



The High Desert BUGLE



March / April 2014

**American Legion Post 56, Auxiliary Unit 56, & SAL Squadron 56
PO Box 2848, Carson City, Nevada 89702**

Meetings are held on the 2nd Thursday of each month at 6:30 PM,
Veterans Memorial Hall at the corner of 2nd and Curry Street, Carson City.

Our next meeting will be held on March 13th at 6:30 PM.

This will be preceded by the annual St. Patrick's Day meal at 5:30 PM.

Visit our website at <http://american-legion-post56-nv.us/>

POST 56 OFFICERS

Commander	Leon Werner	265-2621
1 st Vice Commander	Rick Kaspar	684-9757
2 nd Vice Commander	Ben Casad	335-6927
Adjutant	John Dickinson	246-4024
Finance Officer	Marco Manor	267-4794
Chaplain	Katherine Baran	888-2088
Sgt-at-Arms	TJ Dennington	420-0151
Historian	Vacant	

UNIT 56 OFFICERS

President	Barbara Dickinson	246-4024
1 st Vice President	Vacant	
2 nd Vice President	Vacant	
Secretary	Irma Manor	267-4794
Treasurer	Christine St. Leger-Barter	783-0502
Chaplain	Betty Sherwood	575-6219
Sgt-at-Arms	Dorothy Bolander	883-0345
Historian	Kendra Sherwood	575-6219

SQUADRON 56 OFFICERS

Commander	Matthew Sherwood	575-6219
1 st Vice Commander	Jack Ralph	882-8269
Adjutant	Marco Manor	267-4794

St. Patrick's Day Meal

The ladies of Auxiliary Unit 56 will be preparing their annual St. Patrick's Day meal for our next meeting on March 13. It will begin at 5:30 PM at the Veteran's Hall and a \$5.00 donation is requested. They are hoping for a very large turnout. Be there!

Senate vote on veterans bill 'inexcusable'

American Legion National Commander Daniel M. Dellinger expressed frustration and disappointment with the Senate debate that effectively killed S. 1982, the Comprehensive Veterans Health and Benefits and Military Retirement Pay Restoration Act of 2014.

The Senate voted 56-41 to waive an extra budget point of order made against the bill – four votes short of what was needed to move the legislation onto a full Senate vote – ending floor consideration of the measure.

"Today, the Senate had a chance to put aside partisan politics and do what was right for the men and women who have sacrificed so much while wearing our nation's uniform," Dellinger said. "Instead, we saw the same political gamesmanship that led our federal government to a shutdown last fall. There was a right way to vote and a wrong way to vote today, and 41 senators chose the wrong way. That's inexcusable."

In addition to including a full repeal of the military retiree cost-of-living-adjustment reduction recently passed by Congress, S. 1982 also included provisions expanding current caregiver law to involve all generations of veterans; providing advance appropriations to ensure monthly compensation and pension, as well as education payments, are protected from future budget battles; offering in-state tuition protection for recently transitioned veterans, improving access to mental health and treatment for victims of sexual assault in the military, and authorizing construction of more than 20 community-based outpatient clinics to serve veterans in rural and remote communities.

"I don't know how anyone who voted 'no' today can look a veteran in the eye and justify that vote," Dellinger said. "Our veterans deserve more than what they got today."

Legion's fight for American-made flags heard

In recent years, The American Legion has been asking Congress to consider legislation that would "prohibit the importation of foreign-made flags of the United States," as stated in [Resolution 273](#), passed during the Legion's 2012 national convention in Indianapolis. On Friday, Feb. 21st, those requests were answered.

Legislation drafted by Rep. Mike Thompson, D-Calif., and now signed into law as part of the 2014 omnibus appropriations bill, requires the DoD to purchase flags that are "100 percent made in America." DoD purchases U.S. flags for display at the Pentagon, military bases and ships, and for burials of military personnel killed in action.

Resolution 273 also "encourages its membership, the general public, and all local, state and federal government agencies to purchase and display only American-manufactured flags of the United States." The American Legion is a proud supplier of American-made U.S. flags through its Emblem Sales website, selling more than 1 million every year. Flag purchases from Emblem Sales directly support Legion programs that help America's children, veterans and military families, as well as such programs as Operation Comfort Warriors, Child Welfare Foundation and Temporary Financial Assistance.

Legion rips latest round of defense cuts

The leader of the 2.4 million member American Legion says a Pentagon budget proposal unveiled recently by Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel endangers America's national security and that downsizing force structure and benefits will lead to an exodus of quality men and women from the Armed Forces.

"Secretary Hagel warned about a 'hollowed force,' and The American Legion is concerned that this budget is leading us rapidly in that direction," National Commander Daniel Dellinger said. "Cutting forces to pre-World War II levels makes no sense in a world where countries such as North Korea, Iran and Pakistan could become viable nuclear threats to our very existence. Moreover, we do not know the exact nature of future wars and conflicts. The American Legion believes that we must be prepared for any scenario."

Dellinger called it "unconscionable" that the Pentagon is proposing that members of the military pay for part of their housing allowances out of their own pockets. "Whether it's cutting commissary subsidies or increasing TRICARE deductibles and co-pays, these benefits are well deserved and available to anyone willing to serve. Military life is much more challenging than private sector careers. The American Legion will continue to call for an end to sequestration and insufficient defense budgets. Providing for the common defense of our nation is a responsibility required by the U.S. Constitution."

American Legion officials said that although the organization opposes the current budget proposal, they appreciate the transparency shown by the secretary of defense and look forward to future discussions.

Defense Budget Would Cut Troop Pay and Benefits

The U.S. Defense Department is proposing limiting troop pay raises, reducing housing allowances and cutting funding for commissary stores because of automatic budget cuts, officials said.

Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Army Gen. Martin Dempsey [outlined](#) the recommendations as part of a preview of the Pentagon's \$496 billion base budget request for fiscal 2015, which begins Oct. 1. The federal government's spending plan is scheduled to be released on March 4.

The proposals to curb personnel costs, which the officials said consume a rising share of defense spending, include limiting troop [pay](#) raises to 1 percent, reducing [housing allowances](#) by an average of 5 percent, cutting some \$1 billion in [commissary](#) subsidies -- which will likely mean higher prices for troops and retirees -- and higher health care fees for some retirees.

"The savings will enable us to sustain a well-trained, ready, agile, motivated and technologically superior force," Hagel said during a briefing Monday afternoon at the Pentagon. "Although these recommendations do not cut anyone's pay, I realize they will be controversial."

The proposals drew swift criticism from veterans' service organizations and many lawmakers who have voted down similar efforts in the past.

"The all volunteer force is a finely tuned instrument," Rep. Howard "Buck" McKeon, R-Calif., chairman of the House Armed Services Committee, said in a statement. "These moves are the consequence of trying to resolve our fiscal problems on the backs of our troops."

Norb Ryan, president of the Military Officers Association of America, an Alexandria, Va.-based advocacy group, also released a statement, saying capping military raises below private-sector pay growth will "undermine retention and readiness."

With two years' worth of pay caps and the 5 percent housing-cut proposal, an E-5 Army sergeant with 10 years of service and a family of four would lose \$1,400 a year, while an O-3 Army captain would lose \$2,100 by the end of fiscal 2015, according to the association.

Hagel said personnel reductions are needed in order to preserve funding in other areas of the budget, including weapons modernization and readiness. The request would downsize the military, especially the Army, whose active-duty force would [shrink](#) to between 440,000 and 450,000 soldiers -- and even further to 420,000 soldiers if automatic cuts known as sequestration remain in effect.

"Reducing the Army to its smallest size since World War II is the worst possible approach to maintain our national security," Caroline Delleney, a spokeswoman for Rep. Joe Wilson, R-S.C., chairman of the House Armed Services Military Personnel Subcommittee, said in a statement.

During the past decade of war in Iraq and Afghanistan, where U.S. combat operations will end this year, military compensation has surged by 40 percent more than private-sector pay, thanks in part to generous pay raises from Congress, Hagel said. A former senator from Nebraska, the secretary said he supported the raises, which were higher than the Pentagon requested.

"It was the right thing to do at the time, given the burdens being placed on our service members, the military's recruiting and retention challenges, and the fact that we had few constraints in defense spending," he said. "But today, DoD faces vastly different fiscal challenges."

While troops would receive a 1 percent increase in basic pay next year -- down from 1.8 percent in recent years -- general officers and flag officers would see their pay frozen at current levels, Hagel said. Basic pay would continue to rise after 2015, though the increases would be "restrained," he said.

Service members would also have to pay out of pocket for some of their housing expenses. The department would cover an average of 95 percent of such costs under basic allowance for housing (BAH), with troops picking up the difference, Hagel said. The idea isn't new. In the 1990s, troops on average paid 18 percent of their housing costs, he said.

Retirees and some family members of active-duty troops would also have to pay more for health care. The department plans to "modernize" the Tricare health care system by "consolidating plans and adjusting deductibles and co-pays in ways that encourage member to use our most affordable means of care," including military treatment facilities, preferred providers and generic prescription medications, Hagel said.

"We will ask retirees and some active-duty family members to pay a little more in their deductibles and co-pays, but their benefits will remain affordable and generous, as they should be," he said. Medically retired service members and survivors wouldn't pay annual participation fees and would pay a smaller share of health care costs overall, he said.

What's more, the request would reduce the Defense Commissary Agency's annual budget from \$1.4 billion today to \$400 million by 2017 as first reported by Military.com. Some sources have predicted that such a decrease in funding will force the agency to make major changes, from raising prices to shuttering stores.

"We are not shutting down commissaries," Hagel said. "All commissaries will still get free rent and pay no taxes. They will be able to continue to provide a very good deal to service members and retirees -- much like our post exchanges, which do not receive direct subsidies."

Overseas stores and those in remote locations will continue to receive subsidies, he said.

Think tanks such as the Center for Strategic and Budgetary Analysis say the Pentagon needs to review such in-kind benefits. A survey done by the center found that most troops don't necessarily value certain benefits -- like the commissary -- as much as the military pays for them.

Lawmakers from both political parties will likely push back against the Pentagon's personnel proposals.

Sen. Kirsten Gillibrand, D-N.Y., chairman of the Senate Armed Services Personnel Subcommittee, "has concerns" about the reported cuts to military health care and housing, according to her spokesman, James Rahm.

"She will be looking at these proposals closely and will be focused on ensuring that Congress honors the commitments we have already made to our service members, veterans, retirees and their families," he said in a statement.

UPCOMING EVENTS

- 09 March: Daylight Saving Time Begins
- 13 March: Unit 56 St. Patrick's Day Meal – 5:30 PM
- 13 March: Post 56/Unit 56 Member Meeting – 6:30 PM
- 17 March: St. Patrick's Day
- 20 March: First Day of Spring
- 26 March: Post 56 Executive Board Meeting – 6:00 PM
- 10 April: Post 56/Unit 56 Member Meeting – 6:30 PM
- 23 April: Post 56 Executive Board Meeting – 6:00 PM

POST 56 DUES ARE STILL ONLY \$25.00 PER YEAR.



The advertisement features the American Legion logo on the left. The main text reads "RENEW ONLINE NOW!" in large, bold, white letters on a dark blue background. Below this, it says "Renew your American Legion Membership quickly and easily online!" followed by instructions: "Simply visit the web address shown below, and follow the easy instructions. You can renew your membership and even print out a temporary membership card. Quick and secure credit card payment." There are logos for VISA, MasterCard, and Discover. At the bottom left is the URL "www.legion.org/renew". On the right, there is a screenshot of the American Legion website's renewal page, showing the "THE AMERICAN LEGION" header and a "Renew your membership online" button.