

VETERAN news & notes

Sisk Sets Direction For His Term As VFW Commander-In-Chief

By Ray Sisk, Commander-in-Chief of the Veterans of Foreign Wars (NAPSA)—I am humbled that the delegates of the 103rd National Convention of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States have elected me to the highest office this great organization can offer. I thank the members from the bottom of my heart.

I want to start by addressing the terrible crisis of our time—terrorism. Just as the nation has united to win the war on terror, let us unite in our cause and honor those who defend us today.

This year will be about service to them, honor in their accomplishments, and pride in our organization and country. This focus is nothing new because service to country is what the VFW has been about since the dawn of our existence over a century ago.

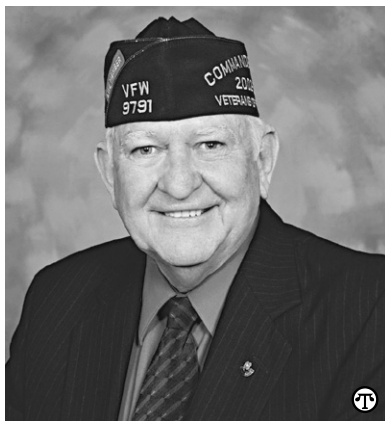
We have always assumed the burden of responsibility as individual citizens and collectively as members of this great organization to be at the forefront of home front activities in times of war and peace.

From sponsoring service programs that range from Buddy Poppy to the National Home and the Golden Age Games, our organization's commitment to service is based on action, not words.

Our members provided 16 million volunteer hours of community service to our country this past year. Our Voice of Democracy Program remains second to none in educating the youth of America to the importance of service and duty to country and Operation Uplink brings joy to the face of every military member stationed far from home.

Nowhere else is this service to our fellow veterans expressed as clearly as in our National Veterans Service Program.

Embracing our motto, "To



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honor the dead by helping the living," this nationwide network of professional service officers ensures veterans and their dependents receive all due entitlements in a timely fashion while protecting their rights.

We have recently expanded our National Veterans Service Program to include participation in the Benefits Delivery at Discharge (BDD) program. This program allows us to place national service officers on selected military installations to assist military personnel in their transition to civilian life.

With over 300,000 veterans waiting for medical appointments, the VFW will continue to have a voice in the national debate surrounding the funding and future of the VA health care system. All veterans are entitled to timely health care and mandatory funding to cover the cost of that care.

Our strength is in our numbers and our strength will continue to increase when we all work together.

Changes to our National Charter expanding membership eligi-

bility will soon take place. We must all do our utmost to expand our ranks and bring new and old candidates into the fold that is VFW.

Moreover, we will open new, non-traditional, avenues to expanding our organization. We will start by reorganizing the Diversity Committee and renaming it the VFW National Outreach Committee. Its core mission will be to create partnerships with nationally known non-veteran organizations based on common interests. These coalitions will also provide us additional strength in our battles for veteran's rights.

Finally, it is once again an election year. With the number of Congressional members that have military experience consistently declining, it is incumbent upon our organization to educate those who would seek office on our priority goals.

Let the candidates know that you expect their support on our issues otherwise they can expect not to have our support at the polls on Election Day. We need to register people to vote and get to the polls.

Only by actively participating in the political and legislative process can we make an impact on those who will be making the decisions that affect our lives for the next two years.

Ray Sisk of Bakersfield, Ca., was elected VFW's Commander-in-Chief at the organization's 103rd National Convention in Nashville, Tenn., August 30, 2002. He is the fourth Californian to hold this office. Sisk served in the U.S. Navy from May 1958 to May 1961. He received the Armed Forces Expeditionary Medal for duty in the Taiwan Straits and off the coast of Vietnam. Ray and his wife Joan have eight children.