

## Commander's Newsletter September

### Rearranging the Chairs on the Titanic

We all know of the tragic sinking of the Titanic in April 15, 1912, when it hit an iceberg in the north Atlantic, 400 Miles off of Newfoundland, Canada. That impact doomed the unsinkable ship the moment it struck the Iceberg. Pretending everything was normal by rearranging the chairs on the deck would have been a fruitless job to busy the hands of those who were going to perish anyway. Admitting they were in peril and working to solve the problem would have been much smarter. Launching lifeboats or filling them to capacity would have saved many more, but the idea of the ship sinking was ignored until it was beyond help.

Are we ignoring the fact that the American Legion is taking on water and sinking lower in numbers yearly, while we methodically go about our ways and continue as though nothing is happening? Let's face the facts that our numbers are decreasing and new members are fewer in number each year. Yes, it is a fact that many of the World War II members have answered the final

call, and Korea and Vietnam is closing in at a fast pace. The fact remains that there is a new generation of veterans who have met the requirements for membership in the American Legion, yet few join. In 2017 we had a membership of 1,717 members. Over the past several years the trend has been a loss of 8 percent. If this holds true again this year our expected renewal would be 1,545.

We are now entering the time of our year when memberships for 2018 start arriving at the post. Each year I read notes on several renewal slips that criticize our post for the cost of membership and state that they are not getting their money's worth. Our post has not raised membership cost for years. These increases have come from national and the state. We receive \$11.00 from the \$46 dollars submitted for dues. Your cost per day is .08 cents. This is a huge bang for your buck. We also feel the loss of revenue from lost members, but still manage to submit a budget that meets the Four Pillars of the Legion.

**The American Legion provides life-changing assistance and guidance for veterans, military personnel, their families and communities in thousands of ways every day around the world.**

**Help comes in the form of personal assistance, cash grants, donated goods, disaster relief, labor, networking, volunteerism and advocacy.**

A short listing of the programs we fund with your dues follows. No dollars are ever spent on salaries. All work is voluntary and few receive a thank you for the hours involved in managing a functional post.

We support the American Legion Baseball program and pay for students to attend Boys and Girls State. In addition we:

- Pay for students to attend Junior Law Cadet
- Sponsor Oratorical Contest
- Donate to Temporary Financial Assistance
- Donate to National Emergency Fund
- Present School Talk/Flag Programs in the community
- Donate to Soldiers Christmas Fund
- Help fund coffee program at VA Hospital
- Purchase supplies for mother's pantry at VA Hospital
- Provide Military Honors for over 150 funerals yearly, and many Honor Guard Ceremonies
- Provide funds to Wreaths Across America, Matt Talbot Kitchen, Homeless Shelter, Special

Olympics and Veterans with emergency assistance, College Scholarships, County Government Day, Scouting Support and many others.

You can see at a local level we provide many vital services for your membership dollars. What about the dollars that support our State and National Program? The following listed programs you receive as members of the American Legion.

### **Free Subscription to The American Legion Magazine**

Our nation's leaders speak directly to citizens on the pages of The American Legion Magazine. The American Legion's organizational goals are promoted using the words of talented writers, professional journalists and world leaders.

### **Benefits Assistance**

The American Legion offers expert advice, support and representation for veterans and families seeking government benefits they are eligible to receive at the federal, state and local levels.

### **Career Assistance**

Hundreds of job fairs and career events every year across the country are coordinated, sponsored,

promoted or produced by The American Legion. American Legion business workshops also help veterans and their families pursue their entrepreneurial dreams.

### **Comfort for the Recovering**

Operation Comfort Warriors helps active-duty military personnel and newly discharged veterans recover and adjust to lifestyle changes.

### **Education Assistance**

The American Legion conducts student-veteran roundtables, networks with Student Veterans of America as well as college campuses, and works with agencies to better apply military experience toward professional and vocational licenses and certification credits.

### **Family and Community Support**

Cash grants and volunteer aid are among the ways The American Legion reaches out to families of military service members and veterans during times of financial difficulty, short-handedness at home or natural disaster.

### **Financial Services**

The American Legion and USAA, two organizations driven by the same values for nearly a century, are allied through a “preferred provider” relationship that

connects Legionnaires with the best advice and service in banking, insurance and personal finance.

### **Homeless Veteran Outreach**

The American Legion offers hundreds of opportunities for homeless veterans across the country, including temporary housing, mentoring and job training.

### **Honor and Remembrance**

American Legion honor guards provide official services at thousands of veteran funerals around the world each year. The Legion is also a leader at every level in the establishment and maintenance of memorials and monuments that honor military sacrifice.

### **Member Discounts**

The American Legion offers members and their families practical, money-saving discounts that can easily save many times the cost of annual membership dues.

### **Volunteer Opportunities**

The American Legion offers volunteer opportunities that fulfill needs in local communities throughout the country and beyond. The Legion and the Sons of The American Legion provide millions of hours of free

community service, assistance at VA medical facilities and help at military installations each year.

### **Advocacy in Washington**

The American Legion is the nation's most influential, effective and dependable advocate of veteran affairs fighting for better active-duty pay, improved housing for active-duty families and helping to ensure that the VA's medical system can properly care for veterans. Need an example of what the Legion is fighting for in Washington? The Senate's markup for the 2018 defense authorization bill was revealed this week. The Senate aligned itself with DoD's budget request to increase pharmacy copayments and to repeal a grandfathered TRICARE fee structure, under the guise that it is too confusing and costly.

This legislative proposal goes even further and aims to raise pharmacy cost shares even higher. By contrast, the House voted to maintain the current grandfathered TRICARE fee structure and pharmacy cost shares and maintain fee increases tied to COLAs. MOAA strongly supports the House proposal to stick with the current TRICARE fee structure, which prevents disproportional fee increases foisted onto military beneficiaries.

The fee increases proposed by the Senate are nothing short of an assault on beneficiaries' hard-earned benefits. Beneficiaries are being asked, *again*, to fund readiness accounts and other DoD projects with money out of their own pockets, rather than asking the broader base of American taxpayers for their support. Sadly, this regrettable practice has become almost routine. Your dues help to support those causes that you earned and need. Worth the cost of a membership? You will need to decide this!

**Individually we stand alone; together, we make a difference!**

Please Note: I've been informed that your State dues will increase as of January 1. If you pay prior to this date you will save \$6 for the year. **On January the dues will increase to \$46 instead of \$40, so pay early to avoid the increase.** Due to a delay with the state and national dues processing, it is possible that you will receive a due notice even though you have paid. We mail your 2018 card the day we receive it. If you have your 2018 card, you are paid up for the year. Ignore this renewal notice--throw it away.

As always, thank you for your membership and more important, thank you for your service.

