely doing things right.

Let us just fill the audience in on the things that you are doing right. Unit Member 348 hosted Storm the Fort, a walk-run event that supports trauma therapy for veterans as well as providing shelter and services to local homeless veterans. Not only does this event promote brand recognition, it also gets the Auxiliary members outside and working in the community. You can also find the unit members work to engage the community by organizing interesting and educational outings and inviting everyone in the community to join them.

Most recently, they took a trip to Take Flight Farms where they watched a demonstration on horse therapy for disabled veterans. Not only was it a great way to educate the community on the challenges facing today's veterans, it is also encouraging to see an alternative therapy to all that helps our veterans, not to mention the horses were beautiful.

Members of Unit 348 are committed to Goal 5 of our Centennial Strategic Plan, which, of course, to build brand loyalty. And they show this commitment by always wearing their American Legion Auxiliary branded shirts and inviting the community to be part of their events.

Fort Atkinson Unit 348, it sounds to me like you are doing everything right. We are so proud of the impact that you are making on your community. We thank you for showing your town who you are, what you do, and why we matter.

Congratulations on a successful year.

(Applause.)

And now Southern Division National Vice President Flora Jean Craig will present the third recipient of the National President's Award for Excellence.

MS. CRAIG: Thank you, Department of Florida. They just wanted to be recognized one more time.

Members and distinguished guests, it is my pleasure to bring to the stage our next winner. Please help me recognize, yes, Rantoul Unit 287 in Rantoul, Illinois, Unit President Cheryl Hinton.

(Applause.)

Recently while volunteering with the local VA, members of the Rantoul Unit 287 learned that their hometown had the second largest population of at-risk veterans in the County. An at-risk veteran is any veteran living at or below the poverty line and at great risk for homelessness.

Immediately, the members of Unit 287 went into action. Here's what they did. First, they called an emergency Legion family meeting inviting the Legion and the Sons members to join with the Auxiliary members to tackle this problem. As a family, they decided to hold a stand-down for at-risk veterans where they provided free dinner, haircuts, toiletries, clothes, food, and toys for kids. And a thank-you letter an attendee wrote, and I quote, we usually stay away from these types of veterans programs because we don't receive a warm welcome. When we came to your event, each of you was kind and compassionate, something our family rarely gets. Thank you for treating us with compassion and kindness, end of quote.

Pretty awesome, don't you think?

(Applause.)

Talk about keeping our promise and Service Not Self, an excellent example of both.

These unit members are serving veterans in their community with open arms and open hearts. We are proud of you and your fellow unit members at home.

Thank you, ladies, for embracing Goal 2 of the Centennial Strategic Plan and treating everyone like family. Our congratulations.

(Applause.)

Now, please welcome Central Division National Vice President Lynda Lancaster to present the fourth unit award.

(Applause.)

MS. LANCASTER: Wow, we have some pretty awesome members, and I can't wait for you to hear about our next winner. Please welcome to the stage the fourth unit to receive the National President's Award for Excellence, Tony F. Soza, Ray Martinez's unit, 41, in Glendale, Arizona, Department President Patricia Thomas.

(Applause.)

Unit 41 members have always been a strong force in their community, so when a local homeless shelter closed its doors leaving residents, many of whom were veterans out on the streets, these members stepped into action.

Initially, the movement started small providing a simple bottled water and PB&J sandwich, but then it grew. Once word spread about the awesome work this unit was doing for our veterans, the Legionnaires and Legion Riders joined Unit 41's community outreach efforts. To date, this Legion family effort has provided nearly 3,000 sack lunches, and these lunches have grown from the simple PB&J that started it out. Now these sack lunches include two types of sandwiches, chips, water, Gatorade and dessert. How awesome is that?

(Applause.)

And to top it all off, at every sack lunch distribution point they set up a membership table so that community members can learn about what we do, who we are, and why we matter.

According to the unit's award submission, this simple information table at all their community outreach events has really helped increase their number of new members. What a great idea.

This unit understands that working as a team, being inclusive rather than exclusive, and building brand recognition in the community is the key to enhancing our membership.

Congratulations, ladies, of unit 41.

(Applause.)

Here to present the fifth and final unit award is our Northwestern Division National Vice President Judy Twete.

(Applause.)

MS. TWETE: Good morning.

Do you see a theme going on here with the scooters and the canes?

It isn't a mandatory thing to be a division vice president and be handicapped.

It is my pleasure to present the final unit winner for the National President's Award for Excellence. The final award goes to Oak-Orchard-Riverdale Unit 28, in Millsboro, Delaware, Unit President Tina Washington.

(Applause.)

Like all other units, we are honored today. Unit 28 has accomplished so many amazing things this past year. One of the biggest things has been this year that they have embraced the Centennial Strategic Plan.

Members of Unit 28 have chosen to focus on Goal Number 2 creating a culture of goodwill, and Goal Number 1, increasing our membership's strength.

Department President Tina Washington has been overheard saying, "Goal Number 1 and Goal Number 2 just go together. If we welcome everyone and embrace diversity and show goodwill, members will naturally want to join our great organization. That's exactly how we got 88 new members this year.

(Applause.)

Unit 28's members also know how important it is to build brand recognition. These ladies wear their Auxiliary branded shirts for every event, especially when they are out in the community. In fact, the members of the community see how much fun they are having and then they ask about

joining. Now, that's how we work membership, have a positive attitude out in the community and potential members come to you.

Finally, because of Unit 28's fundraising efforts, this unit was able to donate \$3,000 to the Auxiliary Emergency Fund.

(Applause.)

This is one of the largest AEF donations made by a unit. Way to go, ladies.

Members of Oak-Orchard-Riverdale Unit 28, it has been my pleasure to honor you and your achievements with the National President's Award for Excellence. Thank you and keep on doing what you're doing.

Congratulations.

(Applause.)

And now to present our final award, we welcome back our National President Keeping the Promise Sharon Conatser.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Yeah, rally towels. How come the center section -- do you think the rest -- I can't see the rest of you?

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Okay. All right. Okay, that's better.

And now for the moment you've all been waiting for. It's time to celebrate the department recipient. This department has achieved so much this year. They have kept our promise in ways I never imagined possible. It is my absolute pleasure to announce the 2016 department recipient of the National President's Award for Excellence. Please welcome to the stage the Department of Virginia, Department President Janet Renner.

(Applause.)

Let me share a few things that the Department of Virginia achieved. They achieved many, but here's a few.

They increased their Auxiliary Emergency Fund donations by nearly 75 percent.

(Applause.)

They created a membership renewal team that contacted every single member that had not yet renewed their membership. This personal touch helped Virginia move up three places in the national membership standings. Presented over 101 official certificates to any member with 50 or more continuous years. Started a program to offer female veterans free membership and started two new units and signed up almost 600 new members.

(Applause.)

Partnered with Habitat for Heroes to build the House of Hope for disabled veteran Gary Hope and his daughter.

As a sponsoring partner, there is now a sign at the project site that reads, "This home is being built in partnership with the American Legion Auxiliary." Talk about brand recognition.

(Applause.)

In total, the Department of Virginia contributed over a quarter million dollars in monetary and in-kind donations with a total of 644 volunteer weeks, not hours, 644 weeks, all in support of our nation's veterans.

Department of Virginia, I am thankful for all your efforts and for being passionate, active, and engaged members of the American Legion Auxiliary. Thank you for working so hard at keeping our promise.

(Applause.)

It is difficult to be limited by time and only able to share briefly about these amazing achievements, but there is good news. You'll be able to read a 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 Virginia 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. There's really no excuse not to enter. And my own thing is, if you don't enter, you can't win.

I'm already looking forward to the celebration. Let's give all of our National President's Award for Excellence recipients one more great round of applause.

(Applause.)

And now bringing special greetings on behalf of the Republic of China's Veterans Affairs Commission, please welcome Counsel Retired Major General Chang.

(Applause.)

MR. CHANG: It's amazing to see you in Cincinnati. Good morning. (Indiscernible) President Conatser, (indiscernible) and the beautiful ladies and gentlemen.

Allow me briefly to introduce myself. I was the Director of Overseas (indiscernible) Department, Veterans Affairs Counsel, VAC, Republic of China and Taiwan just because the structuring government, so I shifted my position to chairman of the joint venture to (indiscernible) for all the VACs placement and foundation.

My company did it with such (indiscernible) and put in the foundation for the veterans and their dependents. I am now back --

(Applause.)

Thank you. I'm now back in charge of an overseas (indiscernible) Affairs. It's a sole pleasure even great honor for myself to be invited and to speak to your American Legion Auxiliary National Convention.

(Applause.)

On behalf of (indiscernible) of a VAC and all the veterans of (indiscernible), I would like to present (indiscernible) the highest respect and admiration to all the fellow members of the American Legion Auxiliary.

(Applause.)

I say this just from the bottom of my heart. Ladies Auxiliary (indiscernible) very important and (indiscernible) to the veterans as your father or your mother, your husband, your son, your daughter, and even yourself. Yourself (indiscernible) devotion to those who serve in the military, so you are not only comfort their heart, their mind, and recognize their

contribution to the peace, freedom and democracy. And you just safeguard and enhance the global security and stability.

(Applause.)

As I have mentioned, the importance of the auxiliaries, in my country I just talk about my country (indiscernible) already elected a new president, female.

(Applause.)

(Indiscernible) is a (indiscernible) Tsai Ing-wen. We're educated and persevering and intelligent. She affirmed that all the soldiers' and the veterans' contributions to our country in many events and she promised that all the soldiers (indiscernible) military (indiscernible) and the civilian knowledge and the techniques would have cultivated into the same (indiscernible). This kind of a concept just (indiscernible) all the soldiers (indiscernible) when they discharge from the military.

There are three women who has importance in my life. (Indiscernible) teenager. The first lady told me, "We are not good. Our families are not good. Why don't you just do something good for your family?" She talked to me and she made me to join the military academy.

(Applause.)

And then when I consider leaving the Army, the second lady mentioned me, "We are not good. Why don't you just pursue your dream? Don't worry too much about your family." I was then promoted Major General.

(Applause.)

And hard at work and feeling tired. The third lady would say, "We are good in love. Why don't you just retire? Enjoy your retired life and your family life." I then responded, "I appreciate, but it's not that time yet."

(Applause.)

Really appreciate again for all assistance and your support to veterans of our United States to (indiscernible) of our organizations. You are more than welcome to visit us in Taiwan, to be our guests. I (indiscernible) all the National Presidents guarantee you will love it.

The beauty of Taiwan is not only the beautiful landscape, but the friendly people and the veterans.

(Applause.)

The small island (indiscernible).

I would like to take this moment to present traditional Chinese (indiscernible) to the National President (indiscernible).

(Applause.)

Okay, that's a painting of a fish. We especially prepared that from our national palace and museum.

(Applause.)

Two fish for lucky and (indiscernible) success and prosperity.

I wish you and your loved ones good health and prosperous and keep remaining young and beautiful. Thank you.

(Applause)

Thank you very much.

PRESIDENT CONATSER: I wanted to share with you how beneficial we felt the trips were to Taiwan and to our entire trip to the Far East. It's amazing the hospitality, the veterans you meet, the ideas you share, and he's right about the friendly people. We shared ideas and successes throughout our entire trip.

And I don't know how many of you saw on Facebook, but we signed a charter in May for the first ever unit in South Korea.

(Applause.)

When we were in South Korea, they have the first post meeting, and Commander Dale was able to install their officers, and it was amazing and the ladies were there, and all of a sudden we're meeting in another little room and I'm sharing our organization with them. And it takes a time for stuff to go back and forth, but we signed the official charter in May, and I'm very proud of that and I know they're going to do a great job supporting our troops there in South Korea.

(Applause.)

During this past year, National Constitution & Bylaws Chairman Martha Lee Thatcher had the privilege of working alongside departments and units determined to update their governing documents. Departments and units shared that revising these documents has helped to create a sense of goodwill among members. It's stories like these that make me confident that our American Legion Auxiliary will continue to grow as we approach our centennial.

Please welcome to the stage Martha Lee Thatcher, National Constitution & Bylaws Chairman.

(Applause.)

CHAIRMAN THATCHER: Remaining relevant and responsible to those we serve means many things to many programs, so how does the Constitution & Bylaws program serve veterans?

As the cornerstone document for our organization providing clear governance and direction is critical to ensuring that our members know clearly their rights, roles, and responsibilities at all levels. Without this, we cannot fulfill our mission of service.

Whether you choose to call it a roadmap, a recipe for success, or simply your unit's BFF, ensuring your document is correct, current, and concise is key to maintaining the team and assuring we are functioning in a positive and constructive way.

It takes work to build a cornerstone, work that is a joint effort of the national committee and our members. Both units and departments have been working diligently achieving and providing their respective government documents for review.

How do we know this? Because the reports we have received said so. And, by the way, the Constitution & Bylaws Committee received 100 percent reporting from all five divisions at both midyear and year-end reporting.

(Applause.)

While many departments reported their annual review of their governing documents, most reported revising their C&B and standing rules to elect their NEC for a two-year term. The Department of Alaska's NEC has a two-year term with the option to renew for two additional terms, and many departments are following and embracing this new approach.

This year's Constitution & Bylaws team determined that it was important to eliminate the mystery and the fear that sometimes accompanies the Constitution & Bylaws process. So as our first goal, we encouraged members to create a variety of games to be played at unit meetings. We saw crisscross puzzles, word search games, and interactive learning taking place across the national landscape. Clearly, this approach had a positive outcome.

This type of interactive learning supports the team approach and serves to strengthen both department and units, Goal 4 of the Centennial Strategic Plan. Do you recognize anyone in this picture?

Even National President Sharon got in on the fun. While visiting the Department of Nebraska, the team incorporated constitution and bylaws into their family feud session, and based on that smile, it looks like she's having a great time.

During the Department of Ohio's School of Instruction, a comedy skit was presented with a presiding judge, a C&B attorney, and a clueless unit C&B chairman.

The national committee's second goal was to design a program with a variety of topics, create a slide presentation, and present that and make it available to the department's C&B chairman. The team selected five key topics, wrote a script to highlight and explain each, and the presentation included how to update your unit's governing documents, changing the term and selection of your NEC, getting a new unit started on the right foot, and becoming a rock star, a reporting rock star. We are pleased to announce it is complete and it is available via download from the national website.

(Applause.)

Please sign on and spread the word. What better way to develop leadership at all levels than to encourage active participation in updating your unit's governing documents.

In support of Goal 3, we saw new members stepping up and seasoned members working together assuring that everyone played an active role in their C&B review and revision process.

Think that Goal 2 of the Strategic Plan isn't a part of the C&B program? Well, think again. Allowing greater inclusion from membership, urging inclusion and enabling everyone to participate helped to create a culture of goodwill.

If we are to achieve Goal 1, then every program must play a role in achieving its defined objective. Like a tree with many limbs, it is the roots that must remain strong and firm or vibrant growth cannot continue.

Constitution & Bylaws is the root and the foundation that will help every Auxiliary program thrive, prosper, and grow in outreach to members and those we serve.

As in the real world, a good BFF, best friend forever, is something that we all value. Consider constitution and bylaws the team's BFF and you'll be good to go, growing in all aspects of our mission.

Madam National President, this concludes my platform remarks.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Are there any proposed amendments?

CHAIRMAN THATCHER: Yes. There is one amendment to the national standing rules.

PRESIDENT CONATSER: I would like to remind everyone that 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 front of the stage.

The debate will be limited to two minutes for each speaker. No person shall speak on the same question more than twice without consent of the convention. I also remind you that we do have a timer here to fairly enforce this rule.

The rules also state that during debate, delegates, alternates, guests, are to remain seated within their own delegation or assigned seating unless they are approaching the microphone or completing a motion form or exiting or entering the general session.

Are there any questions?

(No audible response.)

Martha Lee, please proceed with presenting the amendment.

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

The Constitution & Bylaws Committee received only one proposed amendment. It was submitted by the Centennial Strategic Plan Goal 1 Strategy Team, the current and incoming National Membership Committee and the Executive Committee to the NEC to amend Section 10, Unit Subsection Number 3. The proposal strikes the current language which reads,

"Any member in good standing wishing to transfer to another unit must present to the new unit her current membership card. Upon acceptance of the transfer by the new unit, no dues shall be transferred, and insert the new language. A member who is not subject to suspension or membership revocation under due process is eligible to transfer her membership to another unit if she paid her membership dues to her current unit for either the current year or the immediate past membership year.

A member transferring to a new unit must pay current year dues to either her current unit or to the unit into which she wishes to transfer.

Evidence of paid membership includes one, American Legion Auxiliary membership card; two, verification of membership by ALA Department of National Headquarters membership records; three, other documents verifying payment of current or immediate past-year membership

dues such as a cancelled check or a receipt; or four, when verification document is not available, a sworn statement that the members' dues payment was tendered.

The Constitution & Bylaws Prevention-Committee recommends that the amendment be adopted.

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

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Pages, if there are delegates in the hall, would you please let them in.

The question is on the adoption of the amendment just presented. The Constitution & Bylaws Pre-Convention Committee recommends the amendment be adopted. Is there discussion?

(No audible response.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Sorry, it's really hard to see the microphones from up here.

MS. CORRIHER: Madam President, microphone 3.

PRESIDENT CONATSER: The Chair recognizes microphone 3.

MS. CORRIHER: Martha Corriher, North Carolina. This question is just for further clarification.

A unit has always understood it had the right to determine acceptability into the unit. Would this amendment take away the right to determine acceptability? And also, we understand that a member in good standing has the right to transfer and that if she has not been disciplined or has not been -- if she has not been disciplined, she may or may not be in good standing. Can someone clarify this?

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Coming. Thank you.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: So I believe the question was on whether or not the person, the unit can determine acceptability.

When a person is already a member of an organization, that person, that member, has rights within the organization, and so it's important that those rights are protected. It's part of the democratic process, and you cannot take away any of those rights unless you do so according to your governing documents.

Now, when a person is a member, they're paying money to the organization, and in your organization they're paying to three different entities. They're paying to the unit. They're paying to the Department. And they're paying to the National organization.

If you want to take away any rights of that member and one of the rights would include transferring to a new unit, you have to do so under due process, and your governing documents outline that, and that would be under disciplinary. So you'd have to notify the person of the charges of what the person has violated, so if the person has violated any of your standards, your code of ethics, your governing documents, you would have to notify her. Some of this includes not only your governing documents, but also state statutes because you are incorporated in different states, and so you have to make sure you give proper notice to that person so they can defend themselves

so they know exactly what you're saying that they did wrong so they can come and present their side of the story.

To take away someone's rights, any rights within an organization, would have to take a vote in something. Now, it is possible to discipline a member without taking away rights, and this is done sometimes in just a conversation where you give a reprimand, where you sit down with a person and you say, you know, "The other night you did da, da, da, da, and that's not acceptable under our code of ethics, and we'd like to see this behavior change." And, you know, a lot of times you just need to start off with that conversation and give the person a chance to change. And that's really important that you do that to give the person a chance to change. But if someone continually violates any of your standards, code of ethics, constitution and bylaws or any rules that you've established, then you can't take action against them.

Other action you can take against a member without it being actually rights being taken away from them, you can center them and that is a parliamentary motion that can be made where you make a motion to censor someone. Basically, that goes into the record. It goes into the minutes that you don't approve of their behavior; however, a center does not take away any rights of a member.

So the way that this proposed amendment is written that would change your standing rules is that any member who is subject to suspension or membership revocation, and once you revoked a membership, the person is no longer a member, so they have absolutely no rights then, but if you suspend someone's membership, they also don't have rights except they still have the obligation to pay dues.

So anyone who's not under that suspension or their membership has been taken away from them, they have full rights, and the right, the way this would be, would be to transfer their membership. So if you find someone in your unit who is not acceptable in their behavior, then it is the obligation of the unit to deal with that and to address that behavior.

Your standing rules also give the authority to any department to take disciplinary action against a unit that does not discipline a member. So there is kind of an expectation that you will take care of it, that you will address that, and so a member who wants to transfer and perhaps, you know, a unit that has not dealt with that member and goes to a new unit and maybe they've heard some stories, they're hearing gossip and you can't take action and deny someone's rights on hearsay or gossip because that could open you up to perhaps slander, legal liability, and you have to be careful. So that's why it's important that when there is someone in your organization that you feel is not living up to the expectations that you have in written rules, that you deal with it and you document it.

What you're trying to do is change that person's behavior to right that behavior, to conform with your organization, and if it goes to the point where they continually do not do that, then you do have the option to take that membership away from that person.

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Is there other discussion? Is there someone at microphone 1? You were there, so -- okay, never mind.

Microphone 3.

MS. CASADEI: Mary Ann Casadei, the Department of New York. So what you're saying is that they transfer to our unit because there's been a problem in another unit. The unit they transfer in is responsible for taking care of that problem?

(All say "no.")

MS. CASADEI: That's what you said.

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Only if they're a problem at the new unit.

MS. CASADEI: Okay, so those of us who have been around know that lots of -- I have three new transfers in my unit just this year, and it's worked out fine. They've been wonderful, but if when they come in and they're doing this transfer and they're telling you all these problems they've had at the other post or at the other unit, it's very difficult to take on someone else's problems. And I just wondered how we're asked to deal with that if we're not able to say, "We're not going to accept your transfer."

PRESIDENT CONATSER: So you're saying that a member comes into your unit and is telling you about the problems she had in the previous unit?

MS. CASADEI: Yeah.

PRESIDENT CONATSER: You can't -- that would be gossip. You don't have any knowledge of documentation. My suggestion would be that if they come in and they say that there are these problems and maybe they had -- that you immediately just address and say, "This is how we deal with things in this unit" and make it very clear as to what your expectations are, what type of behavior you expect, and have a conversation with that person and explain to them when someone doesn't act in that way, this is how we handle it. And so it's an educational process, but you can't discipline someone from what you heard. It has to be -- you have to be able to document what they did. And their behavior in a new unit could be totally different because there's a totally different situation.

MS. CASADEI: Thank you.

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Thank you. Other discussion?

MS. WALLACE: Madam President.

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Microphone 1.

MS. WALLACE: Eva Wallace, Delegate, Department of Washington.

I would like to say from personal experience, I was in a unit. I felt mistreated by some of the behavior of some of the other people. I had the option of transferring to a new unit, which was an old, old unit I had belonged to, willingly accepted, and it was -- I felt the problem was not me, but I did not want to make an issue of what was going on in the other unit.

I think we need to recognize that there are good reasons to transfer. It's not the person that's transferring, it's that they want to come into a place

where they feel welcome and they can participate without feeling that people are being mean to them.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Thank you. Other discussion or debate?

MS. DAUDISTEL: Microphone 3, Kathy Daudistel, Department of Kentucky.

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Chair recognizes microphone 3.

MS. DAUDISTEL: I think for clarification, the way I interpreted this, is that if there is a problem in the unit, the unit needs to step up to the plate and take action so that they're not transferring the baggage somewhere else. If there's not a problem and the person wants to transfer, they should be able to pay their dues at the new unit instead of paying it at the unit that they're at.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Thank you. Any other discussion?

MS. SEELEY: Madam President, microphone 2.

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Chair recognizes microphone 2.

MS. SEELEY: Glynis Seeley, Department of Nevada.

This has a lot of words to it as opposed to a three-sentence previous writing. There's two things; one, I was wondering whether or not -- and it's very, very clear how this is worded for the purpose of clarification.

Typically, in my experience, typically as women, we will ignore a problem and hope it goes away before we deal with it. If we have a problem in our unit, we need to behave as grownups. We can have adult conversations and deal with the problem, and we can do it nicely.

If that person chooses after having an adult nice conversation to say, "This behavior is not acceptable in our unit," if that person says, "Well, I don't feel I fit here" and chooses to go to another unit, they go on their own, we did the best we could to deal with it at our level. Maybe at that unit they have a better fit with the rest of the personalities. The personalities have to stay out of it.

This is something that I feel that as stewards of our units and our departments we have to take care of and deal with it in an adult manner.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Thank you. Is there any other discussion?

MS. HOBINWORTH: Microphone 3.

PRESIDENT CONATSER: The Chair recognizes microphone 3.

MS. HOBINWORTH: Jane Hobinworth, Department of North Carolina.

I believe the -- as it is originally written, I think it is totally adequate a minimum number of words, and it is clear, a member in good standing that automatically means somebody whose dues are paid up and they have not violated any of our constitutions and bylaws at any level. However, that being said, there's always interpersonal conflicts. We're women and it's our nature to have interpersonal conflicts. And as a previous speaker mentioned, I think in keeping the culture of goodwill sometimes it's better just to find a better fit.

I don't think the new amendment as it is written, it might have originally meant to address that issue, but as it is written it is not. It just goes into more and more detail of how you determine, well, somebody is an eligible member. So, again, somebody can be a troublemaker, but as long as their dues are paid and they abide by all the constitutional bylaws and rules, they are a member in good standing, so I believe that amendment, I mean the original wording is adequate and we do not need to change it. Thank you.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Is there any other discussion?

Microphone 4.

MS. DIAZ: Madam President --

PRESIDENT CONATSER: The Chair recognizes microphone 4.

MS. DIAZ: Sue Diaz from Alaska. I call for the question.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: I need a second.

(Several say "second.")

PRESIDENT CONATSER: All those in favor of closing the discussion say -- oh, I forgot.

PRESIDENT CONATSER: All those in favor of closing discussion, press number 1. Those opposed to stopping discussion, press number 2. Please vote now.

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Voting is now closed. Please show the results. It's 696 to end the discussion and 56 to not end the discussion, so the affirmative have it.

The question is now on the amendment. Those in favor of the amendment to the standing rules, please press number 1 on your keypad. Those opposed, please press number 2. Vote now.

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Voting is now closed. Please show the results. Five hundred and five in favor of the amendment; two hundred and fifty-eight against. The affirmative has it. Thank you.

(Applause.)

CHAIRMAN THATCHER: Madam President, this concludes my report.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Thank you for a great report, Martha Lee. She said she earned it.

PRESIDENT CONATSER: And while we're on the subject of bylaws and rules, I'd like to remind everyone that candidates are provided rules for campaigning for national office and those rules prohibit campaigning only in the convention hall or distributing campaign materials in the hall or meeting and event rooms. Thank you.

Chaplains provided 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. Without Bird's emails, text messages, cards, and her just thinking-of-you moments, I'm not sure I could have made it through this past year with a smile on my face.

Please welcome our very own National chaplain and my friend, Bird Derrick.

(Applause.)

CHAPLAIN DERRICK: Thank you, Madam National President/friend.

This service year has been eventful and challenging on many levels. Sometimes I refer to my name tag as my red badge of courage. The faithfulness of God is evident.

Installation of officers is one way we transmit to posterity, our ideals and principles. My highlights include encouraging other Legion family chaplains that combined Americanism conference in September. Your convention book says that my invocation was done by singing a song. Actually, I signed the song.

Standing over President Abraham Lincoln's tomb during President Sharon's homecoming was emotionally and intellectually engaging.

Offering a blessing in an Amish home in Arthur, Illinois and learning that we worship the same lord warmed my faith heart.

President Sharon was overwhelmed by member generosity for the AEF project which openhandedness gave hope and encouragement.

Three awareness walks with or on behalf of Commander Dale Barnett exemplified who we are, what we do, and why we matter. My department commander past National chaplain sweetheart husband and I made those walks together. A cherished one was during Commander Dale's Georgia homecoming in May where we toured the infantry museum, notice our families' forward focus solidarity.

When lost luggage threatened participation in Dale's golf event, Sharon literally gave me her shirt and even let me choose which one to wear.

Chaplaincy is no more or less important than any other office or position. We are strong team members. It's just that our job descriptions vary. We are called to intercede for this family before the throne of God. Documenting our mission of ministry is part of accountability and represents best practice. These are your highlights.

We offer prayers at auxiliary events and conduct or oversee memorial services. Sharon speaks to elementary students about junior activities. We have sent thousands of cards and made hundreds of personal calls. We visit veterans in their current living quarters.

Debra offered grace at a luncheon for President Sharon. Judy shared an inspirational service at the Girls State. Susan involves junior members to help with POW MIA ceremonies. Many chaplains manage Facebook groups where prayers and the Lord's answers are shared.

On Memorial Day, Valerie reports a unit that makes a poppy anchor which is launched into the waters in honor of deceased service personnel. Julie participates in Legion rider events. Charlotte's units donate money for church food pantries. Chaplains participate in Memorial Day, Flag Day, Independence Day, Chapel of Four Chaplains, Pearl Harbor, and 911 ceremonies.

Barbara places grave markers. Patricia lays wreaths, and Lois participates and reads across America. Judy mentors and trains chaplains, and all of us donate personal resources.

Most chaplains, including Beverly and Sue, write articles for Department publications. Beverly does not use Facebook, so I copy, paste, and attach posts to emails so that she can participate in prayer with us. We develop prayer books for Department presidents.

Ann models memorials for deceased junior members, and that one hit me hard. Betty reports a chaplain who transported a veteran's ashes to Hawaii and then she conducted his service there. Vicky developed a leadership workshop based on Bible passages related to veterans of all eras. Barbara collects food for homeless vets and teaches religious classes in her church.

Jeralyn (phonetic) provides Bibles to families of deceased members. Linda invited a lady ordained minister to share the word at a fall conference. Linda conducts POW MIA ceremonies at a correctional facility. Debbie implemented a Department-wide prayer chain. A veteran in Sue's department suffered cancer, hepatitis C, and loss of a leg and arm. One of her unit chaplains provided her own Make A Wish and arranged for him to take a motorcycle ride in a sidecar before he passed.

Mary Lee encourages unit chaplains with lyrics from music written by her choir director. And Kay reports units use reflections as devotionals.

Diane demonstrates the draped coffin and flag-folding for her students. When her husband passed away, she stated, "This time I was the recipient of the folded flag." She provides a unique music plan of action.

Melissa's chaplains are present for military send-offs and homecomings. One chaplain ensures that membership dues are paid for gold-star mothers.

Many Department chaplains contribute to the National Chaplains Facebook Group. I encourage that.

Janet likes that prayer requests can be posted any time and someone is always there.

On our National website is a certificate of remembrance to present to deceased members' families.

Chaplains are not super human. They put on their pantyhose one leg at a time --

-- and meet challenges like anyone else. Thank you J.P. Yet even in the face of personal struggle, our chaplains are actively involved in others' lives. They exemplify the mission of service, not self, with grace and conviction.

Madam National President, this concludes my platform remarks.
(Applause.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Bird, are there any resolutions or recommendations?

CHAPLAIN DERRICK: I resolve not to have a resolution, but I do have a recommendation.

During the Combined Americanism Conference at the end of September, many parts of our Legion Family meet, and that includes

chaplains, but over the past number of years, we've noticed that not very many of our department chaplains from the Auxiliary are able to attend, maybe five or six.

It's expensive to get people from Hawaii, Alaska, California, wherever, to Indianapolis, so my recommendation is this, that during the Mission Training that happens in the divisions, we begin to create and develop a time for chaplains to meet together during those Mission Training times. I believe it would be easier for chaplains to get somewhere within their division than to always have to travel across country. Typically, that conference is on our dime. So that is my recommendation, and we might need to invite Past National Presidents and department -- not presidents, chaplains, I'm sorry, and department chaplains to assist with those trainings. We would create something together and roll out something uniform to all of our chaplains.

Thank you.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Thank you Chaplains Pre-Con for that recommendation, and that will be taken under advisement. We appreciate it very much.

CHAPLAIN DERRICK: Thank you.

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Thank you. At this time --

CHAPLAIN DERRICK: I'd like to present President Sharon --

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Okay. I got ahead of the schedule.

CHAPLAIN DERRICK: -- something very special from my heart to hers, from your heart to hers.

This year I opened up the President's Book of Prayers to more than just prayers. It can include letters, personal letters, Bible verses, devotional song lyrics, hymns, whatever is on your heart to share with her. So, National President Sharon, this is --

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Oh, wow.

CHAPLAIN DERRICK: -- your book for this year.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Ladies, would you please stand. I've asked Bird to give a short memorial prayer before the next part of our morning. And on the riders' ride last week, something very moving happened. When they pray in the morning, they reach out and they put their hand on the shoulder of the person next to them and you feel the connection, and I think that we all need that. So would you all, please, just touch the person next to you, if you're okay with that, on the shoulder, as she shares this memorial prayer.

CHAPLAIN DERRICK: Thank you, Sharon.

Let's pray. Father, you are the giver of life, and we celebrate life. Sometimes, Lord, lives leave this earth and go to wherever their eternity calls them.

Lord, today we celebrate two lives from our Legion Auxiliary family. Father, you knew from the foundation of the world when Kris and Helen would live and when they would leave. You are sovereign and in

control over all. So, God, as we celebrate their lives today, we ask that you would be honored and glorified and that you would let our tears be ones of joy and healing and comfort and peace. In your holy name I pray, amen.

(All say "amen.")

CHAPLAIN DERRICK: I now call Linda Boone to the stage for a special presentation.

MS. BOONE: Thank you, Bird.

Earlier this year, the American Legion Auxiliary lost a volunteer, a mentor, and a friend when Florida member Helen Gardner passed away.

MS. BOONE: She will be remembered most for her service to veterans and the kindness she shared with Auxiliary members.

Helen was raised in Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania and received her nursing degree at the University of Pennsylvania. Helen served in several hospitals as the operating room supervisor.

In 1964, Helen helped established the new JFK Memorial Hospital in Atlantis, Florida where she served in a variety of positions until her retirement in 1984 as the Director of Nursing.

Community volunteer activities were a big part of Helen's life where she served in various committees for the City of Greenacres, Florida, the local PTA, and many other local service organizations.

Helen was a devout Catholic and was one of the founders of the St. Therese Catholic Church in Wellington, Florida where her burial mass was held. During that service, her sons Philip, Brian, and Jack, shared their experiences with Helen as she participated in American Legion Auxiliary activity volunteer work throughout their lives.

Helen began her lifelong devotion to the American Legion Auxiliary in 1955. She organized and became the charter president of the Greenacres City Unit 258 in Florida, and served in leadership roles within the unit and department serving as Department president in 1967/68.

The National organization recognized Helen's leadership skills and she served as chairman of more than a dozen National committees and a southern division vice president in 1970.

In a true romantic love story, before the beginning of her year as national president, Helen became the bride of her former high school sweetheart, Retired Marine Lieutenant Colonel Wayne Gardner. He was a wonderful partner to journey with her through her year of service.

Invest in American and Focusing on Youth was a theme of this administrative year, and Helen stated in her installation address, "America is still the land where dreams can come true."

Membership that year was 939,000.

(Applause.)

Program achievements included Children & Youth, 3.2 million dollars and 1.9 million hours assisting 1.1 million youth; Veterans Affairs, 3.2 million dollar, 85,000 volunteers, 2.7 million hours; community service, 2.5 million dollars and hours.

Noteworthy during this year is the first joint legislative rally with The American Legion was held during the Washington conference. And Ray

Kroc, founder of the McDonald's, was founded the Auxiliary's Public Spirit Award posthumously for the establishment of the Ronald McDonald Houses.

Helen served with National Commander Clarence Bacon from Maryland.

Now that you know about Helen as a professional and a leader, let me tell you what I think she was like as a person and friend. The last National convention she attended was in 2004, and so many of you may not have had the opportunity to meet her.

Helen was a lady in her manner and dress, funny with a quick wit, and great smile that was infectious, positive and not a gossip, looked for the good in individuals.

I got to know Helen after she served as National president, and she was kind and supportive of upcoming organizational leaders. She offered advice if asked and was not offended if not taken.

Helen served as national parliamentarian the year I served as national president. During that convention we had many controversial resolutions, and she would coach me by writing big notes on a tablet and sliding it over to me to read. She really helped me look more knowledgeable than I was at the time about parliamentary procedures. What a true mentor.

Helen was a leader that we could all emulate. Condolences to her family and the Department of Florida for their loss.

Helen was president before digital cameras and smartphones and social media, so we don't have as many photographs to remember her by, but those that knew Helen have great memories of a person truly dedicated to the American Legion Auxiliary.

Thank you, Helen, for your contributions to your community and the American Legion Auxiliary.

I now present Past National President Peggy Thomas.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: As Peggy comes to the podium, would you please all look up and wave. We've received a text that Kris's family is watching from Minnesota.

(Pause.)

MS. THOMAS: Kristine Jacobs Nelson, better known as Kris, was born June 22, 1951, and left us on April 20, 2016. On March 30, 1974, she married Terry Nelson, and she said her life changed forever.

Today, we're not just paying tribute to Kris, but celebrating her life. She has left behind her husband Terry, her entire family, and a multitude of grieving friends. She was a devoted wife, mother, and grandmother. She passionately loved her family, her church, and the American Legion Auxiliary.

She told me many times that Terry was the love of her life, her soul mate, and her best friend. She loved her son Troy, her daughter Sarah, her daughter-in-law Angie, her son-in-law Kent, and all her grandkids. She truly loved her Minnesota friends, some of longstanding, and her Auxiliary friends and family.

Kris retired from Consolidated Telecommunications Company after 37 years. At the time of her retirement, she was the director of human resources. She also served as president and then as a Board member of Crow Wing County United Way.

After having been involved with the American Legion Auxiliary for many years, in 2011 she was elected to be our national president. Minnesota Governor Dayton declared September 1, 2011 Kris Nelson Day.

While serving as our national president, Kris was the grand marshal of the Brainerd, Minnesota July the 4th Parade in 2012.

Kris, a 30-plus-year member of our Auxiliary, had served in many chairmanships, and at the time of her death she was serving on the Centennial Strategic Plan Implementation Team. She was also an avid believer and strong supporter of the American Legion Auxiliary Foundation. To know Kris was to love her.

The first time I met Kris we were assigned to a room together at the National Leadership Meeting in Indianapolis, Indiana back in 2005. Since this was the first time I was to room with Kris, I took her a small gift. She never forgot that and mentioned it in a conversation we had just a few months before she left us. We bonded right away and remained very close friends from that first time back in 2005.

She was a very compassionate person and she felt deeply about the lives of our military, our veterans, and their families. She wanted to make a difference and she did. She worked hard to move this organization forward.

The American Legion Auxiliary as a whole has lost a great leader. She inspired and motivated all of us in her unassuming way. She was not afraid to make changes in the American Legion Auxiliary, but she did it in a way that did not violate their traditions.

Today, I am wearing a pair of earrings that Kris gave me for my birthday a few years ago. I wanted to wear them today in memory of my dear friend.

I have spent a lot of time with Kris and Terry over the years. We had some really good times together, and now they are lasting memories. Some people pass through life and never leave a footprint, but Kris definitely left hers.

I have paraphrased some words by Sir Elton John as I find them so fitting for Kris.

"It seems to me you lived your life like a candle in the wind, never fading with the sunset when the rain sets in. And your footsteps will always fall here along our mission's goals, your candle burned out long before your legend ever will."

All in this room have suffered a great loss, but Kris's spirit and legacy lives on. Love and friendship lasts into eternity. May her soul rest in peace. Kris, we love you forever.

PRESIDENT CONATSER: She was a dear friend of many.

My travels as national president gave me the opportunity to see firsthand the great things you are doing to help our veterans, military, and their families. You are all doing such awesome work and yet even with all the

work you are currently doing, you want to do more. Like me, you all believe that we can serve more if we just had more resources, more volunteers, more time, more money. Well, I can't make any more hours in a day, and I can't magically make volunteers if you don't sign up, members, but I can offer a suggestion in the money department.

I know for many of you the American Legion Auxiliary Foundation is this abstract thing floating around out here. We know it exists, but we aren't really sure what it is or what it does or how it might benefit our mission work. I mean, we all know the Foundation exists, right?

(All say "right.")

Rally towels, right?

(All say "right.")

But how many of you have actually applied for a grant or researched how a foundation can help you? Well, we're going to fix that right now. Now, I can stand up here and talk about the granting process and the forms until I'm blue in the face, and you all our bored out of your minds and wished I sat down. But instead, I'm going to ask my friend, Barb Washburn from the Department of Nebraska, the 2016 Department President --

(Cheering.)

-- tell her Foundation story, and it's a great one and you'll like it. Barb, would you please join me?

(Applause.)

MS. WASHBURN: Thank you so much, Sharon.

My story is really a pretty simple one. Our Department learned of the need for some new physical therapy equipment at our Norfolk Veterans Home, but you know what it is, we have 140 veterans there, but where do we get the money to help get this equipment? They wanted a new cross trainer, but that's what I remembered hearing about the LA Foundation Veterans Projects Grants when I was at the Washington DC Conference. So I went to the website, did some looking around, looked at the criteria, and I realized, you know, I think that we have what we need to apply for a grant. If you have 20 percent of your project requirements, you take that plus what the foundation gives you, you can do the grant.

So I got a hold of the Foundation folks. I filled out the form, and a few weeks later I got an email that we had been awarded the grant. I was so excited. It was really pretty easy.

Now, I know, you know, some of you, like I did, thought, "Oh, gosh, we're going to have to fill out a ton of forms, spend hours and hours and hours researching what to do," but you know, it was amazing how easy it really was at the end of the day. The Foundation did have a few questions that they asked once they had approved the grant, but I got some answers from the facility and got them back and it was really not a big deal. We filled out the paperwork required, sent it to National Headquarters. They sent a check back to our department, and I'm happy to report that three weeks ago we dedicated new equipment. The facility is loving it. Our veterans are loving it. More can get physical therapy now, and it was just a matter of months until we are able to get that grant and get the check in place and the equipment.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: That's great, Barb, and I'm so glad that your department recognized how fortunate we are to have the support of our American Legion Auxiliary Foundation. Not only are they out there raising money, but they are granting it back to our units, our districts, and our departments to move our mission forward.

Barb, I know when many of us hear the word "grant," we think there's no way we can fill out that application and ever have a chance of being awarded the money. Do you have any helpful hints for our units and our departments that you would be willing to share?

MS. WASHBURN: Sure. Well, first of all, I would recommend contacting the development team at National Headquarters to discuss the project you're considering. That way before you spend the time and energy working on the application itself, they can help you figure out if this is a worthy project. And I can tell you from experience, they will work side by side with you on that grant application in answering your questions, telling you, you know, how to do it. And the most important thing is how will your project help the veterans that you are wanting to help because that's so important.

And, again, you know, the Board members had additional questions about how the project would help the veterans, but they were simple questions and easy to answer, and I knew that I could always call, you know, get a hold of the National Headquarters staff.

Madison Maves was an absolute gem to work with. I would email her or call her and she knew the answer or could get me the answer very quickly. I was amazed at how quickly they responded.

So, again, you know, contact that team, have them help you. And I would personally like to thank them for all the help they provided to me.

And, President Sharon, thank you so much for asking me to share our story of what a great project this is to use the Foundation.

PRESIDENT CONATSER: You're so welcome, Barb.

(Applause.)

Thank you for talking with me and sharing your story. I know you're just one of many who took advantage of our American Legion Auxiliary Foundation grants this year, and thank you for your service to the Department and to the American Legion Auxiliary and our mission.

MS. WASHBURN: Thank you, Sharon.

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Thank you so much.

(Applause.)

By donating to the American Legion Auxiliary Foundation, you become a member of our team that continues to grow stronger as we work to provide comfort and care to those in need now and into the future.

Here with her report is Foundation Board President, Past National President Linda Boone.

(Applause.)

BOARD PRESIDENT BOONE: All right. The mission of the American Legion Auxiliary Foundation is to positively impact the lives of our veterans, military and their families, by funding programs of the American

Legion Auxiliary today and for future generations. Our success in achieving this mission resides with the generosity and continued support of donors like you. And because you have supported the American Legion Auxiliary Foundation, we have awarded over \$40,000 in grants to the American Legion Auxiliary units and departments --

(Applause.)

-- and provided more than \$57,000 to the National organization just this year alone.

(Applause.)

These grants have made a huge difference in the lives of our veterans, military and their families. Let's take a look.

The American Legion Auxiliary Foundation awarded grants for a variety of emergent needs to units and departments through the veterans projects fund. Those awarded were the Department of Connecticut, \$3,000 to purchase a clothing label marker for Rocky Hill Home and Hospital for veterans to reduce clothing loss.

(Applause.)

Baton Unit Department of New Mexico, \$8,470 to build a gazebo providing an outdoor respite for veterans at the Fort Bayard State Veterans home.

Eugene M. Connor Unit 193, Department of Massachusetts, \$1,600 to construct a therapeutic garden at Cathy's House, a women's veterans home.

Department of Illinois, \$2,752 for a 13-child-friendly waiting room areas at the Illiana VAMC. She wants you to scream and yell, Illinois.

(Applause.)

Department of California, \$8,334 to purchase learning tools for the Children's Learning Center at the Villages Cabrillo, their women's center.

(Applause.)

The Department of Nebraska, \$3,116 for physical therapy equipment at the Norfolk Veterans Home.

(Applause.)

Department of New Mexico, \$1,200 for music therapy equipment at the New Mexico Veterans Affairs healthcare system Geri-Psych unit.

(Applause.)

The American Legion Auxiliary Foundation was able to award the following veteran creative arts festival grants also.

The Department of Vermont, \$2,000 for art kits, promotional materials, and awards.

(Applause.)

Department of New York, \$750 for promotional material and awards.

(Applause.)

And by using the American Legion Auxiliary's Foundation's IRS 501(c)(3) status, we assisted these departments with sub-grants: Department of Illinois, \$500 for their Christmas gift shop.

(Applause.)

The Department of Rhode Island, \$3,500 for American Legion Auxiliary Little Rhody Girls State.

(Applause.)

And the Department of Hawaii, \$5,000 for the American Legion Auxiliary (indiscernible) Girls State.

(Applause.)

Each year the grant amounts have grown since you, the donors, have been so generous. Because of you, over just the past three years, the American Legion Auxiliary Foundation has granted \$83,000 to more than 30 American Legion Auxiliary units and departments stretching from coast to coast.

(Applause.)

But that's not all. The American Legion Auxiliary Foundation Mission Endowment Fund is a permanently restricted fund, and the American Legion Auxiliary distributes earnings from that fund back to the American Legion Auxiliary National Headquarters programs. For FY '16, we are expecting to provide \$19,400 to support the American Legion Auxiliary Girls Nation Program.

(Applause.)

Each year this fund grows because of you and generous donors like you. The Mission Endowment Fund has grown to almost \$700,000 whether through direct mail donations, direct mail responses, matching gifts, or Amazon smile, we appreciate your support.

The American Legion Auxiliary Foundation would like to honor some of you for your generosity by distributing a few awards detailed in the plan of action. These awards have been delivered to your delegation.

To the NEC from the two departments contributing the largest donation per total membership, the award goes to Teresa Isensee, Department of Wisconsin --

(Applause.)

-- and Josephine Keanu from the Department of Hawaii.

(Applause.)

And to the divisional vice president from the division contributing the most funds to the American Legion Auxiliary Foundation, the award goes to Lynda Lancaster.

(Applause.)

We know your support, and we know with your support we have accomplished a lot since the founding of the Foundation in 2007. But we also know there's a lot more to do, so we ask for your continued support and generosity.

Think about leaving the American Legion Auxiliary Foundation in your will, in your insurance policy, or retirement plan. Some of you in this audience have already done this, and we really want to encourage more of you to think about it.

Learn about the simple processes at our website. You can also join us for our second annual Giving Tuesday. On Tuesday, November 29, 2016, charities, families, businesses, community centers, and students around the world will come together for one common purpose, to celebrate generosity and to give. If you haven't already done so, be sure to stop by the American

Legion Auxiliary's Foundation Giving Tuesday photo booth and join the American Legion Auxiliary Foundation Board Auxiliary leadership and staff in the worldwide movement by showing what inspired you to make a gift.

As an extra bonus, our direct mail partner, Innovairre Communications, will match the first \$15,000 in donations, so act now so that you can double your donation.

(Cheering.)

Thank you. It has been an exciting year as we continue to grow stronger and to work to ensure our mission of service endures. None of this would have been possible without you, our donors, supporters, and friends.

Thank you for being an integral part of our team working together to positively impact the lives of our veterans, military, and their families.

Madam National President, that concludes my report.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Thank you, Linda.

Are there any resolutions?

BOARD PRESIDENT BOONE: No, Madam President.

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Great. Great report. Isn't it fun to see how our Foundation has grown and is giving back? Isn't that awesome?

(Applause.)

Hang on one minute.

(Applause.)

As many of you know, I rode part of the Legacy Ride this last week, almost 200 miles, and it was a great time. And last night at the Illinois party, Ray and Tina Smith, the Director of Illinois, and he was the road captain of (indiscernible) where I road, presented this vest to me. And I'm really proud of it, and I just want to say thank you.

How about the Riders in the room, can you stand up? We got any Riders in here?

(Applause.)

They think I look good in it. I have patches next time you see me.

I just wanted to share that with all of you because it was fun to be the first National president to ride on the legacy ride, and it was a blast. It was a blast. As I told them last night before I left them, if we all four groups got behind each of our big projects and our units, our posts, our squadrons, and our chapters, what could we do? What would our numbers be? So let's remember that when we go home and remember to work as a family of four on the major projects in your area, and let's make them all a success, double our money, triple our money, triple our hours. Whatever works, we can make it work.

(Applause.)

Preserving, displaying, and sharing our history, traditions, and milestones is a purpose behind our history program. The Auxiliary's 96th universe year has been a special time for members to look back and reconnect with our organization's rich past. Here to tell us more is National Historian Debra Noble.

(Applause.)

HISTORIAN NOBLE: Good morning.

Madam National President, the members of the American Legion Auxiliary took your theme, Keeping the Promise, and lived it every day of the past year as reported by the hardworking historians at every level of our organization. There were 439 senior unit histories, 130 junior histories, 24 district histories, and 23 department histories written and submitted this year. Those histories highlighted the impact that the American Legion Auxiliary has on our communities, our departments, our nation, and the world around us.

Fifty-one units reported working on the veterans history project with 81 veteran histories recorded. Four units reported working on the members history project, although none were submitted to National.

The common theme in each report received was the importance of working the mission of the American Legion Auxiliary. Historians reported their members are in agreement. The Centennial Strategic Plan will ensure that there will be an American Legion Auxiliary for generations to come.

We have kept our promise to our junior members recognizing the importance of the roles they play in our future. This year for the first time, we have a history patch for our high-school-aged juniors, and we held the first national Junior meetings in conjunction with Mission Training seminars.

These regional meetings have opened the doors for more juniors to be involved and have given a greater number of junior members the opportunity to expand their knowledge of the American Legion Auxiliary programs.

The Department of Nebraska had a unique way of working Goal Number 2 creating an internal culture of goodwill. The chairman established a no-crab zone at meetings --

(Laughter/Applause.)

-- and wore a crab hat to ward off any negative thoughts.

Nebraska also held their first ever district president training session keeping the promise of Goal 3 of our strategic plan.

For the first time this year, we recognize the contributions that can be made by our special-needs students, and Class 6 was added to the Americanism Essay Contest.

We have also kept our promise to our active-duty military and homeless veterans. The Department of Michigan sponsors the Freedom Center, a military lounge located in the Detroit Airport which serves veterans, active-duty military and their families.

(Applause.)

In California, East Pasadena Unit 280 keeps the promise to help our homeless veterans by working on the Vet Hunter Project which --

(Cheering.)

-- searches for homeless veterans along highways and parks. In a six-month period, there were 225 veterans located and housed. Promise made and promise kept.

(Applause.)

Recognize the importance and value of our mission outreach programs, the Department of New Jersey is in the process of forming its first Girls State E unit. The charter members will be former Girls State delegates, one of which is a female veteran and one of who is still on active duty.

Many of the departments made history in so many ways. Joan Caron, Department of Maine Historian, reported that the Department officers of both the American Legion and the American Legion Auxiliary are now housed in one building. And Departments reported new and innovative ways to review the action plan --

(Applause.)

-- including Florida's boot camp for new chairmen, and the Department Diva Night held in Kansas.

Our department historians had a variety of ways of promoting the importance of recording the history, including the basics of writing your history brochure --

(Applause.)

-- created by Georgia Downs, Historian for the Department of Michigan.

(Cheering.)

National Headquarters has also kept their promise to our membership with the launch of the online dues payment program as well as new and updated educational materials available to our members.

Madam National President Sharon, you, too, have kept our promise this year as you visited 43 departments, the Far East and Europe, bringing with you your message of the importance of unity, the importance and family, and the needs to ensure we are here to care for our veterans.

Recently, there was a wonderful picture in the Auxiliary magazine showing you and our National Secretary Debbie signing a charter for the first ever Auxiliary unit in South Korea. What a great moment in Auxiliary history.

And may I congratulate you on being the first National president of the American Legion Auxiliary to walk in the Toms River, New Jersey Halloween Parade where the emblem of the American Legion Auxiliary was front and center on the banner where it could be viewed by the thousands of parade watchers.

There is one common thread throughout this report and that is the history of our organization is written around the work of our members as they work the various committees.

You see, we make history every day in everything we do. What we accomplish today we write about tomorrow, so what we record now will serve as a guide for those who follow us. My thanks to the 16 Department historians who reported 100 percent this year.

Madam National President, each of the five divisional vice presidents had the difficult task of judging the Department histories and then forwarding the winning divisional histories to me. These entries were then judged, and I am pleased to announce the 2016 Toomey Award goes to Lynn Tomlinson, Department of North Dakota.

(Applause.)

Madam National President, it has been an honor to serve this great organization as National historian this year. I know when I have completed writing our history the words on the paper will be more than mere letters. They will tell the story of the most dedicated diverse group of women who share their passion for veterans, for our communities, and for our organization. Under your leadership, promises have been made and promises have been kept.

Madam National President, this concludes my platform remarks.

(Applause.)

VICE PRESIDENT DAVIS: Thank you, Debra.

HISTORIAN NOBLE: You're welcome.

VICE PRESIDENT DAVIS: Do you have recommendations or resolutions?

HISTORIAN NOBLE: We do have just a few recommendations for consideration. One would be to post an example of the winning National history on the National website to be used as a guideline for writing the history.

(Applause.)

The second would be to also include training for historians and the mission training programs so that historians can meet and go over the rules in how to write a history.

(Applause.)

The third would be to allow submissions of department histories electronically so that they did not have to be mailed.

(Applause.)

And the fourth would be to allow a pictorial history to accompany the narrative to be limited to five pictures telling the mission.

(Applause.)

VICE PRESIDENT DAVIS: Thank you, Debra.

Now, if you think I don't look like Sharon, she's been called away to address The American Legion. She'll be back shortly.

The American Legion Auxiliary believes education is vital to democracy, and that investing time and money to educate our youth is literally an investment of our future.

Please welcome to the stage National Education Committee Chairman Sue Britton.

(Applause.)

CHAIRMAN BRITTON: Madam National President, you asked us to keep our promise this year. What does promise mean? It means to pledge, to bring about, and that is exactly what our members did. Let's take a look at what pledging our promise has created.

Our year began as school began, and our members promised to give their role as they gave ten to education. School supplies in quantities of ten were collected and distributed to students. California filled towers of cartons with supplies.

(Cheering.)

New Jersey promised recognition with the printable certificates of appreciation. Fifty-four units in California spent over \$6,000 filling backpacks with supplies --

(Cheering.)

-- and staples like peanut butter, bread, et cetera, to send home with needy students. Numerous departments reported supplying backpacks.

November ushered in the promise of fall and Veterans Day that featured thousands of veterans in community school events. With our recent name change from Veterans in the Classroom to Veterans in Community Schools, the range of activities has expanded.

Dual members like Cindy Newton from Louisiana brought about educational instruction as she and other veterans shared stories of their military experiences.

Art contests honoring veterans were held. And Unit 236 in Maryland showed a lot of promise as they walked with fourth- and fifth-graders to the Town Square War Memorial for a Veterans Day ceremony. The unit provided each student with an American flag, and the students, along with 75 veterans, recited the Pledge of Allegiance. Each veteran introduced themselves, gave their branch of service, and where they served. What a proud educational moment in history for these veterans.

Unit 84 in the Department of Texas held a steak luncheon for 240 veterans and their spouses. Afterwards, they were honored by 3,000 high school students. Every veteran that participated in a school event had their own story to share.

Florida's Unit 80 hosted numerous veterans in community school events throughout the entire year. And promised recognition came about as we offered thanks to all school personnel who influenced the lives of our youth.

American Education Week allowed us to thank not only teachers, but aides, bus drivers, nurses, principals, support staff, and custodians.

In Puerto Rico, a school was in need of serious help, so Unit 140 fulfilled their promise and donated 229 school items for an art class.

Newspaper articles filled local publications with stories of our educational events.

Wyoming's Unit 70 had students draw a picture of their favorite patriotic symbol and write an essay about its significance. Their artwork went on display at a Legion dinner. Hershey bars with written messages of appreciation were given to each veteran. Each student received a bag of treats along with the American Legion booklet, Our Country's Veterans.

Texas Unit 50 gave special recognition to the bus drivers and transportation department in their school district. A city proclamation was issued. Each driver got to wear a ribbon and a placard was presented to display on their bus. The recipients were very grateful and as much as they had never been recognized for their role in the education process.

One of our best-kept promises was our members volunteering and sharing stories and reading with students. Departments demonstrated their

promise with creative ways to share the Education Committee updates and happenings.

May brought about springtime along with our pledge to thank our teachers during teacher appreciation week. The Department of Maryland honored over 900 school personnel.

(Cheering.)

And June was full of promise as the ring of scholarship awards was heard and scholars were honored.

Throughout the year, our members worked with student veteran associations on college campuses and assisted veterans in their pursuit of higher education.

And now for some promising new developments, the American Legion has revised the Educational Development Guide available as a free download on the American Legion website. And as part of the American Legion Committee on Youth Education, it was a privilege for me to be part of the groundbreaking revision in eligibility and awards for the American Legion Legacy Scholarship. So many more students will benefit from new guidelines effective for 2017.

Madam President Sharon, as shown throughout my presentation, this promise rock has guided our work during the course of the year as members worked so diligently for our organization. As a reminder of your year and the many ways our members have dedicated themselves to service and education, I leave you with this token promise rock. May it be a constant reminder of all that we have accomplished this year under your administration.

Madam National President, this concludes my platform remarks.

(Applause.)

VICE PRESIDENT DAVIS: Are there any resolutions?

CHAIRMAN BRITTON: No, Madam President, there are not.

VICE PRESIDENT DAVIS: Okay. Thank you. Thank you, Sue.

Ever since we started doing a vignette of videos for the National Convention several years ago, it was our goal to highlight units and those we serve whose stories might otherwise be untold. So far, we've produced feature stories all across the county, 12 different departments so far from Florida to Alaska.

Today, it's my pleasure to present a story about a small unit in rural Montana. It's a simple project that made a huge impact on their community, renewing patriotism and civic pride. Let's take a look.

(Video begins.)

ANNOUNCER: Montana, truly a beautiful American treasure. Nestled in central Montana is the little town of Judy Gap filled with good, caring, hardworking people. The town is miles away from a grocery store, but in this quiet part of the world you won't find a traffic jam, road rage, or indifference. The highways and countryside are void of litter.

Just outside of town they've harnessed the wind that blows briskly through the mountain valley. Each turbine generates enough electricity to power 350 to 400 homes. Children still attend the local school that's been in use since 1911, and the most noise you'll hear is the distant sound of a train

waving through the mountains. The hardworking people of Judith Gap raise cattle, sheep, buffalo, and the American flag.

Within Judith Gap you'll find American Legion Auxiliary Unit and Post 70 located in a former bank building. Inside, Auxiliary members started Flags on Main Street, a program designed to paint the town red, white, and blue on patriotic holidays.

FEMALE SPEAKER: In 2014, our unit and our post lost members of the World War II generation. Their families donated memorials to us. That was the start of our Flags on Main Street Project.

ANNOUNCER: Their goal was to fly a flag on every building, home, and structure on Main Street.

FEMALE SPEAKER: We learned our patriotism from our World War II generation, and we thought what better way to honor them than to use their memorial money to purchase flags to put on Main Street, and on patriotic holidays we show our patriotism by flying our flags.

ANNOUNCER: They involved the entire community.

FEMALE SPEAKER: We asked our community members on Main Street if we could put flag holders on their buildings and residents. They were all enthusiastic about the program.

FEMALE SPEAKER: I'm the owner of the Judith Gap Café. It makes me feel proud to display the flags on the highway.

FEMALE SPEAKER: This truly is an American Legion Family project. The Legionnaires have helped us with putting up the flag holders, the flags, and they've even donated their memorials to us.

MALE SPEAKER: When the Auxiliary came to us with their Project, we were more than honored to help them out, and it really involved our full American Legion family.

ANNOUNCER: And they get the kids involved, too, by tying in their Memorial Day flag distribution with their flag education project at the local school. Even from their remote location, the word of this project quickly spread.

FEMALE SPEAKER: We've been doing it for a couple of years. This spring, a lady passing through noticed our flags on Main Street, turned around, came back, took some pictures, posted them on You Know You're in Montana When, and it went viral from them.

Students and community members that grew up here posted it on their Facebook and it spread from there.

FEMALE SPEAKER: The amazing part of this program has been the enthusiasm that everyone has shown for it, the Legion, the Auxiliary, the townspeople. And when we see those flags, those red, white, and blue flags waving on our streets, we can't help but feel pride in America.

FEMALE SPEAKER: A portion of the funding came from my mom's memorial, and when I see those flags flying, I am just so proud and it makes me feel so wonderful to be a part of Judith Gap.

ANNOUNCER: Unit 70's patriotic display is just one example of the great works smaller American Legion Auxiliary units accomplish every

day throughout country, further showing the reason we are the world's largest women's patriotic service organization.

(Video ends.)

(Applause.)

VICE PRESIDENT DAVIS: It's a very busy time of year for ranchers. Unfortunately, a representative from Judith Gap, Unit 70, was unable to make the trip, but I know they're watching the live feed. Let's give them another warm round of applause.

(Applause.)

American patriotism is a fundamental value of the American Legion Auxiliary. Americanism programs teach respect for our country and our nation's flag in the hopes of creating lifelong patriotic citizens.

Please welcome to the stage our National Americanism Committee Chairman Brenda Collins.

(Applause.)

CHAIRMAN COLLINS: Madam National President, the Americanism Committee is alive and well. Members have flown their flags at homes, at businesses, and many parks, and they're keeping the promise to our veterans all over the country, such as Duran Gallegos Unit 69 in Alameda, New Mexico.

Members along with ROTC members, cadets, placed 3,000 flags in remembrance of 911 victims and the lives that were lost. They fly them proudly.

The Americanism program is intertwined with all the programs of the American Legion Auxiliary as it should.

We, the American Legion Auxiliary, stand for God and country, and by this, we stand patriotic, and our blood runs red, white, and blue.

William Wolf, Unit 91 of Osceola, Nebraska held a week-long event for children having completed grade 5. The event is called Patriots Week. It's to encourage, enrich, ignite the love of country, commitment to citizenship, knowledge of the Constitution, National symbols, and appreciation of America's founders, leaders, military, and our veterans. Thank you Unit 91 Chairman Teresa Reese.

Beverlee Kounty of Unit 110, Aurora, Oregon, has been going into the primary schools for 15 years. Once again this year she was in the schools with American Legion family members. She takes lumber bought by the Auxiliary, high school students make flag stands and place flags in the stands that are furnished by the Auxiliary.

There are 180 second-graders. The students are divided in groups of 30 and the programs are performed. Ms. Beverlee explains details of the flag while Legionnaires demonstrate folding the flag.

Five high school students help with the program as they explain the Pledge of Allegiance with a skit. The American Legion members talk about their service, and the children ask questions. The high schools students present the young students with their flag and stand as they leave for the day. These students were once second-graders that listened to Ms. Beverlee, and they still treasure their flag and their stand from Unit 110.

A high school in New York City had no budget to purchase American flags for a school with 72 classrooms. Their students had been doing their daily pledge to a blank wall. After a few phone calls, the county president, who happened to have a supply of flags at her home, welcomed the opportunity to promote patriotism. Arrangements were made through emails with the school and were presented by the New York County American Legion Auxiliary. The County President, Barbara Wong, presented 84 American flags to the school.

(Applause.)

This was 12 more than was needed for the classroom. These 12 were used in the common areas.

Race Across America holds a joint effort with the Auxiliary units to honor the memory of those who have given the ultimate sacrifice. The American Legion Auxiliary members were honored to be able to place wreaths on graves of veterans in national cemeteries all across the country.

Junior Member Madison Lebra of Unit 174 in Irmo, South Carolina, was happy to help the seniors with this project.

The title for the essay contest this year was How Do We Keep Lincoln's Promise to Our Veterans and Their Families? A new category was added with four students with special needs. Now, all students may participate in the contest.

Through all the Americanism programs held this year, we have strived to keep our promise to veterans, to active-duty military and their families. It was evident with 100 percent reporting from all departments, both midyear and year end.

(Applause.)

Madam National President, this concludes my platform remarks.

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Do you have any resolutions, Brenda?

CHAIRMAN COLLINS: We do not.

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Thank you very much.

CHAIRMAN COLLINS: Thank you.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: At this time, I hope -- yesterday, several of you sent me little notes and asked me where our Junior member of the year was sitting and people couldn't see her, so for introduction purposes only, I'd ask Coral Grout to please bring her guest forward.

(Applause.)

CHAIRMAN GROUT: Good morning again, everyone.

It gives me great pleasure for the opportunity to introduce to you the Junior Auxiliary Member of the Year, Deanna Woodburn from Kapperman Unit 44 in the Department of Indiana.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Thank you, and thank you, Coral. Thank you, Deanna. I know you're going to do great things. And her parents have raised her right, Chad and Michelle.

Strengthening our communities is something American Legion Auxiliary members strive for each and every day. A major outreach program

since 1926, community service demonstrates our longstanding commitment improving our communities for our military, veterans and their families.

Please welcome Nancy Hansen, our National Community Service Chairman.

(Applause.)

CHAIRMAN HANSEN: Madam President Sharon, keeping our promise and remembering our mission is evident in every unit in every community across the U.S.A. Members young and old have stepped up and stepped into the communities working alongside other organizations giving back not just to our veterans, active-duty military and their families, but to the community as a whole, making a difference in the lives of so many and letting them know who we are, what we do, why we matter, and why we need them to join our organization.

Units have prepared blessing bags filled with personal hygiene products for the homeless, held walks for the wounded, sent boxes to our troops, participated at homecomings and sendoffs. They've handed out Halloween candy at firehouses, made goody and food baskets to bring to shut-ins during the holidays, held birthday parties for our veterans in nursing homes, hosted Christmas parties and Easter egg hunts for our children, sponsored lunches for veterans on Veterans Day, and made quilts for Quilts of Valor, to name a few, all while helping to bring awareness of the American Legion Auxiliary.

Homer Unit 290 in Illinois knows the true spirit of keeping our promise.

(Laughter/Cheering.)

For Memorial Day, four senior members and three junior members lined the sides of the street along the parade route with small flags. Following the parade, the unit put on a smorgasbord for the community. Ladies that attended liked what they saw and asked to join the unit.

Last summer, they set up an American Legion Auxiliary booth during a hometown special that's hosted by ciLiving. A coloring table was set up so local children could color pictures that the unit could deliver to the veterans hospital. It's part of their MAVD, Make A Veterans Day Program. A cameraman inspired by the idea took time out of filming to color a picture for a veteran also.

Gaines T. Evan Unit 44 in Elephant Butte, New Mexico attracts new members by being a visible presence in their community. Always wearing their Auxiliary shirts, they let people know who we are and that they're making a difference.

On Patriots day, the unit held a dinner honoring all first responders in their area followed by a candlelight ceremony and (indiscernible) in front of the post. What a great idea to honor our local heroes.

John J. Morris Unit 62, Peoria, Arizona, continues to focus on the community to build their membership. They work with their local businesses and organizations on joint projects to make them a success. On Veterans Day, an estimated 300 people attended a Veterans Day program that the unit coordinated. This was funded with the help of the local high school band,

media team, a fifth-grade chorus, the Boys Scouts, the Junior ROTC, the Sons of the American Legion, and Chick-fil-A. And they know how to get the word out to promote the Auxiliary. The unit has had over 50 articles published in local media. Talk about promoting and branding the organization.

In March during an MLB spring training game, the unit organized a successful American Legion 97 birthday bash. They distributed over 4,000 poppies, 1,000 hand koozies with the national website address on them, 200 American flags, and 1,000 patriotic cookies. It was a true Legion family event with the Legion Color Guard performing the National Anthem and the juniors helping out. Way to go, Unit 62.

(Applause.)

During the National Preparedness Month in September, Iowa Correctionville Unit 79 sponsored a full day of emergency preparedness in cooperation with the Red Cross. Working with other organizations, the Auxiliary had a table to educate the community on some of the programs including the AEF. Big or small, north or south, the units that reported all reported that they are actively involved in their communities. These units make sure that everyone know who we are by getting the word out to the media be it local newspapers, TV stations, and always wearing the ALA emblems proudly.

Thank you, President Sharon. It's been an honor -- she changed again. It's been an honor and pleasure working with you this year, and this concludes my platform remarks.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Did I change? Yes. Are there any resolutions?

CHAIRMAN HANSEN: No, there are not.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Developing knowledgeable and capable leaders is vital to growing the American Legion Auxiliary by providing women of all ages the opportunity to strengthen their leadership skills. We are advancing the Auxiliary's mission far into the future.

Please welcome National Leadership Chairman Martha Corriher.

(Applause.)

CHAIRMAN CORRIHER: To be an effective leader, you will need the following; vision, motivation, management, energy, creativity, ambition, strategy. You will be faced with challenges, decisions, performance, and accomplishment. All these words rolled together become leadership.

We all have leadership abilities. We just need to reach down deep and pull those qualities out. John Maxwell states, "Good leadership isn't about advancing yourself, it's about advancing your team."

Madam President Sharon's theme, Keeping the Promise, is proof. To be successful, we must commit ourselves to uphold our mission and vision of the American Legion Auxiliary. The members across this great nation have kept their promise and are making more promises for better days ahead.

You may ask how are they keeping these promises? Well, here are a few examples. Leaders give instruction on how to accomplish a project in a group setting or in a one-by-one setting. Leaders explain the process from start to finish so that everyone has a clear understanding of the project, how it will benefit others, and how it will affect our community.

In many departments, fun days activities were held in a casual relaxed setting to share Auxiliary programs and project ideas. Units worked together at fun day fairs to share program information in fun and exciting ways. They held contests to test knowledge about the Auxiliary and gave prizes for correct answers and participation. Members demonstrated to other members how to make poppy pins, crepe-paper poppies, and numerous other activities that they could share with their members at unit meeting, district, county, or division meetings.

The American Legion Auxiliary basic course is a great tool for new members and those seasoned members to learn about the organization or to refresh our memories when it comes to the history of the organization and the process of how we do things and why we do them.

This committee was so excited to have 16 departments reporting 617 members taking the basic course this year. There were many departments that reported having certified instructors for the course, but left out the number of participants in the course. I am so very proud to say that the Central Division had 403 members to take the course.

(Applause.)

Great job, Central Division. And I'm looking forward to seeing exciting and future new leaders coming from that division.

Many departments held schools of instruction, boot camps, or workshops, and incorporated games-type shows to test their knowledge of members. Even Department presidents got into the action on how to show -- how to preside while having a little fun, too.

Part of the Auxiliary Strategic Plan is to develop a culture of goodwill, and that program has been embraced at all levels of the organization in units and departments.

Departments reported to accomplish this mission they invited the entire Legion family to take part in various programs and projects, actively discuss new ideas for members and things they wanted to be considered, and many reported implementing those new ideas and member participation increased.

Here's one example of the Legion family culture of goodwill. Dan, and I'm going to butcher this, but I have the right to, I'm a butcher by trade, Dan Magahey from Virginia is Virginia's poppy man. He also gave instruction on how to make poppies and his proud to wear his poppy shirt. If all units would utilize their Legion members with this program, just think how big and better it would be. That's leadership.

This leadership committee would like to leave you with a German proverb, and I want you to really think about it. "Promises are like the full moon, if they are not kept at once, they diminish day by day." This is the same with our organization. If we don't keep our promise to help grow this

organization, to share the history of the organization, to be kind to one another and to take responsibility for the destiny of our membership, then we, too, will diminish. Keep the faith, keep the promise, and grow this organization for the future generations.

Madam President, this concludes my platform remarks.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Are there any resolutions?

CHAIRMAN CORRIHER: No, Madam President, there are no resolutions.

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Thank you very much.

CHAIRMAN CORRIHER: Thank you.

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Thank you, Martha.

One of our biggest organizational challenges is to increase our visibility in the community as we serve our veterans, military, and their families. We rely heavily on strong grassroots public relations effort to meet these challenges. Here with her report is National Public Relations Committee Chairman Elaine Mackenzie.

(Applause.)

CHAIRMAN MACKENZIE: Madam National President, the Miriam Webster Dictionary defines public relations as follows, the business of inducing the public to have understanding for and goodwill toward a person, firm, or institution, also, the degree of understanding and goodwill achieved.

For the last several years, we, members of the American Legion Auxiliary, have been hearing that while we're doing a wonderful job supporting our active-duty military, our veterans, and their families, we are doing it too quietly. I am here today to report that our members, units, and departments have heard the message and the way they are reacting to it shows a lot of promise.

We're a humble group, but we're catching on. We've been sharing our achievements with the news and social media loud and proud. We asked our membership to pursue Goals 1 and 5 of the Centennial Strategic Plan and they jumped in wholeheartedly. Our members, units, and departments, are working every day in their communities to fulfill the mission of the American Legion Auxiliary. They are doing this while wearing their emblems and pins and being photographed with open smiling faces in front of their banners and displays. This makes for some impressive news coverage and members, units, and departments across the country are getting their share.

Unit Number 44, Newburgh, Indiana, Junior Auxiliary Member
Deanna M. Woodburn --

(Cheering.)

-- organized the drive for needed items at a local transitional housing facility for homeless veterans. She collected items such as cleaning supplies, kitchen supplies, bedding, winter coats and other clothing, and Christmas decorations. She went in her community with television interviews, flyers, and postings to social media. Her multi-platform use of publicity resulted in over 5,000 items being donated in one month, enough to fill a five-ton truck.

(Applause.)

All of the advanced publicity generated community interest causing the television station to interview her again generating even more publicity.

Congratulations, Deanna. With juniors like her, we can see the promise of the future of our auxiliary.

(Applause.)

Unit 286, Pine Castle in Orlando, Florida worked their programs and had publicity every step of the way. They were successful in getting articles in two different newspapers and had coverage on several television stations. When they worked with children and youth in their community, sent delegates to ALA Girls State, celebrated birthdays with World War II veterans, sent gift baskets to the VA, had their Little Miss and Miss Poppy out educating the public about the poppy, visited veterans in nursing homes. There was a newspaper article and/or a television spot on the event. The goal was to have a printed article each month and television coverage of each mission-related program, and this was no empty promise.

In promoting our organization as a whole, members got very creative. YouTube videos were made and promised explaining who we are, what we do, and why we matter.

The units are excited to share what they're achieving in their communities as evidenced by the large number of reports submitted, complete with pictures, clippings, and links to articles, Facebook groups, and websites. They posted, Tweeted, and published information about their participation in stand-downs, honor flights, Quilts of Valor events, poppy distribution, parades, patriotic holiday celebrations, and gift shops. Patriotic flash mobs were held in public places to generate interest in the American Legion family.

Finally, I'll leave you with a short poem. While working our mission, simply remember this, publicize your projects in keeping the promise.

Madam President, this concludes my platform remarks.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Thank you, Elaine. Are there any resolutions?

CHAIRMAN MACKENZIE: No, Madam President.

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Here with her report, please welcome National Secretary Dubbie Buckler.

(Applause.)

SECRETARY DAVIS: Just wanted to let you know that Madam National President has asked Dubbie to have a short report, brief remarks.

(Applause/Laughter.)

SECRETARY BUCKLER: Okay, about as short as I can make this is, things are good, you're solvent, and that concludes my report.

(Applause.)

SECRETARY BUCKLER: Okay, I've been told I can go ahead. And this is out of order, so I wasn't expecting that I was going to be the next one called up here, but --

So elaborating just a little bit on that very short report, I am very proud to stand before you again and say that, again, one more year, the American Legion Auxiliary, your National Headquarters, has had a stellar audit in all the ways that we are audited, and that is many.

(Applause.)

And that is something to celebrate because year after year you hear, "We had a clean audit. We had a clean audit. We had a clean audit." Well, that takes a ton of work and sometimes we just need to pause and realize just what a great achievement that is for this organization. We have a longstanding record of doing that, and we have a very -- and that includes auditing the Foundation, auditing National Headquarters, auditing our magazine, auditing our 401(k), auditing our HR practices. I mean, there are just a number of outside audits or reviews done about the organization, and we come out with -- if these were grades, these would be A-pluses, so I'm just very, very proud of that, and I hope you are, too.

(Applause.)

And one of the reasons that happens is because we have a wonderful National Headquarters staff, and I want to draw attention to one --

(Applause.)

I think I shared this with you last year, Marta Hedding, your National Treasurer, Marta.

(Applause.)

Now, when you do a personality and a characteristic profile, Marta and I are the same, whether it's the Myers Briggs or the, (indiscernible), you know, you all have heard the different kinds of profiles that people do to determine what kind of person you are so that you know how to conduct, you know, business with that person. So Marta and I are alike in every way except one. One of us is an extrovert, and one of us is an introvert.

Guess which one is which? Put those voting fobs down.

You know, at National Headquarters we're members, we're volunteers. Aaron Meyer who you see jumping up and down taking pictures, he is vice commander of his squadron for the Sons.

If we're eligible to join. We are ALA members at National Headquarters which means we're all volunteers, too. And our National Headquarters accounting staff, Tim Bresnahan, you know how outgoing and effervescent he is.

But the whole accounting division went down to our homeless veterans shelter and organized their pantry, and Tim said it was an accounting division's glorious moment because they got to count and sort and organize and count and count and count.

But those are great things that need to be done, so I just want you to know that at your National Headquarters we're humans, too, and we are volunteers, too, and we are actually doing a pretty good job of keeping things organized and well running at your National Headquarters.

(Applause.)

One of the things that we're trying to do, for example, to be more efficient. The magazine cost, the overall cost for the magazine, which is a big

chunk of what your membership dues cover, are unchanged despite the fact that we have less advertising. And that's not just in our magazine, that's in several. And we have declining publication numbers because as our membership numbers go down, so do the number of magazines that we publish, so we're real proud that we're holding the line on the cost given those two situations.

I also just want to share that you all know what's been in the news lately, and one of the things that we have done is we have updated our safety and security practices for National Headquarters. You need to have a workplace violence emergency plan. Twenty-five years ago, that wasn't something that people talked about, but we do. And I will just tell you that, you know, we occasionally get things that are -- can be determined to be threatening at National Headquarters, so we do those kinds of things.

While I'm up here, I just want to say one of the things we also personally volunteer with is the National Veterans Creative Arts Festival, and some of you learned that this year some of the veteran participating can't attend because many of them have attended using Hero Miles, and Hero Miles is a program of Fisher House, and I'm just digressing a little bit from my report. Many of us have miles that we are never going to use. We travel on airlines infrequently, and so at the end of a year, you know, you'll get a statement and you'll have 2,000 miles or 800 miles and you ignore it because you're never going to use them. Please, make it a point to donate those miles to Hero Miles. It's very simple, you just Google Hero Miles and you can figure out how to do that because, collectively, if we all donated our miles we're not going to use, we could probably get a lot more veterans attending things like the National Veterans Creative Arts Festival.

(Applause.)

At the Constitution & Bylaws pre-con meeting, one of the things that we do at this meeting, or at this convention, is we have training for the National Executive Committee. And at the Constitution & Bylaws meeting and then more in-depth at that meeting, it is the responsibility of the national officers and national directors, we have the responsibility for duty and care. And so sometimes there are things we have to talk about and I have to report, and I'm going to be talking plainly right now. It is not to throw anybody or any department under the bus. It is because there are things that people need to know, and I have a responsibility to share. And, unfortunately, the incident occurred over several years, but it is now a matter of public record, and I will only share, I will interrupt myself, I will only share what is a matter of public record in keeping with the requirement for confidentiality of things that are not public record and need not be disclosed, and I will not be doing that. But as a matter of public record, a federal case has -- the sentencing will be in October, United States versus Robin Briere, and that is a federal embezzlement case, and this will be the largest embezzlement in the history of the American Legion Auxiliary.

The Department of Florida's secretary embezzled money over several years, and I don't share that, as I said earlier, to call someone out. I share that because we all need to know about these instances, factually, not via gossip.

Robin pled guilty one count of wire fraud in the amount of approximately \$670,000, so that's a significant loss.

Now, what I also want to share with that is that the Department secretary/treasurer who was hired to replace Robin, Kimberly Sullivan, detected irregularities. She worked with -- and remember, this covered about a couple-of-year period of time. She worked with Erna Schwabe. She worked with Peggy Hearlson. And they put lots of new policies and procedures in place, so they have improved their operations, so it was a very bad situation, and I want to compliment those who worked to correct the situations or the practices that were in place that led to that.

(Applause.)

Now, why is the National organization never talking about this? Well, because this consumed a lot of my time as well. We try to be helpful, and we tried to advise and provide guidance. Plus, there was press about this. And when the headlines say, "American Legion Auxiliary Treasure embezzles over \$600,000," I'm having to call some news outlet and say, "The American Legion Auxiliary National Treasurer Marta Hedding has not done any such thing because the headline was not clear. So one of the things that we all have a responsibility to the organization and particularly the officers and directors that your Department at National level have is duty and care, and that includes reputation, protecting the reputation. So it is necessary sometimes for me to respond to a news report.

So I don't want to belabor that. There have been times when I've stood up here and wrong eventually gets detected, which is a good thing. The Department of South Dakota, their department secretary was convicted of embezzlement about a couple of years ago. And Marta and I were talking that we can recall there have been about six departments in relatively recent history that have dealt with an issue of embezzlement.

So the reason I'm talking about this is because a lot of time spent at National Headquarters is putting together tools, resources to help departments be better.

We talk about fiduciary stewardship. We talk about having a whistleblower policy. We talk about the need to protect whistle blowers.

The National Headquarters can't bring lawsuits unless it involves trademark violations, and a few years ago I talked about that situation where in Colorado the incorporated girls state program had not been operating properly as a subsidiary for years, and it reached the point where it was affecting the name and trademark of the organization. We filed a lawsuit in federal court, and we won. And what was the good news out of that? Colorado dissolved that corporation, brought the program back to its department, and has had now three years of very terrific ALA girls state programs.

(Applause.)

So that's why we have to talk about these things, and that kind of thing really takes an awful lot of my time at National Headquarters, and not just about questions coming from departments, questions coming from units. And some of you heard me say this before, it literally breaks my heart the

kinds of things, the kinds of calls we get about the things going on in some of our units and some of our departments. That's why we have the Centennial Strategic Plan, Goals 1, 2, 3, and 4. We have got to strengthen departments and units, develop good leaders, and we have got to foster a culture of goodwill because if we don't, that is going to be the downfall of this organization.

(Applause.)

Now, I mentioned the Department Operations Guide. It's a little document. It weighs eight pounds because it's got a ton of information in there, almost literally. And one of the things that's in there, especially in Chapters 1 and 2, it talks about the role of a department audit committee, the role of a department finance committee, the role of the department executive committee, the department governing board, where human resources, where those roles are. Those are executive roles.

A finance committee develops a budget, offers it to the governing board to adopt. A finance committee then tracks how income and expenses are tracking against the budget. That's the role of a finance committee.

An audit committee is responsible for retaining an external auditor. The audit committee doesn't do the auditing. It's the risk aversion committee. Its role is to see that an impartial external audit is done.

And the governing board is responsible for the duty and care of the organization, to make sure that the organization is solvent, financially healthy, and has good strategic direction.

So if you're unclear about those roles, there is good information available. We've also put out a -- there's a two-page document on fiduciary stewardship. Some of you have seen our ALA external auditor, Mike Alerding, do a presentation on that. We videotaped that at the Department Leadership National Conference, so that videotape is on our video channel. Information is there for how to be more efficient at how you manage your department.

Now, I've been asked a few times since I've been here, when will the unit handbook be updated. It's going to be called the Unit Guide when it is updated. And, quite frankly, it's not on hold. It's being updated because there are so many things coming out of the Centennial Strategic Plan, so many initiatives are coming up with great outcomes that need to be incorporated into it. So, quite frankly, there's no sense updating it right now when we know we've got a great deal of material that we need to incorporate into it, so it's going to be a while before that's done.

And some of you have also heard me say, "Well, when it will be ready?" as the Pope was asking Michelangelo when he was painting the Sistine Chapel, "When it is finished."

So we are working on it. I just don't want you to think that it's being ignored, but that's why we haven't just turned it over and republished it again because there are so many things that need to go into it.

I mentioned that we do an orientation for the National Executive Committee, and kudos to the Centennial Strategic Plan Goal 4 team because of some of the great work they've done. We have now just developed what

we're calling DEC 101, an orientation for the role of Department Executive Committee Department governing Board members. So that's something that will be rolled out very soon upon conclusion of this convention.

(Applause.)

Questions came up today and throughout the week about what are the -- and I get these questions a lot, what are the processes for suspending a member, revoking a member, disciplining a member?

The process for suspension revocation is outlined -- what you have to do is outline in the constitution and bylaws. And so one of the things that I think we need to develop, and that falls into that same it will be done when it's finished, but one of the things that I think we need to develop is that next step.

What I'm finding is that you are referring to the constitution and bylaws, the revision, and you are referring to the Department Operation Guide. So the questions I'm getting now are, "Okay, I've read where -- now how do we do this? When do we do this? How do we say that --," I get this a lot, "Can you help me word the motion?" And I'm happy to do that, well, I'm not happy to do that because it's sad that we have to do that, but I mean, under the circumstances I want to be helpful, but I think we've now -- the good news is you're wanting to deal with your problems. That's a good thing.

And the other good thing is you want to be proactive because there are two ways to handle problems in any organization. You can anticipate that you might have a problem, but things have been working well for the last 20 years, so we'll just roll the dice. And then when a problem does occur, you can be reactive. And, again, in the spirit of goodwill and compliments, Department of Florida, Department of South Dakota, Department of Colorado would say, "Being reactive is pretty expensive." So we want to help you to be proactive because one way or another, you're going to have to make an investment. It costs money in terms of time and time -- remember, time is money, so it cost to be proactive and try to put things in place to anticipate things that might happen, and it cost to be reactive.

So as you tackle the tough people problems, we're getting questions about that. Remember that you can also, as Chris Dickey mentioned earlier, discipline can be done in the form of a reprimand, and that's much simpler to do than suspending or revoking someone's membership. But if the goal is to foster a culture of goodwill, we have to start doing that, and we can't pass the responsibility on to somebody else.

Now, I've been asked in the hallway a lot, "So what's the latest with departments who have changed the maximum or the allowable terms that their NEC members can serve?" Twenty-four departments, or 44 percent of departments, now have some provision in their governing documents to allow for their NEC member to serve longer than a single one-year term. We think that that's an accomplishment.

(Applause.)

I've been asked a very good question, I want to take a moment to explain, but the National constitution and bylaws says that the NEC term is one year, so I want to just offer a moment of explanation, how long is a term

of the House of Representatives for the Congress? Two years. So you elect someone to serve in that two-year term Congress, but people who serve in Congress can be elected to more than one term. So that's the difference.

The seeded body of the National Executive Committee serves one administrative year because we operate, as you all know, on administrative years, right? So the provisions that some departments are adopting now, 24 or 44 percent, are that their NEC members can serve multiple, more than a single one-year term. So if an NEC member is elected to a two-year term at the Department level, she's going to serve for two one-year terms on the National Executive Committee. Is that a little bit clearer now how that works?

Also, we're getting a lot of questions about term limits for Department offices. So there's nothing in the National constitution or bylaws or governing documents that requires a department to have term limits. The only National requirement in our National governing documents is that each department must have a Department president, a department vice president, a department secretary, a department treasurer, and there's a provision where those two can be combined, a National Executive Committee, and an alternate National Executive Committee woman. That's all that's required in the national Constitution & Bylaws.

So you heard from the Constitution & Bylaws Committee. There are several who are happy to help and work with you as you ponder how to go about making changes if you're even considering doing so.

Now, I have a question to ask you. I'm switching gears now. We had one amendment today before the convention body, and right now our practice has been, because we've always done it that way, to mail those out. This is not binding. This is my way of asking you to give me your opinion.

Who would be really upset if we stopped mailing that amendment packet out and only mail it to the ones who request it? Okay, I'm going to ask the question again. Who would be really upset, so your response would be, "Yes, I would be upset," and you can do that by clapping or yelling or throwing something at me, but who would be really upset if we only mailed those amendment packets out, the 20-day notice, the official notification of the amendment or amendments to be considered before the National Convention delegates? How many would be really upset if we only mailed those to people who requested them instead of mailing them to everybody because we send them electronically?

(Applause.)

Okay, now if you're clapping, that means you would be upset because you want all of them to be mailed.

(Multiple speakers.)

I'm only asking an opinion. Okay, how many would be okay -- I'll ask it positively. How many would be okay if we emailed that out the way we've been doing it and only mailed it to people who requested it?

(Applause.)

I'm just trying to get a feel for that because it's one of those things we've always done that way, and it's quite, as you well know, it's quite an

expense to mail all those out. So if we can just handle it by email and mail it on demand, then that would reduce a lot of cost. Okay.

(Applause.)

Now, you heard great reports. One of them talked about branding. I'm going to say this because every year I just have to. One of the biggest liabilities we have in this organization is also one of our biggest opportunities to brand ourselves, and that's our American Legion Auxiliary Girls State programs. We talk about it a lot because you're entrusted with the care of someone else's daughter for a week. That's a huge liability, but it's also one of the few ways that the general public has any idea of who we are, what we do, and why we matter.

So, please, please, and I've even seen some shirts being worn around here, it is American Legion Auxiliary Girls State.

(Applause.)

Please, it can be American Legion Auxiliary Corn Husker Girls State.

(Cheering.)

It can be American Legion Auxiliary Aloha Girls State. It can be American Legion Auxiliary Hoosier Girls State.

(Cheering.)

It can be (indiscernible).

(Cheering.)

It can be all of those, but put American Legion Auxiliary in front of it. If you're going to make T-shirts and have little brand champions running around your state, make them aware and help them spread the word who put this program on.

Every year I talk to people and I have no firm statistical evidence. I can just tell you that anecdotally, we have a whole lot of American Legion Auxiliary Girls State alums out there who have no idea who put this program on. They thing their school send them and they thing the government paid for it.

So my thing about branding, so how did you like the red shirts?

(Applause.)

You like the material?

(Cheering.)

Okay. Now tomorrow, you understand we have a little change in things. We're still going to do the picture tomorrow, so whether you actually wear it or not, please bring it tomorrow because for a brief moment, we're going to ask you to either toss it on over your clothes or really make it look like you're wearing it because we're all going to be looking up, and tomorrow we're going to ask everybody to mush in and fill in the aisles so that we get one ginormous picture of everybody at National Convention, okay? Sound good?

(Applause.)

Now, another quick announcement. As you plan for the 2016-17 administrative year, this is an announcement. This is like I am announcing

loudly, remember that National Convention next year is one week earlier than normal.

(Applause.)

I'm glad you're all applauding. So 30 days prior to National Convention will be July 22nd. Twenty days prior to National Convention will be August 1st, and that means we're probably between now and then going to have to have a discussion about when reports are due. There are only so many weeks in the year to get things done, so just be aware that next year everything is a week earlier.

Now, I was elected the one to mention this --

-- we need to be practical and we need to be farsighted. You've heard me talk about that the governing board has responsibility for duty and care, and one is the financial health of the organization. Convention delegates have a responsibility to protect the organization, but not in the same way.

We need to be preparing ourselves that in the foreseeable future we need to have another dues increase. We can't go like we have gone in the past where we just let it to until it's a crisis. We're already going to be presenting a deficit budget. We're not bringing enough in dues revenue to cover our annual operating expenses. So just be prepared that it's time to start discussing it, and in the near future there will have to be some sort of proposal. And I understand in the finance pre-convention meeting they had a great discussion about ways to approach it. So that's all I'm going to say about that right now.

Because the biggest thing that's still going on is our Centennial Strategic Plan, and I want to compliment you because a common thing among all of the department presidents' reports this year, in some way or another you mentioned the strategic plan, and most of you mentioned Goal 2 and 5, so hooray to all of the departments.

(Applause.)

One of the things that came out of the Centennial Strategic Plan that we're spending money for, because we resourced that, to invest in ourselves -- I listened with intent to the report -- the life story of Helen Gardner who talked about investing in America. And we're at that stage where the American Legion Auxiliary needs to invest in ourselves. And one of the things we've done is we have this year, we're using a national news release service called MSL, and it's a well-respected large PR business, and e they're helping us develop and distribute stories that highlight the American Legion Auxiliary that can be shared online and in print media across the country.

Now, the cost is about \$100,000 a year, so that's part of that additional budget to resource the Centennial Strategic Plan. Well, here's the return on that. It costs us \$100,000. Right now we're at just about 2 million dollars received in value from having done that, and we've only posted two articles.

(Applause.)

Those articles have been picked up in small, medium, and large markets in places like the Houston Chronicle, LA Times, Chicago Tribune, Orlando Sentinel. Now, we can send out press releases until the cows come

home from National Headquarters, but when you pay a professional company to do it, look what the return is.

Eighty-one million people have seen these stories now, so if we would be paying for these ourselves, we would be paying about \$350,000 for each story, so we would be at \$700,000 right now, so we're already getting back in return well beyond we've paid, so investing in ourselves is paying off. And I just wanted to do a shout-out about that. That's pretty cool.

(Applause.)

Now, everything we are doing is about growing and building an efficient organization. And to grow and build an efficient organization means growing what?

(All say "membership.")

Membership. So a cool thing is we can now text a membership card to a member. That's pretty cool. "I've lost my card." "Well, here's --," we can send you a text so that you can get to it. You want to hear some other cool stuff?

(All say "yes.")

Okay. Well, after decades of waiting, some longstanding obstacles to growing the American Legion Auxiliary membership have been removed. You can now pay your dues by phone, by making a phone call to National Headquarters.

(Cheering.)

That was kind of lame, but okay. You can now pay your dues by phone --

(Cheering.)

-- so, you know, we recently made it possible to renew your dues online, and the anecdotal feedback from that is that members love it. Members' dues payment -- the advantage to this is that the dues payment is processed immediately. The member gets immediate payment acknowledgment, plus a printable membership card. There are no doubts about her payment or her membership status. She has instant proof of membership. And a member can call 317-569-4536. If you just call National Headquarters, I assure you we will get you to the right person. You can now call National Headquarters, and so for those members who pay several dues, "I'm paying for myself, my daughter, and my granddaughters," you can do that in one transaction over the phone by credit card.

(Applause.)

We have been asked for that for years, so Goal 1 hoorays and I know we have Anita Biggs and Trish Ward are in the office, our Goal 1 champions, along with Marta Hedding, so -- and our membership chair, Vicky (indiscernible), so woohoo-hoo. Okay, so I think that's a towel-raving moment for Sharon.

(Cheering.)

Now, so real quick, paying by phone, how does it work? You call, you're paying for the current or next year's membership year. We only accept MasterCard or Visa, but your members -- the membership dues showed up as paid right away, so the member is happy. And the department and unit

portions will be electronically funds transferred, or EFT to departments, and that's included in the twice-a-month distribution that we're already making for dues being paid online. So Departments, you get your money pretty quickly sending it out twice a month.

And the reports provided to the departments will show how much -- who has paid and how much. So it'll be a comprehensive report.

So now you can renew online and you can pay by phone. Do you agree that that's pretty neat?

(Applause.)

So I have a question to ask, what would be even neater than just being able to renew online?

(Multiple speakers.)

Drum roll, please. So the big ta-da moment that I hope you're excited about because we think we've been waiting for this date for decades, new members can now join the American Legion Auxiliary online.

(Applause.)

So to join online is pretty simple. It requires you to be at a computer or tablet or Smartphone, so that means that when you come up to somebody at the grocery store shopping and you find out, "You're eligible to join the American Legion Auxiliary?" well, if you've downloaded the American Legion Auxiliary interactive website onto your Smartphone, you can say, "Let's get you joined right now" in the moment, right now, without them walking away and having to fill out paperwork or you being caught without having a membership brochure on you, and it happens to all of us.

Someone just said "never, never." Well, so here's how she does this. She goes online and she hits "join." It's a pretty noticeable button. And once she does that, she's going to look and she's going to see, "Am I eligible?" just like on a paper she determines if she's eligible. She then selects the department or the state that she wishes to join, and just like now if she's from Ohio but she's currently living in Florida and she wants to join in Ohio she can, or Ohio and Florida can get together and in the spirit of goodwill determine where she should join.

But just like now, she picks the department where she's going to join. She then fills out the form just like on a paper application. She enters her contact information, then she enters her eligibility just like on the paper forms. Then, and this is the new part, she certifies that she is eligible, and this is just like so many online forms that you all are using. By signing, she is attesting or swearing to the accuracy and validity of the information that she has submitted. She then hits "submit" and, instantly, she receive an acknowledgment message. If you can't read these screens, I'm just summarizing what they say. So instantly, she receives an acknowledgment message that says, "You'll receive an email in minutes with a link to make your payment" because, of course, we all know she's not done until the payment has been completed, so she'll get an email to do that, and that comes within minutes. That's not something that she'll get a few days later. Within minutes she gets that email.

So then she opens that email. She pays her ALA dues online and she receives an automatic email back with her receipt and her membership card. The process is just like paying renewal dues online. Her payment covers all three dues levels, her National department and unit dues. She's in the system, so your department membership clerks, your department secretaries don't have to enter this person into the ALAMIS membership system.

The department will then receive its department, plus its department headquarters unit dues because when she joins online, she's joining your department headquarters unit.

Now, she can move after she's joined, but remember, this is so that you get the transaction completed in the moment instead of losing a member because you've got all this delay in time with paperwork. So she joins online, she pays via the email that's sent to her. She has joined your ALA department headquarters unit, and then the department will receive its department and its unit headquarters dues portions with the next distribution of the online dues payments from headquarters, which is twice a month, which I just described.

So we have now removed three barriers to membership growth and retention. Before, you couldn't renew online. You couldn't pay multiple dues in one transaction. And you couldn't renew -- and you couldn't join online. So you can now do all of those three things, and these options, hopefully, will help the American Legion Auxiliary foster a culture of goodwill, generate brand loyalty, and enhance membership strength at all levels. Can we grow membership? Can we do this?

(Applause.)

Okay, Madam President, that now concludes my report. It was very short.

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Thanks, Dubbie. Appreciate the update. We're moving forward. We can do this. The Past Presidents Parley is a forum that brings together the experience of former Auxiliary presidents to utilize their expertise and active service to the organization. Please welcome Janet Jefford, National Past Presidents Parley Committee Chairman. Janet.

(Applause.)

CHAIRMAN JEFFORD: Madam National President, I have heard you speak this year about how important our unit members are. No matter what our past or current leadership roles, we are first and foremost unit members. So today, I would like to share the story of two inspiring winners of the Unit Member of the Year Award. These ladies, along with all winners, are truly keeping their promise of service.

Jeanne Ostnes of Unit 1 in Anchorage is a proud third-generation Alaskan.

(Applause.)

You can often find her in the kitchen cooking and washing dishes or cleaning the grounds around the post home. Loving to have fun, Jeanne could be spotted wearing her '50s poodle skirt and dancing in a skit during the rock-and-roll-themed Early Bird Party last fall.

She was an active member of the Decorating Committee for the Sadie Hawkins-themed sweetheart dinner in February. This event showcases the posts and Auxiliary volunteers of the year by crowning them king and queen. Guess who was the queen this year?

March found Jeanne working the events for the Sons of the Legion National Commander Kevin's Homecoming.

She spent many hours preparing and serving the luncheon, assembling welcome packets for the guests, and gathering donations for the gift baskets presented to President Sharon and Commander Dale.

She was a vital part of the Memorial Day ceremonies at local cemeteries. She states, "Our work with the poppies, decorating crosses, and my reading of Flanders Field has made the services I perform more poignant and memorable."

Being a history buff, Jeanne has taken on the tedious job of cataloging boxes of historical documents from the post and Auxiliary storage rooms. These documents and photos will be used to write a history for the upcoming 100-year celebration. She also hopes to add to the current World War I historical banner new banners for other wars and engagements.

Jeanne is very proud of the service of her family members. On her mother's side, she can trace her family back to their arrival in Plymouth, Massachusetts in 1623. Her ancestors have fought in the Revolutionary War, the Civil War, World War I, World War II.

She traces her Alaskan roots to her grandfather and her father who was pilot and instructor during World War II flying 18 missions as a B17 pilot over Europe.

In Jeanne's words, "I believe their service has led me to continue to make lives better for our living veterans. The work we do with the domiciliary, Fisher House, and for veterans we see daily in the posts all give me optimism that there is more to do."

Please welcome Jeanne Ostnes from Anchorage Alaska.

(Applause.)

(Applause.)

CHAIRMAN JEFFORD: A member for only a little more than a year, Sheila Behrens joined Unit 37 in Quincy, Illinois in April 2015 and immediately began volunteering when others wouldn't. Through her example, other members have become more active. Fund-raising activities have increased, and the Auxiliary and posts are working together to keep their promise of service.

Last June, she spearheaded a garage sale raising \$1,000 that has been used to purchase supplies for veterans at the state home.

The unit began sending monthly care packages to Iraq in the Mideast. Each month they assemble personal care bags for homeless veterans. They are able to do this because of Sheila's ability to get things donated and to negotiate with local stores for discounts on items to purchase.

The post sponsors a dance every Sunday afternoon. The unit sells food as a fundraiser. Sheila began the practice of having a weekly special as well as food off the grill. She helps make the menus, purchases the food, and

cooks. She often donates the food and has inspired other members to do the same. Their proceeds have tripled since Sheila became involved.

Her present rights, Sheila has encouraged others to be active and involved. More members are involved with doing what they can and loving every minute of it.

In June 2015, Sheila was elected unit chaplain. Besides her regular duties as chaplain, she makes red, white, and blue wreaths for members' funerals and gives them to the family afterwards.

I quote from this application, "All these things have occurred and are still happening because of one new member and her decision to get involved. She truly cares about the unit, posts, veterans, military, community, and her church. Sheila personified everything a member should be to make the unit an active organization that continues to take care of our veterans and the community we live in."

Sheila could not be here today. I'm happy to say her son has returned safety from his deployment to Iraq, and she has been spending time with him.

(Applause.)

These two stories are just an example of the good work being done by all our department winners.

(Applause.)

I wish we had time to feature every one of them, but, please, will anyone, past or present, that has ever been recognized by your unit or your department as a unit member of the year please stand and be recognized.

(Applause.)

Thank you each and every one of you for keeping our promise and for exemplifying our motto of service, not self. Thank you.

(Applause.)

Madam President --

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Yes.

CHAIRMAN JEFFORD: It is my privilege to introducing five inspiring women who exemplify the meaning of service, our winners of the Salute to Servicewomen Award.

The Department of Mississippi submitted the winner representing the United States Air Force, Master Sergeant Deborah Fielder, an active member of the Mississippi Air National Guard.

(Applause.)

Serving is a family tradition. He son served in the Air National Guard and her daughter is currently serving.

Deborah currently serves full time as a personnel craftsman for the 248th Air Traffic Control Squadron taking care of all personnel matters for some 80 military families. She has been the unit's family support representative since 2011 maintaining communications with family members while military members are deployed.

She has received many awards throughout her career, including the 2013 Outstanding Senior Non-Commissioned Officer of the Year for the Mississippi Air National Guard.

Deborah not only serves those in uniform, but knows the importance of serving our veterans who no longer wear the uniform. She spends countless hours volunteering at the Jackson Veterans Hospital. She serves local school children by donating school supplies, volunteering as a test proctor, and arranging parties and events. She personally funded 160 Easter baskets for needy children in an after-school program and started an alternative safe trick-or-tree event.

She is a certified victim's advocate and has been in this position as an additional duty since 2010.

Deborah goes above and beyond for her brothers and sisters in uniform and in service to her community.

Please welcome Master Sergeant Deborah Fielder.

(Applause.)

MS. FIELDER: Good morning.

(All say "good morning.")

MS. FIELDER: Good morning my family members and friends. Have you had the opportunity this morning to tell someone that's in your family that you love them?

(All say "yes.")

Well, we're going to take another opportunity, so I'm going to do like we do in church, I want you to look at the person next to you and say, "Family, I love you."

(All comply.)

Great. You guys are good at following orders.

As stated, I am Master Sergeant Deborah Fielder. I am from Meridian, Mississippi. I would like to thank Chief Master Sergeant Angela Bachman (phonetic), Unit 71, the American Legion Auxiliary Department of Mississippi, the American Legion Auxiliary Department of Mississippi for their nomination for this award.

Thank you also to support from Colonel Billy Nabors (phonetic), 186 Wing Commander, Lieutenant Colonel Kelly Miller, Commander of the 186 group and Air Operations Officer, Lieutenant Colonel James Etterman (phonetic), who is the 248 Air Traffic Control which I'm a member of and he is my immediate supervisor.

"Lose yourself in the service of others, then you'll find your sense of purpose," author unknown.

"Integrity first. Service before self, and an excellence in all that we do are Air Force core values."

I have been in the military for 38 years. I know some of you weren't born.

(Applause.)

And I feel that both of these quotes, last statements, speak volumes about my military career and my civilian life.

My service began in 1979 in a combat communications unit and probably ending in the Air Traffic Control Unit. It's been a very rewarding career. I've held various careers, which includes ground radio operator. Let me tell you about a ground radio operator.

How many of you know Morse Code or have heard of Morse Code?
(Multiple speakers.)

Okay. There's a few in this audience that never have heard of Morse Code, so I say to you, da dit dit da.

Okay. Administrative/personnel specialist was also a position for me. That person cuts orders and the keys to military going with orders, sending them overseas at various TDY locations. I'm also responsible for performance reports.

The unit training manager, the unit training manager is responsible for the careers of our members making sure that they take each step of the ladder so that they can end up with a great career.

And then the additional duty of being the first sergeant. That person is the commander's firsthand person to keep the troops straight all in accordance with the mission in their own right. Having a military career, you get to service the public by protecting them and by involving yourself within the community by different community projects that help strengthen our communities.

I've come up with tons of ideas and projects to help and service others, but I'm just one person. I can't and have not done this alone. I've had many helpers who sometimes need just a little push. My projects have included many opportunities to help and service others. I encourage others to learn that if every person on this earth would do one project or something else for another person in this earth every day, we would have a little piece of close to heaven on this earth.

I would like to thank you once again for this award.

(Applause.)

CHAIRMAN JEFFORD: The winner from the United States Army was submitted by Unit 122 in Illinois. She is Captain Lindsay Leskanich, a former junior member of this unit.

(Applause.)

Lindsay began her career in ROTC at Eastern Illinois University, finished basic training in 2004, and completed her bachelor's in general studies in 2007. Lindsay went on to earn her bachelor's in nursing and was deployed to Baghdad in 2008 where she worked in the ER and the ICU units.

While at Ford Carson, Lindsay was the officer in charge of conducting a hospital-wide campaign to raise awareness and offer opportunities for donating to charities.

Lindsay earned her doctorate in nursing in 2015 as part of the psychiatric mental health nurse practitioner program. She is currently stationed in Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri --

(Cheering.)

-- where she is a nurse practitioner and works primarily in the outpatient behavioral health clinic. Her specialty takes a very kind and compassionate person who can cope and respond to the needs of her patients.

Off base, Lindsay volunteers with Habitat for Humanity, Big Brothers and Big Sisters of America, and the Retriever Rescue of Colorado.

Please welcome Captain Lindsay Jo Leskanich.

(Applause.)

MS. LESKANICH: Good morning.

(All say "good morning.")

All right. First, I'd like to start off by thanking everyone here.

Thank you for this prestigious award, this nomination. Thank you, Ms. Marcia Haag for taking the time to nominate me for this.

(Applause.)

And to my family and friends, thank you always for your unwavering support.

As she had mentioned, I've had kind of an interesting journey in the military so far. I've been very fortunate for the opportunities that I've had. I actually initiated started off in 2004 in ROTC and had the opportunity to go to Army basic training down in Fort Jackson. And that was an eye-opening experience. That helped to encourage me to complete my degree.

It's a little easier on this side. So I did graduate in 2015 with my doctorate in nursing, and I've been working with veterans.

The state of Missouri, we see all of the veterans, all the beneficiaries down there, so family members, active duty, and retirees in the outpatient behavioral health setting. So that's been a passion of mine for some time now. And upcoming now is a deployment for me in the next couple weeks, so what I can tell you is that what you all do, it matters. It he's the encouragement of the community that the American Legion Auxiliary offer. It goes without -- there's no words to say how thankful we are for your service, so thank you very much.

(Applause.)

CHAIRMAN JEFFORD: The winning applicant from the United States Coast Guard was submitted by Unit 50 in Iron City, Michigan.

(Cheering.)

She is Lieutenant Melissa McCafferty. Lieutenant McCafferty hails from the town of Newberry in Michigan's upper peninsula. In 2011, she graduated with high honors from the U.S. Coast Guard Academy where she was recognized as the distinguished humanities graduate and was named a Harry S. Truman scholar. You can clap for that one.

(Applause.)

Immediately after, she served as a Truman Fellow at the U.S. Department of State where she worked in the Office of the Coordinator for Counter Terrorism. Lieutenant McCafferty recently left her assignment as a command duty officer at Sector Houston Galveston in Houston, Texas where she was the commander's direct representative for the oversight of Coast Guard missions in a 140,000 square nautical mile area encompassing seven major port complexes.

In June of 2016, Lieutenant McCafferty transferred to Washington, D.C. where she serves as a strategic analyst in the commandant's advisory group responsible for developing strategic context for executive decision-making.

In this capacity, she forecasts emergent trends and long-term opportunities to enhance key relationships with the Department of Homeland Security, Congress, the administration, academia, and the private sector.

While in Houston, Melissa served as a victim advocate and chaired the Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Committee. Because of her tenacity, the number of victim advocates had increased from 40 to 30.

She also collaborated with a nearby hospital and local women's rape crisis counseling program to provide psychological care and medical treatment for sexual assault victims and their families.

In her community, she serves as a mentor and leader to countless women in her capacity as a lacrosse coach, and serves on the Board of Directors as Programing Committee Chair for Truman Scholars Association, a national nonprofit public service organization.

Lieutenant McCafferty holds her advanced boat forces insignia and is a licensed 100-ton master merchant mariner.

(Applause.)

Her personal awards include the Coast Guard Commendation Medal, the Coast Guard Achievement Medal, and the Military Outstanding Volunteer Service Medal. She is a lifetime Girl Scout having won her Girl Scout Gold Award in 2007.

Please welcome Lieutenant Melissa Christina McCafferty.

(Applause.)

MS. MCCAFFERTY: Wow, what an introduction. Thank you.

Good morning.

(All say "good morning.")

Thank you for having me here. I am so thrilled and honored to be here with such wonderful and enthusiastic women. Thank you.

(Applause.)

So where is the delegation from Michigan?

(Cheering.)

Thank you for representing our state and for allowing me to represent our state as well. And to Diana Bancroft and John Mella (phonetic), who's over there in the corner, can you please stand up?

(Applause.)

Diana was the one who nominated me, and she's the reason why I am here today, so thank you, Diana, and thank you, John, for forming a relationship that has extended for five years now.

It is also because of them that I am proud to say I am an American Legion member, an American Legion Auxiliary member.

(Applause.)

Exactly. I'd like to thank my mother who is here as my guest. I'm not sure where she's hiding, but without her courage and constant guidance throughout my life, I would not be anywhere where I am today. So behind every individual is a stronger and even greater individual, and it is to her that I owe all my accomplishments. Thank you, Mom.

(Applause.)

I would also be remiss in saying that although this is an individual award awarded to myself and to other members of the service, I am here because of the collective actions of individuals who, combined, have forged a path that have enabled me to come where I am and stand before you here today. So to the women in the audience, to do what you do on a day-to-day basis and to do so with courage and tenacity and enthusiasm, it is absolutely endearing and heartwarming, and because of your sacrifices and your courage, I am here today. So it is because of your efforts --

(Applause.)

Yeah. It is because of your collective efforts and your combined enthusiasm that I stand on your shoulders and accept this award here today, humbled and honored to do so on behalf of my state, my service, my unit, and my country.

So go Coast Guard, Semper Paratus, and God bless the United States of America.

(Applause.)

CHAIRMAN JEFFORD: Unit 303 in Bonita Springs, Florida nominated the winner from the United States Marines, Sergeant Ashlee Grissom. She was nominated as a servicewoman who has demonstrated exemplary service both in and out of uniform making her the future face of women in the military.

Instead of attending a technical college, Ashlee decided in 2011 to join the Marines to give back to America. She said it was the best decision she ever made.

After graduating from boot camp in Paris Island, she attended military occupational specialty school and graduated as a motor transportation operator. She served as part of a combat logistic unit in Okinawa, Japan and in Korea.

In 2014, she volunteered for and graduated from the Marine Corps Embassy Security Guard School in Naples, Italy. Her unit of seven was responsible for activating the Naples Consulate for the Marine Security Guard Program.

Throughout her career, Ashlee has attended numerous training programs moving quickly from the rank of private to sergeant.

She is always volunteering and has received five letters of appreciation and numerous awards.

Now, being one of only two female embassy security guards in Moscow, Russia, she provides support to other female Marines whenever possible. For the last four years, she has celebrated her birthday in four different countries.

With us today all the way from Moscow, Russia, please welcome Sergeant Ashlee Grissom.

(Applause.)

MS. GRISSOM: Thank you. Good morning, ladies and gentlemen. I'd first like to start off by saying how grateful I am to be with you today and to be the second woman from Bonita Springs Post 303 to stand up here and receive this award.

(Cheering.)

Thank you to the American Legion Auxiliary for this astounding opportunity to represent my fellow servicewomen of the United States Marine Corps. I am so pleased to receive the 2015/2016 Salute to Service Women Award. It is truly such an amazing honor.

August 13th marked 98 years that women have been able to enlist the Marine Corps. On 11 July, 1919, the American Legion granted a charter to the first post of women's Marine Corps Reservists known as Belleau Wood Post 1. It's membership consisted of 90 women who have worked at Headquarters Marine Corps. Opha Mae Johnson, who was the first woman of 305 to enlist in the Marine Corps, was a charter member of this post.

Since then, female service members have continued to progress within the military. 2016 marks the first year that female Marines are able to participate in all combat MOS's. With that being said, it is extremely humbling to be a part of such a remarkable organization, to share the same uniform, and to work alongside servicewomen who currently defy the limitations that were once put in place.

As said before, I am currently stationed in Moscow, Russia as a Marine security guard or MSG. The MSG's job consists of protecting personnel and classified information at assigned missions all over the world.

Along with protecting people and information, MSGs also have various assigned tasks, currently (indiscernible) the 241st Marine Corps Ball and other community functions --

(Cheering.)

Yeah -- functions in order to raise morale and overall cohesion within the embassy community.

Upon returning to Moscow, I will pass on my current duties as I have earned the position as one of three squad leaders where I will then be leading a group of my peers.

Outside of the Marine Corps I volunteer with embassy communities so that I can make a positive impact on the children within the community and also do what I can for children who are less fortunate.

In addition to volunteering, I'm currently training for my second cross-fit competition in pursuing a bachelor's degree in business administration.

(Applause.)

Thank you. I have had the opportunity to travel the world, see amazing things, experience different cultures, and share my own with the wonderful people that I have met, but none of this could have been possible without the support of the people around me.

I would first like to thank my family supporting me throughout my whole career. My dad and my mom have always been my biggest supporters and have always pushed me in the right direction by never letting me give up or stop believing in myself.

I would also like to thank Jen Farrington for making it possible for me to be here today.

Thank you, again, to the American Legion Auxiliary and Bonita Springs, Florida Post 303 for giving me this opportunity.

Lastly, I would like to thank all service members past, present, and future. For all of you, I am truly grateful, semper fidelis. Thank you.

(Applause.)

CHAIRMAN JEFFORD: And last, but not least, from the United States Navy --

(Cheering.)

-- submitted by Unit 346 in Neptune, New Jersey, the winner is Lieutenant Evita Salles.

Evita began her application letter with these words, "It is my sincere honor and privilege to serve in the United States Navy. I am a single mother from New Jersey, and I cannot think of a better organization that affords women the opportunity to excel in positions of leadership no matter what her background may be. My story centers very much around mentorship and recruiting the best and brightest into the United States Navy."

Evita began her Navy career as a naval flight officer. She then transitioned into the Naval Reserve as a public affairs officer. A few years later, she had the opportunity to enter the human resources field. She presently serves full time as the human resources officer at Navy Recruiting Command. There, she is the director for reserve officer sessions overseeing all reserve officer sessions into the Navy.

In addition, she serves as her region's mentor coordinator responsible for ensuring the mentorship of the 100-plus HR officers and perspective HR officers in her region.

Evita mentors the war fighters and supporters of war fighters who are looking to transition into new career paths both inside and outside the Navy. Likewise, she mentors civilians who have never served in the military, but want to answer that call to serve in the best way possible.

In addition, Evita assists other mothers on the base with childcare and other support so that they can serve with a greater piece of mind. She is active in her church, mentoring the youth on spiritual development, college opportunities, and, of course, Navy opportunities.

Quoting Evita, "People often overlook the people behind the scenes, those who ensure the success of the mission by supporting the war fighter. I am proud to be one of those supporters of the war fighter."

Please welcome to the stage Lieutenant Evita Salles.

(Applause.)

MS. SALLES: Whoop, I'm last, but not least, right?

How are you all doing today?

(Cheering.)

All right. Good morning. First, I want to start off by saying thank you, Lord, for allowing me to be here today, allowing me to stand here and speak with you all fine ladies and gentlemen of the audience.

Thank you to the American Legion Auxiliary for all the work that you do in support of veterans, service members, and their families.

I'd be remiss if I didn't thank Doreen Gallagher for nominating me.

(Applause.)

She's the outgoing department president of New Jersey, Unit 346. We've been childhood friends. I've known her since preschool, so it's --

(Applause.)

Yes. We had sleepovers together and everything in the house. We've been friends for a very long time, so I'm honored to be here and to catch up with you after so many years, so thank you.

As I look out on the audience, I see the faces of many caring individuals, people who volunteer and selflessly give their time to help people like me, service members, veterans and their families, so I humbly thank you for the opportunity and for all that you do for everyone. Thank you.

(Applause.)

So I wouldn't be here today if it weren't for caring people like you who help shape me into the woman that I am today. My mentors, both in and out of the military, who believed in me and inspired me to continue on.

My family is my rock, of course. They've supported me through all my endeavors through this path that I've chosen. My father is the one that's inspired me to join the military, so he's retired Army.

(Applause.)

I'm the only Navy one in my family, so -- which is cool. So here I am today. The people I've worked with, service members, the people I've led and who have led me help me get here today, and I thank them for their mentorship and guidance.

So I'm a single mother of two toddlers, a four-year-old and a two-year-old, so they certainly keep me busy and they motivate me and inspire me to continue on every day and to be a better mother, a better woman, a better leader.

So I'm proudly serving in the Navy, and for me, service is a God-given calling. So I'm fulfilled every day serving the war fighter as a Navy human resources officer. So as a Navy human resources community, that's our sole purpose is to serve the war fighter in a variety of capacities.

And my experience has mainly been with on-and-off ramping in the Navy, so people who are looking to transition from active duty, they were out in the sea or air, you know, or in submarines and they want to come and try something new. They want to start a family, and they want to know how to do that the best way possible. Many want to join the reserve component and still serve in a part-time capacity and still be connected. So I help them figure out those things and help point them in the right direction for the path that best suits their lifestyle.

In addition, I volunteered, as you've heard from the introduction, in my church mentoring girls who are looking -- and boys who are looking to come into college, Navy opportunities, children within my community. I thrive on service. That's what keeps me going. I believe, again, it's a God-given purpose to use your skills and talents to help better your fellow man and woman, help each other become the best version of yourselves. Just like every day I strive to be the best version of myself as best as possible.

(Applause.)

Thank you. So I can confidently that I will leave here a better woman because of people like you who have inspired me, who have motivated me and shaped me into the woman that I am today. So I continue and I look forward to giving back and paying it forward, of course.

So I'd like to close off with a quote. One of my favorite quotes from late President John F. Kennedy, which I'm sure you probably all know, "Ask not what your country can do for you, but what you can do for your country."

(Applause.)

So I think we all do that, and, again, thank you from the bottom of my heart.

(Applause.)

CHAIRMAN JEFFORD: Are they not the best of the best?

(Applause.)

Madam President, this concludes my platform remarks.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Thank you so much for your service and allowing us to honor you today. You are true heroes. How about another round of applause for our servicewomen.

(Applause.)

Janet, do you have any resolutions?

CHAIRMAN JEFFORD: No, I do not, but I have one quick recommendation.

The Past Presidents Parley Program is unique. Although it is listed in the Plan of Action as a member support committee, it could also be considered a mission outreach program. Many department, district, and unit Past Presidents Parleys raised a considerable amount of money for scholarships. Many veterans, especially women veterans, are served through this program.

Currently, and end-of-year report is not required, therefore, the number of veterans assisted, the money spent to assist veterans, and the amount of scholarships given is not always being reported.

The Past Presidents Parley pre-convention meeting recommends that an annual report be required.

Thank you, Madam President.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Thank you. Would the national secretary please give us quick, fast, short convention updates.

SECRETARY BUCKLER: I'll do them as quickly as possible.

Okay, there's lot of mail stacked up on the National Headquarters Office here at convention, so if your departments are not picking up your mail, would you please do so because there's plenty of over there to be picked up.

The following committees will meet following the Woman of the Year luncheon: Community Service at table 38 with Carol Edwards; Legislative at table 39 with Elaine Mackenzie; VA&R at table 54 with Kathy Dungan; Americanism at the back of the room with Sue Britton; and will membership plus the incoming national division vice presidents please

assemble at table 53 at the conclusion. Also, the Department of Arizona has one ticket left for the Woman of the Year luncheon if anyone needs one.

Before I go on with announcements, I do want us to pause. I just learned that a dual member of the American Legion/American Legion Auxiliary, who was here as a delegate to the Regional National Convention, Gail Reed from Unit 31 in Arizona passed away while she was here.

So could we just take a moment.

(Pause.)

Thank you, and let's all offer condolences as appropriate.

The unit member of the year reception will be at noon on the second floor of the Hyatt Regency Hotel in the Findlay Room, and the Hyatt Regency is across the street from the convention center, some direction. There's a skywalk -- I don't know where we are in relationship to it. There's a skywalk over there, but remember as I explained yesterday, the luncheon and the reception have moved to the Hyatt Regency Hotel right across the street from the Millennium Hotel. So the unit member of the year reception at noon in the Findlay Room on the second floor of the Hyatt. The woman of the year luncheon will be at 12:30 in Regency's room A, B, and C, which is the ballroom on the third floor of the Hyatt, and that's where we were for the national Constitution & Bylaws pre-convention meeting. That's where that was held.

Will all National President's Excellence Award winners assemble back stage for photos immediately upon adjournment.

Tonight, those who have been invited to the National Commander's head table reception, that is at 5:15 here in the convention center in rooms 230 and 233. And the banquet, the National Commander's banquet is here at 6:30 in the grand ballroom on the third floor. And by the way, that's where the State's dinner will be tomorrow night.

Now, tomorrow is Wednesday, so I've been told. Metal detectors will be placed in front of the American Legion general sessions Exhibit Hall A, so you will not be screened prior to entering the building tomorrow to attend our session or on Thursday morning. Once you leave the American Legion general Exhibit Hall A, you must go through the metal detectors again. So they're only going to be placed in front of Exhibit Hall A.

Security is going to be similar to airport security; however, plastic bottles, water bottles, and food may be brought into the exhibit hall, or into the convention hall. I'm so sorry. It is recommended that everybody be in Hall A where the Legion is holding their National convention by 11:30 tomorrow and at 8:30 on Thursday morning for the joint sessions. Tomorrow's joint session is with the Legion to hear the candidate for President of the United States, Hillary Clinton, and on Thursday morning the joint session with the American Legion is to hear candidate for national president, Donald Trump -- president of the United States, Donald Trump.

Well, he is the national president, I mean, whoever is elected is -- President Obama is our national president -- all right, we'll get --

Okay. I think you all understood what I meant.

This information is also going to be posted in Cvent, and those of you who are receiving that through text, you'll get that information, okay?

So, Madam President, that concludes the announcements -- the updates, the information they need to know.

PRESIDENT CONATSER: This meeting is recessed until tomorrow morning at 8 a.m.

(Adjournment.)

(Whereupon, at 12:08 p.m. on Tuesday, August 30, 2016, the above-entitled meeting was concluded.)

**NATIONAL CONVENTION PROCEEDINGS
WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 31, 2016**

ANNOUNCER: Welcome to Day Three of Keeping Our Promise: The 96th American Legion Auxiliary National Convention. Here to begin our session is your National President Sharon Conatser.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Good morning.

AUDIENCE: Good morning.

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Rally towels! Come on now! And if your department wins an award, let's -- yesterday everybody was, "Oh, yea."

(Laughter.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: So let's get excited, okay?

(Cheering.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: The 96th Annual Convention of the American Legion Auxiliary will come to order. Welcome to Wednesday's session.

Would you please silence your phones, pagers or whatever else that might make noise. And once again we ask -- ladies -- once again we ask that you keep the talking to a minimum, because if we can hear it up here, I know people around you cannot hear what's going on. Thank you.

At this time I will ask National Chaplain Bird Derrick to come forward and give the invocation.

CHAPLAIN DERRICK: Good morning.

AUDIENCE: Good morning.

CHAPLAIN DERRICK: Yesterday in my remarks I made reference to my name tag, sometimes calling it a red badge of courage. So this morning I'm borrowing from Pam Sealey, Department Chaplain from Oregon, to share part of her prayer and then some from my own. So let's bow our hearts before the Lord.

Lord, I ask for courage to face and conquer my own fears, courage to take me where others will not go. I ask for strength of body to protect others, strength of spirit to lead others. I ask for dedication to do my job well, dedication to my country to keep it safe.

Give me, Lord, concern for those who trust me and compassion for those who need me. And please, Lord, be at my side.

You promise, Father, that you will never leave us or forsake us, and you long for us to know you deeply and personally because it is the way you love. You are the God who sees us.

Father, as we go through this day today, I ask for complete calm and peace in Cincinnati. Father, that we would keep our hearts open to you, to one another. And, Lord, as people leave this area and travel home, I have heard concerns about weather storms and road conditions, so, Father, I just ask that you would go before us by your spirit and make the way safe for all.

I just pray in your holy name today, Lord. Thank you, Father.

Amen.

AUDIENCE: Amen.

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Thank you.

And now I am very excited to tell you about a very special gift that was presented to a deserving veteran last week right here in Ohio.

(Music.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Since 2014, Mattress Firm has generously agreed to donate a mattress, box spring and frame to a deserving veteran or veteran transitional housing program located in the convention host city. This has become an annual donation executed by the Mattress Firm, our National Headquarters and American Legion Auxiliary members located in the convention's host city. This year's special veteran recipient is Varnel McDade. He is a U.S. Army -- I'm sorry, U.S. Navy veteran --

(Cheering.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: -- who served from 1968 to 1972.

Varnel was injured on board ship during an accident that left him hospitalized for six months as he underwent five surgeries. He currently lives in a one-bedroom apartment and works five days a week as a maintenance worker. He is a humble man that is grateful for everything that he has. When asked if he needed anything he said, "No, I have all I need, but I would like a good bed so I don't ache in the morning."

At the time, Varnel was sleeping on a leaky air mattress.

Thanks to Mattress Firm, the members of the Department of Ohio and our National Headquarters staff, Varnel new queen-size Cloud Supreme mattress, box springs and frame were delivered just last week, along with a mattress cover, pillows, sheets, pillowcases, a bed skirt and a comforter.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: We greatly appreciate McDade's military service and sacrifices, and hope he is enjoying a good night's sleep. Let's give McDade and Mattress Firm a hand.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: We have a very important person that has made a video for all of us. Would you please watch.

(Music.)

ANNOUNCER: Promises, promises, promises. As part of my executive oath for my second term, I stood on the east portico of the Capitol and delivered a speech that some say was memorable. Keep in mind, I addressed a country bloodied and battered by civil war. There was hardly a family that didn't feel the pain of death, disease or injury. That awful war separated families, often pitting brother against brother.

At the time of my second inauguration, the war's end was only weeks away. As a nation we needed to unite and, sharing the responsibility, both sides could begin the healing with malice toward none, with charity for all, with firmness in the right as God gives us to see the right. Let us strive on to finish the work we are in to bind up the nation's wounds, to care for him who shall have borne the battle, and for his widow and his orphan. That was the original promise and it eventually became your promise too. Our promise.

After the war and after that scoundrel John Wilkes Booth put a bullet in my noggin, Union Civil War veterans formed what they called the Grand

Army of the Republic, the GAR. It was a service organization formed in Decatur, Illinois. It had posts all over the country and had nearly a half a million members. Each post had a Commander, states were organized as Departments, they even had a Ladies Auxiliary and they did all kinds of good for our veterans. They were one of the first organized advocacy groups in American politics. They lobbied Congress for veterans' benefits, supported voting rights for black soldiers, promoted patriotic education, and helped make Memorial Day a national holiday. They called it Decoration Day at the time. I saw it happen, just like I have admired your good deeds for nearly 100 years. Pretty good view from my perch in the clouds.

The GAR dissolved by slow death when the last member passed away. It was an exclusive club limited to Civil War vets and, oh, they were a gritty, stubborn lot. They could have continued to do wonderful things to help veterans and their families from other wars, the Spanish-American War, World War I, even World War II, but those folks refused to change with the times. And as one famous General you might remember once said, "They just faded away."

That's why I'm here talking to you. I have a pretty unique perspective, you have to admit. I've witnessed a great deal from my favorite fluffy cloud, some good, some bad and some frustrating.

(Laughter.)

ANNOUNCER: One thing that I know from my front row seat, organizations fade away when the muckety-mucks and members remain stubborn and resistant to change.

(Music.)

(Laughter.)

ANNOUNCER: Yes, Mary. Oh, I'll be home directly. My carriage is outside and the horses are already hitched up. Goodbye, dear.

Looks like I'm in Dutch with the Missus. Some things never change.

(Laughter.)

ANNOUNCER: But the American Legion Auxiliary, you, the members and leadership, understand that change and a keen eye to the future are necessary to continue your legacy of service. And you good folks have a plan to do it: The Centennial Plan. It's a roadmap for growth, increased service, your very survival as an organization. If you love the Auxiliary, and I know you do, failure is not an option. Everybody needs to board the train. And I'll bet you a five dollar bill that you can do it.

(Laughter.)

ANNOUNCER: I should have been on the 20.

Now, we all know adjusting to change takes time, effort, even consternation. Just like me and this thingamabobble.

(Music.)

ANNOUNCER: But I promise you, just like I promised the Civil War veterans in my speech over 150 years ago that you can do it, you can continue the legacy.

Now, I can't see into the future or I would know that this stovepipe hat is way out of style, but for an old country lawyer I've learned a thing or

two. Your country needs you, veterans and all you serve need you, and you need each other. So keep the promise, my promise, your promise, our promise. Don't make me come back here.

(Laughter.)

(Music.)

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: That was awesome.

Woohoo.

Thank you, Honest Abe, for that inspiring message. I think this would be a perfect time to hear a little more about the future of our organization. Please welcome to the stage Vice Chairman of the Implementation Team, Stephanie Abisi, with a very important update and report on the strategic plan.

And I want to personally thank Stephanie for stepping up and making sure things are going in the right direction. Thank you, Stephanie. Please come to the stage.

(Music.)

(Applause.)

VICE CHAIRMAN ABISI: Good morning. Thank you, National President Sharon.

First off this morning I would like to share an excerpt from a letter we recently received at National Headquarters from a 2014 Girls Nation senator. It begins: "Before attending ALA Girls Nation, I was not a member of the Auxiliary. In fact, I did not realize that even though my grandmother was a member every woman in my family was actually eligible for membership. Because of my experience as an ALA Girls Nation Senator, I was moved to do more for our nation's veterans, so I encouraged my family to join. My mother, sisters and niece are now all members of the American Legion Auxiliary."

(Applause.)

VICE CHAIRMAN ABISI: "My other will be serving as our unit's president this year."

Imagine all the stories just like this one once we achieve our vision that by 2019 the American Legion Auxiliary's million members will be making a difference for veterans and families in every neighborhood.

We must continue to meet the needs of not only this Girls Nation senator and her family, but all of our members by continuing to ask ourselves these questions: Are we serving our purpose? Are we meeting the needs of those that we serve? And if we are only meeting our own needs, what action can we take to stop doing that?

These past couple of years we have addressed the stark realities about the future of our organization. We looked candidly at our declining membership trend and we learned that by the third year half of all new members drop out.

The need to increase our brand awareness. Did you know that the collective Girls State attendance is dropping by three percent each year.

The need to strengthen our departments and units, to attract and to develop leaders, and to foster an internal culture of goodwill, so that people will want to join and stay once they do become members.

Our first step in the awareness campaign, we found that people like what we do, but we don't always follow through with those who are interested in becoming part of our organization, and we realized that we needed to do a better job of addressing our membership and mission service needs. So we developed a five-year strategic plan called the Centennial Strategic Plan. Just a fancy name for a five-year strategic plan that will take us to our 100th anniversary.

As we got into the plan, we realized it is a really big undertaking and it is critical that we succeed. So then we asked ourselves, do we have the capacity to deliver this plan?

The ALA retained a professional consulting company, Johnson, Grossnickle & Associates, to do extensive research, compiling input from more than 8,000 members. Those results, known as the ALA Organizational Effectiveness Assessment, presented at the 2015 convention in Baltimore details members' concerns with our organization's ability to survive in the long run. The publication and presentation are still available on our Web site.

The findings are telling and cut right to what people have been saying informally for years, identifying what our members need and want to become effective and impactful at fulfilling our mission.

We learned from you that membership has to be meaningful. The top drivers of ALA member experience include veterans volunteer activities, community service volunteer activities and leadership. We learned that our membership decline has a lot to do with the behavior and many describe the ALA as having a culture of women being unkind to one another.

We learned that members are willing to invest in the organization to succeed. Ninety four percent of respondents believe that the ALA membership dues are moderate, low or very low.

We learned that members feel that our governing structure lacks continuity and too much time is spent focusing on individual's years and projects and that we do not spend enough time focusing on the mission, and that more training at the department and unit levels is critically needed.

Ultimately, you spoke in the assessment. The Centennial Strategic Plan with its new ideas has to succeed for the organization to survive.

To address these recommendations, we have been working to simplify and streamline. All teams have realized that our plan is very complicated. We know there is a need for constant review and adjustment so that we can succeed with our five goals. So during the last year the Implementation Team approved of combining seven strategies and reducing our total number of strategies to 20.

It didn't take long to learn that Goal 1 was intimidating, so the NEC voted to approve a change to Goal 1 to enhance membership growth. While the five-year membership goals have not changed, we know the original goals seemed overwhelming to units and to members.

What else have we been up to? The 120 Centennial Plan Team members are navigating their way through plans that they've been developing over the last year. Teams continue to meet virtually, including the Implementation Team, which includes National President Sharon, Mary Davis as Interim Chairman, Dubbie Buckler, Janet Jefford, Nancy Brown-Park, Jan Pulvermacher-Ryan, myself, and of course Kris Nelson, who guided this plan in its infancy and is missed in my daily work with the Centennial Strategic Plan.

(Applause.)

VICE CHAIRMAN ABISI: What else have we accomplished since our last convention? As a direct result from findings in the assessment encouraging the organization to become more diverse, Goal 1 Team Members created a Spanish membership application now available on our Web site.

During the last year, members of Goal 1 initiated the Thank a Female Veteran Project, which waived national dues for initial membership for female veterans of the American Legion Auxiliary. As of this week, 59 percent of those whose dues were paid by the ALA in 2015 have been renewed, and another 828 new female veteran members have joined the organization through this program.

(Applause.)

VICE CHAIRMAN ABISI: Also approximately 11,846 members have renewed their 2016 membership online, a direct result from one of our strategies.

(Applause.)

VICE CHAIRMAN ABISI: Goal 2: Create an Internal Culture of Goodwill. As I mentioned earlier, the Organizational Effectiveness Assessment identified that a lack of goodwill among members as the biggest obstacle to implementing the strategic plan.

This team continues to identify the best ways to include the importance of the mission of the ALA, focusing on the unit level, as a way to improve goodwill. This team is also working on plans of introducing a goodwill ambassador and hospitality chair throughout the organization, and is developing a new member mentoring checklist that will be included in the new member kit.

Goal 3: Develop Leadership at all Levels, is focused on identifying desired qualities for ALA roles. So this team, along with national leaders, has documented the national appointment process so that all members have access to this information that was previously only tradition.

A National President Shout-Out is in place and several members have already been recognized by National President Sharon Conatser on Facebook and Twitter for the innovative ways they are identifying and selecting leadership.

(Applause.)

VICE CHAIRMAN ABISI: Goal 4 continues to Strengthen Departments and Units, specifically the support of the development of department strategic plans.

We know that many departments are continuing to work hard at developing their plans and have realized that this is a lot of hard work, but so important to our organization. Fourteen departments have applied and received the full \$1,000, achieving all of the incentive Phase 1 Milestones.

(Cheering.)

VICE CHAIRMAN ABISI: A total of 28 received some incentive awards, totaling almost \$22,000.

On Monday at the breakouts, this team previewed the next phase of incentive awards that will be available to departments in the next year.

In addition, Goal 4 continues to work towards strengthening departments. An initiative promoting and recognizing longer NEC terms has gained much momentum in the last two years. Twenty four departments now include provisions for a longer-than-one-year NEC term. That's a 90-percent increase in longer NEC terms in just the two short years the Centennial Strategic Plan has been in place.

Goal 5: With the American Legion, Build Brand Loyalty. Who we are, what we do and why we matter is the total promise our organization makes to internal and external audiences. We must keep our name in front of members and external audiences as often as possible, and we should refer to our mission statement, our core values and our Centennial Strategic Plan goals when sharing our story.

Throughout the convention you will see many branded items, including the T-shirts you're all wearing today. Goal 5 Teams have been working hard to develop standards and practices that fit our brand. Don't forget to continue to use the ALA Rock Stars hash tag and like their Facebook page.

We have also increased frequency of ALA social media posts that include timely and engaging content. Have you posted your #AuxCon photo today? #ALARockStars?

Remember that ALA Girls Nation senator? Her letter went on to say she feels as if her family has been extended to include the Auxiliary and feels like the Auxiliary is now home. Her greatest hope is that more women will find their way to our organization. Your challenge this morning is to champion the Centennial Strategic Plan and your department's plan when you get home, so we can have more members just like one of our newest from ALA Girls Nation.

We know this plan is a lot of work and it will only succeed if everything that we do is aimed at achieving the five goals. This plan was important, it is still important, and it will be important for the future and it is still the number one priority for this organization.

Madam National President, Mary Davis will now introduce some exciting outcomes and upcoming benefits for all members, resource from the Centennial Strategic Plan funds, the NEC approved in the budget.

Mary?

(Music.)

(Applause.)

MS. DAVIS: Thank you, Stephanie.

As Stephanie mentioned, we have two exciting strategic plan outcomes to share today. As we keep emphasizing, it is really important that these five goals are achieved at every level of the organization. That requires departments, districts and units being engaged in the strategic plan process.

We know that departments, districts and units have limited resources and that these are volunteer-driven efforts. So one of our accomplishments that we will see by the end of 2016 is a guide that makes strategic planning simple. In fact, it is going to be known as Simple Steps to Department Strategic Planning.

(Cheering.)

MS. DAVIS: And it will be how to develop, write and implement a strategic plan at the department level, because it will take all of us working together and working smarter to achieve the vision and goals.

Our most exciting outcome this year was the development of training modules that members could use in a variety of ways, training that is consistent across different mediums. As you know, developing online training is a really big project.

(Laughter.)

MS. DAVIS: Inside joke. The ALA has retained Brilljent, a woman-owned business with offices in Indianapolis and Chicago, which conducts business with both the private and public sectors. They are excellent in taking content and creating learning modules.

There are some challenges around building training for our members. Our membership is large. With close to 700,000 members, it is difficult to reach everyone through traditional, face-to-face training. Our membership is geographically dispersed: 50 states, 8,000 units. Not all members have the time and resources to travel to these face-to-face, traditional training classes.

So based on this, Brilljent's expertise and your feedback from organizational effectiveness assessment, the ALA Academy is under development. It includes multiple delivery methods to help encourage self-paced learning, peer sharing and mentoring, opportunities for ongoing training and discussions. Most of the curriculum will have post-work, discussions, thought-provoking activities to continue the learning after the actual instructional event. Virtual online learning to allow those who may not be able to travel to a classroom or unit meeting to still participate and learning. Consistent training materials: everyone will get the same information and opportunities, that will deliver consistent messaging.

The Academy includes four different curriculums focusing on goodwill and leadership development. The four different curriculums progress from ALA 101, which focuses on who we are, what we do and why we matter; to 201, involvement at the unit level; to 301, narrowing in on those who may want more learning on becoming a leader; to 401, those who want to learn how to effectively lead at the national level, advocate for mission.

ALA 101 is nearing the final stages of development and will be the first course to launch. It will be Web-based learning available to any member with Internet access at any time. The majority of the Academy will be the same Web-based training.

We know the next question: when will it be ready? When it's ready.
(Laughter.)

MS. DAVIS: I'm trying not to hold my breath, but I know it's coming. We are very excited for the ALA Academy and know it will be a great benefit to our members.

Madam National President, this concludes the Centennial Plan Report.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Thank you for your reports, Stephanie and Mary. Do we have any resolutions?

MS. DAVIS: Yes, Madam President, we have one.

PRESIDENT CONATSER: As you see, the Resolutions Committee has joined me on the podium. Marybeth Revoir of Illinois, Resolutions Chairman, had to go home on Monday as the Resolutions Chair, and her committee is well prepared and I'd like to welcome Gailwyn Starr from Illinois and Laura Santino from the Department of Connecticut for the reading of the resolution.

(Applause.)

MS. STARR: Madam President and convention delegates, Resolution 1: Resourcing Year Three of the American Legion Auxiliary Five Year Centennial Strategic Plan submitted by the Centennial Strategic Plan Implementation Team.

Whereas the American Legion Auxiliary'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 occurring among more than 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 a rate it has over the past 40 years, the organization will have fewer than 300,000 members in 16 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 2019-'20 Vision and the five strategic goals for the American Legion Auxiliary, and in February 2016 amended Goal 1 as follows: "Vision by 2019-2020, the American Legion's million members will be making a difference for veterans and their families in every neighborhood."

Goal 5: With The American Legion, Build Brand Loyalty.

Goal 4: Strengthen Departments and Units.

Goal 3: Develop Leadership at all Levels.

Goal 2: Create an Internal Culture of Goodwill.

Goal 1: "Enhance Membership Strength.

And whereas, in 2014 and 2015, the National Conventions of the American Legion Auxiliary voted overwhelmingly to support the American Legion Auxiliary, making an investment in itself to accomplish these five goals of the American Legion Auxiliary 2014 2019-'20 Strategic Plan.

In support of the same, American Legion Auxiliary National Executive Committee appropriated reserve funds to resource the needs of year one and year two of the American Legion Auxiliary Centennial Strategic Plan.

And whereas, the five Centennial Plan Goal Teams, comprised of some 150 members, have identified some 21 critical strategies to achieve those five goals that are interdependent and must be achieved at all levels to become a thriving organization.

And whereas, the official findings and recommendations of the organizational effective assessment of the American Legion Auxiliary, professionally conducted by Johnson, Grossnickle & Associates, and based on the input from 70 percent of greater-than-expected response rate of nearly 9,000 members, non-members, former members, to address in detail the need for the American Legion Auxiliary to invest in itself to achieve the five strategic goals to improve the organization.

And whereas, each year, in order to increase our capacity at all levels of the organization to serve our mission, the Centennial Strategic Plan Goal Teams must add and/or adjust initiatives, plus develop corresponding implementation plans to address the findings and recommendations of the professional organization effectiveness assessment of the American Legion Auxiliary's capacity to serve our mission.

And whereas, the next major step in year three of the Centennial Plan is to retain a reputable professional firm specializing in curriculum development and training to develop customized organizational effectiveness training modules for the American Legion Auxiliary objectively based on the needs identified by members in the JGA organizational effectiveness assessment of the American Legion Auxiliary, and in turn to professionally train trainers that can be dispatched to help districts and departments.

And whereas, in the fiscal year of 2017, the American Legion Auxiliary national budget proposal for resourcing year three of the American Legion Auxiliary Centennial Strategic Plan has been painstakingly and frugally developed, and represents an ongoing investment in the American Legion Auxiliary by reallocating 2,790 -- two thousand -- 79,000 from reserve funds to benefit all levels of the American Legion Auxiliary.

Whereas, in the fiscal year 2017, the American Legion Auxiliary national budget proposal resources each of the five goals, including incentives to the departments for various accomplishments towards successfully implementing their department's strategic plans.

Now for, therefore, be it resolved that the 2016 National Convention of the American Legion Auxiliary held August 29th to September 1st, 2016 in Cincinnati, Ohio supports the American Legion Auxiliary's sustained investment in itself to accomplish the five goals of the American Legion Auxiliary 2014 2019-'20 Centennial Strategic Plan.

And be it further resolved that upon the adoption of this resolution by the 2016 National Convention of the American Legion Auxiliary the first meeting of the 2016-2017 National Executive Committee considered this show of support when considering actions to appropriate funds to resource the needs that have been identified to be accomplished in the fiscal year of 2017,

year three of the American Legion Auxiliary 2014 2019 Centennial Strategic Plan.

And be it further resolved that the American Legion Auxiliary National Conventions in 2017, 2018 and 2019 be apprised of the achievements of the American Legion Auxiliary five-year Centennial Strategic Plan, and be presented resolutions of support based on successes and needs of the implementation of the American Legion's Centennial Strategic Plan over the course of five years.

And be it finally resolved that the national organization and departments continue the commitment of implementing initiatives to accomplish the five goals of the American Legion Auxiliary's five-year Centennial Strategic Plan adopted by the National Executive Committee, so that the organization may realize a reversal of its declining membership and increase its ability to deliver the important mission of the American Legion Auxiliary, and by and beyond the 100th anniversary of the American Legion Auxiliary in 2019 and 2020. The Pre-Convention Financial Committee recommends that the resolution be adopted.

Madam President, on behalf of the Resolutions Committee, I move the adoption of the resolution as read.

PRESIDENT CONATSER: The question?

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Could you read that (indiscernible) --

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Is on the adoption of the resolution as just read. The Finance Pre-Convention Committee recommends the resolution be adopted. Is there any discussion?

(Pause.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Are you ready for the question? Are you ready for the question?

AUDIENCE: Yes!

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Thank you! Those in favor of the resolution to support the Centennial Plan, please press the number 1 key on your voting pad; opposed, please press 2. Please vote now.

(Music.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: They were running backstage to get their keypads. We're good?

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Yes.

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Voting is now closed. Please show the results.

The affirmative has it and the resolution is adopted.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Mary, please continue.

MS. DAVIS: Madam President, that concludes our Strategic Plan report.

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Really?

(Laughter.)

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Okay. Well, that was fun.

(Pause.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: As you heard, one of the initiatives was to sign up female veterans, make them dual Legion and Auxiliary members. When I visited the American Legion, I asked -- I know there's two kinds of dual, the SAL and Legion, we have Legion and Auxiliary. So if there are female veterans that belong to both the American Legion and the American Legion, would you please stand for our thanks.

(Applause.)

(Cheering.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Thank you so much for that.

At this time, if you don't -- just hold your red shirt up over your shoulders and we're going to get instructions for the photo. Aaron told me -- Aaron will come up here with Dubbie and direct us on the group photo, so --

MS. BUCKLER: Okay, wardrobe change. So when you've been seeing on screen how the camera can slide and get pictures, the still picture can't. So here is the frame. The aisle on this side of the Idaho, Michigan, Indiana signs, the aisle right in here, everybody seated outside of this aisle needs to move into this aisle to be in the picture. So this is going to be your ginormous group hug moment.

So if you're seated here from Florida this way, you need to start making your way into the aisles here. If you're seated from D.C., New Hampshire this way, you need to make your way into the aisles here. And if you haven't made a new friend, now is the time to do it, because you're going to get real close and personal.

(Laughter.)

MS. BUCKLER: The picture will only take to the end of that aisle and the end of that aisle. So if you are to the -- that side of the D.C. sign, you won't be in the picture, and if you are beyond where that aisle ends, you won't be in the picture.

(Pause.)

(Music.)

(Cheering.)

(Pause.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Everybody back in their seats?

I want to share with all of you that we had invited the recruiter, a recruiter of the year to come join us, a Legionnaire recruiter of the year. She is a dual American Legion-American Legion Auxiliary member. And for those of you that know, Legionnaires who recruit 50 or more new members by May qualify for enrollment in the American Legion Elite Gold Brigade Program. Patricia is a member of Post 333 in Columbus, Georgia.

(Cheering.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: And I just wanted to recognize that our Legionnaires are working for our membership also. This is her 13th Gold Brigade.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: And she was the first female to win Recruiter of the Year Award for recruiting 818 new members.

(Cheering.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: So if you see someone or see her, please congratulate Patricia Liddell.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: The next item of business this morning is the nomination of National Officers for the 2016-2017 administrative year. Representatives making the nominations, as well as the candidates, are seated on the stage.

Now, now is the time we usually read the election rules. We read them all to you on Monday and you have them in print. Is there any objection to not re-reading the election rules?

AUDIENCE: No!

(Laughter.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: That was pretty firm. They didn't want you to read them again, Dubbie.

MS. BUCKLER: I know.

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Okay.

MS. BUCKLER: I'm not going to.

PRESIDENT CONATSER: She's not hurt at all by that.

Nominations are now in order for the office of National President.

The National Secretary will call the departments with announced candidates.

MS. BUCKLER: Teamwork. We're going to work off the same script.

The Department of Washington 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 a nomination.

PRESIDENT CONATSER: The Chair recognizes -- oh, no, I don't.

(Laughter.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Where is the delegate from Washington?

MS. BUCKLER: Microphone 1, please.

MS. CRAMER: Madam President, Barb Cramer from the Proud Evergreen Department of Washington. Will the Chair please recognize past Department President Helen B. Boots (phonetic) for the purpose of nomination for the Office of National President.

PRESIDENT CONATSER: The Chair recognizes the delegate from Washington for the purpose of making a nomination.

(Pause.)

MS. BOOTS: Thank you. I'm Helen Boots, past department president and the proud mother of Mary Davis.

(Cheering.)

MS. BOOTS: From the great State of Washington, Madam National President, officers and delegates to the 96th National Convention, it is with great pride the Department of Washington, the Evergreen State, presents to you one of our most outstanding members, Mary E. Davis, for the position of National President.

Mary Davis is a proud PUFL -- you know what that means --

(Laughter.)

MS. BOOTS: -- member of Pat Tillman Memorial Unit 53 in DuPont, Washington, which is located outside Joint Base Lewis McChord.

Much like the 40 years Mary has been a member, the military plays a large part of Mary's daily activities. As the wife of an active-duty service members, many of Mary's early years were spent traveling the globe, supporting military and especially their families. From President of Frankfurt, Germany PTSA to coaching baseball for the Military Youth League, as a volunteer elementary school art teacher in Frankfurt, Germany, and Department of Defense Dependent School substitute teacher in Stuttgart to help military families, as the art director and assistant art and craft facility at Patch Barracks in Germany, Mary was working with the military.

Since her husband's retirement, Mary has been an accredited American Legion Service Officer for 19 years. She began working with veterans in 1996 and subsequently was accredited by the General Counsel of Department of Veterans Affairs, as well as being accredited by Washington Department of Veterans Affairs.

Helping veterans and their families on a daily basis apply for their many, much-earned benefits is her passion. As a department training officer, Mary trained over 700 Legion family members in the ever-changing VA processes.

Mary is a past department and National Executive Committeewoman for the Department of Washington. She also has been an integral part of the Evergreen Girls State program for the past 16 years. As well, Mary has held many department chairmanships.

I first signed Mary up for membership while she and her family lived in Germany. Then when the family moved home, Mary was employed as Department Secretary/Treasurer.

Mary's eligibility is through the World War II service of me, a Sergeant --

(Cheering.)

(Applause.)

MS. CRAMER: -- thank you -- a Sergeant in the Women's Army Corps, and her late father, Garnett Boots, Army Air Corps.

She is also eligible through the service of her husband, Dale Davis, U.S. Army retired, and son Robert Davis, U.S. Air Force.

As a college art major, Mary found her passion working with children through art. She has always felt art is an unsung therapeutic expression for everyone. In that belief, she is most supportive in the relationship between the Department of Veterans Affairs and the American Legion Auxiliary at every level with the VA Creative Art Festivals.

She also believes in the value female veterans can add to their organization, that we need to actively recruit, retain and utilize the talents of female veterans.

On behalf of the members of the Department of Washington, I am honored to place a nomination for the highest office of the American Legion Auxiliary, National President for the year 2016-2017, the name of my daughter, Mary E. Davis. Thank you.

(Cheering.)

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Mary Davis is nominated.

Are there any further nominations for the Office of National President? 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.

MS. BUCKLER: The Department of Wisconsin has an announced candidate. The delegation chairman should ask the Chair to recognize the delegate for the purpose of a nomination.

MS. CALTEUX: Madam President, microphone 1?

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Microphone 1.

MS. CALTEUX: Laura Calteux, Delegation Chairman, Department of Wisconsin.

Would the Chair please recognize Wisconsin's First Vice President Shar Keasling (phonetic) for the purpose of a nomination for the Office of National Vice President.

PRESIDENT CONATSER: The Chair recognizes the delegate from Wisconsin for the purpose of making a nomination.

MS. KEASLING: Thank you and good morning.

AUDIENCE: Good morning.

MS. KEASLING: My name is Shar Keasling, First Vice President for the Department of Wisconsin.

Madam President, officers and delegates, it is with great pride that the Department of Wisconsin presents Diane Duscheck for the Office of National Vice President.

Diane was active as a junior member and began taking on leadership roles in the senior Auxiliary when her mother asked her to fill in as a District Junior Activities Chairman for just three short months. Thirty five years later and Diane has continually held chairmanships and offices at the district and department levels.

In 1995, Diane began her service to the national organization. She has now held 12 national chairmanships and the Office of Central Division National Vice President.

Diane immerses herself in each chairmanship and enjoys learning as much as she possibly can. This year Diane was Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Chairman, a Future Focus Committee member, Goal Champion for Centennial Strategic Plan Goal 3, and completed the Military and Veteran Caregiver Network Course 1 training.

Diane was recognized as a leader during her 34-year teacher career as a middle school science teacher, where she was also serving as her school's union representative. She is always well prepared, dedicated to the task at hand, and freely shares her information and experiences with others.

Diane is a 55-year, paid-up-for-life member of Unit 282, Markesan, Wisconsin. Her eligibility comes from the World War II service of her late father Roland and through the Vietnam service of her brother Philip.

On behalf of the members of the American Legion Auxiliary Department of Wisconsin, I am honored to place into nomination our own Diane Duscheck for the high office of National Vice President.

Thank you.

(Cheering.)

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Diane Duscheck is nominated.

Are there any further nominations for the Office of National Vice President? 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 departments with announced candidates.

MS. BUCKLER: The Department of Tennessee has an announced candidate. The delegation chairman should ask the Chair to recognize the delegate for the purpose of a nomination.

MS. HACKNEY: Madam President, microphone 3.

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Microphone 3.

MS. HACKNEY: Melinda Hackney (phonetic), Department of Tennessee, asks the Chair to recognize our delegation chairman, Anita Darnell, for the purpose of nomination.

PRESIDENT CONATSER: The Chair recognizes the delegate from Tennessee for the purpose of making a nomination.

(Pause.)

MS. DARNELL: Anita Darnell, Department of Tennessee.

Madam President and delegates, the Department of Tennessee proudly endorses Janice R. Bruce as a candidate for the National Chaplain for the year 2016-'17.

Jan is a member of Sam P. McConnell Unit 159 in Hixson, Tennessee. She gained her eligibility in the American Legion Auxiliary through the service of her husband, Tom Bruce, who proudly served two tours of combat duty as a U.S. Marine in Vietnam.

She is an active member of the American Legion Auxiliary. On the unit and district level, Jan has served as President, Vice President and Chaplain. She has served as Americanism AEF and Membership Chairman for three years and Music Chairman for nine years.

On the department level, Jan has served as President, Vice President, East Tennessee Divisional Vice President, Third District President and Chaplain, for which she served for five years, attending the National Chaplains Conference each year.

She has also served as Chairman of Music, National Security and Public Relations, as well as many others.

Jan currently serves as Music and Past Presidents Parlay. She has been the department page at many National Conventions and has represented Tennessee as delegate at large at many National Conventions as well.

On the national level, Jan served as National Executive Committeewoman in 2015-'16, was a member of the ALA National Mini-

Council for 2015-'16, and is currently serving as Alternate National Executive Committeewoman for 2016-'17.

Jan is very active in the Sale Creek Church of God in Sale Creek, Tennessee, where she serves on the ladies' ministry board and is assistant choir director.

Jan is currently employed by the Hamilton County Department of Education in Chattanooga, Tennessee as a substitute teacher. She and Tom have one daughter, one son, and five grandchildren.

In view of her dedicated compassion to our veterans and active service in the Auxiliary and the community, it is my pleasure and honor to place the name of my friend, Janice R. Bruce, as a candidate for National Chaplain for 2016-17.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Are there any further nominations for the Office of National Chaplain?

MS. BUCKLER: The Department of Georgia has an announced candidate. The delegation chairman should ask the Chair to recognize the delegate for the purpose of a nomination.

MS. SCOTT: Microphone 1?

PRESIDENT CONATSER: The Chair recognizes microphone 1.

MS. SCOTT: My name is Rosa Scott from the Department of Georgia. I would like to ask the Chair to recognize a vice department from the Department of Georgia, Anisha (phonetic) Owen, for the purpose of nomination.

PRESIDENT CONATSER: The Chair recognizes the delegate from Georgia for the purpose of making a nomination.

MS. OWEN: Hey, y'all.

(Laughter.)

MS. OWEN: Madam President, officers, delegates and guests, I bring greetings from the Department of Georgia's Peach State. It is an honor for us to nominate Valerie Brown-Debro as candidate for office of National Auxiliary Chaplain.

Valerie holds active membership at Unit 77 in Conyers, Georgia. Her eligibility for Auxiliary membership is through her father, Curtis L. Brown, Navy, World War II, and husband, Cess (phonetic) D. Debro, U.S. Army. Valerie's dedicated service to God and country from unit level years as President, First Vice, Second Vice, Chairman Children and Youth, National Security, constitution and bylaws, finance and VA&R.

On district level, she served as Fifth District President and received the Department's President's Award during that term.

On department level, she has served as chaplain, Chairman of National Security, Finance, and Children and Youth. As National Security Chairman, she received National Dorothy Pearl Cert Plaque Award.

She exudes loyalty, integrity and grace. Real estate broker, business owner of One Nation entity for 18 years, married, mother and grandmother. All are members of the American Legion family. A woman of great faith and a heart to serve, she walks by faith and not by sight.

On behalf of the Department of Georgia, we nominate Valerie Brown-Debro as National Auxiliary Chaplain for 2016-2017. Thank you.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Valerie Brown-Debro is nominated for National Chaplain.

Are there any further nominations for the office of National Chaplain?

MS. BUCKLER: The Department of Oregon has an announced candidate. The delegation chairman should ask the Chair to recognize the delegate for the purpose of a nomination.

MS. MCKINNEY: Madam President, microphone 4.

PRESIDENT CONATSER: The Chair recognizes microphone 4.

MS. MCKINNEY: I'm Angie McKinney, Delegation Chairman for the Department of Oregon. Will the Chair please recognize Erin Walters for the purpose of nomination.

PRESIDENT CONATSER: The Chair recognizes the delegate from Oregon for the purpose of making a nomination.

MS. WALTERS: Madam National President, National officers, delegates and guests.

Cheryl Park has been making a difference in the life of veterans her entire life. Through the eligibility of her father, Virgil Brown, a World War II veteran, Cheryl first joined our organization as a junior member and since becoming a senior member has held every office at the unit, district and department level with the exception of treasurer. Chaplain was the first office that she held at each level because that position is the one most near and dear to her heart.

Cheryl's family is a shining example of service, not self. Cheryl's daughter is a Desert Storm veteran and two of her grandsons recently returned from deployment in the Gulf.

Cheryl is a paid-up-for-life member. Both of her daughters are Auxiliary members, all three granddaughters and a great granddaughter are junior Auxiliary members. Her granddaughter Mia is the Department of Oregon honorary Junior President.

The power of prayer is the most important tool we have in aid of our veterans, but great faith must be backed up by great works: Cheryl Park is a woman of action. She has been instrumental in engaging her unit with local churches and she regularly relays the story of the Four Chaplains of the Dorchester to local congregations to raise awareness about faith, family and freedom, and the ultimate price paid for that freedom by many of our veterans.

Cheryl continues to keep our promise by inspiring the next generation of Auxiliary members as the Department Junior Activities Chairman. She participates in numerous fund-raising activities throughout the year, and tirelessly cultivates and mentors new members throughout the Legion Family, exemplifying our call to mutual helpfulness.

Oregon's motto is "She Flies with her Own Wings." Cheryl Park flies with her own wings, but for Cheryl God is the wind beneath her wings.

Madam National President, with great pride the Department of Oregon nominates Cheryl Park for the office of National Chaplain.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Cheryl Park is nominated.

Are there any further nominations for the office of National Chaplain?

Hearing none, nominations for National Chaplain are closed.

Nominations are in order for the office of National Historian. The National Secretary will call the departments with announced candidates.

MS. BUCKLER: The Department of Massachusetts has an announced candidate. The delegation chairman should ask the Chair to recognize the delegate for the purpose of the nomination.

MS. ROY: Microphone 2.

PRESIDENT CONATSER: The Chair recognizes microphone 2.

MS. ROY: Madam National President Chairman, my name is Maggie Roy, President of the Department of Massachusetts. I request that you recognize Ann Fournier for the purpose of nomination of our candidate. Thank you.

PRESIDENT CONATSER: The Chair recognizes the delegate from Massachusetts for the purpose of making a nomination.

MS. FOURNIER: Good morning, one and all. While I don't have the typical Massachusetts accent, our candidate, Dr. Coral May Grout, does. She has the Bostonian accent where she says "park the car in Harvard yard."

(Laughter.)

MS. FOURNIER: Coral Grout is a 63-year member of the Eugene M. Connor Unit in Winchendon, Massachusetts. She is eligible through the service of her father, Charles E. Grout, and grandfather, Stanislaus Plant (phonetic).

She demonstrated her leadership very early in Auxiliary as she was the honorary president of her unit. She is a past president of a unit, present Historian and Membership Chairman of our department -- one of our department's largest units.

In her district, she has served as District 4 Director in 1983 and '84. She has served as our Department President in 1991 and '92. She also served as our NEC for two years.

For the last nine years, she has served the national organization as a National Chairman.

Coral has extensive writing experience and has written winning -- written many winning histories at the department, unit and district level. She is a retired superintendent of schools, having devoted 16 years of a 30-year career as an educator.

Presently, she is an auditor for under-performing schools and the retell evaluator with the Department of Education in Massachusetts.

It is with great pride and pleasure, and with a lot of enthusiasm from the Department of Massachusetts, that we place the name of Coral May Grout as our nominee as the National Historian for 2016 and '17.

(Cheering.)

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Coral May Grout has been nominated.

Are there any further nominations for the office of National Historian?

Hearing none, nominations for National Historian are closed.

With the nominations and the nominations made during the Division Caucuses on Saturday, August 27th, 2016, nominations for the 2016-2017 National Officers are complete.

The Convention rules provide that the nominees for the office 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 her candidate by name and department affiliation only. Each nomination will be allowed a maximum of two minutes for remarks.

Will the representative from Washington please introduce the candidate for National President.

MS. BOOTS: I would like to introduce my candidate, or your candidate or our candidate or whatever word I'm supposed to use --

(Laughter.)

(Cheering.)

MS. BOOTS: -- Mrs. Mary Davis from the Department of Washington.

(Cheering.)

MS. DAVIS: Thank you, Mom. She's a little animated, as you may have noticed.

(Laughter.)

MS. DAVIS: I'm so proud of my membership because of the service of both my parents, my husband, my son and my daughter-in-law.

I believe in our mission as it is so important to help our veterans, military and their families. I believe in learning and education, and in that end I hope all members will embrace the training that is coming up that we are developing at the National level to help our members understand how important our organization is and, once understood, to continue and, if you haven't done it already, to start sharing our mission with others and asking others to join our ranks, because what we do is important and if we're not here, who is here for our veterans, who is here for our military and who is here for their families? It needs to be us; we do great things.

In that end, I am so terribly pleased to have a nomination from my home state. I want to thank my unit, my Legion family in DuPont. We have a great unit, we all have a wonderful time together. And, ladies, you know, it starts with food.

(Laughter.)

MS. DAVIS: At our unit meeting, the first thing we do is have breakfast together as a family, and then we have a short meeting and then we break off into our individual group. We do all of our projects together. I wasn't sure I was going to be comfortable doing that, but I am and I have so many new friends, just like I have made friends every time I come to

Convention, and throughout the times that I have been present mission training and other trainings across our great nation and I've gotten to know so many of you. I want to tell you all thank you for your friendships and how much I have appreciated it through the years.

I look forward to this coming year, I look forward to serving each of you, I look forward to working side-by-side, arm-in-arm with you in helping our veterans, our military and their families.

Thank you.

(Cheering.)

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Will the representative from Wisconsin present the candidate for National Vice President.

MS. CALTEUX: Madam National President, it is an honor to present to you from the Department of Wisconsin candidate for National Vice President Diane Duscheck.

(Applause.)

MS. DUSCHECK: Madam National President and members, I'm a believer that the first duty that we have is to serve others. Each day gives me another opportunity to be of service and hopefully to brighten someone's day.

I am dedicated to the organization and love the opportunity to serve. I believe that leadership and service need to go hand-in-hand. And in that vein I am proud to follow in the footsteps of my parents, who are active volunteers in the American Legion Auxiliary and the American Legion, and also into their community, looking to see where there was something that needed to be done and then stepping up and actually doing it.

If elected to the office of National Vice President, I'll continue my dedicated service to the National organization and will support the National President and her vision.

I look forward to the growth of the American Legion Auxiliary as we all work to serve veterans, military and their families in our communities and abroad.

Department of Wisconsin, thank you so much for everything that you have done, both for me and for veterans, and actually to all of you who are here. Thank you for your fond well-wishes and hellos and everything that you do for our veterans.

Thank you.

(Cheering.)

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Will the representative from Tennessee present the candidate for National Chaplain.

MS. DARNELL: Madam President and delegates, I would like to present Tennessee's candidate for National Chaplain for 2016-'17, Janice Bruce.

(Applause.)

MS. BRUCE: Madam President, Auxiliary members, good morning!

AUDIENCE: Good morning!

MS. BRUCE: I want to first recognize and thank Anita for nominating me and the Department of Tennessee for your support.

Who is Janice Bruce? I am a devoted Christian who loves the Lord and he lives within my heart, and I feel that he has laid it upon my heart and has called me to be a candidate to serve as the ALA National Chaplain for 2016-2017.

I served as Department Chaplain for five years in the Department of Tennessee. I attended five National Chaplain Conferences. During one of those conferences is when I thought how it would be an honor to be elected to serve as your National Chaplain.

I believe the Chaplain should not only serve as the spiritual leader, but should be a person who has the compassion to touch someone's heart by showing them love.

If elected, it will be an honor as your National Chaplain by being a spiritual leader who can fill a room with love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, and gentleness as I pray to God for you and our leaders.

God bless all of you and God bless the United States of America.
(Applause.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Will the representative from Georgia please present the candidate for National Chaplain.

MS. SCOTT: Madam President, officers, delegates and guests, it is my honor to introduce you to you Valerie Brown-Debro, candidate for Department of Georgia for the National Auxiliary Chaplain.

(Applause.)

MS. BROWN-DEBRO: Greetings, family.

AUDIENCE: Greetings.

MS. BROWN-DEBRO: This is a beautiful day today. Let us rejoice and be glad in it what the Lord had made for us.

I have to give praise and honor where honor is due. In all humility, I would like to say thank you. It is a privilege to stand here before you today.

As I stand here today, my goal as your Chaplain is to encourage the American Legion family with one voice, God, as the author and the finisher of our faith. He is the architect of our beloved land of the free.

As we stand and read the pledge each and every day in our hearts, one nation under God, without God there is no Americanism. The first four words of our preamble says "For God and country." Now, if a house is divided against itself, that house cannot stand.

Ladies, we are the American Legion family. As we promote peace and goodwill on earth, as we grow together in faith and love and encourage one another, God is love, ladies. As we are reconnecting with the heart of God, my desire, by sharing the word of God and letting God use me, by walking by faith and not by sight, encouraging our organization to grow and enhance our membership, we will do that. Together we stand.

Allowing us to restore the hearts of the American Legion family, in goodwill gesture to our members, be loyal, be sincere to our veterans as we come here to serve, not self, but to our veterans, our families and their communities. To strengthen our units by prayer, by sharing love, by showing

the heart of God, because by trusting with the Lord with all thine heart, leaning not to our own understanding, but to acknowledge Him in all our ways, He shall direct our path.

So I would like to say thank you to each and every one who is here today as I ask for your vote, I would just like to say thank you. For God and country we serve and He is in my heart, I would like to share it with yours. Lord as our savior.

Thank you for your blessings.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Will the representative from Oregon please present the candidate for National Chaplain.

MS. WALTERS: Madam National President, the Department of Oregon proudly presents Cheryl Park for the office of ALA National Champion -- excuse me, National Chaplain.

(Laughter.)

(Applause.)

MS. PARK: Thank you, Erin.

Madam President, officers, delegates and guests, I am so honored and humbled to be running for the position of National Chaplain.

The foundation of our organization is for God and country, and this is what our nation was built on. Our forefathers saw the value of faith and so did those who created this great organization. I am so proud that I can honor God and serve our veterans and military at the same time.

It is imperative for America to be faith-based and viewed as a nation of believers, and we can all help with that endeavor. We honor God when we serve one another and we have an opportunity to make a difference in the lives we touch every single day, especially with our veterans, our military and their families. Don't stand idly by, but instead choose to make a difference.

I would appreciate the opportunity to serve our veterans this coming year with the National team and share our beliefs with units across this great nation on our magazine's Reflections page.

I have had such great support not only from my department, but from so many of you here, and I thank you for your words of encouragement and your support.

If elected, I will encourage units and departments to create prayer books for their presidents, for I have seen the impact that sharing my prayer book has had on those that I have come in contact with. I would also like to see a national prayer chain, so that across this great country we can share our prayer needs with one another and increase the level of prayer, for we know that with prayer anything is possible and it gives us a direct line to God to share our innermost thoughts.

I hope you elect me as your National Chaplain for this coming year. God bless America and God bless each and every one of us in this organization.

Thank you.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Will the representative from Massachusetts present the candidate for National Historian.

MS. FOYNER: It is with great pleasure that I introduce to you Coral May Grout from the Department of Massachusetts.

(Applause.)

MS. GROUT: Good morning all.

AUDIENCE: Good morning.

MS. GROUT: The writing of the history of the American Legion Auxiliary is a serious responsibility. Therefore, I commit to you that I will use my strong writing skills to create a comprehensive 2016-2017 history.

Our history, like the books you all read in high school, is a snapshot of what happened during a specific time. I would like to build upon a comment made by one of our military yesterday. She quoted a famous World War II Massachusetts veteran who said -- here's the Massachusetts accent -- "Ask not what your country can do for you; rather, ask what you can do for your country."

(Applause.)

MS. GROUT: Had someone not documented what John F. Kennedy said more than 50 years ago, these words of wisdom would not have been available for use yesterday.

To quote another famous Illinois gentleman, "The world will little note nor long remember what we say here, but it can never forget what they did here."

Let's return to the Auxiliary for a moment and apply these quotes to ourselves. With your support, together we will all include progress on the Centennial Plan, accomplishments and information from all 52 departments in a story of what we accomplished during the 2016-2017 year, so that 50 or 100 years from now Auxiliary members will see what we did and know that it mattered. In the words of Lincoln, "our efforts would not have been in vain."

So I thank you for your support. Thank you Massachusetts also.

(Cheering.)

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: This concludes the nomination for the 2016-2017 National officers. We will proceed with the election of the National officers.

You have nominated Mary Davis of Washington 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 Mary Davis as National President for 2016-2017 administrative year, please say "aye."

AUDIENCE: Aye.

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Opposed, no.

Motion carried -- I mean, she's elected.

(Laughter.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: The Chair declares Mary Davis of Washington duly elected as National President for 2016-2017 administrative year.

(Cheering.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Mary, would you please stand?

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Diane Duscheck of Wisconsin is the only nominee for the office of National Vice President. All in favor of Diane Duscheck for the office of National Vice President, say "aye."

AUDIENCE: Aye.

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Opposed, "no."

Diane -- I'll read the script, I won't go off this time --

(Laughter.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: -- Diane Duscheck has been duly elected as National Vice President for the 2016-2017 year.

Please stand, Diane.

(Cheering.)

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: On Saturday at the Division Caucuses each division nominated a candidate for National Division Vice President, and the current Division National Vice Presidents have certified to the Chair the following:

Election of the Central Division Vice President. Carollee Junge of Illinois has been nominated for the office of Central Division National Vice President. All those in favor of Carollee Junge as the National Central Division Vice President, please say "aye."

AUDIENCE: Aye.

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Opposed, "no."

Carollee Junge has been duly elected as the National Central Division Vice President.

Carollee, please stand.

(Cheering.)

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Patricia Lach of Maryland has been nominated for the office of National Eastern Division Vice President. All those in favor of Patricia Lach for National Eastern Division Vice President, please say "aye."

AUDIENCE: Aye.

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Opposed, "no."

You have elected Patricia Lach as National Eastern Division Vice President.

Patricia, will you please stand?

(Cheering.)

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Virginia Nelsen of Nebraska has been nominated for the office of National Northwestern Division Vice President. All those in favor of Virginia Nelsen for National Northwestern Division Vice President, please say "aye."

AUDIENCE: Aye.

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Opposed, "no."

You have elected Virginia as the National Northwestern Division Vice President.

Virginia, please stand.

(Cheering.)

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Beverly Anne Mulkey of Arkansas has been nominated for the office of National Southern Division Vice President. All those in favor of Beverly Anne Mulkey as the National Southern Division Vice President, please say "aye."

AUDIENCE: Aye.

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Opposed, "no."

Beverly Anne Mulkey has been elected the National Southern Division Vice President.

Will you please stand, Beverly Anne?

(Cheering.)

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Cary Fisher of Utah has been nominated for the office of National Western Division Vice President. All those in favor of Cary Fisher as the National Western Division Vice President, please say "aye."

AUDIENCE: Aye.

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Opposed, "no."

Cary Fisher has been elected the National Western Division Vice President.

Cary, will you please stand?

(Cheering.)

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Now, ladies, I do not want any voting until I read the complete instructions, please, so that everybody knows everything. Okay?

For the election of National Chaplain, we will be voting with our electronic keypads.

The nominees are Jan Bruce, Tennessee; Valerie Brown-Debro, Georgia; Cheryl Park, Oregon. If you would like to vote for Jan Bruce, press number 1 -- not yet -- if you would like to vote for Valerie Brown-Debro, press 2, and if you would like to vote for Cheryl Park, press 3. Please vote now.

(Music.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Voting is completed. Hang on one second.

Would you please show the results?

(Cheering.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Jan Bruce, 17 percent; Valerie Brown-Debro, 475; Cheryl Park, 167.

(Cheering.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Valerie Brown-Debro has been elected National Chaplain. Hang on.

(Pause.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: The National Parliamentary would like you to show the percents, if that's possible, from the back.

Jan Bruce, 17 percent; Valerie Brown-Debro, 62 percent; Cheryl Park, 22 percent.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: All right. Coral May Grout of Massachusetts has been nominated for the office of Historian. All those in favor of Coral May Grout as National Historian, please say "aye."

AUDIENCE: Aye.

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Opposed, "no."

Coral May Grout has been elected your National Historian. Coral, will you please stand?

(Cheering.)

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Ladies and gentlemen, I present to you your 2016-2017 American Legion Auxiliary officers.

Mary, would you please bring your officers to this side of the stage?

(Pause.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Let's give them a great big hand, ladies.

(Cheering.)

(Applause.)

(Pause.)

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: While they're doing pictures, I would like to recognize the entire Elections and Tally Committee. These women are here early every morning distributing keypads, stay late after every session verifying all keypads have been returned, and troubleshoot any keypad issues. Let's give these women a round of -- where are you, ladies? Thank you so much.

(Cheering.)

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: A couple of them said "what have you gotten me into?" So, see, it wasn't so bad, was it?

We'd like to give you time, if you ladies would like to return to your delegations. Not you.

(Laughter.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Let's give another round of applause.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Okay, let's practice rally towel while we're waiting. Our Chairman was a little busy, so she has to go get her notebook.

All right, all right. Are we having fun yet?

(Cheering.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: I'm having fun, so I hope all of you are too.

Coming home may be the end of one journey for our veterans, but it's also the beginning of a new journey, a transition to find a new normal. Here to tell you more about how our members comforted and cared for veterans during this transition -- hang on -- okay, she's ready -- is National Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation Committee Chairman Diane Duscheck.

(Applause.)

(Music.)

CHAIRMAN DUSCHECK: Good morning again.

AUDIENCE: Good morning.

CHAIRMAN DUSCHECK: Madam National President, when was the last time you needed to think about having clean, dry socks with no holes in them?

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Uh --

CHAIRMAN DUSCHECK: Think about it.

PRESIDENT CONATSER: I will.

CHAIRMAN DUSCHECK: Our service to veterans is about the big projects we plan as well as the repetitive tasks that we do. The best overall Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation Program by a Unit Chairman in the Northwest Division goes to Mary Hendrickson of West Duluth Unit 71 in Minnesota.

(Cheering.)

(Applause.)

CHAIRMAN DUSCHECK: Mary wrote -- at our meeting in May 2015, the members decided to make a conscious effort to spend their money, time and talents to meet the needs of a wide variety of veterans in additional and unique ways. This common vision resulted in Unit 71 achieving new levels of service to veterans during the 2015-2016 Auxiliary year. Their goal: to improve and expand their VA&R experience.

That night, members decided that rather than just taking toiletries and gently-used clothing to the Duluth Stand Down, they would have a Sock-It-To-'Em table. Assuming there would be about 225 veterans at the event, members set their goal of collecting 750 pair of white crew socks, so each veteran could receive a baggie containing three pair of new socks. A sock thermometer was placed on the wall of the post home and was colored in as sock donations found their way into the basket.

Fundraising began with the meat pie sale. One thousand meat pies were made, baked and sold for a net profit for a net profit of \$1400. That was their response too. Unit members were overwhelmed and grateful, veterans were appreciative of the gift of new socks.

To give a hand up to veterans who are job hunting, Unit 71 partnered with the 148th Fighter Wing of the Minnesota National Guard to collect clothing for the Clothes that Work Program. Members scoured closets for gently-used clothing, socks, belts and jewelry accessories. Veterans choose clothing and accessories to wear for job interviews and for the beginning days of their new employment.

Many veterans live in transitional housing near the post home in a local food pantry. Besides donating funds to the food pantry, unit members

made 45 birthday bags packed with cake mix, a can of frosting, a box of birthday candles, and a birthday card to be given to the veterans and other pantry users.

Two Unit 71 members undertook projects that were of special interest to them. Gail was inspired by caregivers who had taken care of her husband during his final days, so she took 20 hours of special training to become a certified hospice caregiver. She now specializes in hospice work with veterans and their families, and multi-tasks during the quiet times, cutting coupons for distribution to the military bases.

Member Mary became a volunteer reader at Duluth's Lighthouse Center for Vision Loss. Mary now spends three to six hours each month reading the local news over the radio. Special receivers are located in the homes of about 400 families with a visually impaired family member. About 20 percent of Mary's listeners are veterans.

Let's go to Georgia. Cumming, Georgia Unit 307 Chairman Pat Harrick. She belongs to a small unit of 38 members with less than ten members doing the bulk of service and volunteerism, but they are big in their support of veterans. Unit members faithfully pack care packages for troops deployed overseas: Hard-to-get items, pocket crosses, stocking caps, toiletries, and treats have been included in the more than 10,000 packages the unit has sent to date.

One unit member helps 99-year-old World War II veteran with personal needs, paying bills, filing his taxes, and other tasks.

In Augusta, Legion family members transport veterans from the VA to their post two times monthly. The veterans love the opportunity to leave the VA and interact with others in a different environment. When the weather permits, the veterans fish. They can also play pool or cards and watch TV. At each outing, the veterans get a hot meal.

Georgia members have noticed it can be the little things or the repetitive things that really count, like making personal greeting cards for veterans in area nursing homes and assisted-living facilities, and their choral group that goes to nursing homes twice a month to entertain the residents, or the members who play bingo with veterans and pop an average of ten bags of popcorn for the activity. It's celebrating and welcoming newcomers with a gift. It's about making sure that all 250 residents at the VA receive a Christmas gift.

Members in Puerto Rico also realize the benefit of providing aid that veterans can always count on. So when veterans finish their lab tests at the VA, they can count on Auxiliary members to have sandwiches and coffee ready for them.

Our service to veterans is about the big projects we plan, as well as the repetitive tasks we do, always enhancing the lives of the veterans that we honor.

Madam National President, this concludes my platform remarks.
(Applause.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Do you have any resolutions?

CHAIRMAN DUSCHECK: Actually, no.

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Woohoo. Thank you.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: That was a great report, Diane. Thank you and our VA&R Committee for all their help and support at the Veterans Creative Arts Festival and for helping carry out this very important pillar of our American Legion Auxiliary.

As Diane mentioned in her report, veterans across the country struggle with physical and emotional disabilities. By supporting the Veterans Creative Arts Festivals the Auxiliary is helping work through these challenges with dignity and the camaraderie of fellow veterans.

To encourage departments to support this awesome program, there was a challenge extended to all departments, the challenge to donate the most funds per capita by membership category to the American Legion Auxiliary's Foundation Veterans Creative Arts Festival. Do you all remember that?

AUDIENCE: Yes.

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Oh, that was weak.

(Laughter.)

AUDIENCE: Yes!

PRESIDENT CONATSER: So here is how this will go. First I will announce the winner from each of the six membership categories. Then the six winners will be put into a drawing to win this beautiful piece of art -- isn't it gorgeous? It's beautiful. It was donated by a Gold Medal-winning artist, U.S. Army Veteran James McClain. We are very thankful to Mr. McClain for his artwork.

So here we go. Drum roll. From Group A, having 26,000 members and above -- drum roll -- the winner is the Department of Illinois.

(Cheering.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: I don't see you very excited.

AUDIENCE: Yea!

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Group B, having 13,000 to 25,999 members, the Department of Wisconsin.

(Cheering.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: You knew before I said it.

Group C, having 8,000 to 12,999 -- drum roll, please -- the Department of South Dakota.

(Cheering.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: From Group D, having 5,000 to 7,999 members -- drum roll -- Department of Kentucky.

(Cheering.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: From Group E, having 3,001 to 4,999 members -- drum roll -- Department of Connecticut.

(Cheering.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: And from Group F, having up to 3,000 members -- drum roll -- the Department of Hawaii.

(Cheering.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Congratulations to each of these winning departments.

Now for the moment you've all been waiting for. All six winners have been added to -- and because Illinois is in the pot, I'm going to ask our National Parliamentarian -- I would love to do it, but I think this is better -- and the winner --

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: They're being tossed.

(Laughter.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Yep, they're all in there. This piece took up to 45 hours to create it and this department is going home with this beautiful bowl.

(Pause.)

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: In the process of shuffling them, two got stuck together.

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Drum roll. Come on. Rally towels, something.

(Cheering.)

(Pause.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: The Department of Kentucky.

(Cheering.)

(Music.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Great job. Thank you everyone for your donations.

Being National Finance Chairman has afforded Nicole Clapp opportunities to contribute to the sustainability of our 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 Chairman Nicole Clapp to the stage.

(Cheering.)

(Music.)

CHAIRMAN CLAPP: Good morning.

AUDIENCE: Good morning.

CHAIRMAN CLAPP: The American Legion Auxiliary's National Finance Committee is comprised of five appointed members, each serving a five-year term.

The primary role of the committee is to develop the annual proposed budget and review the National Financial Reports. The National Finance Committee members review the draft budget and make adjustments that may be necessary to 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 American Legion Auxiliary and the ALA Foundation; makes financial policy recommendations to the National Executive Committee for action, and ensures that the ALA national organization is meeting nonprofit benchmarks and financial mandates.

One member of the National Financial Committee is also designated to serve as a liaison to the American Legion Auxiliary Foundation Board of Directors and another committee member is designated as a liaison to the American Legion Auxiliary National Audit Committee.

The financial performance of the National organization for 2015-2016 fiscal year has been positive. That's a little woohoo.

AUDIENCE: Woohoo.

CHAIRMAN CLAPP: With the positive performance of our investments augmenting our reserves derived from dues, the last increase at the 2011 ALA National Convention, which became effective with the 2013 ALA membership year, we were able to continue to underwrite the costs for three Department representatives to attend the Department Leadership National Conference, maintain Department visits by National Division Vice Presidents, and continue organizational effectiveness training for Department secretaries at ALA National Headquarters.

Woohoo. Rally towels.

AUDIENCE: Woohoo.

(Cheering.)

CHAIRMAN CLAPP: With reserve funds, we resourced Phase II of the ALA Centennial Strategic Plan, which included developing ALA Academy, aimed at improving our capacity to deliver our mission, and issuing 18 ALA Centennial Strategic Plan Development Achievement Awards as of July 31st, 2016. Congratulations.

(Cheering.)

(Applause.)

CHAIRMAN CLAPP: The successful fund-raising efforts by our direct mail vendor continued this fiscal year with three appeals designated for the Auxiliary and one for the ALA Foundation. Fiscal year donations as of July 31st totaled a net \$606,000.

(Cheering.)

(Applause.)

CHAIRMAN CLAPP: The analysis of the 2015 direct mail donations for calendar year indicated 153,383 gifts were received. Of those gifts, almost 99,000 came from you ALA members and 54,000 came from non-ALA members. The ALA continues to be fortunate to receive such tremendous support from donations outside the ALA.

In fiscal year 2016, the number of people applying for the Auxiliary USAA credit cards continues to increase. Since inception, 6,916 USAA credit cards have been issued, and \$30 million have been charged.

(Cheering.)

CHAIRMAN CLAPP: Ladies, we know we like to shop on those cards. Based on the growth and the number of credit cards issued, the USAA credit card royalty revenue shared with the Departments for fiscal year 2016 is expected to be \$12,500.

(Applause.)

CHAIRMAN CLAPP: Please consider obtaining an Auxiliary USAA card and charge, responsibly, of course.

(Laughter.)

CHAIRMAN CLAPP: The National Financial Committee continues to believe in the value and knowledge gained by members through ALA Mission Trainings and national Junior meetings. During the fiscal year, 370 members attended ALA Mission Trainings and 98 Junior members attended the five Junior meetings. Thank you.

(Applause.)

CHAIRMAN CLAPP: So on behalf of the national Finance Committee, thank you for your dedication, commitment and generous financial support of the Auxiliary's tireless efforts to fulfill our mission.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Thanks, Nicole. Do you have any resolutions?

CHAIRMAN CLAPP: No, we do not, ma'am.

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Yes.

(Laughter.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Thank you for your report.

CHAIRMAN CLAPP: You're welcome.

PRESIDENT CONATSER: The Membership Program works to ensure the future growth and prosperity of this organization by developing the strategies to retain, recruit and engage members. Here with her report is our National Membership Committee Chairman Vickie Koutz.

(Cheering.)

(Music.)

CHAIRMAN KOUTZ: Madam President, if I had to choose one word to describe this Auxiliary year and how hard our units and departments have worked membership, awesome would be that word. The whole Membership Team across the nation stepped up to the challenges and followed through with the promise they would do the best job they could and that is all we ever ask.

New Mexico realized how important it was to have personal contact with their members, so they sent out their own renewal notices, and in return received a really good response. They gave their members a reason to stay once they signed up.

Fifty three new units were chartered across the country. Departments that chartered new units included, but was not limited to, Connecticut, New Jersey and North Carolina.

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Hello, woohoo, woohoo.

(Cheering.)

CHAIRMAN KOUTZ: Georgia, among many other departments, took advantage of presenting promise state certificates to their units.

Delaware units reported their community outreach helped with new member recruitment and often allowed potential members to take a test drive, volunteer before joining.

One unit in Maine waived their portion of the dues if a member participated in an event or volunteered a certain number of hours.

AUDIENCE: Woohoo.

CHAIRMAN KOUTZ: The Department of Maryland encouraged women veterans to be dual members.

(Applause.)

CHAIRMAN KOUTZ: Units in Vermont and Ohio publicized the benefits of becoming an American Legion Auxiliary member in their local newspaper.

(Cheering.)

CHAIRMAN KOUTZ: The Department Membership Chairman from Virginia conducted a drawing for any member who paid her 2016 membership dues was entered to win a paid-up-for-life membership. Pretty cool, huh?

AUDIENCE: Woohoo.

CHAIRMAN KOUTZ: Tennessee had great success with their personal contact with members that had not paid.

(Applause.)

CHAIRMAN KOUTZ: Oklahoma, North Dakota and Illinois all held revitalization sessions.

(Cheering.)

CHAIRMAN KOUTZ: The Department of Illinois Membership Chairman personally made over 200 calls to members who had not renewed since 2013.

(Cheering.)

CHAIRMAN KOUTZ: Junior to Senior membership transition ceremonies were held in Iowa.

(Cheering.)

CHAIRMAN KOUTZ: Florida's Membership Chairman held a Facebook chat every Wednesday night.

(Cheering.)

CHAIRMAN KOUTZ: And South Dakota created a Department member guide as part of their strategic plan.

(Cheering.)

CHAIRMAN KOUTZ: Team Colorado --

AUDIENCE: Woohoo.

CHAIRMAN KOUTZ: -- challenged their members to bring in one new member, while the Department officers and Committee chairmen were challenged to recruit two or more members to demonstrate leadership.

A unit in Montana --

AUDIENCE: Woohoo.

CHAIRMAN KOUTZ: -- had a successful idea for recruitment that included a wine-tasting party for eligible family members in the area.

(Cheering.)

CHAIRMAN KOUTZ: Pennsylvania's membership theme was Join Our Family Tree, branching out for membership.

(Cheering.)

CHAIRMAN KOUTZ: And Texas --

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Where are you? Texas?

(Cheering.)

CHAIRMAN KOUTZ: -- an award was created named, "I got two, how about you?" With the Auxiliary, Legion and SAL invited to participate.

A letter was sent out to all members from the Arkansas Department President that included a membership application and benefits form.

Kentucky set up a membership information table at all of their conferences.

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Woohoo.

AUDIENCE: Woohoo.

CHAIRMAN KOUTZ: The Department Membership Chairman in Nebraska --

(Cheering.)

CHAIRMAN KOUTZ: -- created a help-wanted poster and it read: "Help wanted. Volunteers needed immediately. Veterans, active military and youth, need your help now. Seeking ladies who want to continue to support Promise our Veterans. Our organization consists of veteran-related ladies and girls who have pledged to be there and honor those heroes who have given their all for America's freedom always. The current cuts and sequesters for our veterans' needs have increased our workload, requiring more help from ladies just like you. Contact your local American Legion Auxiliary unit."

Is this not a unique idea?

(Cheering.)

CHAIRMAN KOUTZ: Congratulations to all 40 who earned the Silver Brigade Honors. They were recognized in our pre-Con meeting on Saturday.

Could we have them stand, please? If you're a Silver Brigade winner, could you stand, please?

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Come on, Silver Brigade. Where are you?

(Cheering.)

CHAIRMAN KOUTZ: Congratulations. And talk about meeting the membership challenge. 252 units from 43 departments met the 100-percent target by December 31st.

AUDIENCE: Woohoo.

(Applause.)

CHAIRMAN KOUTZ: Six hundred and twenty seven units met the 102-percent target by July 30th.

(Cheering.)

CHAIRMAN KOUTZ: And special recognition is due to the Department of Florida, who led the pack for 16 weeks. Phenomenal job, ladies.

(Cheering.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Good job, good job. All right.

(Applause.)

CHAIRMAN KOUTZ: Congratulations to the District of Columbia for being --

(Cheering.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: There she goes. You go girl.

(Laughter.)

CHAIRMAN KOUTZ: -- the only department to reach their 100-percent goal. Congratulation, ladies.

(Cheering.)

(Applause.)

CHAIRMAN KOUTZ: What a fantastic year we have had. One of my favorite assignments was having the opportunity to speak with all of the Department Membership Chairman, not only once, but twice. The personal contact with these ladies, sometimes talking for like ten minutes, sometimes for 45 minutes, sometimes to an hour, but each one being very special. I thank you for all your kindness.

To all the members of the National Membership Committee, the Central Division All-Stars --

(Cheering.)

CHAIRMAN KOUTZ: -- the Eastern Division Angels --

(Cheering.)

CHAIRMAN KOUTZ: -- the Northwestern Division Winners --

(Cheering.)

CHAIRMAN KOUTZ: -- the Southern Division Southern Spirit

Ladies --

(Cheering.)

CHAIRMAN KOUTZ: -- and the Wild Women of the wild, wild West Division.

(Cheering.)

CHAIRMAN KOUTZ: Thank you one and all for putting your heart and soul into the membership program this year with the ending results helping our veterans, military and their children.

"I truly believe you don't inspire your teammates by showing how amazing you are, you inspire them by showing them how amazing they are."

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Absolutely.

CHAIRMAN KOUTZ: Anonymous.

(Applause.)

CHAIRMAN KOUTZ: "And whenever you find yourself doubting how far you can go, remember everything you have faced, all the battles you have won and all the fears you have overcome." And this was by Unknown Author. These two quotes were proven over and over again this year.

Madam President, I thank you for the opportunity to serve as your Membership Chairman this year and this concludes my platform remarks.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Do you have any resolutions, Vickie?

CHAIRMAN KOUTZ: No, ma'am.

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Yes. Okay.

(Laughter.)

CHAIRMAN KOUTZ: Thank you.

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Thank you. Thanks, Vickie.

A couple things I'd like to mention here on membership. We have eight departments that are ahead of this time last year.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: And that is as of the newest report two hours ago.

We can do this, ladies. We can keep growing, we can stop the slide, it is in sight. But I'm telling you what, I'm a little worried. If we had 50 prospective members standing outside that door and we're going, oh, yea, membership --

(Laughter.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: -- now, would you want to join that organization?

AUDIENCE: No!

PRESIDENT CONATSER: All right. You have to be excited. You can't be any more tired than anybody else.

(Laughter.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: You're sitting all the time.

(Laughter.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: So, ladies, be enthusiastic. And the thing you can do

AUDIENCE: Woo! Woohoo!

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Oh, thank you, thank you, thank you.

AUDIENCE: Woohoo!

PRESIDENT CONATSER: All right, that's better.

(Cheering.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: All right, let's go! Come on! All right, thank you.

We have to remember Goal 2, because I've seen it in my travels over and over again: Goal 2 is the future of our organization. Goal 2 will make us here in the next hundred years.

Most of all, thank you for accepting the goals that were set. Ladies, because there was complaints in the beginning, but when it got explained, when it got explained that this is really where the Million Member Task Force had set those goals for our future, they were like, some people were like, "Wow, I didn't know we were that far behind."

So sometimes we have to see the reality of where we are, but it didn't stop you from working, it didn't stop you from smiling, and you need to keep that burning passion in your heart so somebody is here to take care of the veterans that are serving today.

Thank you for accepting it, thank you for going after it, and -- we've got to be more excited though, okay? Woohoo!

AUDIENCE: Woohoo!

PRESIDENT CONATSER: All right, all right.

At this time I would like to invite Patti

Williamson from the Department of Illinois to come to the podium.

(Applause.)

(Music.)

MS. WILLIAMSON: Hi. This is my good friend Sharon. And I'd like to thank everybody that sent me pictures, Tweeted out, Facebooked. I have to say she was well-documented in everything she did.

(Laughter.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Even stealing the golf cart.

MS. WILLIAMSON: Yes, even stealing the golf cart.

To date, before the Legacy Run, we have over 15,000 pictures.

AUDIENCE: Woohoo!

PRESIDENT CONATSER: It's a scrapbook. Thank you for that.

(Laughter.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: She didn't sound sincere, did she?

(Laughter.)

MS. WILLIAMSON: I tried, I really did.

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Oh, wow.

MS. WILLIAMSON: Until I get it all scrapbooked, here's a little something for you to enjoy and maybe do your -- enjoy until Christmas.

(Laughter.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: It's a photo frame with two USB right on front full of pictures already.

MS. WILLIAMSON: Two 16 gigabyte, I might add.

(Laughter.)

(Pause.)

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: When I asked Patti if she would accept this, I'm not sure she knew what she was getting herself into.

(Laughter.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: That's right, Patti is awesome. She is very busy, she works full time, she's doing the scrapbook for me. She's also our rep at our Illiana VA in Danville, Illinois, and she goes above and beyond at that.

But, Patti, I cannot thank you enough. I'm looking forward to seeing those pictures. It's going to be a great way to look back and remember all the memories of all of you. Thank you.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: The Resolutions Committee report. I am pleased to introduce the members of our very hardworking Resolutions Committee.

As I told earlier, Marybeth Revoir had to go home because her husband was ill. Gailwyn Starr, Vice Chairman, and Laura Santino, Member, are here to -- are there any resolutions? I almost forgot to say that.

(Pause.)

MS. STARR: Yes, Madam President, we have courtesy resolutions.

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Please present those at this time.

MS. STARR: Thank you.

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Thank you, Gail.

MS. STARR: She always has directed us, always.

(Laughter.)

MS. STARR: Madam President Sharon, delegates, Laura Santino, the other member of the Resolution Committee, we are here with three courtesy resolutions this morning. Laura will present the first two.

MS. SANTINO: Thank you. Whereas, dedicated members of the American Legion Auxiliary have gathered in Cincinnati to hear of the promises made and the promises kept during this past year under the leadership of National President Sharon, along with faithful consideration of the issues presented to them; and whereas, the National Officers and National Chairman have fulfilled their promise to the National President by promoting our programs and chronologizing a year of accomplishments furthering the mission of the American Legion Auxiliary; and whereas, past National Presidents are a beacon from our past that continue to guide the way of our shared knowledge and friendship to all of us; and whereas, National Executive Director Dobbie Buckler, along with the hardworking women and men of our National staff, fulfill their promise to assist our members throughout the year, in addition to choreographing an interest and effective 96th Annual Convention; and whereas, Convention Chairman Donna Ray and the members of the Department of Ohio, along with the staff of this Convention Center, the numerous hotels, restaurants, shops, and venues in the City of Cincinnati and nearby extended warm hospitality to all of us; now, therefore, be it resolved that by this courtesy resolution the American Legion Auxiliary National Convention assembled here in Cincinnati, Ohio this 31st day of August, 2016 express our heartfelt appreciation and grateful thanks to each of them throughout our continuous applause.

(Applause.)

MS. SANTINO: Whereas, this 96th National Convention has been honored by the presence of many distinguished guests led by the American Legion National Commander, Dale Barnett, and staff, whose emphasis on duty, honor and country; along with the Sons of the American Legion National Commander Kevin Collier, who inspired us with his R-O-C-K-E-D Rocked Chair; and along with soon-to-be our presidential candidate speaking, Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump; and whereas, our promising Juniors, National Junior Member of the Year --

AUDIENCE: Woohoo!

MS. SANTINO: -- American Legion Youth Champions, Girls State participants, as well as the President, Little Miss Poppy --

AUDIENCE: Woohoo!

MS. SANTINO: -- Unit Members of the Year, active duty servicewomen --

AUDIENCE: Woohoo!

MS. SANTINO: -- and Woman of the Year recipient provide us with enthusiasm and confidence to not only reach, but exceed our goals; and whereas, multiple representatives whose lives were affected by all our Auxiliary programs and the thousands of hours, logged and un-logged, by volunteers throughout the world; now, therefore, be it resolved that this courtesy resolution of the American Legion Auxiliary National Convention assembled here in Cincinnati, Ohio on this 31st day of August, 2016, express

our heartfelt appreciation and grateful thanks to this distinguished group who shared time with us.

(Cheering.)

MS. STARR: Courtesy Resolution 3: Whereas, one short year ago on September 3rd, 2015, in Baltimore, Maryland a native daughter of Illinois, Sharon Conatser, was installed as American Legion Auxiliary National President; and whereas, President Sharon has asked us to join her in keeping our promise to our values of the American Legion family, to each other and to the mission of the American Legion Auxiliary; and whereas, President Sharon has traveled thousands of miles through the world, full of promise of our future; and whereas, President Sharon's smile, warmth, welcoming nature have melded with the American Legion National Commander Dale and the Sons of the American Legion Commander Kevin to form a stellar team of ambassadors of the Legion family; and whereas, the Conatser family and the Lofton families have weathered a year of longing as they await the return of their wife, mother, grandmother, daughter, sister, but also bask in the great joy of her praiseworthy year of accomplishments fueled by their love and support; and now, therefore, be it resolved that by this courtesy resolution the American Legion National Convention assembled here in Cincinnati, Ohio on this the 31st day of August, 2016 express our heartfelt thanks and appreciation to this remarkable woman, the American Legion Auxiliary National President Sharon Conatser, by giving her a standing ovation --

(Cheering.)

MS. STARR: -- demonstrating our love and admiration, along with saying thank you, a job well done.

(Cheering.)

MS. STARR: Madam President, I move the adoption of these resolutions.

(Cheering.)

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: All those in favor say "aye."

AUDIENCE: Aye!

PRESIDENT CONATSER: We're done.

(Laughter.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: It's not in the script, we just have a couple of minutes, but, ladies, the woman that's been sitting next to me all weeks, she's remarkable, she's a good friend of the American Legion Auxiliary and of ours, but I'd just like to give her the opportunity if she has any last-minute good thoughts. You notice I clarified that. Please welcome Chris Dickey.

(Applause.)

MS. DICKEY: It is truly my joy and privilege to serve all of you, to be able to work with the officers, the staff and all of you. I think this is ten years now I've been coming and I look forward to it every year, and thank you so, so much.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: We're back on script now.

Would the National Secretary please give us updates?

(Music.)

(Applause.)

SECRETARY BUCKLER: Am I supposed to do something else up here? Oh.

(Laughter.)

SECRETARY BUCKLER: First off, I'd like to take a moment of personal privilege. You heard of I hope what you think is a real fantastic Centennial Strategic Plan report this morning and one of the presenters was Stephanie Abisi. Many of you know Stephanie, she's been with the organization for -- I'll get this wrong -- 17 years, I believe, National Headquarters, and her father-in-law passed away, and she stayed to give this report and then left, and they actually arranged the funeral to be tomorrow so that she could be here today to do the report and then leave immediately.

(Applause.)

SECRETARY BUCKLER: So that's the kind of dedication that we have and I just wanted to take a moment to recognize that. Thank you for allowing me to do that.

Another announcement is, when you see us up here going like this, I know it's been a long week, but we're not losing it.

(Laughter.)

SECRETARY BUCKLER: There are gnats up here --

(Laughter.)

SECRETARY BUCKLER: -- and they're the biting kind. And, no, they're not the "Nats" that you would have at your ALA Girls State programs.

(Laughter.)

SECRETARY BUCKLER: These are the little bugs that fly around.

Okay. Before we go -- literally, I'm getting updates about the Joint Session, in case you think I've been a little dyslexic up here. Okay, so here's the deal as of this moment. Upon adjournment here, we need to proceed to the Joint Session with the American Legion. Magnetometers are set up in front of Hall A. I think you all saw those as you came in this morning, so you know where it is and you know the drill. So you will only be screened for the Joint Session today and tomorrow, you're not going to be screened as you come into the building. The magnetometers are there, if you go into the session and you leave, you're going to have to go through it, the magnetometer, to come back in. So I guess what I'm kind of saying is, if you have personal needs to attend to, it would be good to attend to those before you go through the magnetometers and get seated.

Plastic drink bottles and food will be okay to bring with you. This would be the stadium speech, no coolers bigger than this or this.

(Laughter.)

SECRETARY BUCKLER: Be in Hall A by 11:30 today and by 8:30 tomorrow morning. Now remember, when we adjourn today we will go to the session and then we really can't tell you what time installation will begin. So my request is, after the Joint Session concludes and Candidate Clinton has addressed the Joint Session, please come back here to our convention hall for

installation. I know you all understand, I just can't give you any more specific time than that. So -- why?

PRESIDENT CONATSER: They're kidding you, Dubbie. They're kidding you.

SECRETARY BUCKLER: It hasn't come through yet.

(Laughter.)

SECRETARY BUCKLER: Now, the room will not be locked down, so you can -- you are able to get up and, you know, come and go as you will. The restrooms in the hall are located at the back of the room -- I think this says audience left, but recommend -- oh, that's what I just said. Please attend to your personal needs before you --

(Laughter.)

SECRETARY BUCKLER: -- before you go through the lines. Now, bear with me and I'm sorry to be doing this up here.

(Pause.)

SECRETARY BUCKLER: Okay, that's as good of information as I -- I've been getting updates periodically up here, that's the best information I have. So by 11:30, if you're going to the Joint Session, please go through the magnetometers in front of Hall A. And then at 8:30 in the morning we need to be place. So I would suggest that 8:00ish you're making your way through the magnetometer, because remember tomorrow morning it will not just be us going through them, it will be us and the Legion. So there will be many, many more people going through them in the morning.

And then upon conclusion of that Joint Session tomorrow morning hearing Candidate Trump, then those who are participating in the NEC meeting will -- okay, we're still on schedule -- okay, will go to the room where the NEC meeting is being held.

So are we about as good as we can be on all of this right now?

AUDIENCE: Yes.

SECRETARY BUCKLER: Okay, great. Thank you so much.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Well, we're getting ready for the close of the Convention. I ask that the National officers, with the exception of Vice President Mary, leave the stage at this time and find seats near the front. If you have an empty seat near the front -- that's what my script said -- no, would the other officers please go down into the audience for the video.

(Pause.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: We had a collision on stage, sorry. Okay.

Those that I talked to prior, that would be Diane Duscheck, Kathy Dungan, Nicole Clapp, if you want to meet us right here by the distinguished guest table after, we'll go together.

(Pause.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: This video is only a small part of my memories for this year. I hope you will enjoy it and we'll be back after the video.

(Video playing:)

(Music.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Who is an American Legion Auxiliary member? She's me and she's you. When we signed the membership application to join the world's largest women's patriotic service organization, we had our veterans, military and their families in mind. We signed our names to honor the veteran we were eligible through, we signed our names because we wanted to keep the promise.

Throughout my visits to our amazing American Legion Auxiliary departments this year, I reminded members to think about the veteran they joined through. Remember the reason you joined this awesome organization. Remember your roots and the commitments you made.

The American Legion Family. They say there's strength in numbers and I believe it. I talk a lot about our American Legion family, that's how much I believe in the power that comes from us uniting with the American Legion and the Sons of the American Legion to help our collective missions thrive for another century of service. From the unit and post levels to the National organization, it's important for all of us to work together on our important missions in serving veterans, their families, and remain a vital force in our communities.

For me, it was such a blessing to serve the Auxiliary as your National President, next to American Legion National Commander Dale Barnett and Sons' National Commander Kevin Collier. Both Dale and Kevin are strong supporters of the American Legion Auxiliary, our mission and our long-term goals.

It's no secret that American Legion Auxiliary members have fully embraced the Centennial Strategic Plan to continue supporting our troops and veterans for many years to come. Accomplishing the five goals and many strategies outlined in the plan is how we have taken our promise and turned it into an everyday reality.

When we attended meetings, we left our attitudes and personalities at the door to focus on important matters. As Commander Dale and I often said to Legion family members this past year, creating an internal culture of goodwill creates a culture of growth.

I have so much love for the American Legion Auxiliary. Throughout the year I met many dedicated members who shared that love and put the Auxiliary and its mission first. Members not only made an impact on those we served, but we created opportunities to show what we're all about with those around us.

Many of you wore Auxiliary-branded shirts to meetings and community events. You want everyone to feel pride in belonging to the American Legion Auxiliary. And you let the public know more about us and that's critical, because after nearly a century still not enough people are aware of what we do.

One of the best things about belonging to the Auxiliary is that age doesn't matter. Someone can sign you up at birth or you can join later in life. This past year a variety of ages rolled up their sleeves and did whatever it took to lift the mission and our organization.

This year, members pitched in financially to help one another through the Auxiliary Emergency Fund. I chose the Auxiliary Emergency Fund as a special emphasis project, because when a tornado hit my home state of Illinois not that long ago I saw firsthand the devastation a disaster could bring. Unit members helping unit members is what the Auxiliary Emergency Fund is all about and, boy, did you show that at the Washington, D.C. conference. Thanks to your generosity, a record-breaking \$110,000 was raised at the Annual Parade of Checks event.

Our members are incredible. Through the Auxiliary Emergency Fund we've been able to deliver financial assistance to Auxiliary members whose lives were turned upside down after disaster or crisis. Your generous contributions to this fund and the American Legion Auxiliary Foundation this past year have made life brighter for all of us and especially those we serve.

The American Legion Auxiliary has been part of veterans' and service members' lives for nearly a century. Together with the American Legion and the Sons of the American Legion, we will remain a driving force in that picture. We will continue our legacy of service, not self.

Thank you so much to those who kept the promise, to those who stood by us. American Legion National Commander Dale, his wife, Donna, and Dewey Azay (phonetic), Sons' National Commander Kevin, all were so supportive of the American Legion Auxiliary and I know you will continue to be.

I would be remiss if I didn't thank the Illinois American Legion Family. Your support has meant the world to me. To my parents, my sister Pam and her family, Marty, our sons and their families, thank you for your continued support and love as this dream came true.

Thank you also to our awesome National Headquarters staff, and especially thank you to all the American Legion Auxiliary members.

Let's remain committed to growing and strengthening our American Legion family so that we can be here to serve future generations. Remember, our titles change, you're always a unit, post or squadron member first. Let's keep our promise to those we serve, let's remember those who through their sacrifice made us eligible for our American Legion Auxiliary membership. Remember, one person can make a difference and that one person is you.

May God bless each of you, may God bless our troops, both here and on foreign soil, and may God bless our awesome United States of America, our home.

(Cheering.)

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Thank you, thank you so much.

(Cheering.)

SECRETARY BUCKLER: She fogged up.

PRESIDENT CONATSER: I fogged up.

(Laughter.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: This past year has truly been filled with wonderful opportunities and experiences that I will never forget. After

traveling the country and meeting our members, I believe now more than ever that our work is important and that our mission does matter.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: We have to do everything in our power to keep this organization alive, so that we can fulfill our promise, the promise to honor and care for those who have fought so selflessly to protect our freedoms.

And you know what? I'm not alone in that feeling. Take a look at this important message.

(Video playing:)

(Music.)

ANNOUNCER: Greetings. What a wonderful convention. I hope you all go back to your departments and units with a renewed spirit and purpose. And while you're serving our veterans, military service members and their families, have some fun. Be kind to one another and know your cause is a great one. I have faith in you, but know I'll be watching. I know you'll keep the promise, your promise, our promise. Besides, you've got history behind you.

On March 16th, 1864, in the midst of war, I made these remarks at a lady's fair for the benefit of Union soldiers. In this extraordinary war, extraordinary developments have manifested themselves such as not been seen in former wars and among these manifestations nothing has been more remarkable than these fairs for the relief of suffering soldiers and their families, and the chief agents in these fairs are the women of America.

I have never felt comfortable extending compliments to the fairer species, but I must say that if all that has been said by orators and poets since the creation of the world in praise of women were applied to the women of America, it would not do them justice.

I will close by saying God bless the women of America, and 152 years later, at the close of your National Convention, I'd like to say God bless the women of the American Legion Auxiliary.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: I started last year with the word "Wow" and I'd like to begin these final remarks with the word "Wow." What a year. Keeping the promise, keeping the promise to ourselves to always be in the forefront of our communities. The amazing travels, our amazing American Legion Family members.

I would be remiss if I didn't give one more shout-out not only to the Department of Illinois, but to my family. My mom and dad are in the back, and I know my husband is in there and Pam is here, but she -- is Butchy-Poo here?

(Laughter.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: There's Butchy -- that's my brother-in-law. Thank you.

(Laughter.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Thank you to my family and to Illinois, and to the entire Illinois American Legion family for your support.

If there's anything I'd like for you to take away from this year, it's something I've said at every single stop: Personalities, egos, vindictiveness, and grudges are not what we're about. We are about family, we are about our veterans, our military.

(Cheering.)

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Dale, Kevin and I have not only talked the talk, but we've walked the walk the entire year.

I know that you're in good hands with Mary and I know she will continue the promise that we have all made this year.

Please continue to keep the promise, to keep your promise, to keep our promise, but most of all to remember what my good friends, daughter and granddaughter gave me at homecoming: one person can make a difference and that one person is you, and my only hope is that each of you took one part of me home with you.

Thank you and may God bless each of you.

(Cheering.)

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Can we do one more pinky-swear before we go, ladies? Come on, let's do keeping our promise.

AUDIENCE: Keeping our promise.

PRESIDENT CONATSER: And I have one more announcement before I let you go. Would all incoming 2016-2017 National Officers please meet in the front of the stage prior to installation for a photo. She's shaking her head.

Thank you everyone, and please remember the announcement about installation and please come back and support the new administrative team.

Thank you, God bless you.

(Applause.)

(Music.)

(Whereupon, at 10:49 a.m. on Wednesday, August 31, 2016, the above-entitled meeting was concluded.)

**INSTALLATION CEREMONY
WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 31, 2016**

ANNOUNCER: The Installation Ceremony for National Officers of the American Legion Auxiliary. Please welcome your National President, Sharon Conatser.

(Cheering.)

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Thank you, thank you. Thank you so much.

Please welcome the Installing Officer for the 2017 Installation, Past National President Rita Navarreté.

(Music.)

(Applause.)

MS. NAVARRETÉ: Good afternoon.

AUDIENCE: Good afternoon.

MS. NAVARRETÉ: Welcome to the installation of Mary E. Davis from the Department of Washington as National President, and of the National Officers and Department Presidents who will serve with her as we begin a new year of service for God and country.

Participants in this afternoon's program are as follows: Sergeant at Arms Henney Elston (phonetic). The Color Bearers are Karen Schwartz, Leo Grupa (phonetic), Laura Bondurant, and Wayne Elston. Installation Officers, yours truly Rita Navarrette from the Department of New Mexico; Installing Chaplain, Past National President Linda Boone from Oregon.

The reading will be done by Western Division Alaska Unit Member of the Year Jeannie Ostnes.

(Music.)

MS. NAVARRETÉ: Please welcome Divisional Vice Presidents, Central Division Vice President Carollee Junge.

(Cheering.)

(Applause.)

MS. NAVARRETÉ: Eastern Division Vice President Patti Lach.

(Cheering.)

(Applause.)

MS. NAVARRETÉ: Northwestern Division Vice President Virginia Nelsen.

(Cheering.)

(Applause.)

MS. NAVARRETÉ: Southern Division Vice President Beverly Mulkey.

(Cheering.)

(Applause.)

MS. NAVARRETÉ: Western Division Vice President Cary Fisher.

(Cheering.)

(Applause.)

MS. NAVARRETÉ: Please welcome National Historian Coral May Grout.

(Cheering.)

(Applause.)

MS. NAVARRETÉ: And National Chaplain Deborah Debro -- Valerie Brown-Debro.

(Cheering.)

(Applause.)

MS. NAVARRETÉ: Please welcome National Vice President Diane Duscheck, Department of Wisconsin.

(Cheering.)

(Applause.)

MS. NAVARRETÉ: Escorted by Wisconsin Second Vice President Joanie Dickerson.

(Cheering.)

(Applause.)

(Music.)

MS. NAVARRETÉ: With the family and members of the Department of Washington in place, please stand as the colors of Pat Tillman Memorial Unit 53, DuPont, and the colors of Washington are presented.

(Music.)

MS. NAVARRETÉ: And now it is with great pleasure that I ask you to welcome the 2016-2017 National President, Mary E. Davis, escorted by her husband, Dale Davis.

(Cheering.)

(Applause.)

(Music.)

(Applause.)

MS. NAVARRETÉ: Please remain standing for the opening prayer given by Past National President Linda Boone.

CHAPLAIN BOONE: Please bow your heads.

Lord, with open minds and hearts, we come together for the betterment of the American Legion Auxiliary. We remember the experiences and knowledge from the past with gratitude for Your leadership and guidance.

Help us to remember that in striving to help others we work best as a team, not as individuals. Guide and direct us to do that which is right for our community, state and nation. Keep us committed to the overall mission of our organization. Help us not only use what we have gained from the past, but to plan and prepare boldly for tomorrow. We move confidently into the future with You by our side.

Amen.

AUDIENCE: Amen.

MS. NAVARRETÉ: The pledge of allegiance will be led by the oldest and newest members of Mary's family, Helen Boots and Sorya Price.

And Helen and Sorya, would you please come forward?

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.

MS. NAVARRETÉ: You may be seated. We will now have a reading by Jeannie Ostnes.

MS. OSTNES: "I Said Yes," Author Unknown: "I said yes again and I couldn't believe my ears. Yep, I said yes again. I'm a chronic volunteer. They asked me for my help and I thought, who has the time? The phone calls, all those meetings, just for fun and not a dime. So I thought it over: do I want to give or take? I enjoy it all so much, the decision was easy to make. I've loved every single minute of working with the gals; even when the hour was late, it was all for my pals. So please don't try to tell me volunteering is a pain, because all my friends I've made and all I've learned, I'll say yes, yes, yes, again and again."

Thank you.

(Applause.)

MS. NAVARRETÉ: Thank you, Jeannie.

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 a 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 the success of this organization depend on each one of you.

Every American Legion Auxiliary member assumes the obligation of preserving the integrity of the American Legion, the American Legion Auxiliary, contributing to the aims and purposes of our organization.

Will you please raise your right hand and repeat after me, giving your name where I give mine.

I, Rita Navarreté --

THE OFFICERS: I (respective names recited)--

MS. NAVARRETÉ: -- promise to perform faithfully --

THE OFFICERS: -- promise to perform faithfully --

MS. NAVARRETÉ: -- all the duties --

THE OFFICERS: -- all the duties --

MS. NAVARRETÉ: -- of the office I am about to assume --

THE OFFICERS: -- of the office I am about to assume --

MS. NAVARRETÉ: -- and I further pledge --

THE OFFICERS: -- and I further pledge --

MS. NAVARRETÉ: -- that I am not a member of --

THE OFFICERS: -- that I am not a member of --

MS. NAVARRETÉ: -- and that I do not subscribe to --

THE OFFICERS: -- and I do not subscribe to --

MS. NAVARRETÉ: -- the principles of any group --

THE OFFICERS: -- the principles of any group --

MS. NAVARRETÉ: -- opposed to our form of government.

THE OFFICERS: -- opposed to our form of government.

MS. NAVARRETÉ: You may lower your hands.
And now will the newly elected Department Presidents please rise.
National President Rita, will you step -- Rita -- National President

Mary --

(Laughter.)

MS. NAVARRETÉ: Come here, my friend.

(Laughter.)

PRESIDENT DAVIS: Thank you, Rita.

MS. NAVARRETÉ: You will step forward and give the oath to your
Presidents.

PRESIDENT DAVIS: Please raise your right hand and repeat after
me, giving your name where I give mine.

I, Mary Davis --

DEPARTMENT PRESIDENTS: I (respective names given) --

PRESIDENT DAVIS: -- promise to perform faithfully --

DEPARTMENT PRESIDENTS: -- promise to perform faithfully --

PRESIDENT DAVIS: -- all the duties of the office --

DEPARTMENT PRESIDENTS: -- all the duties of the office --

PRESIDENT DAVIS: -- I am about to assume --

DEPARTMENT PRESIDENTS: -- I am about to assume --

PRESIDENT DAVIS: -- and I further pledge --

DEPARTMENT PRESIDENTS: -- and I further pledge --

PRESIDENT DAVIS: -- that I am not a member of --

DEPARTMENT PRESIDENTS: -- that I am not a member of --

PRESIDENT DAVIS: -- and do not subscribe to --

DEPARTMENT PRESIDENTS: -- and do not subscribe to --

PRESIDENT DAVIS: -- the principles of any group --

DEPARTMENT PRESIDENTS: -- the principles of any group --

PRESIDENT DAVIS: -- opposed to our form of government.

DEPARTMENT PRESIDENTS: -- opposed to our form of
government.

PRESIDENT DAVIS: You may lower your hands. Congratulations.

(Applause.)

MS. NAVARRETÉ: You, the members of the American Legion
Auxiliary, have chosen outstanding Officers to lead us through this year. I
have charged them with a serious responsibility and I likewise charge you, all
remaining Members of the American Legion Auxiliary, please stand and raise
your right hand, repeating after me.

I solemnly promise --

MEMBERS: I solemnly promise --

MS. NAVARRETÉ: -- to renew my pledge of service --

MEMBERS: -- to renew my pledge of service --

MS. NAVARRETÉ: -- to the American Legion Auxiliary --

MEMBERS: -- to the American Legion Auxiliary --

MS. NAVARRETÉ: -- and to give wholehearted support --

MEMBERS: -- and to give wholehearted support --

MS. NAVARRETÉ: -- to these newly elected Officers.

MEMBERS: -- to these newly elected Officers.

MS. NAVARRETÉ: Thank you. Our Installation Chaplain Linda will offer a prayer.

CHAPLAIN BOONE: God, we ask that you give us pure hearts that we may see You, humble hearts that we may hear You, and hearts of love that we may serve You. God, as we depart, allow kindness to rule in our hearts and compassion in our lives. In our journeys to and from, direct us; in our happiness and pleasure, bless us; in care, anxiety or trouble, sustain us; in peril and danger, protect us.

Go now with us in peace. Amen.

AUDIENCE: Amen.

MS. NAVARRETÉ: Thank you Linda. You may be seated.

The retiring Officers will now transfer the pins and give the ribbons of the office to their successors.

Will the retiring Officers please come forward and present the newly elected and installed 2016-2017 National Officers.

(Music.)

MS. NAVARRETÉ: And we will do it one at a time, please.

As the outgoing Officers return to their seats, Past National President Sharon Conatser will present them with their pin and ribbon, and we will begin the pinning and giving of the ribbon by Chaplain and also the new Chaplain.

CHAPLAIN BOONE: I present my sister, our new National Chaplain, Valerie Brown-Debro, of the Department of Georgia, our new National Chaplain.

(Applause.)

CHAPLAIN BROWN-DEBRO: I'd just like to give glory to the Good Lord Himself. I'd just like to thank to my Department of Georgia each and every unit member and family member, everyone that's here today. To Tennessee, I'd just like to say thank you to everyone that's here. By faith we succeed, by grace we believe.

It is a gift from God.

Thank you.

(Applause.)

MS. NOBLE: I am honored to present your 2016-'17 National Historian, Coral May Grout.

(Applause.)

MS. GROUT: Thank you to my department, the Department of Massachusetts, and I look forward to serving our organization to the best of my ability.

(Applause.)

MS. WORKMAN: I'm honored to present to you the Western Division National Vice President, Cary Fisher.

(Applause.)

MS. FISHER: Thank you to my department and to the Western Division. I look forward to serving our organization to the best of my ability.

(Applause.)

MS. CRAIG: It is my honor to present the newly elected and installed Southern Division National Vice President Beverly Mulkey from the Department of Arkansas.

(Applause.)

MS. MULKEY: I want to thank my department, and there are others that know who you are, and I look forward to serving all of you this year and look forward to seeing you. Thank you.

(Applause.)

MS. TWETE: From the Northwest Division, from Valentine, Nebraska, Virginia Nelsen.

(Applause.)

MS. NELSEN: Thank you to my department and the Northwestern Division. I look forward to serving our organization to the best of my ability. Thank you.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: I know Helen is thinking of all of us and it is with great pride that I present to you the new Eastern Division National Vice President Patricia Lach.

(Applause.)

MS. LACH: Thank you. I would like to thank my department, the Department of Maryland, and my unit, Unit 11, Francis Scott Key, at Frederick, Maryland for your support, and thank you very much.

(Applause.)

MS. LANCASTER: It's with great pride and pleasure I introduce to you our newly elected Central Division Vice President from the Department of Illinois, Carollee Junge.

(Applause.)

MS. JUNGE: Thank you to the Department of Illinois for your support and my unit, Rayfield Meyer, Unit 474. I look forward to serving our organization to the best of my ability.

(Applause.)

MS. NAVARRETÉ: You may be seated.

National Vice President Diane Duscheck from the Department of Wisconsin, please come forward, along with National President Mary.

(Applause.)

MS. NAVARRETÉ: Diane, congratulations. You will now receive your pin and ribbon.

(Pause.)

PRESIDENT DAVIS: It is my pleasure to introduce National Vice President Diane Duscheck for remarks.

(Music.)

VICE PRESIDENT DUSCHECK: Thank you.

PRESIDENT DAVIS: Congratulations.

(Cheering.)

(Applause.)

VICE PRESIDENT DUSCHECK: President Mary, members and guests, I really want to thank you for the trust, your support and your many

well wishes. I appreciate the opportunity to serve each of you as your National Vice President.

President Mary, I want you to know that I'm here to support you in any way I can during your year as you serve as National President and continue to build the strength of the American Legion Auxiliary, and I'll be ready to support the other Officers, the chairman committee members and our National staff, so that they too will have a great year of service.

Many thanks to the Department of Wisconsin. I think you're over here. (Cheering.)

VICE PRESIDENT DUSCHECK: Thank you for all of your support and thank you all for being here today.

My wish for each of you is to have a meaningful year of service for the military, the veterans and their families, and to make our communities better places to live because of our dedicated service to all and our example of goodwill.

Thank you.

(Applause.)

MS. NAVARRETÉ: I lost you, Mary. Please remain at the podium.

(Laughter.)

(Pause.)

MS. NAVARRETÉ: Past National President Sharon to present the pin and the ribbon.

(Pause.)

(Applause.)

PAST NATIONAL PRESIDENT CONATSER: Mary, I wish for you --

PRESIDENT DAVIS: Sharon.

(Laughter.)

PAST NATIONAL PRESIDENT CONATSER: I wish for you an awesome year of memories and remember that all of these Members of the American Legion family are here to make your year full of fun, full of memories, and full of lots and lots of travel.

PRESIDENT DAVIS: Thank you.

(Laughter.)

PAST NATIONAL PRESIDENT CONATSER: You like that, yeah? I wish for you the very best. I've loved having our leadership team, those out there that have served together as a team -- there's no "I" in team -- and I wish for you a team for the coming year. Thank you.

PRESIDENT DAVIS: Thank you.

(Applause.)

MS. NAVARRETÉ: It's my great honor and humble moment to be able to hand over to you the gavel for you to lead the organization, because you have earned the right to lead, my friend.

PRESIDENT DAVIS: Thank you.

(Applause.)

(Cheering.)

PRESIDENT DAVIS: Ooh, that was fun.

(Laughter.)

PRESIDENT DAVIS: So this is very special, all my special friends and I'm really looking forward to this coming year. Thank you, Sharon.

Members of the American Legion Auxiliary, thank you for your support these past years and your belief in me as your 2016-'17 National President. I am humbled and I am honored.

First, I wish to thank my installation team, Rita, Linda, and especially Jeannie. Unit Member of the Year's ladies are special. Having Jeannie help with the installation just proves how special they are. It's very special to have the support of the Western Division Past National Presidents as a support network. These two are only a part of the PNP network.

A special thank you to all the past National Presidents who were and are always available when asked to provide me with guidance. Also, a special thank you to my very special friend and her family, Sharon Conatser.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT DAVIS: For the past ten years she has seen me at my best and most definitely at my worst, and always stood by me. She and her sister Pam walked me through my cancer experience and my unexpected meeting with an Indianapolis street curb. That was a painful one. She is a product of what this organization embodies, an opportunity to make lifelong friends from across our beautiful nation.

I would like to thank the Department Secretaries with whom I served so many years ago for their continued friendship.

I would also like to thank the National staff, previous and present, all of whom are consummate professionals and friends.

Would the Washington delegation please stand?

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT DAVIS: Stay standing. I wish to thank the Legion family members across -- you can keep standing --

(Laughter.)

PRESIDENT DAVIS: -- across the great State of Washington for their support, as well as each and every member of my campaign committee.

Would the Western Division please join Washington in standing?

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT DAVIS: A huge thank you to the members of the Western Division who have supported me and encouraged me by your commitment to our organization. Thank you. You may all be seated.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT DAVIS: I wish to recognize the beautiful piano rendition of "In Flanders Fields," which was recorded for me by Evergreen Girls State alumna and counselor, composer, recording artist, and producer Kamie Bolen of Utah.

I also wish to thank my parents. My mother, whom you've all met, for her steadfast support -- where is she? There you are. Her service in the Women's Army Corps, my late father'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 would be through the American Legion Auxiliary.

A special thank you to my active duty and veteran clients who over the past 19 years have taught me so much about what it means to be a disabled veteran, about expecting promises to be kept and what patience means, how much each and every one of them worries about how they will care for their family when they are too disabled to work, or how they will provide for their families after they die of their service-connected condition. I will always keep their stories close to my heart. I salute them.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT DAVIS: I spent 20 years following my husband around the world. As we raised our children, volunteering became a way of life. Employment many times wasn't an option because of the amount of time we would spend in an area and sometimes employers don't want to hire a military wife because she's not a long-term employment investment. It just happens.

One time when Dale thought I should have a paying job, I actually told him my volunteering schedule was too full to have a job that paid.

(Laughter.)

PRESIDENT DAVIS: True. After that conversation, Dale looked forward to the next move and that his request that I become employed would be honored prior to my getting too busy with volunteering activities.

(Laughter.)

PRESIDENT DAVIS: Several weeks ago, as I followed R. Riveter, a military-wife-owned business site, I came across a powerful mission statement which I wish to share with you. It said, "Empowered women empower women." This business is an upstart of two military wives and blossomed into an avenue to help empower other military wives through mobile employment.

So let me say that again: "Empowered women empower women." What a concept. It's a telling statement and so appropriate. As I look at you, the women who serve in the American Legion Auxiliary, how does that statement weave into what we do? Each and every day as we work our programs, serve our veterans, help our military families, or make a difference in the life of a child, we swell with pride because of the difference we make. Maybe you don't realize it, but this need that inspires you also empowers you to action. Whether you follow the program's action plan or find a creative activity to meet the needs of those we serve, you make a difference.

Once empowered, what happens? You invite others to share in these special projects or activities. But why do you keep doing what you do? Why do you invite others to share in your joy of helping veterans, military and their families? It's because you have pride in what you do, that warm, fuzzy feeling each of you get when you have completed a project.

Like how you felt when you saw a tear on a homeless veteran's face as you helped them wash their clothes. Or when you packed boxes and cookies, with cookies and cards to send to soldiers deployed overseas who are missing their families. Or that time you acknowledged the child who

heroically saved her family from a fateful fire, or followed a young lady to professional greatness because your unit sponsored her to Girls State where she found her public-speaking voice. It is a reflection of your satisfaction in a job well done. I call that member pride. Pride in one's accomplishments, pride in making a difference in another's life, pride in belonging to an organization that embodies the mission work of the American Legion Auxiliary. Pride is what retains those members who can no longer physically work the programs, but continue to pay dues and contribute financially. Or members who are just too busy right now with family, but want to be a part of something greater, and members who actively working the programs.

The national theme for this year honors you, the unit member and your work, it is ALA Member Pride. The pin will simply reflect our acronym, ALA. Again, reflecting pride in the mission of our organization and hopefully sparking conversation with non-members about the activities and projects in which you are involved. I charge each of you to share the pride of what you do by inviting others to join. Please, help grow what you believe in, membership in the American Legion Auxiliary.

As we studied the Centennial Strategic Plan, many have voiced their concern about increasing the membership strength as stated in Goal 1. The numbers seem burdensome. For me, the first thing that comes to my mind is a little children's story, "The Little Engine That Could." There was a little blue engine that was pit against running up and over a steep mountain. It scared her. But after encouragement of others, she turned her attitude into a repetitious phrase, "I think I can, I think I can, I think I can." And for those of you who don't know the story, because she had a positive attitude she worked harder and in the end she made it over the mountain. The moral of the story is she had a goal and she worked as hard as she could to achieve that goal. Even if she hadn't made her goal, she had the personal satisfaction of knowing she had done the best she could do, and that's all I'm asking of each of you, to have faith in yourself that you can increase membership by encouraging others to join.

And while we are at it, I'm asking you to enhance the member experience. Find ways to make meetings and activities informative and enjoyable, invite non-attending members to come to special, productive get-togethers. Be prepared that not all members are organized meeting people, but may want to contribute in some other way. Enhance their experience by utilizing their talents. That's how we keep members.

The 2016-2017 project is twofold, the projects I wish to emphasize and encourage members to give to the American Legion Auxiliary today and in the future. We all recognize the cost of higher education, it is rising sharply. All of our scholarship awards are far below level an organization as large as ours should be giving. Our scholarships should reflect a significant award, not a minor one as they do now. I hope members will consider helping our future leaders through scholarship contributions. I hope you will help me raise \$75,000 to supplement the scholarship funds.

I also hope to raise awareness of the American Legion Auxiliary Foundation by encouraging you to financially contribute through planned

giving. It is such a painless act to become a philanthropist in support of the future of the American Legion Auxiliary. As the title states, planned gift-giving allows you to continue to give to the mission of the American Legion Auxiliary long after you are gone.

Mission Training has been a success this year and will continue in the five divisions. Also I have asked for an additional sixth Mission Training. I am pleased to share that a roving Mission Training has been added for next year.

Now, what does roving mean? We have geographical pockets where members don't or can't go to training, but need training. The Northwest is targeted for this fall. If all goes well and it is well-attended, another pocket where training isn't reaching members will be identified and the roving training will be shifted there.

For this endeavor to be a success, I do again need your help. Please look on the National Web site to where each one-day training will be held nearest you. Gather up your members and please attend.

Also division meetings were a huge success this year. Our first year Junior meetings were held simultaneously with mission training. Encourage Junior members to attend the Junior meetings. It's a perfect way to help enhance your Junior activities program. By a Junior member attending the Junior meetings, they are eligible to run for the office of Junior Division Vice President. Please help grow the future members of our organization. Encourage your Junior members to have a day of learning, fun and friendship by coming to a Junior meeting near them.

A new member in my unit said to me this last year, "I love the work we are doing, but I really don't know anything about the American Legion Auxiliary." I believe an exciting new project which you've already heard about, which I'm going to remind you of, we hope to introduce members to this year will give our members the additional support beyond mission training. The ALA Academy is an online personal growth teaching. Be watching on the National Web site for its rollout. I think you're going to be really, really pleased with it.

I invite everyone to come to Seattle for my homecoming October 20th through 22nd. Team Washington has some great activities to showcase the beautiful Pacific Northwest and, if the weather cooperates -- remember, it's Seattle -- you will have a great view of our Mount Rainier. Please bring your entire Legion Family. Brochures for the event are on your chairs and Department Headquarters has been sent information, and information is available from the Department of Washington Web site as well.

Also tomorrow evening will be a victory party for the incoming National Commander Charlie -- if elected --

(Laughter.)

PRESIDENT DAVIS: -- National SAL Commander Jeff and me. We invite all to join us for good food and a good time with good friends. It is being held at the Hyatt Regency from 4:00 to 6:00.

I hope this year, 2016-2017, will be a productive year for each of you, for your units and for your department. I look forward to visiting your

departments to work beside each of you for the betterment of America's veterans, active duty and their families. May sunshine fall on all that you do and let kindness be your guide.

God bless you as you take pride in making a difference and God bless those we serve.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT DAVIS: You may be seated. Thank you. I appreciate that.

I wish to introduce to you some important people in my life. My husband, who went to sleep during my speech.

(Laughter.)

PRESIDENT DAVIS: First of all, I'd like to introduce my family. We have a wonderful, eclectic family: Native Alaskan, Tlingit, African-American, Welsh, Cambodian, and our latest nephew-in-law is Brazilian. Each and every one an integral part of what makes our family so special.

First I'd like to introduce the man in my life for the past 46 and a half years, Dale Davis.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT DAVIS: Earlier you met my mother. Mom, would you stand up, please?

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT DAVIS: Our daughter, Alisa, and her husband Craig.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT DAVIS: Our son, Robert, and his wife, Paula Davis, will be arriving this evening. Those are the ones that couldn't make it in from Alaska.

Christian and Sorya Price, my grandson and his new bride.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT DAVIS: Now, our grandson, Gavin Davis, and our granddaughter, Payton Price, were unable to join us today because they're both in college. Gavin in Alaska, college has started, and Payton was lucky enough to be selected for a special team at her college as a freshman and so she had to be there as well.

I also in the front row here -- if you would stand when I call your name? Dale is going to do this part.

(Laughter.)

MR. DAVIS: I wondered if I was going to get a chance to say anything.

(Laughter.)

MR. DAVIS: I would like to introduce Mary's brother-in-law and sister-in-law, they are my brother and --

(Laughter.)

MR. DAVIS: -- his wife, Roger and Debbie Davis. Please stand.

(Applause.)

MR. DAVIS: And the woman who tormented me for many years, my older sister, Sharon Ernesty (phonetic) and her husband Roger. And their son, my nephew, Tim Ernesty.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT DAVIS: Actually, it's our nephew.

(Laughter.)

PRESIDENT DAVIS: Now we'd like to present our grandson, Christian Price, who will be speaking for the family.

(Music.)

(Applause.)

MR. PRICE: Well, first I'd like to say thank you to inviting myself and my family here. This has been an amazing week. We've been here for a couple of days and it's a change from Seattle, Washington, but we enjoy it.

I'd like to say that my grandma has had a pivotal role in our family's wealth, health and success. The passion that she puts in, both in her professional life and her personal life, is tremendous. It's made it so that myself, my sister, other individuals in our family can live out the things that we want and attain the things that we want.

And I think that we can see the same passion goes into her professional life as well. She gives 110 percent in everything that she does and she will continue to do so as long as she can.

I thank her every day for the things that she's done in my life and our family's life, and you are all honored -- hopefully honored -- to have her as your National President. Thank you.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT DAVIS: Thank you, Christian.

Representing the Department of Washington on stage -- and if you would stand when your name is called -- past National Chaplain Emma Peoples.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT DAVIS: Past National Western Division Vice Presidents Janet Easley and Barbara Rutherford.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT DAVIS: My unit, Unit 53 President Karen Schwartz.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT DAVIS: And Post 53 Commander Leo Grupa.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT DAVIS: Leo just retired from the Army, we're very proud of him.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT DAVIS: Phyllis Kristoferson (phonetic), my campaign manager.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT DAVIS: Wayne Elston, Department Commander.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT DAVIS: Laura Bondurant, Department President.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT DAVIS: Our NECs, Bob Wallace and Eva Wallace.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT DAVIS: We like to keep it in the family.

(Laughter.)

PRESIDENT DAVIS: And most importantly my personal pages, Karen Grimes and Lorna Ledoschuk. Thank you.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT DAVIS: And again many thanks for the support from my entire family and my Legion family. I truly appreciate all the well wishes and the goodness you have given me all these years. Thank you so much.

(Applause.)

MS. NAVARRETÉ: Thank you, Madam President.

It is my honor to present the Legionnaire who is expected, if he is elected tomorrow, to serve with Mary this year. Charles Schmidt from the Department of Oregon, will you please come forward?

(Music.)

(Cheering.)

(Applause.)

MR. SCHMIDT: Thank you and good afternoon.

AUDIENCE: Good afternoon.

MR. SCHMIDT: It's a great delight to be with you all this afternoon, the largest ladies' patriotic organization in the world.

(Cheering.)

MR. SCHMIDT: The Department of Washington, I want to thank you for giving the American Legion Auxiliary a candidate that hopefully, if I'm fortunate enough tomorrow --

(Laughter.)

MR. SCHMIDT: -- that we'll get to work with our neighbor, our Northwest neighbor Mary Davis. Thank you, Washington.

(Applause.)

MR. SCHMIDT: I think I can safely say or safely speak on behalf of the American Legion that we are honored and looking forward to working with Mary and the American Legion Auxiliary in the coming years to do good things in our communities, in our states, and also good things for our country, America.

And, Mary, I really look forward to the coming months that we'll be traveling together and taking your theme of the ALA Member Pride and my theme, Carry the American Legion Legacy Forward, by making something good happen and also accentuating the positive, that hopefully -- well, I know we're going to have an awesome year, I just feel it already, if I'm elected.

(Laughter.)

(Applause.)

MR. SCHMIDT: But I commend you delegates on the selection that you have made to carry your legacy forward as well, that of the American Legion Auxiliary. And I'm happy and excited to be traveling with your President, Mary Davis.

Thank you and God bless you all.

(Applause.)

MS. NAVARRETÉ: Additionally, it is my honor to present the Sons of the American -- Sons of the Legion Commander who will serve with Mary, Jeff Frain from the Department of Arizona.

(Cheering.)

(Music.)

COMMANDER FRAIN: Hello, American Legion Auxiliary and guests!

AUDIENCE: Hello!

COMMANDER FRAIN: God, I'm so excited to be up here to address you. I don't know if it's the coffee and the Mountain Dew I had in the back or just seeing all the pretty ladies.

(Laughter.)

COMMANDER FRAIN: Like I've said before, when you address men all the time, when I get to come see you, it's exciting.

(Laughter.)

COMMANDER FRAIN: It's a better view.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: You've got my vote.

(Laughter.)

COMMANDER FRAIN: I'm already elected, but okay, I'll take it.

(Laughter.)

COMMANDER FRAIN: It's my honor to come before you, I've been waiting for this for years, but the most honor will be serving with Mary. I keep saying Judy Davis, and everybody keeps saying "Why?" We figured it out the other day, it's because my wife works with a Judy Davis and every time I address you I sit there and I say Judy Davis. And they're like, "Who?" So, Mary, I'm getting it down pat, I'm figuring it out.

(Laughter.)

COMMANDER FRAIN: But is Arizona in the house?

(Cheering.)

COMMANDER FRAIN: There's my moms right over there.

(Laughter.)

COMMANDER FRAIN: Now down to business. Ladies, I have instructed the Sons of the American Legion a call to action to sign up three new Legionnaires next year, that way we can grow our family. When we sign up three, we'll get one Son and one Auxiliary hopefully, and we're going to grow this organization.

(Applause.)

COMMANDER FRAIN: And one of the things I said out there is, you know, when we get the three veterans out there, we're going to grow our parent organization, help them out, and we're going to help the American Auxiliary, American Legion Auxiliary and the Sons of the American Legion.

And I found out there's about 20 million veterans who are eligible. So I only ask for about ten percent, that's only two million. Imagine if we did really do that. We will have at least one million more American Legion Auxiliary members and at least one million more Sons of the American Legion with two million more American Legion Legionnaires. It's something we can do, but we need your help with that.

(Applause.)

COMMANDER FRAIN: And I know Mary, she is ready. I feel sorry if elected, Charlie, you got two very energetic people here. We're going to run him to the ground, I tell you.

(Laughter.)

COMMANDER FRAIN: One of the other things I want to do next year is, the Sons of the American Legion is very well known for the Child Welfare Foundation, and one of the things that we want to do is I made a challenge to the President Dennis Boland, if the American Legion family combined can raise a million dollars next year, we're going to shave his head.

(Laughter.)

COMMANDER FRAIN: And let me tell you, Dennis loves his hair, really loves it, so we're going to remove it, but we're going to need your help. So if a Sons member comes to you and says, "Can you help me do a function?" Please say, "Yep, we're going to shave Dennis' head."

(Laughter.)

COMMANDER FRAIN: So that's going to be a new motto.

And one of the other things the Sons accomplished this past weekend, we hit the \$7 million mark in donations.

(Cheering.)

(Applause.)

COMMANDER FRAIN: One of the things I was talking about or the plan in my speech was about hitting the seven million; when they did it, I had to change it. So now we've got a new motto: Let there be no debate, we will hit eight for the Child Welfare Foundation.

(Applause.)

COMMANDER FRAIN: Mary, I wish you a very successful year. I'm going to be there by your side, unless your husband comes after me, you know, you never know.

(Laughter.)

COMMANDER FRAIN: Because as I say, when you stand with the ladies, it's exciting.

(Laughter.)

COMMANDER FRAIN: But with that, thank you for everything. I hope you have a great convention. Mary, I'm excited. It's the Mountain Dew.

PRESIDENT DAVIS: I am too.

(Applause.)

MS. NAVARRETÉ: There will be a photo op right here.

(Pause.)

(Cheering.)

MS. NAVARRETÉ: The time has come to welcome Sharon Conatser into the ranks of Past National Presidents. To recognize her accomplishments this year, there will be presentations at the time.

Peggy Thomas, please come forward to present Sharon with her Past National President's pin and ribbon.

(Music.)

MS. THOMAS: Madam Past National President Sharon and a very, very good friend. You have traveled many miles and many countries this year in the name of the American Legion Auxiliary. You have had an awesome year. The Auxiliary is very proud of the job you have done, but I am the most proud. You carried out your duties as the leader of this organization with both pride and dignity. A great ambassador for the American Legion Auxiliary both at home and abroad, as you reminded us all of keeping the promise.

You were never too tired to smile and make each and every person you met feel that they were very important, as you promoted all the programs of the Auxiliary.

Be assured, when I pin this beautiful pin on you, that your work is not done, but each time you look at this pin remember what a wonderful experience it has been to have been the leader of the largest women's patriotic organization in the world. And I am also honored to be the one to present the ceremonial ribbon to you as the most powerful evidence of the wonderful lady you have been throughout the years, but especially this year.

I want you to wear the pin and ribbon with pride. You have blazed a trail. We all love you Sharon.

(Cheering.)

(Applause.)

MS. THOMAS: They make everything so difficult.

(Laughter.)

MS. THOMAS: I've trained her well.

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Look at that.

MS. THOMAS: Oh, show off.

(Laughter.)

(Pause.)

MS. THOMAS: She's wonderful, isn't she?

(Cheering.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Okay, I'm getting the pin. No problem.

MS. THOMAS: We're trying to do this as quickly as possible so Mary can get on with her show.

(Laughter.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Thank you. Thank you, my friend.

MS. THOMAS: I love you, you know I do.

(Applause.)

MS. THOMAS: And now, Jan Pulvermacher-Ryan, please come forward for the presentation of colors.

(Pause.)

MS. PULVERMACHER-RYAN: To my very dear friend President Sharon, I would ask that you and Marty stand with these two beautiful flags and remember not only in your mind, but in your hearts, this incredible year of service.

One year ago these beautiful flags were entrusted to your care to guard wisely for one year. They stand, as they have stood for years, for 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 hearts.

As you traveled this year, they were always there as your support, the wind beneath your wings. You've touched the hearts of many as you spoke to veterans, to the military and to our wounded warriors about your continuing commitment to make life better for all.

You and Marty represented us with dignity and pride as you journeyed beyond our shores to foreign lands as our ambassadors of goodwill, not only for the American Legion Auxiliary, but for the United States of America. You two answered our nation's call to service during this remarkable year. We salute your dedication to a dream of a better world through your service.

And now this year, which seems to stretch forever when you first donned the mantle as National President, has come to a close, as it should, with many chapters written, with memories to be cherished and wonderfully fulfilling moments to be treasured. Now you and Marty can return to Illinois knowing that you have lived your dream.

Awaiting you when you arrive home will be these beautiful flags, the scarlet banner of the American Legion Auxiliary proudly waving as you asked all of you to join you in keeping the promise.

The story of the American Legion Auxiliary is part of the tremendous epic of America. It is the story of a large and typical group of American women who serve for human dignity and liberty. It is the story of success, of wonderful women doing magnificent things for America, and you are one of those successful women.

Much of the beauty of life is found in people like you who care. We need to stand up and be counted. True appreciation is expressed through deeds, not words, and you have exemplified that through your service.

The proud flag of the United States, its red and white stripes and its blue stars, represents our nation's most revered and precious replica of the freedom we all cherish.

As members of this great organization, we are keenly aware of the sacrifices of many who have died to preserve our precious way of life. This flag that we honor and under which we serve is much more than a piece of cloth: it represents the very essence of our people, it is our very soul, and is indeed the treasured emblem of our unity and purpose as a nation. We are a voice to be heard. Good citizenship requires that of each of us.

As you depart from this convention, know that you take with you the friendship and love of our members for this incredible year of service. Cherish the memories of this year as you reflect on this great journey. May God continue to bless you with good health and happiness wherever life or circumstances takes you.

Thank you.

(Applause.)

MS. NAVARRETÉ: Thank you very much, Jan.

There are just three announcements before President Sharon closes her convention.

First, a reminder of the NEC meeting Thursday following the Joint Presidential Candidate Presentation. It will be held in Room 263, 263.

Second, special instructions for the 2016-2017 Department Presidents and Secretaries. Please go to the table located at the back of this room, check in with those volunteering at the tables. Ensure your name is checked off in order to receive the gift. You may not pick up one for someone else.

Past National Presidents, National Officers, National Executive Committeewomen, each of you will receive your gift at the end of the post-NEC meeting. You may not pick up one for someone else.

And, third, please show courtesy by remaining in your seats until the close of the convention and the recessional of Past National President Sharon and the retiring Officers.

Madam National President Mary, please return the gavel to Sharon so she may close her convention.

PAST NATIONAL PRESIDENT CONATSER: The Sergeant at Arms will please retire the colors of the Pat Tillman Memorial Unit 53 and the Department of Washington, and then will escort the new National President and the new National Officers from the podium.

(Music.)

PAST NATIONAL PRESIDENT CONATSER: Will the installing Sergeant at Arms please retire National President Mary and her Officers.

(Music.)

(Applause.)

PAST NATIONAL PRESIDENT CONATSER: Ladies and gentlemen, please do not rush for the doors. Mary has said the pins will not be handed out until I reach the back of the room.

(Laughter.)

PAST NATIONAL PRESIDENT CONATSER: I know you, I know you.

(Laughter.)

PAST NATIONAL PRESIDENT CONATSER: Thank you for a fabulous year, thank you for the fabulous memories. The tears are not tears that it's over, the tears are because it happened and the memories.

Thank you Illinois and my family one more time. It could not happen without all of you. Thank you so, so much.

(Cheering.)

(Applause.)

PAST NATIONAL PRESIDENT CONATSER: Pinkies! Pinkies!

At this time I would ask the four personal pages to retire the National Colors and when -- wait, not yet, sorry -- could we have prayer by Bird? I need it.

CHAPLAIN DERRICK: Sharon, it has been my honor to bring the heart of God to your special events this year, to pray for you and your family through the year, and my commitment is to continue to pray for you each time the Lord brings you to my mind.

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Thank you.

CHAPLAIN DERRICK: Chaplain from Kansas Sue Britton (phonetic) has --

PRESIDENT CONATSER: New York -- oh, Kansas. Sorry. (Laughter.)

CHAPLAIN DERRICK: -- has written a really creative prayer that I would like to share and then I will offer a benediction beyond that.

Sue's prayer is called Keeping the Promise: Past National Presidents' Prayer.

"Dear Lord, I find myself at the conclusion of my year as National President for the American Legion Auxiliary. The year has quickly passed and I can't believe that I now stand at the doorway of entering the ranks of Past National President. My schedule has been heavy at times and the load has sometimes been burdensome. I have visited Departments across this great nation and made visits to other countries. I've met with many old friends, but have made new ones along the path.

"I have traveled throughout the country to represent our organization and have found a great dedication amongst our members who are committed to our vision and carrying out our mission. There is no way to describe the feeling of accomplishment as I prepare to step aside and prepare the path for my successor. It has been a tiring, but very rewarding year serving our veterans, our children, our communities, but most importantly serving the members of such an elite organization.

"I have celebrated a year of memorable experiences and thank you for allowing Marty to be able to share in my year of service. You have guided me with good sense and a strong commitment to do the best job possible and I thank you for your faith and trust in me and my capabilities. You have guided me over rough roads, through snow, wind, ice, and hail, and safely delivered me to my destinations. You have provided me with meals lovingly prepared and graciously served by our members. I thank you for the opportunity to have served with National Commander Dale of the American Legion and National Commander Kevin of the Sons of The American Legion.

"As I prepare for the next chapter in my life, I thank you for allowing me to serve in this capacity, one that I will always hold near and dear in my heart. Thank you for watching over me throughout my year of service. I ask your watchful eye and special blessings on my successor Mary as she fulfills her duties in this role. I am forever grateful for your love and allowing this special dream of mine to come true. With trust in your plan, Dear Lord, I remain in service, Sharon Conatser."

From Psalm 20, verses 1 through 5: May the Lord answer you when you are in trouble or distress. May the name of the God of Jacob protect you. May He send you help from his sanctuary and give you aid from Mount Zion. May He accept all your offerings and be pleased with all your sacrifices. May He give you what you desire and make all your plans succeed. Then we will shout for joy over your victory and celebrate your triumph by praising Our God. May the Lord answer all your requests.

And now the Lord bless and keep you all in the strong name of my God and Savior Jesus. Amen.

AUDIENCE: Amen.

PAST NATIONAL PRESIDENT CONATSER: The personal pages please retire the National Colors. Then Marty and I and the 2016 National Officers will follow. And when I reach the back of this room, I declare the 2016 National Convention adjourned.

(Applause.)

(Music.)

(Whereupon, at 3:59 p.m. on Wednesday, August 31, 2016, the above-entitled meeting was concluded.)

**POST-CONVENTION
NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING
THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 1, 2016**

PRESIDENT DAVIS: Ladies, if you'd like to take your seats, we can get started.

(Pause.)

PRESIDENT DAVIS: The National Executive Committee Meeting will now come to order. Please disable all electronic devices, or place them on silent mode. And I'll give you a minute to do that, because I never have enough time.

(Pause.)

PRESIDENT DAVIS: Please rise and remain standing for the opening ceremonies.

(Pause.)

PRESIDENT DAVIS: The National Chaplain, Valerie, 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 Sue Britton will lead us in the pledge and the National Anthem followed by Constitution & Bylaws Chairman Vickie Koutz leading us in the Preamble to the Constitution.

Valerie?

CHAPLAIN BROWN-DEBRO: Let us pray. Heavenly Father, we just come to you today. It is a beautiful day today in which you have provided for us. We just thank you for another day, another opportunity, and another privilege that you brought us together here, because someone didn't make it up this morning. But we just thank you, Father, that you brought us together to give better for our veterans, their families, and community, were given the right for their freedom to make decisions for the betterment of our organization. Father God, as we ask for your direction from favor from God and favor with men, we thank you for the leadership here, that you give them the wisdom, the knowledge, understanding which only you can give us. Father, always humbling ourselves and posturing ourselves in an upright position, being mindful that we are one nation under God. These things we ask in your holy name. Amen.

ALL: Amen.

CHAIRMAN BRITTON: And in reference to the POW/MIA, may we have a moment of silence?

(POW/MIA Moment of Silence.)

CHAIRMAN BRITTON: Thank you.

Please join me in the Pledge of Allegiance.

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.

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.

CHAIRMAN KOUTZ: 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 DAVIS: You may be seated.

This meeting of the National Executive Committee is convened. I am so pleased to see -- I think I only see one open chair.

Anybody else -- am I missing one? Two open chairs. All right.

Thank you all for being -- you got one there? Three. Okay.

Thank you all for being here. I'm so pleased to have you as our Executive Committee this year. I hope we have a really good year. You all got NEC 101, so you kind of know what your jobs are. And that's exciting. And I know that you will do the best you possibly can to support the mission and do what we need to do to get the business of the American Legion Auxiliary on the right track. So thank you all.

Do we have any first time NEC members here? Oh, my goodness, that's great. All right. Good.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT DAVIS: Good for you.

Before we begin our business, I want to take a few minutes to welcome you in your role as the 2016-2017 National Executive Committee. Those present who are eligible to vote today and at subsequent NEC meetings are the NEC members. NEC members included and are limited to National Executive Committee women from each department, the five national division vice presidents, the national chaplain and national historian, national vice president, and the national president.

Those allowed to be present at NEC meetings with voice but no vote are the past national presidents and the national secretary and national treasurer. They both have light. I just put my hand in the wrong direction.

We welcome our visitors and remind you that you may listen to the discussion but are not permitted to participate in any debate nor vote. I also, at this time, like to impress upon members of the National Convention -- I'm sorry -- Executive Committee that you are now serving in a national role as the board of directors with fiduciary responsibility to the national organization. Okay?

As a member of the NEC, you no longer have the interests of your departments as the primary focus. You are serving as national representatives of the national organization, and you must be making decisions and casting your votes according to what is in the best interests of the national organization. You have a huge responsibility.

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 responsibly on behalf of the national organization. Now, to get the business at hand, the Chair asked for those of you wishing to address this meeting to 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 transcripts of this meeting. And also, please be sure that, in making any remarks, you address the Chair. Okay?

Serving as parliamentarian for this meeting is Chris Dickey, Professional Registered Parliamentarian. For this meeting and in future NEC meetings, the minutes will be approved by a Minute Approval Committee. The Chair appoints the NECs from Illinois, Wisconsin, and Virginia as the Minutes Approval Committee responsible for approving the minutes for this year's NEC meeting.

Our next order of business is the confirmation of the national secretary and national treasurer. One of our first responsibilities to the national president is to present the national secretary and national treasurer to the NEC for confirmation. The question is on the confirmation of Mary "Dubbie" Buckler for the office of national secretary for 2016-2017 administration year.

All in favor, say aye.

ALL: Aye.

PRESIDENT DAVIS: Opposed, say no.

SECRETARY BUCKLER: Thank you.

(Laughter.)

PRESIDENT DAVIS: You have confirmed Mary "Dubbie" Buckler as your national secretary for 2016-2017 administration year.

I am very pleased to present for confirmation Marta Hedding for the office of national treasurer for the 2016-2017 administrative year. The question is on the confirmation of Marta Hedding for the office of national treasurer.

All in favor, say aye.

VOICES: Aye.

PRESIDENT DAVIS: All opposed, say no.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: No.

PRESIDENT DAVIS: You have confirmed Marta Hedding as your national treasurer for 2016-2017 administrative year.

Congratulations, and thank you for your service.

Could I please have the national officers stand and be recognized?

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT DAVIS: Do I introduce you?

Good.

I haven't learned -- I probably have learned the names, but I'm a bit nervous. So I don't want to make a mess.

So thank you all for recognizing them.

Would all the Past National Presidents please stand and be recognized at this time?

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT DAVIS: Thank you.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT DAVIS: Thank you, ladies, for your continued service.

The next item of business is the confirmation of standing and special committee appointments for the 2016-2017 administrative year and foundation board appointments. You have received a copy of the appointments list. Please take a moment to review the list. Before you do that, I wanted to mention that on the appointments is the name of Nicole Clapp as Children & Youth Chairman.

As you all know, Nicole also currently serves on the National Finance Committee. When the Appointments Advisory Committee met in February, we discussed this, and I shared I had received an opinion from the national judge advocate, who serves as our counsel general. There's nothing in our national governing documents that prohibits a member from chairing one committee and serving on another committee.

The counsel general confirmed that her continued service on the National Finance Committee was okay, as long as she disclosed the potential conflict of interest on the conflict of interest form that each of you has been presented and signed. He then said she would have to recuse herself from voting on any matter involving the Children & Youth Programs. We have other members serving on the NEC and committees who have potential conflicts to disclose as well.

We have had several instances in the ALA where persons serve on more than one committee. The proposed FY '17 budget includes the FY Children & Youth budget. That budget has already been prepared. So really, there's an unlikely event that any new Constitution & Bylaws -- I'm sorry -- Constitution -- Children & Youth budget matter would come before the Finance Committee this coming year.

In the unusual chance that there were such a matter, Nicole would be required to recuse herself from discussion or vote. My close advisers in this room, including immediate Past National President Sharon, know that I have been seeking resumes with professional expertise for many months. With the unfortunate resignation of Past National President JoAnn Cronin earlier this year from the Finance Committee, we were very fortunate to have a resume and become aware of this resume from Liz Foster, a retired CEO of a credit union. And I believe she was retired after 30 years, so well-versed in finance.

Liz has not been a department president, yet, like Nicole, she has tremendous expertise. And she was needed on the National Finance Committee. The National Finance Committee monitors the finances of an \$8

million annual budget. The NEC approved her earlier, and we are delighted she brings her knowledge to the Finance Committee. And I was thrilled to see that kind of resume when I asked for resumes, and I had several others who had good financial backgrounds as well.

There were two new Finance Committee members coming on this year. I decided for the time being it was in the best interests of the organization to leave Nicole on the Finance until I find an appropriate resume to replace her with. So we have no discussion of there might be a conflict of interest. We don't want that negative discussion to come about. But we are looking for someone with an appropriate background.

Especially after I heard from the counsel general that there isn't a conflict of interest, but it can be done. Nicole also knows that I'm continuing to seek resumes from members with professional backgrounds in finance. I want to eventually appoint a new member to the National Finance Committee who is not a PNP.

We have three PNPs, and I want some more expertise or a wider broad base of expertise. Nicole is prepared to resign from the National Finance Committee. I've spoken with her. As soon as we have a new appointee with the right financial knowledge to bring to the NEC for your confirmation.

And if any of you in your departments or know of anyone who has a wonderful financial background who is a member -- we have members with fabulous backgrounds. Please have them send their resume to me. I would just totally appreciate hearing about that. It really helps us when we go through the appointments process to know what talents you have beyond what you've done for the auxiliary.

At this time, I ask for a motion to confirm the national appointments as presented to you.

MS. SEELEY: Glynis Seeley, Department of Nevada. I'd like to make a motion that we accept the slate as presented.

PRESIDENT DAVIS: Is there a second?

MS. WALLACE: Eva Wallace, Department of Washington. I second the motion.

PRESIDENT DAVIS: Is there any discussion?

Oops, sorry, Eva.

MS. HOBBS: Madam President, Virginia Hobbs, Past National President. I have a question regarding the Audit Committee. As it is indicated on our form, it is listing four members. There is to be five members on that committee.

You have -- it is indicating Peggy Thomas as the liaison from the Foundation. In speaking with Foundation President Linda Boone, that is incorrect. That it should be Marybeth Revoir, that Peggy Thomas is not on the Foundation Board of Directors or an officer.

PRESIDENT DAVIS: Okay.

MS. HOBBS: Also, we need a representative from the Finance Committee, which cannot be Peggy Thomas, since she is now to be serving as Finance Chairman.

PRESIDENT DAVIS: Thank you for that information. I'm sorry. There are legs on these microphones, ladies. So please, be careful.

So noted.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: (Indiscernible.)

PRESIDENT DAVIS: Okay.

That's a correct update for us. So on your list, would you please make that correction?

(Pause.)

PRESIDENT DAVIS: On the Audit Committee, Peggy Thomas -- strike Peggy Thomas and add Marybeth -- let me spell you her last name.

MS. CONATSER: R-E-V-O-I-R.

PRESIDENT DAVIS: Thank you, Madam Past National President Sharon.

MS. CONATSER: Madam President Mary?

PRESIDENT DAVIS: Yes.

MS. CONATSER: I am representing the Finance Committee on the Foundation Board. I was elected to do that at the June finance meeting.

PRESIDENT DAVIS: On the Audit?

MS. CONATSER: No, that's wrong.

PRESIDENT DAVIS: Okay.

(Laughter.)

PRESIDENT DAVIS: She's a new PNP. What can I say?

(Laughter.)

MS. NAVARRETÉ: Rita Navarreté, Past National President. In the spirit of goodwill and also for clarification on the Children and -- on the Finance Committee, I would like to just share that the upcoming leaders are part of that group, the first vice president, the VA&R Chair, and the Children & Youth Chair. And they're there for voice and not vote. So I am sure that the Finance Committee members on that committee will seek and listen to any comments or recommendations given by the above positions.

PRESIDENT DAVIS: Thank you.

(Pause.)

PRESIDENT DAVIS: If there -- is there any other discussion?

(Pause.)

PRESIDENT DAVIS: That's right.

Was there another person that we missed on this?

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: (Indiscernible.)

PRESIDENT DAVIS: Who was elected liaison to the Audit Committee?

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Nicole.

PRESIDENT DAVIS: Okay.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Nicole.

PRESIDENT DAVIS: Nicole Clapp is liaison to the Audit Committee.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Sharon was (indiscernible) to the Foundation.

PRESIDENT DAVIS: Right.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: You're liaison to the Foundation.

MS. CONATSER: I am liaison to the Foundation.

(Cross-talk.)

PRESIDENT DAVIS: Who was elected?

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: (Indiscernible.)

(Cross-talk.)

PRESIDENT DAVIS: To the Audit Committee?

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: To the Audit Committee.

PRESIDENT DAVIS: Okay.

(Pause.)

PRESIDENT DAVIS: Let me make a clarification. Marybeth Revoir is liaison to the Audit Committee from the Foundation. Nicole Clapp is liaison to the -- to the Audit Committee from the Finance Committee.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: (Indiscernible.)

PRESIDENT DAVIS: And that she will only be there until she is replaced.

Are you ready for the question?

VOICES: Yes.

PRESIDENT DAVIS: Thank you.

All in favor, say aye.

ALL: Aye.

PRESIDENT DAVIS: All opposed, no.

The motion to confirm the complete list of appointments has passed. Congratulations, and thank you for your service.

The Chair calls on Janet Jefford, National Chairman of the Strategic Plan Implementation Team.

(Pause.)

CHAIRMAN JEFFORD: Madam President, as you know, the convention body adopted the resolution to resource the Centennial Strategic Plan. Therefore, on behalf of the Centennial Strategic Plan Implementation Team and the Executive Committee to the NEC, I move the adoption of the resourcing year three of the ALA Five-Year Centennial Strategic Plan Resolution.

PRESIDENT DAVIS: It has been moved to adopt the resourcing year three of the ALA Five-Year Centennial Strategic Plan Resolution.

Is there discussion?

Are you ready for the question?

ALL: Yes.

PRESIDENT DAVIS: All those in favor of the resolution, say aye.

ALL: Aye.

PRESIDENT DAVIS: Those opposed, say no.

The affirmative has it, and the resolution is adopted.

(Pause.)

PRESIDENT DAVIS: We now welcome Finance Committee Chairman Peggy Thomas to present the proposed FY '17 budget of the American Legion Auxiliary.

(Pause.)

CHAIRMAN THOMAS: Good morning, all.

ALL: Good morning.

CHAIRMAN THOMAS: To begin with, I wish to extend our congratulations to both Mary and Diane. And we're looking forward to an exciting year under their leadership. And I'm quite sure we will not be disappointed.

As the incoming Finance Committee Chairman, on behalf of the entire Finance Committee -- and I ask them to stand as I call their name. Vice Chairman Jan Pulvermacher-Ryan, Nicole Clapp, Liz Foster, and the newest member, Sharon Conatser. I am honored to present the 2016-2017 fiscal year budget of the American Legion Auxiliary for your consideration. Thank you, ladies, for -- did you stand and be acknowledged?

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Yes.

CHAIRMAN THOMAS: Okay. I want them to know who's on the Finance Committee.

I need to thank the National Headquarters staff and the national chairman for the input, guidance, and ideas to make sure we were able to develop a comprehensive yet realistic budget. We need to continue meeting our goals, obligations, and expectations of providing services for you, our members, our veterans, their families while balancing the governmental requirements of comparing ourselves to the national benchmarks, which we will share with you.

Tim Bresnahan, our comptroller.

Where are you, Tim?

MR. BRESNAHAN: Right here. Right here.

CHAIRMAN THOMAS: -- has spent countless hours preparing the documents, which he will go over with you this morning. We will have the documents projected on the screen for everyone to review.

Tim, are you ready?

MR. BRESNAHAN: Thank you, Peggy. Thank you, Peggy.
Can everybody hear me?

VOICE: No.

MR. BRESNAHAN: In every part of the room.

Can you hear me, Sharon?

MS. CONATSER: Yes.

MR. BRESNAHAN: Okay. All right.

And I'm going to be looking at different screens. So I will try to speak up. And here we go.

I did want to introduce Chrystal Daulton, who is going to be helping me with the slides, new this year. So we're going to go ahead and jump right in.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: We don't have any visual on this side. It's just on --

MR. BRESNAHAN: Okay.

What I would like to do or start with is like what is considered our narrative of our budget. The narrative is really a comprehensive summary. It gives you an overall understanding of the budget in just two pages.

This is -- I did want to point out this is the sixth year since the \$4 annual dues increase in 2011, which went into effect with the 2013 membership year. And the budget reflects our organization's continued commitment to budget wisely, with less dues income so that we can meet our mission service needs over the next 12 months. So you might ask yourself what are we getting with this budget.

First off, if you look at the narrative, you're going to see that we get - or for the 50 in a row, you're not going to have a 15 cents rehab. assessment. We are also proud to announce that the Spirit of Youth and Children of Warriors Scholarship amounts have been increased a total of 40,500. Because of the resolution of support for resourcing the year three of the ALA Centennial Strategic Plan, this budget includes continuation of awards to departments to develop and implement department strategic plans.

This budget also includes continuation of comprehensive department trainings, which include department secretary training at ALA NHQ with the costs being covered by ALA at HQ, ALA Mission Trainings with also the newly added sixth Mission Training, six enhanced national Junior meetings, and the department national -- sorry -- and the Department Leadership National Conference, where we will continue to fund three department representatives to attend. As a reminder, I also want to remind you the national Junior meetings are held at the same locations as the six Mission Trainings.

We also continue to be the co-presenter at the National Creative Arts Festival. In addition to your donations that you send in, the -- we have an organizational commitment of \$120,000 as a co-presenter of the program.

Also, we continue to make the national division vice presidents available to your departments through authorized visits to the departments, authorization to attend the Department National Leadership Conference, and authorization to attend national Junior meetings in their respective division.

As mentioned earlier, due to the resolution of support for year three of Centennial Strategic Plan, this budget includes year three expenses and relieving of reserves related to those expenses. We will review reserves here in a moment in the next page of the narrative. So those are the main points of the budget that we developed and are presenting for your vote.

Can you scroll down to -- Chrystal's scrolled down to the key areas. The next section is the key areas of the proposed budget. You'll see \$7.7 million is proposed for programs and member services, our mission. That is the cost for us to deliver who we are, what we do, and why we matter.

We do have overhead costs as well. And you will -- those are reflected in the administrative area and staffing as well as our support of the Foundation. The Foundation does have a separate budget. Linda Boone will be presenting that budget as the Foundation's Board president. The Finance Committee is in support of the Foundation's budget that will be presented for your approval this morning.

Moving on down, you'll see that the Foundation continues to work and increase its mission of supporting the ALA as a whole. I'm not going to steal Linda's thunder, but I -- I'm excited about what the Foundation is doing. They're doing great work, and it's grown. And they're really helping the ALA and our mission.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Yay.

MR. BRESNAHAN: Yeah, go ahead and give that applause.

(Applause.)

MR. BRESNAHAN: The last piece of the budget there is a summary of our reserve funds.

So if we could flip to the next page, please. I'm still on slide one. Sorry. Just scroll down to the -- there you go. Thank you, Chrystal.

This is, as you've heard Nicole say in the past, our savings account, our rainy day fund. This year, the ALA National Finance Committee carefully reviewed and identified our long-term and ongoing future financial obligations that we must meet, regardless of how many members we have or how many -- how financial markets impact our investments. This year, we more clearly described and apportioned the reserve funds to earmark those reserve funds that we must permanently restrict to meet long-term contractual obligations and recurring big project needs.

To be clear, we can't change the total of our reserves. We can only update how we identify them, those that we must restrict based on multi-year obligations. We do this to make sure that these funds are earmarked for the long-term and to make sure they cannot be used in the short-term for other needs. The exact amount of reserve funds only fluctuates based on investment performance and when the budget includes moving a specific amount of reserve funds to the current year expense budget. This will always be how we manage our reserve funds, and we receive excellent reviews from our auditors annually on how we handle our reserve funds.

Also, I wanted to make sure we all understood that earmarking or restricting funds is not the same as spending those funds. It just means that we have properly set aside or restricted those reserve funds that can only be used for the future -- for future specific purposes. This year's budget more clearly describes the restricted ALA National Reserve Funds for the major categorical needs that safeguard this organization. The restricted reserves ensure that we meet our future legal and fiduciary obligations and ensure our future existence, such as through resourcing the Strategic Goal Initiatives.

I am especially pleased that we are restricting reserve funds to meet our long-term national scholarship obligations. We all know that college costs have skyrocketed over the years, in the past 15 years. Scholarships are a core mission purpose of the -- or one of the core mission purposes of ALA. And we need to make sure that we block out reserve funds and that reserve funds are restricted for that purpose so we can meet our future obligations and grow our scholarship program to keep up with inflation.

I want to applaud National President Mary for having education as her emphasis and for asking the Finance Committee to look at our scholarship

program and its future needs. You can go ahead and give her an applause. That'd be great.

(Applause.)

MR. BRESNAHAN: Also, in the spirit of transparency and best practices going forward, the budget presentation of reserves will always reflect the unfunded pension liability and ensure reserve funds are earmarked to meet this future obligation. Again, please remember earmarking or restricting reserve funds is not the same as spending. We're just setting it aside in case we need it.

So I would like to thank all of you serving on the NEC, the Finance Committee, Dubbie, and Marta for making sure we maintained our excellent fiduciary track record by thinking long-term and earmarking our reserves. Okay. So now I'm going to get to the detail. That was just a summary.

(Laughter.)

MR. BRESNAHAN: So let's continue to the proposed budget. We're going to go into a little more detail. This slide that is on the screen now is actually this slide. It provides a succinct picture of how our money is budgeted, how it's spent by programs, management in general, and fund raising. And also, it does have pie charts, and I kind of like pie charts. So --

(Laughter.)

MR. BRESNAHAN: The pie chart shows -- if I can get the pointer to work. These pie charts show 86 percent of our budget expenses are planned to be spent on program and member services, 10 percent on management in general, and 4 percent on fundraising. Increasing the fundraising percentage, I wanted to point out, is an emphasis for both the ALA and the Foundation focusing on development.

So you'll see how fiscal year '17 compares to fiscal year '16, and there's hardly any difference in our distribution percentages. Barely any difference. We basically are consistent from year-to-year.

Does anybody have any questions on this slide?

Okay. Hearing none, we're going to go on to some more detail.

Right now, at the top of this, you're going to see here that we have revenue at the top. The numbers you see on the far left are the activity number. And I'm having trouble figuring out where to go with this. But these are activity numbers right here.

They are -- the activities are considered our categories and our cost centers. For example, if you can -- 117 is ALA Girls Nation. And I'm trying to get to -- I'm getting so old, I can't even see that far.

(Laughter.)

MR. BRESNAHAN: But that's ALA Girls Nation. And in one row, that's all the revenue coming in for ALA Girls Nation. And we try to group them into different categories, because it gives us a better picture where our revenue's coming from. And eventually, you'll see where our expenses are going.

And also, I group them this way so you're more comfortable in understanding what goes into these categories. We also break down our revenue, as you can see, by the prior year, the projected current year, and then

the fiscal year '17 budget. And over here, which is not on the screen, it gives you a percentage difference between last year's budget and this year's budget.

Okay. So if we scroll down to total revenue, you're going to see that our projected budget is 8.7 million in revenue, roughly the same as fiscal year '16 budget. And we'll get to the fiscal year -- we'll get into more of that number here later about when we cover dues. If we scroll down to expenses, obviously, there's a cost of doing business. And realizing that, you have under expenses, that we have increased scholarships, which we covered earlier, as an emphasis this year. We have our magazine and then ultimately, you'll see on the next page our net difference between revenue and expense.

Also on the second page, you will note we have footnotes down here. And the footnotes try to add more information on categories where there's a new budget line item or there's been a substantive change from a previous year. Again, this whole presentation is about striving for transparency and clarity and for your comfort level when you are voting on the budget.

I did want to point out you will note on Footnote 3 that we are proposing a membership dues budget of \$5.6 million. We have had a slide at the end of our -- well, no, sorry. We have a slide at the end of the presentation concerning senior member numbers and senior member dues.

Plus, you will see that we are once again funding our budget up here at the top, which my pointer is not dead. Up here right at the top, we're funding our budget 248,000. We're still trending downward in dues-paying members and therefore, dues income. And we will be until we address that in the future. So it's a deficit budget, which we'll be funding from reserves.

Are there any questions on the detail slide?

Okay. Hearing none, we'll move on to Exhibit A and Exhibit B. Exhibit A is our VISTA Grant Program. I think the most important thing for you to realize is at the very bottom of that page or close to the bottom, you have -- we have ins and outs of the grant, which are reflected as part of revenue and expense on the detail worksheet presented earlier. So it's part of our budget, but it's an in and out.

We are a grantor and basically a conduit for grant funds. We manage the grant. We are planning to have 75 VISTAs in service, which equates to 975,000 in contributing human resources. We are also planning on having four of those at National Headquarters.

The VISTA program is helping us help veterans, which also will help people be aware of who we are. And I think -- how many people were at DLNC this past year?

Okay. Then you've heard our grant team present about the grants program. And there's a lot that VISTA can do in health departments as well. So -- okay.

Next slide.

The last piece is our third year of our Centennial Strategic Plan. That's Exhibit B. The reserves being carried over from fiscal year '16 year 2 delayed expenditures are the \$479,000 figure, which I think is that one.

So there's an additional 279,000 that we project will be released from reserves as need be. So approximately over fiscal years '15, '16, and '17, we're going to have spent about \$1.7 million on the Centennial Plan.

Are there any questions concerning the Centennial Plan in the budget?

Okay. We're going to go on to the chart, and I really like this chart.
(Laughter.)

MR. BRESNAHAN: The information on these charts show how the annual ALA budget is based on targeted increase in the number of ALA senior members projected for the coming year and how those numbers relate to the previous two years' actual numbers.

The fiscal year '17 proposed budget is based on striving to meet targets, keeping in mind that actual senior membership numbers have consistently been less than projected each year. And I just wanted to say at this point, at our Finance Committee proposed budget meetings along with the drop in membership, we continued to struggle every year in proposing a budget for dues revenue, because we know we're trending down. Yet, we also have faith that the Centennial Plan will have a positive effect on membership, not only in stopping the slide, but eventually reversing the trend. We also know that will take time.

And so, I wanted to show you a pictorial, a picture of our trends in both targeted actual senior membership dues and targeted actual senior members. This is where we were in 2015. We had 6.4 million targeted, and we actually got 5.7. The target for 2016 projected was 6.7 million, and we're projecting that we're going to end up at 5.5 million.

Our actual dropped 200,000 from 2015 actual to 2016 projected. That is also the same drop we had from 2014 to 2015. So the targeted for 2017 is \$7 million.

We are proposing a budget of 5.6 million, which takes into account our historical trends that shows a 1 percent increase over 2016 projected actual. We are hopeful, but we're accountants, so we're conservative. We did hope -- actually, we did hope in future budget proposals we will be able to propose an increase over prior actual greater than one percent, because we believe the Centennial Plan will have success and will stop the trend of losing members.

So then, if we scroll down to the next -- yeah. You'll see that the senior member numbers, which is just pure numbers of senior members. It doesn't have any dollar amount in it. Just really mirror the Chart 1.

Does anybody have any questions on this chart?

Because that concludes my report.

Does anybody have any questions on any of my report?

Thank you very much.

And can everybody thank you, Chrystal, for helping me?

(Applause.)

CHAIRMAN THOMAS: Since nobody had any questions, Madam President, I move the adoption of the 2016-2017 fiscal budget for approval.

(Laughter.)

PRESIDENT DAVIS: Hi, Peggy.

Since the motion comes from a committee, a second is not required. The question is on the approval of the proposed FY '17 budget as presented.

Is there discussion?

Are you ready for the question?

ALL: Yes.

PRESIDENT DAVIS: The question is on the adoption of the FY '17 budget as presented.

All in favor, say aye.

ALL: Aye.

PRESIDENT DAVIS: All opposed, say no.

The motion to approve the proposed FY '16 budget has passed.

Thank you both. I appreciate that.

Good job, Tim.

Good job, Chrystal. Good job.

She's our active duty wife. So excited.

The Foundation Board President Linda Boone will now present the Foundation budget.

PRESIDENT BOONE: Good morning.

ALL: Good morning.

PRESIDENT BOONE: Okay. So you got a one-page summary sheet for the Foundation budget. Okay. There's just a couple of things I want to point out to you and that Tim, I think, already pointed out to you. But we're going to do some increased expenses due to the fundraising efforts that we're trying to do.

We're really reaching out, trying to encourage a lot more members to do planned giving. So we have -- we're making lots of phone calls, and we're mailing packets. And we're doing things like that.

And included in this budget is the revenue from our endowment, the interest revenue, the earnings revenue. We're anticipating that to be this year \$17,425. And that will be used for the Girls Nation Program. We'll give that back to the American Legion Auxiliary for the Girls Nation Program. So that number keeps going up.

I remember the first year we gave back money, it was like \$2,600. So we're doing much better. As our funds grow, we get more interest.

So okay. So the budget, proposed budget is for total revenue \$322,852 and total expenses, \$322,852. So I would move for the adoption of this budget for the FY '17 year for the Foundation.

(Pause.)

PRESIDENT DAVIS: The question is on the approval of the proposed FY '17 Foundation budget as presented.

Is there a discussion?

Are you ready for the question?

ALL: Yes.

PRESIDENT DAVIS: The question is on the adoption of the FY '17 Foundation budget as presented.

All in favor, say aye.

ALL: Aye.

PRESIDENT DAVIS: All opposed, say no.

The motion to approve the proposed FY '17 Foundation budget has passed.

PRESIDENT BOONE: I would just like to make a comment about the expectation that the Foundation has, the board of directors, is that NECs will promote the Foundation and that includes officers of the NEC and that you will promote it and encourage donations as much as you can so we can give out more grants. So with your help, we can get more money for grants. Thank you.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT DAVIS: Thank you, Linda.

All right. So we are going on to new business.

I'd like to first call Sharon Conatser.

(Pause.)

MS. CONATSER: Madam President, I am pleased to be serving as Chairman of the Future Focus Committee this year. And what we're looking to do is gather names of those that would like to work on the 100th Anniversary committee. Now, with that said, we -- it doesn't have to be the people in this room.

We are looking for unit members, grass roots members, leaders, past national presidents, NECs. We're looking for a wide variety of people to serve on that committee. After that, the list will be given to President Mary, and the committee and her will go over those names and make a decision.

I do want to clarify that because you send your name in does not mean -- or someone else's -- that they will be selected. Because if we get 150 names, not everyone can be on the committee. And we hope we do. So if anyone is interested on that, if they would please send me a note, an email, a private message, however it works and let me know what you think your strengths are that would be an asset to that 100th Anniversary Committee.

Thank you, President Mary, for allowing me to do that.

PRESIDENT DAVIS: Thank you, Sharon.

Is there any other business to come before the NEC meeting?

Hearing none, the Chair now calls on National Secretary Dubbie Buckler for updates.

SECRETARY BUCKLER: Thank you, Madam Chairman, Madam President.

So first, we just heard a report from the Foundation. I want to remind you of the \$6,000 grant that we are still neck-and-neck with the top contender. I have not yet voted today, so I don't know what today's totals show. But we're still neck-and-neck.

And are we -- are we still just a tick below?

VOICES: Yes.

SECRETARY BUCKLER: Okay. So I will just say again all of you probably know somebody in The American Legion. And if you -- we -- everybody who's currently voting if you just get one more person to vote, just based on how the numbers crunch, we would knock this thing out of the park.

So please, it's -- it would make a big difference to the Foundation if we could do that.

And, Linda, as President of the Foundation Board, I will -- pleased to share that in the NEC 101 orientation, we talk about the importance of fundraising and the role -- the fiduciary responsibility that we all have in leadership positions to promote and participate in supporting fundraising for the organization. I want -- I want to wish immediate Past National President Sharon Conatser best wishes as she heartily goes into retirement. She will remain as active as she ever has been, minus maybe some of the travel.

But, Sharon, it's -- you're a dear friend. It's been a terrific year.

And, Madam President, if I may have a moment of personal privilege? Could I ask everybody to join me in a round of applause and appreciation?

(Applause.)

SECRETARY BUCKLER: And I didn't mean to steal your thunder in doing that. I just --

(Applause.)

SECRETARY BUCKLER: And every year, I want to thank all the Past National Presidents I have served with, because every year, their delegations adopt me. So in addition to my Indiana delegation, I'm adopted each year by the National Presidents Delegation. And certainly, this year has been no exception. And with them being so close and being able to drive over from time to time, it's really been a close family relationship.

And now, I would like to thank our new National President, Mary Davis. She --

Mary, I just wish you the best. It's going to be a year filled with journey. And this is moving.

(Laughter.)

SECRETARY BUCKLER: Okay. Rule number one, don't lean into the podium. You might -- I might have just joined you right there, Suzie. You might have had to catch me. Whoa. I'm sorry. That was just a little unsettling.

So let me take that -- start that over again. So, Mary, I personally wish you the best. We are good friends. We have much in common.

If you hear us calling each other Thelma and Louise, just know that it's an inside joke that will probably not let up throughout this coming year. She is a -- she's just -- she's very committed to this organization, brings a great background to this position.

As you travel as the chief ambassador for the largest women's patriotic service organization in the world, we wish you safe travels. And we -- I know that we all pledge our support for this to be a terrific administrative year. And we're delighted to be part of the team. Thank you.

That's an applause moment.

(Applause.)

SECRETARY BUCKLER: I also want to thank National Headquarters staff. We try to be a little more organized in introducing them. As you know, we have a couple of high-profile visitors to this National

Convention. And I do want to -- again, I don't -- I can't apologize because there are things I have to do. But I'm not being rude when I'm having to do something. So if you see my head down and I'm clicking away, it's because I need to and I'm not being rude.

But this year, we've just not had the opportunity to really just do a big shout out to our National Convention staff, because they've usually been so busy somewhere else trying to do something they haven't been around where you could see them. So at least for those in the room, would you please stand up?

(Applause.)

SECRETARY BUCKLER: Tamara Shumate, Chrystal Daulton, and Tim Bresnahan.

(Applause.)

SECRETARY BUCKLER: And we all are a great team, and I got a great picture of Tim, because I think it was the first time I ever saw him holding the microphone as he was talking.

(Laughter.)

SECRETARY BUCKLER: Tim -- I'm just going to -- be real careful up here. This is --

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: I know. I heard it going (indiscernible).

SECRETARY BUCKLER: We've had sturdier podiums.

I want to thank all of you for all you're doing to support the Centennial Strategic Plan. We're all in this together. I'm going to go into great detail, but the camaraderie and the esprit de corps and the shared purpose and commitment is just something that's really overwhelming.

When we started this, we didn't feel that. And we feel it now. So thank you to everyone who's in this room.

I have -- someone said I should raffle this off, but I don't have a raffle license. And we are pretty sticklers for the rules. So this was Mary's corsage from last night. So -- and I know she would want somebody to have it.

So in the spirit of goodwill, who would like to have this with the anticipation they might make a donation to the Foundation, you know, for the honor of having the corsage that belonged to Mary?

(Pause.)

SECRETARY BUCKLER: Okay. This is sad. We need some takers.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: (Indiscernible).

SECRETARY BUCKLER: Okay. Okay.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: (Indiscernible).

SECRETARY BUCKLER: Oh, no. Oh, I can't take bids, because I don't have a license to do that. So -- okay. So those who are interested, I tell you what. Line up here, and we'll just do a toss. Pretend it's a wedding.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: (Indiscernible) bridal bouquet.

SECRETARY BUCKLER: Okay. Actually, I'm going to do a throw. Whoever catches it -- oh, they're coming up closer.

SECRETARY BUCKLER: Oh.

(Laughter.)

SECRETARY BUCKLER: Okay.

(Laughter.)

SECRETARY BUCKLER: That wasn't as heavy as previous ones have been. I'm really sorry about that. Okay.

And finally, Madam President, all I want to say is thank you, everyone. This has been -- for all the hectic stuff going on behind the scenes, we hope that you've enjoyed the convention and things have gone smoothly. I wish you all safe travels, and God bless. And in the words of Tiny Tim -- not that Tiny Tim. In the words of Tiny Tim, God bless every one.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT DAVIS: Okay. Now you know my generation. If I think of the other Tiny Tim.

(Laughter.)

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Tiptoe through the tulips.

PRESIDENT DAVIS: I'd like to call on (indiscernible).

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: I just want to make note of something on (indiscernible) for the (indiscernible) Credit Union. It's happened to me twice. And I'm wondering (indiscernible) the other organizations getting (indiscernible) when you scroll up to the (indiscernible) and put your email in, if you click right, it's happened to me twice. That organization (indiscernible) slide in on (indiscernible) instead of (indiscernible).

(Cross-talk.)

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: So be very careful as you slide up the screen, where you touch. And it's going to (indiscernible) the Foundation.

PRESIDENT DAVIS: Did you all hear that?

(Cross-talk.)

PRESIDENT DAVIS: Good to know.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Yeah.

PRESIDENT DAVIS: If you did not attend the NEC 101 meeting, please see Chrystal at the back of the room for your packet. This packet contains documents that you must sign before leaving today.

SECRETARY BUCKLER: Sorry. Thank you, Madam President. I was supposed to announce that.

PRESIDENT DAVIS: Yeah, this was my update for Dubbie.

(Laughter.)

SECRETARY BUCKLER: We are a team.

PRESIDENT DAVIS: If there's no other new business to come before the body, as we close the first meeting of the 2016-2017 National Executive Committee meeting, I leave you with these words. Let service in the community, state, and nation be ever a main objective of the American Legion Auxiliary and its members. Let us be watchful of our organization and ourselves that nothing shall swerve us from the path of justice and freedom, loyalty and democracy.

You are adjourned.

(Whereupon, at 11:16 a.m., the above-entitled meeting was concluded.)

Appendix A



SUMMARY OF MOTIONS / RESOLUTIONS ADOPTED

BY

**AMERICAN LEGION AUXILIARY NATIONAL
GOVERNING BOARDS FOR 2015-2016 AND 2016-2017
AND 2016 NATIONAL CONVENTION DELEGATES
CONVENED AUGUST 26 – SEPTEMBER 1, 2016,
IN CINCINNATI, OHIO**

2015-2016 NEC MEETING AUGUST 27, 2016

**2016 AMERICAN LEGION AUXILIARY
NATIONAL CONVENTION
AUGUST 29 – AUGUST 31, 2016**

2016-2017 NEC MEETING SEPTEMBER 1, 2016

###

**American Legion Auxiliary 2015-2016 National Executive Committee
Final 2015-2016 NEC Meeting held Pre-National Convention
Cincinnati, Ohio
August 27, 2016**

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:

- cancel the charters of those units listed in the document “American Legion Auxiliary Unit Charter Cancellations for the period February 2016 – August 2016,” (as listed in the 8/27/16 NEC Agenda Meeting Packet)
- adopt the updated ALA National President Foreign Travel Policy as recommended by the National Finance Committee (as included in the 8/27/16 NEC Agenda Meeting Packet)
- adopt the updated ALA Unbudgeted Solicitations of Funds Policy as recommended by the National Finance Committee (as included in the 8/27/16 NEC Agenda Meeting Packet)
- adopt the updated ALA NHQ Check Signing Policy as recommended by the National Finance Committee (as included in the 8/27/16 NEC Agenda Meeting Packet)
- request The American Legion research the need to specify “widows” among ALA membership eligibility criteria
- with The American Legion, advocate that Congress establish a National Poppy Day

M/S/C to amend American Legion Auxiliary Standing Rules, Section III, changing the title of the section to “National Conferences for Department Leaders” and adding a new subsection that specifies attendance for Department training presented and underwritten by the National ALA organization is expected unless excused by the National President or National Secretary.

###

**American Legion Auxiliary 2016 National Convention
Cincinnati, Ohio
August 29-31, 2016**

Summary of Motions/Resolutions Adopted/Amendments

M/S/C = Moved/Seconded/Carried

M/S/C to adopt the 2016 National Convention Credentials Report

M/S/C to adopt the rules for the 2016 National Convention

M/S/C to adopt the changes to the 2016 National Convention program as published in the 2016 American Legion Auxiliary National Convention Guide and Annual Report

M/S/C to amend the American Legion Auxiliary Standing Rules, Section 10, Units, Subsection 3, to clarify and simplify the process by which a member can transfer her membership to another ALA unit

M/S/C that the ALA National Organization and Departments continue their commitment to the American Legion Auxiliary 5-Year Centennial Strategic Plan and that the 2016-2017 National Executive Committee appropriate funds to resource needs identified to be accomplished in Phase 3 of the Centennial Plan

Courtesy Resolutions Adopted

The following courtesy resolutions were adopted:

M/S/C that the Convention Body extend its appreciation for a successful 2016 American Legion Auxiliary National Convention to the host city, Cincinnati, Department of Ohio, the Department National Convention Committee and Chair, and National Secretary and National Headquarters Staff

M/S/C that the Convention Body express its appreciation to the honored guests contributing to the success of the Convention

M/S/C that the Convention Body, by standing ovation, show its appreciation for outgoing American Legion Auxiliary National President Sharon Conatser

###

**American Legion Auxiliary 2016-2017 National Executive Committee
First 2016-2017 NEC Meeting held Post-National Convention
Cincinnati, Ohio
September 1, 2016**

Summary of Motions/Resolutions Adopted

M/S/C = Moved/Seconded/Carried

M/S/C to re-confirm Mary “Dubbie” Buckler as American Legion Auxiliary National Secretary for the 2016-2017 ALA administrative year

M/S/C to re-confirm Marta Hedding as American Legion Auxiliary National Treasurer for the 2016-2017 ALA administrative year

M/S/C to confirm the national appointments to the National Standing Committees, Special Committees, and ALA Foundation Board for the 2016-2017 ALA administrative year (as listed in the roster circulated onsite and subsequently published in the national leadership directory, aka Red Book, provided to each department)

M/S/C to appropriate funds to resource Year 3 of the American Legion Auxiliary Five-Year Centennial Strategic Plan by allocating \$279,000 from Reserve Funds, and require annual reporting on implementation of the Centennial Strategic Plan to the 2017, 2018, and 2019 National Conventions

M/S/C to adopt the proposed ALA Fiscal Year 2017 budget (as circulated in advance)

M/S/C to adopt the proposed ALA Foundation Fiscal Year 2017 budget (as circulated in advance)

###

Appendix B



**AWARDS PRESENTED
DURING NATIONAL CONVENTION
AUGUST 26 – SEPTEMBER 1, 2016**

*(Visit www.ALforVeterans.org
to see a full listing of 2015-2016 awards.)*

MONDAY, AUGUST 29, 2016

LIAISON TO CHILD WELFARE FOUNDATION COMMITTEE AWARDS:

Excellence Award - Department of Florida
Meritorious Achievement Award - Department of South Dakota
U.S. Udie Grant Award - Department of Florida
Garland M. Murphy Jr. Award – Department of Florida

TUESDAY, AUGUST 30, 2016

NATIONAL PRESIDENT’S AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE:

James P. and Michael Sullivan Lone Rock Unit 383: Lone Rock, WI
Fort Atkinson Unit 348: Strasburg, NE
Rantoul Unit 287: Rantoul, IL
Tony F. Soza/Ray Martinez Unit 41: Glendale, AZ
Oak Orchard Riverdale Unit 28: Millsboro, DE
Department of Virginia

PAST PRESIDENTS PARLEY COMMITTEE AWARDS:

Salute to Active-Duty Servicewomen Award

United States Army: Capt. Lindsay Leskanich, Illinois
United States Navy: Lt. Evita M. Salles, New Jersey
United States Marine Corps: Sgt. Ashlee Nicole Grissom
United States Air Force: MSgt. Deborah D. Fielder, Mississippi
United States Coast Guard: Lt. Melissa Kristina McCafferty, Michigan

Unit Member of the Year

Alabama: Carol Tyson
Alaska: Jeanne Ostnes
Arizona: Joyce Livingston
Arkansas: Peggy Duncan
California: Amy Floyd
Colorado: Joanne Carpenter
Connecticut: Kristin Jones
Delaware: Karen Marvel
Florida: Dana Metts
Georgia: Ellen Golliver
Idaho: Brenda Rhoads
Indiana: Marge Gosney
Iowa: Tammy Wolford
Kansas: Amy Cranston
Kentucky: Jennie Barnett
Louisiana: Michelle Fontenot
Maine: Starr Kelley
Maryland: Lois VanSickle
Massachusetts: Bridget Marinelli

Michigan: Linda Wolven
 Minnesota: Sharon Odegaard
 Mississippi: Theresa Pickle
 Missouri: Belva Farnsworth
 Nebraska: Barb Meyer
 New Jersey: Sophia Lorena
 New Mexico: Dixie Trujillo
 New York: Marion Palumbo
 North Carolina: Kathy Hambright
 North Dakota: Jan Gladue
 Ohio: Pat Miazga
 Oregon: Sherian "Sherry" Justus
 South Carolina: Rosemary Early
 South Dakota: Bernice Halling
 Tennessee: Constance (Connie) Taylor
 Texas: Brenda Anthony
 Vermont: Denise Colety
 Virginia: Ivy Jones
 Washington: Liz Hunt-Fidler
 Wyoming: Debra Anderson
 (Note: Not all American Legion Auxiliary departments submitted names to be considered for this national award.)

Woman of the Year:

Presented to U.S. Army Maj. Gen. Peggy C. Combs

WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 31, 2016

MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE AWARDS:

Silver Brigade, President's Choice

Judy Alderman	Bruce Jorgensen
Ann Fournier	LaVonne Pulvermacher
Amy Hankins	Sue Welchert
Janice Peticolas	Linda Campbell
Peg Sullivan	Vicky Graham
Rodica Andreescu	Elizabeth Kern
Charlene Fox	Pam Ray
Sherry James	Sonja Wright
Mary Phillips	Sue Cantrell
Sharon Starr	Dolores Green
Anndi Bownes	Maureen MacDonald
Elizabeth Fullwood	Brenda Rivera
Ruth Jones	Charlotte Connors
Louise Phillips	Sherry Greene
Dot Vargas	Julia McBee
Jama Butts	Susan Romero
Patricia Gawlik	Anita Darnell

Melinda Hackney

Laurina Miller

Glenda Schultz

Kathy Falk

Susan Morgan, Unit 280, Department of California

Carol Haines

Susan Morgan

Melissa Seward