

## **Issue: National Security Principles of The American Legion**

### **Message Points:**

The American Legion since its founding in 1919 has always supported a strong national defense which is reflected in its own Preamble to the Constitution, namely, "To uphold and defend the Constitution of the United States of America," and "to inculcate a sense of individual obligation to the community, state and nation".

The United States is faced with a myriad of short and long term threats and challenges to include terrorism, rouge nation-states, nuclear weapons proliferation, a resurgent Russia, and China (a nation becoming more and more capable of projecting its power far from its shores). As such, it is urged that the Department of Defense conduct a global posture review.

The American Legion upholds the following national security principles as fundamental to the best interests of the United States:

1. The National Security Strategy needs to be reassessed so that missions and resources are more closely aligned.
2. The credibility of the United States in an unstable world needs to be maintained by retaining the requisite military capabilities to deal with actual and potential threats. Such a strategy requires that the Armed Forces be more fully structured, equipped and budgeted to achieve this strategy. Active and reserve military end strengths should be increased to an absolute minimum of 2.1 million for the foreseeable future. At least 18 full-strength Army Divisions or 72 Brigade Combat Team equivalents, an enlarged Special Operations Force, 11 deployable Navy aircraft carrier battle groups, 3 or more Marine Corps Expeditionary Forces, and 13 or more active Air Force fighter wing equivalents should be retained as the minimum needed baseline foundation. Defense budgets should be funded at least 4 percent of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) during time of peace, 5 percent during time of war.
3. The National Guard and Reserves must be realistically manned, structured, equipped, trained, fully deployable and maintained at high readiness levels and not over-utilized in order to accomplish their increasing and indispensable missions and roles in our national defense.
4. Peacetime Selective Service registration should be retained so as to maintain our capability to rapidly reconstitute forces in the event of emergencies or war.
5. Force modernization for the Services needs to be realistically funded, and not further delayed, or the United States is likely to unnecessarily risk American lives in the years ahead. Production of airlift and sealift assets needs to be expedited.

6. The American people expect that whenever U.S. forces are committed, that they will be committed only when America's vital national interests are threatened and only as a last resort after all reasonable alternatives have been explored and tried.
7. Full support of peacekeeping, peace enforcement, peace-making and humanitarian operations as they are becoming more frequent and necessary in waging the sustained war on terrorism.
8. The honorable nature of military service should be upheld as it not only represents fulfillment of American patriotic obligation but is also a privilege and responsibility that embodies the highest form of service to the nation.
9. The United States Government must honor its obligations to all service members, veterans, military retirees and their families, and lasting compensations and incentives should be equitable.
10. Major incentives for military service should continue to include an enhanced GI Bill for education and training, improved quality of life features, and a reduced operational tempo in order to recruit and retain a quality and fully-manned force which is professionally-led.
11. Urge the United States Government to retain the necessary deployed forces worldwide to accomplish both short term as well as long term commitments and contingencies.

## Issue:       **Resolution No. 169, Support for the War on Terrorism**

### Message Points:

The United States of America was suddenly, and without provocation, attacked by terrorists on September 11, 2001, resulting in the deaths of thousands of innocent civilians and members of the military of the United States. This tragic event does not stand alone, but is a continuation of a long series of unprovoked terrorist attacks aimed at destroying American lives and the very basic core values of freedom, democracy and respect for human life by radical Islamic fundamentalists.

In response to this despicable act of cowardice, a united Congress in a bipartisan manner authorized the use of armed force against the global armies of terrorism no matter where they reside. Recognizing that the global war on terrorism is as deadly as any war in which the United States has been previously engaged, the President and Congress did authorize military actions in both Afghanistan and Iraq.

The acts of terrorism mentioned heretofore were aimed at the heart and soul of the civilized world, and the world has come together to fight a new and different war, the first, and we hope the only one, of the 21<sup>st</sup> century – a war against all those who seek to export terror, and a war against those governments that support or shelter them.

The National Executive Committee meeting in pre-Convention session adopted this resolution, Resolution 169 Support For The War On Terrorism, which was adopted at the 87<sup>th</sup> National Convention meeting in Honolulu, Hawaii. It has subsequently been resoundingly renewed at every National Convention since. This resolution states:

1. The American Legion fully supports the President of the United States, the United States Congress and the men, women and leadership of our armed forces as they are engaged in the global war on terrorism.
2. The American Legion urges all Americans and freedom-loving peoples everywhere to stand *united* in their support of the global war on terrorism, and *united* in their support of the troops who are engaged in protecting our values and way of life.
3. The National Commander is authorized to use whatever means at his disposal to disseminate accurate information about this war on terrorism, and to engage whatever means necessary to ensure the *united* support of the American people.

In support of this resolution, The American Legion has published a comprehensive booklet, which amplifies on these message points.

**Issue: Quality of Life for Active Forces, Reservists and Military Retiree Veterans**

Message Points:

The American Legion has always supported quality-of-life features for service members and their dependents as well as military retirees and their survivors, as people are the foundation of our nation's fighting forces. Without highly qualified, dedicated and experienced men and women warriors, even the most sophisticated weaponry will not provide the deterrent force necessary for this nation to remain at peace or to defend our vital national interests.

Military compensation is only one factor in the quality-of-life equation. Other major factors include fair treatment; career stability; regular promotions; adequate housing; accessible quality health care; commissaries; cost of living salary increases that adjust fairly to the total cost of living, not just inflation; day care; educational facilities; and recreational facilities. Each of these quality-of-life factors help to ease the numerous hardships and personal sacrifices that are demanded of service members and their families.

The American Legion therefore supports the following with respect to military compensation:

- Military pay comparability for the armed forces by closing the gap between military and private sector pay and having pay raises become competitive with the private sector;
- Regular increases in the Basic Allowances for Quarters (BAQ) rates to keep pace with cost of living increases and regional differences in housing market costs;
- Preserving attractive retirement systems for the active and Reserve components with annual COLA's paid at the same rate, and concurrently, with other Federal retiree COLAs;
- Full funding of concurrent receipt of military retirement pay, military separation pays, and VA disability compensation as well as Special Compensation payments for disabled military retirees;
- Survivor Benefit Plan (SBP) premiums paid up after payment for 30 years or until age 70, whichever comes first, and that pension payments not be offset by Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC) benefit payments;
- Providing a responsive, service independent, military appeals avenue and process in which to appeal medical separation and retirement, discharge upgrade and

correction of military record board decisions that impact separating and retiring service personnel and their subsequent quality-of- life.

Our service members and dependents deserve, and have earned, entitlement to the best quality-of-life standards and benefits that a grateful nation can offer. Without high quality-of-life standards, it will be impossible to recruit and retain the high quality personnel so necessary to protect America and our freedom and to sustain our vital interests.

**The American Legion supports the following with respect to Military Health Care and TRICARE:**

- The retention of Walter Reed Army Medical Center and the Armed Forces Institute of Pathology at their current location until after the end of the GWOT;
- Continue to fully funding programs to provide for the needs of wounded and ill warriors, their families and their caregivers;
- Continued commitment to Uniformed Services University of Health Sciences (USUHS), as a national asset, for the continued provision of uniquely educated and trained uniformed physicians, advanced practice nurses, and scientists dedicated to careers of service in the Army, Navy, Air Force, and the United States Public Health Service;
- Prohibit increases in out-of-pocket costs for access to quality health care for all military beneficiaries;
- For retired and survivor beneficiaries, any percentage increase in fees, deductibles, and co-payments considered in any year not allowed to exceed the percentage increase the beneficiaries experience in their compensation;
- Prohibit an enrollment fee for TRICARE Standard or TRICARE For Life (TFL), since neither offers timely access to TRICARE-participating providers;
- Ensure TRICARE fully maintains enough accessible and high quality medical, mental and dental health professional providers for its beneficiaries for timely, effective and responsive care in all specialties;
- TRICARE providing payment for more preventive care options and more mental and behavioral health care rehabilitation programs;
- Continue TRICARE Reserves Select (TRS) and resetting TRS fees to a fair level and making TRS fully responsive to the needs of National Guard, Reserves and their families;

- Military retirement pay and TRICARE healthcare for members of the Reserve Components should be authorized before age 60;
- No increase of TRICARE fees or establishment of new enrollment fees at all; absent that budgeting option, only increased health care costs or fees within the TRICARE system with Congress approving increases at a rate no larger than the rate of pay increases for Active, Reserve, National Guard, military and medical retirees, and military survivors;
- Preventing BRAC, re-basing and relocation of forces that are planned from causing disruption in military health care network.

**The American Legion supports the following additional matters specific to community quality-of-life for soldiers and their families:**

- Renovation and construction of quality military quarters with full funding for their timely and proper maintenance;
- Increased funding for enough state of the art child day care centers;
- Increased funding and fully resourcing DOD schools and Impact funding local public school education serving military families;
- Adequate morale, welfare and recreational facilities; and non-privatized exchanges and commissary facilities without suffering a system of “variable pricing;”
- Covering all actual relocation and moving expenses and having fair and reasonable reimbursement for losses and damages caused in the conduct of military family moves;
- Continued funding of family support programs beyond times of conflict to strengthen military families who are the strength behind the military;
- Commitment to continue improved quality-of-life programs and policies to support National Guard and Reserve families;
- Appropriate funds for DOD to provide military honors upon request at veterans’ funerals. DOD should implement equitable and expedient reimbursement procedures for members of the veterans’ service organizations who participate in military funeral honors.

## **Issue: National Plan For Energy Independence**

### **Message Points:**

The United States continues to import approximately 60 percent or more of its oil while its domestic production continues to drop to its lowest levels in over 28 years, thus further compounding our foreign trade deficit at a time when our energy demands continue unabated. The United States' continued reliance on foreign sources of energy places our national security at risk as well as our economic well-being and way of life.

The war on terrorism and the continuing conflict in the volatile Middle East has brought into sharp focus the heavy reliance of the United States on imported foreign oil which necessitates a re-evaluation of our current and long-range energy policies.

That The American Legion urge Congress and the administration to have comprehensive, transparent, interagency, nationally inclusive planning for the short and long-term energy welfare of the country. The process should result in a national campaign to achieve energy independence with the sufficient and suitable production of energy to maintain our national security and way of life. This national campaign should address specifically the issues of production, conservation, environmental impact, and safety.

The issues of production of alternative energy sources should include coal reserves, our vast supply of natural gas and/or methanol and ethanol, as well as nuclear energy, wind, solar, geothermal, and biofuels so as to ensure that our Nation will never be an economic hostage.

## **Issue:       Combating Cyberspace Threats**

### Message Points:

The security of the United States is being challenged increasingly by non-traditional threats which may extend the fields of battle and terrorism to computer cyberspace and in which inexpensive nuclear, chemical and biological weapons of mass destruction, including disease as a weapon of war, may be employed. We support the formation of a comprehensive and integrated system of federal agencies (including the Armed Forces, law enforcement, intelligence and public health) to detect, deter and defend against cyberspace threats to critical government and private infrastructures.

The American Legion urges the Congress to appropriate the necessary funding and resources to combat the continuing cyberspace and other threats to the United States in the 21st Century and also urges the American public to be vigilant of cyberspace attacks. All efforts should be made to detect, deter and defend against the threats of cyber warfare, and to prosecute violators to the fullest extent of the law.

## **Issue:      Homeland Security**

The September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks on American soil have made Americans painfully aware of their vulnerability to violence from international terrorism. These terrorists were able to carry out their attacks because previous emphasis by the U.S. Government on homeland security and intelligence collection, while improving over recent years, had been inadequate and incapable of preventing such attacks.

The National Defense Authorization Act of 2003 established the new Department of Homeland Security as well as a new cabinet position designed to be the single source of authority, at the highest levels, for all homeland defense programs and policies. The American Legion supports the full funding of the Department of Homeland Security so as to harmonize the many agencies and offices with Homeland Security responsibilities into a viable and credible deterrent to those who seek to inflict violence on the United States and the American people.

U.S. national intelligence agencies also need to be fully funded. Their efforts and data collection should be expanded and coordinated. The American Legion supports legislation that would strengthen the abilities of the United States Departments of Justice, Homeland Security, U.S. Customs, Federal Bureau of Investigation and the Internal Revenue Service to police, investigate and prosecute financial institutions or individuals within the parameters of the U.S. Constitution that use legitimate and illegitimate financial means to help support both domestic and international terrorism.

That The American Legion also reaffirms its Citizen Corps affiliation, and urges Congress to support and fully fund all components of Citizen Corps. The American Legion has published an award winning pamphlet on Disaster Preparedness and urges all Legionnaires to take part in personal and community disaster preparedness events, particularly those affiliated with Citizen Corps programs. The American Legion urges Congress to keep Citizen Corps as a permanent part of the nation's approach to homeland security and disaster preparedness.