

The Legion's Extraordinary Century of Accomplishments

By Rep. Chris Smith (R-NJ)

Congratulations to State Commander Ray Miller for his lifetime of honorable, dedicated and effective service to our country both in uniform and out—and to all veterans and service members and their families.

Absent the Legion, The United States would be a far different place and nowhere near as vet friendly nor as strong.

Absent the Legion, respect for fundamental American values and our flag would be diminished.

On the eve of American Legion's founding a century ago—on Sept. 9, 1919—it behooves every American to take note and acknowledge a century of extraordinary accomplishments.

The Legion has played an absolutely essential role in ensuring that veterans and their families are honored in both word and deed and that America's military capabilities are second to none.

A sufficiently strong military often deters conflict and war.

However if that fails, America's well-trained and best equipped have always been counted on to secure the peace.

American Legion-led efforts in 1921 created the US Veterans Bureau, now the VA. A few weeks ago, Congress passed and President Trump signed the largest VA budget ever—over \$89.5 billion.

Every earned veterans benefit we know today was first pushed—and often conceived of—by the American Legion.

In December of 1943, the Legion's National Commander Harry Colmery drafted on Hotel Mayflower stationary in Washington, DC the first draft of the greatest veterans law ever—the GI Bill:

The GI bill transformed America.

Among its provisions, the means to pay for post-secondary education coupled with the no-down payment low interest home loan, incentivized the creation of the middle class.

The American Legion inspired GI Bill unleashed unprecedented sustainable prosperity—the likes of which the world has never seen—a building boom and has significantly enabled veterans and their families to achieve their dreams.

The first 100 years are almost in the book.

But like Ronald Reagan used to say, our best days are still ahead.

We are that shining city on the hill.

And it will continue to be the American Legion—with its 2 million members and leaders like Commander Miller who will continue to guide and inspire and challenge this amazing country of ours bequeathed to us by the sacrifice of our veterans to greatness.