



Minnesota sent 30 delegates to Washington DC to lobby for veterans rights. A group photo was taken at the Veterans hearing room at the Cannon Office Building.

# WASHINGTON CONFERENCE



Rep. Tim Walz, D-Minn., was the featured speaker at the Legion's rally in Washington, just before delegates visited their Congress people.



Rep. Tom Emmer, R-Minn., talks with members of the Minnesota group. From left are National Vice Commander Al Davis, Legislative Chair Bob Hart of Stillwater, Emmer, and Jason Jackson Frye, Emmer's legislative director.



Past National Commander Dan Ludwig presents a check from Minnesota for Leading Candidate Charles Schmidt of Oregon for his campaign.



Minnesotans were part of the overflow crowd to hear National Commander Dale Barnett testify before a joint veterans committee of Congress.



Legislative Chairs Bob Hart of Stillwater and Margee Keller of Crookston shown at the Cannon House Office Building.



Sen. Amy Klobuchar, D-Minn., met with a group of Minnesotans in her office in Washington. From left are Margee Keller, Marland Ronning, Klobuchar's aide, Klobuchar, Jeff Olson, Bob Hart and, facing forward, Commander Jim Kellogg.



Sen. Al Franken listened as Jeff Olson went over the national legislative priorities for The American Legion.



Rep. Walz met with a Minnesota delegation from the First District right after his talk at the Washington Hilton to the commander's rally. From left are Chuck Kruger, Walz, Bill Goede, and, facing the congressman, Luke Weinandt.

# Legion lists its national priorities

## Fully fund a superior national defense as the global war on terror continues

The global war on terrorism is continuing to pose a threat to America's security and national interests. It is critical to maintain a well-funded Department of Defense to ensure a strong national defense to protect America and its allies from enemies such as the Islamic State and North Korea. Additionally, The American Legion strongly advocates for a good quality of life for troops and a sensible transition from military service to civilian life. The Legion vows to fight against those who seek to jeopardize the benefits promised to past, present and future servicemembers for short-term budget gains. The severity of sequester cuts has been lessened, however force reductions continue and the military remains in a recovery mode after absorbing dramatic cuts.

## Ensure real accountability within VA

The American Legion believes in a strong Department of Veterans Affairs. In the aftermath of news coverage on VA mismanagement and patient waiting lists, the Legion believes that in order to restore trust and confidence in VA, there must be real accountability for employees and managers who violate the trust of veterans and the public. There must be consequences for poor performance and actions that hurt veterans. The men and women who served our nation with honor deserve to see justice to those who act against their interests.

## Institute a 21st century health-care system

Veterans need to know that there will be a robust system built for them to care for their needs. The American Legion led the way in calling for reform in the midst of a crisis in patient access to VA health care. The Legion strongly opposes efforts to privatize care and diminish the VA health-care system.

## Develop alternative help for veterans struggling with mental health issues and brain injuries

The American Legion has dedicated extensive resources to studying the devastating effects of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI). Veterans and servicemembers in need of treatment for brain injuries and mental stress deserve access to the best care and research in alternative and other forms of therapy.

## Make sure transition programs are not adversely affected by sequestration

Sequestration cuts are having an impact on servicemen and women who are transitioning to the civilian world. The primary issue is that Transition Assistance Programs (TAP) face budget shortfalls as Department of Defense funds are being squeezed to accommodate security goals. At the same time, reductions in force strength are forcing more servicemembers out. Congress must act to reverse these cuts and ensure that transitioning servicemembers are able to make contributions in the civilian workforce.

## Crete opportunities for veteran business owners

Veterans who own small businesses hire a greater percentage of other veterans. These veteran-owned businesses represent a great tool in the fight against veteran joblessness. The Legion supports veteran-owned small businesses and encourages parity for veterans in government contracting.

## Provide opportunities through post-9/11 GI Bill

As the founding author of the original GI Bill, The American Legion is continuing to press for legislation to help transitioning servicemembers receive quality education benefits. The Legion believes that veterans should be allowed to convert GI Bill education funds into capital for business start-ups. These grants would further the goal of growing the veteran-owned small business industry, which, in turn, would generate jobs for veterans.

## End veteran homelessness

The American Legion believes that not a single man or woman who has defended our nation should be forced to sleep on the streets at night. While the goal of eliminating veterans homelessness by 2015 was not met, the Legion urges Congress to pledge any and all necessary resources to eradicate the problem immediately. The programs in place are working. It is essential that their funding continues unabated in order to eliminate veterans homelessness.

## Reject any attempts to diminish benefits earned by veterans

The American Legion strongly opposes any attempts to further dilute the promises made to the men and women who served, or are still serving, our nation. The Legion opposes any proposed degradations of the promised health care and benefits to retired servicemembers from when they enlisted.

## Repeal unfair offsets that penalize disabled veterans and widows.

VA disability compensation should not be offset from military retired pay regardless of the VA rating percentage, nor should VA survivor benefits (DIC) be offset from military Survivor Benefit Plan annuities. The American Legion supports legislation that would repeal those unjust offsets now.

## Protect the American Flag

The American Legion remains committed to protecting Old Glory, and continues to support legislation that safeguards our nation's flag from physical desecration. H.J. Res. 9, S.J. Res. 21



Commander Jim Kellogg, National Commander Dale Barnett and Rob Gross, administrator of the new Minnesota Veterans Cemetery at Preston, admire the wintertime vista of the grounds.

# National Commander's Tour 2016



The National Commander gets some much-appreciated fishing advice from Past National Commander Dan Ludwig when his awareness walk took him out on the ice at Forest Lake. It was the first time Barnett had walked on water. No fish were harmed.



National Commander Dale Barnett has a lively exchange with the press at Little Falls.



Barnett presents a 60-year certificate to World War II veteran Charles Burch during a stop at Hutchinson.



Barnett learns all about Herman the German during a special stop in New Ulm, the hometown of National Sergeant-at-Arms Dan Zimmermann. At right are historian George Glatzbach and Mayor Robert Buessman.



National Historian Jim Copher of Minnesota introduced Barnett at Delano.



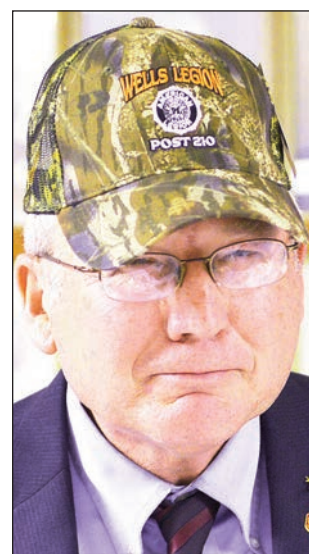
National Commander Dale Barnett got the whole room stirred up when he faced the TV camera at Adams. Past Department Commander Harlan Buck joined in.



Commander Jim Kellogg advised the membership team at Preston "not to take the plow out of the ground" until the state reaches 100 percent.



Barnett reminded the crowd at Litchfield that 100 percent of donations to The American Legion go to the programs for which they were intended.



Barnett received many gifts along the way including these hats at Wells and Winona.



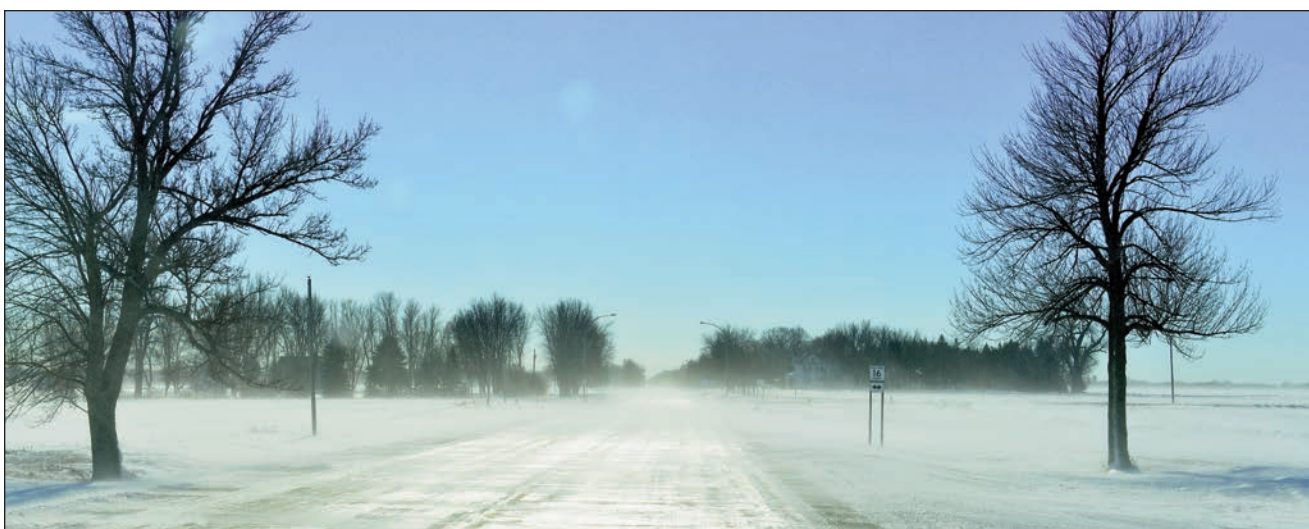
Good friends Mike Bredeck of Madison and Barnett greeted each other at Morris. Both serve on the staff of Boys Nation. Bredeck is Boys State Director.



World War II vet Roy Reiser of Beroun was served a 90th birthday cake by Tess Davis at Princeton.



Barnett was surrounded by Korean War vets from Rochester during a stop at Stewartville.



A major snowstorm made driving a challenge. Adjutant Randy Tesdahl drove all 969 miles of the trip.



Membership Director Jim Lucas, who emceed all the stops, drew a crowd as he prepared the program at Wells.