

The Legion Link

January 2014

Vol. 21 Issue 6



Making a Difference for Veterans Everyday



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Department Commander
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HAPPY NEW YEAR !!!!! It's hard to believe we are halfway through this year. Time is going so quickly. I hope everyone had a Merry Christmas. With six months left we need to concentrate on our Veterans who haven't

renewed their dues. We as THE AMERICAN LEGION need to stand up to be the representatives for ALL veterans in Congress who are trying to CUT THE VETERANS BUDGET (TRI-CARE ,COLA'S and SEQUESTER). With 109,500 members out of 1.6 million veterans in Florida (less than 10 %) we need to let the other 1.5 veterans know why they need to join the Legion. A veteran can stand alone and not be heard or have his/her voice magnified by 2.4 million! The Legion speaks as one for ALL VETERANS. Who would your Congressman listen too? One or 2.4 Million?

Next month the National Commander, Dan Dellinger, will be visiting Florida. He will be here January 5th through the 9th, visiting the East Coast. I wish he could be in more Districts but mileage and time is the key factor

in setting up his visit. He has been in Hawaii, Korea, the Far East plus who knows how many States and has been home a total of 6 days in six months. The itinerary is based on travel time available with consideration for him and the many states he still has to visit. Dan has been doing a great job talking almost every week to Congress about budget cuts and Veterans issues. He already had to cut one day because he had to return to Indianapolis. Things could change even as this is being written. Let's hope not!

The National Vice Commander Paul Dillard is also coming to the 1st District the first part of February for a three day tour as well. He is from Texas and is Vice Commander of the Southern States (Southern Block). Also, Sean Sparks from our National Post Revitalization Team will be in the 5th District working with Jerry Brandt the Department Chairman.

I thank all of you for supporting COTA (Children's Organ Transplant Association). All of the money donated will stay in the state of Florida to aid the 75 plus children who are waiting for transplants.

As you can see Florida is being visited because of the hard work you all have been doing. I thank you for all you have done and will continue to do FOR THE RIGHT REASONS, OUR VETERANS. Hope to see you soon in my travels. God Bless America - For God and Country



Jay Conti Sr.
Department Vice Commander
ViceCommander@floridalegion.org
BRAVO-ZULU
352.287.1400

HAPPY NEW YEAR TO ALL!

December was a wonderful month as I spent a lot of time just like many of you in our Communities raising money for Christmas presents for the needy and I attended the Pearl Harbor Ceremony at Spring Hill Post 186. I played Santa Claus (**Go Figure**) at 7 Different events that included: Post #155 Children's Christmas Party where over 100 children from the Crystal River Armory, Yankee-town Coast Guard Station, Veterans Homeless Shelter, Resource center, CREST School "A Special needs School" not to mention the few Toy Runs with Various Legion Rider Chapters.

I also had a chance to visit all of my Brothers & Sisters who were inpatients at the Gainesville VA Hospital (as SANTA) who were being hospitalized during the holidays; it was my hope to bring a smile to their faces and it sure did. I also attended the grand opening "**Open House**" of the new VA Facility "Community Living Center" at Lake Nona VA Hospital in Orlando. I want to thank the many Posts who invited me to your Christmas and New Years Parties. We had a lot of fun at the many Christmas Parties and the New Years eve Party my wife Toni & I attended.

With New Year started most are turning the page of the past year. **BUT! Not So Fast!** There is still work to be accomplish for the 2013-2014 Legion Year. I suggest that you look where your Post is at this point of the year, see if you need to catch up in membership (ask for help if you need it!), get ahead start for the end of year CPR Reports and don't forget Awards for Boy Scouts, JROTC & Shooting Sports, School Medals, Americanism, Children & Youth Month (C & Y April) and many other Programs that we have. With some Posts starting nominations next month let's finish what we started last year and go out with a BANG!

On Saturday, December 14th, American Legion Post 286 in Pine Castle, FL done their yearly Bikes for Kids Programs where 199 needy children will be given a brand new bicycle because the Pine Castle Legion Family done fundraisers throughout the year! In 3 hours, 57 Volunteers assembled 199 bikes for a bunch of happy children on Christmas Day. This is what being a Legionnaire and better yet a very close Legion Family is all about!

To American Legion Post 286 Commander Rob Rossman and the Legion 286 Family; I say thank you for your commitments to the Children in your Community. **BRAVO ZULU!**



Dennis Boland
NEC

Legislative Priorities for the 113th Congress:

A: Oppose any further increases in TRICARE fees, including prescription drug fees: The American Legion stands strong against those who would dilute the promises made in the contract with those who serve in our nation's defense. We strongly oppose any proposed degradation of the health care promised to retired service members when they enlisted through increases in fees for TRICARE For Life, increases in pharmacy co-pays or any further breaches of the contract of trust between this nation and those who have defended it.

B: End Veteran Homelessness: The American Legion strongly supports the Administration's goal of eliminating veterans' homelessness by 2015 and calls on Congress to pledge whatever resources are necessary to accomplish this goal, to include medical, rehabilitative and employment assistance to homeless veterans and their families. (S.62/H.R.385)

C. DOL-VETS: The VETS program should be kept in its rightful place within the Department of Labor. DVOPs and LVERs should be solely focused on getting veteran's jobs. The Jobs for Veterans State Grants Program should not be consolidated into a new single funding source. (Oppose H.R.803)

D: Disabled Veterans Tax/Widows Tax: VA disability compensation should not be offset from military retired pay regardless of the VA rating percentage, nor should VA survivor benefits (DIC) be offset from military Survivor Benefit Plan (SBP) annuities. The American Legion supports legislation that would completely repeal these unjust offsets NOW. (H.R.333/H.R.303/H.R.31)

E: The American Flag: The American Legion remains committed to protecting Old Glory, and continues to support legislation that safeguards our nation's flag from physical desecration. Please work with The American Legion to develop language that will be approved by congress, and be sent to the States for ratification. (H.J.RES.47/S.J.RES.17)

Other priorities of concern to The American Legion are: Protect Veterans and DOD from the harmful cuts imposed through sequestration; Veterans' Benefits & Health Care; Quality Education through Post 9/11 GI Bill; Small Business Verification and VA Claims Backlog:

These should be of concern to you and used when contacting your Congressman and Senators. With your sincere efforts we can get a better quality of life for our Veterans who earned this right through their military service to our Country.

Chaplain Steve's Spiritual Corner

Happiness, healthy, and successful New Year everyone. May this forthcoming year be a joyous, rewarding, and fulfilling one. This year I will continue on with my Chaplain's District Training. Area and District Commanders, you all have been a blessing to the program.

Dear readers I would like us to start using daily a language of empowerment, healing, and hope. You know we are all in some way, shape, or form confronted constantly with unexpected challenges in our lives. It is imperative and important that we sometimes slow ourselves down and take time to reflect and think on fruitful solutions and answers. One way to deal with these issues is to imagine you have a library of positive thoughts in your head. When things get to be a little rough just go to your library of good thoughts and put them in perspective. Thinking about positive and good thoughts can be helpful during a turbulent and troubling period. It seems a little easier said than done, however, you should at least give it a try. You might just surprise yourself with the results. You can also try smiling. "A cheerful heart is good medicine, but a crushed spirit dries up the bones." Proverbs 17:22

"Dear friend, I pray that you may enjoy good health and that all may go well." 3 John 1:2 "I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours." Mark 11:24

I hope and pray that each and every one of you will have joy, peace, love, hope, serenity, humility, kindness, benevolence, empathy, generosity, truth, compassion, and faith throughout the year.

For God and Country



Walt Eatman

Department Sgt-at-Arms

Greetings to all. I would like to remind any Post's that want to participate in the Color Guard competition at the June convention that the manuals regarding the rules and regulations are available and you can contact department and they will mail you a copy. Also we will have a training session on a Saturday in February; date TBA.

The chief judge from the National Color guard Mr. Tracy Bullard will be conducting the class and will answer any questions. Please rsvp to Department if you plan to attend and send just one representative, not your whole color guard. Also I will be traveling around to the Districts after the holidays to pass out and review the revised Sgt-at-Arms manual with the Posts and District Sgt-at-Arms. Wishing Everyone a Very Merry Christmas and a Healthy Happy New Year !! For God and country, God bless the American legion and it's members



From The Desk of the Department Judge Advocate Larry Sheets

In reading through the proposed Constitution and By-Laws that Posts have submitted for approval, I have noticed that in many of them. The Executive Committee for lack of a better term "rules the roost."

It is important to note that the general membership of a Post has the final say, when they vote to either approve or disapprove a recommendation from the Executive Board.

When the minutes of the Executive Board are read at the general membership meeting, the general membership present at the meeting has the final say.

If there is a motion to accept the minutes of the Executive aboard as read, and it is seconded and voted to pass, then everything in those minutes are accepted.

Should there be a question regarding something in the Executive Board minutes, the motion should be that the minutes are accepted with the exception of the item to be discussed. After the approval of the motion, the item will be discussed and voted on.

The membership of the post has the final say on anything dealing with the affairs of the post.

Please remember this when rewriting your Constitution and By-Laws.



AMERICANISM

Steve Barentine - Chairman

Here we are - it's 2014 already! My wife, Amy, and I hope you had a great holiday season. We hope you all have a prosperous 2014.

District and Post Boys State Chairmen - it is time to contact the schools to get your eligibility lists and set up meeting days for your Boys State interviews! Remember that you and your committee select the Boys State delegates and alternates.

Post Oratorical Contest Chairmen should get their contests completed so that District and Area contests will be ready for the next month. The Department Oratorical Contest is Saturday, March 8th at Department Headquarters. For God & Country

85% Goal

February 5, 2014

Membership Report as of December 30, 2013

District/ Area	Commander	Goal	Rec'd	% Goal
12	Kenneth Wakefield	8,442	8,160	96.66
6	Thomas Biddle	10,741	9,464	88.11
13	John Dollinger	8,811	7,531	85.47
3	Randall White	1,715	1,456	84.90
15	Eunice Butts	5,329	4,467	83.82
8	Joseph Magee	8,255	6,811	82.51
2	Willie Jackson	1,373	1,119	81.50
17	Dorothy Moore	4,152	3,378	81.36
16	Sidney Damsgard	12,028	9,735	80.94
5	Thomas Gora	7,810	6,269	80.27
11	Frank Maitland	4,168	3,325	79.77
1	Jimmy Martin	6,288	5,016	79.77
7	Charles Giffin	3,911	3,107	79.44
4	Charles Ferguson	4,198	3,302	78.66
14	Gary Decker	3,026	2,350	77.66
9	John Vazquez	4,349	3,330	76.57
Eastern	Robert Kiley	19,183	17,624	91.87
SW	Debra Roush	17,066	14,342	84.04
Central	James Burgess	21,268	17,309	81.39
Northern	Michael Wolohan	17,875	14,405	80.59
Western	Verna Joyce	7,661	6,135	80.08
Southern	William Johnson	11,543	9,005	78.01
Department			78,820	
Post 400		12,067	10,867	90.06
Post 208		3,181	2,671	83.97
Totals		111,525	92,358	82.81

Douglas Deierlein
Membership Chairman
ddeierlein@yahoo.com

Hello Legionnaires,

WOW! Where has 2013 gone too?

I hope everyone had a Joyful Christmas and a safe and Happy New Year. Well membership is going just great, I am so proud of each and every one of you for the job you are doing with membership. I know that we still have a long road ahead of us. But, remember our goal is to make both Art and Mike take to the SKY in 2014. I know that we will make this happen!

The legion has come out with membership renewal post cards if any of the post are interested please contact Department Membership Team to get some to assist you with notifying your members that have not renewed yet. I would ask that each post put a plan in place to ensure all members coming to the Post Canteen and Post meetings are current 2014 members. Also I would hope that all Post have a retention team in place to work the MYLEGION.ORG listing for post 400 and 208 members along with working on the STAY ACTIVE slips that Department has sent out to each post. Retention is just as important as getting new members, because if we work at keeping the members we already have, getting new members will come easily.

If anyone needs assistance with Membership issues please contact me, my number is 863-253-2748 and my email is Membership@Legionmail.org, I am here to help. Well, I will close by asking each and every one of you to HELP US make Art and Mike both FLY! Until next month let's "Shoot for the Stars" and "Get-R-Done"



Ron Musselwhite
Department Oratorical Chairman

Well, it is a new year already. All Post should have their Post contest completed by Jan. 12th. All the District contest needs to be completed by Feb. 2nd. and all Area contest need to be completed by Feb. 23rd.

The Department Finals will be on March 8th. at 9AM at Department Headquarters. Please come out and listen to these students speak on the Constitution. Let's fill up the hall and show our support.

Steve Shuga
Children & Youth Program Chairman
cy@legionmail.org

Post activities should be focused around the dates of holidays and events below. Please report all CY monthly activities. Our goal is a 100% reporting from every post. Everyone benefits from timely submissions. Remember your **Coins for COTA and Children Welfare Foundation –Piggy Banks or Cans**. Promote safety in the community with schools getting back in session, alert drivers of our children walking along roads, school bus pickups and school zone speeds.

Important C&Y Program Dates

General Scholarship Alert !!! – Provide applications to your Senior High Schools and encourage Seniors to apply for a chance to be selected for a 2014 General Scholarship from The American Legion. Scholarship applications must be submitted no later than 1 March 2014.

Children Welfare Foundation – 100% Member Per Capita Banner Program – Every Post, Unit, Squadron, Chapter can support this by providing \$1 per member and submitting this check to Dennis Boland, Child Welfare Foundation.

January Holidays

1 New Year's Day
20 Martin Luther King Jr. Birthday

The month of January is also known as: National Bath Safety, Blood Donor, Braille Literacy, Hobby, Hot Tea, Oatmeal, and Soup Month

Check out the link for more monthly activities and events. (www.holidayinsights.com)

John Ebling
Department Veteran Benefits Chairman

High Quality Dental Care at a Reasonable Cost

Eligible Veterans plus family members receiving care under the Civilian Health and Medical Program (CHAMPVA) can now purchase affordable dental insurance. This new program is a partnership between VA, Delta Dental, and Met Life.

More than eight million Veterans who are enrolled in VA health care can choose to purchase one of the offered dental plans. This three year pilot has been designed for Veterans with no dental coverage, or those eligible for VA dental care who would like to purchase additional coverage. Participation will not affect entitlement to VA dental services and treatment.

There are no eligibility limitations based on service connected disability rating or enrollment priority assignment. People interested in participating may now complete an application online through either Delta Dental or Met Life. Coverage for this new dental insurance will begin January 1, 2014 and will be available throughout the United States and its territories.

Wayne Newland
Department Boy Scout Chairman
772-388-6677

A BIG SHOUT-OUT to Robert Doyle, Post 344, District 12, for organizing a new Scout Troop. Robert Doyle is also the contact for the new American Legion Eagle Scout pin. tafainst@bellsouth.net. If you have had an Eagle Scout in your Post recently, it would be nice to present this pin to them at their next Court of Honor.

Congratulations to Tom Pendergast, Post 39, for competing and turning in his packet for The American Legion Knot. It is being processed thru Department & National. Two more application packages are in the last stages of completion to be turned in. Who will be next? Unlike some awards where the person must be nominated, The Knot is one that the person who is earning it must do the paperwork. This will bring to 26 Knots earned in Florida.

Do you know a Legion member, active in scouting that is active in his Church? You might discreetly check as see if he or she already has the Adult Religious Award. If not, they must be nominated for the award. Details at:

http://www.praypub.org/main_frameset.htm.



To: American Legion, Legion Riders
From: George Gasparini, Director ALR 155 FI.

"THANK YOU" Legion Riders for participating and helping Santa give out presents today. Today with funds provided from the ALR treasury for toys, voted on by the membership we helped Pass Commander Santa Larry put a Smile on 130 less fortunate Children in Citrus County, all receiving a bag full of gifts and toys.

A little 7 year old girl sitting on Santa lap said I want a blue blanket for Christmas for my bed, she has been very cold at night. When I heard that request from the little one I looked at our members and we all agreed we had to do something to make her wish come true. Without hesitation ALR member/Santa helper Jackie departed to purchase a blanket from a local store in behalf of our chapter. Jackie returning with the blue blanket which was given to the little girl, making a Christmas wish to Santa come true.

This is a part of being a American Legion Rider, helping Veterans the young, old, sick and less fortunate. Just another day in the lives of ALR members. Please reach out in your hearts and help our Veterans and less fortunate in our communities.

THANK YOU AGAIN. MERRY CHRISTMAS, SAFE & HAPPY NEW YEAR. (KEEP THE RUBER DOWN)
For God and Country

Jim Burk
Department ALR Chairman
772 812 2495

I'VE GOT YOUR SIX
 Military talk meaning I've got your back or
 I've got you covered.

Mission statement:

We really don't know how many homeless veterans are living on the street or in the woods in St. Lucie County. But we intend to find out. The purpose of our all-volunteer group is to identify these individuals, supply them with personal hygiene products, food, water and other things that we take for granted. We need to create a situation of mutual trust. This sounds easy, but at times may be difficult and even dangerous. After trust is established then the real mission begins. Our ultimate goal is to get them back into society. There is nothing wrong with continuing to provide them field aid. But homelessness will never go away until they are in a safe, secured environment.

Some of the duties are as follows:

1. Field team leaders, in charge of outreach. The actual search and rescue members.
2. Supply officers, in charge of gathering donations, inventory and disbursement of all items such as clothing, free emergency cell phones, water, food, and in some cases money.
3. Liaison officers to interface with the various agencies to insure a smooth transition back into society and to coordinate with community officers in order to make contact with other nonprofit organizations such as soup kitchens, faith based organizations, Salvation Army, Mustard Seed, Love Connection, and others.
4. Fund and donations officers to insure that we keep getting what we need to pass out.
5. Law enforcement and various local government agencies liaison to explain what we are doing and how it can help them.

I'm sure as we get into this other positions may pop up.
 Felix & Maria Ayala 785 209 1101 or 785 209 1712



TAPS

I am saddened to announce the passing of Lois McFall, the 1st Vice President of Auxiliary and significant other of NEC Dennis Boland. There

will be a service for Lois on Saturday, December 21, 2013 at Lehigh Acres Post 323, 1124 Ashlar Ave., Lehigh Acres, FL 33936 from 2:30pm to 4:00pm.

Please keep Dennis in your thoughts and prayers. Condolences may be sent to Dennis at 314 Lake Ave., Lehigh Acres, FL 33936-1439.

Bob Brewster
Veterans Employment Chairman

First things first, I and my family would like to wish all of you a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. We are having an information table at the Raymond James Stadium, Tampa, FL. This is a Veterans Job Fair. It is very beneficial to have some local Legion members attend where they will be meeting hundreds of the young vets who are serving today and some vets who have just been separated from active duty. This event runs from 11:00 AM to 3:00 PM on Thursday, January 16, 2014.

I hear from so many Posts that it is so hard to get the younger vets to join. This group of veterans represents the 2nd largest group in my Post 373-Orange Park, FL; reason being, we go where they are, not sitting in an office waiting for them to come to us. If you wish to attend this Veterans Job Fair, you do not have to be the Post Commander. You don't have to be an officer. All you have to do is come to this event and be enthusiastic about your Post.

Last month, I asked for information on companies employing a lot of vets in their workforce. I also asked for the names of companies who are helping vets at your Post or District. **So far, I have not received one single response.** It takes no talent to complain about lack of membership. It does take a little effort to go to events like this and communicate with these young veterans. They will want to know about your VSO and your Post dues and what your Post does for the vets and their families. So let's all get serious and work with our vets, young and old. For God and Country

RIDING SNOWMOBILES

K	L	M	K	H	E	L	M	E	T	S	K	I	S	T	MITTENS
Y	T	K	B	S	H	T	U	C	S	L	L	I	H	X	MOMENTUM
R	H	R	I	R	A	S	T	R	O	S	E	R	T	T	RACING
E	L	S	A	G	N	M	N	C	U	M	I	G	R	R	RESORTS
N	X	O	P	I	D	S	E	D	S	L	P	G	O	A	RIDERS
E	Z	H	U	E	L	T	M	C	L	P	O	A	P	C	ROUTES
C	G	K	I	E	E	S	O	S	A	G	I	U	S	K	SCENERY
S	N	N	D	L	B	D	M	E	G	F	L	R	B	S	SKIS
C	I	T	T	R	A	V	E	L	I	N	G	S	T	T	SLED
Z	D	S	E	P	R	R	E	B	S	R	N	E	A	D	SPEED
R	I	D	E	R	S	S	A	C	E	E	E	E	S	R	SPORT
E	L	T	T	O	R	H	T	T	T	R	T	T	K	I	STEERING
Z	G	F	V	P	G	A	N	T	I	L	O	U	O	V	TERRAIN
G	N	I	C	A	R	I	I	N	M	O	Q	J	O	E	THRILLS
Q	C	R	Z	D	W	M	G	N	B	X	N	M	Z	R	THROTTLE
BOOTS	GLIDING	TRACKS													
COMPASS	GOGGLES	TRAILS													
DRIVER	HANDLEBAR	TRAVELING													
EXHILARATION	HELMETS	TRIPS													
FACE MASK	HILLS	WINTER													

John Dollinger
POW/MIA Department Chairman

Following the disastrous report from the Government Accountability Office (GAO) concerning all the duplication of efforts and costs involved in the MIA/POW, Congress has gotten involved and requested a report from the Inspector General's Office, Department of Defense.

On November 6th Kenneth Moorefield, Deputy Inspector General issues a Memorandum with "Subject: Assessment of the Effectiveness of the Department of Defense Prisoner of War/Missing in Action Accounting Community"

In the memo the IG goes on stating "the objective is to assess the Department's programs and practices concerning the identification and repatriation of the remains of the Nation's missing in action from past armed conflicts. This will include the overall accounting community organization and waste, abuse, mismanagement, travel issues and other deficiencies related to the administration of programs carried out by the Defense POW/Missing Personnel Office(DPMO), Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command(JPAC) and other members of the accounting community. The assessment is already in progress.

The statistics reported currently are:

	<u>WWII</u>	<u>Korea</u>	<u>Cold War</u>	<u>Vietnam</u>	<u>Iraq & other</u>	<u>Total</u>
Total MIA	73,652	7,897	126	1,643	6	83,324

JPAC has said they will continue the fake remains ceremonies being held in Hawaii. The National Alliance of POW/MIA Families published the following statement concerning the issue "Therefore, we will spell it out in simple in small words, so perhaps even JPAC leadership will understand. Stop playing with remains

Stop lying to families
Watch how you spend your limited funds
Lastly, to quote Senator Clair McCaskill "get it frickin done!"

I believe they are absolutely correct.

George Gasparini
Dept. of Florida ALR Vice Chairman

I HOPE THAT EVERYBODY HAD A GREAT CHRISTMAS AND A SAFE NEW YEAR! Now, down to business.

The most urgent item on the Boy Scout calendar is The Eagle Scout of the Year competition for a lot of Scholarship money. The candidate must be from a Scout Troop chartered by a Legion Post OR be a son or grandson of a Legion member AND he must live in Florida. Details at <http://www.legion.org/publications/160902/eagle-scout-year-nomination-form>

Next item on the list is the American Legion Camporee, "The Cracker Trail Competition" at Camp Tanah Keeta, near Jupiter, FL, Feb 28, Mar 1 & 2. This year's Camporee is hosted by Ken Nichols, District 11 [kenlin04@gmail.com]. They need help from Legion members to judge events. Details at <http://www.gulfstreamcouncil.org/pdf/CrackerTrail2014FinalHandbook.pdf>.

ROSTER CHANGES RECEIVED UP TO DEC. 19, 2013

381 Commander Nelson Souve	17100 Tamiami Trail, Lot 140, Punta Gorda, FL 33950
361 Commnader Daniel Wisham	2868 Oak Lea Drive, S. Daytona, 32119 (386) 760-3887 danw@clearwire.net
366 Commander John Reddy	1150 Crestview Dr, Troy, Ohio (937)335-1401 sreddy8381@aol.com
249 Adjutant Ross Garcia	131 Basin St, Freeport, 32439 (850) 217.4062 mdvgarcia@gmail.com
366 Adjutant Nathan Bliss	1098 Wren Cir. Barefoot Bay, 32976 (772) 202-4344 blissnathan56@yahoo.com
371 Adjutant	POSITION VACANT
348 MAILING/BILLING ADDRESS	PO Box 4235, Tampa, FL 33677
210 MAILING/BILLING ADDRESS	PO Box 184, Ocala, FL 34478
336 website	www.alpost336.m.webs.com
2 nd Dist. Cmdr Willie Jackson	(850) 508-9985
3 rd Dist. Vice Commander	POSITION VACANT
189 Post Dues	\$35.00
278 Commander Dale Wagner	PO Box 154, Lithia, 33547 (813) 737-9299 g.gator2@verizon.net
15 th Dist. Boy Scout Chair- Kathryn Boyer	3502 Yale Circle, Riverview, 335578 (407) 970.3134 usaf0127@yahoo.com



Paul Martel
Department Legislative Chairman
Legislative Report

As of July 1- 2013 we have sold 100 specialty plates, as you may know, we have two years to sell 1000. What you may not know is all you have to do is apply for the plate, pay for it and IF we don't reach the goal, the money you paid will be applied to your normal plate. YOU WILL NOT LOSE A CENT, and you do NOT have to wait till you renew your plate, DO IT NOW. We are always trying ways to raise money to help our veterans and programs, here is the perfect tool. The potential is in the hundreds of thousands of dollars, just sign up in the Link, takes a few seconds, and that's it. You have done your part.

You may have heard about the I.R.S. harassing American Legion post around the country for not having DD-214 of their membership on file. Our National Legion or (VSO) veterans service organization, the only one to go head/head with the I.R.S. on this subject, after much discussion and not backing down, the I.R.S. has had their field manual up dated (Nov.26,2013). The new guidance requires I.R.S. agents to have evidence of wrong doing before asking for the DD 214' forms. I am not saying you do or do not need to have DD 214 on hand, that is up to your post by laws or the way your post does business.

VA has added 5 illnesses related to service connected- TBI, which are: Parkinson disease, certain types of Dementia, Depression, unproved seizures or certain diseases of the Hypothalamus and Pituitary glands.

Gaming: Our Department Commander Art Schwabe and our Department Adjutant Mike McDaniel were in Tallahassee and Commander spoke to the Senate Gaming committee calling for modernizing bingo laws. As you know baby steps work the best, your post can do what you want but, Department has strongly suggested, DO NOT HAVE MACHINES, it's not worth it.

Florida Department of Veterans affairs 2014 Legislative Proposals: (I have condense these)

1) Veterans Preference in Employment, (currently), service connected, spouse of that veterans not able to work, spouse of missing in action, un-remarried widow of veteran who dies of service connected disability, wartime veteran with honorably-discharge, person must live in Florida one year, PROPOSED CHANGE, include all veterans not just war time or disabled veterans, Florida national guard, Gold Star Mothers, and veterans who wish to move here. FISCAL impact: None.

2) VETERANS HOME RESIDENCY REQUIREMENTS: must live in Florida at least one year, PROPOSED CHANGE: amend criteria to remove the one year wait, must live in Florida. FISCAL IMPACT None

3) VETERANS WALK OF HONOR AND MEMORIAL GARDEN: Florida Veterans foundation is the FDVA's direct support to fund programs that benefits veterans and their families, the foundation relies on public donations, seeking authority to raise additional funds, PROPOSE CHANGE: establish a recurring funding stream by sales of bricks to construct a Veterans "Walk of Honor "and the construction of a Veterans Memorial Garden. FISCAL IMPACT None

4) In-state Tuition for Veterans: Current law, automatic in-state residency status for active duty residence or station in Florida, spouses and dependents, drilling members of Florida national guard, however, veterans must wait one year to establish residency, or pay the out of state tuition rate. PROPOSE CHANGE: amend law to extend automatic in-state residency status for tuition purposes to veterans, FISCAL IMPACT: Veteran may save \$ 15,000 or more which is the typical difference between in-state and out of state. The proposal will affect State University system and the Florida College system to the tune of,(SUS) \$ 13.6 mil, and (FCS) \$8.1 mil.

5) EDUCATIONAL DOLLARS FOR DUTY PROGRAM: Florida National guard (FNG) provides up to 100% tuition for FNG members. PROPOSE CHANGE: allow eligible FNG members to pursue their goals by authorizing on line courses. FISCAL IMPACT: indeterminate.

6) NON-RESIDENT DL EXEMPTION: Florida law exempts active duty member's station in Florida to change their license, but not their spouse or dependent child. PROPOSE CHANGE: Amend to family of service member. FISCAL IMPACT: None



HAPPY NEW YEAR!



*Although no one can go back and make a
brand new start, anyone can start from now and
make a brand new ending.*

1st District Commander
Jimmy Lee Martin

The 1st District is running at full speed. Post 249 has new Officers and they have hit the ground running. Membership numbers are gaining and they are working on getting a new piece of land for their new Post Home. Our newest Post, 402 in Panama City Beach started with 15 members when I gave them their temporary Charter in June of 2013. They now have 38 members and gaining. Four of our Post are at 90% or greater. We are looking for a number of Post to be 100% by the time this article is published.

1st District Membership numbers were 76.88% as of the middle of December. Don't count us out yet in the race to 100%. Our 2nd Meeting of the District was held on November 2, 2013 at Post 240 in Pensacola. Thank you Post 240 for your hospitably. The meeting was well attended by Past Department Commanders Larry White and Fletcher Williams. Department Vice Commander Jay Conti, Department Chairman Jim Ramos, Steve Shuga, my friend and former 1st District President, Geri Bailey, now Department President, were there also. Geri and I were elected and served together in 2004 – 2005. It was great to be together again.

My next District Meeting date was changed from February 8 to February 15 and will still be at Post 75 in Crestview, Fl. Because of the low turn out we had to postpone our 1st District Golf Tournament to the end of March or First of April. I will post more information on this later. For God and Country



January Fun Facts

- 2, 1974 - 55 mph enforced by President Nixon
- 3, 1913 - Thomas Edison Demonstrates "talkies"
- 4 - National Trivia Day
- 10, 1984 - "Where's the Beef" the Wendy's commercial first debuts
- 12, 1971 - All in the Family TV show debuts
- 14, 1914 - Henry Ford begins the assembly line production of automobiles
- 15, 1967 - First Super Bowl game played
- 22, 1973 - George foreman wins his first heavy-weight title match
- 28, 1986 - Challenger disaster - crew of 7 dies
- 31, 1930 - Scotch tape marketed by 3M

CENTENNIAL CELEBRATION

Clarence Hill, Past National Commander

The American Legion will begin celebrating 100 years of service to veterans, military personnel, families and communities starting at the National Convention in 2018, continuing throughout 2019 and culminating at the National Convention in 2019. The Department of Florida will form a Centennial Celebration Observance Committee to develop a plan for events at the Department level. PNC Clarence Hill will serve as chairman of the committee. Anyone desiring to be on the committee should volunteer at the Fall Conference or by email to cehill316@aol.com.

Posts are also encouraged to form their own centennial committees. Each Post can convey its legacy by sharing historical photos, videos and print material on the Legion's new Centennial Celebration web page: www.legion.org/centennial. Detailed instructions on how to create a Post history page is available on the web page, as are the types of information a Post should look to identify for their centennial. For more information on the National web page, email ledwards@legion.org.

John Dollinger

13th District Commander

Happy New Year!! **Congratulations, the 13th District achieved the 75% target.** Everyone worked hard to meet this target and your efforts are appreciated. Now, we are headed forward to 80% for January 4th and on to 85% on February 5th. Only by that same group effort will this be accomplished, one step at a time. Keep those renewals, transfers and new member forms going to Department.

REMINDER >>>The **Southwestern Area Ball** is being held at Post 110 on January 25, 2014. Cocktails beginning at 5:00 pm. Attire is semi-formal and tickets are \$25.00 per person. To obtain tickets make your check payable to Dennis R. Boland, and send it to 314 Lake Avenue, Lehigh Acres, FL 33936-1438. Your menu choices are a 6oz. Delmonico Steak or Chicken Parmesan so please designate which meal you want for each ticket. Ticket cutoff is January 11, 2014. Dinner tickets will be picked up at the door.

This is the Southwestern Area Ball so those from District 8 are welcome to attend.

The **13th District Meeting** will be held on January 26th at Post 110 beginning at 1:00 pm. There will be some awards, programs discussions and very brief presentations from upcoming 2014/2015 candidates for Department Offices. It is important that Post Commanders and other Officers attend.

The Department Commander will be in the 13th District the week ending January 25. This is **Department Commander's Annual Visitation**. We will be visiting numerous Posts as well as touring the New Veterans Administration Clinic in Cape Coral and the Jacobsen State Veterans Nursing Facility in Port Charlotte.

The 13th District Picnic will be held on Sunday, March 9th at Post 103. It will be a family event with something for everyone. Please save the date and watch for more information.

Stanley Gold
National Legislative Chairman

An update on my last article. Now there are 168 co-signers to House bill H.R. 1726 and 8 co-signers to Senate bill S1174 concerning the 65th infantry "Borinqueneers". Now all members from Florida have co-sponsored. Coral Gables Post 98, of which I am a member, will vote to send a resolution to our Department Convention that our National Legislative Division will do what they can to get this bill passed. We also will write to other Departments to get their help too.

Congressional Actions

The House of Representatives and the Senate were both in session during the week of December 9. Both chambers hope to adjourn for the year by December 13. However a number of areas of legislative concern may push that date to December 20 or later. Some of the areas of concern include:

- A conference committee seeking to promulgate a final FY 2014 budget resolution
- Further action on the FY 2014 DoD authorization (H.R. 3304)
- Possible action on a farm bill extension (H.R. 3695)

Both Chambers are scheduled to begin the Second Session on January 3, 2014 with a pro forma session.

House, Senate Conferees Reach Agreement on Federal Budget

Earlier this week, members of a House-Senate conference committee announced an agreement for the fiscal year (FY) 2014 budget (H.J. Res 59). The measure constitutes the agreement reached between House Budget Chairman Paul Ryan (WI) and senate Budget chairman Patty Murray (WA) to partially roll-back the sequester of discretionary spending scheduled for FY 2014 and FY 2015 and increase discretionary caps for those two years.

Under the agreement, \$63 billion in spending authority would be restored while \$85 billion in cuts to mandatory programs and non-tax revenue increases would more than offset that spending, providing \$23 billion in deficit reduction. Discretionary caps would be increased by \$45 billion this year (\$22.4 billion each for defense and nondefense) and \$18 billion of FY 2015.

Major Offsets include:

- \$28 billion by extending sequestration of mandatory spending to FY 2022 and FY 2023
- \$12.6 billion from increasing aviation passenger security fees
- \$12.2 billion by requiring new federal workers to pay more toward their retirement and reducing the retirement COLAs of working age military retirees.

The measure also blocks a scheduled 23.7% cut to Medicare reimbursements for physicians set to occur January 1, and instead provides a 0.5% increase through March. The House was expected to begin debate on the agreement this week.

The House voted 353-0 to approve H.R. 1402, the Veterans Paralympic Act of 2013. This measure extends two annual authorizations until FY 2018 within the Department of Veterans Affairs (VVA). First, the bill authorizes \$2 million to pay a monthly assistance allowance to disabled veterans training or competing for the Paralympics. A second authorization would put in place \$8 million for grants to U.S. Paralympics, Inc. Any appropriated amounts remaining would be available without fiscal year limitation.

Sid Damsgard
16th District Commander

Greetings from the 16th District. There has been a lot of activity in the 16th District since our last report. First I'm sorry to report that Commander Schwabe's team at Post 275 Auxiliary Golf tournament did not win first place. As a consolation his charity did receive a check at conference for \$11,500 to benefit COTA. So far the 16th District has contributed \$20,000 to this worthy cause and we are not done yet. At our District meeting this past week many of the posts have pledged monies to be turned in by convention.

Post 252 held their annual Thanksgiving Dinner for the Veterans at Bay Pines (now known as the C.W. Bill Young Medical Center). They fed over 250 veterans at their post on Thanksgiving Day. Commander Schwabe was there helping make some of the dinner preparations. I personally witnessed him peeling 100lbs of potatoes almost single handedly. It was quite a sight watching him wield a potato peeler. We of the 16th District are very proud of this post and all the hard work they put in for our veterans.

With the holidays right around the corner there are many events that our posts will be involved in this year. There are at least three parades all the way from Safety Harbor to Gulf Port. Post 79 will host their Luminary Ceremony on December 8th, Post 275 will host the 33rd Sun Coast Brotherhood Toy Run December 15th this event supplies toys and gift card to the Pinellas County Foster Children & Parents Association. It is quite a sight-seeing 3000 motorcycles at this event. Ever post is busy preparing for their New Year's celebrations many starting early in the day to avoid amateur night drivers. The 16th District Riders will be having a district wide run on December 7th all chapters are invited. Finally December 14th is Wreaths Across America with several posts laying wreaths at our local cemeteries and Bay Pines.

The 16th District wishes everyone a safe and Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. We look forward to another year of supporting our veterans and children. I personally want to thank all the volunteers that make our efforts so successful. To our Auxiliary and Sons of the American Legion thank for your support we are family. For God and Country

News from the Mighty 5th District
Tom Gora, District Commander

Christmas, and the New Year holidays have now past and we in the 5th District hope all around the Department of Florida had a happy and safe holiday period! Happy New Year to all around the Department of Florida from the 5th District! There were a multitude of outstanding holiday programs conducted by the 19 Posts in the District. Suffice it to say that there were plenty of Thanksgiving and Christmas baskets passed out to the needy by 5th District Posts, plenty of toys collected and distributed to children, and plenty of comfort packages and phone cards sent to our troops overseas, and many fun social events enjoyed by post members.

The District enjoyed its annual Department Commander's visit December 5-8, 2013, and Art and Erna Schwabe certainly saw a lot while visiting the District. Other distinguished guests during the visit were Auxiliary President Gerrie Bailey and Sons of the Legion Detachment Commander Kirk Miller. Visits were made to 13 of our 5th District Posts, where we were greeted enthusiastically by Post members. At our stop at Post 194 we witnessed the Post's "After School Program" for kids in action by listening to an 8 year old girl recite, by memory, the Gettysburg Address for us. We also toured the new Jacksonville V.A. Clinic, toured the Jacksonville National Cemetery, passed out Christmas gifts at the Clyde Lassen Veterans Nursing Home in St. Augustine, and participated in the Pearl Harbor Day ceremony at Mayport Naval Station on board the USS Samuel B. Roberts (FFG 58) with three Pearl Harbor survivors in attendance. A good time was had by all at a dinner hosted by Post 129 on December 7 which also featured a fun skit put on by Post 129 members. The visit concluded with the 5th District meeting on Sunday, December 8 with Commander Schwabe addressing the assembly, and Auxiliary President Gerrie Bailey presented a Charter to Unit 401 from Hilliard, Florida.

The 5th District has formed a committee to study and design an American Legion monument marker at the Jacksonville National Cemetery. Specifications for monuments has been received and we hope to raise funds and make an American Legion monument marker at the cemetery a reality within the next two years. The District is honored to have a visit from National Commander Daniel Dellinger January 8-9, 2014, during which he will experience some of the great hospitality that the 5th District is noted for. Once again, happy New Year to all from the Mighty 5th!

Ken Nichols

11th District Cracker Trail Chairman

I have been asked why the Cracker Trail is so important to the American Legion as well as to the Boy Scouts and my answer is very simple - the Boy Scouts was the 1st Program, chartered by Congress back in 1919 to the Legion.

The Cracker Trail, now approaching it's 3rd year on the weekend of 2/28-3/2/2014 at Tanah-Keeta Scout Reservation, was designed to bring these 2 great organizations closer together since the Boy Scout Program is designed to develop the ideals of physical, mental, and Citizenship skills etc. to our young men, as well as to women in the Venturing and Sea Scouts.

The American Legion which in many cases has evolved in some cases too more social places, but in many areas, the programs such as Americanism (Boy Scouts, Boy's State, Girl's State with the Auxiliary, Oratorical, ROTC and many others), Children & Youth and others still is very strong which makes this relationship so important to promote and grow this program to other areas of the state and beyond which has been a goal.

The program under the guidance of our awesome Program Chairman and Chartered Troop Chairman Pietera Siegler is probably the reason why the Cracker Trail has been growing from 125 Scouts to over 250 last year and projected to grow again this year. She has been encouraging the addition of at least 3 more Legion sponsored Towns to go along with Honor Guard and Americanism-PRESIDENTS this year (flags last year). Pietera has also helped to build a relationship with our local council which supports this event

These 3 more projected Legion towns which we are working on developing, to go along with the normal Boy Scout skills such as pioneering, cooking, first aid, shot gun etc., are 1) Flags, 2) Visit A Post (troops learn about the "programs" that exist in most Posts, while at same time getting the only requirement for Troops to attend, that being signature of Post Commander on the form included in the registration pages of handbook) 3) Visit A Vet, where scouts contact a vet (could check with Post Service Officers to id) and get to know; might become a Troop project

The Cracker Trail information including registration can be found along with the Handbook at our new 11th District website at floridacrackertrail.org, or by contacting Pietera or myself at #'s in handbook.

We look forward to seeing you at this awesome event For God and Country

*The way to get started is to
quit talking and start doing.*

~ Walt Disney ~