

REPORT OF 2010 NATIONAL CONVENTION

June 11-12, 2010 | Albany, New York

It was an impressive opening of the AMRA National Convention, with the U.S. Naval Sea Cadet Corps Color Guard presenting and posting the Colors!

Keynote Speaker Kevin Secor, Liaison to Veterans Service Organizations for Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric Shinseki, brought greetings from the Secretary and expressed the Department's appreciation for AMRA's work on behalf of military retirees and veterans. Mr. Secor updated attendees on new programs being developed by VA and assured members that the Secretary is working daily at making VA a more efficient, veteran-centric operation. The Secretary is taking steps to make the claims process easier and more accessible and believes that improvements in VA's use of technology will bear fruit that will bring VA closer to its service goals. The online claim form has now been shortened from 23 pages to a more manageable 10 pages. Following his prepared remarks, Mr. Secor opened the floor to questions and spent considerable time responding to member concerns.

City of Albany, NY Mayor Jerry Jennings made a brief appearance to welcome delegates and to thank every military retiree for their contributions, both in the past as members of the Armed Forces and as citizens of their local communities.

Following approval of the Convention Rules and the minutes of the 2009 National Convention, National Officers gave brief reports of the year's activities in their areas of responsibility. Twelve Legislative Resolutions were adopted by delegates, as well as 3 Resolutions presented by the Department of New York. Resolutions are available online in the Legislative section of the website.

At the Awards Luncheon, National President Catherine La Valle was recognized as the Top Recruiter for the year. Lake Champlain Chapter NY1, Treasure Coast Chapter FL1 and Lone Star Chapter TX1 received awards recognizing their recruiting efforts during the past year, all of which resulted in increases for their chapter. The Departments of Florida and Texas were similarly recognized for the increases in the number of members within their states. The Department of New York and Treasure Coast Chapter FL1 received awards for the best newsletter sent to their members on a regular basis. Certificates of Appreciation were presented departing members for their service as National Officers or members of the AMRA Board of Directors.

A Memorial Service conducted by National Chaplain Debbie Smith honored all AMRA members who have passed away since last year's National Convention.

Fred Gilman, President of the American Military Retirees Foundation, presented a report on the newly-launched Foundation which has assumed responsibility for raising funds for AMRA's scholarship program. The Foundation will provide a \$35,000 grant to AMRA to pay scholarship awards to 24 students during the Fall 2010 and Spring 2011 semesters. The Foundation is awaiting charities registration numbers for all states that require registration; once those are received, the Foundation's first solicitation will take place to invite AMRA Life Members to participate in the scholarship program.

The National financial report indicates steady progress and a stable financial position. Total Liabilities and Net Assets on the CPA's report indicate an increase in AMRA's bottom line from \$424,390 in 2008 to \$565,839 at the end of fiscal year 2009. Unaudited figures for FY2010 which ended April 30, 2010 indicate the Association's net worth at \$599,343.

Delegates listened to and debated 18 proposed amendments to the National Constitution & Bylaws. Most changes were clarifications of previously adopted amendments but changes were made to requirements for holding National Officer positions, quorums, authority of the National Executive Committee, representation of Members-At-Large at Conventions, the addition of a National Disciplinary Hearing Panel as a Standing

Committee, clarification of the AMRA official uniform, and the addition of a new National Advisory Council. The C&BL is being updated and a complete and current copy will be posted online under a new section of the website titled Member Resources. AMRA members who wish to see a copy of the proposed amendments as presented at the Convention may request a copy from the Executive Director by calling 1-800-424-2969 or emailing her at mbergeron@amra1973.org .

Delegates elected the following National Officers and Board Members:

National President – Catherine L. La Valle

National First Vice President – Ronald K. Kneppshield

National Second Vice President – James Masterson

National Treasurer – Donald F. Buhr

National Secretary – Mavis Jock

Director – Mary Favreau (Class of 2012 -filling unexpired term)

Director – Jeremiah Arbogast (Class of 2013)

The National Convention recessed until the Annual Convention Banquet and was called to order after dinner, at which time National Officers and Directors were installed. Historical re-enactor Fred Polish came dressed in full Uncle Sam regalia and told the story of the “original” Uncle Sam (Sam Wilson) who was famous in the Albany area and is buried in Oakwood Cemetery in Troy, NY. Having become very well known for supplying salted beef to the Army during the War of 1812, Sam Wilson was asked to pose for the “I Want You For the U.S. Army” poster. In 1961 Mr. Wilson was named by the U.S. Congress as the progenitor of America’s symbol of Uncle Sam.

The National Convention was adjourned, to re-convene in Branson, MO on June 11, 2011.