



FEBRUARY 2019 **MEMBERSHIP IMPACT REPORT**

A Report from American Legion National Headquarters



VOICES

"The overwhelming support for this legislation was an incredible testament to the respect that The American Legion has in our country, among Republicans, Democrats, independents, people from all walks of life. Today, in the same place where our country was founded, we get to honor an organization that has taken those values of our founding fathers and carried them forward into the 21st century."

- Former U.S. Rep. Chet Edwards, attending the Jan. 31 first-strike ceremony for an American Legion centennial commemorative coin at the U.S. Mint in Philadelphia. The coin sets go on sale March 14.



866

Number of Informal Hearing Presentations prepared by The American Legion for veterans disputing their VA benefits claims decisions in January.



6

New American Legion posts chartered in the month of January: Colorado 176, District of Columbia 3, Illinois 1944, Texas 313, Washington 23 and Wyoming 96.



\$1,030,163

Amount in American Legion Temporary Financial Assistance cash grants disbursed in January 2019, a single-month record, most of which were delivered to active-duty junior enlisted members of the U.S. Coast Guardsmen with minor children at home who missed their mid-January paychecks due to the federal government shutdown. TFA grants assisted 3,160 minor children in the month of January.

LEGISLATIVE

2019 Washington Conference

The 59th American Legion Washington Conference is set for Feb. 24-27 at the Washington Hilton Hotel, 1919 Connecticut Avenue in Washington, D.C. Legionnaires from across the country will be in the nation's capital to meet with their congressional delegations, conduct business meetings and hear from top officials from VA and DoD. The "Know Before You Go" session to brief attendees on the Legion's top legislative priorities is set for Monday, Feb. 25, 5 p.m. – 6 p.m., in International Ballrooms East and Center.

On Monday, Feb. 25, from 4 p.m. - 5 p.m., *Military Times* journalist Leo Shane moderates a Fireside Chat with the four top leaders of the House and Senate Committees on Veterans' Affairs. House Committee Chairman and American Legion Boys State alum Mark Takano, D-Calif., Ranking Member Phil Roe, R-Tenn., Senate Committee Chairman Johnny Isakson, R-Ga., and Ranking Member Jon Tester, D-Mont., will discuss the directions they plan to lead their committees in the 116th Congress.

Speakers from Congress, VA, the White House and others are lined up to present to the Legion during Tuesday's Commander's Call from 8 a.m. – 11:15 a.m. in International Ballrooms East and Center. National Commander Brett P. Reistad delivers his testimony before a joint session of the Senate and House Committees on Veterans Affairs Wednesday at 10 a.m. at the Dirksen Senate Office Building.

Following the Washington Conference, on Thursday, Feb. 28, the VA Veterans Benefits Administration offers a GI Bill Symposium, 8 a.m. – 5 p.m., in the Fairchild Room, Terrace Level, of the Washington Hilton.

Visit www.legion.org for live-streaming details of the commander's testimony on Feb. 27.



13

Number of American Legion districts that conducted membership revitalization campaigns in January 2019.



1,200

Estimated number of disabled and homeless veterans who will receive housing, health care and other forms of assistance on the 387-acre West Los Angeles VA Medical Center campus after construction is completed, according to a master strategic plan for the facility. VA officials briefed Legionnaires and American Legion Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation Division staff Feb. 7 about progress there.



81

Number of former American Legion Baseball players who will be in the Baseball Hall of Fame at Cooperstown, N.Y., following induction ceremonies on July 21. Four of the six newest honorees – Roy Halladay, Mike Mussina, Lee Smith and Harold Baines – made it to the Majors after playing Legion ball.

LEGISLATIVE

Legislative Priorities

Legionnaires participating in the 59th Washington Conference will be armed with a drop sheet and a 32-page illustrated publication, with key points and the Legion's expectations of Congress, on such matters as: the future of VA health care, Blue Water Navy Agent Orange benefits, implementation of Legion-supported bills passed in the 115th Congress, improved access to VA medicine, progress toward an interoperable VA-DoD electronic health records system, recruitment and retention of VA health-care professionals, effective treatments for post-traumatic stress disorder and traumatic brain injury, improved VA health-care services for women, comprehensive care options for victims of military sexual trauma, prevention of veteran suicide, support for veteran caregivers, help for homeless veterans, expansion of licensing and credentialing opportunities for veterans seeking civilian careers in specialized fields, improved Veterans Preference Hiring performance, access to small business capital through the GI Bill, cybersecurity, support for law-enforcement agencies, protection against financial scams and a constitutional amendment stating: "Congress shall have power to prohibit the physical desecration of the flag of the United States."



12

American Legion appearances in support of veterans disputing their VA claims decisions before the U.S. Court of Veterans Appeals in January.



11,000

Estimated number of student veterans whose GI Bill education benefits were paid last year to ineligible, delinquent schools, according to a VA Office of Inspector General audit. Maintaining integrity of the GI Bill is one of The American Legion's top legislative priorities heading into the Feb. 24-27 Washington Conference.



SWS

The American Legion System Worth Saving Task Force will be visiting the Southeast Louisiana VA Health Care System, home of the new New Orleans VA Medical Center, March 11-13. The task force conducted site visits at the Palo Alto, Calif., VA Medical Center Feb. 4-6 and the El Paso, Texas, VA Medical Center Feb. 11-13.



\$26,000

American Legion National Emergency Fund grants distributed to individuals and posts affected by Hurricane Michael, the Camp Fire in California and a flood in Wisconsin.



812

Board of Veteran Appeals cases that were decided in January with assistance from American Legion veterans disability claims specialists.

CENTENNIAL

100 Years Ago in the Legion

At the request of Lt. Col. Theodore Roosevelt, Jr., 20 officers of the American Expeditionary Forces gather in Paris Feb. 15-17 1919, with approval from AEF Commanding Gen. John Pershing, to plan a "morale conference" for troops still stationed in Europe. On the first night, Feb. 15, the 20 have dinner at the Inter-Allied Officers Club. They talk until after midnight and come away with plans to establish a "GAR (Grand Army of the Republic) of the Great War." They eye mid-March for a caucus to establish the new association. Among those attending are Col. William Donovan, Lt. Col. G. Edward Buxton, Lt. Col. Bennett C. Clark, Lt. Col. Franklin D'Olier, Lt. Col. George A. White, Lt. Col. Eric Fisher Wood and Capt. Ogden Mills. Nine of the 20 officers attending the dinner and planning session are alumni of the Plattsburgh, NY, prewar training camp.



HIRING FAIR

Hiring Our Heroes and The American Legion are teaming up once again to conduct a major veteran employment event in advance of the Legion's annual Washington Conference. The Washington Military Hiring Fair is Feb. 22, starting at 9 a.m. with a resume-writing workshop, followed by a financial literacy session from 10:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. A networking luncheon between 11:30 a.m. and 12:30 p.m. is followed by a 1 p.m. – 4 p.m. hiring fair. Hundreds of employers are expected. The event takes place at the Washington Hilton Hotel, 1919 Connecticut Ave. NW in Washington, D.C.

 **16,000**

Approximate number of casualties, including combat deaths, that have been suffered by members of the U.S. Armed Forces during periods of time unrecognized as war eras since the end of World War II. In support of Resolution 1, passed at the Fall National Executive Committee meeting, The American Legion is now asking Congress to expand the definition of "wartime service" to include conflicts between currently designated eras.

 **191**

Number of American Legion Junior Shooting Sports teams that competed in the first round postal match in January. The national championships are scheduled for July 23-28, 2019, at the Olympic Training Center in Colorado Springs.

 **\$29,077**

Value of youth scholarships awarded by The American Legion National Headquarters in January.