



Newsletter

August 2003 Manny Bacon Post 1758

2003 Convention

Danny Oberhauser and myself attended the 2003 convention in Syracuse NY. There were representatives there from every county in the state. A good time was had by all but it was sad to see our department commander Fang Wong leave. He will be missed. Our new department commander is Charles I. Herschlag of Erie county. Good luck Chuck.

WE NEED YOU!

The single most important thing we do as Legionnaires is staying in the American Legion. By not renewing our membership we let down our post, our county and Department but most importantly we let down our fellow veterans who are depending on the Legion to try and make changes for the better in Washington and at VA facilities. Membership has been dwindling nationally. That means our voices in Washington and the VA got a little softer and made it a little easier for them to ignore us.

You may not be an active member, but we all make a difference by BEING a member. That's why every member counts. That's why every Veteran who is eligible should be a member. Let's get 100% for Commander Ryan.

Please get your renewals in as soon as possible. Thanks again to all those who already have. Here are some samples of what our memberships are trying to fight. We also fight for forgotten heroes like Joseph Kaufman whose story I sent last month.

Vice Commander Klock has offered to personally buy any new member there hat for them. Keep it in mind when trying to get new members.
Thanks Neil !!!

BUDGET WARNING 2004 Legislative Alert

Earlier this year, President Bush offered his budget request for VA funding in FY 2004. The American Legion testified that his recommendations were too low to meet the demand for timely access to quality health care by veterans currently enrolled in the VA health care system. In addition to continuing the current prohibition on enrollment of any new Priority Group 8 veterans, (expected to lock out about 525,000 veterans by the end of 2005) the President offered three legislative initiatives that The American Legion adamantly opposes because their collective goal is to drive 1.254 million veterans away from the system:

- * Charging an annual enrollment fee for Priority Group 7 and 8 veterans.
- * Increasing prescription co-payments for nonservice-connected medical conditions from \$7 - \$15 per 30 day supply.
- * Increasing outpatient visit co-payments for nonservice-connected medical conditions from \$15 - \$20 per visit.

When Congress adopted the budget resolution for FY 2004 (the non-binding budget blueprint), it called for a \$1.8 billion increase in the Presidents budget request to bring the VA medical care funding level to nearly \$30 billion.

Two days ago, the House Appropriations Subcommittee on VA, HUD, and Independent Agencies passed (by voice vote) its FY 2004 appropriations. According to the Committee on Appropriations website, the Subcommittee funding VA medical care at \$27.2 billion or approximately the same as requested by the President. In addition, the Subcommittee included the Presidents legislative initiatives for an annual enrollment fee and increased co-payments targeted for Priority Group 7 and 8 veterans.

Now, we need to contact House Members and tell them that VA funding is still short of the budget resolution for FY 2004. The American Legion would urge the House to increase VA medical care funding to \$30 billion and drop the Presidents legislative initiatives to charge an annual enrollment fee and increase co-payments for outpatient visits and prescriptions.

**There are still over 200,000 veterans having their health care rationed by being forced to wait over six months for their health care appointments.

**VA projects that over 1 million additional veterans will be turned away from their

earned health care if this budget is passed.

**The roughly 175,000 military personnel who have served in the war against terror have not begun to apply for VA services in big numbers. But about 50,000 of them will file disability claims in coming years, if the 30% rate of VA utilization after the Gulf War is any guide.

** There's a backlog of 280,000 veterans awaiting a disability rating, which determines how much they should receive in benefits.

** 108,000 veterans are waiting to hear back on appeals of rating decisions.

Community Day September 13

The post will be participating on a larger level this year.

We will be marching in the parade we have 4 or 5 convertibles that have been acquired so that members who are unable to march may ride.

We will be selling 50/50 tickets, calendars and novelty hats. Mrs.

Richards was good enough to make arrangements for a table again this year. A big thanks to her. Commander Ryan has made arrangements for military hats and pins to be sold on consignment to the post. We will be selling these items all day so even if you cant make the parade stop by our table, have a seat and sit awhile. Please bring a chair. As of this writing I don't have a time or assembly area for the parade. Those wishing to participate please try and make the Sept 9th meeting. We will have final info by then or check the web site. You may also feel free to call me at home 845-226-8246 after Sept 9th for info.

The post has already sold 45 calendars.

Pot Of Gold

We Goofed !!! There was no drawing last meeting. Pot stands at \$ 44.00

Welcome Aboard

We have 3 new members. Please welcome Fred Detheridge, William Nichols, and Joseph Varacek. **Thanks for joining!**

National Commander delivers report to congress.

Commander Conley delivered his report to congress on VA health care. Before writing it he visited VA facilities across the country. Here is a sampling. 200,000 veterans waiting 6 months or more for there first appointment. 164,000 veterans turned away from enrolling because they are not poor enough. Places like Dallas- capital improvement takes a back seat to hitting the bottom line, Bay Pines Fla.- list of veterans waiting 6 months or more had been **REDUCED** to 14,000, Cheyenne Wyo- Patient load doubled / staff cut by 12 % .Nationally - Staff shortages are everywhere, Capital improvement money is being used for day to day expense, Puget Sound- because of nursing shortage the intensive care unit can not always function, Ann Arbor Mich.- the Director predicts he will have a 7 million dollar deficit, Hines Ill- 7 job vacancy's for spinal cord specialist that cant be filled because VA cant compete with outside salaries, nationally doctors , nurses and pharmacists don't stay because they know there's more money on the outside, one ward at a VA hospital only had 2 RNs for every 32 patients, Knoxville Iowa -nurses required to do 40 hrs of overtime a month , night shift 1 nurse for 2 wards and 52 patients, Jackson Miss, -needs 20 nurses but its not in the budget, Richmond VA- nursing shortage so bad over 100 beds cant be used, and 2000 vets waiting 6 months or more to see a doctor.

Nationally -Directors are forced to pay more to contract specialized care than it would to put such a specialized surgeon on the payroll because they don't know year to year if its in the budget. Portland Or.- patient backlog hit 10,000. Little Rock - 1000 waiting for an MRI. Common sense tells us that a 7% increase in funds cannot handle a 30% increase in demand.

Call or E-mail our reps today. Tell them we want **MANDATORY VA** funding now! You can E-mail them at our website.

["http://americanlegion1758.tripod.com/index.htm"](http://americanlegion1758.tripod.com/index.htm)