

State Headquarters News Update



Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States Department of California

Sacramento, California

VOLUME 1, NO. 3

APRIL 1, 2008

Unity thru Service

JOHN MC CAIN VISITS POST 2111

Presumptive Republican nominee Senator John McCain visited Post 2111, District 1 at a Town Hall Meeting on March 28, 2008. Senator McCain attended a private fund raising activity earlier in the day in La Jolla, California and then traveled on to greet VFW members and military families in Chula Vista. McCain accused his rivals of being “naïve” for advocating what he considers premature withdrawal of U.S. troops in Iraq. McCain recently returned from a trip to Europe and the Middle East and said General David Patraeus told him the country had become the controlled background in the fight against al-Qaeda.



Legislative Day A Huge Success

The Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW), Department of California, hosted its annual Legislative Day Luncheon at the Sutter Club March 25, 2008 where State Senator

Lou Correa and Assemblyman Chuck DeVore were honored as Legislators of the Year.

“It is an honor to recognize two legislators that are great supporters of our state’s veterans,” said David Norris, VFW, Department of California state commander. “Senator Correa and Assemblyman DeVore have been instrumental in the progress veterans programs have made in California and we are thrilled to recognize their hard work and great achievements on behalf of veterans in our state.”



Senator Correa is a member of the Senate Veterans Affairs Committee and co-authored AB 282 making it a misdemeanor for someone to misrepresent them self as having received a military decoration. Senator Correa was also a strong supporter of Governor Schwarzenegger’s proposal to start allocating tuition-assistance funds for the California National Guard. Senator Correa sent a letter to his colleagues urging them to find additional funds to help support National Guard members who may lose their jobs, homes, and vehicles as a result of their repeated deployment.



Assemblyman DeVore sits on the Assembly Committee on Veterans Affairs and co-authored AB 187, increasing the amount a county can pay for a veteran's funeral from \$50 to \$350. In addition to co-authoring AB 282, Assemblyman DeVore also proposed AB 1758, an education assistance program to bolster membership and retention in the California National Guard.

Both Senator Correa and Assemblyman DeVore have authored AB 1814, to authorize the Department of Veterans Affairs to contract with Veterans Service Organizations for the assistance of veterans and families in applying for federal benefits and services.

After the luncheon, the Legislative Day continued as VFW members met with members of the legislature at the Capitol.

LEGISLATIVE ACTIVITY:
William Manes - Chairman

Update on AB 1814, VFW sponsored bill to authorize the Department of Veterans Affairs to contract with the veteran service organizations to provide services to veterans and their families in the filing of claims for federal benefits.

The bill was originally expected to have a hearing by the Assembly Committee on Veterans Affairs on March 25. The hearing was delayed until April 1 and is now delayed until April 15. Since the Committee must complete action on such bills no later than April 18, the hearing cannot be postponed any further. There is still time for additional advocacy efforts on behalf of this bill to our Legislators. After the hearing by the VA Committee, the bill will also have to go to the Committee on Appropriations.

The legislative committees have started hearings on some bills. The following is a summary of recent actions.

There currently are four major bills pending on the subject of education benefits for members of the California National Guard:

AB 1758 Postsecondary education. (Chuck DeVore, Irvine) Would create the California National Guard Education Assistance Program, for the purpose of promoting recruitment and retention of members of the California National Guard. Would also provide for covering the costs of the program by repealing the existing provision in the Education that permits aliens without lawful immigration status to attend the State Universities and Colleges by paying the lower fees for California residents. At a hearing on March 25 by the Assembly Committee on Higher Education, the bill was amended to remove the repeal of the lower fees for students who are aliens without lawful immigration status. With that change, the Committee passed the bill on a unanimous vote.

AB 2082 Student financial aid: military service. (Mary Salas, Chula Vista). Existing law requires that priority for the Cal Grant B Entitlement awards be given to students with the lowest expected family contribution and the highest level of academic merit. This bill would require that priority also be given to students serving in the California National Guard with at least 2 years of service. Passed by the Assembly Committee on Higher Education and referred to Assembly Committee on Veterans Affairs.

SB 1290 National Guard: Educational Benefits. (Mark Wyland, San Juan Capistrano/Carlsbad). Would require any campus of the University of California, the California State University, or the California Community Colleges to provide a tuition and fee waiver, as specified, to any qualified member of the California National Guard. This bill was scheduled for a hearing on March 25 but was cancelled by the author. Apparently the bill is being dropped in favor of the following proposal.

SB 1752 California National Guard Education Assistance Award Program. (Mark Wyland, San Juan Capistrano-Carlsbad). Would provide awards to members of the National Guard which would be equal to the cost of attendance at a qualifying education institution, or would be the sum of the mandatory system-wide fees and the campus based fees charged to California resident undergraduate students at the University of California. Passed by the Senate Committee on Veterans Affairs March 25 and referred to the Senate Committee on Education.

In other actions: SB 1222 County veteran service officers funding. (Gilbert Cedillo, Los Angeles) Would provide that the State Budget include funding at the rate of \$3 for every veteran in the State to provide funding to the Counties for the operations of the Veterans Service Offices, funding for grant programs to allow veteran

service organizations to conduct outreach programs in conjunction with the County offices, and funding for the Department of Veterans Affairs to manage the grant and contract administration. Passed by the Senate Committee on Veterans Affairs.

SB 1572 Veterans Bond Act of 2008 (Mark Wyland, San Juan Capistrano/Carlsbad) Provides for a Bond Act to be submitted to the voters at the November 4, 2008, General Election to authorize a State General Obligation Bond issue of \$900 million for funding of the Cal-Vet Farm and Home Loan Program. Passed by the Senate Committee on Veterans Affairs.

A special item: SB 1322 Communism (Alan Lowenthal, Long Beach) Would have the State Legislature declare that the "Cold War is long over and the threat of a communist takeover of the state or federal government no longer exists" and would repeal a provision in the Education Code that provide for dismissal of a teacher who is a member of the Communist party. It would also remove sections of the Code that were adopted during the 1940's concerning the threats of the world communist movement and the dangers to the state and federal governments. The bill is scheduled for a hearing by the Senate Committee on Education on April 2.

Complete information on all state legislation involving veteran's issues is available at the website: <http://www.califveterans.com>.

88th ANNUAL STATE CONVENTION

The 88th Annual State Convention will be held June 20-25, 2008 in Ontario, California. Please check our Department website for up to date information and reservation forms. We will be using the Doubletree Hotel, any questions, issues and/or concerns should be addressed to the Convention Chairman Judge Brown, PSC. He can be reached by phone at (209) 358-2898 or by email judgebrown@comcast.net

VFW Launches NASCAR Racing Season:

'It's all about supporting the troops'

KANSAS CITY, March 28, 2008--The Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States recently debuted its entry into NASCAR with the combat veterans organization's "Celebration for Our Heroes" troop-support special event, held Thursday in Kernersville, N.C., the headquarters of VFW NASCAR partners Kevin Harvick, Inc. (KHI). Special guests for the event included more than 140 soldiers from Fort Bragg, including 40 wounded soldiers, as well as approximately

60 soldiers with the 2-325 Infantry Regiment who returned home March 22 from duty in Iraq. During the VFW-sponsored celebration at KHI headquarters, Fort Bragg soldiers toured the racing facility and spent time with team co-owners Kevin and DeLana Harvick, as well as the VFW Racing drivers, Ron Hornaday and Cale Gale.

According to several VFW officers who attended the daylong troop-support event, everyone enjoyed their NASCAR experience, including Harvick and Hornaday who extended their scheduled appearances to spend more time with the soldiers. "Kevin even led a group tour," said VFW Junior Vice Commander Tommy Tradewell, adding that many of the soldiers he had talked to had little knowledge of NASCAR before the event. "Now they all are fans!"

One of the reasons VFW entered the racing scene was to honor today's military members and to generate troop-support for America's heroes. "It's a fact that NASCAR fans love America and arguably are the most patriotic citizens in our county," said Tradewell, adding that the patriotic and colorful VFW Racing paint scheme on Ron Hornaday's Number 33 truck and on Cale Gale's Number 77 car should create a lot of excitement and garner support for servicemembers and their families. "What a great way to show them that VFW, KHI and America stands behind them and will continue to stand behind them as long as they are required to serve."

Tradewell said he believes loyal NASCAR supporters also will help VFW meet the escalating need for VFW services to the military. "They understand how important those services are at a time when the need has never been greater," he said.

The first of eight 2008 seasonal races for the KHI and VFW Racing team will be this weekend at Martinsville Speedway in Virginia. Preceding each race, VFW Racing will host special troop-support events. VFW Racing will be a partner in every NASCAR Craftsman Truck Series and Nationwide Series race this season, both on and off the track.

"Everyone at KHI is excited to be working with the VFW on their first NASCAR effort," said Kevin Harvick. "VFW is an incredible organization, and we expect this program will help educate the public about the tremendous work they do to support our country's heroes."

To find out the latest in VFW Racing, click here www.vfwracing.org/

UPCOMING EVENTS

District 23 Official Visit – April 25-27, 2008

Hotel Information:

Comfort Inn-Riverside
11043 Magnolia Avenue
Riverside, CA
(951)688-5000
\$84 (plus tax)

Mention VFW to get special rate – Deadline for reservations is April 18

Friday visitation to various Posts in District 23 – Dinner at 8547-Moreno Valley, Friday, 4/25/08

Saturday district meeting at Post 9223-Arlington, 9:00 a.m., Banquet Saturday, Post 9223, \$10.00

District 2 Annual Picnic – April 12, 2008, Noon

Anaheim Post 3173

Hot Dogs & Hamburgers Supplied by Color Guard

District 8 Official – May 17-18, 2008

Hotel Information

La Quinta Inn-Ventura
5818 Valentines Road
Ventura

(805) 658-6200

\$84/night plus tax

Mention VFW for special rate

Friday night dinner at Post 1679-Ventura

Saturday district meeting at Post 1679, 1:00 p.m.
(luncheon before meeting)

Banquet Saturday night at Post 3935-Pt. Hueneme

FORM 12

Please make sure you complete Form 12's ON LINE. If you do not have access to a computer, please advise the Department Chairman and he/she will prepare Form 12 on-line. Form 12's will no longer be accepted via U.S. Mail – they must be submitted on-line.

COMMANDER DAVE NORRIS' ITINERARY

April

25-27 District 23 Official visit

27-29 Nisei Reunion, Sands Hotel, Reno Nevada

May

4-11 Unavailable

16-18 District 8 Official Visit

June

6-8 District 4 Mass Installation

20-26 State Convention, Ontario, CA

5th ANNIVERSARY OF THE FALL OF BAGHDAD

April 9th is designated as National Commemoration Day of 5th Anniversary of Fall of Baghdad.

All Americans are urged to join the nation in a moment of national reflection April 9 in remembrance of the 5th anniversary Iraqi Liberation Day and the fall of Baghdad to celebrate the hope given to the Iraqi people because of the courageous actions of U.S. and multinational forces.

At 5 p.m. EDS - as the sun sets across Arlington National Cemetery - Americans are urged to honk their car horns to celebrate, honor and recognize the courageous actions of U.S. and multinational forces in giving hope to the Iraqi people. The National Remembrance Ceremony will culminate with a joint U.S-Iraqi wreath-laying ceremony at Arlington National Cemetery. who have made the ultimate sacrifice, as well as salute our troops, our veterans and our military families.

The national remembrance moment is being initiated by "Families United for Our Troops and Their Mission, a not-for-profit 501(c)3 grassroots coalition of Gold Star and Blue Star families, veterans and Americans, who share a deep appreciation and support for the uniformed services men and women in their efforts to make America safer. Collectively the group's mission is ensuring that the sacrifices of courageous warriors have not been made in vain, and that the heroic soldiers, sailors, airmen and Marines who have been charged with such a vital mission will be given the support they need to complete their mission.

APPOINTMENT OF ASSISTANT EDITOR AND WEBMASTER

The Department of California is pleased to announce the hiring of Asst. Editor and Webmaster Stephanie Martin effective April 1, 2008. Please submit all articles to Stephanie at martin@vfwca.org.

Department Web Page – Just a quick reminder to visit the Department web page at <http://www.vfwca.org> – your place for the latest news, program information, post and district tools/resources from the State Headquarters. Check it out today!