

REPORT OF 2011 NATIONAL CONVENTION

June 12, 2011 – Branson, Missouri

The Ozark High School JROTC Color Guard from Springfield, MO kicked off the AMRA Convention in grand style! Color Guard members did a wonderful job of presenting and posting the Colors and set just the right note of pride and patriotism for delegates to attend to the Association's business with great enthusiasm.

Following the Opening Ceremonies and Roll Call, AMRA was honored to welcome Kevin Secor back as our Keynote Speaker. Kevin is Liaison to Veterans Service Organizations for Secretary of Veterans Affairs, General Eric Shinseki, USA (Ret). The Secretary began supporting AMRA's National Convention a few months after our first visit to his office in March of 2009 and has assigned Mr. Secor to each of our conventions since.

Mr. Secor began by bringing the Secretary's warmest greetings to AMRA officers, members and delegates. He congratulated AMRA on its legislative efforts and assured the Association that its voice is being heard, by legislators in Washington and by Secretary Shinseki. Mr. Secor focused his remarks on the Post 9/11 GI Bill and what AMRA members can do to help returning warriors transition back into society. He cited AMRA's scholarship fund which is named for its Founder, SGM Douglas R. Drum. SGM Drum had a sincere appreciation for education and its use as a tool of transition. Members of AMRA know well the impact of the original GI Bill which educated the returning forces and helped build the powerful U.S. economy. Today, over 518,000 veterans have availed themselves of the new GI Bill but nationally, of all students who enter a 4-year institution only 57% graduate; and early indicators suggest that the rate will be even lower for student veterans. The best way to ensure that the GI Bill will continue into the future is to ensure a high payoff for the American people, and that payoff is graduation. AMRA can help by urging its members to visit local colleges, find out if there is a Student Veterans of America group there, or any student veteran group, and offer assistance by listening to them, offering support for their activities and perhaps relating how GI Bill education affected their futures. Mr. Secor went on to discuss VA funding to realize Secretary Shinseki's primary goals which he outlined as better access to healthcare, ending the claims backlog, and ending veteran homelessness. President Obama's 2012 budget includes a request for \$132.2 billion to further those goals and to continue transforming VA into a 21st century organization. In response to a question from an AMRA delegate concerning the turnover rate at local CBOCs, Mr. Secor responded that most CBOCs are contracted, that VA is aware there are some problem areas, and that AMRA can help by identifying the areas where high turnover rates exist so that the Secretary can investigate and resolve the problem. VA is experiencing the same medical personnel problem as the rest of the country but is reacting by utilizing interns and nurses from nearby medical schools and working with all branches of the Armed Services to recruit retiring medical personnel. Individuals affected by frequent turnover at a CBOC should contact their Patient Advocate at the nearest VA Hospital.

Following approval of the Convention Rules and the Minutes of the 2010 National Convention, National Officers gave brief reports of their activities since the last convention and delegates considered and adopted 2011-2012 Legislative Goals for the Association. Thirteen Resolutions were approved and are available online in the Advocacy section of the website. One General Resolution was presented by the National Officers to increase dues, effective October 1, 2011. Since AMRA annual dues have not been raised since 1990 and Life Member dues not since 2006, the Resolution was unanimously adopted and the new dues rates will be as follows:

Annual dues :	\$25.00/year or \$65.00/3 years (up from \$18.00 and \$49.00)
Life dues:	To age 45 \$275.00 (up from \$240)
	Age 46 to 59 \$195.00 (up from \$185)
	Age 60 to 69 \$155.00 (up from \$145)
	Age 70+ \$ 95.00 (up from \$80)

The Annual Awards Luncheon found President Cathy La Valle presenting awards to the Department of Florida for a 5.94% increase and the Top Department award to Texas for their 15.25% increase. Lake Champlain Chapter NY1 received a recruiting award for its 4.32% increase and the Top Chapter award went to Treasure Coast Chapter FL1 for its 9.09% increase. The Top Recruiter Award went to R.G. Brown of Virginia who recruited 9 new members this past year. The Department of New York received the Communications Award for the most creative and informative newsletter regularly sent to all members in the Department of New York. The Treasure Coast Chapter FL1 received the Communications Award for its newsletter regularly sent to all Chapter members. A special award was presented to Fred Gilman on the occasion of his 90th birthday, in recognition of his many years of dedicated service to AMRA and his fellow retirees.

President of the American Military Retirees Foundation, Fred Gilman, reported on the status of the Foundation which completed its first full year of operations on December 31, 2010. Mr. Gilman advised that a solicitation of AMRA Life Members was mailed in November, 2010 with good results; the 2011 Life Member solicitation will be mailed in September. The generosity of AMRA members enabled the Foundation to award 24 college scholarships totaling \$35,000 for the 2010 academic year and another 24 scholarships totaling \$35,000 will be awarded for the 2011 academic year. The Foundation's audited statement indicates a balance as of 12/31/2010 of \$59,364.

The Association's financial status continues to improve, with Total Liabilities and Net Assets of \$595,929 on the CPA's report at the end of fiscal year 2009 and as yet unaudited totals for fiscal year 2010 which ended April 30, 2011 shown as \$670,694.

National Chaplain Deborah Smith conducted a Memorial Service honoring all AMRA members who have passed away since the 2010 National Convention. A special remembrance was rendered for AMRA Past National President Charles Sellin who served from 1998 to 2000.

Proposed amendments to the AMRA Constitution & Bylaws were presented by Committee Chair, Vincent La Valle. Delegates listened to and considered changes to the National, Department and Chapter bylaws. The majority of changes made to the National bylaws may be considered "housekeeping", with the major changes made in the areas of member resignations, changes to the method of review for legislative Resolutions prepared by the Legislative Affairs Committee, the inclusion of Actionable Misconduct and Disciplinary Sanction language in the Disciplinary Proceedings section and a change in the process for forming new Departments. Minor "housekeeping" changes were made to Department bylaws and the major change to Chapter bylaws was the inclusion of the Actionable Misconduct and Disciplinary Sanction language in the Disciplinary Proceeding section. Updated copies of all bylaws are available to members in the Member Resources section of the AMRA website at www.amra1973.org.

Following the Credentials Report, delegates elected the following Officers & Directors:

National President – Catherine L. La Valle
National First Vice President – Ronald K. Knepshield
National Second Vice President – Jeremiah J. Arbogast
National Treasurer – Richard Kramer
National Secretary – Mavis Jock
Director – Sylvia Andrews (Class of 2014)
Director – Kirk Bennett (Class of 2013 – filling unexpired term)
Director David L. Cook (Class of 2014)
Director LeRoy Holloway (Class of 2014)
Director Deborah S. Smith (Class of 2014)

All Officers and Directors were installed by Past National President Donald Waterworth at a special session of the Convention which was opened following the Annual Banquet, after which the Convention was adjourned until June, 2012 at a location to be announced.