

2024 NATIONAL CONVENTION
AMERICAN LEGION AUXILIARY
103RD NATIONAL CONVENTION



MONDAY, AUGUST 26, 2024

FIRST SESSION

8:32 A.M. - 11:45 A.M.

New Orleans Convention Center

Hall B2

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P R O C E E D I N G S

VOICEOVER: Welcome to the Big Easy.
New Orleans is a one-of-a-kind city, overflowing
with Creole and Cajun cuisine, jazz music, and
brass bands. Here to spice up the American
Legion Auxiliary's 103rd National Convention
while escorting National President Lisa
Williamson to the stage are the Jaywalkers New
Orleans Second Line Band, here.

(Music played)

(Applause)

VOICEOVER: Please welcome your 103rd
National President of the American Legion
Auxiliary, Lisa Williamson.

(Applause)

PRESIDENT WILLIAMSON: Trying to catch
my breath.

(Laughter)

PRESIDENT WILLIAMSON: Good morning,
delegates and guests.

ALL: Good morning.

PRESIDENT WILLIAMSON: I didn't hear
you. Good morning.

ALL: Good morning.

PRESIDENT WILLIAMSON: The 103rd
National Convention of the American Legion
Auxiliary will now come to order.

(Applause)

(Ringing)

PRESIDENT WILLIAMSON: Before we begin
our opening ceremonies, I would like to have
everyone please ensure your electronic devices
have been placed in the silent mode. I thank you
very much.

(Laughter)

Okay. So, I'm going to get you guys
to work out. Will the national president's
pages please post the colors? So please rise.

(Laughter)

(Ringing)

(Pause)

Our national chaplain, Brister Thomas,
will lead us in prayer. Brister?

MS. THOMAS: Bonjour, American Legion
Auxiliary.

ALL: Bonjour.

MS. THOMAS: Yesterday we had our memorial service, and I wanted to share that message with you this morning. Our American Legion National Chaplain, Frank Carr, encouraged us to remain vigilant. There is still a lot of work to be done, and he reminded us about a quote from Isaiah that I think applies to everyone. "Here I am. Send me." And isn't that what we do when we volunteer? We say here I am.

So, if you bow your heads with an all-faith prayer with me. Divine spirit, with hearts of gratitude we gather and say here I am. Send me. Grant us the courage to continue to be those to volunteer, to spread the message, and to take on the work that needs doing. We have so -- made so much progress, and there is so much to be accomplished. Bless us with the strength to act purposefully, to educate wisely, and to inspire with compassion.

As we come together this week, we seek the grace to open our hearts, to learn, to grow, to engage, and to love one another with genuine kindness. Let us support one another knowing our

unity makes us stronger. Here we are. Send us.
With gratitude, we pray. Amen.

ALL: Amen.

PRESIDENT WILLIAMSON: Thank you --
thank you, Brister.

Please remain standing as National
Americanism Chair -- Chairman Sallie Rossman
leads us in the Pledge of Allegiance, followed by
the national anthem being played by our Jaywalker
Second Line Band and the reciting of the Preamble
of the National Constitution of Bylaws by -- by
our chairman, Michelle DeGennaro. Sally, please
lead us in the pledge.

MS. ROSSMAN: Thank you.

(Pledge of Allegiance)

(National Anthem)

(Applause)

PRESIDENT WILLIAMSON: Let's give it up
one more time for the Jaywalker Second Line Band.

(Applause)

MS. DEGENNARO: I'm good. For God and
Country we associate ourselves together for the
following purposes:

To uphold and defend the Constitution
of the United States of America -

ALL: To maintain law and order; to
foster and perpetuate a 100-percent Americanism;
to preserve the memories and incidents of our
associations during all 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 good will
on earth; to safeguard and transmit to posterity
the principles of justice, freedom, and
democracy; to participate in and contribute to
the accomplishments of the aims and purposes of
The American Legion; to consecrate and sanctify
our association by our devotion to mutual
helpfulness.

PRESIDENT WILLIAMSON: Thank you.

Thank you, both.

And before they leave, one more time
for the Jaywalker Second Line Band.

(Applause)

PRESIDENT WILLIAMSON: Wasn't that fun?

Now that I've caught my breath. So, it is my honor this morning to present the 2023-2024 National Officers of the American Legion Auxiliary. National Chaplain Brister Thomas from Hawaii.

(Applause)

PRESIDENT WILLIAMSON: National Historian Donna Thurman from Kentucky.

(Applause)

PRESIDENT WILLIAMSON: Central Division National Vice President Carol T. Robinson from Ohio.

(Applause)

PRESIDENT WILLIAMSON: Eastern Division National Vice President Deb Tiernan from Vermont.

(Applause)

PRESIDENT WILLIAMSON: Northwestern Division Vice President Karen Susag is from Montana.

(Applause)

PRESIDENT WILLIAMSON: Southern Division National Vice President Christine Trahan from Texas.

PRESIDENT WILLIAMSON: And Western
Division National Vice President Jan Cushing from
Arizona.

(Applause)

PRESIDENT WILLIAMSON: And on this side
of the stage, we have our National Secretary,
Kathy Daudistel from Kentucky.

(Applause)

PRESIDENT WILLIAMSON: National
Treasurer Marybeth Revoir from Illinois.

(Applause)

PRESIDENT WILLIAMSON: And none other
than our National Vice President, Trish Ward,
from the Department of Kansas.

(Applause)

PRESIDENT WILLIAMSON: As well, please
welcome our special guest, our national
headquarters Executive Director, Sara Reigel.

(Applause)

PRESIDENT WILLIAMSON: And our
professional registered parliamentary, Chris
Dickey.

PRESIDENT WILLIAMSON: Of course, I

cannot forget my amazing pages, April Sinclair,
chairman.

(Applause)

PRESIDENT WILLIAMSON: Sue Diaz.

(Applause)

PRESIDENT WILLIAMSON: Beverly Eves.

(Applause)

PRESIDENT WILLIAMSON: And Sharon
Riegsecker, all from my great Department of
Alaska.

(Applause)

PRESIDENT WILLIAMSON: And a big thank
you to all the national chairmen who arrived
early to greet our attendees. So good morning.

ALL: Good morning.

PRESIDENT WILLIAMSON: Let's do it
again. Good morning.

ALL: Good morning.

PRESIDENT WILLIAMSON: Welcome to your
103rd National Convention here in beautiful New
Orleans. Yes, please. Sorry. No. Stay
standing.

(Ringing)

(Laughter)

PRESIDENT WILLIAMSON: No, you get it -- no. So sorry. I'm so -- I'm so glad all of you were able to come celebrate with us. Wasn't that a fabulous opening?

(Applause)

PRESIDENT WILLIAMSON: It's been an amazing year for our American Legion Auxiliary. The lives we change through our Be the One mission to the incredible achievements of our grassroots members, we have so much to celebrate. Don't you agree? And of course, in the perfect city to have a great time, and as the locals say, let the good times roll.

(Laughter)

PRESIDENT WILLIAMSON: I'll get it. By the end of the day, I'll get it in French.

(Laughter)

PRESIDENT WILLIAMSON: So, every day we feature -- we will feature a mission moment, something to remind us of our mission and why our hard work is worth celebrating. So, let's kick off our first day of national convention with

something that's near and dear to my heart. Take a look at the screens.

(Video played)

VOICEOVER: The VA reports that every day, 135 people die by suicide. Almost 20 percent of those deaths are veterans, and for each of these deaths, the ripple effect extends to over 130 family members and friends. People are afraid to talk to someone about suicide, because it's been that taboo, a subject for so long that we don't talk about it.

So that's part of Be the One, is to destigmatize and to talk about it, to say that it's okay to not be okay.

VOICEOVER: There are a lot of things that we can do for our veterans. Number 1 is we need to listen.

VOICEOVER: I think that we can listen better. We can ask them questions, but listen to them, listen to their family.

VOICEOVER: All you have to do is be that one set of ears, to let them talk, and be the one to initiate a conversation. You have to be the one to just sit and listen and be there

for them. We've got people that get on the phones and make phone calls, and they talk to them about, how you feeling today? And if the veteran starts talking, you better stay on that phone.

VOICEOVER: Make it open and easy for them to come to speak to you. They just want to be listened to. A lot of times, just sitting down with a cup of coffee and talking to the veteran. Let them vent, let them get it off their chest, and usually a big crisis can be averted.

VOICEOVER: There's research that shows that from the first moment someone thinks about harming themselves, 48 percent will do it within an hour. There's some research that shows 70 percent will do it within 20 minutes, and there's some research that shows that they'll do it within 5 minutes. So what that shows is, if we can build time by talking to them, we can change lives and save lives. But at its core, Be the One is about human connection. Be the One doesn't always look the same for everyone. It's

not always national trainings and statistics. Sometimes it's as simple as making time for someone.

VOICEOVER: To me that's what it means to be -- be the one, is to help that one person or find someone who can help that person. Be the one to maybe even just call somebody that you haven't heard from in a while, that you could be concerned about, or be the one to totally listen to somebody who is trying to share their life with you. They may not have anyone.

VOICEOVER: Be the One means to be the one person that makes a difference in someone's life. Everything they've given to us, make a difference, ask the question, be there for them, and just be the set of ears.

VOICEOVER: Earlier this year, the Department of Ohio invited members to join a roundtable discussion about navigating post-traumatic stress as a family member. Members and veterans joined together to share their experiences, learn from one another, and gain a better understanding of how to help a veteran in

crisis.

This huge undertaking involved expert-led trainings around the country, a collaboration with Columbia University, input from experts in the field of mental health, and the VA's S.A.V.E. Training program. With a mission this important, we had to go big. The more people that are trained, the more people that know what to look for, potentially the more people we serve.

VOICEOVER: These really young girls have got great ideas. They want to make sure people are happy.

VOICEOVER: I learned about service dogs when I was Department of Kentucky president a few years ago. So, I did a lot of research on where dogs come from and how they choose who they match them with. The trainer met with both the dogs and the heroes just to make sure they were a good fit and that everything matched. One of the guys, he wouldn't come out of his house until he got the service dog. His family convinced him to get a service dog, and he was just so excited that he could leave his house again.

VOICEOVER: These veterans are so special, and they need to be told how special they are. We need to tell them how important they are. We don't know what they've gone through.

VOICEOVER: The American Legion Family needs to work together to stop veteran suicide, and the American Legion family is the one organization that can do it. Be the one.

VOICEOVER: I would like everyone to remember we can all be the one to save one. Reach out. It only takes one person to be the one for somebody else.

VOICEOVER: Be the one to save one. We're about changing lives and saving lives.

VOICEOVER: Be there. Love them. Respect them. Be strong for them. And if you ever see them out on the street and you see them wearing those little caps, walk up, shake their hand, and thank them for their service.

(Applause)

(Video ends)

PRESIDENT WILLIAMSON: So please

welcome to the stage the American Legion Chair of
Be the One, Waco Hoover.

(Applause)

MR. HOOVER: Well, this was a -- a heck
of an entrance. So good morning.

ALL: Good morning.

MR. HOOVER: I'm just going to -- I'm
just going to -- I'll prop it up over here. Not
the whole time, no.

Thank -- thank you all so much for
having me. It's a -- it's an incredible
privilege to be here this morning with all of you
because everyone in this room represents an
incredible opportunity to transform the
trajectory of veteran military suicide in this
country. For far too long, military -- our
community -- we haven't placed nearly enough
emphasis on the importance of spouses and family
members. And quite frankly, all of you are the
frontline of defense. We are there in the
household with our family members, the veteran,
the service member, so we -- there's a special,
special opportunity for us to -- to be willing to

think differently about that.

On a personal note, you know, high level, because this isn't about me, this is about Be the One, but all of us have our own personal stories and are impacted by this. You know, I grew up in a -- in a -- in a, you know, a broken home. Father came back from Vietnam, two tours of Vietnam, 82nd Airborne. To left -- to say that it left a -- in indelible imprint on me and my family is an understatement, but my -- my grandmother, aunts, uncles were such inspirational human beings to get me to where I am today. And I'm -- and I'm -- I have been successful because of it. I was a good marine because of it, and I'm an even better husband and father because of that. So, thank -- thank you all.

I want to just talk real quick about a couple of stats. The video was fabulous. You guys covered a lot of this. But just a reminder of -- of why we're here and what we're trying to tackle with Be the One.

Can anybody tell me what these two

numbers represent? Shout it out. Okay, I'm just going to go. Yes. Well, no, in fact. You're close. The number on -- the 7,000 number represents the number of combat deaths since 2001. The other number represents the number of veterans who made it home and have died by suicide over that same period. Every time I look at these numbers, it sinks in, and it's a stark reminder of why we're, why Be the One is incredibly important.

Really simply, you know, our objective -- you can read through this -- but it's to reach more people with a specific directive. Be the one to act, to call, to serve, and be willing to save one another. Collectively as a community, we are more powerful than any piece of technology or any piece of research. Those things are important, but those are tools that help us engage with each other more effectively.

I want to speak just a little briefly on the big pillars of Be the One and everything that -- that we're doing. Destigmatization, the

video touched on that. It was really incredible. But that's how we are changing culture. This has -- is as much of a cultural issue as it is anything else. Transforming the willingness to raise your hand and say, I'm not okay, I need some help. There's a tremendous amount of tension with military service in admitting that.

The next piece is the training, and from what I understand, all of you are getting trained later today with the Columbia Protocol, which we're incredibly, incredibly thrilled that you're taking the time to do that. And I'm going to spend some more time on that. Be the One Lab is all about research, it's all about all of us rolling up our sleeves and working more closely with leading, world-class academic institutions to present the data that can be really powerful in informing our strategy forward.

Events. Events seem like such a rudimentary thing, but that's why we're all here, to spend time with the person to your left and your right, to hug each other, to be reminded why America is such a special place.

Legislative. The grassroots piece that we're leaning to is incredibly important as well. And we're doing some incredible things at the -- at the state and local.

Last but not least, the Be the One symposium, which we hosted earlier, you know, in the -- in the - last week, which is -- which is incredible, world-class speakers. And then we have a whole accelerated program which we can talk more about later.

Before I go on, I just want really to talk about the cornerstone, a huge part of what we're doing and how we're approaching saving lives with Be the One. It's all about upstream solutions.

It's about how do we filter out and prevent as many men and women from getting to point of crisis. And that's having a big focus on all these well-being factors, which, as -- probably not surprising, many of those are incredibly relevant to all of us here in this room today.

It's not just about mental health,

physical health. Those are some of the obvious ones. But spiritual health, financial health, career health, family health, huge, huge important things to focus on, as well as social connections. Social connections quite literally save lives. And all of these things are opportunities for us to have more of a laser focus, and come up with new, creative ways to engage service members and their families and spouses before they even get to the point of crisis.

Destigmatization. It's okay not to be okay. We touched on this. I've only got 15 minutes, so I'll make sure I go through this. I don't want to -- to the -- some of the slides that are really important. But on this, we're establishing a Be the One Task Force with key industry leaders and clinicians, and corporate leaders, and we very much intend to engage all of you in that effort.

The suicide prevention training piece is really, really exciting. The -- there's two things that's really important about this. It's

not just the training, but I want to share something with you. Since we rolled this program out in February, it's been really incredible to see how we're already changing the culture and the stigma around this. Of our 300-plus staffers between DC and Indianapolis, we've had over a dozen individuals come forward and share their stories that they attempted suicide, but they're still here. That's powerful. That's how we make change. That's how we're willing to be there for each other.

If anyone isn't aware of the app, and I'm sure they'll cover this later today when you do the training, but we actually have a -- you can go, Be the One Columbia Protocol, and there's an app on your Android, on your iPhone, that you can download, and it gives you a step-by-step process where you'll be able to help somebody. That you can go through it, and you can do it for yourself, or you can do it for a loved one or a veteran or an active-duty service member.

The research lab, which I touched on a little bit -- but I think the -- the big,

important piece of this, which is important from our standpoint, is data informs our roadmap. So, we need to collectively, you know -- as the Legion community, we have almost 2.6 million members across the country. That's a lot of individuals with their own stories, with their own journeys, where we can be a -- a part of that tip of the spear creating a lot of this data but -- because of our own journeys. Whether that seems as simple as surveys or providing access to the latest therapeutics that can help do that. So, we can be a part of creating the body of knowledge that helps saves countless more lives.

Just some more research partners for you to see. Columbia University, you're going to spend time with later today. But you can see some of these are world-class institutions.

The event strategy. Many of you are, you know, familiar with what we're doing with IndyCar. And I want to place a -- just a special emphasis on this. When I mentioned culture earlier, it's something that we talk about all the time. We're not going to be successful in

this fight if we don't attack it from two areas. There's the research, there's the training, there's the technology. Those things are very important. But the power of media and entertainment and sports and music, to get involved in this -- to fight with this, that -- we -- we need both of those things to do it right. These types of initiatives are critical because it brings this issue to the forefront of American consciousness.

I can't tell you how many people that I spend time with all across the country who have no idea that this epidemic is even taking place. That's why this is incredibly powerful. And I can tell you that we have saved -- we know of, we've saved four lives through this program over the last 18 months. That's what we know about.

(Applause)

MR. HOOVER: If we save one, it's worth it, as -- as we all know.

Legislatively, we -- we touched on, just really quickly, we helped pass a breakthrough therapies funding bill in Indiana

earlier this year, which is really profound.

It's -- some of these things are us just aligning our resources and all of us together to make sure we're there at the right time and the right place to help push some of these critical things through at the state level. The state -- what's happening in the states is arguably just as important, if not more than the federal level. So, there's so many opportunities to get involved locally.

The symposium we touched on. I'll skip through that. Suicide prevention training. So, this number is a little dated since convention, but I want to let you know, as of Wednesday in the general assembly after you be training here and there -- since February, we will have trained almost 10,000 Legion members in our community.

(Applause)

MR. HOOVER: And -- and we're not going to stop there. We're going to get after it. Our goal is to train millions of Americans and our members so that you have the tools, you understand how to have a conversation to get

somebody to the right resources.

Some of the training results, we've had 100 percent increase in feeling knowledgeable how to get someone the right care for suicide risk. Let's -- let's -- I'll admit it. We know it -- this is intimidating conversation. Many of us don't want to have this conversation. It's scary. It's life or death. Who wants to have their hands in that? But we have to be willing to have that conversation. That's what we're working to equip you with.

A couple of other stats. 200 percent increase in understanding the importance of asking specific questions to -- to determine that level of risk. It's not always hospitalization. More often than not, it's just developing a plan with somebody. It can be a financial issue. They're going to be evicted from their home. It could be a relationship issue. They're dealing with divorce or maybe their kids being taken away from them. So, developing a plan is critical.

And then 41 percent increase in the level of comfort with asking about suicide risk

after the training. These things -- this change in sentiment, this comfortability with it -- changing culture. And you can check out some of these. I showed some of the -- the stat there, but, you know, we are engaging in the front lines with people who are not part of our community. But that's what the Legion does. It demonstrates leadership so that other organizations can get involved, and we can provide resources and community and connection.

I'm going to talk -- the last part of this is really talking about legacy and history. All of us know that the Legion is steeped with incredible history and legacy of doing some of the most profound things for the veteran community over the past century. And I'm going to touch on just two of these quickly, Columbia University, American Heart Association, because they're really relevant to how we're approaching this.

Let me ask you a question. In this room, who all has had CPR training? Like, 70, 80 percent of us. What we're doing with the

training is CPR for the brain. Think about it like that. And just -- I'll -- I'll lay in this plan, I promise. CPR, especially if performed immediately, doubles or triples a cardiac arrest victim's chance of survival. If somebody falls down in this room with cardiac arrest and none of us know CPR, the chance of them living while waiting for first responders is very slim. Doubles to triples. That's incredible. That's what we want to do with veteran suicide or someone in crisis.

46 percent of people who experience an out-of-hospital cardiac arrest receive the immediate help that they need before professional care help arrives. Imagine if we could increase our numbers, men and women who are potentially in crisis or having suicidality, to 46 percent. We could save a lot of lives with that. 100,000 to 200,000 lives of adults and children are saved each year if CPR is performed early enough. We can put a huge dent in -- in our suicide numbers, the 6,000-plus veterans that we've been losing every year since 2001.

Really quickly here, this is the mission that we're on. When I say that we are quite literally looking to train millions of Americans, that's what we're set out to do, and that's what we're going to do. And we can't do it alone. We have to work with a lot of different partners, IndyCar, and a whole host of other stakeholders across this country, to make it happen. But in 1972 in Seattle, University of Washington trained, in two years, 100,000 people. If -- in two years, we've trained 100,000 of our members and other Americans, that'll be a good start.

But I -- I think that's kind of unacceptable in this day and age. In 1972 they didn't have social media. They didn't have internet. The speed at which we can transfer information -- they didn't have Zoom classes where we could do these things and train thousands and thousands of people at once. So, I think we can get after that much, much more aggressively.

As I said, this is CPR for the brain.

We use the terms brain health and suicide prevention all the time around Be the One. We stopped saying mental health, and there's a reason for that. We need to eliminate the subjectivity that comes with how we think about mental health.

If I fall down on the stage because I'm really clumsy, and I bang up my knee, you're all going to laugh at me. But then you'll worry about me. But then if I walk into the office on Monday next week and I have a cast on, no one's going to think there's something wrong with me. They'll think I'm really clumsy, and I'll get a lot of jokes, because that's what we do in the military community, poke fun at each other. But it's not nearly the same thing as if you have a mental health issue. What's going to happen? Get my cast on, get MRIs, do surgery, whatever I have to do. We need to treat brain health the same way. If you bang it up, you get treatment, you go in and, again, eliminate the subjectivity. Let's attack it with science. That's a really important part of this.

If not me, who? If not now, when?

We've had almost three decades of consistent, flat, relatively speaking, veteran military suicide. I think we can all agree that it's unacceptable at this point. If it's not us, who is it going to be? If it's not us, who is it going to be? And we have an opportunity now with the Legion, with Be the One, to really serve as the tip of the spear to be the group of people, to be the generation, the men and women, that finally put a stop to this. It's not going to happen overnight. It's not going to be easy. But I know everyone in this room believes that it's worth it. And we have to be willing to do something about it. And we are developing the tools, we're making the tools available to all of us, so that we can go back to our communities, our churches, our schools, our workplace, and we can spread this message.

The good news is you all are getting trained today, which is amazing to hear. So, thank you for that. The last thing that I want to close with is three simple things: learn,

listen, and lead. Very simple. Take the time -- 60 minutes, 30 minutes, whatever you want to put into it -- to learn how to identify the signals, the symptoms of someone who might be in crisis, in trouble. And often times they're not obvious at all. Then take the time just to listen. You don't have to have all the answers. Just listen to someone you care about or someone that you notice. Once you've listened, lead them to whatever resource they need, to develop a plan, to actually get them the care that they need. That's -- the training in and of itself is important, but we all have to be conscious and willing to have these hard conversations.

So, thank you all very much. It's an honor to be here. Be the One.

(Applause)

MR. HOOVER: Thank you.

PRESIDENT WILLIAMSON: Thank you.

MR. HOOVER: I appreciate it. Thanks for having me here.

PRESIDENT WILLIAMSON: Thank you so much for being -- being here today. Why I'll --

Be the One is our family mission. For me, it has been and will continue to be a lifelong passion.

Even though I spent my entire presidential year traveling the country and speaking about veteran and military suicide prevention, I can tell you that we've only scratched the surface of the Be the One mission. This is why you'll see Be the One woven throughout the -- the convention in form of stage presentations, our breakout session later today, and of course some very special guests.

Which reminds me, please welcome to the stage Louisiana Department President Yolanda Robertson.

(Applause)

(Music)

MS. ROBERTSON: Greetings, greetings, greetings from the great State of Louisiana. I'm Yolanda Robertson, the dual member and department president of this amazing organization. It is indeed a pleasure, a very indeed pleasure, to have you all here for the 2024 National Convention, and the Department of Louisiana's

honored to be the host state. Will all the members of Louisiana please stand?

(Applause)

MS. ROBERTSON: Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. You may be seated. About an hour away is our state capital, which is my hometown of Baton Rouge. All things jambalaya and the City of Gonzales, and what we like to call Crawfish City, is a little town called Breaux Bridge. Louisiana is known as sportsman paradise. I tell you we enjoy football on Saturdays and Sundays. We are home to LSU Tigers, Southern Jaguars, and the New Orleans Saints.

(Applause)

MS. ROBERSTON: Ooh. Go Saints.

(Laughter)

MS. ROBERTSON: If you travel a little further north, you might run into a town of Leesville, the United States Army base Fort Polk. Now it's Fort Johnson. It's where I and many other soldiers were stationed and completed thousands of hours of duty. As you pass along

sugarcane fields, crawfish farms, and beautiful green trees, they line our highways.

It's August. It's August. And the heat is on --

(Laughter)

MS. ROBERTSON: -- at an all-time high. I tell you, come sit down, have a good cup of gumbo, some sweet tea, and some pecan pralines. I want to welcome you to the beautiful State of Louisiana. You all enjoy, and I know you're going to have some good food. And we are glad that you are here with us. God bless.

(Applause)

PRESIDENT WILLIAMSON: Thank you, Yolanda. Now let's please welcome our national convention chairman, Monique Batiste.

(Applause)

(Music)

MS. BATISTE: Good morning, good morning, good morning.

ALL: Good morning.

MS. BATISTE: Hey y'all.

ALL: Hey y'all.

MS. BATISTE: Welcome to New Orleans, NOLA. New Orleans, whatever your flavor, we welcome you. Good morning, American Legion Auxiliary. By now, you've had our Creole cooking, you know your way around Bourbon and Canal Street, and you've learned the history of the second line. And if you haven't, you will have the rest of the week to learn.

Madam President asked for all things Mardi Gras, and what better place to bring Mardi Gras to you than New Orleans. King cake, Mardi Gras beads, and all things purple, gold, and green. If there's anything else you need while you are here, please let me or Team Louisiana know. And let's go get them.

I want to introduce our --
(indiscernible), do you want to introduce? Our National Convention Committee, Ms. Linda Petit, she's filing in the mail room. She's the vice president -- the vice chairman of the Convention Corporation. Our chairman of pages --

(Applause)

MS. BATISTE: Oh, Linda's back there.

Our chairman of pages, Renee Hantz, and Vice Chairman Amy Watts.

(Applause)

MS. BATISTE: Our mailroom staff, Barbara Lejeune, Regina Fulmer, and Shemeka Davis --

(Applause)

MS. BATISTE: -- and our driver, who's not here, who's been taking President -- Madam President Lisa, her pages, and her staff around, Tony Matthews. We welcome you to New Orleans.

(Applause)

(Music)

PRESIDENT WILLIAMSON: So national convention delegates will be utilizing our electronic voting systems. Your delegation chairman should have already picked them up before today's session began, and each delegate should have a keypad. Remember that Convention Standing Rule Number 17 states that voting keypads are not to be removed from the assembly hall, and each department's delegation chairman is responsible for all keypads issued to the

department. Departments will be charged \$150 donation to the Spirit of Youth Scholarship Fund for each missing keypad. So be sure to count your keypads before you turn them into the election committee at the end of each day.

We will be using the number 1 key for a yes vote, and a number 2 key for the no vote. If you choose to abstain from voting, simply don't press a key.

(Laughter)

PRESIDENT WILLIAMSON: Now if you press the wrong key on the keypad, wait a moment, then press the correct one. The key -- keypad will register only the last key pressed. Got it?

ALL: Got it.

PRESIDENT WILLIAMSON: So, let's practice. Let's practice with a fun New Orleans trivia question that you guys in New Orleans can't participate. No.

(Laughter)

PRESIDENT WILLIAMSON: What year was the last time we held a national convention here in New Orleans? Press 1 for 1992 and press 2 for

1998. Please vote now.

(Music)

PRESIDENT WILLIAMSON: Okay. We're going to show the results. So, on the screen -- if you selected 1998, B, you are correct.

(Applause)

MS. WILLIAMS: This is actually our sixth national convention in New Orleans, also known as the Big Easy.

All right. Let's do -- what's next on our to-do list is the adoption of reports, which organized the convention. The credentials report will be presented by Credentials Chairman Kathy Dungan from the Department of Mississippi. Kathy?

(Applause)

PRESIDENT WILLIAMSON: You're probably used to this, huh?

MS. DUNGAN. Yes.

Good morning, y'all.

ALL: Good morning.

MS. DUNGAN: Madam National President, the Credentials Committee met on Saturday, August

the 24th, and the following is our report of delegate count: Alabama 11; Alaska 11; Arizona 22; Arkansas 9; California 24; Colorado 12; Connecticut 12; Delaware 11; District of Columbia 8; Florida 45; Georgia 13; Hawaii 9; Idaho 9; Illinois 25; Indiana 41; Iowa 23; Kansas 16; Kentucky 14; Louisiana 11; Maine 12; Maryland 26; Massachusetts 12; Michigan 32; Minnesota 28; Mississippi 11; Missouri 14; Montana 11; Nebraska 21; Nevada 8; New Hampshire 15; New Jersey 15; New Mexico 12; New York 37; North Carolina 14; North Dakota 14; Ohio 40; Oklahoma 10; Oregon 12; Pennsylvania 56; Puerto Rico 8; Rhode Island 9; South Carolina 11; South Dakota 15; Tennessee 11; Texas 22; Utah 9; Vermont 13; Virginia 14; Washington 13; West Virginia 12; Wisconsin 24; Wyoming 10. That makes -- that makes a total of 897.

Madam President -- Madam President, on behalf of the Credentials Committee, I move that the roll of delegates hereby submitted be the official delegate allotment for this convention.

PRESIDENT WILLIAMSON: 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 those in favor, press the number 1 on your voting pad. Those opposed, press 2.

(Music)

PRESIDENT WILLIAMSON: Voting is now closed. And let's see the results. 593 as yes and zero nos. So --

(Applause)

PRESIDENT WILLIAMSON: There is a majority in the -- the affirmative. The motion is carried, and the credentials report for the 2024 National Convention has been adopted. Thank you, Kathy.

Okay. We're cruising right through this. The Rules Chairman Erika Hernandez from the Department of California will present the proposed rules for this convention. Erika.

(Applause)

MS. HERNANDEZ: The rules are printed on page 22 and 23 of the American -- of the

Legion Family Program. Madam National President Lisa, by direction of the Rules Committee, I move the adoption of the National Convention (sic) for the 2024 as printed.

PRESIDENT WILLIAMSON: Thank you. The question is on the adoption of the National Convention Rules for 2024 as printed. Is there any discussion? No? So again, just like before, we will vote. 1 for yea and 2 for nay. So please -- please vote now. Please vote now.

(Music)

PRESIDENT WILLIAMSON: Voting is now closed. And let's see the results. 691 yes, 3 nos.

(Laughter)

PRESIDENT WILLIAMSON: There being a two-thirds in the affirmative, the motion is carried and the rules for the 2024 National Convention have been adopted.

Thank you, Erika.

(Applause)

PRESIDENT WILLIAMSON: Our National Secretary, Kathy Daudistel, will give the

Convention Agenda Report. Kathy.

(Applause)

MS. DAUDISTEL: Please refer to the agenda that was distributed to all delegation secretaries during registration. The delegation secretaries were charged with distributing this agenda to their delegates and alternates. I move the adoption of the agenda as distributed.

PRESIDENT WILLIAMSON: Yeah. I ran away too quick. Is there a second?

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Second.

PRESIDENT WILLIAMSON: The question is on the motion to adopt the agenda as distributed. Is there any discussion? Hearing none, the question is on the motion to adopt the agenda as distributed. All those in favor, press 1 on your keypad. Those opposed, press 2. Please vote now.

(Music)

MS. WILLIAMSON. The voting is now closed. And please show the results. There we go. 683 yes, and 5 no. The affirmative has it, and the convention agenda has been adopted.

By adoption of these reports, the --
sorry -- the 103rd National Convention of the
American Legion Auxiliary is officially organized
for conducting business. Good going gals, guys,
everyone.

(Applause)

PRESIDENT WILLIAMSON: Men and women.
Here to start us off by sharing the incredible
work our juniors -- of our juniors is our
National Junior Activities Chairman Barbara
Washburn. Barbara.

(Applause)

MS. WASHBURN: Good morning, Madam
President. Members and guests, from coast to
coast --

ALL: From coast to coast --

MS. WASHBURN: -- juniors are the most.

ALL: -- juniors are the most.

MS. WASHBURN: From coast to coast --

ALL: From coast to coast --

MS. WASHBURN: -- juniors are the most.

ALL: -- juniors are the most.

MS. WASHBURN: You all did a great job,

and I'm really sorry we can't sing all the verses. And it sounds like many of you know this classic Junior song. Now if you are a current or former Junior member, I would like you to stand and be recognized.

(Applause)

MS. WASHBURN: Thank you so much. You may be seated. As you can see, Juniors play a vital role in our current and future leadership of our organization.

So, if you're wondering about my shirt, this beautiful poppy T-shirt was designed by a Junior member from Wisconsin.

(Cheering)

MS. WASHBURN: And it was chosen as the winner of our contest this year. All Juniors and committee members received this shirt. If you must have one, emblem sales had a few, and they may be able to be ordered. That's the end of that commercial.

(Laughter)

MS. WASHBURN: I would like to start with our five national Junior meetings, which

were a huge success this past year, with 128 Junior members attending. And they enjoyed a fun-filled day of painting kindness rocks, filling socks of love for homeless veterans, interacting with therapy dogs, which was the highlight of the day and of course spending time learning and growing. Juniors received the first ever National Junior Meeting patch, and for some it was their first patch.

I want to personally thank Program Liaison Kristin Hinshaw and Events Manager Jessie Symmes for their work in making sure everything was in the right place at the right time.

(Applause)

MS. WASHBURN: The ALA Patch Program kept our program liaison busy this year with 1,858 patches earned by Junior members and young sons of the American Legion --

(Applause)

MS. WASHBURN: -- an 86 percent increase from last year.

(Applause)

MS. WASHBURN: The introduction of a

purple patch level for our pre-K, age 3 through kindergarten, was also a huge success, with 152 patches earned. The ALA Patch Program has proven to be a great way to engage our American Legion family, as well as teach our youth about our programs. You can see the pride in their eyes when they receive their patches and certificates of completion.

Speaking of ALA programs, the amazing thing about the Junior Activities Program is that it is not just one program. It's a collection of all programs, beginning with Americanism, where our Junior members participated in flag disposal ceremonies, handed out flags at events, learned about flag folding, taught others how to recite the pledge in sign language, and led the national anthem at local and state sport activities and events.

Florida Juniors were focused on several events to raise money for the AEF in response to disasters that occurred in their state, including a polar plunge in Florida.

(Laughter)

MS. WASHBURN: California Juniors worked the Children and Youth Program by hosting a lemonade stand to support military children at Fort Irwin. Other military children were remembered by Junior members performing the military child table ceremony and observing the month of the military child and Purple Up Day for military kids. Juniors worked side by side with Seniors to support the community service program. Juniors gather items for local food banks and help with communicate -- community projects and beautification efforts.

If you're wondering how our Junior members could participate in the Constitution & Bylaws Program --

(Applause)

MS. WASHBURN: -- you should watch these young members in action at a Junior meeting. Sometimes they are more aware of parliamentary procedure than Senior members.

(Laughter)

New Jersey Juniors and young sons were busy supporting the education program by packing

school supplies. Rhode Island juniors collected over \$5,000 for items for Give 10 to Education. Juniors in Texas filled goodie bags for National Education Week. ALA Girls Day was well-represented by many Juniors attending. Hats off to Juniors of Unit 72, Department of Tennessee, who raised money to send seven citizens to Volunteer Girls State. ALA Girls State and Girls Nation also provide our Juniors with the opportunity to learn about our legislative program.

Our Juniors practice leadership skills while attending leadership camps in Iowa, Minnesota, Illinois, New Jersey, Alabama, Georgia, and many other departments. Our youngest mushers worked membership by recruiting new Juniors to help work on projects. Hats off to the Department of North Carolina members who used the Patch Program as a recruitment tool.

National Security was a large part for many of our Juniors this past year, as they visited first responders and assembled care packages and Christmas stockings to send to

active-duty military. Illinois Juniors served a Thanksgiving meal to service members at the Great Lakes Naval Station. There is little doubt that our Juniors embraced the Poppy Program by making poppies, greeting the poppy lady, designing poppy posters, and assisting with poppy distribution. After all, who can resist a poppy offered by a Junior?

Public relations is right up their alley for the Juniors as they excel at social media posts, and several have been showcased in local newspapers and on television. I personally think VA&R is the program where our Juniors can make the biggest impact. They love making cards and tray favors for veterans in veterans' home, visiting with our veterans, and playing cards and bingos (sic) when the opportunities allow.

The partnership with Wreaths Across America is another fantastic way to teach our Juniors about the importance of remembering and honoring those who served. Juniors participated in laying wreaths in many departments.

Juniors sponsored many projects which

benefited our communities, veterans, and military, and I could -- like to share just a few of those now. Jillian Battles, Department of Massachusetts, organized a project entitled Bags for Bravery, focused on gathering items for deploying troops and veterans. She has donated over 800 bags, of which 600 were given to troops deploying in December 2023. She also donated bags to Leeds VA Medical Center, and in 2024 plans to work with the VA and support homeless veterans.

(Applause)

MS. WASHBURN: Juniors of the Department of Virginia put their sewing skills to work by creating fidget towels to -- to be used by veterans and other patients with Alzheimer's and dementia. These towels contain a variety of items to keep minds engaged and hands busy. I had the opportunity to see one of these at the National Junior Meeting in Nashville, and it was truly a work of love.

There are so many amazing projects our Juniors are spearheading, and I wish time allowed

me to share those. Many have been showcased on the five-division Facebook groups, so if you are not a member, please sign up now so you can stay in touch with what our amazing Juniors are doing.

In closing, I would like to share a few thoughts about our Junior members from fellow Nebraskan Beverly Neel entitled Our Future, Our Junior Members.

"Keep inspiring, because you inspire more than you know. Keep encouraging, because you encourage us all. Keep remembering, because you remember what is important. Keep believing, because you are the difference we need. Keep focused on faith, family, friendship, and goals. Keep involved. We are never too old to do something. Keep learning. Make each day one you can learn from. Keep true. Be true to yourself and others will notice who you are. Keep hope. We never know what someone is going through. Most of all, keep sharing your heart, your talents, and yourself."

Madam President, this concludes my platform remarks.

(Applause)

MS. WASHBURN: And now -- thank you.

And now it is my honor to reveal our Junior members of the year, if I may. From the Central Division, Addi Pruitt of Indiana --

(Applause)

MS. WASHBURN: -- receives a \$1,000 scholarship. From the Northwestern Division, Katherine Whitmore of Colorado --

(Applause)

MS. WASHBURN: -- receives a \$1,000 scholarship. Southern Division, Ella Ridgeway of Virginia --

(Applause)

MS. WASHBURN: -- receives a \$1,000 scholarship. The Western Division, Rebeka Avila-Hernandez from California --

(Applause)

MS. WASHBURN: -- receives a \$1,000 scholarship. And now, please join me in welcoming the Eastern Division and overall 2023-2024 National Junior Member of the Year, Sadie Mullen of New Hampshire, a \$5,000 winner.

(Applause)

(Music)

MS. MULLEN: Right. Anyways. Yeah.
That's a lot of people here.

(Laughter)

MS. MULLEN: As you all know, my name
is Sadie Mullen. Let me see here.

MS. WILLIAMSON: You got this.

MS. MULLEN: All right. Okay. I,
today, was just --

PRESIDENT WILLIAMSON: You're just
talking to me. You're just talking to me.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: You got this,
Sadie.

MS. MULLEN: I would just like to --
would just like to say thank you for -- to
everybody for my invitation here. And -- can't
even read it. Also, all of those who supported
me with this very, very long but super successful
year I had. I will forever be grateful to have
been picked as the Junior president, and I think
it was a really good learning experience for me.
I've learned so much that when -- if you really

think about it, you don't really learn that much in school anymore. So --

(Laughter)

(Applause)

PRESIDENT WILLIAMSON: All right. You got them laughing. You're good.

MS. MULLEN: Yeah. I definitely learned how to, you know, love and care for the veterans that need it the most in ways that, if I wasn't in the position I was in, would not have learned in everyday life, I guess you could say. Aye-aye-aye.

(Laughter)

PRESIDENT WILLIAMSON: You could just say thank you.

(Applause)

PRESIDENT WILLIAMSON: You got this. You're good?

MS. MULLEN: A little bit.

(Laughter)

MS. MULLEN: Where was I? I lost my spot, guys. Ah yes, found it. Yeah. I also learned how to give. I don't really know how to

phrase that, but I guess -- I guess just, give in a way that -- you wouldn't think much to give.

(Applause)

PRESIDENT WILLIAMSON: You're good. You're good. Just say thank you. Just say thank you.

MS. MULLEN: Thanks, guys.

(Applause)

("Sadie" chants)

PRESIDENT WILLIAMSON: We're going to give her a hot minute to compose herself. I will let you know I met Sadie when I was in New Hampshire, and what a girl. But I will let you know that she not only made one sizeable contribution to the Spirit of Youth Scholarship fund, that someday she may be able to use, but she made two.

(Applause)

(Laughter)

(Applause)

PRESIDENT WILLIAMSON: Okay. Important question, do you have your phone?

(Laughter)

PRESIDENT WILLIAMSON: You know how that goes. So, thank you very much, Barb. Thank you very much, Sadie. A little overcome, I think.

(Applause)

PRESIDENT WILLIAMSON: But 1,300 Auxiliary members in here, and she looked up and was like, oh my god.

(Laughter)

PRESIDENT WILLIAMSON: Ah, she'll get better.

So, it is my pleasure to induce -- introduce the ALA Girls Nation Chairman, Kelly Elliott, who will share more information about this very impactful, premiere program. Please join me in welcoming her to the stage. Kelly?

(Applause)

(Music)

MS. ELLIOTT: Madam President Lisa, members, and guests, this year ALA Girls State and Girls Nation made some new strides in their programs, using more technology, Zoom staff training, online voting, and social media, just

to name a few. All 50 states were able to hold their Girls State programs this year. This was up from last year, so great job.

(Applause)

MS. ELLIOTT: Special -- several teamed up with their respective American Legion Boys State programs to share speaking -- speakers, having joint projects, and saving on programs. This year we gave the following scholarships at ALA Girls Nation: Girls Nation President Cameron Mirmelli, \$2,000.

(Applause)

MS. ELLIOTT: ALA Girls Nation Vice President Isabella Windmiller, 2,000.

(Applause)

MS. ELLIOTT: ALA Girls Nation, two outstanding senators, Anneliese Barga and Sophia Self each received 2,000. And our Girls Nation outstanding counselor, Tina Majdinasab received \$1,000.

(Applause)

MS. ELLIOTT: At ALA Delaware Girls State, a highlight from their program was a new

tour, the Hagley Museum, part of the DuPont Historical Society. Another highlight of the Delaware program is their ability to use the Legislative Hall daily.

(Applause)

MS. ELLIOTT: The citizens were able to work side by side with their legislators, to sit in their seats, and debate the merits of their bills, and hopefully pass along their success stories.

MS. ELLIOTT: New York Empire -- Empire Girls State --

(Applause)

MS. ELLIOTT: -- held its program over the July 4th Holiday. Citizens learned about Honor Flight and made cards and lap blankets for veterans on the flights. They handed out blue-star banners to citizens who have family members currently serving.

MS. ELLIOTT: Wisconsin --

(Cheers)

MS. ELLIOTT: -- Badger Girls State, holds a talent show during their state fair where

the delegates show off their numerous talents, dancing from -- and -- dance -- from dancing to singing and to comedy. They also held a college and career fair with over 50 colleges and universities attended, along with all branches of the military. They stated that they will continue to do these things in the years to come as they are very popular with their delegates.

ALA Missouri Girls State --

(Cheers)

MS. ELLIOTT: The biggest excitement this year was the premiere of their documentary, *Girls State*, directed by Amanda McBaine and Jesse Moss. After working on the project for three years, it premiered at the Sundance Film Festival in Utah in January. In April, it had its worldwide premiere on Apple+ -- Apple TV+. What a great way to promote ALA Girls State.

(Applause)

MS. ELLIOTT: ALA Girls Nation this year saw some changes too. We were able to visit the Arlington National Cemetery with Boys Nation. We laid a wreath at the Tomb of the Unknown

Soldier together; two Girls Nation senators and two Boys Nation senators laid the wreath.

We were honored to be asked to visit the White House with Boys Nation and the NCAA Division 1, 2, and 3 champions. We toured the White House, and then we were asked to step out to the South Lawn where we were honored to be present for Vice President Kamala Harris to give her first speech -- her first public speech after being endorsed for president of the United States. It was a history-making moment, and to see this woman in this prestigious leadership role was an amazing moment for these young ladies.

(Applause)

MS. ELLIOTT: We had the honor of meeting Lieutenant General Steven Gilland, superintendent of the United States Military Academy, West Point. He inspired these young ladies to continue to inspire -- aspire to be great leaders, a true highlight of our week.

Our service project this year was putting together comfort kits for the Military

and Veteran Caregiver Network with the American Red Cross. These will be distributed to the caregivers. And then Mike Seifer from the Red Cross also talked about -- to the senators about international humanitarian law training.

We had an exciting week, for running -- from running for office, debating bills, visiting the monuments, attending Twilight Tattoo, meeting our state senators on Capitol Hill, and making lifelong memories. ALA Girls State and Girls Nation continue to encourage these young adults to be leaders in their communities. I look forward to seeing what they do in the future.

Madam President, this concludes my platform remarks.

(Applause)

MS. ELLIOTT: And now may I introduce a special guest?

PRESIDENT WILLIAMSON: Please do.

MS. ELLIOTT: Thank you. It is my honor to introduce our 2024 ALA Girls Nation President Cameron Mirmelli from the great State of Arizona.

(Applause)

(Music)

MS. MIRMELLI: Thank you, Ms. Kelly.
Thank you, Ms. Lisa. And thank you all for being here and giving me this opportunity to speak before you today.

About two weeks ago, I sat down to prepare what I wanted to say tonight, and well, let's just say I had little success. For someone who more often than not has too much to say, being left speechless would be considered a miracle in my household.

(Laughter)

MS. MIRMELLI: But lo and behold, there I was. How could I possibly describe how much this organization means to me? Well, I thought I could walk you through what this program literally is. That is, it sends two girls, each from their respective Girls State, to Washington DC to learn more about their national government, to participate in mock senate, to visit Capitol Hill. But while these were remarkable experiences that I'm honored to have been part

of, they didn't quite do this program justice. So, I thought instead of walking you through what happened day by day, I would leave you with a moment, or rather a question that has stuck with me every day since.

To give you some context, each presidential candidate had to go to four rooms for ten minutes where anyone in that room could ask you a question about literally anything. So essentially solving all the world's problems in 20 seconds. Sounds easy enough, right?

(Laughter)

MS. MIRMELLI: And you think you'd get the same questions each time, everything from inflation to global affairs. But I only got one question, all four times. How do we address the polarization in our country? And I responded the same way each time. I said this. What we are doing now, and what we have been doing this entire time, we can debate -- heck, we can disagree, but above all else, we should listen and show each other respect.

(Applause)

MS. MIRMELLI: I mean, I will testify that I learned much more from Girls Nation listening than I did speaking. Someone taught me all about the agricultural system, another about New Jersey slang, and someone even taught me about cow castration --

(Laughter)

MS. MIRMELLI: -- confirming the fact that I will never be a veterinarian one day, but --

(Laughter)

MS. MIRMELLI: But none of this would have happened if both of us didn't open up our hearts and minds to listen to one another. And more often than not, we found that we were much more similar than we originally thought to be. After all, there are millions of brave men and women who have sacrificed their lives for us to have the opportunity to listen to one another, for me to have the opportunity to speak before you today.

So, we must always remember who we are but never forget how we got here. So, I couldn't

go longer without saying thank you to the people who got me to the point where I am today.

(Applause)

MS. MIRMEELLI: To the American Legion, to Arizona Girls State --

(Cheers)

MS. MIRMEELLI: -- to Girls Nation, to the volunteers, to the staff members, to everyone else who makes this organization possible. I know I speak for everyone who has been a part of this program when I say that there is truly nothing else like it. To my beautiful, lovely friends that I met at Girls State and Girls Nation, I think about each one of you every single day, and I can't wait to see the positive contributions you make to our society.

And last but certainly not least, thank you to the family and friends who got me to the point where I am today. I would not have known about this program if it weren't for my mentor, Mr. Dan Twibell (ph.), and certainly would not be here without my parents, especially my mom who is here today. Thank you, mom, for always

encouraging me to be shamelessly myself.

(Applause)

MS. MIRMELLI: But before I thank you all once more, I've been asked to share a little bit about what my future plans are. And while after this program I'm certain that I want to do a future in public policy and learn more about veteran affairs, I'm not exactly sure what that path looks like. This is the first time in my life where I don't really have a definite plan. And before this program, that absolutely terrified me.

But now I have faith. I not only have faith in myself, but I also have faith in our country. I know that if anyone that I met at both Girls State and Girls Nation has a part in our country's future, we are in very, very good hands.

(Applause)

MS. MIRMELLI: So, with that, I leave you with one last remark. Always be kind to each other and always be kind to yourself. Much love, appreciation, and respect for you all. Thank you

for letting me be here tonight, and most importantly, thank you for all you do for our community. Thank you.

(Applause)

PRESIDENT WILLIAMSON: Give it up.
Give it up for Cameron.

(Applause)

PRESIDENT WILLIAMSON: Incredible,
don't you agree?

(Applause)

PRESIDENT WILLIAMSON: Thank you, both Kelly and -- and Cameron. I was blessed to spend the week there at Girls Nation, and it's changed my life. And I think you all agree that we are going to leave this world in good hands, correct?

(Applause)

PRESIDENT WILLIAMSON: So, we are a little bit ahead of time. Yay, right?

(Cheers)

PRESIDENT WILLIAMSON: So why don't we take a 15-minute break? People, stretch your legs, do whatever business you might need to be -- take care of. We'll say 10 after. How's

that? Give you guys a little bit of a stand up, stretch. So, I'll see you back here at 10 after, okay?

(Break from 9:55 a.m. until 10:10 a.m.)

PRESIDENT WILLIAMSON: Everybody start getting to your seats and quiet down. We have one, zero seconds left.

(Music)

MS. WILLIAMSON: Okay. Ladies, gentlemen, Auxiliary members, Legion family members, please take your seats.

So, we realize that some people are a little concerned about the -- the -- sorry, the keypads. I like to call them clickers. The keypads are not working. They are working, but we want to do a test vote just to see how long it's taking to register to our staff in the back. I think that with all the metal in the building, we might need to add a little time to our voting period, okay?

So, what I would like you to do -- all of you who have the keypads, no, we're not going to vote. I want you all to push 1 when I tell

you to so we can time it in case you need to extend that voting period, okay?

So, we're going to push just 1. In one, two, three, press.

(Music)

PRESIDENT WILLIAMSON: Hang tight. Hang tight. It is taking a bit longer than our voting period. So, what we're trying to do is time it so that we can extend that voting period for everyone, so that everyone has a comfort level that their vote is being cast.

(Pause)

PRESIDENT WILLIAMSON: Okay. Okay. We have determined that what we normally give you is 15 seconds for the vote. But because of the building and all the -- and Wi-Fi and -- that it takes the -- to get it there is taking us 45 seconds. So, we're going to have to be patient. We'll extend the voting time next time we vote. But they are getting registered, all right? Everybody feel all right with that?

(Applause)

PRESIDENT WILLIAMSON: Of course not.

MS. STIER: Madam President?

PRESIDENT WILLIAMSON: Tamara, can we do one more time? I think that the concern is the people are not seeing their votes on the LED. They do go through.

One more?

MS. STIER: Madam President? Mic 4?

PRESIDENT WILLIAMSON: Hang -- yes?

MS. STIER: Mary Jo Stier, NEC for South Dakota. Is it supposed to register a one or a two? That was the question.

PRESIDENT WILLIAMSON: We were just -- at that time, we were just pushing the number 1 only --

MS. STIER: Okay.

PRESIDENT WILLIAMSON: -- just to time it for timing.

MS. STIER: Will it register a one -- will it say one on the keypad, is our question?

PRESIDENT WILLIAMSON: Eventually it probably will say 1/A or 2/B.

MS. STIER: Okay. They are not.

PRESIDENT WILLIAMSON: Hang tight.

MS. STIER: Thank you.

PRESIDENT WILLIAMSON: Thank you, Mary
Jo.

33 --

MS. WEISDORFER: Madam President?

PRESIDENT WILLIAMSON: Where are you?

MS. WEISDORFER: Microphone 4.

PRESIDENT WILLIAMSON: Microphone 4.

MS. WEISDORFER: Lina Weisdorfer, Unit

PRESIDENT WILLIAMSON: Yes.

MS. WEISDORFER: -- Department of New
Mexico.

PRESIDENT WILLIAMSON: Yes.

MS. WEISDORFER: Is it supposed to
blink a green light when our vote has registered?
Some of -- we've seen some that register a green
light, and some of us only get red lights.

PRESIDENT WILLIAMSON: The lights don't
matter --

MS. WEISDORFER: Okay.

PRESIDENT WILLIAMSON: -- and the
display does not matter.

MS. WEISDORFER: Okay.

PRESIDENT WILLIAMSON: That's what I

just was told, okay?

They're getting us set up to do one more test vote, okay? So that everybody has a comfort level here.

Ready? Just 1? Just the --

Okay. We're going to do the press 1, but we're going to give everybody 45 seconds. Give the voting period right now. Press 1.

(Music)

(Pause)

PRESIDENT WILLIAMSON: There we go. We had 700 -- someone doesn't know the number 1.

(Laughter)

PRESIDENT WILLIAMSON: And it did -- it took almost a minute. So, we just need to be patient. 700 is very good. I can tell you that mine flashes only red as well. So, I'm not overly concerned about it.

Are we good?

I think everybody's did. Mine did, too. But my light flashed.

So, we're -- we're not -- here's good news. We're not voting any more today.

(Cheers)

PRESIDENT WILLIAMSON: So that's the good news. We'll -- we'll try to get it ironed out before session tomorrow, okay? So, everybody has a comfort level, because I want everybody's vote to -- to count and feel like that it's counted. All right? Technology.

So, let's get on with the rest of our program? How's that? Now we shine a spotlight on the invaluable work of our Children & Youth Committee. Their mission is clear, to collaborate as a Legion family, to safeguard, nurture, and uplift children and youth, especially those from our military and veterans' families.

Please join me in welcoming on stage our National Children & Youth chairman, Coral May Grout. Coral?

(Applause)

PRESIDENT WILLIAMSON: Hey, it matches your outfit?

MS. GROUT: It does, doesn't it?

Good morning, Madam President and delegates.

ALL: Good morning.

MS. GROUT: One of the American Legion Auxiliary's shining programs is Children & Youth. We work collaboratively with The American Legion Family to promote programs that protect, care for, and support children and youth, especially those of military and veterans.

John F. Kennedy, our nation's 35th president, once said, "Children are the world's most valuable resource and its best hope for the future." A huge thank you to all the department chairs and division chairs who helped us reach 100 percent.

(Applause)

MS. GROUT: Reading all the applications for Youth Hero and Good Deed awards sometimes made me cry. These kids are so proud to be honored. Here are just a few of the exemplary deeds accomplished by kids across America. Logan Segui (ph.) was nominated by his grandmother, Tina Haggerty (ph.), and Pennsylvania Unit 357.

(Cheers)

MS. GROUT: He was at lunch and playing

on his Chromebook when his friend came over and tapped him on the shoulder. Logan looked up and saw his friend in distress, covering his mouth with his elbow. Logan asked if he was okay. His friend shook his head no. He then asked if he was choking. His friend shook his head yes. And Logan looked around and jumped up, and in his own words, he said, "My friend isn't dying on my watch."

(Laughter)

MS. GROUT: Logan immediately performed the Heimlich Maneuver, and the food flew out of his friend's mouth. The school called Logan's mom and said he was a hero.

(Applause)

MS. GROUT: Acie Holland III was nominated by Wisconsin Unit 171, was riding a school bus home when he felt the bus suddenly speed up. He also saw the driver's head was down over the steering wheel. He jumped into action. He got to the front of the bus and managed to get the driver's foot off the brake. He got his foot onto the brake and managed to steer the bus to a

stop on the curb. He then called 911 to get help for the driver, who had passed out due to a medical emergency. The driver got assistance, and none of the students on the bus were injured.

(Applause)

MS. GROUT: Kinsley Byrnes, age 6, was nominated by Connecticut Unit 71. She did a lemonade stand for St. Jude Hospital for Children and raised \$1,650.

(Applause)

MS. GROUT: Students at the Lewis Elementary School, which is a KDH2 school located on Fort Irwin Army Base, was nominate -- were nominated by California Unit 180. They participated in Anchored for Life, which includes monthly meetings and help, with planning and implementing school service projects, giving school tours to students who are brand new at Lewis Elementary, and serving as playground monitors, teacher helpers, tutors, or wherever needed. Many units with locations close to military bases such as Fort Irwin, California, reported participating in KDH2 area of children

and youth. They provided activities for children of deployed parents, including parties, tutoring, befriending, and sports.

Auxiliary members participated in Christmas events in every department. This included parties with Santa in attendance, caroling, and making cards to send to our military. Halloween was another holiday where members distributed Halloween safety coloring books and other safety documents. They also assisted with community programs, like trunk-or-treat, to assure the safety of children.

Indianapolis Unit 500 and the department of --

(Cheers)

MS. GROUT: -- and the Department of Rhode Island were some of the participants in these events. Members and Juniors dressed up in costumes for local parties, including candy and other treats of course.

You stepped up to the plate to support children and youth in other ways on days such as Veterans Day, Memorial Day, July 4th, Easter, and

Valentine's Day. We had 155 registrations for our Month of the Military Child webinar.

(Applause)

MS. GROUT: I was joined by Ann Rehbein, National Security chair, and our fantastic liaison Kristin Hinshaw for an hour-long session. Attendees reported that they received lots of useful information. What an amazing month the Month of the Military Child was.

Purple Up Day was a huge success across the country. Can we show the video?

(Video plays)

VOICEOVER: Purple up for military kids.

(Video ends)

(Laughter)

MS. GROUT: Who was that?

The Children & Youth Facebook group was full of photos for days upon days. The national chairs meeting was held during this time, and we stepped up to the plate with clothing, pocketbooks, jewelry, and pets, all in purple.

I am so proud of the Department of Massachusetts. The Senate and the House of Representatives co-approved a proclamation signed by the governor at a ceremony held at the State House several days in advance of April 15th. The bill was co-signed by more than 80 senators and representatives.

(Applause)

MS. GROUT: Each year, you and members who aren't here today support children and youth as well as their families. You shared your experiences and activities on social media and locally. You informed communities who we are, what we do, and the communities can see why it matters. Thank you all for an amazing, memorable year of service to our kids.

Madam President, this concludes my platform remarks. And thank you for this magnificent appointment.

(Applause)

MS. GROUT: One of the most important programs, which is an auxiliary program to the Children & Youth Program, and I had the good

fortune of having as a member of my Children & Youth Committee this year, is the person who represents us on the Child Welfare Foundation. And it's my honor and pleasure to introduce Past National President Linda Newsome, who is the CWF representative for this year. Linda?

(Applause)

(Music)

PRESIDENT WILLIAMSON: Yeah, I know. You can tell.

MS. NEWSOME: I'm going to smack you.

Madam National President, the whole child is, as the name implies, the focus on the child, and it certainly describes our work with The American Legion's Child Welfare Foundation. The American Legion Auxiliary is proud of its participation in and support of The American Legion's foremost philanthropic priority in educating the public about the needs of the children across the nation, the Child Welfare Foundation.

Established in 1954, the Child Welfare Foundation has awarded more than 20 million --

yes, I said million with an M --

(Applause)

MS. NEWSOME: -- in grants to assist America's children. During the 2024 calendar year, 90 grant applications were received for consideration by the Foundation's board. The board's screening committee recommended awarding grants totaling \$684,050.

(Applause)

MS. NEWSOME: Thank you. Among the recipients is the ASXL Rare Research Endowment Foundation of Portland, Maine, which was awarded \$9,050 for its project to produce educational materials for parents and caregivers that will inform and empower them on how best to advocate for their children after receiving their diagnosis.

Boston Community Pediatrics of Boston, Mass, was awarded \$50,000 for its project, BCP Hardship Fund: Providing Pathways to Health Through Basic Needs. The grant will provide assistance to families, ensuring children have access to transportation for healthcare

appointments and the basic needs at home.

The Cleveland County ALWS Baseball,
Inc. of Shelby, North Carolina --

(Applause)

MS. NEWSOME: -- and they were awarded
\$125,000 for their project, and I quote, "2024
American Legion World Series". This grant --
yes. Come on.

(Applause)

MS. NEWSOME: This grant will assist in
providing youth-centric activities during the
long week of The American Legion Baseball World
Series.

Contributions of \$114,317 were received
from The American Legion, which was followed by
Auxiliary contributions totaling \$89,345. Come
on.

(Applause)

MS. NEWSOME: \$ 89,000, I'll repeat.
But the Sons of the American Legion once again
led the way with contributions of \$489,185.

(Applause)

MS. NEWSOME: And that brings them to

an incredible total over \$10 million.

(Applause)

MS. NEWSOME: That's since their first contribution. Way to go, SAL.

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

PRESIDENT WILLIAMSON: Absolutely.

MS. NEWSOME: Thank you. Stacy. Stacy Cope is a member of the American Legion Auxiliary through her grandfather, and her whole family is military related. Since 2019, she has served as the youth welfare program manager in the Legion's Americanism division, where her responsibilities include oversight programs. She is also my go-to person regarding CWF. And as an aside, she put this booklet together, and it is super.

Our next guest is President Robert Morrill, who served in the U.S. Army, where he spent his time in Germany and the U.S. Bob joined The American Legion post in 1970 and served as post commander in 1976. He currently

belongs to Post 942. President Bob is also a member of the Sons of the American Legion. President Morrill served his county and district in many capacities and was New York department commander in 1998. He has a distinguished record --

(Laughter)

MS. NEWSOME: -- on the national level and was elected as president of the National Child Welfare Foundation in 2022. He is here today in that capacity. I am so delighted to have -- had -- National Child Welfare Foundation president, and he came with goodies. So, you all stay tuned.

(Music)

MR. MORRILL: Thank you, Linda.

Madam President Lisa, distinguished guests, members of the Auxiliary, good morning.

ALL: Good morning.

MR. MORRILL: I'm truly delighted to be with you today. Now I have a -- some remarks to give, but Linda gave most of them already.

(Laughter)

MR. MORRILL: My first job was to recognize Linda for all of her good works that she does in representing you and the Child Welfare Foundation, but you've already heard from her. I just want you -- to let you know she does represent you very well.

I'd also like to give a shout-out to the Department of New York. Ladies --

(Cheers)

MR. MORRILL: All right. Love you ladies. You're great. You're great. Do such great work in New York.

Finally, I would like to thank the American Legion Auxiliary for all the hard work you do over -- that you've done over the years, not only those that are in the audience today, but also all the members back home that couldn't make the convention this year. You all are a vital part of the Child Welfare Foundation's success, but even more important, the work that you do for our veterans and their families across this nation is unmatched by any group in this country. Your embracing --

(Applause)

MR. MORRILL: -- and partnership with The American Legion mission, Be the One, to help prevent veteran suicide is very important and very much appreciated. So, thank you, thank you, thank you for all that you do.

At our annual fall meeting in October, the CWF Board of Directors approved \$684,050 in grants for four youth-serving nonprofit organizations across the country. I'm happy to report that at the close of the 2023-2024 CWF program year, which closed on May 31st, 2024, the Foundation received a total of \$723,348 in donations.

(Applause)

MR. MORRILL: Which is -- which is \$44,084 more than the previous year.

(Applause)

MR. MORRILL: And of that, \$89,345 came from the Auxiliary, which is \$27,078 more than the previous year.

(Applause)

MR. MORRILL: Outstanding. Our record

of contributions for the American Legion Auxiliary only go back to 1997, and since then the Auxiliary has contributed a total of \$2,478,804.89.

(Applause)

MR. MORRILL: Outstanding. Give yourselves a hand.

Now that I've praised you, let me remind you that both the Auxiliary and The American Legion, both larger organizations, have -- have a lot of work to do to catch the SAL --

(Laughter)

MR. MORRILL: -- when it comes to donations for the Child Welfare Foundation. This year ending May 31st, the SAL raised a total \$489,185.30. Not only that --

(Applause)

MR. MORRILL: -- but they reached the very important milestone of 10 -- \$10 million in contributions to the CWF. This is an amazing accomplishment.

(Applause)

MR. MORRILL: As we celebrate our accomplish -- accomplishments here today, we know

that a lot of hard work still needs to be done. With the economy the way it is, the need for our work on behalf of children with physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual needs is greater than ever. In October, the CWF Board of Directors will be reviewing 210 grant requests. So, you see there is a great urgency for the services we provide to many youth-oriented organizations, and why we continue to support -- why it is important for you to continually support our efforts.

We -- we on the CWF Board look forward to tomorrow's challenges and what we can do to -- what we can accomplish together to assist the needs of our nation's youth to live better lives.

I ask that you -- I ask that, as you head back home, that you take a minute to think about what you can do to make a bigger impact next year on the Child Welfare Foundation. Consider putting CWF piggy banks on the -- in your post home and on the tables of all your dinner functions for donations; holding a monthly spaghetti dinner, pancake breakfast, or a monthly raffle; and supporting the CWF through its 100%

Banner program. Each dollar contributes -- contributed does not just help a child, it helps a nation of children.

This year marks the 70th anniversary of service to the youth of our nation for the CWF. Please take a moment to stop by our CWF booth in the exhibit hall to learn more about the Foundation, its mission, and how you can help. We have a number of items that we're selling that will help support the foundation: polo shirts in both men's and women's sizes; baseball caps; newly designed pins and coins; the larger piggy banks; SAL aprons and tumblers; and we already sold out of socks. We had a whole bunch of socks, and they're all gone, so -- but these make great -- great Christmas gifts, and I would urge you to stop by and help us out by purchasing some of those items.

Now for the awards. The first award I'd like to present is a U.S. "Udie" Grant award, awarded to the top department nationally based on contributions totaling -- combined total contributions to the American Legion Auxiliary,

SAL, Riders, and Eight & Forty during the contribution year. With \$123,268.37 in donations, the winning department is Arizona.

(Applause)

(Music)

(Applause)

MR. MORRILL: The next award is the Garland D. Murphy, Jr. Award, awarded to the most active department in the nation based on actual contributions received --

(Cheers)

MR. MORRILL: -- during the contribution year. This year, the top department raised \$12,804 for the Child Welfare Foundation. And the winner is the Department of Florida.

(Applause)

(Music)

MR. MORRILL: Our next award is the Excellence Award, awarded to the top department with the highest per-capita contributions average for the contribution year within each organization. This year, the winner had a per-capita average of \$2.72 per member. The winner

is the Department of Kentucky.

(Applause)

(Music)

MR. MORRILL: Close behind Kentucky -- close behind Kentucky was Rhode Island, Oklahoma, Texas, Wyoming, Vermont, Tennessee, Massachusetts, Wisconsin, and Minnesota.

(Applause)

MR. MORRILL: Our next award is the Meritorious Achievement Award, awarded to the top department in each organization experienced the highest increase in per-capita giving in the contribution year. This year, the department raised a per -- raised their per-capita giving by \$2.72. The winner is the Department of Kentucky.

(Applause)

(Music)

MR. MORILL: Madam President, The American Legion Child Welfare Foundation Board of Directors would like to thank you for your steadfast support of the Child Welfare Foundation and for the wonderful year you -- of service you provided. And so, on behalf of the Child Welfare

Foundation Board of Directors, it is my honor to present you with this gold, five-diamond pin recognizing the 2023-2024 program. And thank you very much for your unwavering support of the Foundation.

(Applause)

MR. MORRILL: Diamonds are a girl's best friend, I guess, right?

(Laughter)

MR. MORRILL: Before I leave, I'd like to recognize Stacy Cope, program coordinator for the Child Welfare Foundation, and also many other youth-oriented programs for The American Legion. Stacy, take a bow.

MS. COPE: Thank you.

(Applause)

MR. MORRILL: Madam President and members of the Auxiliary, thank you for inviting me to be with you today. It has been my honor and privilege to attend your convention. I wish you all the best for a successful convention and a memorable year of service to come. God bless you all.

(Applause)

PRESIDENT WILLIAMSON: Thank you, Robert, Stacy, Linda, and Coral. Thank you very much for recognizing those very hard-working departments.

Our accomplishments are fueled by the continued dedication of The American Legion Family. Today I am honored to introduce some of our most esteemed Legion family members. Please give a warm welcome to the president of the 2024 Convention Corporation, my friend Herbie Petit.

(Applause)

(Music)

MR. PETIT: Good morning, everyone.

ALL: Good morning.

MR. PETIT: Madam President Lisa, national officers, delegates, ladies and gentlemen, it takes great pride and pleasure to welcome everyone to New Orleans, Louisiana, for the 105th National Convention. Thank you for being part of this incredible experience.

You are here to take care of some business at hand for the American Legion

Auxiliary, but after your daily responsibilities conclude, please take advantage of what our city has to offer: fantastic food in our restaurants, our culture, our music, our architects, the all-around great atmosphere of the city. Our Convention Corporation volunteers have worked tirelessly to make this convention the best it can be. We try to ensure a good experience for all of you. We hope you had a great time here and a safe one going home.

In closing, I would like to mention Past National Commander Bill Detweiler, 1994-95. Bill passed away in March of 2019. He was the backbone of the Convention Corporation. His valuable insight helped secure the VA hospital here in New Orleans. In the beginning, he was one of the legal advisers for the D-Day Museum. Their hard work helped incorporate what is now known as the World War II Museum. Bill --

(Applause)

MR. PETIT: Thank you. Bill, you may be gone, but you're not forgotten.

Thank you, Madam President.

You enjoy yourselves in New Orleans.

PRESIDENT WILLIAMSON: Thank you, Herbie, for being here with us today.

His belief in collaboration and community shines through his motto, "We can all make things better by working together." Sons of the American Legion National Commander Donald "J.R." Hall, Jr. is eligible through his grandfather, who was a World War II Army veteran. J.R. is a proud member of Glen Burnie Squadron 40 in Maryland --

(Cheers)

PRESIDENT WILLIAMSON: -- and has held numerous leadership roles. With over 20 years of dedicated membership, J.R. was elected as the national commander in 2023, driven by a deep commitment to service and community.

Please join me in extending a warm welcome to our Sons of the American Legion Commander J.R. Hall.

(Applause)

(Music)

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKERS: We love you,

J.R.

MR. HALL: I love you too.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Vermont loves
you too.

MR. HALL: And I love you, and I love
you, and I love you.

(Laughter)

(Cheers)

MR. HALL: I love you all. I'm going
to read the words Lisa has for me. "Hello,
auxiliary members."

(Laughter)

MR. HALL: Just kidding. But she's
like that, you know. First, I want to say thank
you. Thank you, American Legion Auxiliary, for
giving me a great friend, a great president, a
great family member. What a joy it has been to
work with your president even though she's a
bully.

(Laughter)

MR. HALL: I got to say everywhere I've
went this year, I've been welcomed by the
Auxiliary with open arms. Lots of hugs and

kisses, and I enjoyed every one of them. Nobody else bullied me -- bullied me but one.

(Laughter)

MR. HALL: I'm not going to -- I'm not going to rag on that, because you all know who she is.

(Laughter)

MR. HALL: In a little while, we're going to come out here, and we're going to do a little skit that she bullied me and Dan into, but --

(Laughter)

MR. HALL: -- that's the way she is. I want you to know. But I'll tell you this, many years in The American Legion Family, I heard those words. I heard American Legion family. Everybody said it all over. We're The American Legion family. It was put on things. But I truly feel this, and I'm not saying it because it's me. I don't think it's ever been lived like it was this year with our commander, Dan Seehafer, our president, Lisa Williamson, and myself.

(Applause)

MR. HALL: I -- I don't think the three of us will have any problem with changing our covers or changing our sashes and walking away, knowing that we tried our best. We held up the Be the One mission the best we could. We held up American Legion Family, and we did our best for our veterans and our children and youth. Because let me tell you something, this family is whole because of the Auxiliary, because of the Legion, because of the Sons, because of the Riders.

(Applause)

MR. HALL: And I kind of completed my year yesterday, but I can tell you I went home and held my grandfather's necklace. Right? And I said Pawpaw, it was all for you. And I felt very happy within myself knowing that I did everything I could do for my why. For my why.

And I'll hit you with that one more time as I've done everywhere I've gone. And I ask you to take a second and remember your why. Just remember why you're a member of the American Legion Auxiliary. Because somebody in your family raised their right hand and said, "I'll

take care of this." Go do what you need to do. It's our men and women who have fought for our country who have given us the right to be American Legion members, and the right to be a part of this family. God bless our whys. Our whys are why we're here. Thank God we have our family that served our country.

(Applause)

MR. HALL: So, while in the back when we were rehearsing our script that Lisa gave us -
-

(Laughter)

MR. HALL: -- and went over things for later, somebody in the back said, J.R. you should do what you normally do and just go off script and say what you want to say. So, there is a little thing going around in Normandy that said each of us had to say something, right? It might be three olives, it might be almond milk, or the words nut juice.

(Laughter)

MR. HALL: Let me -- let me explain. We were in Hawaii. We were having coffee, and

they said, Commander, to Dan, we don't have any regular creamer. We have almond milk. And I'm like, almond milk? Who uses that? So, the great aid there said, well that's what they use instead of cream and all. And the conversation started, and I said, you know why they call it almond milk, don't you? He said, "why?" I said, "who would buy it if they called it nut juice?"

(Laughter)

MR. HALL: My words. We're nut juice. I'm done. Thank you all.

(Applause)

PRESIDENT WILLIAMSON: I didn't think he'd do it.

(Laughter)

PRESIDENT WILLIAMSON: I surely couldn't do it in his SAL meetings.

(Laughter)

PRESIDENT WILLIAMSON: So -- I'm almost afraid to introduce the next person.

(Laughter)

PRESIDENT WILLIAMSON: Elected during

the 104th National Convention in Charlotte, North Carolina, Commander Seehafer brings a deeply personal commitment to The American Legion's mission of serving veterans and their families. His leadership is guided by the Legion mission, Be the One, aiming to prevent veteran suicide. An ordained minister from Wisconsin, Commander Seehafer earned his eligibility through his service in the U.S. Navy and Navy Reserve as a military chaplain. He is a dedicated member of American Legion Post 157 in Horicon, Wisconsin, where his service means various leadership roles, including national chaplain and commander for the Department of Wisconsin.

It is my privilege to invite to the stage a leader whose personal commitment embodies the spirit of The American Legion and The American Legion Family. Please join in me in welcoming our Legion National Commander, Daniel J. Seehafer.

(Applause)

MR. SEEHAFER: All right. I knew you were fired up.

(Laughter)

MR. SEEHAFER: This morning I was like, man, what's going on in the Auxiliary section over there? I was over at that side trying to prep for the pre-NEC, and you -- you were loud. That's good.

(Cheers)

MR. SEEHAFER: Now I'll tell you what. I'm kind of a, you know -- I haven't been there, but I'm going to go back in about a couple of days in a wake-up, back to the pastorhood and pulpit. And I'm thinking about some material that I've collected, and I'll tell you this, there ain't no way in God's green earth I'm going to be talking about nut juice.

(Laughter)

MR. SEEHAFER: I think I got a louder applause there, Brother J.R.

(Laughter)

MR. SEEHAFER: I'm going to tell you what. I'm going to bring you up, and I'm going to get us really serious too. And really what we're all about, right? I think we were so

strong -- and I say we, the whole family -- because we were on the same page. For once in a long time, we had a mission -- a mission. Not some catchy phrase or some hyped up slogan or even a marketing tool. We need to get our name out, of course, and what we do, but we truly had a mission. And people wherever I go can relate when I talk about purpose and relevance. Why in the world are you here in the first place? To give your time, your talent, and then also your treasure? We know volunteering in this family, you don't get rich, right?

(Laughter)

MR. SEEHAFER: Now I may be rich in the heart, because I'll tell you what -- and maybe sometimes you'll never get it as well, but that tap on the shoulder. And you turn around and somebody will say, you know something? As they said to me, Commander, do you have a minute? And we all know it's not more -- I mean it's not just a minute, right?

(Laughter)

MR. SEEHAVER: But do you have a

minute? And I say absolutely. And then they open up. And they say, you know something -- and it even could be you, even personally. Or they're talking about the family and saying, you know something, The American Legion changed my life. Or in some cases, The American Legion saved my life.

I talked about it in front of Congress. If you haven't seen that, you can go on website, look it up, my testimonial. And I didn't just do it for -- for emotional cause. Really telling the story. When somebody can go that low in life, to actually take a weapon, place it in their mouth, and pull the trigger. I want that message to know that no one needs to do that. I'm not saying I know how anyone feels. I'm just saying you don't need to do that. We want you to be a part of us. We want you along with us to change other lives and to save other lives. We want you to have purpose and relevance even in your life.

I'm going to be looking at -- and I know Lisa has it, and J.R., and the whole family

of our riders -- we talk about what we truly do. Again, from Girls State and Nation to all the things that you do to raise funds, it changes people's lives, doesn't it? It saves people's lives.

So, I want you to never, ever forget, because I know you being here, you're leaders. In fact, maybe you even heard me talk about it -- servant leaders. I want you to truly be a servant leader. I want us, this family, to change the face, not only of our organization, but the world. We can do it. We're 3 million and rising. Just in our little part of the pie. I always joke around with this as well. We're double that of Walmart.

(Laughter)

MR. SEEHAFER: And we're, I think, now under 2,000 -- I know Mike, my statistician (sic) there, he knows the numbers, all right. Mike Rohan, the very first Auxiliary male member.

(Applause)

MR. SEEHAFER: I put that in my speech

too. He can owe me 100 bucks later, all right?

(Laughter)

MR. SEEHAFER: But as we joke around a little bit, we're around that 2,000 -- even lower than 2,000 of McDonalds. So, we know about a -- a good sale and a Big Mac, right?

(Laughter)

MR. SEEHAFER: I want us -- I want the world to know what The American Legion is all about. And when somebody mentions us, we're going to say, we're not just an organization. We're a family. A family -- yes.

(Applause)

MR. SEEHAFER: We are a family that changes lives and saves lives. I want you to take that message, place it right here. But then as you depart from here, go to your homes, go to your units, go to your states, go to your departments, pass that message on. And let nothing stop you. You never know when somebody could walk across your path, and you can mean the difference between life and death. And that is just not some rhetoric. That is truth.

So, from my heart to yours, as I've been finishing in saying, keep up the great work, the life-changing work, the life-saving work. And with that, love you and God bless.

(Applause)

PRESIDENT WILLIAMSON: Yeah, give it up for Dan.

(Applause)

PRESIDENT WILLIAMSON: So, Commander Dan, should we do our special thing while you're out here?

MR. SEEHAFER: You mean the thing with the three olives or the thing with the almond milk?

PRESIDENT WILLIAMSON: Neither.

MR. SEEHAFER: Oh, you mean the thing with the goat.

PRESIDENT WILLIAMSON: Okay. Now I have to explain to the audience what we're -- we're referring to. I think you pretty much got it. We have spent an incredible amount of time together with our spouses, with our aid, and his spouse as well, and we have talked about

everything. We've talked about the mission. We've talked about Be the One. We've talked about how many olives go into the perfect martini, two or three. We've talked about almond milk, oat milk, and yes, nut juice.

(Laughter)

PRESIDENT WILLIAMSON: So obviously someone is confused. So, let's not talk about olives, almond milk, or goats. Let's get J.R. back out here.

MR. SEEHAFER: Absolutely. Let's get J.R. back out here. Hey, J.R.

(Laughter)

MR. SEEHAFER: Are you still around, brother? My goodness, I feel like I'm on a Golden Globe here.

(Laughter)

MR. SEEHAFER: J.R., my friend.

PRESIDENT WILLIAMSON: Where'd he go?

MR. SEEHAFER: Oh, he's coming.

MR. HALL: I'm here.

MR. SEEHAFER: Come here, J.R.

MR. HALL: Are you going to do the goat

thing?

PRESIDENT WILLIAMSON: Is he going to -- are they going to do the goat thing. Man, as many of you know, the National President's Award of Excellence celebrates five exceptional units and one amazing department. This year, we added a little extra celebration, and it's called the Unity Award. Dan, J.R., and myself looked through all six winners, and we chose one to win this extra honor, which recognizes their Legion family efforts towards our Be the One mission.

So, while we have the whole family here represented on stage, let's present this winning unit with their National President's Award for Excellence and their Legion Family Unity Award.

MR. HALL: My turn?

MR. SEEHAFFER: Yes.

(Laughter)

MR. SEEHAFFER: Right here.

MR. HALL: Right here?

MR. SEEHAFFER: Yeah.

(Laughter)

MR. HALL: The American Legion passed Resolution 13 establishing the first day of each month as Be the One Day. This unit has embraced this initiative wholeheartedly. On the first of each month, this unit publicly -- public relations' chair updates their social media profile picture to Be the One logo, reinforcing their dedication.

Did I do good?

(Laughter)

MR. SEEHAFER: My turn now, J.R.

And their commitment does not stop there. This ALA unit felt so strongly about the Be the One message that they ordered Be the One T-shirts from Emblem Sales so that their entire American Legion family can promote the mission.

Your turn.

PRESIDENT WILLIAMSON: As a -- as the National President Award for Excellent winners, this unit made a significant impact by providing brand new backpacks and school supplies to the children and military -- military veterans' families. Their dedication this year supported 9

families and 23 children through this vital initiative.

In addition, their generous donations -- they also contributed countless hours and raised funds for their local high school teachers and extracurricular activities. Unit members continue to support their military community by raising money for the CWF, Child Welfare Fund, and volunteering at the Post Food Pantry for military and veterans.

Today, we recognize their outstanding commitment to the Legion family, their passion for community involvement, and their dedication to the Be the One mission.

And now the moment we've all been waiting for. This year's first recipient of the National President's Award for Excellence and additional Legion Family Unity Award goes to --

IN UNISON: Garner Unit 91 in Beebe, Arkansas.

(Applause)

(Music)

MR. HALL: Can we leave?

MS. WILLIAMSON. Thank you. Yes.

Please begone with you.

(Laughter)

(Applause)

MS. WILLIAMSON. One more hand for both of my commanders, Dan and J.R. They are incredible and my family forever.

Carol, do you want to say -- you can say something. I'll hold them.

MS. WESTERGREN: Good morning.

ALL: Good morning.

MS. WESTERGREN: What an honor to be here. As a lot of you know, we tag ourselves as the biggest little post in Arkansas. I was trying to add up in my head -- we have a little over 100 members for the whole family together, and so that just shows, Auxiliary members, it doesn't matter the size of your post. It matters the size of your heart.

(Applause)

MS. WESTERGREN: And together as a family, you can do anything to be the one for our veterans, active duties, their families, and our

communities. Thank you so much. Thank you,
President Lisa. What a shock and honor.

PRESIDENT WILLIAMSON: Congratulations.

So, from our grassroots members to our
national leaders, we operated as one united
family dedicated to advancing the Americanism
program. Please welcome National Americanism
Committee Chairman Sallie Rossman to share her
report.

(Applause)

(Music)

MS. ROSSMAN: Madam President. Ronald
Reagan once said, "When we honor our flag, we honor
what west and for as a nation: freedom, equality,
justice, and hope." The American Legion also
believes that promoting and encouraging patriotism
allows all citizens, regardless of age, to value
their rights as a citizen. Members promoted
Americanism by educating citizens of all ages on
what the flag stands for, how to care for it, and
its history, building the framework of good
citizenship through interacting with schools,
libraries, scouting presentations, naturalization
ceremonies, and Legion family events.

Through these presentations, communities identify the Auxiliary as a resource for assisting and promoting patriotism and Americanism.

Our Country's flag flew across the country during patriotic holidays, parades, ceremonies, and in national cemeteries. Members, students, and community members placed thousands of flags on the Avenue of Flags, fields of honor, veterans' resting places, and main streets to show their Americanism. As young citizens assisted in placing flags, they were taught reverence and respect for the flag.

Units placed flags in school classrooms to promote patriotism and allow students, including preschoolers, to learn the Pledge of Allegiance. Educating children about the history of our country is vital to its civic health. The Auxiliary received a grant from The American Legion Child Welfare Foundation allowing all departments to obtain a star-spangled kids kit to assist in educating youth on U.S. history, Americanism, and the United States Constitution. Unit members visited classrooms, providing students with educational materials from the kit,

along with various patriotic items, to increase interest in learning about Americanism.

The Department of Florida, Hugh Gilbert Strickland Unit 138 --

(Cheering)

MS. ROSSMAN: -- unable to get Uncle Sam, had Aunt Tam visit students, sharing U.S. history and Constitution facts through a Jeopardy-style game.

Department of North Carolina's Benson Unit 109 --

(Applause)

MS. ROSSMAN: -- members created a star-spangled kit plan of action with a Continental Congress skit incorporating the students as the 13 colonial delegates and the 6 founding fathers as the star-spangled stars.

The Americanism essay contest allowed students to develop their thoughts and knowledge of what being an American signifies. Writing the essays enabled the students to explore the various facets of Americanism and patriotism, as they examined the rights and the freedoms given

to the citizens through the U.S. Constitution.

The National Presidents Americanism Contest's 2024 topic was, What Does Freedom Mean to Me? Auxiliary members networked within their communities and utilized their connections with school boards, businesses, and organizations, which provided vital avenues for disseminating awareness of the Americanism essay contest.

The Auxiliary collaborated with the Americanism programs of the Legion through volunteering and monetary donations. Members supported the oratorical contest, The American Legion baseball, and juniors sports shooting program, judge -- serving as judges, timekeepers, escort coaches, and scorekeepers.

Members continued to support the flag amendment, which would return to the American people the right to protect their flag. The Auxiliary contacted representatives and recruited others to support the flag amendment by explaining what it is and why it is essential.

Auxiliary members encouraged citizens to participate in the right to vote, which

ensured that the voices of all citizens are heard. Members made citizens aware of upcoming elections by placing get out and vote signs and providing transportation to the polls.

The American Legion also really believes in creating a nation of citizens inspired to protect our liberties for future generations. Our organization is committed to promoting patriotism and responsible citizenship. Investing in America is investing in our country's future.

Madam President, that concludes my platform remarks.

(Applause)

PRESIDENT WILLIAMSON: Thank you, Sallie.

Our education program is dedicated to advocating for quality education for all, with a special focus on our military children. Please join me in welcoming to the stage our National Education Committee chairman, Starr Purnell.

(Applause)

(Music)

MS. PURNELL: Good morning.

ALL: Good morning.

MS. PURNELL: Malcolm X once said, "Education is the passport to the future, for tomorrow belongs to those who prepare for it today." Preparing today for a brighter tomorrow was the main objective of the departments and units throughout this nation.

In today's society, many children are being sent to school without the supplies they need. Beebe Unit 91 supported Give 10 to Education by donating items to keep the classrooms germ-free, by providing tissues, hand sanitizer, and Lysol.

Vermont, Bennington Unit 13 --

(Cheers)

MS. PURNELL: -- donated baskets filled with school supplies.

Wisconsin units incorporated Give 10 to Education, where McFarland Unit 534 collected items for Stuff the Bus, and Spooner Unit 12 sponsored a community school supply drive.

Great-grandparents from Alameda Unit 69

in New Mexico homeschooled their own great-grandsons. How cool is that? Several departments supported homeschooled students and provided Give 10 to Education to them.

Teacher Appreciation Week and American Education Week are times to recognize and thank educators and staff for their dedication and commitment to caring for our students.

Units provided breakfast and sent thank-you cards, chocolates, and other treats to not just our teachers, but to support staff, administrators, cafeteria workers, and crossing guards, who all are part of the village.

Not only are the teachers appreciated, but Alderton-Dawson Unit 60 in West Virginia --

(Cheering)

MS. PURNELL: -- recognized bus drivers by providing pastries for them as a thank you for safely transporting the students.

Units encouraged educators to participate in Red Friday and Purple Up Day during April for the Month of the Military Child. Unit 176 in Springfield, Virginia, celebrated by

hosting a panel discussion with military children sharing their military experience as a military child. Several units performed the Military Child Table Ceremony.

Veterans and community schools were a big deal to our students. This is a time when our veterans and even some active-duty military have the opportunity to visit our schools and allow students to ask them questions. Some read books and demonstrated the folding of the flag, and explaining what each fold meant. Students made thank-you cards for your service, cards for those attending. Veterans enjoyed sharing their military experience with the students.

Units interested in our children were shown all year long. South Carolina, Congaree Unit 90, had a Tools for School event where free eye examinations and free school immunizations were given.

Greenville Unit 3 in South Carolina adopted a local school and donated indoor playground equipment for children with disabilities.

(Applause)

MS. PURNELL: Scholarships were promoted in every American Legion Auxiliary division. Pecos Unit 70 collaborated with school counselors in getting information out on Auxiliary scholarships and awarded three local scholarships to graduating seniors. 26 of Maryland's units awarded 69-unit scholarships totaling \$53,113 --

(Applause)

MS. PURNELL: -- and \$4,000 in department scholarships. National scholarship applications superseded last year's. 67 national scholarships totaling \$164,500 was awarded this year.

(Applause)

MS. PURNELL: Let us continue to educate our community and participate in education initiatives by sharing resources and volunteering. Knowledge is power, and if each one reaches one, we will continue with the service- not-self motto.

Madam President Lisa, thank you for the

committee appointees and for giving me this great opportunity and this appointment to serve as National Education chair. It has truly been an honor to serve. This concludes my platform remarks.

(Applause)

PRESIDENT WILLIAMSON: Thank you, Starr.

So, I -- I do want to -- I'm going to go off script a tad bit. We know that the -- this year's -- my fundraising efforts were for the Spirit of Youth Scholarship Fund, where we're now giving one scholarship to every department this year.

(Applause)

PRESIDENT WILLIAMSON: And over the weekend we received a \$20,000 donation to reach my \$70,000 goal.

(Applause)

PRESIDENT WILLIAMSON: It's right back there. We'll end today's session with our Public Spirit Award presentation, but before we bring out our special guest, let's have National

Secretary Kathy Daudistel share any announcements. Kathy?

(Music)

MS. DAUDISTEL: All right. You ready for announcements? Don't forget to visit the Wall of Heroes, conveniently open before and after each session. So don't delay, donate today.

(Laughter)

MS. DAUDISTEL: Checks, cash, VISA, or Mastercard will be happily accepted.

For the afternoon breakout sessions, Parliamentary Procedures with Chris Dickey is completely full. The Be the One breakout still has some openings, and if you'd like to register for that, you should have received a text on your phone, or you can stop by the national headquarters office.

Following this session, would all incoming department presidents gather in front of the stage for a quick chat with National Vice President Trish.

And buy a chance to win a PUFL at

today's ALA luncheon. Doors open at 12:15, Hall B, that way, and the luncheon is sold out. However, secretaries, if you're reading your department secretary email that we've been communicating through all year, check your emails, and you may find some options.

That concludes today's announcements.

(Applause)

PRESIDENT WILLIAMSON: Okay. During last year's national convention, we announced the American Legion Auxiliary's official support of Wreaths Across America, and today we get to celebrate this amazing organization as the recipient of the Public Spirit Award.

(Applause)

PRESIDENT WILLIAMSON: The Public Spirit Award is more than just the recognition. It's a tribute to organizations who go above and beyond in their efforts to honor and uplift those who have served our country. Let's watch to learn more about the ALA's support of Wreaths Across America.

Play video.

(Video plays)

VOICEOVER: Every December, volunteers across the nation come together to honor our fallen heroes by placing wreaths on their graves. This is the mission of Wreaths Across America. Founded in 2007, Wreaths Across America is a nonprofit organization dedicated to remembering, honoring, and teaching. Their mission is simple yet profound: remember the fallen, honor those who serve, and teach the next generation the value of freedom.

Each year on National Wreaths Across America Day, thousands of volunteers lay wreaths at the gravesites of our veterans in over 4,000 locations across the United States and overseas. This powerful act of remembrance ensures that we never forget the sacrifices made for our freedom.

The American Legion Auxiliary shares a similar mission. Established in 1919, the ALA is dedicated to supporting The American Legion and honoring the sacrifice of those who serve by enhancing the lives of veterans, military, and their families.

Both organizations are deeply rooted in the values of patriotism and service, and they often collaborate to achieve their shared goals. Members of the ALA frequently participate in Wreaths Across America events, working side by side with volunteers to honor our nation's heroes.

VOICEOVER: Placing a wreath on a veteran's grave is a humbling experience. It's a small act of gratitude for their immense sacrifice.

VOICEOVER: Being part of both the American Legion Auxiliary and Wreaths Across America has given me a greater sense of purpose and community.

VOICEOVER: By working together, Wreaths Across America and the American Legion Auxiliary ensure that the legacies of our veterans live on, inspiring future generations to appreciate the freedoms we enjoy.

Join us in our mission. Remember, honor, teach.

(Video ends)

(Applause)

PRESIDENT WILLIAMSON: Here to accept the award on behalf of Wreaths Across America is Jeff Pierce. He's the director of broadcasting and media partnership. Jeff.

(Applause)

MR. PIERCE: I speak now?

PRESIDENT WILLIAMSON: Yes.

MR. PIERCE: Oh, that's fantastic. Thank you to President Williamson for her never-ending support of Wreaths Across America and her help. And also, I wanted to mention - because it's part of my job -- that Wreaths Across America Radio is here broadcasting, and we want to share your ALA story. So, we're right outside the door here. Wreaths Across America Radio is available on iHeartRadio, it's available on TuneIn, it's available on Odyssey. We want to hear your why for participating in the American Legion Auxiliary. So come see us at our booth.

Now it is my absolute honor to introduce, from the great State of Maine, our

executive director, Karen Worcester via Zoom.

Please pray with me that this works.

(Applause)

MS. WORCESTER: Hi, everybody. I hope you can hear me. Sorry I couldn't be there, but life happens. I especially wanted to be there to thank the ALA for over 100 years of championing the veterans' causes, but most importantly -- and I had -- have had a lot of time to talk to Lisa about this -- is our -- both of us -- our interest in teaching the next generation just how important it is to love this country and to have them understand that the torch will be passed to them and how it's a responsibility that we have to teach our children to keep this country free.

I should be calling her Madam President, I think, now, because Lisa, one of the things that I had hoped to surprise you with is that, inspired by you -- I'm a little emotional -- watching you a week on the convoy as you interacted with veterans and families and children and gold star families, you were a real inspiration to me, as your whole organization has

been to Wreaths Across America. And I now am an ALA member of Post 9 in Machias, Maine, and I'm very proud to be that.

(Applause)

MS. WORCESTER: So, thank you, Lisa, for turning me onto that. I hope to get more involved.

I just want to quickly say that Wreaths Across America -- I hope you'll get a chance to look at our website. We do so much more than place wreaths. We're the real -- we really place a lot of importance on teaching. We have a great teaching curriculum. We have our radio, our MEE, our mobile education exhibit, and we do have the year-round mission.

So, I'm very humbled to accept this award, but I accept it on behalf of over 3 million volunteers. As of this morning, we have 4,562 locations. That's up 452 new for this year. And each one of those locations is supported by, is coordinated by a volunteer. And those volunteers share the same love of country, and in many cases are Legion and ALA members.

And they share that same love of this country,
the same need and feeling for us to teach our
children to love the country as all of you do.

And I just admire your programs
you've -- we, as a young organization, have
learned so much from watching you and for many
years.

And I just want to say we just did our
Legion baseball. We didn't win, but it was a
wonderful thing, a wonderful organization, that
the kids up here in Maine really enjoyed. So,
thank you, thank you, thank you. I accept this
on behalf of all those volunteers.

And I just -- I always leave with a
quote. And I've used this one before. Maybe you
heard it when I was with you last year. "What
you leave -- what you leave behind is not what is
engraved in stone or in stone monuments, but what
is woven into the life of others." And as an
organization, you've woven into the lives of many
and will continue to do so. And as an
organization, we will emulate that and try to
carry on, because the kids are our future, and I

think that's the most important thing. And thank you for helping us continue to teach the children.

(Applause)

PRESIDENT WILLIAMSON: Oh, thank God for technology, huh, Karen?

MS. WORCESTER: I liked to have given you a hug, but --

PRESIDENT WILLIAMSON: We'll -- we'll give a hug soon. So, I thank you very much. I -- I -- I said it earlier today that going to Girls Nation was life changing but being the -- having the opportunity last year as national vice president to be on the caravan -- to go on a caravan -- the whole caravan this year with my husband. I know that both of us are going to be very involved with Wreath once this year is completed. And I just -- our -- our missions parallel one another, which the teach aspect, with remembering our veterans, serving their families. And I couldn't think of a better organization to receive this award. So, hang on a sec.

The Public Spirit Award is presented to Wreaths Across America. Karen Worcester, executive director, with Jeff Pierce accepting in her -- her place. In appreciation for your contributions, benefitting our military and veteran communities for 2024.

(Applause)

MR. PIERCE: It is absolutely our honor to accept this award and to -- thank you, by the way, to all of the units that have signed up to participate as a \$5 sponsorship group. If you don't know what that is, again, Wreaths Across America Radio is parked right outside --

(Laughter)

MR. PIERCE: -- and we're happy to answer your questions. Thank you all for your support of our organization. Especially you, Lisa.

(Applause)

PRESIDENT WILLIAMSON: Don't you agree he has a great radio voice?

(Laughter)

PRESIDENT WILLIAMSON: So, I think that

concludes our day so -- for today. So, thank you everyone. And for those of you that are going to the luncheon --

Sure -- so a little sad note. I don't know if I can do this. So, there was a minor -- no, it was major -- major mishap over the weekend with some of the Riders returning home after the Legacy Run. There were three that were hurt from Arkansas. And just today -- sorry about -- Alabama. The other A one. Just 10 minutes ago, the Rider that was on life support did pass away. Two others are okay. They've been released from the hospital as far as we know. The other Rider, out of surgery, has a brain bleed, but they feel it will heal, and a broken leg, and his ankle has been repaired.

So, if you would please keep our Riders in your prayers. Sorry to end on that sad note.

But let's go to the luncheon.

Oh, there's a big check behind me?

(Laughter)

PRESIDENT WILLIAMSON: One more thing.

Come back up here, Jeff.

(Applause)

PRESIDENT WILLIAMSON: As the recipient, they get a little more than just that crystal. They also get this check.

(Applause)

PRESIDENT WILLIAMSON: Good?

MR. PIERCE: Thank you again. It's all yours.

PRESIDENT WILLIAMSON: Okay.

Is there anything else, Kathy?

(Applause)

PRESIDENT WILLIAMSON: Oh, my goodness. Okay. Now we're going to end on a good note. So, thank you, everyone. We'll see you tomorrow for the second session, 8:30 a.m. And don't forget the luncheon. And until then, we are adjourned.

(Applause)

(Adjournment)

| <u>Minutes Approval Committee</u> | <u>Date Approved</u> |
|--------------------------------------|----------------------|
| Penelope Foster Caswell Mazonna (AK) | June 4, 2025 |
| Janet A. Bacon (IL) | June 4, 2025 |
| Jane Ridenour (OH) | June 4, 2025 |

2024 NATIONAL CONVENTION
AMERICAN LEGION AUXILIARY
103RD NATIONAL CONVENTION



TUESDAY, AUGUST 27, 2024

SECOND SESSION

8:30 A.M. - 11:55 A.M.

New Orleans Convention Center

Hall B2

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P R O C E E D I N G S

(Music played)

VOICEOVER: Welcome to day 2 of the
2024 American Legion Auxiliary National
Convention. Here to begin this session is your
national president, Lisa Williamson.

(Applause)

PRESIDENT WILLIAMSON: Good morning.

ALL: Good morning.

PRESIDENT WILLIAMSON: One more time,
good morning. Thank you very much. So, thank you
to all of our national officers for greeting all
of our members this morning. Let's start off the
morning with some amazing, amazing women. Past
National President Vickie Koutz, would you do the
honors, please.

(Applause)

MS. WILLIAMSON: Oh, God. Hang tight.
You know, I forgot something. We are about
forgotten country, and we forgot the invocation.

MS. THOMAS: Aloha.

ALL: Aloha.

MS. THOMAS: What a glorious day. Good morning, everybody.

ALL: Good morning.

MS. THOMAS: If you would be patient with me, I've changed our prayer up just a little for today. We're just going to take it a little serious. Be The One. What an important mission we have. And yesterday, during our luncheon, we held an honor bead ceremony.

An honor bead ceremony is where you choose a bead that has a color that might relate to a personal experience you have. For example, green would be for a personal struggle, purple for the loss of a relative, and so on. While our discussions are about veterans are vital and must continue, your well-being matters to us as well. So, we just want to do a health check-in with you today, how are you?

ALL: We're doing good.

MS. THOMAS: Good. Do you need

someone? And seriously, I know you are out there, and I know that this topic may be bringing up feelings, issues. I know that you might be feeling that because I know I'm feeling that. So, if you need someone to be the one for you, please reach out. Reach out to the person next to you, in front of you, behind you, anyone up on this stage and to me.

You are a valued member of our military, our veteran and family community, so we want to make sure we are all taking care of each other. You are loved, and you are supported. And if you could join with me just for a short Hawaiian word for our blessing.

(Foreign language)

MS. THOMAS: This is a prayer for blessings. We are blessing you, and we are seeking positive energies that you allow to pour into your life strengthening and guiding you along your path. Amen.

ALL: Amen.

PRESIDENT WILLIAMSON: Let's please take a moment to ensure our electric devices are in silent mode, and let's go back. Vickie Koutz, would you please do us the honors.

(Applause)

MS. KOUTZ: From the Department of Oregon, Linda Boone, your 1992-1993 national president.

(Applause)

MS. KOUTZ: From the Department of Maryland, Linda Newsome, your 1994-1995 national president.

(Applause)

MS. KOUTZ: From the Department of Kentucky, Virginia Hobbs, your 1998-1999 national president.

(Applause)

PRESIDENT KOUTZ: From the Department of New Hampshire, Kristine West, your 2000-2001 national president.

(Applause)

MS. KOUTZ: From the Department of Ohio, Desiree Stoy, your 2008-2009 national president.

(Applause)

MS. KOUTZ: From the Department of Texas, Carlene Ashworth, your 2010-2011 national president.

(Applause)

MS. KOUTZ: From the Department of Virginia, Peggy Thomas, your 2012-2013 national president.

(Applause)

MS. KOUTZ: From the Department of California, Nancy Brown-Park, your 2013 --

(Applause)

MS. KOUTZ: -- 2014 national president. From the Department of Illinois, Sharon Conatser, your 2015-2016 national president.

(Applause)

MS. KOUTZ: From the Department of Washington, Mary Davis, your 2016-2017 national

president.

(Applause)

MS. KOUTZ: From the Department of Wisconsin, Diane Duscheck, your 2017-2018 national president.

(Applause)

MS. KOUTZ: From the Department of Iowa, Nicole Clapp, your 2019-2021 national president.

(Applause)

MS. KOUTZ: From the Department of Kentucky, Kathy Daudistel, your 2021-2022 national president.

(Applause)

PRESIDENT WILLIAMSON: And, of course, from the Department of Indiana, Vickie Koutz, the '22-'23 national president.

(Applause)

PRESIDENT WILLIAMSON: We have one in the back, Kathy Dungan from the Department of Mississippi.

(Applause)

PRESIDENT WILLIAMSON: These ladies represent over 30 years of American Legion Auxiliary leadership at the highest level. Please let them know how much their service is appreciated.

(Applause)

PRESIDENT WILLIAMSON: So, the National Veteran Creative Arts Festival promotes the health and healing of our veterans. While the dedicated VA staff and the ALA volunteers make this event a success, the event would not be possible without generous donations. Every donation secures a memory that the attendees will treasure for the rest of their lives.

These are the winners who have earned the donations for gold which is 5,000 to 14,999: the Department of Texas.

(Applause)

(Music played)

PRESIDENT WILLIAMSON: The Department

of California.

(Applause)

PRESIDENT WILLIAMSON: The Department
of Colorado.

(Applause)

PRESIDENT WILLIAMSON: The Department
of Florida.

(Applause)

PRESIDENT WILLIAMSON: The Department
of Wisconsin.

(Applause)

PRESIDENT WILLIAMSON: Bobby Cox. The
Department of Indiana.

(Applause)

PRESIDENT WILLIAMSON: And our bronze
level donations, the Department -- 1,000 to
2,499: Department of Ohio.

(Applause)

PRESIDENT WILLIAMSON: The Department
of Massachusetts.

(Applause)

PRESIDENT WILLIAMSON: The Department
of Georgia.

(Applause)

PRESIDENT WILLIAMSON: The Department
of South Dakota.

(Applause)

PRESIDENT WILLIAMSON: The Department
of Kentucky.

(Applause)

PRESIDENT WILLIAMSON: And the
Department of New Hampshire.

(Applause)

PRESIDENT WILLIAMSON: Let's give it up
to everybody.

(Applause)

PRESIDENT WILLIAMSON: Thank you so
much. It is my absolute privilege to introduce
the director of the National Veterans Creative
Arts Festival and my friend, Amy Kimbler. Amy.

Applause)

(Music played)

MS. KIMBLER: That's fun music. Good morning. Good morning.

ALL: Good morning.

MS. KIMBLER: Thank you, Madam President. It is an honor to be here with all of you today. I know that it's early in the morning, and I heard you all just cheering, but I want to do something a little bit fun, wake you up a little bit even more and get you ready to hear some other presentations this morning. So just go with me on this, indulge me for just a minute.

I'm a music therapist, that's my background, so we're going to do a little bit of singing this morning. So, make a joyful noise, right. Just make a joyful noise. Okay. So, I'm going to sing just the first part of a little song, and I want you to sing the rest of it. We're going to do a few of them, okay. This is a Louie Armstrong song. Okay. I see trees of green.

ALL: And red roses too.

MS. KIMBLER: Okay. That was our warm-up. Good job. Good job. All right. Here's an Elvis song. Well, a lot of people covered it, but I'm going to say it's an Elvis tune. Wise men say --

ALL: Only fools rush in.

MS. KIMBLER: Beautiful. Beautiful. We have our own choir today. Okay. Here's another one. Pretty woman --

ALL: Walking down the street. Pretty woman, the kind I'd like to meet. Pretty woman.

MS. KIMBLER: Very nice. See you got this. Okay. This is the year you have to remember this song, it's a Four Seasons tune. Oh, what a night --

ALL: Late December back in '63.

MS. KIMBLER: Excellent. Amazing. Okay. Earth, Wind and Fire. Do you remember --

ALL: The 21st night of September.

MS. KIMBLER: Oh, we got to try that

again. Some of you knew it. Do you remember the
21st night of September. Yes, there you go.
Okay. Two more, two more. Some KC and the
Sunshine Band. Do a little dance --

ALL: Make a little love. Get down
tonight. Get down tonight.

MS. KIMBLER: You got it. Okay. One
more, Journey Tune. Don't stop --

ALL: Believing.

MS. KIMBLER: Give yourselves a round
of applause, that was amazing.

(Applause)

MS. KIMBLER: Okay. So how many of you
have heard of the National Veterans Creative Arts
Competition Festival, raise of hands?

(Applause)

MS. KIMBLER: Good. How many of you
stopped by the booth and got one of these, these
fans? How many of you know how to put them back
together?

(Laughter)

MS. KIMBLER: All right. All right.

All right. So, I know that many of you are familiar with this program and have worked in supporting it throughout the years as volunteers and also through donations raised by your individual, your unit, and department levels.

On behalf of my staff and the veterans who participate in this program, I express our sincere appreciation to all of you. The American Legion Auxiliary demonstrates service to veterans through your involvement with programs like the National Veterans Creative Arts Competition Festival. You understand just how important and life changing the creative arts can be in helping veterans, help with physical and emotional pain, mental health struggles, how their involvement in the arts enhances their overall health and well-being, and how engaging and participating in the arts brings people together.

Since the year 2000, you've been actively involved with us in making a positive

difference in the lives of veterans who participate in creative arts as therapy. With the American Legion Auxiliary by our side for over 20 years, the creative arts program has increased to where this past year we had over 3,000 veterans submit over 7,000 entries from 125 VA facilities throughout the country. Absolutely incredible.

(Applause)

MS. KIMBLER: These entries represent a small sampling of the day-to-day therapy that is being done in VA facilities throughout the country, as well as at home. Veterans are doing this all on their own and using it. They've learned how to use the arts as therapy every day. So, I heard the list. Lisa read all of the amazing departments that contributed to this year's program. Thank you. Thank you, thank you so much.

I want to give a special shoutout to the Department of Colorado wherever they are --

(Applause)

MS. KIMBLER: Yes. -- for their amazing contributions to the festival that we just had in May in Denver. The veterans and their caregivers commented how much they felt cared for and loved and well fed in the hospitality room, so well done. I just want to say thank you again to you.

(Applause)

MS. KIMBLER: To all of you, I know that you have choices in where you give your time and your money. Now matter how great or small, every minute and every dollar provided are going a long way in meeting veteran needs and their caregivers, so sincerely, thank you.

Thank you to the Auxiliary's leadership team who we've had the privilege of working with for over 20 years. These members and the state departments have become great festival friends. It's been our pleasure this year to get to know and work with Madam President Lisa Williamson and

to throw our support behind the Be The One initiative.

Our hope is that veterans who participate in the National Veterans Creative Arts competition and the festival come away with a sense of accomplishment and with a feeling of strong motivation to explore other areas of their lives where they can achieve the same feeling of being healed and of growth.

In the spring of 2025, approximately 150 gold medal winning veterans will gather together in Indianapolis --

(Applause)

MS. KIMBLER: -- to participate in workshops and writing seminars and rehearsals. And at the end of the week, they'll put out a great display of their award-winning entries and their award-winning pieces for the community. I'm excited to go to the Hoosier state. I need to learn how to use Hoosier in a sentence, and so I'm hoping you all can teach me how to do that

over the next few months.

The veterans -- oh, I already said that. Okay. Before I leave the podium, I want to once more say how grateful we are to all of you for your ongoing support of veterans, their caregivers, and the creative arts. We sincerely appreciate your role as co-presenter and your ongoing commitment to veterans.

I have one more song before I leave. Okay. I need you to clap.

(Clapping)

MS. KIMBLER: Okay. Here we go. Celebrate good times --

ALL: Come on.

MS. KIMBLER: Thank you again. Have a wonderful convention here in New Orleans.

(Applause)

PRESIDENT WILLIAMSON: That was so much fun. So much fun. Well, we can definitely say we're having fun here, aren't we? A little bit off script. I'm going to tell you that I am so

honored to attend the Veterans Creative Arts festival and have made some really great friends with, you know, volunteers. And it's about the veterans, right. I can tell you that I have had two veterans in my travels come look me up knowing that I was going to be in their departments, and it's so wonderful to see them, and they walk in the door and you're like what are you doing here. It's very incredible, very heartwarming that they took time out of their day, so Thomas and Devin, thank you so much.

(Applause)

PRESIDENT WILLIAMSON: No task was too big or too small for our members to support our armed forces and their families. Here to tell us more about how our auxiliary members are volunteering to help military veterans is our National Security chairman, Ann Rehbein. Ann.

(Music played)

(Applause)

MS. REHBEIN: Good morning.

ALL: Good morning.

MS. REHBEIN: The national focus for The American Legion Family this year was to increase awareness about the veteran and military suicide epidemic by embracing the Be The One mission. Be the One to Save One. If you have you heard National Commander Seehafer speak, his mantra is changing lives and saving lives.

You, the members of the American Legion Auxiliary, have followed that mantra all year. The Department of Maine and many other units organized Be The One events. These events underscore the dedication to addressing mental health issues within the veteran community.

(Applause)

MS. REHBEIN: Many members wore Be The One shirts on the first day of each month raising awareness of military and veteran suicide. One of the most popular and easy ways to support our active-duty military is wearing red on Friday. Remember everyone deployed is very popular with

our members. Thousands of care packages, cards, snacks, socks, cookies, and much more were sent to deployed troops. Baby showers were a big hit again this year, and many units expressed the joy in providing for a new baby.

All of the holidays were recognized with parties and meals with names like Operation North Pole and Turkey Run at Fort Riley, Kansas. Many units spread the love by adopting. Unit 304 in the Department of New York New York adopted a platoon.

(Applause)

MS. REHBEIN: Unit 82 of New Hampshire adopts a local service man and his unit to send packages overseas when they are deployed. Sioux Center Iowa, Unit 199, adopted two local deployed service members families and presented the children with stuffed animals embroidered with their names and a patch that read "We are always under the same stars."

The spouse and children of the service

member were gifted memberships in both the American Legion Auxiliary and the Sons of The American Legion. National guard members were also recognized. In Illinois, Ralph M. Noble, Unit 285, shopped for National Guard children presenting them with \$30 Walmart gift cards at the readiness center.

Unit 1 in Denver, Colorado, adopted the 244th engineering battalion, which is a reserve unit that collected items to stock a food and supply pantry for the soldiers, and when the battalion has drills, they provide meals for the day. Quilts of Valor were awarded to many active-duty service personnel wrapping them in comfort and healing.

JROTC and ROTC units were supported monetarily and with scholarships. Wisconsin auxiliary members presented graduating high school seniors with honor cords as they enter the military, hosting events for the graduates and parents to be recognized and encouraged to reach

out to The American Legion Family for support.

Members also remember the Prisoners of War and Missing In Action, also known as POW MIAs. Many units reported attending repatriation ceremonies for those recently identified. Gold Star families were honored with teas and dinners, and donations were made to the Gary Sinise Snowball Express which help support Gold Star families. Blue Star Mothers is also a popular group supported.

Units supported Month of the Military Child and Purple Up Day in many ways. Meeting attendees nationwide were encouraged to wear purple, and activities were held in communities and military installations. Many military child tables were displayed, and at Ames Unit 37 in the Department of Iowa, purple ribbons were provided for all to wear during the month.

There are many great organizations that help service members and their families. Many units collaborated with them by donating to the

USOs, Operation Home Front, Operation Comfort Warriors, Wounded Warriors and Soldiers Angels, just to name a few.

Unit 66 in Decatur, Georgia, provided lunch at the Atlanta airport for seven months this year. Units also participated in preparing holiday travel meals, greeting military, and the USO Phone Home program. The Department of Texas, Unit 19, donated \$2,300 to Armed Services YMCA in Killeen for monthly food banks for military families.

As you can tell, through the National Security Program, changing lives and saving lives is a reality. And Madam President, we have some very special guests to present this morning. Today, we are honored to celebrate the achievements of our men and women in the armed forces. Thank you to everyone who submitted an application on their behalf. They were all exemplary examples of the dedication of our service personnel today.

I am pleased to introduce to you today the five individuals who were chosen service member of the year in their respective branches. First, we have from the U.S. Army, Staff Sergeant Helen Travino nominated by Leonard Moore, Unit 71, of North Carolina.

(Applause)

MS. REHBEIN: In part, her nomination reads: Staff Sergeant Travino is a young mother dedicated to God, country and family, committed to excelling in her career, dedicated to improving herself, and thus, benefitting those whom she serves by continuing her education. She has been instrumental in the success of placing homeless veterans in furnished apartments with basic needs products in her geographical area through participation of an Auxiliary collaboration with Military Missions In Action.

She regularly participated in events benefiting local veterans through Auxiliary fund raisers, breakfast, and raffles. In addition to

her active participation in veteran-related events, she provided donations of clothing, toiletries, and other needed items to a low-income county in North Carolina through the Auxiliary initiative.

Not only is Helen a role model for her colleagues and military clients she serves, but she is a role model for her young son. Her passion for teaching patriotism and Americanism to children is evident in her interactions with her son by including him in many of the Legion and Auxiliary events and activities.

Staff Sergeant Travino extends that passion to schoolbook drives and school-based activities. Unfortunately, she could not be present today, but let's acknowledge her achievements.

(Applause)

(Music played)

MS. REHBEIN: From the U.S. Navy, Petty Officer Second Class, Stephanie Auen nominated by

Denton, Iowa, Unit 57. Petty officer Auen joined the Navy to see the world and has visited many countries. Doing multiple exercises with allied forces, she has been able to learn from each resulting in strengthening relationships to achieve their collective missions.

She is also actively involved in various activities to enhance morale, professionalism, and promote inclusion within the CCSG9 staff from planning and executing multicultural heritage observances to leading training topics and building a positive work environment. She has been dedicated to fostering a culture of respect and excellence within her team.

Outside of her military duties, she enjoys spending time with her family and friends, hiking, paddle boarding, and exploring new culinary experiences. She also volunteers with Morale Welfare and Recreation to give back to the community and engage in meaningful activities.

Petty Officer Auen also could not be with us today as she is employed -- deployed on the USS Roosevelt, but please help me recognize her.

(Applause)

(Music played)

MS. REHBEIN: From the U.S. Coast Guard, Chief Petty Officer Caitlin Barker nominated by Freedom Unit 183 of Ohio.

(Applause)

MS. REHBEIN: Her commanding officer states that she is a tremendous asset at Marine Safety Unit, Morgan City. She has been instrumental in revitalizing the Waterways Management Division by renovating processes used to review, update, and ensure the regulated facilities are held accountable. She not only thrives in her professional career but is an enthusiastic contributor to her community by volunteering at the local food bank and animal shelter. Please help me welcome Chief Petty Officer Barker.

(Applause)

(Music played)

MS. BARKER: Say good --

CHILD: Good morning.

(Applause)

MS. BARKER: Well, in true toddler mom fashion, my purse was dumped out, and my speech was in that, and I do not have that, so we're adlibbing it today. So, thank you, everyone. Thank you to the American Legion Auxiliary for nominating me to Freedom Post 183 in Pemberville, for the continued support. You are heavy. So again, yeah, we're ad-libbing it.

So, a little about my military service -- you want to stand up there? -- I started my career as a reservist, and in between my sophomore and junior year at the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point --

(Applause)

MS. BARKER: -- from there I decided to go active duty once I graduated. I went to

Chesapeake, Virginia. From there I went to St. Louis, Missouri. I also lived in Belleville, Illinois, so I got --

(Applause)

MS. BARKER: From there I went to Marine Safety Unit, Houma, Louisiana, just down the road, and then I went to sector Miami, Miami, Florida.

(Applause)

MS. BARKER: And then from there, I'm now back at Marine Safety Unit, Morgan City, just down the road.

(Coughs)

MS. BARKER: You okay? So again, this -- yeah. So a little about my military service, my life has been truly full of great memories, great experiences, and great roller coasters of all of that in between from hurricane responses, from COVID.

(Laughter)

MS. BARKER: Well, all right. We're

going to take a little turn. So, my military service, that can be summed up in what just happened. You meet people from all over. You meet someone from Hawaii, and you know that my child is not going anywhere, and she's going to be just fine. So that I think is my military service summed up in one word.

(Laughter)

MS. BARKER: So, all right. Well, that was derailed. So yeah, so that right there, military service, you meet people from all over, you become a team. You become one, and it doesn't matter where you're from, what you are, you trust them. You know that you can trust them because they're your team, and that to me is my military service summed up very easily right here just what just happened with my child. So, thank you. Thank you, again. Thank you to everyone coming out.

My boss is here somewhere. Thank you to Lieutenant Janelle Peshay for coming out and

supporting me. So, thank you.

(Applause)

MS. REHBEIN: We are honored to present Caitlin this morning with this plaque, and they all read the same: Presented to CPO Caitlin Barker, United States Coast Guard, for honorable military service on behalf of a grateful nation.

(Applause)

MS. REHBEIN: From the United States Airforce, Chief Master Sergeant Dustin Troyer nominated by Pleasant Dale Unit 354 of Nebraska.

(Applause)

MS. REHBEIN: Chief Master Sergeant Troyer enlisted in the U.S. Air Force at the age of 19 with a desire for an education and a commitment to serve his country. In his 25 years of active duty and dedication to the Air Force, he has served eight overseas deployments and is currently in his 14th location assignment in the service of the U.S. Air Force.

He has been the recipient of many major

awards and decorations. His current assignment has taken him to the Pentagon in Washington, DC, as the 1C7 career field functional manager. His entire family is active in volunteering in whatever community they find themselves in by volunteering with the American Red Cross and placing wreaths for Wreaths Across America. Please help me welcome Chief Master Sergeant Troyer.

(Applause)

(Music played)

MR. TROYER: Thank you so much.

Caitlin, I really appreciate that. I'm not sure how I'm going to follow that up, but I'm going to do my best. She should have went last; she was the showstopper there, so. Thank you again.
Good morning, everybody.

ALL: Good morning.

MR. TROYER: I am honored and humbled to be standing here today representing the United States Air Force and my American Legion family

back in Pleasant Dale, Nebraska.

(Applause)

MR. TROYER: I am fortunate to have in attendance today my parents, Jeff and Arlene Seke (ph.), and my grandparents Thomas and Joanne Seke.

(Applause)

MR. TROYER: Not able to attend today was my wife, Melissa, and my daughters, Madison and Aslan (ph.). Let me tell you something, those three women are the reason I am where I am today. It was -- thank you.

(Applause)

MR. TROYER: It's their support and their sacrifice and their willingness to go where the Air Force needed me to be allowed me the freedom to forge a career that spanned a quarter century. My successes are their successes. A lot of you here today served whether you wore the uniform or you kept the front porch light on for us. So, in whatever role you held, thank you

for your service.

(Applause)

MR. TROYER: In my narrative, I wrote I've come a long way since Milford, Nebraska, and I couldn't have imagined the opportunities that the Air Force would have afforded me. If you had told my 18-year-old self that my life's path would lead me here, I would have thought you were clinically insane. My journey has been unorthodox, and it's not been easy. My failures equal my successes, but I wouldn't change a thing.

I spent the majority of my career as an airfield manager, and being part of an elite team responsible for managing America's military airfields around the globe is a sense of pride for me. Today I stand here as their career field manager representing 2,200 military and civilian personnel at 89 airfields around the world.

(Applause)

MR. TROYER: I might be a little

biased, but I know I have the best career field in the Air Force.

(Laughter)

MR. TROYER: I have been part of The American Legion Family for 25 years thanks to my grandparents.

(Applause)

MR. TROYER: You see I come from a family that served in uniform and continued to serve long after their military careers had ended. It's their example, their servant leadership that motivates me to follow the same path when it's my time to hang up the uniform. I love serving, and I know I'm going to love serving those who continue to protect our freedoms.

I want to thank the American Legion Auxiliary for this amazing award. I want to thank my American Legion family back in Pleasant Dale for nominating me for this award, and my Nebraska chapter for supporting me through this.

As always, thank you all for your unwavering support to the men and women of the one percent. Thank you.

(Applause)

MS. REHBEIN: From the National Guard, Technical Sergeant Donald Lambert nominated by Jackson Perks, Unit 71, Ramson, West Virginia. Technical Sergeant Donald Lambert --

(Applause)

MS. REHBEIN: I was wondering if you were awake. -- is currently assigned to the 130th Air Lift Wing in Charleston, West Virginia, where he is a services craftsman. His duties and responsibilities include, among other things, proper procedures for food quality and providing ceremonial base honors.

He is also fulfilling responsibilities for the Supportive Services for Veterans Families program assisting homeless and at risk of being homeless veterans get permanently housed where he has continually gone above and beyond to ensure

his veteran clients stay permanently housed and supported. Please help me welcome Technical Sergeant Lambert.

(Applause)

(Music played)

MR. LAMBERT: Good morning.

ALL: Good morning.

MR. LAMBERT: So, first of all, where is the Department of West Virginia at?

(Applause)

MR. LAMBERT: Where was that earlier?

(Laughter)

MR. LAMBERT: I want to say good morning. I want to say thank you for allowing me to be here today. I would stand here and talk about my career in the Ar Force, but to me, it's just another day in the office, it's another day at work and being able to be in the world's greatest Air Force, so what I want to do instead is I want to thank, first of all, the Department of West Virginia for putting forth my nomination.

I want to thank the National American

Legion Auxiliary for the ability to be here today because when I received the Spirit of Service award for the International Guard in 2020, due to this little thing called COVID, I wasn't able to be able to do something like this; I had to go to Washington, DC on inauguration day and give a speech to a camera in front of an empty room, so I appreciate the ability to be here.

I want to recognize a couple members of my family. If it wasn't for seven members of my family being in the American Legion Auxiliary and supporting my unit back home, Unit number 29 in Elkins, West Virginia, and being able to do this, I wouldn't be able to stand here before you today and say we are a part of a great organization. And those seven members are my great grandmother, my grandmother, my mother, my sister -- hold on -- my niece, a cousin of mine who just went to Rhododendron Girl State this year --

(Applause)

MR. LAMBERT: -- and will return next year as a counselor. And, of course, my wife.

If it wasn't for my wife being beside me all ten years that I've been in the Air Force and in The American Legion, I probably would have been clinically insane by now because both are taxing sometimes. I want to take a moment. I want to dedicate this award to somebody. Where is the Department of Iowa?

(Applause)

MR. LAMBERT: So, the award that I want to dedicate -- this will be a little hard for me, so if my voice cracks or anything, please forgive me. Friday, as I was getting ready to come down here for this, I was notified that my advisor from my undergraduate years at Glenville State College unexpectedly passed away, so I want to dedicate this award to Dr. C.E. Wood who saw something in me at Glenville State College that being a young kid nineteen years old straight out of basic training, I mean literally straight out of basic. I went to basic, graduated December of 2014, started my freshman semester January 2015, so it's a culture shock.

He saw something in me and really took me under his wing. And he was one of those professors that he cared about his students, and when he passed, his Facebook page, it's filled with all sorts of stories, and I'll share one with you if I have a moment. So, Dr. Wood was an Army Lieutenant, Marine Corps sergeant, Desert Storm veteran. When he was in Desert Storm and as the Iraqis are surrendering, they'd all come up saying, you know, (foreign language).

Well, he did that story two or three times, so one day as I'm walking down the social science department, I see him and I go (foreign language), and he's like if you ever do that again, and he finds out, he's coming for you.

(Laughter)

MR. LAMBERT: But that was just the kind of guy he was. He had a contagious laugh. He had such a great personality. When I turned 22 and was getting ready to graduate Glenville State, he got me a birthday cake, and it was play

a game of Hang Man, and it had my first name and then the bottom was a couple of dashes, and I looked at it and was like you want me to guess what this bottom word supposed to be, he said, yeah, you're Air Force. You're smart enough, you can figure it out. So, I want to dedicate that to him.

To the Department of Iowa, y'all raised a fine man who mentored a lot of veterans, a lot of Marines, and especially me. So, to everybody here, I appreciate the ability to be with you today, and I know my wife is watching backstage, so I want to say Tiffany, thank you for coming down here with me.

Unfortunately, our ten-month-old son, Elliott, couldn't be here today. If he was, he'd be right here, and I wouldn't have to say a word because he would let every single one of you know he's here. So unfortunately, him not being here, I can't top everyone else, but I appreciate the ability to be here today.

I appreciate the work that you guys do

because I know especially back home in my post, if it's not for my Auxiliary unit working with my American Legion post as well as we do in Elkins, I couldn't get half done what I usually can get done. So, if it wasn't for you guys, I definitely wouldn't be able to be here today, so thank you.

(Applause)

MS. REHBEIN: I think you'll all agree that we have some tremendous service people to look up to. Thank you, Madam President. I've enjoyed every moment of this appointment. Thank you for the opportunity.

(Applause)

PRESIDENT WILLIAMSON: So, thank you so much for your service allowing us to honor you today, you are true heroes. Let's give another round of applause to our service members.

(Applause)

PRESIDENT WILLIAMSON: And thank you, Ann, for your report and allowing us to honor

these service members.

(Applause)

PRESIDENT WILLIAMSON: The Armed Services YMCA enhances the lives of military members and their families in spirit, mind and body through programs relevant to the unique challenges of military life. The Armed Services YMCA in Killeen, Texas --

(Applause)

PRESIDENT WILLIAMSON: -- estimates that in their area alone more than 25 percent of active-duty military and ten percent of veteran families need assistance with groceries. The AS YMCA Killeen Five-Star Food Market works to combat this issue. Check out this video showcasing the food market and how it helps military families in that area.

(Video playing)

MS. YERRINGTON: The Poppy funds came to the Armed Services YMCA here in Killeen to start what we call now the Five-Star Food Market.

MS. PAUL: Our partnership here with

Armed Services YMCA and the Department of Texas has grown tremendously with us using our poppy funds and then involving The American Legion Family, we have been able to start it as a once-a-month food distribution is now a weekly distribution.

MS. MCCLOUD: It's a means to have an outlet when you can't really afford, you know, most groceries given the economy and the uprising pricing and stuff having somewhere to go to be able to compensate for that for me and my family especially because I have three kids, two grown boys, so they eat a lot, especially teenagers.

MS. YERRINGTON: The poppy funds are the funds that started us and still sustain us to this day.

MS. PAUL: Poppy funds can only be used for active military and veterans, and this is for their livelihood.

MS. SANDERS: Honestly, when we were going through a rough patch, we came across this one, and it truly meant life and death for us.

We were going through such a rough time with payments on different things, so it was really hard to put food in the house.

MS. DAVIS: It has grown over time. We started with just a monthly distribution of about a hundred families now to serving over 400 families every week and distributing over 800,000 pounds of food in 2023.

MS. MCCLLOUD: I started when I was pregnant with my now 11-month-old daughter. I register. I come every Thursday just to receive nonperishable items and stuff, you know, canned goods, meats.

MS. SANDERS: We primarily come for the friendship at this point. I don't go out a lot; I have three kids. I'm home all the time, and I met some really nice people here and made friendships.

MS. TRAMM: The staff here at Armed Services YMCA from day number 1 has been tremendous. Sheri gave up for her office, now that's our little Five-Star pantry.

MS. YERRINGTON: I can do computer work anywhere, but there's only so many places that we can serve the community like this, and it was the ideal spot to serve this many families in a very short period of time.

MS. PAUL: I see how they treat the people that come in here. They become a family. It's like now they know each other on a first name basis.

MS. DAVIS: Oh, my God. The people that works here is so friendly, and they warm, and they give you any kind of information if you need help, resources, friendly faces.

MS. MICHAEL: Any time you have questions or you need help. I mean, for the first part of it when I was pregnant in the line waiting to receive my groceries, they always help me down the stairs with the groceries before I realized that it was a elevator.

MS. SANDERS: I have a friend who actually works here, and she keeps my son while I go through, and then it makes it easier.

MS. YERRINGTON: It's what we do is to serve the active duty and to serve the veterans of this community. I tell them all the time we're only as good as those who are there working there every day. And they come every single day in this Texas heat right now. It's not easy to unload those trucks and unbox those boxes, but you know what, I never have one complaint. And the relationships that they build, and they know their names. I walked out just a few minutes ago, they're holding their babies while they're in there shopping in the pantry. We are a family, and in any family, right, we take care of each other.

MS. PAUL: When I come up here on food distribution days or when we do a holiday meal, distribution turkeys, just the gratitude that they have that we are able to give them to help them have a better holiday. It makes a difference between a family being able to not have anywhere to go or being able to make their own little holiday dinner.

MS. SANDERS: Military personnel don't make as much as what civilians think. It's not so easy for them when they have children.

MS. MCCLOUD: I had talked to some other wives and spouses that I found that seem to be in my same shoes, you know, with a tight budget, large family. A lot of them work off of one income in the family so that really helps them go a long way just being able to come here and receive groceries, you know, kind of contribute to the household as well.

MS. SANDERS: It does help a lot. It gives that slight push where you would be falling short, so instead of falling short, you're still being able to feed everybody and take care of yourself.

MS. DAVIS: It is no shame. All ranks, all people with degrees. No matter if you work at McDonald's or you work in an office or you're a colonel, it benefits everybody.

MS. YERRINGTON: Groceries are getting higher. Even buying it wholesale, it's getting

higher, so anything that anybody can do, no gift is too small, we need those funds so we can maintain and sustain and grow as needed.

MS. PAUL: It makes the Department of Texas very proud that we're able to utilize our poppy funds for such a great endeavor to be able to help the veterans and active military here in the YMCA Harker Heights community.

PRESIDENT YERRINGTON: To see it from the very beginning to where it is today, any donation is going to help. Whether it be a donation of food or a monetary donation, if we had not had our poppy funds, we would have never been able to start this venture which has grown in the almost three years that this started.

MS. SANDERS: Truly, honestly, thank you to the people that they have chosen to work here and the funding because it does help a lot.

MS. MCCLLOUD: Thanks for seeing us, you know, military spouses because a lot of people think, you know, with military, you know, they don't struggle because, you know, and they don't

see the inside.

MS. YERRINGTON: It's a small amount, a dollar. No gift is too small and no gift is too big, so contact your local food pantry or your local Armed Services YMCA or even your local Y. They may have resources there for veterans and for active-duty families, and you don't realize the impact of your dollar. If you can't give the dollar, maybe you can give your time, and you can give back in so many ways other than just a financial dollar.

(Applause)

PRESIDENT WILLIAMSON: Way to go, Texas.

(Applause)

PRESIDENT WILLIAMSON: And I love seeing our member Mary Ann Paul explain the Auxiliary's involvement in this project, so one more round of applause, please.

(Applause)

PRESIDENT WILLIAMSON: And now it's your turn to contact your AS YMCA and get started

on your own Five-Star Food Market. From promoting the Poppy program to expanding our community of poppy makers, their efforts and honor and support our heroes, here to share more about the impactful work is National Poppy Chairman, Norma Tramm. Norma.

(Music played)

(Applause)

MS. TRAMM: Madam National President Lisa, Moina Michael said, "We shall keep the faith." This was her response to the poem in Flanders Fields written by Lieutenant Colonel John McCrae, MD, the line saying "The torch be yours, to hold it high" continue to resonate with her, and she remembers the sacrifices by wearing the poppy. Moina spread the importance of the poppy, and on September 27th, 1920, the poppy became the official flower of The American Legion Family. We wear the poppy to remember those who fought and died during the war.

Georgia Unit 233 was approached by a family member of Moina Michael; they wanted to

have a large poppy for a sign in Center City. A 20-inch red poppy was produced and placed on the sign, this honors Moina Michael. As you can see, it turned out great, and the family was very pleased.

Unit 233 continues in the spirit of Moina Michaels as they display the history of the poppy program on a trifold board. While distributing poppies, they explain the meaning of the flower. Some public-school teachers approached and had never heard of Moina Michael. After the explanation, these teachers assured the unit that they would include Moina Michael in their curriculum.

Teaching our youth is so important. Leonard Conley, Unit 216 in the Department of Nebraska, participated in the Boot Camp carnival. They provided a poppy-making station and reading the book "The Poppy Lady". Hard cover copies of the book were purchased for all the elementary and middle schools in the district, as well as the public children's library.

District 22 in California had several units request --

(Applause)

PRESIDENT WILLIAMSON: -- poppy proclamations from their city officials. They also had local radio and television stations provide information on their poppy distribution. News anchors were observed wearing a poppy presented to them by the local unit.

If you want to have your local unit request a proclamation, you can find a sample on the national website. The project was Get Poppied. The inventor was Unit 570 of the Department of Pennsylvania. What a creative idea. They purchased 24 seven-by-seven inch poppies with ground stakes.

Unit 570 invited people to share names and addresses of active-duty military or veterans they wish to honor along with a donation to their poppy fund. This also included two-yard signs, one sign designated "The Project: You've Been Poppied," and another to display the unit's name

and number.

Each recipient received a heart-felt letter titled "You've Been Poppied" explaining the significance of the poppy, how the funds would be used, and the importance of the program. The letter also included the name of the person who donated in their honor. Flyers promoted the program and was also on their social media. Yard plantings were done between 7 and 9 p.m. and remained in the yard for 24 hours and then on to the next yard.

Meeting the active military and veterans whose yards were poppied was a profound experience. Many shared stories of their service and expressed deep gratitude for the recognition. They were thrilled to be featured in the daily Facebook posts which were widely shared. By the end of May, 29 active military members or veterans had been honored, and the national poppy day was celebrated by planting poppies at Blakely Legion Post 570. The outpouring of positive feedback was overwhelming.

Units have done a great job of sprinkling our world with poppies this year. We need to make sure that everyone knows the poppy is the symbol of sacrifice and hope. Wear a poppy and remember a veteran. Madam President, this concludes my remarks, but with your permission, I would like to share information about national Little Miss Poppy.

Little Miss Poppy is very popular with our units. I know, National President Lisa, that you have met several of them. I wish to congratulate all of them for their dedication and for spreading poppies and the poppy story in their communities. A huge thank you to all you, the Senior American Legion Auxiliary members, who mentored and took time to help our little miss poppies make a difference.

Unfortunately, our national Little Miss Poppy 2024 was unable to attend the convention. She raised over \$2,000 in her year distributing poppies and visiting veterans. I'm pleased to announce that Kendall Schroeder, American Legion

Auxiliary Unit 63 of Ottawa, Ohio, was chosen as national Little Miss Poppy. And you can read all about her activities, all you need to do is go to the national Poppy Facebook group page, and it is posted there.

Madam President, thank you so much for allowing me to share this information.

(Applause)

PRESIDENT WILLIAMSON: Thank you, Norma. Unfortunately, we couldn't meet our Little Miss Poppy. So, working alongside the national treasurer, the national finance committee works to ensure the fiscal health and longevity of our organization. Please welcome the chair of our National Finance Committee, Nicole Clapp.

(Music played)

(Applause)

MS. CLAPP: Good morning.

ALL: Good morning.

MS. CLAPP: American Legion Auxiliary National Financial Committee is the one who is

dedicated to addressing today's financial needs while balancing the future fiduciary requirements. During the 2023-24 administration, past national presidents held all five committee positions serving in staggering terms equaling five years. Past National President Sharon Conatser of Illinois served as vice chair. Committee member Virginia Hobbs of Kentucky served as a Risk and Compliance Committee liaison while Nancy Brown-Park of California serves on the committee as the American Legion Auxiliary Foundation Board of Directors' liaison.

And this year we welcomed a new member, Kristine West from New Hampshire.

(Applause)

MS. CLAPP: I want to thank these ladies for your dedicated execution of the committees' essential duties and responsibilities. The primary role of the finance committee is one, to build the annual budget in conjunction with the national headquarters staff which then recommends to the

National Executive Committee for adoption.

Our national organization budget this year focused in three areas. First, things we're excited about such as increased income from the dues, IT advances for the national headquarters, which reduced expenditures and minimized the risk of a data breach and fulfills one of our goals of our IT risk audit assessment.

Second was the challenge we might have to face as we continue to focus on our membership by providing creative ways for mission delivery, to engage new members, and retain our current members and units.

And third, our initiatives and special projects to counteract those challenges by increasing the funding of our student scholarships, decreasing the cost of direct mail campaigns, and ensuring the highest level of service to our members by continuing to develop and care for our staff.

This committee met seven times this year both in person and via live stream. Our

goal: to make the necessary budget adjustments reflective of new and changing goals, to review our financial policies, to oversee our investment funding and alternative revenue streams, and to conduct the final review of the ALA and the ALA Foundations' annual audits.

Additionally, members of this committee analyze financial statements every month. These actions ensure that the American Legion Auxiliary and national organization continues to meet our nonprofit benchmarks and governmental mandates.

VALEO Financial Advisors manages our investments including our Helen Colby Small AEF Fund, our National President Scholarship Endowment Fund, the Paid Up For Life, PUFL Fund, Spirit of Youth Fund, and our general fund. Private alternative investments were including investments in multifamily housing, medical office buildings, senior living housings, community office space, timber, and industrial

development asset classes.

So, our national footprint now reaches across 13 states in many cities and spreading the ALA mission to veterans, military, and their families. Year-to-date, our membership dues increase was \$221,090 better than budget.

(Applause)

MS. CLAPP: Our investment income was \$139,240 better than budget. The net operating income is \$1,445,830 better than budget. Congratulations.

(Applause)

MS. CLAPP: While -- listen close -- the net operating expenses were \$1,187,300 under budget.

(Applause)

MS. CLAPP: So, with all these numbers at the time of this report, the income generated from the recent dues increased, along with cost containment efforts and our interest in dividend proceeds, we are expected to exceed our organizational expenses for the first time in

five years.

(Applause)

MS. CLAPP: That is a big woo-hoo. As I said in NEC, it's woo-hoo not voodoo.

(Laughter)

MS. CLAPP: These targeted efforts have resulted, as you can see, in continued ALA mission trainings, ALA Junior meetings, national officer travel, and increased funding for scholarships bringing our total of current 18 Spirit of Youth scholarships, as you can see, to 67. That is incredible. Thank you.

(Applause)

MS. CLAPP: These initiatives are important for the education and support of our unit members and the communities we serve. One step can start a journey, one song can change a moment, one smile can start a friendship, one hug can lift a soul. One candle can wipe out darkness, one life can make a difference. One word can start a prayer, one hope can lift the spirit, one touch can show you care. Be that one

today.

Your American Legion Auxiliary National Finance Committee's number one priority is to be the one to fund our mission at the highest level possible through enhancing the programs that we continue to feel are vibrant, vital, and relevant for more than 100 years of the American Legion Auxiliary. Madam President Lisa, this concludes my platform remarks.

(Applause)

PRESIDENT WILLIAMSON: I think I'll repeat that, woo-hoo. The financial health of our organization is a testament to the work and dedication of our volunteer finance team. Leading that charge is our National Treasurer, Marybeth Revoir, who is here to present the national treasurer's report. Marybeth.

(Applause)

(Music played)

MS. REVOIR: Madam National President and fellow members of the American Legion Auxiliary, good morning.

ALL: Good morning.

MS. REVOIR: Our organization is built on four pillars of service established by the American Legion. Our American Legion Auxiliary also follows these founding tenants as we practice service not self. I passionately believe our treasurers and secretaries can also be thought of as our pillars of strength. They are the backbone of your unit, district, county, and department operations and generally are responsible for the day-to-day success of these entities usually serving multiple terms.

They volunteer their time and expertise to perform multiple functions that keep us on track as we work to fulfill our mission of service. I've always had a special place in my heart for the hard-working treasurers for our organization. This is a role I settled into many years ago and which has allowed me to continue to serve the American Legion Auxiliary.

Treasurers should by nature serve with integrity and confidence so that they can ensure

the members will trust in their judgment. They perform their duties with instructions from the organization's governing documents and actions of the members during regular meetings. It is important that they remain out of disputes between members and stay apolitical.

It is my hope that each of you will go back to your units and such, seek out those indispensable treasurers and secretaries, tell them you how much you appreciate them, give them a big hug. I am sure your acknowledgment to their contributions to our overall success will make their day. Today, I'd like to share some insight into one such pillar of strength from the American Legion Auxiliary's national financial past.

Ms. Cecilia Sophia Wenz led the national organization and their finances as national treasurer for almost 40 years. She joined the staff soon after our organization was founded and was elected treasurer in 1928, a position she was reelected to until her

retirement in 1967. Think of that, 40 years of service in the same job for our organization. Cecilia was known as resident speaker; she seldom said much. Not like me, but she didn't say much, but she was known to insert a quip or a story on occasion, so quotes from her are very scarce.

When interviewed by a newspaper during 1923 national convention while she was the assistant treasurer, the reporter noted all day and half the night she sits in the Auxiliary headquarters, takes in money, gives out tickets and information. An answer to his question about what she thought of San Francisco, Cecilia replied, "I haven't had a chance to even get out and see the city. We haven't done anything but work, and it doesn't look as though we will do anything else while we are here".

Our current finance division would certainly second that comment and would certainly understand. 40 years of service in a role as national treasurer, Cecilia was certainly a mighty force in shaping our organization even if

it was a quiet one, always in the background.

I'd like to give a big thank you to the national headquarters archivist Cathi Taylor for her research on Ms. Wenz and finding me the information and the lovely pictures that you've been able to see.

Contained in this year's annual report book, you can review the last audited statement of this organization as of September 2023. American Legion Auxiliary has a fiduciary responsibility to publish these statements making them available to our membership and the public. They continue to show we are good stewards of the funds entrusted to us to further the mission of the American Legion Auxiliary.

Included in the convention magazine treasurer's report, you can get a sense of our income and expenses during this current administration for the first three quarters of it. Lots of numbers, but they describe a successful path. In closing, Madam President, I'd like to once again quote National Treasurer

Cecilia Wenz. In 1965 she told the convention body, "There are times when a treasurer is very popular, and there are times when she is most unpopular, but a treasurer must be a watch dog, so to speak, in this, I have conscientiously tried to do."

I am honored to say I served the role of national treasurer as Cecilia described, always a watch dog and to the best of my ability. I also would like to make one announcement. Yesterday, you heard about a \$20,000 check that came in a donation to the Spirit of Youth Fund to help make the goal of \$70,000 for this year. I'd like to publicly thank Team Alaska and National President Lisa for that contribution. Thank you very much.

(Applause)

MS. REVOIR: Madam President, this concludes my platform remarks. It has been an honor to work with you this year.

(Applause)

PRESIDENT WILLIAMSON: Thank you very

much, Marybeth. We're going to have a little shuffle here real quick. I just got a text from the national commander's aide that they're running a little ahead, and I'm going to go over to the Legion, and we're going to have our national vice president share this meeting for a while.

(Applause)

MS. WARD: The American Legion Auxiliary Foundation significantly enhances the lives of our veterans, military personnel, and their families by providing essential funding for American Legion Auxiliary programs both today and for future generations. To share more about the incredible impact our generous donors and supporters have made on the lives of veterans and their families, please welcome the American Legion Auxiliary Foundation Board President, Cathleen MacInnes.

(Applause)

(Music played)

MS. MACINNES: Thank you very much,

Madam President. The American Legion Auxiliary Foundation exists for one reason, to ensure that the programs of the American Legion Auxiliary thrive for many years to come by providing financial support to mission-focused Auxiliary programs and initiatives.

The Mission Endowment Fund provide contributions to ALA programs like Girls Nation and for the first time next year Spirit of Youth scholarships. The foundation has had the opportunity to grant \$210,000 to ALA Girls Nation since 2012.

The Veteran Projects Fund helps make your unit, your district, or your department make a direct impact on veterans, military, and their families in your community by supporting one-time needs. Many ALA entities partner with other veteran service organizations to help them both to assist the greatest number of veterans.

Golden Valley Unit 22 of Arizona received a --

(Applause)

MS. MCINNES: -- received a grant of

\$10,000 to assist the Jerry Ambrose Veterans Council's Operation 6 in making roofing repairs to their storm damage transitional housing facility where they serve homeless and at-risk veterans. Unit 22 has collaborated on many projects and events for this group helping to reduce veteran homelessness, suicide, and substance abuse. What a terrific use of the Veteran Projects Fund to be the one for many veterans in the Kingman, Arizona, area.

(Applause)

MS. MACINNIS: James R. Hickey, Unit 120, Wolcott Unit 881, and Marion Memorial Unit 1430 in New York --

(Applause)

MS. MACINNIS: -- partnered to obtain a Veteran Project Fund grant to purchase an ePiano -- Amy, where are you? Are you listening? -- for the Canandaigua VA Medical Center community living center complex. When not being used by the veteran musicians, the ePiano

will be used for interfaith church services and for music therapy.

The foundation helps to fund the ALA's co-precentorship of the National Veterans Creative Arts Festival each year having provided a total of \$521,000 towards that effort since 2014. The foundation also awards local veterans creative festival art grants. This year six grants totaling \$15,000 were awarded to units in the local VA affiliated festivals in Colorado, Florida, Indiana, and New York, and they are listed at the Wall of Heroes.

The ALA Foundation received donations from ALA members, units, departments, and others. \$83,930 to the Veterans Creative Arts Festival Fund; \$29,774 to the Veteran Projects Fund; 87,211 to the Mission Endowment Fund; and \$100,000 from The American Legion Department of New York for the Veterans Creative Arts Festival Fund. Perhaps all-American Legion departments will make similar donations, so go back home and encourage them.

This report was made possible by the dedication of the ALA Foundation Board, the national headquarters development team, and the finance division staff. Retiring from the Board this year with many thanks for their services, are elected directors Lauralee Gooch and Kaye Hirst, Kathy Daudistel, Marybeth Revoir, and National President Lisa Williamson.

In the coming year, we look forward to welcoming Shawnika Hunt, Pam Ray, and Virginia Hobbs, and welcoming back Linda Boone and Coral May Grout. We also hope for an increase in ALA foundation grant applications to strengthen all of your units' mission-focused programs.

In addition, next year the foundation will be presenting two department awards: the Donor Distinction Award to the department with the largest per capita contributions to the ALA Foundation funds, and the Grant Impact Award to the department with the greatest number of approved ALA Foundation grants.

Your contributions to the ALA

Foundation have made our work possible and thank you most of all for using your ALA Foundation grants to enhance your ability to be the one for America's veterans.

Madam President, this concludes my platform remarks, and we do have four courtesy resolutions.

PRESIDENT WILLIAMSON: Would the resolutions chair, Jane Hardacre, please join us on stage to present.

MS. HARDACRE: I would be happy to present, Madam President. Good morning.

ALL: Good morning.

MS. HARDACRE: The first courtesy resolution is for Amwins whereas Amwins has been and remains a faithful partner to the American Legion Auxiliary and its members. Amwins is a leading global specialty insurance distributor and continues to provide ALA members with the most cost-effective options and comprehensive coverage whereas Amwins is a generous sponsor of Wall of Heroes initiative to honor veterans and

service members.

Resolved, that the American Legion Auxiliary expresses its sincere appreciation to our partners at Amwins for your unwavering dedication to delivering tailored insurance solutions that meet the unique needs of our military families that reflect the highest standards of professionalism and care.

Courtesy resolution for Ship Thrifty whereas Ship Thrifty is an authentic supporter of the American Legion Auxiliary's mission and continues to display that in the work they do with the ALA units and departments. Ship Thrifty educates, inspires, and empowers people to send care packages to service members through incredible no-cost tools, expert support, connections, and proven processes that support thousands of military care package events each year whereas Ship Thrifty is a generous partner of the American Legion Auxiliary.

Resolved, that the American Legion Auxiliary expresses its gratitude to Rob and

Michelle Williams at Ship Thrifty for empowering ALA members to ship care packages and support the well-being of service members near and far. May you continue to uphold the highest standards of excellence and making a lasting impact on the lives of those who serve.

Courtesy resolution for USAA whereas USAA is dedicated to providing tailored banking solutions that meet the unique needs of our military personnel and their families that reflect the highest standards of excellence and integrity. Through USAA's innovated financial products, personalized customer service, and steadfast support of military families, they have demonstrated a deep understanding of the sacrifices made by our service members.

Whereas USAA is a generous member benefits provider of the American Legion Auxiliary and is committed to empowering our committee with financial stability and security. Resolved, that the American Legion Auxiliary extends our sincere gratitude and commends USAA

for their continued support. Your partnership ensuring the financial well-being of our service members and their family members is invaluable, and we are grateful for your unwavering dedication to those who serve our country.

Courtesy resolution for the American Legion Auxiliary Foundation whereas the American Legion Auxiliary Foundation has contributed liberally and consistently from their fiscal resources to the American Legion Auxiliary programs like ALA Girls Nation and the National Veterans Creative Arts Festival.

Whereas, the American Legion Auxiliary Foundation continues to use veteran project funds and Veterans Creative Arts Festival grants to empower units and departments to forge partnerships with their local veteran service organizations and VA facilities to fund community projects.

Resolved, that the American Legion Auxiliary offers its profound thanks to the American Legion Auxiliary Foundation for their

financial commitment to bettering the lives of veterans, military, and their families. Thank you, Madam President.

(Applause)

MS. WARD: Let's show our appreciation to these great supporters of the ALA mission by giving them a huge round of applause.

(Applause)

MS. WARD: 911, please. We need a medic, please. Break. 15-minute break. We will reconvene at 10:20 a.m. Thank you. 15-minute break.

(15-MINUTE BREAK)

MS. WARD: Everybody, be seated. Call to order. With your applause given recently, the resolutions are adopted. Thank you, Jane Hardacre and Cathy MacInnes.

(Applause)

MS. WARD: I have been in awe of all the departments and units coming together as a family. Making our communities better is something Auxiliary members strive for every day.

Please welcome Diana Sirovina, National Community Service Chairman, to tell us more about how our members are contributing to their communities.

(Applause)

(Music played)

MS. SIROVINA: Good morning.

ALL: Good morning.

MS. SIROVINA: Madam National President, what did our members do to make their communities a better place to live? Reports from all 52 departments showed our members knew no limits when it came to volunteering time and resources to help those around them. Members volunteered for Dress for Success, Prom Closet, Project Hope, Toys for Tots, Adopt a Highway, Meals on Wheels, just to name a few community projects.

They also partnered with organizations such as The Rotary, The Lion's Club, and the VFW to make a greater impact on their communities. And if all that wasn't enough, they spent countless hours working in their local schools,

libraries, churches, senior centers, and food pantries.

Units all across the country participated in the national days of service. For the 9/11 National Day of Service, West Virginia Unit 93 purchased American flags that were displayed in the healing field in Huntington.

(Applause)

MS. SIROVINA: Unit 19 in Midland, Texas, participated in the Martin Luther King, Jr. day of service by donating hygiene and cleaning products to a senior life event and partnered with a high school basketball team to cook and deliver meals to 70 people experiencing homelessness in the area.

In October 2022, the National Executive Committee of The American Legion passed a resolution establishing American Legion Family day to be observed annually the last Saturday of April.

In Texas, the Post 511 American Legion

family --

(Applause)

PRESIDENT WILLIAMSON: -- hosted their American Legion family day by inviting veterans, military families, and people from their community to a full day of fun, food, and lots of information. There were games for children and adults, and everyone enjoyed the barbeque. Tables were set up to provide information on Legion family programs, and they gave the children poppy and Americanism coloring books.

Be The One was the main focus during their American Legion Family Day. A post member told how an Auxiliary member helped him through some very trying times. He talked about the first time he went to that post and how this person was a godsend because she began talking to him, not knowing how deeply depressed he was. He said he joined the Post and continues to go there on a weekly basis because he feels comfortable and can talk about his problems.

The Glenn Arden Post 275 Legion family in Maryland held several fundraisers in advance to raise money so the community could come out to a completely free event. They invited their community partners from the police and fire departments, library, health care, and local government to provide information to all that attended.

On the day of the event, they opened their doors to well over 200 people. They had information tables set up and were able to recruit several new members for the Legion family. There was an area set up to decorate cards for veterans and active-duty military. Face painting, dancing, and food were also available all day. The rain that day did not stop the people from coming out to meet The American Legion Family and learn what they do to support our veterans and the community.

As a major outreach program of the American Legion Auxiliary since 1926, the Community Service Program demonstrates our long-

standing commitment to making our communities a better place to live. Perhaps Montana's chairman said it best, we are visible in our communities with our programs and activities. Every community having an American Legion Auxiliary has been enhanced by our dedication to serving our communities, our veterans, and our active-duty military.

Madam President, this concludes my platform remarks.

(Applause)

MS. WARD: Thank you, Diana. The Leadership Committee aims to equip our members with the confidence and skills needed to excel in leadership roles. Here to share her report is National Leadership Chairman, Linda Tome.

(Applause)

(Music played)

MS. TOME: Madam National President Lisa, good morning. Can I see a show of hands from the audience who considers themselves a leader? Okay. Good, but I didn't see

everybody's hands go up, but I'll bet that most of you are.

Strangely, I received several reports from department chairs who said that they were surprised they were appointed the department leadership chairman. They did not consider themselves a leader, but guess what, they ended the year more knowledgeable and confident in themselves than they ever thought they could be. One of the chairs said, and I quote, "Someone saw in me what I didn't see in myself." So, to those of you who did not raise your hand, think again.

The purpose of the Leadership Committee is to better equip members to serve in leadership positions with confidence and skill, and one of our key program statements is aimed at raising awareness of ALA leadership development opportunities. Many departments encourage their members to attend mission training. You don't need a special title to attend these training sessions; your title as a unit member is what we

are looking and attend they did.

Having sessions in all five divisions, the numbers for mission training this year were impressive with 441 attendees, almost a 35 percent growth from '22-'23.

(Applause)

MS. TOME: The last time mission training had over 400 attendees was back in 2018-2019. Great job promoting mission training. And I hope all of you who attended came back energized about our programs and shared your knowledge with everyone.

The second key program statement is to promote participation in the ALA Academy. We made great progress from September 1st to May 31st. This year over 1,300 members completed ALA academy courses, an increase from 900 attendees the previous year. Woo-hoo.

The Departments of Pennsylvania, Florida. Come on, catch up.

(Applause)

MS. TOME: The Departments of

Pennsylvania, Florida, Indiana, California, and Arizona had over 100 members accessing the ALA Academy and/or attending webinars. Great job, and thank you.

And our third key program statement to enhance knowledge about ALA history, programs, and organization, Department of Florida had all 16 district presidents schedule an Auxiliary basics course concepts, ABC School, covering a range of mete -- of topics from protocol to social media presence taught by certified instructors.

Leadership chairs organized various events including award-writing workshops, fall and spring leadership conferences, midwinter conferences, and department workshops. Many workshops also included The American Legion Family and additional training opportunities for Be the One.

(Applause)

MS. TOME: In a similar vein, the Department of New York's goal was to expand its

monthly leadership Zoom workshops.

(Applause)

MS. TOME: Leadership over lunch and late-night leadership workshops were created and scheduled resulting in great participation. Way to be inclusive and think about the demographics and needs of your members.

In Utah, Peggy Robertson, the department leadership chair, started the year with a weekly Facebook live session on Monday mornings at 10:30 a.m. The topics covered officer duties, mission outreach, programs and member support committees, and addressing members questions and concerns. Good job, Peggy. Thank you.

The Department of Georgia's leadership theme, Mission Matters: Amp Up for Leadership for Unit Foundational Strength, started in July last year. Members were encouraged to engage through weekly emails from Leadership Chair, Cheryl Waybright. They earned points for reading emails and replying that they were amped up. They

earned additional points for attending events and sharing how they implemented the information that they received. Great way to encourage engagement and provide incentives.

To make learning fun, the Departments of Florida and California played Jeopardy --

(Applause)

MS. TOME: -- to encourage participation at their conferences while the Department of Pennsylvania plays What's My Role. Members roll the dice, choose a card with an ALA roles/responsibilities, and win a Tootsie Roll if they guessed correct. If they didn't guess correctly, they won knowledge but still won a Tootsie Roll. Sounds like it was a great success.

I'd like to thank my leadership committee because overall, it was a very busy year in the nation filled with learning, love, and leadership. I began with a quote and like to read and end with another leadership quote which really could also be interchanged with mentoring,

huge part of leadership. "Leadership is making others better as a result of your presence and making sure that impact lasts in your absence."

Madam National President, this concludes my remarks.

(Applause)

MS. WARD: Thank you, Linda. The role of the National Membership Committee is to encourage and support our nationwide efforts to attract and retain a diverse and active membership because members are the Auxiliary's most valuable asset. Here to present the membership report is National Membership Chairman, Karen Toll.

(Applause)

(Music played)

MS. TOLL: Oh, I'm glad you had a break, my team and I just made it. Good morning.

ALL: Good morning.

MS. TOLL: What a positive year we have had racing with our sled dog teams. We embraced the Iditarod theme and created our own great

membership race to honor National President Lisa Williamson. We had dog themes for everything. We creatively named mascots and encouraged our hardworking mushing teams. Thank you all for making this a wonderfully fun year.

This year we watched our membership slide, and then it stopped, and then it started again. We worked hard to discover why we were sliding and to make any corrections that we could. We all still have a lot of work to do.

There were 312 recruit ten winners, and they will all receive a special gift for their hard work. I am sure they'll be sporting their new gift soon. This number has increased over the past years, and we feel that this is because we included all Auxiliary membership, and it did not mandate any number of Senior members. We think that helped the increase.

There will be exciting changes to this next year, so be on the lookout so that the numbers are higher and maybe you can be included. For our 100 percent deadline, which was July 4th,

we had 13 departments make goal. They were the
Department of Alaska --

(Applause)

MS. TOLL: Arizona.

(Applause)

MS. TOLL: California.

(Applause)

MS. TOLL: Colorado.

(Applause)

MS. TOLL: Delaware.

(Applause)

MS. TOLL: District of Columbia.

(Applause)

MS. TOLL: Florida.

(Applause)

MS. TOLL: Hawaii.

(Applause)

MS. TOLL: Maryland.

(Applause)

MS. TOLL: Michigan.

(Applause)

MS. TOLL: New Hampshire.

(Applause)

MS. TOLL: New Mexico.

(Applause)

MS. TOLL: And Pennsylvania.

(Applause)

MS. TOLL: Congratulations. The departments reaching 102 percent goal by the deadline of July 27th were Alaska.

(Applause)

MS. TOLL: Arizona.

MS. TOLL: Delaware.

(Applause)

MS. TOLL: District of Columbia.

(Applause)

MS. TOLL: Florida.

(Applause)

MS. TOLL: Hawaii.

(Applause)

MS. TOLL: Maryland.

(Applause)

MS. TOLL: Michigan.

(Applause)

MS. TOLL: New Hampshire.

(Applause)

MS. TOLL: And New Mexico.

(Applause)

MS. TOLL: Congratulations. The Department of Florida Musers took an early lead and never looked back. Florida finished second overall with a percentage of 113.86.

MS. TOLL: They were taken over in the end by the Department of Hawaii.

(Applause)

MS. TOLL: In our division race, the sweet southerners headed out strong, but the western division was right on their tails --

(Applause)

MS. TOLL: -- and they, too, quickly took the lead and maintained this to the end.

(Applause)

MS. TOLL: Meanwhile, in the Department of --

ALL: The west is the best! The west

is the best! The west is the best!

MS. TOLL: Meanwhile, in the Department of Tennessee, they embellished a visualization of membership eligibility. Now, that's adorable. In Alaska, Department President April Sinclair held a workshop at their fall conference teaching back to basics showing how to properly fill out applications, transmittals and data entry forms, as well as how to properly submit them to a department.

April also traveled with her dog, Aurora Chinook. Several other departments named and carried huskies. The Department of Florida chose Sunshine for their sled dog.

(Applause)

MS. TOLL: The Department of New Jersey named their dog Speedy Jersey. And many other departments participated. In the Department of Wisconsin, they referred to their membership calls as poppy calls. They found that communication is the key to keeping everyone involved.

(Applause)

MS. TOLL: The Department of Colorado created and sold T-shirts showing their membership trail to 100 percent.

(Applause)

MS. TOLL: And everyone likes a good rivalry. As many of you sports fans know, Ohio State and Michigan are huge rivals.

(Applause)

MS. TOLL: At the Department Leadership National Conference or DLNC, the Department of Ohio challenged the Department of Michigan to whichever state had the highest percentage of membership by May 31st, the other chairperson would wear the opposing state's football team shirt and provide a gift. Sorry, Ohio.

(Applause)

MS. TOLL: I wanted to share with you an exciting membership story. Our Eastern Division Membership chair Corrinna Colson from Vermont --

(Applause)

MS. TOLL: -- and her NEC Kelly

Donaldson --

(Applause)

MS. TOLL: -- were on Facebook and saw a story about a little girl living in Kentucky; she was selling popcorn. If her sales were enough, she could get a popcorn popper for herself. This caught Corrinna and Kelly's eye because the little girl wanted the popper so that when her deployed father returned home, they could both enjoy the popcorn that they so loved.

By the time Corrinna and Kelly saw the post, it was too late to make a purchase, so they took it to the next level. They purchased the same popcorn popper and had it delivered to the little girl.

(Applause)

MS. TOLL: With the help of Kentucky Department Secretary Jennifer Mullins, they contacted Karen Presson of Unit 3 in La Center, Kentucky, who befriended the girl's mother and

siblings. Karen and her husband and a few of the others from their post and unit made visits several times. They had made repairs to their truck, their home, and to the kids' treehouse. We are currently waiting for the father to return home to complete the membership applications, and Corrinna and I will share the family's first year's dues. Now that's teamwork.

(Applause)

MS. TOLL: The moral of this story is membership is everywhere, we just need to ask. I'd like to give a huge thanks to Jeanne Ostnes from Alaska for the use of her official gear.

(Applause)

MS. TOLL: And thank you to vice president and President Lisa for allowing me the opportunity to be the national membership chair, it truly was my honor, and I had a blast. And before I go, if it's okay, my head mushers were out in the audience earlier and have a collection.

MS. WARD: I was told to grab the dog.

MS. TOLL: Oh, thank you. We have a collection for the Spirit of Youth for \$4,538.

(Applause)

MS. TOLL: Thank you, everyone. And please continue to push for membership for many years.

(Applause)

MS. WARD: Thank you for the excellent work, Karen. That was so much fun. Well done, right.

(Applause)

MS. WARD: Effective communication and committed service are the hallmarks of our national secretary's role. Please welcome Kathy Daudistel who will provide us with the national secretary report.

(Applause)

(Music played)

MS. DAUDISTEL: Good morning.

ALL: Good morning.

MS. DAUDISTEL: What an interesting fun

and challenging year I have had serving as your national secretary, but I can honestly say that I genuinely enjoyed the role, and I am grateful to the wonderful people I was able to interact with because of this position.

The interesting part was the very definition of the role. The national secretary is appointed every year by the national president, and it is strictly a volunteer role; therefore, the national secretary does not spend time in national headquarters. I was set up with remote access to the national secretary email, and with the help of headquarters staff, Sommer Prim, we monitored the incoming mail and replied as quickly as possible or rerouted the email to the correct person.

I was also given access to the emblem approval email address, though I quickly realized that Sommer was the in-house emblem expert and was able to expedite the request much faster than me. Recently, that entire process was moved over to the marketing and communications division.

As national secretary, I was invited to sit in on several meetings like the Risk and Compliance and Finance meetings and the ALA Foundation meetings. I will admit that the foundation meetings were at the top of my list because it gave me a chance to see our mission in action.

I was also afforded the opportunity to sit in on the preliminary foundation grant approval meetings, and I really learned a lot about grant writing and approvals from the development division. The fun part was interacting with all of you, our grassroots members. I loved hearing from you, and I was always happy to help you look for a solution. One of my favorite fun parts has been the monthly meetings with the department secretaries.

(Applause)

MS. DAUDISTEL: These meetings were not recorded, and we did not abide by a strict agenda. The meetings were for the secretaries to discuss anything on their minds and to get ideas

from others. Not only did they learn from each other and come up with great ideas, but friendships were formed. I personally learned a great deal from these meetings, and I have much love and respect for the responsibilities and roles the secretaries have taken on. Kudos to all you department secretaries, you are fantastic.

(Applause)

MS. DAUDISTEL: The challenging part came with the emails asking for help with a myriad of issues. These emails ranged from member issues, unit issues, and department issues, and there were not just a few. No one is immune to problems, and it seems everyone is experiencing some type of issue with bullying leading the list. Unfortunately, there isn't a simple fix, and most of the time, national leadership can't intervene.

Your first course of action when you have a problem is to discuss it with your local leadership as appropriate. For instance, if you

are a member experiencing some issues within your unit, discuss it with your unit leadership. If your unit leadership is the issue, take it to the district and/or county level. If needed, take it to the department level.

Consult your unit guidebook, read your constitution and bylaws and standing rules, and don't be afraid to ask questions. I love this organization, and I love especially the mission. Our veterans, military, and their families need us. Together we can, and we do such amazing things. Please, don't let the issues overcome your reason for joining.

(Applause)

MS. DAUDISTEL: You matter. You matter, and without you, we cannot accomplish our goals. It has been a fun, interesting, and challenging year. I learned a lot and, like I said, talked with many wonderful members, as well as interactive with our incredible headquarter staff.

I am so grateful for President Lisa for

giving me this opportunity to serve in this capacity, and I am also so grateful for everything you all do. I will miss serving as your national secretary, but I'm not going away. Thank you again for this wonderful opportunity and keep up the great work. You are appreciated.

(Applause)

MS. WARD: Thank you, Kathy. Today we celebrate not only the achievements of our organization, but also the tireless efforts of the exceptional staff at our national headquarters. Leading this team is our Executive Director, Sara Riegel. Please join me in welcoming her to the stage.

(Applause)

(Music played)

MS. RIEGEL: Okay. Let's just play music for the rest of the day.

(Applause)

MS. RIEGEL: All right. Thank you, Madam President, in care of National Vice President Trish. Good morning, everyone.

ALL: Good morning.

MS. RIEGEL: Good morning, everyone.

ALL: Good morning.

MS. RIEGEL: Gracias. Okay. I wanted to start off -- and I am short, but I'm not going to use the pedestal. I wanted to start off with a simple quote by Phil Jackson, former NBA player and head coach for the Chicago Bulls and the Los Angeles Lakers, "The strength of a team is each individual member. The strength of each member is the team."

We at national headquarters are part of the American Legion Auxiliary team surrendering me -- the me for we. Each member brings a value in our roles and the contributions that we make to the American Legion Auxiliary national team. The staff understands that our role, our responsibility is to ensure that the mission and purpose of the organization is sustained, enhanced, protected, and effective. We bring our experience, knowledge, skill set, and abilities. Not one person alone on the staff has the

capability to know everything and do everything,
so we must come together and become one to
fulfill our role in support of the American
Legion Auxiliary national organization.

You have heard or you will hear in the
committee report all the incredible inspirations
of the Auxiliary in action of the mission the
power of your impact in service to one or in
service to many. You all have shown the national
staff the importance of service -- of the service
support we provide in our roles; you've done this
through mission trainings. You showed up to
learn and grow in delivering the mission.

Junior meetings. You signed up our
future Auxiliary leaders to continue to carry the
torch of the mission. Both of these sessions
this year, as you heard before, were showing a
significant increase in attendance which means
you, as Auxiliary members, answered the call to
learn, to refresh so you can grow because life
never stops teaching.

You've attended ALA Academy and

webinars. You are taking those courses and attending those webinars, thank you. The www.alaforveterans.org website is getting more traction. Over 2.5 million pages have been viewed. That's a lot. The Auxiliary member portal now has over 112,000 users with logins and passwords. So, if we have over 500,000 members but only 112,000 have signed up, just a word of encouragement.

Behind the portal door, our members will find even more information like the ALA Today where you can read up on what we are up to at national headquarters: anniversaries, birthdays, and pivotal operational updates. But don't forget we have so many other touch points that the national staff gets information to you: emails, e-news, blogs, social media, and text messaging.

Over the years, especially post-COVID, we have reported on evaluating our revenue generating resources. This year a management made a recommendation to the Finance Committee

that we step back from our direct mail resource and explore new ways to access revenue resources. For example, The American Legion, through emblem sales, asked the Auxiliary to join them in testing what we call pop-up shops offering name-brand products for a limited time.

What I was asked to do to address today was about the pop-up stores. They will be coming through as a third party, a vendor called BSN, the sports, not through the Emblem Sales websites. Our apologies for any confusion this may have caused. This was the first launch, and the Emblem Sales was encouraged by your response. We will keep you informed of these opportunities, but remember, the Auxiliary does receive royalties from those sales so keep shopping.

Okay. So, I'm just going to wrap up my report because you all don't have enough time for all the things we do at national headquarters. I do want to give a special thanks to National President Lisa and her leadership working and collaborating with me and the national

headquarter staff finding the time while she was bouncing across the nation to take our calls, join our meetings.

And yes, folks, I have full disclosure here, I did accidentally call her one day at 6 a.m. forgetting about the time difference. Yeah, I did that. And but what did she do? She pleasantly said, "What's up?" We the staff were thankful to be a witness this past year to the incredible leadership of The American Legion Family as they were rich in their hearts coming together to continue the mission holding on tight to the importance of "Be the One". Madam President, that concludes my report.

(Applause)

PRESIDENT WILLIAMSON: I'm sure I didn't say what's up kindly.

(Laughter)

PRESIDENT WILLIAMSON: Thank you very much, Sara. So now we're to the meat of today. National Constitution & Bylaws Chair Michele DeGennaro has been working hard to ensure our

governing documents are maintained so that we may easily answer questions about our governance, programs, and eligibility. Please welcome Michele to the stage for her report and the presentation of the amendments. Michele.

(Applause)

(Music played)

MS. DEGENNARO: Thank you, Madam President, members of the Auxiliary. It is now time for the fun program, woo-hoo.

(Applause)

MS. DEGENNARO: Auxiliary members across the country from Vegas to Rhode Island learned that to have a strong organization, it takes clear and concise governing documents. So, with the start of a new year came new changes, and with those changes came the responsibility to review our constitution and bylaws.

After receiving constitution and bylaws revisions for over 80 units, the Department of Michigan knew it was time to lighten things up

hosting a quiz bowl at their fall conference.

Members were divided into teams and had fun while learning the importance of well-written governing documents. Did I mention they rewarded them with chocolate?

(Applause)

MS. DEGENNARO: Department of Ohio Constitution and Bylaws Chair, Carol T. Robinson, also had fun --

(Applause)

MS. DEGENNARO: -- also had fun with constitution and bylaws this year. At their mid-winter conference, a skit was performed to show the difference it makes when members are informed about the unit's constitution and bylaws. Think of it this way, Carol says, and I quote, "What would a baseball team be like without rules? How many innings would there be? How many strikes would it take before the batter was out?

Without rules, nobody would know how to play baseball. Rules tell us how and what to do so we can complete our mission." Sounds like the

department of Ohio hit a home run.

(Applause)

MS. DEGENNARO: Newt Heisley, Unit 38 in Fountain, Colorado, set up a committee to completely revise their unit-governing documents. It had been several years since the constitution and bylaws were reviewed. The copy they had was only a draft, and the changes were never approved by the membership.

The committee consisted of four members, and they were inspired to complete a full revision when the new Auxiliary year started. Unit members were excited to play a role in making sure they had current and accurate governing documents that would guide their unit to success. After much work, a complete revision, approved by the membership, was submitted to the Department of Colorado. Great job, Newt Heisley, Unit 38.

(Applause)

MS. DEGENNARO: Many departments reported on different ways they helped their

members to understand the importance of clear and concise governing documents. The Department of West Virginia wrote monthly articles including where to find resources available on the national website.

The Department of Kansas took time to sit with their members and explain what each governing document meant and their differences. The Department of Texas also set up a table at their fall conference to personally hand deliver their information.

The Department of Alaska, home of our National President Lisa Williamson, pulled out all the stops during her homecoming as copies of the National Constitution and Bylaws were readily available to read and review while traveling across her beautiful state.

From the Department of Nebraska, incoming Department President Amanda Washburn studied diligently to prepare for her upcoming term while the Department of Oklahoma NEC Tracy Smith reviewed the national policies located in

the back of the National Standing Rules. They say membership is everyone's job, but our national membership chairman -- committee chair, excuse me, Karen Cole says so is the knowledge of our governing documents, even if they can be a little confusing.

The Department of Pennsylvania learned that our constitution and bylaws and standing rules can be our friend. When a concern or question arises, their department's (indiscernible) committee persistent training has resulted in members now asking what's in your governing documents?

And with that, Madam President, this concludes my platform remarks.

(Applause)

MS. DEGENNARO: I do have some amendments if I may continue.

PRESIDENT WILLIAMSON: Sure.

MS. DEGENNARO: So, we do have nine proposed amendments this morning: one amendment to the National Constitution and Bylaws, two

amendments to the National Bylaws, and five amendments to the National Standing Rules. Before we begin consideration of these amendments, the chair would like to remind the delegates of the Convention Standing Rules.

Per Standing Rule 12, all motions must be presented on a motion form. Forms are located at the elections and tally table located at the back of the room where you picked up your keypads. The debate will be limited to two minutes for each speaker.

No person shall speak on the same question more than twice without the consent of the chair -- of the convention, excuse me. I also remind you that we do have a timer here to fairly enforce these rules. The rules also -- oh, sorry, Lisa. No, that's fine.

PRESIDENT WILLIAMSON: Go ahead.

MS. DEGENNARO: Okay.

PRESIDENT WILLIAMSON: I can read over your shoulder just fine. You're good.

MS. DEGENNARO: Do you want to use your

book?

(Laughter)

MS. DEGENNARO: The rules also state that during the debate, delegates and alternates and guests are to remain seated within their own delegation or assigned seating area unless they are approaching the microphone, completing a motion form, exiting or entering the general session hall.

Finally, Rule 11 states that only national committee chairs and voting delegates of the convention may make motions and address the convention during debate. Are there any questions?

PRESIDENT WILLIAMSON: That's my part.

(Laughter)

PRESIDENT WILLIAMSON: Michele, please proceed with presenting the amendments.

(Laughter)

MS. DEGENNARO: Back to me. I was on a

roll. It is the responsibility of the Constitution and Bylaws Committee to bring all proposed amendments to the floor for deliberation apart from the endorsement status by the preconvention committee held on Saturday. Therefore, regardless of the preconvention committees recommendation on the adoption of the amendments, I will, on behalf of the Constitution and Bylaws Committee, move for the adoption of all the amendments. Remember, all departments and delegates received advanced copies of these amendments.

Before I present the proposed amendments, on the behalf of the national and bylaws committee, I move that if any amendment is adopted, it will not take effect until the close of this 2024 national convention.

PRESIDENT WILLIAMSON: It's my turn?

MS. DEGENNARO: Yeah.

(Laughter)

PRESIDENT WILLIAMSON: It has been moved that if any amendment is adopted, it will

not take effect until the close of this 2024 national convention. Are there any objections? Hearing none, the motion is adopted. Thank you very much. Again, Michele.

MS. DEGENNARO: Thank you, Madam National President. Proposed amendment number one seeks to make national chairman delegates at large to the national convention. The amendment was proposed by the Department of Minnesota. If adopted, the section will read as follows:
Constitution Article 6, National Convention, New Section number 7.

National committee chairman,
Americanism, American Legion Auxiliary Girls Nation, Auxiliary Emergency Fund, Children and Youth, Community Service, Constitution and Bylaws, Education, Finance, Junior Activities, Leadership, Legislative, Membership, National Security, Poppies, Public Relations, Risk and Compliance, and Veteran Affairs and Rehabilitation shall be delegates at large to the national convention unless already a delegate at

large voted to be -- unless already a delegate at large, excuse me, vote to be exercised with their departments.

Constitution and Bylaws pre-convention committee recommends the amendment be adopted. There is also a consequential amendment to renumber the current 7, 8, and 9 to become the new 8, 9, and 10. Madam National President, on behalf of the Constitution and Bylaws Committee, I move the adoption of proposed amendment number 1 with a consequential amendment to renumber the sections as distributed in the amendment packet.

PRESIDENT WILLIAMSON: The question is on the adoption of the proposed amendment number 1 with a consequential amendment to be renumbered the sections as distributed. The Constitution and Bylaws pre-convention committee recommends the amendment be adopted. Is there any discussion; and when you do so, please speak clearly and loud.

Are you ready for the question?

ALL: Yes.

PRESIDENT WILLIAMSON: All those in favor of amendment number 1, press 1 on your keypad. All those oppose, press 2.

(Music played)

PRESIDENT WILLIAMSON: Okay. Voting is now closed. And please show the results. The vote is 760 in the affirmative, and 38 in the negative. The affirmative has it, and the amendment is adopted.

(Applause)

PRESIDENT WILLIAMSON: And the governing documents are now amended. Please continue.

MS. DEGENNARO: Madam National President, proposed amendment number 2 seeks to give the National Executive Committee the authority to discipline foreign units not attached to a department. The amendment was proposed by the National Executive Committee. If adopted, the section will read as follows:
Bylaws Article 11, Unit Charter, Section 1.

Units attached to departments may be

disciplined by their department executive committee for any good and sufficient cause. Foreign units not attached to a department may be disciplined by the National Executive Committee for any good and sufficient cause.

Disciplinary action may include censure, probation with corrective terms, or initiating the charter cancellation process in which the National Executive Committee has final authority. Disciplinary action must follow the principles of fundamental fairness which includes notice and an opportunity to be heard.

The Constitution and Bylaws pre-convention committee recommends the amendment be adopted.

Madam National President, on behalf of the Constitution and Bylaws Committee, I move the adoption of proposed amendment number 2 with a consequential amendment to change the title of the article as distributed in the amendment packet.

PRESIDENT WILLIAMSON: The question is

on the adoption of proposed amendment number 2 with a consequential amendment to change the title of the article as distributed. The Constitution and Bylaws preconvention committee recommends the amendment be adopted.

Is there any discussion? Are you ready for the question?

ALL: Yes.

PRESIDENT WILLIAMSON: All those in favor of amendment number 2, please press number 1 on your voting keypad. All those opposed, press number 2. And voting is now open.

(Music played)

PRESIDENT WILLIAMSON: Okay. Voting is now closed. Please show the results. Oh, look at that. 736 for yes, and 28 for no. So, the affirmative has it, and the amendment is adopted, and the governing documents are now amended. Please continue, Michele.

MS. DEGENNARO: Madam National President, proposed amendment number 3 seeks to remove duplicate wording from the Bylaws. The

amendment was proposed by the National Executive Committee. If adopted, Bylaws, Article 11, Cancellation of Charters, Unit Charters, Sections 5 and 6 will be removed. No renumbering in this section is required.

The Constitution and Bylaws pre-convention committee recommends the amendment be adopted. Madam National President, on behalf of the Constitution and Bylaws Committee, I move the adoption of proposed amendment number 3 as distributed in the amendment packet.

PRESIDENT WILLIAMSON: The question is on the adoption of proposed amendment number 3 as distributed. The Constitution and Bylaws pre-convention committee recommends the amendment be adopted. Is there any discussion? Are you ready for the question?

ALL: Yes.

PRESIDENT WILLIAMSON: All those in favor of amendment number 3, press the number 1 on your key -- voting keypad. All those oppose, press the number 2. Please vote now.

(Music played)

PRESIDENT WILLIAMSON: Okay. Voting is now closed. Please show the results. The vote is 761 in the affirmative, and 15 in the negative. The affirmative has it, and the amendment is adopted, and the governing documents are now amended. Please continue.

MS. DEGENNARO: Madam National President, proposed amendment number 4 seeks to bring back the Past President's Parlay as the national standing committee. The amendment was proposed by the Department of Texas. If adopted, the section will read as follows: Standing Rules 7, Committees, Section 6, member organizational support past president's parlay shall be comprised of a chairman and two members of all whom shall be past national presidents and all of whom shall serve a one-year term.

Members in the Past President's Parlay shall all have served as the American Legion Auxiliary national president. The purpose of the Past President's Parlay is to further the mission

of the American Legion Auxiliary through activism to include but not limited to support of national initiatives, service projects, and mentoring of members at all levels.

The Constitution and Bylaws

preconvention committee recommends the amendment not be adopted. Madam National President, on behalf of the Constitution and Bylaws Committee, I move the adoption of proposed amendment number 4 as distributed in the amendment packet.

PRESIDENT WILLIAMSON: The question is on the adoption of proposed amendment number 4 as distributed. The Constitution and Bylaws preconvention committee recommends the amendment not be adopted.

Is there any discussion?

MS. DEGENNARO: Madam National President, microphone number 1.

PRESIDENT WILLIAMSON: Microphone number one.

MS. FICKLIN: Rose Ficklin, Department of Arizona.

PRESIDENT WILLIAMSON: Are you sure?

MS. FICKLIN: I'm not sure today, no.

(Laughter)

MS. FICKLIN: Where does the funding come from for the travel for the new chairman and any awards or marketing? Is this in the new budget coming up?

PRESIDENT WILLIAMSON: I'm going to let Michele field this one.

MS. DEGENNARO: Thank you, Madam President. During our preconvention, our current Finance chairman -- Past National President Nicole Clapp stated that during the budget session, it was not budgeted for the upcoming year. So, I hope that answers your question to that, Rose.

As far as the future funding, it has not been budgeted for the '24-'25 year.

MS. DEGENNARO: Madam President, number

2. PRESIDENT WILLIAMSON: The delegate, number 2, please.

MS. DUSCHECK: Diane Duscheck,

Wisconsin, Past National President. I speak against this proposal. To have a committee that is composed of people who have only been past national president limits the number of people on this committee that can even come on to this committee to less than 25 people.

I don't think there's anyone in this organization who has background knowledge that needs to be on a special committee to share it with the people around them, so I think that we all need to step up as leaders and help out everyone around us without this committee. So, I speak against this.

(Applause)

PRESIDENT WILLIAMSON: Thank you, ma'am.

MS. DEGENNARO: Madam President, microphone 3.

PRESIDENT WILLIAMSON: Microphone number 3, please.

MS. COPELAND: Theresa Copeland, Department of Texas.

PRESIDENT WILLIAMSON: Go ahead.

MS. COPELAND: I speak for this motion, and the reason I do is I think it's important that we have a past presidents' parlay on all levels. Yes, we have leadership, and yes, we have constitution and bylaws that can help us with policies and procedures, but when you have people that have already served in this office, they bring something special to it, it's an empathy and an understanding so that the leaders now, the leaders we have now have a committee they can go to.

They understand when you're talking about things like with bullying and how they deal with things that -- just someone that has served in that office understands. Most of the people on these committee are coming anyway. They already have a call-in, or they're coming for a reason. They serve on something already, so I just think that these committees bring something special.

I'm not saying that they're better than

anybody else, there's just more of an understanding and empathy that you have when you've already served in this position that you can give to our leaders that are serving today.

PRESIDENT WILLIAMSON: Thank you very much.

MS. DEGENNARO: Microphone 1, Madam President.

PRESIDENT WILLIAMSON: The delegate at microphone 1.

MS. MORRIS: Glynis Morris, Department of Nevada. I speak against this amendment. While the basic premise of the past national president is to provide mentorship, leadership, and guidance from years of invaluable service, knowledge, and experience, the way this current amendment is written, there is no specific mission, no specific duties or function of each committee member.

There is no written plan for -- well, financing the new committee, which you've already discussed. I just actually would like to see

whether or not we could go back and rewrite it.

I think a rewritten amendment would be better.

PRESIDENT WILLIAMSON: Thank you,
Glynis.

MS. WASHINGTON: Madam National
President, microphone 4.

PRESIDENT WILLIAMSON: I thought I saw
someone there. Microphone 4, please.

MS. WASHINGTON: Tina Washington,
Department of Delaware.

PRESIDENT WILLIAMSON: Please go ahead.

MS. WASHINGTON: I stand in opposition
to this amendment. I feel that there are lot of
department presidents and a lot of unit
presidents that can enhance if we go to that
committee, and just to allow only past national
presidents doesn't do the majority of our
membership a service. We need to have input from
all of those people at every level that have
experience in that position. So, I stand
opposed to this amendment.

PRESIDENT WILLIAMSON: Thank you, Tina.

(Applause)

MS. MAGGIE: Madam National President,
microphone 4.

PRESIDENT WILLIAMSON: Go ahead.

MS. MCMAHON: Maggie McMahon, NEC from
the Department of New Jersey. The national got
rid of this committee in 2021 after the Future
Focus Committee met and determined there was no
need for this committee because no one reports to
them. Their purpose on a national level was to
do the luncheon, so I don't -- we're opposed to
this amendment coming up.

PRESIDENT WILLIAMSON: Thank you,
Maggie.

(Applause)

PRESIDENT WILLIAMSON: Is there any
further discussion? Are you ready for the
question?

ALL: Yes.

PRESIDENT WILLIAMSON: All those in
favor of amendment number 4, please press number

1 on your keypad, and those opposed, press number 2. Vote now.

(Music played)

PRESIDENT WILLIAMSON: Nice. I didn't know it was a sing-along. Voting is now closed. Please show the results.

(Applause)

PRESIDENT WILLIAMSON: The vote is 78 in affirmative, 672 in the negative. This has not been adopted, and governing documents will not be amended. Thank you very much. Michele?

MS. DEGENNARO: Madam National President, proposed amendment number 5 seeks to increase the composition of the National Constitution and Bylaws Committee by adding three committee members. The amendment was proposed by the Department of Texas. If adopted, the section will read as follows: Standing Rule 7, Committees, Section 6, Core National Standing Committees Constitution and Bylaws.

The Constitution and Bylaws Committee shall be comprised of chairman, vice chairman,

and three members, all of whom shall serve a one-year term. The purpose of the constitution and bylaws committee is to inform members about having proper governing documents at all levels.

Constitution and Bylaws pre-convention committee recommends the amendment be adopted. Madam National President, on behalf of the Constitution and Bylaws Committee, I move the adoption of proposed amendment number 5 as distributed in the amendment packet.

PRESIDENT WILLIAMSON: The question is on proposed amendment number 5 as distributed. The Constitution and Bylaws pre-convention committee recommends the amendment be adopted. Is there any discussion? Are you ready for the question?

ALL: Yes.

PRESIDENT WILLIAMSON: All those in favor of amendment number 5, press number 1 on your keypad. Those opposed, press number 2. Please vote now.

(Music played)

(Applause)

PRESIDENT WILLIAMSON: Voting is now closed. Please show the results. There we go. 738 in the affirmative, and 49 in the negative. The affirmative has it, and the amendment is adopted, and governing documents are amended. Please continue Michele, or should I say Shirley.

(Laughter)

MS. DEGENNARO: She was dancing and said she feels like she needs the L. I said, well, you are the tall one; you are Laverne.

(Laughter)

MS. DEGENNARO: Madam National President, proposed amendment number 6 seeks to change the purpose of the National Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Committee to include veterans, their families, caregivers and survivors. The amendment was proposed by the National Veteran Affairs and Rehabilitation Committee.

If adopted, the section will read as follows: Standing Rule 7, Committees, Section 6,

Core National Standing Committees, Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Committee. The Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Committee shall be comprised of a chairman who shall serve a one-year term, a vice chairman, and one member serving staggered two-year terms, one of whom shall be appointed each year to a two-year term and a representative from each national division who shall serve a one-year term.

The vice chairman shall serve as the National Veterans Affairs Voluntary Service, VAVS, representative, and the member shall serve the national VAVS deputy representative. The purpose of the Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Committee is to promote programs, events, services that assist and enhance the lives of veterans, their families, their caregivers, and their survivors ensuring the best quality of life possible and the continuing honor of their memory.

The Constitution and bylaws pre-convention committee recommends the amendment

be adopted. Madam National President, on behalf of the Constitution and Bylaws Committee, I move the adoption of proposed amendment number 6 as distributed in the amendment packet.

PRESIDENT WILLIAMSON: The question is on the adoption of proposed amendment number 6 as distributed. The Constitution and Bylaws preconvention committee recommends the amendment be adopted. Is there any discussion? Are you ready for the question?

ALL: Yes.

PRESIDENT WILLIAMSON: All those in favor of amendment number 6, press the number 1 keypad. All those opposed, press number 2. Please vote now.

(Music played)

PRESIDENT WILLIAMSON: Okay. Who's Kermit and Miss Piggy? Voting is now closed. Please show the results. 767 in the affirmative, and 10 in the negative. The affirmative has it, and the amendment is adopted. The governing documents are amended. Please continue, Michele.

MS. DEGENNARO: Thank you, Madam

National President. Proposed amendment number 7 seeks to remove the units authority to revoke membership in the ALA. The membership was proposed by the Department of Ohio. If adopted, the section will read as follows: Standing Rules, Section 11, Units, Number 10. The unit has the responsibility for the discipline of its members. A member disciplined by the member's unit may appeal a unit's disciplinary action in writing to the department executive committee.

There will be no revocation of membership by the unit. A unit may suspend a member only after following the due process and fundamental fairness practices stated in the governing documents of the unit, department, and the local state laws for nonprofits.

The suspended member of the unit will be transferred to the department membership group for a period of not less than three months but no more than one year. After the suspension period, the member may apply to transfer to another unit

pending acceptance by the transfer unit membership. If the suspended member is denied, they may apply to another unit or remain in the department membership group indefinitely.

Disciplinary actions against members including membership suspensions are not appealable to the national organization. All discipline must be imposed in accordance with the principle of fundamental fairness which includes notice and opportunity to be heard. A department may discipline a unit for failure to discipline a member.

Constitution and Bylaws pre-convention committee recommends the amendment not be adopted. Madam National President, on behalf of the Constitution and Bylaws committee, I move the adoption of proposed amendment number 7 as distributed in the amendment packet.

PRESIDENT WILLIAMSON: The question is on the adoption of proposed amendment number 7. The Constitution and Bylaws pre-convention committee recommends the amendment not be

adopted. Is there any discussion?

MS. FICKLIN: Madam National President,
microphone 1.

PRESIDENT WILLIAMSON: Yes.

MS. FICKLIN: Rose Ficklin from the
Department of Arizona. I know where I'm from
now.

(Laughter)

MS. FICKLIN: We are totally opposed to
this. If I have a member in my unit who
embezzles money or physically assaults someone,
all I can do is suspend them for a year and then
put them in the department so that they can go to
another unit and do the same thing and become a
cancer? No, sorry. You guys need to oppose this
one.

(Applause)

PRESIDENT WILLIAMSON: Thank you, Rose,
for your delicate wording.

(Laughter)

PRESIDENT WILLIAMSON: Looks like we
have a delegate at microphone number 2.

MS. CONRAD: Denise Conrad from the Department of Ohio.

PRESIDENT WILLIAMSON: Go ahead, Denise.

MS. CONRAD: I think that maybe our intent wasn't stated clearly enough when we wrote this. The intent was that we did not give any of us eligibility. Our veteran that served, our person in the military served and gave us eligibility to belong to this organization. All we do is verify that that eligibility exists; therefore, how do we take away a membership when their eligibility didn't come from us? So, if you can suspend a member, that still gives you the opportunity to discipline your member.

If you have a member that's transferring from the membership group, you should be able to follow what happened to them. The department should be able to handle. They flag someone when they're expelled now, so why couldn't they flag someone when they're suspended for embezzlement or for an egregious crime. So,

I don't know that membership should be on the table as a consequence for any kind of infraction that they may incur against the organization.

Thank you.

PRESIDENT WILLIAMSON: Thank you, Denise.

MS. MCCLOUD: Madam President, microphone 1.

PRESIDENT WILLIAMSON: Microphone 1?

MS. MCCLOUD: Yeah. Jennifer McCloud, Department of Connecticut. We are against this as it is written, although I appreciate her explanation. In the purpose or rationale for this amendment it was to go ahead so that that person could go ahead and honor their veteran; however, if they're not acting in accordance with our governing code of conduct, how are they honoring that veteran?

(Applause)

PRESIDENT WILLIAMSON: Thank you, Jennifer.

MS. MCCLOUD: Thank you.

PRESIDENT WILLIAMSON: Did I see someone over at microphone 4?

MS. QUAM: Madam President, Carol from the Department of North Dakota. I am a dual member, and it does a dishonor if they --

PRESIDENT WILLIAMSON: Speak into the microphone, would you. We can't quite hear you.

MS. QUAM: I'm a dual member. I'm also a dual member, and if they dishonor the uniform, wouldn't they dishonor the American Legion Auxiliary also? So, if they can't follow the rules, kick their butts out, and I'm putting it mildly. Thank you.

(Applause)

PRESIDENT WILLIAMSON: Thank you very much. I take my words back, Rose.

(Laughter)

PRESIDENT WILLIAMSON: It looks like someone over at microphone 1. Go to microphone 1. We'll come to 2 next.

MS. MORRIS: Glynis Morris, Department of Nevada. We've been given the availability of

rules, regulations on military person that we signed up under, whoever that may be, also still had to follow the same rules. I agree with everybody else because in a sense, it's dishonoring our veteran but depending on our behavior.

Our behavior dictates how we do this. Our behavior dictates how we treat each other, our behavior. And if your behavior is against our normal standard and governing practice, when you go against that, we have to have the availability to say wait a minute. On the way this is worded right now, okay, you get suspended, you go into department membership group. At the end of that suspension, let's say that person doesn't want to come back to my unit because they've had enough of us, which happens, okay. They're done with me; they don't like me, fine, go transfer someplace else.

However, with some of the new rules and laws that are in place, where does that responsibility fall on us to what we're allowed

to tell the next unit that's asking? If you take that away from us, how are we going to be able to monitor our own behavior?

PRESIDENT WILLIAMSON: Thank you,
Glynis.

(Applause)
PRESIDENT WILLIAMSON: The delegate at
number 2.

MS. PERKINS: Madam President, Mary
Kelly-Perkins, Department of Florida. I speak in
opposition. How can I continue to honor and
respect a veteran when I just embezzled a
thousand dollars, \$2,000 to my unit?

PRESIDENT WILLIAMSON: Thank you,
ma'am.

(Applause)

PRESIDENT WILLIAMSON: Mary Jo Stier is
at microphone 4.

MS. STIER: Yep. Mary Jo Stier,
Department of South Dakota. I've been asked to
read this. Are the department secretaries
supposed to keep track to make sure their members

are still in jail?

(Laughter)

PRESIDENT WILLIAMSON: Okay. Not what I thought she was going to read, but. Looks like the delegate at number 1.

MS. LLOYD: Lauren Lloyd from the District of Columbia. I have a clarifying -- I'm sorry. I have a comment. I think the intention behind the proposed amendment is not to vilify our organization or even units, but I do have a concern like Glynis mentioned. Because of HIPAA laws and because of the way that we work and privacy information, but also because sometimes units suspend members where I don't believe it was warranted.

So how do we regulate the balance of power between this issue that we have with bullying within our organization that we just heard about and while trying to keep a fair mind for the good of the Legion and the good of the Legion family? So, I think this recommendation for the proposed amendment is not horrible, I

think it needs to be rewritten and reconsidered with different and better language that actually follows our rules as our governing documents say, but also us as a society and to protect the privacy of people who have maybe made a bad decision that shouldn't be vilified for their future actions. Thank you.

PRESIDENT WILLIAMSON: Thank you,
Lauren.

(Applause)

PRESIDENT WILLIAMSON: Is there someone over there at microphone 4?

MS. PIGNATO: Yes. Good morning.

PRESIDENT WILLIAMSON: Go ahead.

MS. PIGNATO: Kathy Pignato, Department of Illinois. My question and possible concern is should this pass and we're not able to suspend or -- well, not suspend -- to revoke membership, does that mean that all the memberships that have been revoked in the past need to be reinstated under this new proposal?

PRESIDENT WILLIAMSON: Nice point. It

looks like there's -- it's not, that's the answer, but it was a good point. Is that Barbara Corker?

MS. CORKER: Yes.

(Applause)

PRESIDENT WILLIAMSON: Microphone 4 please, Barbara.

MS. CORPER: National President Lisa, Barber Corker, Department of New York. I call for the vote.

PRESIDENT WILLIAMSON: Thank you very much.

(Applause)

PRESIDENT WILLIAMSON: Do we have a second?

ALL: Second.

PRESIDENT WILLIAMSON: Is there any objection to any debate? Any objection? So, we are going to go straight to the question. Let me remind you this is on the question of the proposed adoption of proposed amendment number 7. The Constitution Bylaws pre-convention committee recommends it not be adopted.

Are you ready for the question?

ALL: Yes.

PRESIDENT WILLIAMSON: All those in favor of amendment number 7, press the number 1 on your keypad, and those opposed, press 2. Please vote now.

(Music played)

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

(Applause)

PRESIDENT WILLIAMSON: So, we had 58 in the affirmative and 699 in the negative. The amendment is not adopted, and governing documents will not be amended. Thank you very much. Thank you everyone for your very kind words and -- no, I'm serious. I'm serious. I like that we had a good quality debate, but it was kind, and there no vindictiveness, so thank you very much. Be kind.

(Applause)

PRESIDENT WILLIAMSON: Michele.

MS. DEGENNARO: Thank you, Madam National President. Proposed amendment number 8

seeks to add the ALA Foundation to the National Risk and Compliance Committee's list of responsibilities. The amendment was proposed by the American Legion Auxiliary Foundation. If adopted, the section will read as follows:

Standing Rules 7, Committees, Core Committees
Risk and Compliance.

The Risk and Compliance Committee shall be compromised -- excuse me, comprised of a chairman and two members each serving staggered three-year terms, one of whom shall be appointed each year by the national president and two liaison members, one of whom shall be recommended each year by the national finance committee and one of whom shall be a member of the American Legion Auxiliary Foundation Board of Directors recommended each year by the American Legion Auxiliary Foundation to the National President for appointment.

An additional member independent of the

organization may be selected by the Risk and Compliance Committee from applicants with demonstrated experience and nonprofit risk and compliance to serve not more than two consecutive three-year terms with voice but without vote.

The National President shall appoint the chairman from among those ALA members who are not liaison members. The Risk and Compliance Committee responsibilities with regard to the ALA and the ALA Foundation are to one, review the integrity of financial statements and financial disclosures; two, ensure compliance with legal and regulatory requirements; three, engage the independent auditor and review and approve the annual financial audit and IRS Form 990; four, oversee the organization's internal controls and risk management procedures; five, meet periodically with respective management and auditors to gain an understanding of the potential significant risks and exposure facing the organization and propose needed internal

controls to reduce the risks.

The Constitution and Bylaws pre-convention committee recommends the amendment be adopted. Madam National President, on behalf of the Constitution and Bylaws Committee, I move the adoption of proposed amendment 8 as distributed in the amendment packet.

PRESIDENT WILLIAMSON: The question is on the adoption of proposed amendment number 8 as distributed. The Constitution and Bylaws pre-convention committee recommends the amendment be adopted. Is there any discussion? Are you ready for the question?

ALL: Yes.

PRESIDENT WILLIAMSON: All those in favor of amendment number 8, please press 1 on your keypad. Those opposed, please press 2. And you can vote right now.

(Music played)

PRESIDENT WILLIAMSON: Who knew there were that many voices -- that many verses. So

voting is now closed. Please show the results. So, 761 in the affirmative, 12 in the negative. The affirmative has it, and the amendment is adopted, and our governing documents are amended. Please continue, Michele.

MS. DEGENNARO: Madam National President, proposed amendment number 9 seeks to give the National Ethical Conduct Committee authority to investigate allegations regarding violations of the ALA Foundation's code of ethical conduct.

The amendment was proposed by the American Legion Auxiliary Foundation, and a copy of the ALA Foundation's ethical conduct -- code of conduct was included in the proposed amendments packet previously circulated.

If adopted, the section will read as follows, Standing Rules Article 7, Committees, Special Purpose Committees, Ethical conduct. Ethical conduct, national -- the National President must appoint an Ethical Conduct

Committee. The committee shall be composed of six members each serving staggered three-year terms, no member serving more than two consecutive terms.

The National President shall annually appoint a chairman from among the committee members who have served at least one year. Committee members will be selected from applicants with demonstrated experience and risk assessment conducting investigations and must be independent from the NEC.

To maintain independence, members may not serve on other national committees and will not attend national meetings unless required to report. The purposes of the Ethical Conduct Committee are one, review allegations of code of ethical conduct, violations by all national officers, national committee members, and members of the NEC regardless of voting rights in a timely manner ensuring fundamental fairness and make recommendations to the NEC.

And two, to review allegations of the American Legion Auxiliary ALA Foundation's code of ethical conduct, violations by directors of the ALA Foundation in a timely manner ensuring fundamental fairness and make recommendations to the board of directors of the ALA Foundation. The Constitution and Bylaws pre-convention committee recommends the amendment be adopted.

Madam National President, on behalf of the Constitution and Bylaws Committee, I move the adoption of proposed amendment number 9 as distributed in the amendment packet.

PRESIDENT WILLIAMSON: The question is on the adoption of proposed amendment number 9 as distributed. The Constitution and Bylaws pre-convention committee recommends the amendment be adopted. Is there any discussion? Are you ready for the question?

ALL: Yes.

PRESIDENT WILLIAMSON: All those in favor of amendment number 9, please press 1.

Those opposed, please press 2. And you can vote right now.

(Music played)

PRESIDENT WILLIAMSON: Voting is now closed. Please show the results. 746 in the affirmative, 21 in the negative. The affirmative has it, and the amendment is adopted, and the governing documents are amended.

(Applause)

MS. DEGENNARO: Madam National President, this concludes my report.

(Applause)

MS. DEGENNARO: Woo-hoo. I just want to thank the delegates, and as Lisa said, we want to thank you for a fair and kindness debate.

(Applause)

PRESIDENT WILLIAMSON: So, thank you, Michele. Thank you, delegates. It was a lot of hard work. I really appreciate the kind voting that we really did. I mean, there was no one calling anyone out, it wasn't vicious, it wasn't

mean, and I really appreciated that.

I was really thankful to get back here in time and not have to leave it in Trish's hands to run this debate, but this is one of my favorite parts, so I was glad to get back. I am sad I missed those reports, but I'll watch them on stream later. Thank you very much, everyone. So would the national secretary please give us some convention updates. Kathy?

(Music played)

MS. DAUDISTEL: All right. The member from Michigan has been transported to local medical facility. Thank you for all of your thoughts and prayers. Please remember to stay hydrated, eat. Use the shuttles. Stay as cool as you can. All right. Chaplain Brister would like for all department chaplains to meet on my right-hand side of the stage immediately following this session for a quick meeting. National Vice President Trish would like to remind you if you are involved at all in

today's -- tomorrow's installation practices today at 2 p.m., casual dress is fine.

Okay. This is -- I'm scared. Today, really, the Wall of Heroes is open after this meeting concludes, so stop by after the session. I'm not going to swear that it's really open, so go check it out. That concludes my announcements.

(Applause)

PRESIDENT WILLIAMSON: And who keeps playing with the microphone? Oh, yeah, Michele was here.

(Laughter)

PRESIDENT WILLIAMSON: On that note, this meeting is adjourned until tomorrow morning at 8:30 when I'll see you back in this room. Have a great night. And hydrate.

(Applause) (Music played)

PRESIDENT WILLIAMSON: Oh, there we go.

(Music played)

| <u>Minutes Approval Committee</u> | <u>Date Approved</u> |
|--------------------------------------|----------------------|
| Penelope Foster Caswell Mazonna (AK) | June 4, 2025 |
| Janet A. Bacon (IL) | June 4, 2025 |
| Jane Ridenour (OH) | June 4, 2025 |

C E R T I F I C A T I O N

I, Brandy Tamplin, certify that the foregoing transcript is a true and accurate record of the proceedings.



Brandy Tamplin
Transcriber

DATE: August 28, 2024

2024 NATIONAL CONVENTION
AMERICAN LEGION AUXILIARY
103RD NATIONAL CONVENTION



WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 28, 2024

INSTALLATION OF NATIONAL OFFICER CEREMONY

8:32 A.M. - 11:18 A.M.

New Orleans Convention Center

Hall B2

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P R O C E E D I N G S

INSTALLATION OF OFFICERS CEREMONY

AUTOMATED GREETING: Welcome to the
American Legion Auxiliary Installation of the
National Officers. Please welcome your National
President, Lisa Williamson.

(Music)

(Applause)

OUTGOING PRESIDENT WILLIAMSON: Good
morning.

ALL: Good morning.

MS. WILLIAMSON: One
more time. Good morning.

ALL: Good morning.

MS. WILLIAMSON: Good
morning, American Legion Auxiliary. It is
nominations and elections day.

(Applause)

MS. WILLIAMSON: So
let's get this started. I call this meeting to
order.

(Ringing)

MS. WILLIAMSON: Today,
we're going to remember the prayer.

Brister, would you please lead us in
the invocation?

(Ringing)

BRISTER THOMAS: Day three. Wow. We
are here. And it is a big day that we make
special decisions, so we want to think about
perspective today. You may see an angry person,
so you want to be angry. But maybe there's
something really devastating in their day that
day, or you may see someone really happy, but
they may be really sad about something. So,
what is your perspective of you? How are you
feeling?

A special friend of mine shared a poem
that you may have heard of. It's called *Pretty
Ugly*, and they use it with Wounded Warriors.
So, I thought I might share that with you this

morning. We're going to read it, and then we're going to read it again. But I promise it's short. And it's a little negative, so pardon me on that. Are you ready?

"I am very ugly

So don't try to convince me that

I am a very beautiful person

Because at the end of the day

I hate myself in every single way

I'm not going to lie to myself by

saying

There is beauty inside of me that

matters

So, rest assured I will remind myself

That I am a worthless, terrible person

And nothing you say will make me

believe

I still deserve love

Because no matter what

I'm not good enough to be loved

And I'm in no position to believe that

Beauty does exist within me

Because whenever I look in the mirror I
always think

"Am I as ugly as people think?"

Now, here's perspective. I'm going to
read it again fast, and I'm going to read it
backwards, because we're going to take a
different perspective of who we are.

"Am I as ugly as people say?"

Because whenever I look in the mirror,
I always think beauty does exist within
me

And I'm in no position to believe that
I'm not good enough to be loved.

Because no matter what, I still deserve
love

And nothing you say will make me
believe that I am a worthless, terrible
person. So, rest assured, I will remind
myself that there is beauty inside of
me that matters. And I'm not going to

lie to myself by saying

I hate myself in every single way.

Because at the end of the day, I am a
very beautiful person

So don't try to convince me that I'm
very ugly".

And with that, I say, Amen.

ALL: Amen.

(Applause)

(Ringing)

OUTGOING PRESIDENT WILLIAMSON: Please
be seated. And thank you to our past national
presidents for arriving early today to greet our
attendees.

(Applause)

MS. WILLIAMSON: The
first item of business is the nomination of the
national officers for the '24-'25 administrative
year.

Representatives making nominations as
well as the candidates are seated on stage.

Kathy Daudistel, National Secretary,
will read the rules governing nominations and
elections. Kathy?

MS. DAUDISTEL: Nomination of national
officers shall be made from the floor.
Nominating speeches shall be limited to two
minutes for each candidate except the national
president candidates; she will be allowed four
minutes. There will be no seconding speeches.
Following nominating speeches for national
officers, each of the nominees for national
president, national vice president, national
chaplain and national historian shall be
introduced to the assembly by the auxiliary
member making her nomination; said introduction
to be only by name and department affiliation. And in
response to the introduction, the nominee for office shall
be allowed a maximum of two minutes for remarks.

Number 24. Election of national
officers shall be held on Wednesday. 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 1st ballot, a second ballot will be taken between the candidates receiving the two highest number of votes, with the candidate receiving the most votes on the second ballot being elected.

Madam National President, that completes the reading of the nomination and election rules.

MS. WILLIAMSON: The nominations are now in order for the office of National President.

The national secretary will call the departments with announced candidates.

MS. DAUDISTEL: The Department of Kansas 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. Microphone four, I believe. They're on their way. Help is on the way.

(Applause)

MS. ESTEP: Thank you, guys.

Microphone four.

MS. WILLIAMSON: The chair recognizes the delegate from Kansas for the purpose of making a nomination.

MS. ESTEP: Cheryl Estep, Delegation Chairman from the Department of Kansas. I request that you recognize the delegate from Kansas, Jeannie Haas, who is on stage for the purpose of a nomination.

MS. WILLIAMSON: Thank you very much. I recognize Jeanne Haas for the purpose of making a nomination.

MS. HAAS: Jeanne Haas, delegate from the Department of Kansas. Madam National

President, American Legion Auxiliary members. I am Jeanne Haas, a proud member of the American Legion Auxiliary Department of Kansas, and I am honored to nominate my friend, Trish Ward, for the position of American Legion Auxiliary National President.

Trish is a 27-year paid-up-for-life member of the John P. Hand Unit, Number 250, in Lewisburg, Kansas. She obtains her eligibility through the World War II service of her father, John Brusati, who served in the Army, and her grandfather, Edwin Lindberg, a Navy Seabee. She honors the service of her father-in-law and seven uncles through her volunteering spirit with the American Legion Auxiliary.

The Ward family is a blended family of children, grandchildren, and great grandchildren, who share a passion of volunteering with The American Legion Family and, of course, all of our members. Trish's husband, Steve, is the light of her life, and together they share a life of joy,

happiness, volunteering, and lots of travel adventures, usually surrounding American Legion family events.

Trish served her unit in most every office and is especially proud of serving the unit's education chairman for over 20 years, overseeing the distribution of a scholarship that honors the first person from Lewisburg to lose their life in the Vietnam War.

She proudly served through the positions in District 2 and the Department of Kansas, where she served as Kansas Department President in 2010 and 2011. Under then National President, Carlene Ashworth, she proudly served as a Power of One girl. And Kansas brought home the department's National President's Award for Excellence under Trish's administrative year.

Trish's journey at the national level began in 2011, when she served as NEC and was named National Membership Chairman by Past National President, Kris Nelson. Since that

time, she has held nine national chairman positions, including national vice president in 2023-'24, Central Division vice president in 2017-'18, and was a charter member and served two terms on the American Legion Auxiliary Foundation, along with serving on the ALA Strategic Planning Experiences and many other special appointments. And oh, by the way, she proudly is a member of the National Association of Parliamentarians.

Trish's greatest joy is to serve our veterans, military, and their families, and to support our members through the mission of the American Legion Auxiliary. It is her life's work, her passion, and her purpose.

It is my honor and privilege, on behalf of the Department of Kansas to nominate my friend, Trish Ward, for the office of National President of the American Legion Auxiliary for the year 2024-2025. Thank you.

(Applause)

MS. WILLIAMSON:

Trish Ward 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 the departments with announced candidates.

MS. DAUDISTEL: The Department of Illinois has an announced candidate. The delegation chairman should ask the chair to recognize the delegate for purpose of a nomination.

MS. GOLIGHTLY: Madam President, microphone four.

MS. WILLIAMSON:
Microphone four.

MS. GOLIGHTLY: My name is Angie Golightly from the Department of Illinois. I'd

like to ask to recognize Sharon Conatser, Past National President and our delegate to this convention, for the purpose of nomination. Thank you.

MS. WILLIAMSON: The chair recognizes the delegate from Illinois for the purpose of making a nomination.

MS. CONATSER: Thank you. Madam National President Lisa, I am Past National President Sharon Conatser, and a delegate from the Department of Illinois. Our candidate for national vice president, Pam Ray, is first a loving daughter, granddaughter, sister, wife, mom, aunt, nana, and above all, friend.

Pam is proud of her 68 years continuous years' membership in the American Legion Auxiliary, currently as a Paid Up For Life member. She honors her father, Claiborne M. Lofton, a veteran of World War II and the Korean Conflict.

Pam's entire family has been

continually active in The American Legion Family.

Her father went on to serve as Department of Illinois commander. Her mother, Irene Lofton, served as department president and National Central Division vice president.

Pam's husband, Butch Ray, has also served in many roles as a member of the Sons of The American Legion, including Past National Chaplain. He served as National Regional Membership Chairman this past year and was elected as the new Central Region -- excuse me, National Regional Vice Commander for the Sons of the American Legion for the incoming year.

Her sister, Sharon Conatser, is a Past National President, and her brother-in-law, Marty Conatser, is a Past National Commander.

Pam's loving spirit is deeply rooted in her 48-year nursing career. Pam has been married to her husband, Butch, for 45 years. They have two beautiful daughters, Sarah and Amy, and two amazing grandchildren, Chloe and Ben.

Pam has served her unit, district, and as department president 2010-2011. She was a Power of One president, serving with Past National President Carlene Ashworth, and formed a lasting friendship with both Carlene and National Vice President Trish Ward.

Pam served our national organization in the following ways -- as NEC, on the Girls State Committee, Strategic Planning Committee, Vice Chairman of Public Relations, Vice Chairman of Junior Activities Chair Committee, Vice Chairman of the Americanism Committee, ALA Girls Nation Chairman, Junior Activities Chairman twice, National Security Chairman, National Membership Chairman for the two COVID years, Constitution and Bylaws Chairmen, Children and Youth Chairman and is currently serving as the National Veterans' Affairs and Rehabilitation Chairman.

Pam's heart has always been helping young people. She raised \$42,000 in 2012 to award 42 new nurses scholarships through our Past Presidents Parley Program in Illinois. A

longtime leader and advocate for ALA, Girls State and Girls Nation, she served at Girls Nation multiple times in over 25 years in our Girls State program.

Madam President, I'm proud to nominate Pam Ray, my little sister and a great leader for the office of National Vice President for '24-'25.

(Applause)

MS. WILLIAMSON: Pam Ray is nominated. Are there any further nominations for the office of National Vice President? Hearing none, nominations for National Vice President are closed.

(Applause)

MS. WILLIAMSON: Nominations are now in order for the office of National Chaplain. The National Secretary will call the departments with announced candidates.

MS. DAUDISTEL: The Department of Louisiana has an announced candidate. The

delegation chairman should ask the chair to recognize the delegate for purpose of a nomination. Is there someone at microphone four?

MS. DAVIS: Madam President, microphone four. Good morning.

MS. WILLIAMSON:

The Chair recognizes the delegate for Louisiana.

MS. DAVIS: Shemeka Davis, Assistant Delegation Chairman. I ask if you will recognize Linda Petit, delegate from Louisiana, who is on stage for the purpose of a nomination.

MS. WILLIAMSON: The chair recognizes the delegate from Louisiana for the purpose of making a nomination.

MS. PETIT: Thank you. Good morning, Madam President, national officers, delegates and guests. I'm Linda Petit from right here in New Orleans, Louisiana. And it is an honor to introduce Monique Batiste, a 43-year member of Ricard Stewart, American Legion Dog Silver Unit

505. Monique's eligibility is through her grandfather, World War II Veteran, Clinton Richard Johnson.

Monique has served as unit historian and is currently her unit's president. She has also served her district in all capacities, and she has been our 2011-2012 department president. She has held the following national offices and appointments. National Junior Activities Committee chairman, national Junior Activities Committee, national Poppy Committee chairman, national Legislative Committee vice chairman, national Strategic Planning Committee, and this year, she is serving as the National Convention Committee chairman.

Monique works at a community outreach program. It's a nonprofit, FOAM, which stands for Fathers On A Mission. And she also helps with other nonprofit organizations. She shares the mission of the American Legion Auxiliary. This is a passion for her. She assists those

single fathers with FOAM, who happen to be veterans, many of them, and this has become an unexpected, but pleasurable and rewarding job.

The desire to run for national chaplain comes from helping others not only through donating time, but also offering encouragement, motivation, and prayer. The Department of Louisiana presents Monique Batiste, our candidate for national chaplain. Merci beaucoup.

(Applause)

MS. WILLIAMSON: Thank you. Are there any further nominations for the office of national chaplain?

The Department of Colorado has an announced candidate. The delegation chairman should ask the chair to recognize the delegate for the purpose of the nomination.

MS. LENA: Madam President, where are you? Microphone number four. Number four.

MS. WILLIAMSON: Go ahead.

MS. LENA: Terry Rose Lena from the Department of Colorado, requesting acknowledgement of Janelle Mendelson for the purpose of nomination. Thank you.

MS. WILLIAMSON: The chair recognizes the delegate from Colorado for the purposes of making a nomination.

MS. MENDELSON: Janelle Mendelson, Colorado Department, President, '23-'24 delegates. Madam Chair, President, all those in the audience, today, I have the honor of nominating a truly remarkable individual for the position of national chaplain.

This person embodies compassion, integrity, and a deep commitment to serving others. Their unwavering support and guidance have touched the lives of many within our community, providing comfort and wisdom during both joyful and challenging times.

One of my favorite quotes resonates strongly when I think of our nominee. "The best

way to find yourself is to lose yourself in the service of others." Gandhi. This quote encapsulates the essence of our nominee's character. They have dedicated themselves to serving not only through their spiritual leadership, but also by actively engaging in outreach initiatives, supporting those in need, and fostering a sense of belonging among all of us.

Our nominee has a unique ability to listen without judgment, offering a compassionate ear to those who seek solace, and they approach every situation with empathy and understanding, creating a safe space where individuals feel comfortable sharing their struggles and triumphs.

In a world that can sometimes feel disconnected, our nominee bridges those rifts, reminding us of the importance of community and togetherness. Moreover, their leadership is marked by humility. They lead by example, embodying the values they preach. Whether it's through a kind word, a

thoughtful jester, or simply being present in our lives, they inspire us to cultivate our own capacity for kindness and service.

In closing, we wholeheartedly nominate Judy Sadler for the position of national chaplain. Her dedication to serving others, coupled with her unwavering support and guidance, makes them the ideal candidate for this role.

Let us continue to uplift and support one another, inspired by their example of selfless service. Thank you.

(Applause)

MS. WILLIAMSON:

Judy Sadler is nominated. Are there any further nominations for the Office of national chaplain? Hearing none, nominations for national chaplain are now closed.

Nominations are in order for the office of national historian. The national secretary will call the departments with announced candidates.

MS. DAUDISTEL: The Department of

Florida has an announced candidate. The delegation chair should ask the chair to recognize the delegate for purpose of a nomination.

MS. BELL: Madam President, microphone two.

MS. WILLIAMSON: Go ahead.

MS. BELL: Florida delegation chairman, Dee Bell. I ask if you will recognize Past National President Linda Boone, who is on stage, for the purpose of a nomination.

MS. WILLIAMSON: The chair recognizes the delegate from Florida for the purposes of making a nomination.

MS. BOONE: Good morning, delegates.

ALL: Good morning.

MS. BOONE: I'm Linda Boone, Past National President from Oregon. It is with enthusiasm that I rise to tell you about my friend, Dara Oliver. Dara has been a member of the American Legion Auxiliary for 39 years and is

also a proud Legion Rider. I met Dara and her daughter, Delaney, about six years ago at a mission training when they lived in New York and were very active at the national junior program.

Dara has since served at the unit, county, district and department levels both in New York and Florida throughout her membership. She has also served on the national level for the past seven years, most recently as the vice chairman of Legislative.

Dara transferred the Department of Florida after a family move, and she didn't stop participating. She has assisted in events and jumped right into helping with committees, programs, and mentoring members. Dara has served the Department of Florida for five years as the Junior Activities chairman and is currently serving as the department historian for a second term.

Dara is intelligent, passionate, and willing to get the job done. She's an excellent

writer, loves journaling and geology. Dara's commitment and contagious energy towards our organization are obvious in everything she does.

I know that Dara is -- if Dara is elected as our national historian, she will complete a captivating, historical record, while engaging others by making it exciting.

I am pleased to nominate Dara Oliver for the position of national historian for the 2024-2025 year.

(Applause)

MS. WILLIAMSON: Dara Anne Oliver is nominated. Are there any further nominations for the office of national historian?

MS. DAUDISTEL: The Department of California has an announced candidate. The delegation chairman should ask the Chair to recognize the delegate for purpose of a nomination.

MS. WORKMAN: Number three. Microphone number three, please. Linda Workman, delegate

from California. Madam President, please recognize Past National President Nancy Brown-Park for the purpose of nomination.

MS. WILLIAMSON: The chair recognizes the delegate from California for the purposes of making a nomination.

MS. BROWN: Madam National President, American Legion Auxiliary members, I am Past National President Nancy Brown-Park from the Department of California. I am honored to present Melanie Taylor for the position of American Legion Auxiliary national historian for 2024-2025.

Melanie's service makes her the perfect choice for the position of national historian. She has been active in 17 American Legion Auxiliary administrations and has served on 12 programs at the national level. She has also been appointed to several special committees throughout the years where she has provided

critical input and numerous strategic contributions.

Her wide array of experience in our programs and knowledge of all levels of the American Legion Auxiliary give her the background and depth to understand our special history and what she will need to do to capture the history for '24-'25.

She is a 33-year PUFL member and a member of William Russell Ledford, Unit 293 in Cloverdale, California. Her eligibility is from her family and her husband of 34 years, Bob, a Vietnam era veteran. In addition to her volunteerism with the American Legion Auxiliary, Melanie served as county registrar for the Empire Boys State of America after retiring from a law firm where she was the office administrator and legal secretary.

She is a member of the United Methodist Church and Beta Sigma Phi sorority. She and her husband enjoy the outdoors, especially camping in

their motor home with their two toy poodles,
Sophia and Samantha.

Melanie's experience at all levels
makes her the right choice to be the historian of
the American Legion Auxiliary.

It is my distinct honor to nominate
Melanie Taylor for the position of the American
Legion Auxiliary Historian for '24-'25. On
behalf of the Golden State of California, a
department of the proud Western Division, we ask
for your support of our candidate, Melanie
Taylor. Thank you.

(Applause)

MS. WILLIAMSON:

Melanie Taylor is nominated. Are there any
further nominations for the office of national
historian? Hearing none, nominations for
national historian are now closed.

With these nominations and the
nominations made during the division caucuses on
Saturday, August 24th, nominations for the

2024-2025 national officers are completed.

The convention rules provided that the nominees for the offices of national president, national vice president, national chaplain, and national historian shall be introduced to the Assembly.

The Auxiliary member who made the nomination will introduce that candidate by name and department affiliation only. Each nominee will be allowed a maximum of two minutes for remarks.

Will the representative from Kansas please introduce the candidate for national president?

MS. HAAS: Trish Ward, Department of Kansas.

(Applause)

MS. WARD: I would first like to extend deep thanks and gratitude to John P. Hand Unit 250 in Lewisburg, Kansas and to the Department of Kansas American Legion family and the great

Central Division for their support.

(Applause)

MS. WARD: Thank you. The Kansas American Legion family accepted me into their ranks in 1999, and I am forever grateful to them for their friendship, giving my life purpose and showing me what being an American Legion family member is really all about. But it doesn't stop with Kansas. To the entire American Legion family across the country and our foreign units, thank you for your support.

Throughout my journey and leadership, and on behalf of those we serve, I am forever grateful and truly humbled. I will strive to make you proud and represent you with dignity and grace always.

A special thank-you to my wonderful husband, Steve, who joins me as a family in our commitment to the ideas and principles of The American Legion. Through thick and thin, I'm so fortunate to have such a loving, wise, and kind

man support me in everything I do, even the crazy ideas like tie-dyeing over 100 red, white, and blue t-shirts for my project.

Our family is comprised of children, grandchildren and great grandchildren who are members of the sons of The American Legion and American Legion Auxiliary. We believe that it starts and ends with family, and I'm grateful to all of them who bring so much of their time and talent to our organization and who have supported me in this journey of leadership in our organization.

A special thanks to my beautiful mom, who at 96 years young, is forever a voice of reason, my biggest supporter and my number one cheerleader. She and my dad believed in giving back to others, and I thank them both for instilling in me the importance of volunteering and of serving others with a good, compassionate, and kind heart.

As we look forward to an exciting new

administration, I look forward to investing back to you, our members, units, and departments with a mission to rebuild membership and leadership capacity from the grassroots up. We are poised to roll out the Department Excellence Initiative comprised of innovative and engaging content, along with the Merit Medallion Recognition Experience for department business excellence, building a culture of excellence where we need it most across our units and departments to reinforce the glue that binds this great organization together, is a key element and priority for the new administration.

As the Kansas motto, *ad astra per aspera*, reminds us, sometimes we must go through difficulties to get to the stars. I see the stars, and they are right there for the taking.

So, join me as we lead the way and together, let's make it happen on behalf of our members and those we serve. Thank you.

(Applause)

MS. WILLIAMSON: Will
the representative from Illinois please present
the candidate for National Vice President?

MS. CONATSER: Pam Ray, Department of
Illinois.

MS. RAY: Good morning. First and
foremost, I'd like to thank Sharon for nominating
me. It is so hard to believe that 10 years ago,
I was standing here and nominating Sharon for
National Vice President. At that point in time,
I never dreamed that I would have this amazing
opportunity. I want to thank Sharon and Marty
for all your support and love as I have taken
this journey, and of course, the huge thanks to
my family, especially my husband, Butch. My unit
in Urbana, my 19th District Department of
Illinois and Central Division, thank you all so
much. Your knowledge, love, and support are
invaluable to me.

As a candidate for national vice

president, I really thought about what I wanted to convey to all of you. Sure, all the regular things come to mind is friendship, support, appreciation. Then, I realized what I want you to know is that I will do my very best to keep our organization's mission in my heart and in my mind. I will remember my dad each time I volunteer at an Honor Flight, attend a memorial service or meet a veteran or active military personnel. I will be kind, straightforward, and focused on who we are and why we are here. I will support our leadership for the upcoming year.

Trish and I have been friends for many years. We both know that communication, mutual respect, and trust are the foundation of a strong working relationship. All these actions will help me grow and will help our organization remain strong. As many of you know, I'm a back-to-basics person. I believe that our founding

members were on the right track with how they made our membership grow. We need to know our history and learn from it.

In closing, I would like to share a quote from Queen Elizabeth, who summed up my theory on what works best for us in our everyday lives as well as in the American Legion Auxiliary. "It's worth remembering that it's often the small steps, not the giant leaps that bring about the most lasting change."

Let's take those small steps together.

Thank you all.

(Applause)

MS. WILLIAMSON: Will the representative from Louisiana please present the candidate for national chaplain?

MS. PETTIT: Monique Batiste, Department of Louisiana.

MS. BAPTISTE: About a year ago, my three sisters and I, along with a childhood friend, started a dedicated discipleship group, a

group that is a safe place of sorts. We set aside time every other Saturday, read three books, and used The Message Devotional Bible by Eugene Patterson. Each week, we shared our highs and lows, our good and bad and offered encouragement, reminding one another just how good God is to us. Because there is so many other places in life we could be, we could have been if it had not been for God's grace and our big faith.

Faith has several components -- belief, commitment, trust and confidence. Through my own personal experiences and helping friends navigate through theirs, I found myself relying solely on faith. It's a norm for me. An everyday action.

I share with you a scripture with the bottle attached. The Scripture is one of my favorites. When going through one of the toughest times in my life, Matthew 17:20 helped me find the strength I needed at that time. "If you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you

can say to any mountain, 'move from here to there', and it will move. You ask how? Here's how. Because you believe things will get better, they will.

Because you are committed to, you will get through any situation. If you trust, as I have and do, even after faces -- facing the toughest challenges in life, with confidence, it will move -- it will move. Nothing is impossible with faith.

The one thing I have learned on this journey is that God doesn't miss a beat with me. With faith, all things are possible.

I'm Monique Batiste, candidate for National Chaplain, and I would appreciate your support. Thank you.

(Applause)

MS. WILLIAMSON:

Will the representative from Colorado present the candidate for national chaplain?

MS. MENDELSON: Judy Sadler, Department of Colorado.

(Applause)

MS. SADLER: Madam President, national officers, ALA members, and guests, I am Judy Sadler, the candidate for national chaplain. As Monique said, Matthew teaches us we can move mountains. Today, I stand before you with a heart full of gratitude and a -- light's in my eyes -- and changes which, as I present nominating for the position of American Legion Auxiliary national chaplain.

In these times -- changing times, we seek healing, inspiration and connection, as of which those are the role of the chaplain.

As department chaplain, I participated in our first chaplain's retreat with Unit 2 and endorsed by Past National Chaplain Karen Peel, this was the huge -- huge success, and we are planning another one this spring. One of the themes was "Blessed are the caregivers, for they

shall inherit the earth. "By now, most of you have received a healing hanky. In Colorado, that is my trademark. These hankies, which have been prayed over by my prayer group at my church, we give to The American Legion Family in times of trouble, sympathy, wellness, and need to spiritual help throughout and just letting them know that someone cares. The power of the prayer connects all families together as a collaborative strength.

I am a Red Coat Ambassador at the Rocky Mountain VA Medical Center. I assist the VA chaplain and give -- that gives me grace, joy to help them lift the spirits of veterans. Many just need someone to hear, someone to talk to, and I do what I can when they're -- when they need that stress.

MS. WILLIAMSON: It's time, sweetheart.

MS. SADLER: Okay.

MS. WILLIAMSON: That's

all right. Go ahead and do the closing.

MS. SADLER: In closing, I humbly ask for your support to let us embark on this journey together. We can cultivate an atmosphere where -- I can't read it. Okay. My name is Judy Sadler, and I am running for national chaplain.

MS. WILLIAMSON: Thank you.

(Applause)

MS. WILLIAMSON: Will the representative from Florida present the candidate for national historian, please? Oregon.

(Laughter)

MS. BOONE: I do live in Florida, but -- Dara Oliver, Department of Florida.

(Applause)

MS. OLIVER: Good morning, American Legion Auxiliary. My name is Dara Oliver, and I'm running for your national historian.

Recently, I realized that life is short, and it's all about opportunities. Social media has allowed us the opportunity to share information quickly. Once it's written down, it eventually becomes our history.

My history started in this organization when my daddy joined the Legion, and I became a Junior member. I was not active as a member until years later, when my boyfriend's mother talked me into transferring to her unit. I will mention that that boyfriend became my husband, and my mother-in-law was the best Auxiliary sister ever.

The first office I held 35 years ago in upstate New York was Unit Historian. It was then I knew which one of my gifts that I could share with the American Legion Auxiliary. I have a degree in advertising, design production, and photography. I journal every day, and my husband and I are living history reprises traveling

around the country portraying Teddy and Edith Roosevelt.

For the past 39 years, I have volunteered for the Auxiliary serving as unit county district and was elected Department of Florida Historian for a second term. I'm also a Legion Rider. Thank you, Florida, and Unit 219.

I have served on many offices and roles, including seven on the national level. I certainly have found my love and passion.

We need to grow with the changing and fast-paced world of technology, preserve our memories, but stay current, protect them, and be able to share them easily. We want to access our histories to find out more of our past. History is meant to be shared.

I promise as your National Historian to encourage more members to complete histories on all levels, communicate with department historians, share Auxiliary archives, and add to the Women in History pages to celebrate those who have made history for

themselves. I will post on social media, listen to your suggestions, and share information quickly.

I hope that you will support me, Dara Oliver, as your 2024-2025 National American Legion Auxiliary Historian. Thank you.

(Applause)

MS. WILLIAMSON: Will the representative from California present the candidate for national historian? Yeah, Nancy.

MS. BROWN-PARK: Melanie Taylor from the Department of California.

(Applause)

MS. TAYLOR: Thank you, Nancy. Madam National President, national officers and Auxiliary members, I am Melanie Taylor, and I am from the Department of California, and I am seeking the Office of national historian.

To quote David McCullough, an American historian, "History is who we are, why we are and the way we are."

I understand the importance of recording all the department achievements, no matter how large or how small. We benefit by preserving those records and making them available not only to our members, but also to the public. History is just not taking photos, covering the day-to-day travels of our president.

It is recording all the events that take place in your departments. It is recording those monumental accomplishments that you have seen -- you have achieved to promote the American Legion Auxiliary mission, such as the Veterans History Project, the Junior History Patch program and all the great work that you do to keep our vets and military -- active duty military, their children and our communities aware of who we are and what we do.

I would be honored to record the accomplishments of our departments as we continue to serve the mission of the American Legion Auxiliary. Thank you, William Russell Ledford,

Unit 293, Department of California, for your endorsement and the continued support. I love you all.

When Josie Melgard was national president, funds were raised to commission a stained-glass panel with the ALA emblem to be put in a window at the National Cathedral in Washington, DC. This was a monumental task, but it was accomplished, and we can be proud of that pane in the National Cathedral. So, think big.

Thank you, Past National President Nancy Brown-Park, for your guidance and my nomination to this office.

It is my honor to stand before you this morning and ask for your support as I seek the office of national historian for 2024-2025 administrative year. Thank you.

(Applause)

MS. WILLIAMSON: This concludes the nominations for the 2024-2025 national officers.

We will proceed with the election of national officers. You have nominated Trish Ward of Kansas 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 Trish Ward as National President for the '24-'25 administrative year, please say aye.

ALL: Aye.

MS. WILLIAMSON: Any

opposed?

The Chair declares Trish Ward of Kansas duly elected as national president. (Applause)

MS. WILLIAMSON:

The script says, "Please stand", but she did it already.

(Laughter)

MS. WILLIAMSON: Pam Ray

of Illinois is the only nominee for the Office of national vice president. All in favor of Pam Ray

for the Office of national vice president, please
say aye.

ALL: Aye.

MS. WILLIAMSON: Any

opposed?

Pam Ray has been duly elected as
national vice president for the '24-'25
administrative year.

(Applause)

MS. WILLIAMSON: On

Saturday, August 24th, at the division caucuses,
each division nominated a candidate for national
division vice president and the current division
national vice presidents have been certified to
the chair with the following nominees.

Rosemarie Hauck has been nominated for
the office of Central Division national vice
president. All those in favor her as serving
as national Central Division vice president,
please say aye.

ALL: Aye.

MS. WILLIAMSON: Any

opposed?

Rosemarie Hauck has been named duly elected as the Central Division national vice president.

(Applause)

MS. WILLIAMSON:

Lauren Lloyd has been nominated for the office of national Eastern Division vice president. All those in favor of Lauren Lloyd as division national vice president, please say aye.

ALL: Aye.

MS. WILLIAMSON:

Oppose, no?

You have elected Lauren Lloyd as the national Eastern Division national vice president.

(Applause)

MS. WILLIAMSON:

Debra Albers has been nominated for the office of

national Northwestern Division vice president.

All those in favor of Debra Albers as national Northwestern Division vice president, please say aye.

ALL: Aye.

MS. WILLIAMSON: Oppose,
no?

You have elected Debra Albers as the national Northwestern Division national vice president.

(Applause)

MS. WILLIAMSON: Cheryl Shine has been nominated for the Office of national Southern Division vice president. All those in favor of Cheryl Shine as the national Southern Division vice president, please say aye.

ALL: Aye.

MS. WILLIAMSON: Oppose,
no.

Cheryl Shine, you have been elected the national Southern Division national vice

president.

(Applause)

MS. WILLIAMSON:

Beverly Eads has been nominated for the office of national Western Division vice president. All those in favor of Beverly Eads as national Western Division vice president, please say aye.

ALL: Aye.

(Applause)

MS. WILLIAMSON: Oppose,

no.

Beverly Eads has been elected as national Western Division vice president.

(Applause)

MS. WILLIAMSON:

For the election of national chaplain, we will be voting with our keypads. The nominees are Monique Battiste and Judy Sadler.

If you would like to vote for Monique, please press number 1. If you would like to vote for Judy, please press 2.

Please vote now.

(Music Played)

(Laughter)

MS. WILLIAMSON: Voting

is now closed. Please show the results.

(Applause)

MS. WILLIAMSON: Monique

Batiste has been duly elected as the national chaplain for the '24-'25 administrative year.

Please stand, Monique.

(Applause)

MS. WILLIAMSON: The

election for national historian, we will also be using our electronic keypads. The nominees are Dara Oliver and Melanie Taylor.

If you would like to vote for Dara, please press 1.

ALL: No.

MS. WILLIAMSON: Oh,

it's not that way in my script.

(Laughter)

MS. WILLIAMSON: Switch

up. We'll do it that way.

If you'd like to vote for Melanie,
please press 1. If you vote for Dara, please
vote 2.

Please vote now.

(Music played)

MS. WILLIAMSON: You

guys aren't dancing today. Voting is now closed,
and please show the results.

(Cheers)

(Applause)

MS. WILLIAMSON: Melanie

Taylor with 278 and Dara with 506. Dara Oliver
has been duly elected as national historian for
the '24-'25 administrative year.

Please stand up, Dara.

(Applause)

MS. WILLIAMSON: All of

you elected, please rise.

Ladies and gentlemen, I present to you

your 2024-25 American Legion Auxiliary national officers. Please rise.

(Applause)

MS. WILLIAMSON: Thank you, ladies. And a big thank you to the entire Elections and Tally Committee that have been in the back room for the last three mornings. These women are here early every morning distributing keypads and stay late every afternoon, collecting them after every session. So please help me give these women a round of applause.

(Applause)

MS. WILLIAMSON: They are the Judge Cheryl Jackson Sinkler from the Department of Georgia.

(Applause)

MS. WILLIAMSON: Catherine Brockman, Department of Oregon.

(Applause)

MS. WILLIAMSON: Janelle Mendelson, the Department of Colorado.

(Applause)

MS. WILLIAMSON: Rose

Ficklin from the Department of Arizona.

(Applause)

MS. WILLIAMSON:

Monique Connor from the Department of
Massachusetts.

(Applause)

MS. WILLIAMSON: Julie

Maldonado from the Department of Pennsylvania.

(Applause)

MS. WILLIAMSON: Amanda

Washburn, Department of Nebraska.

(Applause)

MS. WILLIAMSON: Ann

Crawford, Department of Iowa.

(Applause)

MS. WILLIAMSON: And

Melissa Green, the Department of Oklahoma.

(Applause)

MS. WILLIAMSON: I thank

you all, ladies. You've been a great, great -- performed a lot of work, and I thank you very much.

In 2021, the American Legion Auxiliary National Headquarters officially announced its support of Honor Flight Incorporated. Honor Flight invites our heroes to share in a special day of honor at our national -- at our nation's memorials that were built to commemorate their service and sacrifice. The American Legion Auxiliary's Memorandum of Agreement with Honor Flight shows Auxiliary units and departments to directly donate funds generated from poppy distributions.

Let's watch this feed -- video, highlighting the relationship between our organizations.

(Prerecorded video played)

MS. BABIS: Honor Flight is an opportunity to fly veterans to Washington, D.C. to see their memorials that stand in their honor,

and it's totally free for them.

MS. LUFT: I became involved around 2018 with Honor Flight. My parents are both World War II veterans, and my husband was a Navy veteran of the Vietnam. And this was an organization they were looking for volunteers, and so I signed up.

Our first flight went up our first flight went out in November with a mere 58 World War II veterans, and the gentleman that started that program knew that I was highly involved with the American Legion Auxiliary. He called me 24 hours before the second flight and said, "Hey, Amy, what are you doing tomorrow?" He had a guardian that dropped off, and he asked if I could do it. And of course, I dropped everything because I wanted to be part of this mission. And that's all it took was that one flight in the spring of 2009 to get me sucked into this program.

MS. LUFT: The Honor Flight program

actually started out for the World War II veterans, because it was their memorial that was actually built 60 years after the end of World War II.

MS. OLIVER: They tend to pick anybody that is World War II veteran first, and then they go down the row; Korea, Vietnam, and it's completely free to the veteran.

MS. LUFT: It was pretty incredible to see all these memorials; Vietnam Memorial, World War II Memorial, the Women's Vietnam Memorial through their eyes as a first timer to Washington D.C. It is a pretty incredible experience.

MS. BABIS: We're able to go see Vietnam from there. We try to be prepared on our bus ride there to locate names and panels so that our veterans know where they're going to find their comrades.

MS. LUFT: There are escorts there, and there are people there helping you in do you need anything. And we're going to push your dad,

because you're going to push him all day. They always need ground crew, and that's people to help put wheelchairs on their buses or off of buses.

Unfortunately, I did not have the opportunity to take the flight with my dad. My dad was a World War II Army veteran. My late father passed away, just shy a year before the Honor Flight program started. But on all the flights, he goes with me. And I look at that plane full of veterans, and all I see is my dad.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: I submitted my dad's name. He's a Navy Vietnam veteran. I know personally my dad was just so excited and really just wanted to do this trip.

MS. LUFT: It is much more than just seeing those memorials. What we're seeing now is more of a healing process to these Vietnam Veterans. There are veterans who have told me if it wasn't for the Honor Flight program, they

would still be holding onto these ghosts that are inside of them. There's a lot of Honor Flight magic that happens behind the scenes, and it's not just the memorials anymore.

Calling the veterans to tell them they've been selected for a flight, what a great opportunity that is.

MS. BABIS: So, they called us and then surprised my father. The head nurse, Kim, called my dad himself. She got the chance to actually call my dad and say you've been selected to go to Mission 20 and then from there on out we went and we visited the Korean War monument. We went to the Vietnam Wall. And that's when I really got to see my father get very choked up, because he had the opportunity to thank his comrades that didn't make it home.

MS. LUFT: We do a mail call on each and every flight. And we try to reenact mail call, because we know how important it was for those veterans when they came back.

He was so proud of the fact that he had the most amount of letters when he got off that airplane. He kept saying, "Do you see how many cards and letters are in this envelope?" They had to actually give him two envelopes, because there were so many.

They get read over and over and over again by our veterans. They carry them with them wherever they go.

There are so many opportunities for our American Legion family to take part in this.

First and foremost, if you haven't attended a homecoming in your local area, please do that. It's one of those bucket list things to be able to shake the hand of a veteran and say to them, welcome home and thank you to your service.

He loved the welcome home, and that was that was a huge part of what Honor Flight really is about, making sure that these veterans get a welcome home. They did this beautiful ceremony. My girlfriend and I dropped him off at -- he was

in a nursing home. He was very tired, so I put him into his bed, and he woke up in the morning and saw his favorite aid and he said something about how he was tired and she said, "Well, tell me all about it." And he said, "I'm tired. I'm going to take two bites of oatmeal, and I'll tell you at lunch." Laid down and unfortunately, 13 1/2 hours after his Honor Flight, he passed away.

So, I think that that was the moment that we realized this was such a gift that honestly gave our dad, that he got to have his last mission and his mission was complete.

MS. OLIVER: I promised my dad on his death bed that I was going to do something in his honor. So, every flight is a tribute to him, and it's a tribute to all of the veterans that we serve. This is what our organization is about.

Have your veteran sign up for Honor Flight. It's an amazing experience. This was an opportunity that our dad really looked forward to.

Honor flight to me is an opportunity to help our veterans heal from the scars of the war that they fought. I'm honored that they did that for me, and if this is a little something that I can give back to them, that's why I do it.

MS. LUFT: The most important thing is, as an American Legion family, is when we see our veterans to thank them for their service. But the second thing is to ask them if they've been on an Honor Flight, and if they haven't, assist them with getting signed up, but let them know that this is an opportunity for us to say thank you to them and to show them the love and support that they so well deserve.

(Applause)

MS. WILLIAMSON: Pretty moving. Going off a little -- off script a little bit. My first trip this year serving as National President, I was able to be a guardian -- my husband and I both guardians for a husband and wife. And it was incredible to see

it in their eyes. And there was one time where my husband was pushing the wheelchair of his veteran up the ramp from Vietnam Wall, and he was -- and the veteran was in tears. And just to watch his wife simply go up there and hold his hand as moral support was one of those mental images I will hold with me for the rest of my life.

(Applause)

So that was a powerful and moving video. The National American Legion Auxiliary is proud to work with Honor Flight.

Join with me in giving a round of applause for Amy Luft, Nancy Babis, and Dara Oliver.

(Applause)

MS. WILLIAMSON: Thank you very much.

(Applause)

MS. WILLIAMSON: The Public Relations Committee showcases our

identity, highlights our work, and emphasizes our significance. Through effective PR, we can enhance our reputation, increase brand recognition and draw in new members. Please welcome to the stage, the national Public Relations Chair Pam Bates. Pam?

(Applause)

(Music Played)

MS. BATES: Good morning.

ALL: Good morning.

MS. BATES: Dr. James Grunig is the co-author of *Managing Public Relations*, *Public Relations Techniques*, *Managers of Guide to Excellence* and *Public Relations and Communication Management*. He quotes, "Public relations is a management of communication between an organization and its publics. "The American Legion Auxiliary Public Relation chairs create a connection with our American Legion Auxiliary members and our communities. This connection strengthens our brand, our brand image, awareness

of what we do and who we are to our communities, helps build a positive image of our programs we support and disseminates important information about our organization.

They accomplished this by providing information on branding, setting up a social media account and websites using the PR toolkit, templates of assorted PR material and much more that can all be found on our national website.

If you think PR chairs at all levels are the only persons who should disseminate information about our organization, you need to step back and look at our preamble words. "We associate ourselves together."

Those PR chairs supply you with tools and information. It is up to you, the member, are responsible for sharing that information to other members, your community, and other organizations. You each must be ambassadors of our organization.

Here are a few examples of public

relations and promoting the ALA mission. Unit
214, Willoughby, Ohio --

(Applause)

MS. BATES: -- set up a tent and a
tablecloth at a community event. They provided
ALA literature, membership applications, lots of
red, white and blue stuff for kids, bracelets,
buttons and bookmarks that were all branded.

Unit 36 in Booth Bay, Maine --

(Applause)

MS. BATES: -- hosted a Veterans'
Suicide Awareness Walkathon to spread awareness
of veteran suicide and to get the community
involved in the Be the One mission. They used a
letter to the editor to get the event published
in their local paper. What's better than an ALA
proclamation from the city --

(Applause)

MS. BATES: -- for one of our
programs. Representatives from the Woods W.
Lynch, Unit 19 in Midland, Texas, accepted a

proclamation at the Midland, Texas County
Commissioners Court.

How about some colorful bags and our
word mark to give our ALA information and goods?
We got a lot of those bags this weekend, didn't
we this week?

Azuza, California, how about -- I'm
sorry. How about a collaborating with The
American Legion and writers getting our mission
into the newspaper? Azusa, California, Unit
180 --

(Applause)

MS. BATES: -- raised \$7,200 for toys
and a playground for children at Fort Irwin Army
Training Base.

(Applause)

MS. BATES: Good job, everyone. Give a
big round of applause.

(Applause)

MS. BATES: In closing, I want to leave
you with this thought. PR professionals are

sometimes called spin doctors. This, to me, conjures up images of magical wizards of information. There's a certain element of magic to what we do.

And here's your challenge. Remember that what you do or what you say is public relations. Be the wizard who makes PR magical, exciting, informative, so that your members want to be a part of the ALA experience that will enhance every program and promote our mission.

Madam President, that concludes my remarks.

(Applause)

MS. WILLIAMSON: Our next committee has shown dedication to our veterans' well-being and rehabilitation. Here to share with us the strides we have made and the path forward in our mission to serve those who have served us is National Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation Chairman, Pam Ray. Pam?

(Applause)

(Music played)

MS. RAY: Good morning.

ALL: Good morning.

MS. RAY: Madam National President, Elizabeth Andrew, says, "Volunteers do not necessarily have the time, they just have the heart." And I find that to be true. I have found that the VA and our program is not only good for the souls of our veterans, but also for the families, caregivers, survivors and of course, our volunteers.

Our hospital volunteers continued to share their passion with veterans. This year, we started awarding the lifetime achievement pin to those with over 35,000 hours of volunteering. To date, eight dedicated members have received this award. And we continue to send hours bars to our volunteers as well. There is a stack of those pins just waiting to be awarded.

We know that hospital volunteering is not for everyone. This is for a variety of

reasons, and that's okay. We have so many other facets of this exciting program where you can give your time. And believe me, our units do their part. There is the Caregiver Support Network, Adaptive Sports, Honor Flight, Wreaths Across America, and of course, bingo, Christmas gift shops and watching the recent eclipse in Maine.

Let's take a look at what they're doing. We'll give them just a minute there.

There we go.

Three years ago, Martinsburg, West Virginia VAMC established a food bank to assist veterans who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless. They also support veterans who are transitioning back into everyday living. Jackson Parks, Unit 71 -- where's West Virginia this morning?

(Applause)

MS. RAY: There we go -- made three

shopping trips to deliver over \$1,800 worth of food to the food bank. What a great project.

Unit 71 also held a dinner and raised money to give to the rescue. This program finds foster homes and provides food and treatments to veterans' pets, while the veteran is receiving care at the Martinsburg VAMC. Such a creative way to help our veterans in their time of need.

(Applause)

MS. RAY: The Department President of Missouri -- hello? Missouri --

(Applause)

MS. RAY: There we go -- had a very special project this year. It's a very veteran-focused project. Veterans Community Project is a program that provides free of charge tiny home communities for veterans in need. There are tiny homes for one and tiny homes for families of up to seven people. There are onsite wrap around support services designed to equip veterans with the tools necessary to return to an

everyday, independent life. Missouri has two of these facilities -- one in Kansas City and one in Saint Louis. There are five other VCP's around the country as well.

Missouri has gone a step further. They are asking their ALA Girls State Citizens, to raise \$5000 to furnish one of the new tiny homes in Saint Louis, and I love this.

(Applause)

MS. RAY: Unit 164 in Katy, Texas --

(Applause)

MS. RAY: -- is a youngster. They're a youngster to this organization. They were chartered in 2017. Going from 10 to 68 members in just seven short years, they have worked their way up to working 12 programs. Each month, they hold a veteran's breakfast. One of their regular attendees is dual member, Thelma Williams. Thelma is 105 years young.

(Applause)

MS. RAY: She joined the Women's Army

Corps in 1943 at the age of 24. She was recognized during the unit's Women's Veteran's Day ceremony and is active at her women's Veteran Veterans group at her home in Watercrest. Unit 164 had a unique opportunity to support Camp Hope, Houston, a member of the PTS Foundation of America. It's a six to nine-month program that aims to relieve the effects of combat trauma through a whole person approach. It provides peer support, mentor programs and professional development for America's warriors and their family, and there is no cost to the veteran.

This year, they presented a check to Camp Hope as well as 125 frozen pies. Sounds like a win-win to me. For the families of Camp Hope, Unit 164 gave \$1,000 to provide a complete Thanksgiving meal of turkey and all the trimmings to the families. Way to go, Unit 164.

(Applause).

MS. RAY: This year, as you saw, the national American Legion Auxiliary renewed our

MOU with Honor Flight Network. Units from coast-to-coast embraced Honor Flight and their veterans. The use of poppy funds for this program is taking off, and we are so excited to grow our partnership with them in the future.

Wreaths Across America as a program that serves our veterans' families by continuing to remember their beloved veteran who has gone to post everlasting.

National President Lisa and her husband Darrell once again made the trip down the eastern seaboard in Maine and ending in Arlington National Cemetery. All along the route, stops are made to deliver the wreaths to family members and cemeteries. On overpasses, you can see flags waving to honor those veterans no longer with us, others standing at attention on the side of the road, saluting as the caravan passes.

Many departments participated in laying wreaths last December. As you can see, this program involves the entire American Legion

family and encompasses all ages.

For the past 24 years, the American Legion Auxiliary has been a partner with the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs in presenting the National Veterans Creative Arts Festival. These talented veterans share performance, writing and art with their peers, and fortunately, with all of us.

The American Legion Auxiliary is front and center for those veterans to get to know who we are. They are the most grateful group of people. They did nothing but thank the American Legion Auxiliary all week long. Being able to see the difference this program makes in their lives is an experience I will remember for a lifetime, so I thank Madam President for this opportunity.

Let's take a look at a couple of pieces of work. The performers were so proud to entertain. We heard singing, acting, poetry, and more. The finale had everyone in the audience

crying, and the veterans were smiling from ear to ear. I was amazed at the level of talent that these artists possess. The photo with the statue in the sand, it is made of sand. It is sculpted and then painted. He encouraged us to feel that photo. And you can feel all the different levels of sand, and I don't know how it doesn't fall down when you set it upright, but it doesn't.

This western scene is made entirely of paper. It really is. The photo with the Yeti, with -- there we go. There's the paper. Yes, it's all paper. And he -- it was very long. It was several feet long. The photo with the Yetis is made entirely of leather. There was a father and son who did the leather work, a veteran they met at last year's festival, then painted it for them. This last photo is a photograph, right? Nope, it's a painting done by a grandpa of his granddaughter who was excited to receive the biggest muffin on the table.

Next year, the festival will be in

Indianapolis, Indiana.

(Applause)

MS. RAY: I encourage all who can to attend. Thank you to all of our members who volunteer for our veterans, whether at home, the AMC or CBOC, or with a unique opportunity in their area. This is our mission. This is our reason for being.

Madam President, this concludes my platform remarks.

(Applause)

MS. WILLIAMSON: Thank you, Pam. The Legislative committee's mission is to support veterans in championing the legislative agenda. They play a vital role in our organization by equipping our members with tools and information, they need to advocate on behalf of The American Legion Family with their local officials. Today, she will share the committee's achievements and future goals. Please join in welcoming National Legislative

Chairman Donna Dillard.

(Applause)

(Cheers)

MS. DILLARD: Good morning.

ALL: Good morning.

MS. DILLARD: Madam National President Lisa, it has been said that advocacy is the lifeblood of change, the driving force behind many of the positive shifts we've seen in society. That statement is reinforced by the recent changes in our veteran-related legislation such as the PACT Act, which was a major step forward in the healthcare of our veterans. And it is reinforced as well by our continued support of the Flag Amendment to protect our flag, which we will support as long as it takes for our nation to take action.

This year, our Legislative Committee set out to engage members to become grassroots advocates by helping them learn about the issues, to help identify and build relationships with

their legislators and to communicate with legislators and their staff. And it paid off, as departments reported communication with their representatives via e-mail, letters, phone calls and in person. Those reporting their numbers showed an astounding total of 23,700 contacts made to congressional representatives in the various forms of communication.

(Applause).

MS. DILLARD: Thank you. Many units, such as this one, Garner unit 91 in Arkansas in Beebe, Arkansas, conducted educational programs to discuss the bills that relate it directly to National President, Lisa Williamson's, Be the One priorities. In a successful attempt to gain attention to our legislative priorities, Ohio --

(Applause)

MS. DILLARD: -- Legislative Chairman Cynthia Bowling, distributed wristbands printed with information referencing ALA Legislative Ohio, Facebook and the Grassroots Action website.

She also created a PowerPoint to teach members how to use the Grassroots Action Center. Her drive for advocacy paid off, as she was invited to be a guest on the radio show, They Sacrificed for Us on WINT 101.5 FM, where she shared a story of the World War I Hello Girls with all the listeners.

Oregon National Security Chairman

Yvonne Drury..

(Applause).

MS. DILLARD: -- attended the Washington Conference and wrote up the entire legislative agenda in her Legion Family Newsletter. Several department members subscribed to the Stephens Cute Post 4 Newsletter, so her message was spread far and wide. Departments reported many methods used to host legislative representatives, including town hall meetings, school functions, discussion groups, churches, chili cook-offs, and many meet-the-candidate nights in Colorado. ALA Legislative

Department Chair Sarah Tobin was requested to participate in the Female Veteran Roundtable discussion with Senator Bennett and staffers at the El Paso County Veterans Center, where the focus of discussion was Military Sexual Trauma and access to appropriate mental health resources.

Our American Legion Family members weren't the only advocates seeking justice through our legislation. Tennessee Auxiliary member Nicole Hartfield began introducing 7th and 8th grade students at the local middle school to advocating for veterans and military members through legislation.

These students learn about branches of government and flag code, which leads into the flag desecration and flag code amendments. As part of these classes, students completed further research on the flag amendment and wrote letters to their national Tennessee senators and representatives. Over 370 letters were sent in

all.

(Applause)

MS. DILLARD: Many reported that they advocated for veterans in their states by coming together with other veteran organizations to strengthen their alliance when advocating for the veterans and their families. In Missouri, even the young Juniors get involved by attending rallies in support of veterans, like Junior member, Sophia Adams, from Unit 5, who attended a rally with her homemade sign, "Help Veterans Like My Paw Paw".

Our American Legion Auxiliary members continue to work to keep veterans' issues in front of legislators, strengthening our mission to serve veterans, service members, and their families.

Madam President, this concludes my platform remarks.

(Applause)

MS. WILLIAMSON: The

Auxiliary Emergency Fund is so important because it's a perfect example of members directly supporting members. It is our most challenging times that we are so grateful for the generosity and support of others. Here with more on our Auxiliary Emergency Fund, is National Chairman Jeanne Haas. Jeanne? We'll play music for you.

MS. HAAS: Okay. Good morning.

ALL: Good morning.

MS. HAAS: Good morning. \$135,879.57 is the dollar amount the Auxiliary Emergency Fund awarded from October 1st, 2023 to May 31st, 2024. During this time period, 73 fellow Auxiliary members were assisted through the Hardship and Disaster Assistance Grants. The AEF was created in 1969 with a bequest from the estate of Auxiliary member Helen Colby Small of Burlington, Wisconsin. Five decades later, the AEF is still helping fellow Auxiliary members get back on their feet.

Since June 1st, 2023, donations were

received from over 200 departments, districts, divisions, units, members, and friends. During department meetings, passed the hat during their meetings. Berkeley Unit number 60 of West Virginia --

(Cheers)

MS. HAAS: -- trick or treated for AEF funds. Collections were made by placing containers in posts and during events. The Department of Minnesota used the challenge, The Power of a Penny, for members to donate their change. During a Zoom quarterly meeting, the use of a clean jam jar with the label affixed for donations, reminding members to help those in a jam, donate for AEF was shared.

Colonial Heights Unit 284 in Virginia involved their Poppy Princess and soliciting AEF funds during the meeting. Department President of Utah, Mike Rasmussen, chose AEF as a project, asking for donations for a quilt raffle. The quilt was made by Department Second Vice

President, Peggy Robertson.

(Cheers)

MS. HAAS: Midwinter in Iowa, members danced, shook, rattled and rolled to make donations for AEF.

(Cheers)

MS. HAAS: Unit 28 of the Department of Delaware held their annual dinner and variety show to support the Auxiliary Emergency Fund. The event featured entertainment to a packed house and fun was had by all. Although I have no photo proof, it was reported that its Eastern Division National Vice President, Deb Hernan, took part in the entertainment. The event netted over \$3,500 for the AEF program.

(Applause)

MS. HAAS: The Department of Puerto Rico gave piggy banks to their members to collect donations for AEF during the year, setting a goal of raising \$1,000. Members returned their piggy banks and counted the funds raised, resulting in

\$1,035 dollars donations to AEF.

(Applause)

MS. HAAS: Congratulations, Puerto Rico, on this achievement.

The Department of Minnesota, under the leadership of AEF Chairman Margaret Keller, more than doubled their department donations by holding auctions, grab bag donations, challenges and other creative ways to make a donation. The Department of Minnesota reported sending in over \$30,000 to support the AEF fund.

(Applause)

(Cheers)

MS. HAAS: Many departments reported units and departments administering their own AEF local funds. The Department of Alaska granted one member assistance and has several additional applications awaiting a decision. The Department of Florida reported awarding 56 Bella (phonetic), Florida Auxiliary members at grants totaling \$106,000, to provide assistance following a

disaster or a crisis impacting their lives.

Lastly, Charles Ingram in Unit 329 at Briggsville, Wisconsin, utilized utility unit funds to pay for snow removal at a member's home to assist her family. Her Legionnaire husband was traveling for medical treatment and was in need of an emergency vehicle transport from their home for this treatment.

These are just a few of the many true acts of service each year that positively impact the lives of our fellow Auxiliary members. Of the 73 Auxiliary members receiving AEF grants during this fiscal year, 17 were awarded disaster grants for damage to their primary residence and for essential emergency expenses, while 56 were awarded hardship grants to assist the basic needs of shelter, essential utility bills, and for the recent loss of their income. Thank you to all the donors who gave in service, not self.

Madam President, it has been my honor to record and report these acts of kindness and

generous support of the AEF program for our Auxiliary entities and members to help their fellow members during their time of need. Thank you. This concludes the AEF platform remarks.

MS. WILLIAMSON: Thank you very much, Jeanne. Chaplains bring spiritual guidance, emotional support and love to every situation. They remind us how important it is to connect and show compassion for each other. Please welcome National Chaplain Brister Thomas, here to present the National Chaplains report. Brister?

(Applause)

(Music played)

MS. WILLIAMSON: There it is.

MS. THOMAS: Hello again. Where are the chaplains that served this year department? Raise your hands. And the ones that are serving next year? What about our units? Right? What about chaplains ever who have served? Raise your hands. There you are. Those are our special

people.

(Applause)

MS. THOMAS: Thank you. This past year has been a period of remarkable growth and innovation for our ALA chaplains. It's been marked by significant strides in our mission to serve. Our guiding theme, "Let your light shine so brightly that others can see their way out of the dark." And it's been more than a motto. It's been our call to action.

We actually challenged ourselves to think creatively, to build camaraderie and develop shared resources that would help amplify our reach and our impact. So, this year, our work centered around three tenets -- fellowship, growth, and blessings.

So first, fellowship. For the first time, we organized quarterly virtual meetings for chaplains across the country, and these meetings were more than routine check-ins. They were designed to create a collaborative environment

where chaplains could share insights, address challenges, and exchange best practices. By meeting regularly, we strengthened our network, and we clarified our roles within the ALA, enhancing the support we could give to each other and our community.

Our chaplains have continued to fulfill their essential roles with dedication and compassion. Across the nation, they've been at the forefront of memorial services, honoring those we've lost with dignity and respect, as evidenced by the heartfelt ceremonies in West Virginia --

(Applause)

MS. THOMAS: -- and Maryland.

(Applause)

MS. THOMAS: Beyond these solemn duties, our chaplains have been active participants in community events by participating in Wreaths Across America -- and right there you can see my cute husband -- and engaged in

numerous other activities that highlighted the values of the American Legion Auxiliary.

One example is in Nebraska. The chaplains led efforts in creating prayer quilts --

(Applause).

MS. THOMAS: -- and I have these examples right here. Right, Nebraska? And in the back, there's your prayer.

(Audience)

MS. THOMAS: Right? I know. I know. So, these efforts supported our members and strengthened the bonds between the ALA and our community.

Our second tenet, growth. This year saw significant growth when we introduced the Advent and the Hanukkah Daily Devotionals. It's a new initiative that provided daily reflections and prayers throughout the holiday season. And it was available to all members via Facebook and

website and email. This project was a nationwide effort, with contributions from chaplains in every single state, as well as from our national leadership, including our national vice president, Trish Ward, and of course, our national president, Lisa Williamson.

The impact of the initiative was profound. It served as a valuable resource and a tool for unit meetings and newsletters and gave a deeper connection among our members.

In Idaho, for instance --

(Applause)

MS. THOMAS: There you are -- Lucinda Sutherland shared that participating in devotions inspired her to explore and understanding -- and this is my favorite part -- different faith traditions, thereby broadening her ability to serve a diverse community. Looking ahead, we are committed to continuing this momentum. And we are developing new resources, which you will see within the next few weeks, we hope, including an

updated Chaplain 101 Guide and a revised and updated prayer book. These will be designed to empower our chaplains with the resources that you need to continue your work with confidence, excellence, and compassion.

Our third tenant, blessings. Chaplains share blessings, receive blessings across the nation. I'm not ready for this part -- sorry. And here is mine to all of you. It's a shared Hawaiian blessing in English. "Mahalo Nui loa", from my heart to your heart. Please feel my gratitude from my breath to your breath, please know my friendship. And from me to you, please know my love for each of you.

Madam President, this concludes my platform remarks, but may I request a special privilege, please?

MS. WILLIAMSON: Yes, you may.

MS. THOMAS: Would you please join me up -- for here for a moment?

In appreciation for your tireless efforts and devotion, we have collected thoughts, prayers, poems and more. Embracing the digital age, we do have a flash drive for you as well, but we do you have it in print. From chaplains, previous leaders, members and more, we hope you will accept this personal prayer book curated specially for you.

MS. WILLIAMSON: Ah.

(Applause)

MS. THOMAS: There we go.

MS. WILLIAMSON: Nice.

Oh, look at that. So, from the very beginning.

MS. THOMAS: From the very beginning.

MS. THOMAS: You don't want to read it?

She doesn't want to read it all right now, I think that's okay.

MS. WILLIAMSON: Thank you very much.

(Applause)

MS. WILLIAMSON: Okay.

So, we have a special presentation and today, and it's going to start with the introduction of the Four Chaplains, which will be from Lou Cavalier, the United States Navy retired and vice chairman of the Chapel of the Four Chaplains, we welcome. Thank you.

(Applause).

MR. CAVALIER: Good morning, everyone. So, I give you greetings from the Chapel of Four Chaplains in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

(Cheers)

(Applause)

MR. CAVALIER: And like I always do, I always invite everyone to come and visit us. We're in the Navy Yard, just in South Philly, right by all the stadiums. And some of you actually take us up on that. You're always welcome. I know that New Jersey will be visiting us in September, but just follow along. Just give us a call, and let us know when you're

coming.

But I'm on stage here today. I'm joined by Shannon -- Sharon Whitmer from the Department of New Jersey --

(Applause)

MR. CAVALIER: And also John Brouse from -- also from the Department of New Jersey. He's now the vice commander.

(Applause)

MR. CAVALIER: And of course, he is with his celebrity dog, Sarge. And Sarge is a real celebrity in New Jersey. I can tell you that. But we're here today really to honor your outgoing president. We do selfless service awards, and if anyone epitomizes selfless service, it's Lisa Williamson.

I'm wearing this poppy. I wear a poppy all the time. The people from Pennsylvania and New Jersey can attest to that. But I like to wear it here, because you guys really support that program, and we're very appreciative of

that. That's one of the great ways that you are to be the one. And under the leadership of Lisa Williamson, you guys have made great strides in doing lots of things. And it's impressive, because Lisa has had numerous leadership responsibilities with the Auxiliary here.

I mean, just reading some of these things here she was, she served as the Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation Committee, Children & Youth, Auxiliary Emergency Fund, Constitution & Bylaws -- that sounds boring -- Public Relations, Community Service, Junior Activities, and now she completed the year as your president, and she's also an American Legion Rider. I mean, you've got a very talented young lady here, and we want to honor that.

So, Lisa, you've touched many people with your life. You have changed lives, and you have saved lives. And I know that's very important to you as you traveled around the country this past year. All in the spirit and

legacy of what we call at the Chapel of Four Chaplains, the Legacy of the Four Chaplains is selfless service, and you exemplify that. And for that, we are now going to induct you into our Legion of Honor by awarding you our bronze medallion.

(Applause)

MS. WILLIAMSON: Wow. My goodness.

(Applause)

MR. CAVALIER: So, I ask you all to please join me by standing. Since this is the equivalent of a military order, we like for everyone to stand and to hear the Chapel of Four Chaplains is pleased to present the Legion of Honor Bronze Medallion to Lisa Williamson, the Auxiliary -- American Legion Auxiliary National President, on today, August 28, 2024, in recognition of her lifetime service to all people, regardless of race or faith. This award symbolizes to all Americans and for all time the

unity of this nation founded upon the one God.
Congratulations, Lisa, and keep up the good
work, American Legion Auxiliary.

(Applause)

(Cheers)

(Applause)

MS. WILLIAMSON: Thank
you, Lou and guest, and Sarge, and Brister. And
I was not expecting that. So, I thank you very
much.

As national presidents, we get the
privilege and honor of leading the American
Legion Auxiliary for a year. When that year of
service is complete, we begin our next chapter of
leadership and join in the esteemed ranks of past
national presidents. Each Past National
President serves as a link in the chain that
spans over 100 years. When that chain is broken,
we feel the loss profoundly and deeply. Past
National President Carlene Ashworth is here to
celebrate the life of our friend and esteemed

Past National President and passionate member,
Katherine Morris. Carlene?

MS. MORRIS: Katherine Gene Morris was born in Houston, Texas on October the 7th, 1934 and left her earthly home on August the 11th, 2024, just two months shy of her 90th birthday. She was elected the 83rd national president of the American Legion Auxiliary in St. Louis, Missouri, in 2003.

When I think of Katherine, I think of a smiling face of love and joy and the many happy times that we shared together over 50 years. Katherine was passionate with her love for her husband, John, her children, Cheryl, Donna and Paul, and her son Frank, her grandchildren, great-grandchildren and with all those who were her friends. She was also passionate about the American Legion Auxiliary during the many years of dedicated service.

Katherine had a kind heart, and she loved her friends, and they loved her. She

never liked confrontation and would always look for the good in every situation. It was only fitting that her theme during her term as National President was Hearts in Service.

During Katherine's installation address, she stated, and I quote, "Our American Legion Family has a big heart. We have a lot of love and a huge amount of concern for our country, our veterans, and for the community life that all of us treasure and want to see improved." She went on to say, "Just as the heart is the engine that drives the body, our members power every move that we make on behalf of America's veterans."

Katherine urged members to stay true to the core of the mission of the organization founded in 1919. She reminded them why their work in support of veterans continued to be so critical so many decades later, Katherine had many events take place during her year that brought her great joy; laying the wreath at the

Tomb of the Unknown Soldier and at the many cemeteries around the Beaches of Normandy, visiting our veterans and nursing homes, VA hospitals and other facilities, and having the opportunity to interact with our members as she traveled across the country and around the world, spreading her smile and bringing happiness to everyone she met.

One of her special memories was getting to meet and have a conversation with General Colin Powell. And when time permitted and after leaving office, Katherine's relaxing moments would find her having a great time at any nearby casino. And I feel sure there are some of you out there who have had the opportunity to enjoy this time with her.

Katherine's daughter, Donna, reminded me of this the next event, and I'm sure many of you do not know that Katherine was once a star on CNN. Well, the story is during their -- during her National Convention, which, by the way was 20

years ago this month, President George Bush was the guest speaker, and Katherine had the privilege of introducing him.

We all know that when a president is speaking anywhere, it's going to be on the news. And after he concluded his remarks, the president leaned over, kissed Katherine on the cheek, and during the entire CNN newscast that day, every time the president was shown delivering remarks to The American Legion, that was the clip that was shown over and over, and over throughout the day.

(Cheers)

I want to close my -- by sharing remarks with you, the memory card given at Katherine's funeral, because it speaks so much of the person that she was. "I'd like the memory of me to be a happy one. I'd like to leave an afterglow of smiles when life is done. I'd like to leave an echo where spring softly down the ways of happy times and laughing times and bright

and sunny days. I'd like the tears of those who grieve to dry before the sun, with all of the happy memories I leave when my life is done."

We will miss you, my friend Katherine, and we will never forget you. And when we think of you, I hope it brings a smile to our face, knowing that your legacy brought happiness and joy to all those who knew her. Thank you.

(Applause)

MS. WILLIAMSON: Our national historian strives to preserve, display, and share our history, traditions, and milestones. These efforts allow members the opportunity to look back and reconnect with our organization's rich past. Here to tell us more is our National Historian Donna Thurman.

(Applause)

MS. THURMAN: Let us thank Past National President Carlene, for sharing that bit of history with us. Please applaud.

(Applause)

MS. THURMAN: Good morning American Legion Auxiliary members.

ALL: Good morning.

MS. THURMAN: It's a fabulous time to be here in beautiful New Orleans to celebrate the accomplishments achieved during the year. History has been made and has been shared by you, the members, this week in this historic city. If you have been following National President Lisa Williamson on Facebook, you know that she has contributed greatly to our history. She traveled our wonderful country from sea to shining sea and beyond. How many miles have those sled dogs gone? A lot.

She visited nearly every department, witnessing the great efforts and achievements of our members. She shared the American Legion families Be the One mission at every opportunity with the National American Legion Auxiliary focus being the need to reduce the stigma of health

issues that affect so many of our veterans and active-duty personnel. Her compassion for those suffering was so sincere that many reached out to her with their personal stories. She made a difference by bringing this issue to the forefront.

While visiting various departments, she was able to assist Auxiliary members with different projects. She visited VA hospitals and patients, went to VA nursing homes and played bingo with the residents, participated in Be the One walks distributing information to community members, and she helped Junior members pack boxes and do many other activities. And all of this information came from our national -- our department historians.

She wanted to be a hands-on president, and boy was she ever. But President Lisa's visits were not all business. American Legion and Auxiliary members made sure she was able to do some sightseeing as well. And what beautiful

sights they were. Not only was our fearless leader on the road, but the national division vice presidents were busy with their department visits. They each represented Madam President well by continuing to share the Be the One mission with Auxiliary members and Legionnaires, putting their own twist on the story.

They engaged with grassroots members, answering questions and giving advice. I have been honored to serve as national historian this year and would like to praise all the wonderful department historians who work so diligently on their history books. They asked pertinent questions during our Zoom meetings and were eager to help one another. And a special shoutout goes to Dayna Beyer of Ohio --

(Applause)

MS. THURMAN: -- for sharing her history toolkit with everyone. I know that it helps so many of you. Each one of you was a delight, and I thank you for your assistance this

year. President Lisa, this concludes my platform remarks, but I do have an announcement to make if I may?

MS. WILLIAMSON: Please do.

MS. THURMAN: Thank you. The National Toomey Award is given for the best department history book. Each division had a winning book. The winning books from each division were Central Division, Wisconsin, Department -- Mary -- Department Historian, Mary Petrie.

(Applause)

MS. THURMAN: East Eastern Division, New Jersey --

(Applause)

MS. THURMAN: -- Department Historian, Lisa Natal.

MS. THURMAN: Northwestern Division, Minnesota ---

(Applause)

MS. THURMAN: -- Department Historian,

Renee Seuss.

(Applause)

MS. THURMAN: Southern Division, North
Carolina --

(Cheers)

(Applause)

MS. THURMAN: -- Department Historian,
Linda Quinlan.

(Applause)

MS. THURMAN: Western Division,
Arizona --

(Cheers)

(Applause)

MS. THURMAN: -- Department Historian,
Marge Christensen.

(Cheers)

(Applause)

MS. THURMAN: And this year's Toomey
Award winner is the Department of Wisconsin,
Mary Petrie.

(Cheers)

(Applause)

MS. THURMAN: Congratulations. The awards will be mailed out following the National Convention. Thank you so much.

(Applause)

MS. WILLIAMSON: Next, we are pleased to -- I am pleased to introduce the members of the dedicated Resolutions Committee. Our Chairman, Jane Hardacre from Florida.

(Applause)

MS. WILLIAMSON: Vice Chairman Lisa Liford from Indiana.

(Applause)

MS. WILLIAMSON: And member Alica "BB" Buser from Kentucky.

(Applause)

MS. BUSER: Good morning. Good morning. Thank you, Madam President.

We have two resolutions of support and one courtesy resolution. I'd now introduce Lisa Liford from the Department of Indiana.

(Applause)

MS. BUSER: She is the vice chair.

Thank you.

MS. LIFORD: Thank you, Jane, Madam President. My pleasure to read our two resolutions. Our first one is Quilts of Valor. "Whereas, the American Legion Auxiliary is a diverse and inclusive organization, which includes mothers and grandmothers of service members, veterans.

And Whereas, Quilts of Valor is a nonprofit organization that honors veterans and service members who have been touched by war by presenting them with comfort and healing quilts.

Whereas, the Quilts of Valor mission is supported by American Legion Auxiliary members across the United States.

Resolved, the American Legion Auxiliary collaborates with Quilts of Valor by serving the inter intersections of two organizations' missions.

Resolved, the American Legion.

Auxiliary pledges its support to the Quilts of Valor Foundation in honoring and comforting veterans and service members who have been touched by war.

We commit to actively promoting and participating in Quilts of Valor initiatives, including quilt making and facilitating quilt presentations to veterans and service members in our local communities nationwide by supporting Quilts of Valor, we aim to honor our heroes and provide them with comfort and recognition for their valor.

(Applause)

Blue Star Mothers. Resolution of Support. "Whereas, the American Legion Auxiliary is a diverse and inclusive organization, which includes mothers and grandmothers of service members and veterans; and

Whereas, Blue Star Mothers of America, Inc. are mothers of a person who, A, is serving

in the armed forces; or B, has served in or has been honorably discharged from the Armed Forces, and she is living in the United States or is a citizen of the United States, living outside the United States.

Whereas, they support each other and their children while promoting patriotism. Our organization focuses on our mission every single day and will never, ever forsake our troops, our veterans, or the families of our fallen heroes.

Whereas, the mission of the American Legion Auxiliary and Blue Star Mothers of America, Incorporated organizers overlap on a multitude of levels.

Resolved, The American Legion Auxiliary pledges its support to the Blue Star Mothers of America Inc., an organization dedicated to supporting military service members, veterans and their families, and Gold Star mothers. Recognizing the sacrifices made by our military families, we acknowledge the importance

of providing them with support, resources and encouragement. Therefore, we commit to actively participating with Blue Star Mothers of America, Inc. chapters in our local communities to assist with promoting their programs and initiatives, including care packages, care package drives and volunteer active.

Resolved, Through our support of Blue Star Mothers of America Inc., we aim to express our gratitude to military families and demonstrate our unwavering support for their service and sacrifice".

(Applause)

MS. WILLIAMSON: Whereas, the dedicated delegates, alternates and guests have gathered in New Orleans, Louisiana for the ALA 103rd National Convention to hear the accomplishments of the world's largest patriotic auxiliary organization and to show their dedication to in their membership serving our Heroes and Mission outreach efforts and Resolved

that this courtesy resolution expresses our heartfelt appreciation and grateful thanks to all named in this resolution, who shared time with us.

And be it further resolved, we express our heartfelt thanks and appreciation to this extraordinary woman, American Legion Auxiliary National President Lisa Williamson, by giving her a standing ovation, demonstrating our love, support and pride in all her accomplishments, along with the unanimous thank you for keeping us focused on The Legion Family Be the One mission.

(Applause)

MS. HARDACRE: Now, it's you. MS.

WILLIAMSON: No.

Okay. Let's show our appreciation for this great committee with a round of applause.

(Applause)

MS. HARDACRE: Madam National President, this concludes the Resolution report. Thank you.

MS. WILLIAMSON: Thank
you, Jane, Lisa, BC.

And with your applause, I suspect these
resolutions are adopted.

(Applause)

MS. WILLIAMSON: So, our
Resolutions Committee is not the only hard-
working group behind the scenes at our
convention. Let's give a big hand to our
Distinguished Guests Committee.

(Applause)

MS. WILLIAMSON: Our
chairman, Past National President Carlene
Ashworth.

(Applause)

MS. WILLIAMSON: Vice
Chairman, Past National President Desi Story, and
member, Past National President, Mary Davis.

(Applause)

MS. WILLIAMSON: Thank
you very much.

MS. WILLIAMSON: Thank you. They're trying to keep us straight back backstage, and we know how fun that could be. Would Ann Robinson from my great department of Alaska, please come to the podium to present the President's Scrapbook?

Ann? On her way? There we go. Ann Robinson. Please give her a round of applause.

(Applause)

MS. ROBINSON: I got the mic. See? That's all you go to do. I would like to thank every person out there that sent me photos. We had an amazing year working together, and I've actually got to meet a couple of you. So, thank you all for showing me Lisa's travels, her ambition, her love as my American Legion Auxiliary sister.

Knowing Lisa, she's not like she's ever going to stop moving. So, she didn't get a book. She got a live frame that I'm going to work on

continuously for the next year, because you're all still sending me photos, and I don't want to let any of them go. I do have one question.

MS. WILLIAMSON: Okay.

MS. ROBINSON: Did you really sign some guy's buns? Dinner last night was awesome. I learned a lot.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Who'd you go to dinner with?

MS. ROBINSON: I went to Earth (phonetic) and ran into some people.

(Pause)

MS. ROBINSON: So, this is what we call a live frame. You add pictures for the rest of your life. But when you get to 8,000, the ones in first start falling off. Just keep that in mind, okay?

MS. WILLIAMSON: So, in a couple of months.

MS. ROBINSON: Yeah. You already got a thousand or on there. And then I gave you three

thumb drives with all the pictures on them. So, if you want to make any large pictures, et cetera, et cetera, you have them at your disposal.

MS. WILLIAMSON: There we go. Thank you very much.

MS. ROBINSON: Trust me, there's a thousand on there. I love you very much. I love you.

MS. WILLIAMSON: So, I think that you guys would all agree that probably -- I love scrapbooking. Nothing that I would do, but I mean, I would probably look through it once. But to have all of our pictures hanging on my wall or on my desk, I'll be always looking at these to remember my year and your travel. So, thank you, Ann. This is perfect. It's a great way to remember my term as a national president.

(Pause)

MS. WILLIAMSON: The

National President's Award for Excellence allows me to highlight the incredible work being done in -- to advance our organization's mission. Today, we're excited to honor four more outstanding unit winners and one department winner. We kicked off the awards Monday with the Legion Family Unity Awards and here to continue the celebration is National Central Division Vice President Carol Robinson. Carol?

(Applause)

MS. ROBINSON: Thank you, Madam President. Our first unit work with their Junior members to demonstrate how to be active members of the organization through community service. Their enthusiasm and passion for serving their community never went unnoticed. They adopted the Multiple Careers Magnet Center and the unit members volunteered with the students from the center at Feed My Starving Children, preparing

over 2,000 meals to ship to overseas.

Junior members later received Good Deed Awards for their volunteer work. The recognition extended beyond the American Legion Auxiliary, with even the mayor expressing special gratitude and presenting a certificate of appreciation for their outstanding service and resources provided to the community.

In the spirit of family, the unit teamed up with another American Legion Auxiliary unit to teach sixth graders about the importance of Veterans Day and a Legion Post to support the Be the One event and attend their suicide prevention forum. Their support extended through financial contributions, countless volunteer hours, and uniting as a Legion family.

As of today -- now listen to this. As of today, their membership has increased over 400 percent.

(Applause)

MS. ROBINSON: Please put your hands

together for Winwood, Unit 511 in Dallas, Texas.

(Cheers and Applause)

MS. ROBINSON: A big thank-you to the unit president, Kimberly Wheeler, for telling us all about the unit's great work.

(Cheers and applause)

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Way to go!

(Cheers and applause)

MS. ROBINSON: Congratulations, Unit 511. We are incredibly proud of your present -- your persistent efforts in uplifting your community. Now, Deb, are you ready to present the next winner?

MS. TIERNAN: Yes, I am. Thank you, Carol T. I have the honor of recognizing the second unit to receive the National President's Award for Excellence. Despite their smaller size, this unit exemplifies the spirit of collaboration with the Legion family. This unit's collective efforts symbolizes the Legion family's dedication to community service. Each

member plays a vital role in ensuring the seamless execution of these events, which not only foster community spirit but also showcase the Legion family's positive influence on our neighborhoods.

This unit has committed themselves to do whatever it takes to support the Be the One initiative. By proudly wearing their Be the One shirts and providing a supportive platform for veterans to share their stories, they embody compassion, solidarity and addressing critical mental health issues in the veteran. Today, we applaud this unit for their passion and dedication.

It is with great pleasure that I invite you to this stage -- drum roll, please -- John Gella, Memorial Unit 219, Fruitland Park, Florida.

(Applause)

(Music played)

MS. TIERNAN: Let's have a big round of

applause for Unit President, Toni Stainbrook, will not be in her unit for this fabulous award. (

(Cheers and applause)

MS. TIERNAN: Congratulations, Unit 219.

Okay, Karen, it's your turn. Are you ready to present the next winner?

MS. SUSAG: Thank you, Deborah. The next unit excels across the multiple mission of outreach programs, demonstrating remarkable success in the areas such as ALA Hoosier Girls State, Community Service, Education and National Security.

In embracing the Be the One initiative, they took a proactive stand against the military and veteran suicide epidemic by recognizing the power of a kind word, a listening ear or a helping hand, ensuring no veteran feels alone or forgotten. Utilizing their public relations platform, they have spread awareness about the crucial call to action. Through their strategic area use of social media platforms, they have

reached a broad audience and engaged in meaningful conversations, urging members and the public to be vigilant, compassionate, and proactive in supporting our veterans.

Taking the Be the One mission a step further, this unit encouraged members to participate in the Buddy Check program. Unit members hosted regular meetings, providing training resources, such as the VA S.A.V.E. training and ensured that their members were equipped to make a significant impact in preventing veteran suicides. Their commitment to our veterans serves as an inspiration to us all.

Our next winning unit embodies the model, "A legacy of service, not self." Please welcome to the stage -- ta-da -- Burton Woolery, Unit 18 in Bloomington, Indiana, a round of applause --

(Cheers and applause)

MS. SUSAG: -- for Jennifer Tracy, the VA&R chairman who nominated her unit for this

award.

(Cheers and Applause)

MS. SUSAG: Outstanding work, Unit

18. Now let's get Christine up here to present the next winner. Christine?

(Cheers and Applause)

MS. TRAHAN: Good morning. How y'all doing?

ALL: Fine.

MS. TRAHAN: All right. We're going to bear with some broken glasses this morning. Woo-hoo. Okay. It is my distinct honor to present the next award for outstanding service and dedication to our veterans. This unit hosted their first annual veterans' retreat. This wonderful event was spearheaded by one of their Junior members, who planned it as a part of their Girl Scout Gold Award project.

About 60 veterans and their families participated in the weekend filled with games, activities and camaraderie. The retreat provided

a fun-filled environment and gave veterans a valuable opportunity to learn about VA benefits and discuss veterans' issues in a safe space. During their retreat, the unit teamed up with the VA Center Peer Program to address critical needs of veterans and their families.

Together, the unit gathered and purchased enough cleaning supplies for 25 veterans. They didn't stop there. They collaborated with a local women's club, which held their own donation drive and were able to collect 15 additional sets of supplies for veterans' families.

The dedication and proactive efforts of this unit exemplify the spirit of service and community that our organization strives to uphold. Their initiatives have not only brought joy and support to our veterans, but also demonstrated the power of collaboration and community involvement.

Please join me in honoring and

congratulating -- drum roll. Let's hear it.
Madison Unit 229 in Madison, Alabama. And a
special thanks to Jean Downs, Unit President
for sharing your unit story.

(Music played)

MS. TRAHAN: Congratulations for your
well-deserved recognition, Unit 229.

Okay, Jan, are you ready? Let's rock
and roll.

MS. CUSHING: Am I okay? Can you see
me?

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: (Indiscernible)

MS. CUSHING: No, that's not good,
right?

(Applause)

MS. CUSHING: Thank you, Christine. It
is my honor to present our department winner of
the National President's Award for Excellence.
This department made it their mission to
incorporate the Be the One initiative into their
fall and mentor of meetings, demonstrating their

commitment to veteran suicide awareness and prevention.

During their fall conference, they welcomed Nicola Lakota, the founder of the Christian Corner Foundation, as their featured speaker. Nicola shared her journey of healing, following the tragic suicide of her son, Christian, who was in the Army.

At their midwinter conference, the department hosted a highly successful workshop called Through our Eyes, navigating Post Traumatic Stress as a family member led by their leadership chairman. This workshop provided a safe space for members to share experiences and understand the behaviors veterans often exhibit in civilian life. Participants learned they were not alone in their challenges and gained valuable insights into recognizing signs and symptoms of escalating crisis in veterans, along with resources and contact for immediate help.

In addition to these impact moments, 15

Legion family members from the -- this department organized a legislative day at their capital building to discuss various veterans-related bills with their representatives. A nearby city caught wind of their Legion family efforts and was so impressed that their mayor presented a proclamation declaring the first of every month as Be the One Day in their city, while the department is currently in the process of officially establishing September 22nd as Veteran Suicide Awareness Day.

Please join me in congratulating this department for their outstanding contribution, their commitment to raising awareness, and passion for advocating on behalf of veterans. Let's give a round of applause to -- drum roll -- the Department of Ohio and Department President Jane Ridenour.

(Applause)

(Music played)

(Applause)

MS. Williamson: Each of these honorees has gone above and beyond in their commitment to our veterans, their families and our communities. What makes this year's award even more remarkable is seeing how our units and our departments have come together as a Legion family, united in a shared mission. Their collective efforts personify the strength and spirit of our organization, showing that we are stronger together as a family.

A special highlight of this year's awards is the commitment to embracing our Be the One mission. Please enjoy -- join me in congratulating all of them for their contributions.

(Applause)

MS. WILLIAMSON: By raising awareness, providing essential resources and offering support, our units and departments have taken significant steps to ensure no veteran feels alone or forgotten. To all the honorees, I thank

you for your unwavering devotion, your
compassionate service, and your excellent
leadership.

As we move forward, let us carry the
spirit of these achievements with us, continuing
to strive for excellence in all that we do.
Together, as we -- as a united Legion family, we
will make a lasting impact and honor the
sacrifices of those who have served our nation.
Be the one.

(Applause)

MS. WILLIAMSON: And it
was Ohio I signed a bun. And they even got me to
a horse therapy place, and I pet the horses. As
we set up for the next -- for the national -- the
National President's Report, the chair calls on
National Secretary Kathy Daudistel to make a few
convention updates. Kathy?

MS. DAUDISTEL: Thank you.

OUTGOING PRESIDENT WILLIAMSON: Yes,
ma'am.

MS. DAUDISTEL: The Wall of Heroes has gathered over or around \$27,000 so far.

(Applause).

MS. DAUDISTEL: Yep. So, the booth is still going to be open for a little while after this session. They take cash, check, MasterCard or Visa, so make a donation today in honor of your veteran. State's dinner begins at 7:00 p.m. in the Convention Center Great Hall, same place as last night's Commanders Banquet that way. It is sold out.

However, I know there's tickets for available out there, so if you're a delegation chairman or a secretary that has tickets, stand up real quick, so whoever wants a ticket can find you. There you go. So, look around if you need a ticket. It's going to be a really fun event. It's Mardi Gras theme, and I guarantee you Lisa has some good stuff planned.

All right. Winners of the PUFL membership will be announced at State's dinner

tonight. And the last thing is we have a very special birthday in the house. She's behind stage. She's worked back in the corner with the Elections and Tally booth all week. Chrystal Daulton has turned 50.

(Applause)

MS. DAUDISTEL: So, let's sing happy birthday to Chrystal.

(Applause)

(Audience singing)

MS. DAUDISTEL: Chrystal, where are you? She's back there near the doors. Behind you. Happy birthday, Chrystal.

(Cheers and applause)

MS. WILLIAMSON: So, don't forget at the States Dinner today, we're going to be raffling off another PUFL, but it's for a Legion or an Auxiliary PUFL. So, get your Legionnaires to purchase tickets for that, and the proceeds are going to the Spirit of Youth Scholarship Fund.

(Applause)

MS. WILLIAMSON: All

right. Okay. Well, we've heard with the reports from just about everyone. So, I'm getting out my Kleenex. So, I guess it's my turn. Let's take a look at the screens.

PRERECORDED STATEMENT BY OUTGOING

PRESIDENT WILLIAMSON: Since 1919, the American Legion Auxiliary has been about connections. Connection between members who share a common passion with connection with the military and our veterans, and of course, our connection with the Legion family.

This past year was not only built on these connections, but it truly served to strengthen them. I had the privilege of experiencing these connections firsthand. I also had the opportunity to build some personal connections that have forever changed my life

In the past few years, the American Legion Auxiliary has worked strategically to form

important protections with Honor Flight, Wreaths Across America, and other organizations working to honor and support our military veterans and their families.

My husband, Darrell, and I trained and served as guardians on a September Honor Flight, and it was an experience I will never forget. My veteran, Susan, was one of the strongest, toughest, fastest people I have ever had the privilege of knowing. People say I'm fast, but wow, Susan was tough to keep up with. She was unstoppable. In fact, Susan just did another Lone Eagle Honor Flight. Only this time, she was serving as their medic.

My first connection with the Wreaths Across America's escort to Arlington was during my year as National Vice President, and it was life changing. This year was no exception, although it did involve a bit more travel to get there. The morning of December 7th, I was with

the Legion Family leaders in Hawaii for Pearl Harbor Day. By that evening, I was on my way to the airport for an overnight cross-country flight to Maine, where I arrived just in time for the 5:00 a.m. sunrise service.

After the service, Darrell Chaffee, a military chaplain, and Rico, a retired Colonel, and I were loaded into our car, and the wreaths caravan was on its way to Arlington. One of our stops was at a school, where students each presented on the life of a Gold Star family veteran. Speaking the veteran's names out loud with a symbol of honor and remembrance, a promise that they would never be forgotten.

At Arlington, 70,000 volunteers did the same. They read the grave marker, laid wreaths and said the veteran's name out loud and promised to never forget. In just over two hours, every single grave had a wreath, and the view from the Tomb of the Unknown was something none of us will ever forget.

Organizations like Honor Flight and Wreaths Across America serve as the ALA's connection to like-minded organizations in the community. And together, we are better at serving our military veterans and their families.

This was also a year for deep connections with our Legion Family, the American Legion National Commander Daniel Seehafer, Sons of The American Legion National Commander Don "JR" Hall Jr., and I were all proud to work alongside each other throughout this administrative year. But most of all, we were proud of Be the One, our mission to prevent veteran and military suicide.

Be the One has resonated with our members. At every event we attended, there was at least one member who shared their connection with veteran and military suicide. I visited a unit in a small town in the Midwest, and as I spoke about Be the One, I could tell it was affecting members who had gathered to listen.

When I was finished, a veteran came to the mic and said those that she's talking about, those veterans struggling with suicidal thoughts, I was one of those people.

Be the One has given me permission to talk about it, permission to be okay, permission to know I'm not alone. Later his wife came up to me and said that that was the first time he had ever publicly shared his story. That night, I knew another important connection had been made.

Be the One is not an easy mission, but the important ones never are. There have been plenty of tears shed and stories without happy endings, but we continue to fight. We fight to destigmatize mental health issues. We fight to let people know it's okay to not be okay. We fight when others cannot fight for themselves, and we fight for more happy endings.

Ask any Past National President, and they will tell you the question they got asked the most was, "Are you tired yet?" And of

course, I understand why. Traveling to 44 departments, countless units, dozens of VAs and veterans homes, national cemeteries, Fisher Houses, USOs, six presidential libraries, fall, midwinter, and spring conferences, department conventions, ALA Girls State programs, the Pentagon, and the 9/11 museum might sound tiring, but for me, every single event was another opportunity to make a connection.

Serving as your national president has been a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to hear members' stories and to hold the hands that we serve. And I will never tire of those interactions. They kept me energized.

At the National Veterans Creative Arts Festival in Denver, it was a heartwarming experience to witness the amazing talent of our veterans, the healing power of the arts, connections made, and the love for the Auxiliary was so heartwarming to witness. It was great to reconnect with old friends and make new ones with

the veterans. I'm pretty sure I gained some new Facebook friends.

As a national leader, I've been to D.C. several times, but attending ALA Girls Nation gave me the opportunity to experience D.C. through the eyes of these incredible young people. It was inspiring to watch our country's youth debate bills and learn so much from one another. Our future is in good hands.

The American Legion Auxiliary wouldn't exist without members, so thank you for becoming a member or renewing your membership once again. We worked really hard and stopped the membership slide for 2023. I'm hopeful that our momentum continues through the close of 2024. I'm so proud of the progress we made. You matter. And together we can make a difference for our veterans, military, and their families.

Mission Training was a great opportunity for members to connect and learn about Be the One, the impact of membership, ALA

branding and much more. These one-day conferences inspired members to continue working ALA programs in interactive and fun environments. Thank you for all the members who attended admission training during this administrative year and a huge thank you to the presenters to help make these events so successful.

In addition to in-person Mission Trainings, we worked hard to connect our members to resources they could access from the comfort of their homes. Resources like webinars and our program engagement plans on the national website that provided guidelines and ideas to help members implement ALA programs in their local communities.

Our children members play a vital role in the Auxiliary, and this year we made sure to recognize their accomplishments by offering the first ever Junior Members of the Year Scholarship to five deserving recipients, one in each division. We also increased the number of Spirit

of Youth scholarships. These scholarships are now offered one per department instead of just one per division. Scholarships are a great way to recognize the contributions of our Juniors and to invest in the future of our Legion family.

None of these expansions would have been possible without your generous contributions to the scholarship funds. And for that, I thank you sincerely. You truly supported our Legion family.

It was such an honor to serve as your National President. I'm so grateful for all of our members. I may have served this organization in the top volunteer position, but it's the grassroots level that works for mission day in and day out to serve our veterans, military and their families.

My favorite moments this year have been connecting with you and putting our mission first. I will forever be thankful that you join me in being the one to save one. I hope you do

continue to always be there for our veterans in changing lives and saving lives. We will keep fighting until no veteran dies by suicide.

Thank you to all of our national officers, our national committee chairs, and our national headquarters staff, who have been alongside me this year. It was truly a team effort.

And finally, thank you to my mom. You were supposed to be here as I reached this peak in my ALA membership. And while you may not physically be here, I felt your presence in every visit, in every hand I held, in every connection I made. Thank you for watching over me and for all the love.

And to all our members, thank you for everything you've done to make this year special. I am so grateful. Let's keep building those connections because together, we can make a difference in the lives of our veterans, military and their families. And please, continue to Be

the One.

(Applause)

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: That was
awesome.

MS. WILLIAMSON: Thanks.

Be the One. Be the One.

(Applause)

MS. WILLIAMSON: Please,
please be seated. I can guarantee you I am not a
crier, but I have cried more this year than I
have ever cried. As you can see from this video,
I loved each and every second of -- as your
national president, and I would do this forever
if I could. But as the saying goes, all good
things must come to an end.

Trish, if you love being national
president half as much as I do, you're going to
have an amazing year, so.

A couple of closing things, we -- I
touched on it in my report, but I want you to all
please rise. Our national staff is simply

amazing. You don't know that there was a little hiccup this -- this last three days, but our production director fell -- got sick, and our staff and these audio/video camera people stepped up. And hopefully, you didn't see that we had a few little glitches. But if it was not for our staff --

(Applause)

MS. WILLIAMSON: -- what you saw today, you saw Monday, you saw all week long, would not have gone as smooth without them. So, I really appreciate all of you.

I want to let you know those -- throughout the year I've had occasionally people wanting some more of my national president's pins, and I wanted to make sure that we had enough for the year. But I'll let you know though it -- they are not dated. And without stepping on Trish's toes, they're not dated, but if anybody would like to take some back and they have Be the One seminars or events within their

departments, we have about 500 backstage. See one of my national president's pages, and we'll make sure and get you some so you can distribute them, because they do talk about Be the One and 988. They aren't dated. And I'm sure Trish would be all right with that, huh?

So please, please, please, one more. And speaking of Trish, a reminder. There's a certain installation going on here later. It starts at 1:30. Doors will open at 1:00. Okay. And I'm going to say I've had a marvelous, marvelous convention. Everybody else?

ALL: Yeah.

(Applause)

MS. WILLIAMSON: Don't forget States Dinner. Don't forget installation. We still have some partying to do in the city of parades, so I'll finish it up, "Laissez les bons temps rouler".

(Applause)

(Laughter)

MS. WILLIAMSON: Let the good times roll. And be the one, everyone. Be the one. The 2024 National Convention stands adjourned. Thank you so, so much.

(Cheers and applause)

(Whereupon, the 2024 103rd American Legion Auxiliary National Convention was adjourned.)

| <u>Minutes Approval Committee</u> | <u>Date Approved</u> |
|--------------------------------------|----------------------|
| Penelope Foster Caswell Mazonna (AK) | June 4, 2025 |
| Janet A. Bacon (IL) | June 4, 2025 |
| Jane Ridenour (OH) | June 4, 2025 |