

Saturday, Aug. 15, 2009
National Council of Administration Meeting

PRESIDENT TO KEYNOTE OPENING SESSION

President Barack Obama will address VFW members at 11 a.m. at Monday's Joint Opening Session. Entrances to the West Building and North Building will open at 7 a.m., and the official convention badge must be shown to enter the building.

Besides state and city dignitaries, also speaking at the convention will be VA Secretary Eric Shinseki and Rep. Harry Mitchell (D-Ariz.), who is chairman of the Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations of the House Veterans Affairs Committee.

Noting that there has been a "huge drop in donations at all non-profits," VFW Quartermaster General Larry Maher said VFW faces "painful" budget restructuring. "We can't project a balanced budget without more revenue," he said. "We have been living beyond our means." Measures affecting national staff include a hiring freeze instituted in October 2008, an 18% reduction of employees and no merit raises for the next fiscal year. Adjutant General Gunner Kent reiterated the difficulty of going through this restructuring and emphasized that one department alone will lose more than 90 years of institutional knowledge following the retirement of several employees.

Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief Tommy Tradewell said, "Modification is the way we have to go." Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief Richard Eubank added that "each and every one of us have a responsibility to build up membership."

Commander-in-Chief Glen Gardner, Jr., concluded the meeting by saying that the quality of VFW members is more important than the quantity. "It's not about the money members pay in dues," he said. "It's about getting members who want to belong and care about this organization."

The Vander Clute Memorial Motorcycle Ride raised \$45,000—\$27,000 of which came from the Department of Illinois—to be donated to Fisher House, which provides free or low-cost lodging to veterans and military families receiving care at military hospitals.

For the first time ever, VFW will provide live Internet streaming of the convention's general sessions only. Replays will run from approximately 1 p.m. until 8 a.m. the next day via www.vfw.org.

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