

The American Legion



For God and country

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Editor – The following guest editorial by the national commander of The American Legion on a very timely and important topic is offered for your publication consideration.

Guest Editorial – 619 Words

June 24, 2007

Meet the Challenge

Landstuhl heroes deserve more.

By American Legion National Commander Paul A. Morin, American Legion Auxiliary National President JoAnn Cronin and Sons of the American Legion National Commander Earl Ruttkofsky.

Many of the wounded arrive there naked. We are not talking about a hospital in the Sudan, but our very own Landstuhl Regional Medical Center in Germany, a stop on the journey home for most of the severely wounded Americans fighting in the War on Terror.

As Michael M. Phillips explains in his book, “The Gift of Valor,” the clothes of these heroes are often cut off their back by medics and corpsmen as they are evacuated from the battlefield. He adds, “If you make it to Landstuhl, you’re good to go. It was an article of faith among the Marine infantrymen in Iraq that if the corpsman plugged up the hole to keep you from bleeding out, and the field surgeons stitched up the important organs, and the Air Force got you all the way to the Army hospital in Landstuhl, Germany, then you’d live. You might not be the same. Your legs might not be where they were before the war. Your arms might not work as well. Your skin might be disfigured by burns. Your brain might be so badly injured that you might not really be the same person you used to be. But you’d survive and eventually get home to your parents, your wife, your kids, your girl.”

The American Legion wants them to do more than survive. America can never repay the debt it owes these heroes, but it can certainly improve their quality of life. Much attention

has been rightly given to substandard conditions at Walter Reed Army Hospital in Washington, but little is being done to help improve the plight of our heroes at Landstuhl.

Last month, National Commander Morin and National President Cronin had the honor of visiting this vital DoD facility. Patients there don't ask for much. Some are even eager to return to their old units so they could fight alongside their buddies. Sadly, some of these wounded warriors had broken television sets in their rooms. Others lack comfort items such as DVDs, MP-3s or even magazines. They do receive a small clothing allowance, but when you arrive with nothing it doesn't go very far.

We are throwing down a challenge to the entire American Legion family and anyone else who wants to help. Let's raise \$50,000 by the close of our 89th National Convention on Aug. 30 to ensure that these men and women are given the comfort items that they want. By family, we mean The American Legion, the American Legion Auxiliary and Sons of The American Legion; "anyone else" includes everyone who has the heart to help these brave young men and women.

It's important that this be a family effort because it is our families that these men and women are protecting. The heroes at Landstuhl are our Band of Brothers and Band of Sisters.

Words such as "support the troops" and "sacrifice" are tossed around so much these days that they are in danger of being dismissed as clichés. Here is another one: "Talk is cheap." Care packages and cards are nice, but a donation to "Operation Landstuhl" is effortless.

Simply visit www.legion.org/landstuhl

and use any major credit card to make an online donation. It doesn't matter how much you give. Just give something. If you prefer, you can mail a check to

Operation Landstuhl

c/o The American Legion
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Every post, unit or squadron that makes a donation will receive a certificate of appreciation signed by the national commanders and the national president. A strong national security and taking care of veterans are two of the original four pillars that The American Legion has been built on. Operation Landstuhl is yet another way to fulfill that commitment.

Paul A. Morin is national commander of the 2.7 million-member American Legion, the nation's largest veterans organization. JoAnn Cronin is national president of The American Legion Auxiliary, the nation's largest women's patriotic organization, and Earl Ruttkofsky is national commander of the Sons of The American Legion.

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