

**LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES OF THE
JEWISH WAR VETERANS OF THE USA**

As Presented By

Sheldon Ohren

NATIONAL COMMANDER



**BEFORE A JOINT SESSION OF THE
SENATE AND HOUSE
VETERANS' AFFAIRS COMMITTEES**

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NATIONAL COMMANDER SHELDON OHREN

Sheldon Ohren of Monsey, NY was elected National Commander of the Jewish War Veterans of the USA at 117th Annual National Convention in August 2012. Previously he served as Commander of the Department of New York. He is a life member of PFC Fred Hecht Post 425.

Mr. Ohren served in the United States Air Force from April 1952 through January 1956. As an Airman First Class, he was assigned to the 6910th Security Group Headquarters in Landsberg am Lech, Germany, where he served as a cryptographic communications specialist.



After leaving the service, he enrolled at New York University from which he graduated with a BS Degree in Industrial and Labor Relations; subsequently he finished his accounting credits at the City College of New York. In 1965 he joined the Internal Revenue Service and retired in 2000 as an Appeals Team Chief. During that period he earned a Master of Science Degree from Pace University and taught at Long Island University.

Mr. Ohren was elected Jr. Vice Commander, Sr. Vice Commander, and ultimately Commander of the JWV Department of New York in 2008. He has worked as a member of the National Executive Committee, the National Court, the Convention Committee, as well as a Special Assistant to the President of the National Museum of American Jewish Military History. He also serves as Vice-Chairman of the West Point Liaison Committee and attends Oneg Shabbats sponsored by JWV at the Academy. He has represented National at the USMA by presenting Kiddush Cups and Shabbat Candlesticks to the Jewish graduates. In addition, he represents JWV at local Naturalization ceremonies and presents a copy of the Bill of Rights to the new citizens. Mr. Ohren participates at various JWV sponsored functions at the VA Hospital in Montrose, NY, and has served as a Docent at the Camp Shanks Museum, the Port of Embarkation during World War II.

In addition to JWV, he has been President and Treasurer of his B'nai B'rith Lodge for 10 years and has been a member of Congregation Shaarey Israel for the past 19 years. He is also a Charter Member of the United States Holocaust Museum, a member of the NMAJMH, and a member of the Holocaust Museum and Study Center in Spring Valley, NY.

A Brooklyn native, he is married to Judy (nee Bearman) who is a Life Member of the Ladies Auxiliary of Post 425. They have three children and five grandchildren.

INTRODUCTION.....	4
NO GOVERNMENT FUNDING	5
THE MILITARY COALITION	5
THE THROWAWAYS	6
MANDATORY FUNDING.....	8
SEQUESTRATION	8
VETERANS AND BRAIN DISEASE	9
SUICIDES	10
VA CLAIMS BACKLOG	11
BLINDED VETERANS.....	12
HAZARDOUS CHEMICALS	12
VETERAN HOMELESSNESS	13
CORRECT THE SURVIVOR BENEFIT PROGRAM (SBP).....	14
MIA/POW	15
RESTORING THE US-RUSSIAN JOINT COMMISSION ON POW/MIA AFFAIRS.....	15
ANNUAL PTSD SCREENING FOR TROOPS.....	16
BENEFITS FOR GLOBAL WAR AGAINST TERRORISM VETERANS	17
BUDGET CONTROL ACT	18
CAPITAL ONE’S VIOLATION OF SCRA	18
EXPANDING VETERANS’ COURTS	19
EXPEDITING DISABILITY EVALUATIONS	20
REWRITING THE STOLEN VALOR ACT	20
SUSTAINING PRIORITY AND FUNDING FOR ACCOUNTING OPERATIONS	21
DOD MISSION IN DANGEROUS TIMES	22
BACK-UP TO DOD.....	22
CONCLUSION	23

INTRODUCTION

Chairman Sanders, Chairman Miller, and Members of the Senate and House Committees on Veterans' Affairs, my fellow veterans and friends, I am Sheldon Ohren, the National Commander of the Jewish War Veterans of the U.S.A. (JWV). JWV is Congressionally Chartered and also provides counseling and assistance to members encountering problems dealing with the Department of Defense (DoD), the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), and other government agencies. JWV is an active participant in The Military Coalition, a select group of over 30 military associations and veterans' organizations representing over five million active duty, reserve and retired uniformed service personnel, veterans, families, and survivors on Capitol Hill. In fact, I am very proud that our National Executive Director, Colonel Herb Rosenbleeth, who is here with me today, is the President of the Military Coalition.

On February 12, 13 and 14, our National Executive Committee members were here in Washington to meet with their Senators and Representatives as part of JWV's Capitol Hill Action Day(s). Our members prepared diligently for these important meetings and successfully presented many of JWV's legislative priorities to your colleagues, their members of Congress and congressional staff.

Chairman Sanders, it was a singular honor for JWV to present our prestigious JWV Medal of Merit to you at our Congressional Reception during our days on Capitol Hill. It was equally rewarding to JWV to have so many distinguished guests participate with us!

Mr. Chairman, on Friday, March 15th, we at JWV will celebrate our 117th birthday. For all of these 117 years, JWV has advocated a strong national defense, and just and fair recognition and compensation for veterans. The Jewish War Veterans of the USA prides itself in being in the forefront among our nation's civic and veterans groups in supporting the well-earned rights of veterans, in promoting American democratic principles, in defending universal Jewish causes and in vigorously opposing bigotry, anti-Semitism and terrorism both here and abroad. Today, even more than ever before, we stand for these principles. The Jewish War Veterans of the U.S.A. represents a proud tradition of patriotism and service to the United States of America.

As the National Commander of the Jewish War Veterans of the USA (JWV), I thank you for the opportunity to present the views of our 100,000 members and supporters on issues under the jurisdiction of your committees. At the conclusion of JWV's 117th National Convention in

Norfolk, Virginia, our convention delegates adopted our resolutions for the 113th Congress. These mandates establish the legislative agenda for JWV during my year as National Commander.

JWV believes Congress has a unique obligation and compelling opportunity to ensure that veterans' benefits are regularly reviewed and improved to keep pace with the needs of all veterans in a changing social and economic environment. JWV salutes the Chairs and Members of both the House and Senate Veterans' Affairs Committees for the landmark veterans' legislation enacted over the past several years. Eligibility improvement, patient enrollment, long-term care, access to emergency care, presumptive Agent Orange disability, enhanced VA/DoD sharing, improved preference rights of veterans in the federal government and other records recognize the debt this great country owes to those who have so faithfully served.

We must improve access to veterans' health care, increase timeliness in the benefit claims process, and enhance access to national cemeteries and to state cemeteries for all veterans.

NO GOVERNMENT FUNDING

For the record, the Jewish War Veterans of the USA, Inc. does not receive any grants or contracts from the federal government. This is as it should be.

THE MILITARY COALITION

JWV continues to be a proud member and active participant of the Military Coalition (TMC). PNC Robert M. Zweiman, JWV's National Chairman, serves on the Board of Directors of the Military Coalition and, again, our National Executive Director, Colonel Herb Rosenbleeth, USA (Ret), continues to serve as the President of the Military Coalition and as Co-Chair of the Coalition's Membership and Nominations Committee.

JWV requests that the Senate and House Committees on Veterans' Affairs do everything possible to fulfill the legislative priorities of the Military Coalition which are applicable to your committees. These positions are well thought out and are clearly in the best interests of our military personnel, our veterans and our great nation.

THE THROWAWAYS

Throwaways are sometimes called disposables or expendables. They include razors, toothbrushes, underwear, clothing, and other products; and now, we can add military personnel, their family, and their dependents.

If you follow political campaigns, advertisements, and TV, you will understand and determine that the most important thing in American life is the balanced budget and then possibly the family, but what the family politicians talk about is solely their own family – forget about yours.

The budget cutters have specifically programmed your (not their) obligation which demands from you the right for you to sacrifice yourself for the well being of military personnel. The obligation for budgetary cash savings has been imposed on you – the usual political “not me” syndrome.

The budget cutters have created and imposed on you a fear of national financial failure by which they have been able to control your way of life. Thus, they have forced you to accept the responsibility for the nation’s financial failures rather than to place the responsibility where it belongs, on the creators of the continuing national financial failure.

The pettiness of the methodology is demonstrated when the proposed pay increase of 1.8 percent for military personnel is reduced to 1 percent while the politicians, at the same time, push for the purchase of more tanks while thousands of tanks already exist and lay fallow in fields available for use. Does paying off political donors or self gratification constitute a moral basis for denying a modest pay increase for the personnel we rely on to protect our nation?

For many years, we have raised questions as to the inadequacy (read miserable) of housing for the military and their families. There has always been a national responsibility for creating the atmosphere for a healthy and normal lifestyle.

This budgetary failure has existed for many years without a national leadership (read both Executive and Congressional) acceptance of their moral obligation. The quality of life for military families has become budget-wise, a meaningless quality, essential for a loving and happy home.

Now here comes the new budgetary cost reduction approaches to further disrespect the military and their dependents. Just imagine that for your family breakfast you need to buy some juice, cereal, and milk. First you must get onto a bus, taxi, or your car to go to a nearby town to

buy the food. Then you would pay more for the food than you might have to pay on the base plus add the transportation costs and the inconvenience of lost time and waste of effort.

Well, that is the budgetary red tape being forced upon us by the removal and the elimination of PX's, commissaries, and exchanges from our bases. You must recognize that not only do these units provide food, but they also provide clothing, medications, and all the needs and requirements of the shopper to be able to make purchases at reasonable prices. This applies not only to the military and their families but also to retired veterans.

Many of the families also depend on the discounted product coupons found in newspapers which people like my wife, Jeri, send overseas to various APOs where the coupon expiration dates are then extended for six months while those coupons are not time extended at the local stores.

Irrationality is the best indication of the proposal to eliminate and close base schools and require military children to be transported to local town schools. We constantly talk about the need for educational advancement and the requirement for global leadership based on educational skills. Here, we intentionally devalue that goal.

So now we will have to bus the children to local schools where the local students will consider the military students to be "outsiders" and where our children may be unable to participate in after-school activities, sports, and school clubs. They will probably not expect to graduate with their class unless their parent remains on that base. The psychological affect on these children cannot be quantified. The effect on their future lives cannot be projected or protected. And, don't expect the locals to do this out of the goodness of their heart by raising their own local property taxes to pay for it.

The budget cutters are morally indefensible and corrupt. Their actions can result in some of the families returning home, financially unable to live together on base. The budget cutters, by their actions and without respecting human decency, have taken a path intended to disrupt and disable the family unit and weaken our military personnel.

The budget cutters are responsible for the current and the future of those of our military personnel (and don't forget the family members) who may end up with PTSD, homeless, family dysfunction, and other ailments. It would have a clear impact on our society as we have learned from today's life.

You may consider that I am being overly frustrated and overly downcast, but I do realize that common sense tells me that to nickel and dime those who sacrifice themselves on the front lines and define our national security is a national disgrace. To treat our troops as though they are robots entitled only to a little oiling is not merely a dishonor but a serious disease in the soul of America and its citizens.

We all deserve better than having our military personnel and their families being considered a throwaway – especially in one of the wealthiest countries in the world.

MANDATORY FUNDING

JWV continues to maintain that the Congress has an unbreakable obligation to its veterans. Adequate VA funding must be guaranteed by the Congress.

This country has a sacred obligation to those who have served and defended our nation to fully provide for their needs when they return from battle. Mandatory funding is necessary so that all category eights receive the care they need, so that veterans receive long term care, and so that VA medical research will be second to none! This is especially important now that we know more about the real challenges and expenses resulting from injuries to the brain, eyes, amputations, and other catastrophic injuries.

Only when the VA not only knows in advance the level of its funding but also knows with certainty that its funding levels will be adequate for all of its requirements can our veterans be assured that all of their health care needs can and will be met.

SEQUESTRATION

Last year's failure of the Joint Select Committee on Deficit Reduction means that automatic spending cuts, known as sequestration, are scheduled to take effect in early 2013 unless Congress finds other options to reverse the deficit. Cuts in military spending are projected not only to compromise our national security but also increase unemployment by as much as an entire percentage point nationwide. The JWV is deeply concerned about military spending reductions during a time of war. JWV is equally wary about the budget and its potential effect on the Department of Veterans Affairs.

Hundreds of thousands of men and women who served in Iraq and Afghanistan now rely on VA for health care. They enter our nation's VA medical centers, clinics and nursing homes at a time when veterans of previous wars are reaching advanced ages and in need of VA's services. These are services they earned, deserve and were promised. No veteran should have to wait weeks for appointments nor travel hundreds of miles to see providers. Female veterans should have health-care services that meet their needs. Cities such as Orlando, Denver and New Orleans should not have to wait years for the construction of long-overdue hospitals.

The pressure on VA will only mount as defense budget cuts drive down force sizes and more of our military personnel re-enter civilian life. DoD and VA must work in harmony to ease the transition and help the influx of new veterans get the help they need, including timely benefits, access to high-quality health care and careers that match their skills.

Many key veterans programs require coordination with government departments such as Labor, and Housing and Urban Development, which enjoy no protection of any kind from sequestration. Veterans programs within those departments must be protected if they are to succeed.

JWV wants Congress to ensure that national security and veterans programs in VA and other departments are not sacrificed in the budget battle. Previous legislation, such as the Balanced Budget and Emergency Deficit Control Act of 1985 and the Statutory Pay as you Go Act of 2010, included language specifically protecting VA programs from cuts. As the budget deficit widens, similar and specific protections are necessary today.

VETERANS AND BRAIN DISEASE

There are over 220,000 service members diagnosed with mild and severe brain injuries since 2001. Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) is often called the signature wound of the Iraq and Afghanistan wars. Common causes of TBI include damage caused by explosive devices, falls, and vehicle or motorcycle accidents. Most reported TBI among Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom service members and veterans has been traced back to Improvised Explosive Devices, or IEDs, used extensively against Coalition Forces.

Severe TBI usually results from a significant closed head injury, as in an automobile accident or most open or penetrating injuries, where there may be considerable residual deficits

of brain function. Depending on the injury, a severe TBI could impact speech, sensory, vision and cause cognitive deficits including difficulties with attention, memory, concentration, and impulsiveness. There is an aggressive initial treatment program in the theater with neurosurgical expertise.

Rehabilitation services are needed by individuals with TBI who continue to have medical and functional problems following injury and initial treatment. Rehabilitation is begun as soon as individuals with TBI are medically stable. The degree and rate of recovery are difficult to accurately predict because TBI is experienced differently by each person depending upon several unique characteristics, such as the type of injury and an individual's personal health and resilience. Where rehabilitation takes place depends on the person's needs. Individuals with severe TBI's may need inpatient care at a Military Treatment Facility (MTF), a VA Polytrauma hospital, or a civilian rehabilitation center. Individuals with a mild TBI (mTBI)/concussion may be treated at outpatient facilities.

A report released by an Institute of Medicine Committee concluded there is "limited evidence" that some types of cognitive therapy – exercises and strategies taught to patients to recover brain function – work in the long term, especially therapies addressing deficits in memory, attention and communications.

JWV strongly urges the Congress to provide the VA with sufficient resources to properly care for, and rehabilitate veterans with TBI wounds or injuries.

SUICIDES

The Jewish War Veterans of the USA has long advocated the embedding of mental health professionals in all active military units, including the Reserve and National Guard components. The media is reporting an average of one suicide victim per day among the men and women on active duty. The presence of such mental health professionals may prevent some of the suicides and homicides we are now witnessing among those now serving in the military.

The "military culture" demands service members to maintain an aura of toughness and stoic acceptance of the horrors of war. The "code of silence" either encourages or requires members of the military not to report comrades-in-arms to "higher authorities" even when that

comrade exhibits characteristics of one who might become a victim of suicide or might strike out angrily and harm those closest to the service member.

The Jewish War Veterans of the USA repeats its enunciated position, that there needs to be a truly innovative approach to anger management within the military and a recognition that there is a problem that absolutely must be approached creatively and that there need to be fewer studies and more action.

Therefore, the Jewish War Veterans of the USA demands the Department of Defense immediately retain the services of as many mental health professionals as required to embed one in each and every military unit, including the active component, Reserve and National Guard.

Furthermore, the Jewish War Veterans of the USA demands funding be provided for the Department of Defense to immediately seek to train the Non-Commissioned Officer Corps and the Company Commanders on how to recognize depression, anger, and the other signs of possible violence either directed inward (suicide) or outward (spousal abuse, etc.)

VA CLAIMS BACKLOG

The Veterans Affairs Department's disability claims backlog recently edged above the 900,000 mark with 608,365 – 67.6 percent – stuck in the system more than 125 days.

VA reported that total disability claims hit 900,121 as of December 24, 2012, up 24,725 – 2.7 percent – from the backlog that existed at the start of the calendar year on January 3, 2012.

Over the past two years, VA has gone backward. According to VA's own figures, over 65 percent of veterans with disability benefits claims have been waiting longer than 125 days for them to be processed.

While some regional offices may have an average rate of 76 days per claim, others take 336 days—a troubling inconsistency. Although the VA has a shortage of trained claims personnel, and there is a long lead time to train claims personnel, this average rate of processing must be reduced. Unfortunately, accuracy is also a problem.

VA has been reluctant to publicly post accuracy figures in its Monday Morning Workload reports, but VA's own STAR reports for accuracy place the rate in the mid 80's.

VA is hopeful that the Veterans Benefits Management System (VBMS) will eliminate many of the woes that have led to the backlog, but electronic solutions are not a magic bullet.

Without real reform for a culture of work that places higher priority on raw speed than accuracy, VA will continue to struggle, no matter the tools used to process claims.

While VA's stated goals of "no claim pending longer than 125 days" and 98-percent accuracy are admirable, many veterans would settle for their claims being initially processed correctly in a timely manner. Veterans with multiple conditions need to be seen by a primary care physician and should not be handled separately with each condition reviewed one at a time. One veteran-one visit.

If VA employees receive the same credit for work, whether it is done properly or improperly, there is little incentive to take the time to process a claim correctly. When a claim is processed in error, a veteran must appeal the decision to receive benefits, and then wait for an appeals process that may take months to resolve and possibly years for delivery of the benefit.

JWV believes VA must develop a processing model that puts as much emphasis on accuracy as it does on the raw number of claims completed. Nowhere does VA publicly post its accuracy figures. America's veterans need to have more confidence in the work done by VA.

BLINDED VETERANS

Blinded veterans are of extra special concern to JWV. The large number of IED explosions in Iraq and Afghanistan have led to a huge number of eye injuries and blinded veterans. In fact, orbital blast globe injuries, optic nerve injuries, and retinal injuries have been all too common. JWV strongly urges the congress to insure adequate funding to care for our thousands of veterans with eye injuries.

HAZARDOUS CHEMICALS

JWV applauds VA for processing nearly 230,000 claims through June 2012 that involved the three newest Agent Orange-related conditions. The recent expansion of conditions presumed to be linked to Agent Orange exposure certainly created additional work for VA, which already faces a heavy claims backlog, but VA Secretary Eric Shinseki argued correctly that it was the right thing to do. Decisions about treating and compensating veterans exposed to deadly toxins must never be motivated by whether or not the road will be challenging or costly, but whether or not the veteran has suffered and requires treatment because of the exposure.

JWV strongly supports the establishment of a unified policy to deal with the consequences of exposure to hazardous materials in the military.

JWV urges continued study of all environmental hazards and their effects on servicemembers and veterans. New challenges, such as burn pits, must be addressed. Evidence suggests more than 227 metric tons of waste have been burned in conjunction with JP-8 jet fuel, releasing countless carcinogens into the air that servicemembers have breathed. At the very least, a full accounting of exposed veterans through a burn-pit registry or similar means would be an important step forward.

Agent Orange remains a concern, as thousands of veterans exposed to the toxin are left behind when it comes to vital treatment and benefits. JWV remains committed to ensuring all veterans who served in areas of exposure receive recognition and treatment for conditions linked to Agent Orange. Time is running out for those veterans not designated as having “boots on the ground” during the Vietnam War. Studies indicate “Blue Water Navy” veterans may have experienced higher exposure rates to Agent Orange than those who were on the ground, due to water desalination systems on the ships; this never has been satisfactorily addressed by VA. The time is now to recognize all Vietnam veterans for their exposure to Agent Orange, not just those who had boots on the ground.

JWV urges VA to work with DoD to finally complete the list of exposure locations outside Vietnam, including the C-123 K transport aircraft, Thailand and other supporting areas of the Vietnam theater, as well as Korea.

JWV urges continued close scrutiny by the Institute of Medicine into Agent Orange, Gulf War illness and other concerns. When problems are identified, VA must act swiftly to ensure current compensation and treatment is based on the most recent scientific findings.

VETERAN HOMELESSNESS

VA has promised to devote resources necessary to end veteran homelessness by 2015. To fully implement that pledge, VA is going to have to work closely with Congress to continue making responsible investments in affordable housing and supportive service programs to help more veterans and their families. Current estimates put the number of homeless veterans at approximately 76,000 on any given night, down from 2010 numbers of 131,000 or more.

JWV recommends providing funding for a broad range of appropriate and effective interventions, including:

- Appropriation of funds for the Supportive Services for Veteran Families program. SSVF funds have been used effectively by community organizations to prevent many veterans from becoming homeless and to quickly assist veterans who need nothing more than short-term rental assistance and limited case management to get back on their feet. SSVF funds also can be used to pay for employment services, utility assistance, child care costs and other housing-related expenses.
- Congressional support for the homeless veterans Grant and Per Diem transitional housing program. This program provides short-term housing help to homeless veterans, allowing them to get connected with jobs, supportive services and more permanent housing, ultimately allowing them to become self-sufficient. Promising new models for using Grant and Per Diem funds – including allowing veterans to remain in their GPD housing units once support from the program ends – and new programs focused on women veterans are helping to ensure that GPD continues to meet the ever-changing needs of returning veterans and their families.
- Congress should provide 10,000 new HUD–VASH vouchers designed to serve homeless veterans (and in many cases their families) who need long-term housing, intensive case management and supportive services. Since 2008, 37,975 vouchers have been awarded, contributing substantially to major reductions in veteran homelessness.

CORRECT THE SURVIVOR BENEFIT PROGRAM (SBP)

Survivors of military retirees who die of service-connected causes and who paid into SBP, and survivors killed in active-duty, should receive both SBP and DIC (Dependency and Indemnity Compensation) benefits without the current dollar for dollar offset. JWV strongly supports legislation to end this offset.

JWV strongly supports HR 178, The Military Surviving Spouses Equity Act, which would correct this inequity.

MIA/POW

JWV has always been an ardent, active supporter of the National League of Families of American Prisoners and Missing in Southeast Asia. JWV will always remember those who are still unaccounted for and their families. We fly the MIA-POW flag in the lobby of our headquarters and place that flag in front of our meeting rooms.

There are still 1,655 personnel listed by the Defense POW/Missing Personnel Office (DPMO) as missing and unaccounted-for from the Vietnam War. The number of Americans announced by DPMO as returned and identified since the end of the Vietnam War in 1975 is 928. Another 63 US personnel, recovered by the US and ID'd before the end of the war, bring the official total of remains repatriated from the Vietnam War is 991. Of the 1,655 missing and unaccounted-for personnel, 90% were lost in Vietnam or areas of Laos and Cambodia under Vietnam's wartime control: Vietnam-1,280 (VN-470); Laos-314; Cambodia-54; PRC territorial waters-7. More than 450 over-water losses are among the 630 DPMO lists as No Further Pursuit (NFP) cases.

RESTORING THE US-RUSSIAN JOINT COMMISSION ON POW/MIA AFFAIRS

In 1992, the US-Russia Joint Commission on POW/MIA Affairs (USRJC) was established by Presidents George H.W. Bush and Boris Yeltsin to determine the fate of personnel of the United States and the former Soviet Union still missing and unaccounted for from the Vietnam War, the Cold War, Korean War and World War II, as well as the former USSR's war in Afghanistan.

The USRJC and its mission have been supported by every President of the United States since its formation. In 2006, President George W. Bush appointed General Robert "Doc" Foglesong, USAF Retired, as the American Co-chair and, in June, 2011, Russian President Dmitry Medvedev appointed Ms. Yekaterina Priyetzheva as the Russian Co-chair and more than 30 Commissioners to the Russian delegation of the Commission.

Over the past several years the Department of Defense has broken promises of support for the USRJC, redirecting funding and personnel to other tasks causing irreparable damage to the USRJC and its ability to accomplish its mission. The Jewish War Veterans of the USA and other veteran's organizations and POW/MIA family member organizations repeatedly have

asked the President and the Congress to reinforce their support for the Commission and have received little response.

Therefore, be it resolved that the Jewish War Veterans of the USA calls upon the President to reaffirm his commitment to the USRJC as a Presidential Commission, to General Robert “Doc” Foglesong as the American Co-chair, and their mission through publicly citing his policy priority and backing.

It is further resolved that the Congress provide and direct the Secretary of Defense to restore to the USRJC the funding and personnel diverted to other POW/MIA related tasks, thus ensuring the USRJC and its mission can be restored to its full potential. It is further resolved that the USRJC remain an independent Presidential Commission, with the Department of Defense providing the funding and personnel determined necessary by the Commission.

ANNUAL PTSD SCREENING FOR TROOPS

The National Institute of Medicine has recommended that all members of the military returning from a tour of duty in Iraq and Afghanistan; and should be screened for Post Traumatic Stress Disorder.

Of the 2.6 million service members deployed to Iraq and Afghanistan, some 13 to 20 percent exhibit symptoms of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. Per the National Institute of Medicine, barely one-half of those diagnosed with PTSD actually received treatment.

Many members of the military do not seek treatment for fear it would injure their career within the military were they to seek treatment. By placing any results of interviews and screening in the member’s health file but without any reference to the screening in their personnel file more members would be willing to speak frankly during the interviews and screening.

To be truly effective any interviews and screening process needs to be performed on an annual basis. Frequently, those who do seek treatment are not tracked to determine the success or failure to the treatment provided. There are alternative methods of treatment which have proven successful in non-DoD/DVA settings.

Therefore, the Jewish War Veterans of the USA calls upon the Departments of Defense and Veterans Affairs to immediately implement programs which permit alternative medical

therapies such as yoga, bio-feedback, acupuncture and animal-assisted treatment plans as well as the more traditional modalities in order to address the needs of the men and women suffering from post traumatic stress disorder.

Therefore, the Jewish War Veterans of the USA calls upon the Departments of Defense and Veterans Affairs to research the rates of success and failure of the various modalities so that a full and complete conclusion can be made as to the viability of the individual modality.

BENEFITS FOR GLOBAL WAR AGAINST TERRORISM VETERANS

It appears that the men and women who have served during the Global War Against Terrorism may have been exposed to a variety of toxic substances. A considerable percent of men and women serving in the Global War Against Terrorism are victims of military sexual trauma.

Military Sexual Trauma is defined by the Department of Veterans Affairs as, “Sexual harassment that is threatening in character or physical assault of a sexual nature that occurred while the victim was in the military, regardless of geographical location of the trauma, gender of the victim, or the relationship to the perpetrator.”

The Department of Veterans Affairs has developed certain procedures to treat these illnesses and injuries, nevertheless, there needs to be more done immediately to address the growing requests for these services. The only Federal beneficiaries not covered under the Hyde Amendment are women in the Armed Forces. There is greater awareness among the men and women currently serving and recently separated that there is a nexus between their current mental health and physical complaints and the service to their country.

The Department of Veterans Affairs has let it be known that it is seeking to hire 2,500 mental health professional of differing academic credentialing to confront this epidemic. The Department of Veterans Affairs must aggressively recruit and train counselors and evaluators to meet the physical and psychological needs of this new class of veterans.

Therefore, the Jewish War Veterans of the USA calls upon the Department of Veterans Affairs to immediately take any and all steps necessary to handle the needs of the veterans of the Global War Against Terrorism, regardless of the nature of the illness or injury and regardless of the costs to do so; and calls on Congress to pass necessary legislation to have the Hyde Amendment include our servicewomen victims of rape or incest.

Furthermore, the Jewish War Veterans of the USA calls upon the Congress to make immediately available to the Department of Veterans Affairs such funding as may be required by the Department to meet the needs of these veterans.

BUDGET CONTROL ACT

The Budget Control Act takes effect on January 2, 2013. The Budget Control Act mandates a decrease of some \$600 billion over ten years in the country's funding for national security. It appears quite likely that this sequestration of funds will result in an active Army of less than 400,000 personnel.

The downsizing of the active component would have a devastating result in the ability to meet the needs of the United States' foreign policies and would place an abhorrent burden on the Reserve and National Guard components of the Army thereby causing many members of the Guard and Reserve to leave those components.

This entire scenario can be avoided by an immediate action of the Congress to come to the realization that the Budget Reduction Act must be amended to face the dangerous direction it is leading the Nation. The totality of the proposed reduction in the strength of the armed forces most likely will be: Army-30%, Navy-33 1/3%, Air Force-30%, Marines-20%, Coast Guard-5%.

Therefore, the Congress must act responsively and step beyond partisan politics to prevent the demise of the active Army which would become an Army designed solely to prevent a foreign power from actually invading American soil but which would not be of sufficient strength to be deployed overseas.

Furthermore, the Congress must act so that the research and development of new technologies would continue and new projects and programs could be developed.

CAPITAL ONE'S VIOLATION OF SCRA

Capital One Bank violated the Servicemembers Civil Relief Act by wrongfully foreclosing servicemembers' homes and repossessing their cars. These actions by Capital One were clear violations of the special Protections afforded servicemembers by the Servicemembers Civil Relief Act.

In addition to the violations mentioned above, Capital One, also, improperly denied some servicemembers interest rate relief on some credit cards and car loans. Capital One has agreed to pay at least \$125,000 to each servicemember whose home was illegally foreclosed upon and at least \$10,000 to each servicemember whose motor vehicle was illegally repossessed. Capital One will provide \$5 million to servicemembers denied appropriate benefits on credit card accounts, automobile, consumer loans. The total value of the settlement reached between the Department of Justice and Capital One is approximately \$12 million.

Therefore, the Jewish War Veterans of the USA congratulates the Department of Justice for pursuing the claims of the men and women in the military who were wronged by Capital One and by recovering some of the money due them from Capital One.

Furthermore, the Jewish War Veterans of the USA requests of the Justice Department that the next institution that can be proven to have violated the servicemembers Civil Relief Act not only be required to repay the injured servicemembers but, also, be required to pay punitive damages, as well.

Furthermore, any such offending institution shall be required such reasonable steps as available to repair the credit rating of their wrongful actions.

EXPANDING VETERANS' COURTS

Several jurisdictions have created “veterans’ courts” wherein veterans accused of non-violent crimes are either diverted into alternative programs or are tried. The veterans selected to participate in these programs must meet several strict criteria in order to qualify for the “veterans’ court”. Those veterans who meet the criteria for eligibility are placed in an alternative program wherein they are required to be drug-free with random drug testing and undergo intense psychological counseling including but not limited to anger management. If they successfully complete the program their record is either sealed, expunged, or both.

The recidivism rate among veterans who successfully complete the “veterans’ court” program is particularly encouraging in the areas of drug abuse and anger management thereby allowing the veteran to have a better chance of finding and holding a job as well as establishing and maintaining a family life.

Therefore, the Jewish War Veterans of the USA encourages additional jurisdictions to establish “veterans’ courts” and to closely monitor these programs and to publish the results of the programs for other jurisdictions to study and emulate.

EXPEDITING DISABILITY EVALUATIONS

The Departments of Defense and Veterans Affairs announced that they had formed a partnership to create and integrate their evaluation of service members into a single system.

This Integrated Disability Evaluation System (IDES) was designed to expedite the evaluation of sick and injured members so that the active component could concentrate and focus on the condition that made the individual unfit for active duty and prepare the service member for follow-up with the Department of Veterans Affairs with a single evaluation occurring rather than two separate and distinct evaluations. The goal of the IDES was to shorten the average time from the time an active duty member first sought an evaluation to the date the member received a VA check from 540 days to 295 days (with Reservists and Guard members taking an additional ten days).

The new program has woefully missed its’ goal with only 19% achieving the goal in 2011.

This is a worthy goal, it but requires a greater dedication of people, funding and technology to fulfill this goal.

Therefore, the Jewish War Veterans of the USA calls upon the Congress and the Departments of Defense and Veterans Affairs to commit to achieving this goal by investing all the requisite resources without reservation and without delay.

REWRITING THE STOLEN VALOR ACT

Our Supreme Court has stricken the Stolen Valor Act as an unconstitutional violation of the First Amendment’s right of free speech. This decision by our Supreme Court allows liars, con artists and impersonators to gain prestige, financial rewards, and other benefits from their lies.

Those men and women who earned these Medals through their bravery, often paid for with their blood and lives.

There must be developed a law that can meet the Constitutional mandate while penalizing these liars, con artists and impersonators as frauds and which subjects them to penalties for perpetrating their frauds upon others. The Department of Defense could and must prepare a roster of the men and women who are the recipients of these Medals demonstrating valor and courage.

The Jewish War Veterans of the USA calls upon the Congress to immediately enact a law that does not impinge upon a citizen's freedom of speech but does impose sanctions upon anyone who employs such prevarications for any form of gain be it pecuniary, political, etc.

The Jewish War Veterans of the USA calls upon the Department of Defense to immediately assemble a list of the men and women who are the recipients of the various Medals which denote valor and bravery and a list of those who have committed valor fraud and thievery.

SUSTAINING PRIORITY AND FUNDING FOR ACCOUNTING OPERATIONS

Congress mandated, within the 2010 National Defense Authorization Act, that the POW/MIA accounting community develop the capacity to identify 200 remains per year by 2015.

Accounting for personnel listed as POW, MIA, KIA/BNA from the Vietnam War, Cold War, Korean War and World War II, as well as two listed as KIA/BNR from Desert Storm/ the Gulf War, and Afghanistan is of the utmost importance.

The accounting community has made it clear that it would be impossible to meet the stated identification goal without increased funding and personnel, unless the available resources were redirected to the exhumation of gravesites in national cemeteries or selected sites of multiple casualties, thus diminishing ongoing efforts.

Recent United States policy indicates interest in renewing accounting efforts in North Korea has added additional requirements and, despite assurances from the White House, Department of Defense and U.S. Pacific Command that adequate funds will be available, there is a continuing concern that the current budgetary constraints will impact negatively on the accounting mission.

Political circumstances, environmental conditions and policy interests pertaining to each of the countries in which United States personnel were lost during the Vietnam War, Korean

War, Cold War and World War II differ greatly, some posing significant challenges in obtaining agreements for access and cooperation.

Be it resolved that the Jewish War Veterans of the USA calls upon the Congress to appropriate fund and provide personnel for the fiscal years 2013-2018 necessary to expand the pace and scope of American field investigations and remains-recovery operations to ensure that answers for the families of American men and women still missing and unaccounted for from all our Nation's past wars are pursued simultaneously as a matter of the highest national priority of the United States Government and the American people.

DOD MISSION IN DANGEROUS TIMES

The Department of Defense is facing large cuts in the near future. JWV believes this nation must maintain adequate force levels and adequate equipment levels. Military readiness does not come cheaply. Our military personnel should all have a reliable benefits package that will never be reduced.

Today's active-duty service members and those who serve in the National Guard and Reserve components have volunteered to stand watch in this nation's defense. Yet few stand watch for them. Basic benefits of their service, from retirement to TRICARE, are under assault. The defenders of the country need to be able to focus on defending this country. They must not worry their benefits will be pulled out from beneath them while they are focused on more pressing concerns such as terror plots, IEDs, and insurgents seeking to undermine hard-fought gains.

The Congress must insure that DoD is funded to meet all its missions including possible overseas threats from Iran, North Korea, and even China.

BACK-UP TO DOD

VA Hospitals must be adequately funded, staffed and equipped to perform their vital role as this nation's only back-up for DoD medical facilities. U.S. military personnel could possibly suffer casualties exceeding the capacity of the combined military medical treatment facilities. In such a case, the VA would be vital to the nation. JWV again strongly urges the Congress to fund the VA to fully handle this potential workload.

CONCLUSION

Chairman Sanders and Chairman Miller, our great nation must care for its veterans. Our country must, therefore, pay for the costs involved.

At our annual national conventions our members work diligently to develop our legislative priorities. Our dedicated resolutions chairman, PNC Michael Berman, works very diligently to develop our resolutions and to bring them before our convention delegates. Following further fine-tuning by our convention delegates, our resolutions are finalized, and become our legislative priorities for the coming year. We thank you for the opportunity to present them to you today.