

00:00:12:02 - 00:00:16:24

Speaker 1

Good night's sleep.

00:00:16:27 - 00:00:41:18

Speaker 1

Well, if you, If you're looking at your agenda, after last night's, reception that, concluded at nine, I'm assuming everybody was in bed by 930. So, Although the commander and I, Raul Ortega, we're up at, six this morning to, have maneuvered Lafond, the owner there was unable to reciprocate because he was couldn't open up less this morning.

00:00:41:20 - 00:00:59:03

Speaker 1

He had a little bit too much fun last night, I guess. It's my pleasure to welcome you again this morning and, introduce some of our staff that's going to be here today, at this time. And I'd like to do is to have our, one of our key members, Mr. Francisco Alvarez, introduce our keynote speaker this morning.

00:00:59:05 - 00:01:00:27

Speaker 2

Frank Baker.

00:01:00:29 - 00:01:12:21

Speaker 3

Who, lead us in to lead us into the Pledge of Allegiance. Now, if you could all please stand and place the flag.

00:01:12:23 - 00:01:13:08

Speaker 2

Sir.

00:01:13:10 - 00:01:17:27

Speaker 3

Oh, I pledge allegiance to the flag.

00:01:17:29 - 00:01:20:03

Speaker 1

Of the United States of America.

00:01:20:05 - 00:01:21:23

Speaker 2

And to the republic for.

00:01:21:25 - 00:01:36:16

Speaker 3

Which it stands. One nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all or for.

00:01:36:18 - 00:01:58:18

Speaker 3

Good morning, foreign mirrors. welcome to the 39th annual state convention of the American GI forum. I'd like to thank all of you for being here. Brancaster looked at it after last night, but, looks like we have a pretty good turnout. I've been given the opportunity and the pleasure of introducing our keynote speaker for the morning, Gary Condit, who is our U.S. congressman.

00:01:58:20 - 00:02:31:20

Speaker 3

And, Gary's family immigrated to California when he was still a boy. He attended series. He went to Stan State College, graduated from there in 1989. He, went to Congress for the first time to represent us. well, we always have agreed with Gary on his stands. he has, in this last term, protected Social Security, helped to protect veterans rights, attacked Medicare, which are issues that are important to the American GI forum.

00:02:31:23 - 00:02:53:11

Speaker 3

he's a man that's deserving of our support and our votes in this next upcoming election. I'd ask that you give a round of applause to our favorite Blue Dog Democrats, Gary Condit.

00:02:53:13 - 00:03:12:15

Speaker 3

Thank you very much. Welcome to all of you. to Modesto, California. Those of you who do not, live here, we welcome you here. We're delighted and honored that you're here. We're absolutely honored that you folks are here this morning. We appreciate you and what you have done for this country. And you know, of, I appreciate that introduction.

00:03:12:15 - 00:03:32:01

Speaker 3

That was a very nice introduction. Maybe I'll just take you with me the rest of the week. I could use that. this week, sort of reminds us, or I think it really reminds us of the ultimate price that men and women in the armed service sometimes pay in line of duty and honor and country and service to country.

00:03:32:03 - 00:04:00:01

Speaker 3

when we speak of veterans programs, I think we can't forget that they are earned benefits. for those who did the heavy work of freedom, who were prepared to give all of themselves, if necessary, to this nation. And I think this week, we're reminded of that. We're reminded of what veterans have done, what they were willing to do if called upon.

00:04:00:03 - 00:04:20:20

Speaker 3

And Justin would and others died for the service of this country. And they kept their word. And this country has to keep its word to our veterans and to our service people who have made that commitment.

00:04:20:23 - 00:04:28:29

Speaker 3

I know that all of you pay close attention to the activities in Washington because, I hear from.

00:04:28:29 - 00:04:31:02

Speaker 2

You.

00:04:31:05 - 00:04:50:19

Speaker 3

Leo, I hear from frequently, matter of fact, I was wandering around the capital one day and looked into a room, and there was Leo holding a very important meeting. He had warned me, I so I had snuck in on him. But I know that you all, all of the veterans here, pay close attention to what's going on in our recent budget.

00:04:50:19 - 00:05:22:13

Speaker 3

Budget debate, veterans programs did okay. you often, you often read how the veterans did compared to other entitlement, the entitlement programs. but this in itself should sort of warn us, serve as a warning sign. in my opinion, and many of your opinions, veteran benefits should not be compared to social security, welfare or food stamps, veterans benefits, or a different deal.

00:05:22:16 - 00:05:58:00

Speaker 3

There are contract with our military and our people, and these commitments and obligations aren't like others. Veterans and military retirees should have the same status and budget deliberations, that we have for interest on the debt we have to pay. We can't fudge, we can't fudge on it, and we can't delay it. And that's why and and I would ask all of you in the room and any place that you can promote this, I have introduced a bill and I introduced it several years ago, and I'm having a hard time getting people to focus on it.

00:05:58:00 - 00:06:29:28

Speaker 3

But I introduced H.R. 206 that would require the armed services to provide all the entering military people with a contract which defines explains all the benefits and regardless of changes in the law or text, that commitment, it is a memorandum of understanding that people that go in the military clearly understand what their benefits are and what they're entitled to, and that they have a contract.

00:06:30:00 - 00:06:51:29

Speaker 3

Now, let me tell you what happens in all of you. probably aware of this is that I get from time to time veterans who call me up and say, I was told I was supposed to get this. And I say, well, you probably work now, my young son, or he's a man now, but just got out of the military.

00:06:52:01 - 00:07:19:16

Speaker 3

And, when they when he went in during the Persian Gulf War, he was told a lot of things by the guy who recruited him. And the guy who recruited him probably met. Well, but it didn't go exactly the way they told him it was going to go. And all of you probably would have been there right? My only point is, there are a few basic benefits that the contract, the memorandum of understanding, all to explain.

00:07:19:18 - 00:07:43:12

Speaker 3

Therefore, each person then has a contract that I can look at when you bring your congressman or whoever can look at and try to hold the military responsible too, because frankly, you know, as I know in the budget crisis, in the budget time where we're trying to cut the budget, the people serving get the attention and the people retired sort of out to fight for themselves.

00:07:43:14 - 00:08:11:24

Speaker 3

And you do a very good job at it. But it my point is, is that if they walk in with a contract, I've got something that I can hold them accountable and responsible for. So I would ask all of you, and if you can, any place across the state in this country, if you could get the guy from any group to help me, put some pressure that we take up H.R. 206, I think it would do a great service to the people who serve in the military.

00:08:11:26 - 00:08:28:23

Speaker 3

I think it would be a good service for the country in that people would feel like that. We honored our commitment. And sometimes when decisions are hard to make, people begin to fudge on their

commitments a little bit kind of out of sight, out of mind. So it would be most helpful. Other bills which I support, which impact veterans.

00:08:28:23 - 00:08:55:19

Speaker 3

And I'll just go down them real quickly for you. H.R. 580, which will allow the Medicare program to reimburse the Department of Defense for the care of eligible military retirees, H.R. 3012, which will allow you to purchase health care through the, successful Federal Employees Health Benefits System, H.R. 2193, which will make necessary the changes in the federal tax law to open Corvette programs to veterans.

00:08:55:21 - 00:09:27:21

Speaker 3

Veterans currently excluded H.R. 65 and H.R. 303, which will allow retired members of the armed services who have served service connected disabilities to receive military retired pay, currently with the veterans disability compensation without deductions from either H.R. 1513, which will change to the date for service in Vietnam, and Vietnam to December 27th, 1961, thereby covering veterans who were excluded.

00:09:27:27 - 00:10:02:18

Speaker 3

It just made this a surprise to me. H.R. 2764, which will allow veterans who totally who are totally disabled as a result of service connected disabilities to travel on military aircraft or on, if space is available on a space available basis. H.R. 1646, which will revise and reform the statutes organizing the reserve forces to reflect the expanded role in the downsize force, ongoing discussions with veterans, in our district, have led to the following results so far.

00:10:02:20 - 00:10:30:18

Speaker 3

And, many of you in this room have been helpful, and that is to improve improvements at, Fresno VA hospital, a screening clinic and said, initiatives of a, initiation of a band service to Fresno, VA hospital and most importantly, a, reopening of the, discussions place in a VA outpatient clinic at Castle. And we expect and hope to hear some detail soon regarding the region's reorganization priorities.

00:10:30:20 - 00:10:57:02

Speaker 3

we have been working to convince them that a clinic in this area is not, in this area is not only necessary, but it is justified by the population and the makeup of of our community. And I would ask all of you to remember our efforts in Congress must reflect a fundamental understanding that veterans and military retirees have a special status and relationship with the people of our nation.

00:10:57:04 - 00:11:22:02

Speaker 3

And if there's any one thing that you could do to lobby and convince members of Congress and federal, people is that veterans, military people have a different status in relationship. We have a different category. You are not an entitlement. in the same category of the ones that I mentioned earlier, this is a bond. We have a bond as a nation with our military people.

00:11:22:04 - 00:11:45:24

Speaker 3

And as you've seen this week, how this nation rallied to a hero, just a young man who has served ten years, Alfredo, doing his job. But they rallied. We have a bonding of the heart with the people who serve in the military, and we cannot allow in any way that bond to be broken. We must keep our commitments as they've kept their commitments.

00:11:45:26 - 00:12:07:16

Speaker 3

I'm delighted to be here with you this morning. and we're going to have a reception this afternoon. And those people who stay out late, we'll see them there. Right. And I clearly understand some of them didn't make it. I serve in Congress and people like that. Anyway, thank you very much and God bless you. And I'll be delighted to take questions.

00:12:07:16 - 00:12:16:19

Speaker 3

If you would like.

00:12:16:21 - 00:12:20:27

Speaker 3

I, really appreciate the past. assistant. You've given a.

00:12:21:00 - 00:12:26:13

Speaker 2

Year. I ask you this in your assistant, Jesse Brown, and I'm last California.

00:12:26:15 - 00:12:29:06

Speaker 3

Furthermore, I'm turning 20. I like.

00:12:29:06 - 00:12:34:24

Unknown

To ask you that in this coming year, we're going to be proposing to Jesse Brown and people that I'm.

00:12:34:25 - 00:12:38:19

Speaker 3

Committed to send a year to serve veterans.

00:12:38:21 - 00:12:50:24

Unknown

And a deep interest in the veterans, program. And, I'd like to for you to consider that if it comes around and, for the secretary, defense Brown will be proposing that sometime in the near future.

00:12:50:26 - 00:12:53:26

Speaker 3

Absolutely happy to do that.

00:12:53:29 - 00:12:56:03



Speaker 2

Yes, sir.

00:12:56:05 - 00:13:26:29

Unknown

I do a little bit in support for. And you know that many jobs be strengthened. And I like to see that program. supported. And because in case of emergency, everything is made up and it's a member of the local 442, I encourage you to.

00:13:27:01 - 00:13:31:18

Unknown

In for each other. Like way.

00:13:31:21 - 00:13:50:07

Speaker 3

Okay. But let me just comment quickly about that. I you know, when I got into Congress, it seemed to make pretty good sense in a budget cut in time. people were trying to eliminate the Selective Service program that simply required, you know, our young people to register and and so that we could keep track just in case we did have a problem.

00:13:50:08 - 00:14:15:15

Speaker 3

We had to reinstitute the draft. It seemed to be an easy target, to eliminate or to begin to eliminate. we have since found that, you know, if we had to organize quickly without it, it would be difficult to do so. Your your point is well taken. And I just tell you if there will continue to be attempts to, to reduce it and bring it down because people think the threat is gone.

00:14:15:17 - 00:14:24:28

Speaker 3

I'm convinced more and more every day that the threat is not gone and the threat may even be greater, but just in a little different way. Hey, Leo.

00:14:25:00 - 00:14:31:23

Speaker 2

Here. first of all, I'd like to, offer my.

00:14:31:25 - 00:14:37:16

Speaker 3

Sincere thanks for participation, for your sponsorship of some of our.

00:14:37:16 - 00:14:44:24

Speaker 2

Remote care and work, particularly pleased with the fact that you have might be in the wrong place.

00:14:44:24 - 00:14:46:24

Speaker 3

But we will be accessible.

00:14:46:24 - 00:14:49:12

Speaker 2

To us. And we feel that.

00:14:49:15 - 00:14:50:18

Speaker 3

There is a.

00:14:50:21 - 00:15:03:28

Speaker 2

Record. You know, we have to find it. We're not used to being noticed by politicians, and that's not reality. But it is the case.

00:15:04:01 - 00:15:09:02

Unknown

in my mind, more than once. And just to remind us.

00:15:09:05 - 00:15:13:07

Speaker 2

Again to be part of the conversation, so.

00:15:13:10 - 00:15:17:15

Unknown

Certainly. In my mind.

00:15:17:15 - 00:15:23:10

Speaker 3

But perhaps doing away with selective service was the wrong thing.

00:15:23:13 - 00:15:26:15

Speaker 2

not only from the standpoint of, preparedness.

00:15:26:15 - 00:15:27:18

Speaker 3

For our country.

00:15:27:20 - 00:15:42:15

Speaker 2

But it seems like to be that it our young people were forced to put in a couple of years of service. It would be all for nothing. Worse. But operating all of the prisons that.

00:15:42:15 - 00:15:43:14

Speaker 3

We operate across.

00:15:43:14 - 00:15:51:29

Unknown

The country to where?

00:15:52:01 - 00:15:52:28

Unknown

We have a good.

00:15:53:00 - 00:15:53:14

Speaker 3

Dose of.

00:15:53:14 - 00:15:54:15

Speaker 2

Discipline and.

00:15:54:15 - 00:16:21:23

Speaker 3

Guidance, and I from which we can serve again. Thanks, Leo. I'm you know, I just applaud you. I agree with you. We had just, had a serious debate the last couple days on AmeriCorps, which is a youth program similar to the Peace Corps, but it's domestic. And, and some of us believe that we have the, the mechanism already set up to give the young people the ability to have service to the country and true service, and that it's something that you've just suggested.

00:16:21:26 - 00:16:43:15

Speaker 3

I'm totally convinced, and I don't mean this in any mean spirited way. I mean, this is sincerely and as thoughtful and compassionate as I can. You can have the smartest, the most clever young person in the world. But if you have no discipline, your life is tough. And one of the things that all of you know that you did, with your military service is one thing happened.

00:16:43:18 - 00:17:13:16

Speaker 3

You learned discipline. You learned how to get up on time. You learn all kinds of stuff that has been in. You've been able to apply to your daily lives. And I don't mean this in any bad way or like I know it all, but I am just convinced that what you said is right is that if we figured out some way to have a true service for young people, whether it's a year or two years, it doesn't have to be military, but some service that we could use, these principles, I think we'd be better served would have less population in the jails and prisons in this country.

00:17:13:16 - 00:17:29:03

Speaker 3

And we'd have a lot of young people that felt good about themselves and more productive. So I you you're absolutely right, Leo. Let me also just say that that, I want Maggie, would you stand up? Maggie works in my office. For those of you I know.

00:17:29:05 - 00:17:50:07

Speaker 3

And, and with people like Maggie and, and Leo and Ron, who I hear from frequently as well, we're we're not going to, forget or not be involved in the Hispanic community. And the things are important to you, you know, like, with the introduction, you may not always agree with me, but you're going to know where I'm coming from and why, and we're not going to go away.

00:17:50:07 - 00:18:14:17

Speaker 3

We're going to be there and be a part of the things that are important to you. Anyway, thank you very much. God bless all of.

00:18:14:19 - 00:18:25:19

Speaker 2

You know how to pose. Thank. Thank you very much. Thank you for having me on this. Thank you.

00:18:25:22 - 00:18:38:05

Speaker 2

Thank you sir. Thank you. Thank you very much. I will.

00:18:38:08 - 00:18:44:15

Speaker 3

Oh, yeah. I.

00:18:44:17 - 00:18:59:21

Speaker 3

Can. Yeah. Go ahead and get your coffee or juice right now. We have about ten minutes before we start the conference.

00:18:59:23 - 00:19:04:18

Speaker 3

Thank you, Leland and Robert. But before go.

00:19:04:21 - 00:19:16:05

Unknown

This I think I would like. Okay. Just trembling. I do you know.

00:19:16:08 - 00:19:18:11

Unknown

I think the \$2,

00:19:18:13 - 00:19:19:17

Speaker 3

Yeah. If.

00:19:19:18 - 00:19:22:11

Speaker 5

There you go. This is something.

00:19:22:14 - 00:19:30:20

Unknown

That, that.

00:19:30:22 - 00:19:32:22

Speaker 5

We they want pieces of the.

00:19:32:23 - 00:19:36:23

Unknown

I think this one.

00:19:36:25 - 00:20:03:00

Unknown

Yeah, I like it. Yeah. Okay. okay. you. A couple of, a week. It what? Like you have. I was getting it. Yeah.

00:20:03:02 - 00:20:07:04

Unknown

They were. Like three, three.

00:20:07:06 - 00:20:11:09

Speaker 2

Like.

00:20:11:11 - 00:20:17:27

Unknown

Yeah. Well, first. Well, I know.

00:20:18:00 - 00:20:22:13

Speaker 2

They take it down.

00:20:22:16 - 00:20:41:10

Unknown

To her. Okay, so we have. Yeah. Okay. You're in the area? Yeah, yeah. Like I said, I feel I it was my priorities. I don't care.

00:20:41:12 - 00:20:41:26

Speaker 2

Yeah. So.

00:20:41:29 - 00:20:50:26

Unknown

You know, you you.

00:20:50:29 - 00:20:53:11

Speaker 3

Typically are young students that are here today.

00:20:53:13 - 00:22:46:15

Unknown

This is our, women.



00:22:46:18 - 00:22:53:23

Speaker 6

it's Vicenza arteries. And she was,

00:22:53:25 - 00:23:33:06

Speaker 6

The very first one to give service overseas in uniform. Also, Hispanic women at that time were being sought at the time to, work in the fields as a linguist in the fields of cryptology, communications and interpretation. A lot of times we think of just the men in the service. But you see, the women have contributed their share to also at that time, many women accept the jobs in the defense in spite of the hardships that families made under them, because at the time it wasn't kosher for women to go out and earn a living.

00:23:33:08 - 00:24:05:00

Speaker 6

However, we were very instrumental in working in military institutions, helping to make the equipment to fight the wars. And in spite of that. Because of the very tradition of being a home body, it was very difficult. But war time helped to provide them with jobs so that they could, implement an income to help with the families.

00:24:05:02 - 00:24:32:20

Speaker 6

You know, right now, today, we live in a fast moving society, and it demands for all of us to be prepared for the challenges that are facing. We need to continue to encourage all our young people to continue on to higher education. And we must always remember that we are here to honor our veterans at all times. Men and women, veterans.

00:24:32:22 - 00:25:02:14

Speaker 6

And we must never forget our motto that our founder gave this organization. Education is our freedom, and freedom is everybody's business. So let's continue to make it our business because times are changing for them for the better. And we must encourage all young adults to participate in leadership roles in order to develop their potential to run this country one day.

00:25:02:18 - 00:25:10:19

Speaker 6

And it will happen.

00:25:10:21 - 00:25:41:11

Speaker 6

Let's continue to work with what is important. Let's improve our communities to make it up bit. Not only do we want to improve in our community, we need to continue to improve throughout the nation so that this becomes a better country that we have today. We must never forget and especially our youth. Don't ask what your country can do for you, but what we can do for our country.

00:25:41:16 - 00:25:59:25

Speaker 6

We have an obligation and a duty to do for our country. What is important to maintain of where we are the number one nation in the world. It's our duty to encourage everyone to register, to vote.

00:25:59:28 - 00:26:27:08

Speaker 6

Every vote counts. One vote makes a difference. And remember my message to you young people. Take it to your schools. If your friends are 17 and I have, of course, you missed the deadline to read if you're 17.5 by October 16th or rather before election, if they're going to be 18 by October the 7th, you register six months prior to your 18th birthday.

00:26:27:08 - 00:26:57:15

Speaker 6

You don't wait for your 18th birthday and vote. It is your duty. It is your obligation. And as we're approaching the year 2000, we need to safeguard all the advances that we have achieved to make a dream come true of our great founder, Doctor Hector Garcia. Least of all, let's not forget the pride that we have in our tradition.

00:26:57:18 - 00:27:02:24

Speaker 6

And continue to remember our.

00:27:02:27 - 00:27:18:12

Speaker 6

And most important, for everybody, let's provide the world with Brett and justice for all. Thank you.

00:27:18:14 - 00:27:39:16

Speaker 1

Thank you. And Mariana. Very good. I enjoy the part about the, the young students because you are future leaders, and I'm looking forward to the day that you're up here to take my place. And I can sit out there. at this time. And I'd like to do is to bring up our, our youth, chairperson for the convention.

00:27:39:16 - 00:27:49:15

Speaker 1

And he's our vice chair of Modesto chapter, Jose Rodriguez.

00:27:49:18 - 00:27:59:08

Speaker 1

Is going to give us a quick update on our, on our youth, session, on what's going on and where we're at. And if you could. How so? Can you tell us a little bit about yourself very quickly?

00:27:59:11 - 00:28:00:20

Speaker 2

Okay.

00:28:00:22 - 00:28:19:00

Speaker 5

Good afternoon. just to give you a little bit of background on myself, I'm not from California. I'm actually originally from Houston, Texas. so I'm, the hand at heart always will be.

00:28:19:02 - 00:28:23:23

Unknown

Hey. But,

00:28:23:25 - 00:28:52:13

Speaker 5

I grew up in Houston, and, I was fortunate enough to have opportunities early on in life. I went to a performing arts high school. at a young age, and I, was an actor. Did theater there for four years, so I, I went to some a special kind of school, but it was a public school, and it was also one of the better academic institutions where I had a lot of support from my teachers and my peers.

00:28:52:16 - 00:29:16:25

Speaker 5

I then was, able to, go to the East Coast for college. I went to Yale University, where I, graduated with a degree in chemical engineering. after four years. And then, I finally set myself on the other side of the country. Now I'm in California. I took a position with Procter and Gamble, and I've been here now for a total of one year.

00:29:16:27 - 00:29:44:23

Speaker 5

about two weeks ago. So, I'd like to say that I'm happy to be here. I'm happy to have a community that supports, Latino issues, supports youth, and, since I arrived, I've found mentors and, different people specifically, Raul Ortega, Leo Avila, just to name a few. And, I've been involved with the, Hispanic Leadership Council.

00:29:44:25 - 00:30:22:20

Speaker 5

I, Downey High School advisor, along with Edison and, and, more recently, I became involved with the GI forum. Now, as, as far as this, conference is specific, we've been working on leadership with our youth. And yesterday we had a workshop on just that subject. We went through, some sort of an exercise to, look, more of a broader perspective as to who our leaders are in our community and around us and really see what makes them who they are and the leaders they are, and try to build those skills in our youth as well.

00:30:22:23 - 00:30:43:03

Speaker 5

So we went through that discussion. and I think the, the young people had as long as well as myself, because I'm a young person, I think, we got, benefit from that. today where our activity, we're going to do a little more fun, fun things. this afternoon, afterwards, we're going to Camelot Park in Modesto and have a little bit of fun.

00:30:43:05 - 00:31:16:29

Speaker 5

But when we come back, our youth will start talking more about their objectives as a, as an organization, how they want to, network, between youth organizations in California. So that's just an update as far as, what, what we're going to be doing, just to, add on that the, there's also a raffle going around where half the proceeds will go to the, youth organizations and the women's group organization, and the other half will go to the winner.

00:31:16:29 - 00:31:41:08

Speaker 5

So I would encourage everyone to buy tickets as many as possible. And, to end, I'd like to ask the youth, to meet in the lobby right after this. Don't go anywhere. We're going to leave right after this. So, we're going to Camelot Park. So thank you again. Welcome.

00:31:41:10 - 00:31:50:12

Speaker 1

at this time, I'd like to have, our commander, Raoul Ortega, come up and assist me for a second.

00:31:50:15 - 00:31:57:07

Speaker 2

To.

00:31:57:09 - 00:32:22:26

Speaker 1

On behalf of the on behalf of the American G.I. forum, we'd like to do is to recognize the company that works for Proctor and Gamble, which is one of our main sponsors today. just an appreciation of the hard work that they've done for us, and particularly this conference and also lending Josette to our organization. So, from the American GI forum to Proctor and Gamble to market and, real representative.

00:32:22:26 - 00:32:44:06

Speaker 1

Thank you. Thank you.

00:32:44:08 - 00:32:48:06

Speaker 1

Hello. We're still there. Okay.

00:32:48:09 - 00:33:00:17

Speaker 1

One of the names that, One of the names that wasn't mentioned was, that it is Theresa Guerrero. could you stand up, please?

00:33:00:19 - 00:33:05:03

Speaker 1

Thank you.

00:33:05:05 - 00:33:32:25

Speaker 1

That ESA is one of our, main contributors in this community. She is currently the, Hispanic Leadership Council president, is also a member and proud to be an officer of, Mujeres Latinas and, involved very deeply with the Hispanic Youth Leadership Group. And it was responsible for bringing a lot of our youth today. Thank you. Teresa.

00:33:32:28 - 00:33:43:19

Speaker 1

Okay. At this time we'd like to do is to introduce our queens. If we could have a representative. I'd up in a minute. This.

00:33:43:21 - 00:33:49:21

Speaker 1

Did I destroy that?

00:33:49:23 - 00:34:01:13

Speaker 1

If you could, please, could you, come up and introduce our queens?

00:34:01:15 - 00:34:03:19

Speaker 6

I'm trying to figure out which one it is.

00:34:03:21 - 00:34:06:08

Speaker 2

Okay.

00:34:06:10 - 00:34:16:22

Speaker 6

from the Stockton chapter, we have Gabriela Barstow.

00:34:16:25 - 00:34:27:12

Speaker 7

From San Jose, East Valley chapter. Snyder. Martinez.

00:34:27:15 - 00:34:36:26

Speaker 6

From the San Jose chapter, we have Vanessa Ramirez.

00:34:36:28 - 00:34:37:21

Speaker 6

And from our.

00:34:37:21 - 00:34:38:18

Speaker 7

Home chapter here in.

00:34:38:18 - 00:34:46:12

Speaker 6

Modesto, we have Adriana, Terra.

00:34:46:14 - 00:34:48:23

Speaker 6

At this time, we also want to introduce,

00:34:48:25 - 00:34:50:24

Speaker 7

Tonight, miss 1995 and 96.

00:34:50:24 - 00:35:03:29

Speaker 6

Miss California from the Stockton chapter. April Machuca.

00:35:04:02 - 00:35:10:11

Speaker 7



And I just want to say that, they really deserve a really good round of applause because, they've all worked very hard, and.

00:35:10:11 - 00:35:12:25

Speaker 6

It's it's actually very hard to do something like.

00:35:12:25 - 00:35:13:16

Speaker 7

That.

00:35:13:19 - 00:35:19:09

Speaker 6

I competed to two years ago, I don't remember a time goes by really fast.

00:35:19:11 - 00:35:41:12

Speaker 7

I competed two years ago, and I happen to notice it's a really tough situation, to come up in front of a lot of people and try to display just exactly what you're working for and try to encourage and be in the position of just basically because a lot of the smaller and younger children really look up to them, and it's really a position that needs to be applauded because it's not easy at all.

00:35:41:16 - 00:35:55:16

Speaker 2

And they've worked really hard. And so.

00:35:55:18 - 00:36:11:05

Speaker 1

Okay. Thank you very much. She also, failed to mention one thing that she's also a student at Davis premed student and will be graduating in the near future.

00:36:11:08 - 00:36:18:01

Speaker 1

We have a little note here. I want to go ahead and follow protocol. Since somebody is giving me the.

00:36:18:03 - 00:36:40:05

Speaker 1

Required. Good. We have all the youth. please stand up. Everyone here in the youth program here. All of us. Anyone under 21? All right.

00:36:40:08 - 00:36:47:03

Speaker 1

Thank you.

00:36:47:06 - 00:36:56:26

Speaker 1

Let it roll. Whatever I will say. Did you hear that? He said, I wish I was 30 years younger. Yeah, yeah.

00:36:56:29 - 00:37:00:01

Speaker 2

You.

00:37:00:03 - 00:37:28:05

Speaker 1

Okay, let's continue on with our program. We have a lot of things to cover. at this time, it's my pleasure to introduce, two of our members from our chapter, Modesto chapter, and, two of our lady members, B Acosta and, Gracie Ortega. And they're going to be giving out some scholarship awards.

00:37:28:07 - 00:37:37:24

Speaker 1

00:37:37:26 - 00:37:46:06

Speaker 1

Anita, do you want to make any presentation before we get started? Okay. Thank you.

00:37:46:09 - 00:38:01:00

Speaker 6

Good afternoon. The Modesto chapter is, honored and pleased to award the annual scholarship awards to the following students. But first, I would like to introduce Gracie Ortega, who is in the committee. And, of course, everybody knows Anita.

00:38:01:03 - 00:38:16:01

Speaker 2

00:38:16:03 - 00:38:51:03

Speaker 6

Thank you very much. Be it is, to me, it is a special honor and privilege to award the scholarship to our our Queen, California state queen. April Machuca. April. Her men receive your award.

00:38:51:06 - 00:38:59:11

Speaker 2

Thank.

00:38:59:13 - 00:39:15:13

Speaker 6

oh. Given that my throat. I just want to tell everybody in the American GI forum. Thank you. Once again. I'm not going to fill it all out. That's tonight. I'm not going to do it right now, but I would like to just thank you so much for the.

00:39:15:13 - 00:39:16:22

Speaker 7

Opportunity.

00:39:16:25 - 00:39:43:04

Speaker 6

To represent you. Thank you for all your support you have given me this year, your support at nationals, your support during the pageants. When I went to go visit panels this year. Thank you for always, always giving me a smile, a hug, a pat on the back or a wink. or a wink. Some of you would wink, but it was a nice wink.

00:39:43:04 - 00:39:51:23

Speaker 6

No. It was a nice wink ment with nothing but friendship. And that has meant.

00:39:51:26 - 00:39:53:04

Speaker 7

More to me than anything.

00:39:53:04 - 00:40:04:23

Speaker 6

Else. Is your friendship, your kindness, your hospitality. Thank you very much. Thank you. Anita and Leo. doctor Sam's not here, but he will be later. Thank you. To him.

00:40:04:25 - 00:40:06:03

Speaker 7

To me.

00:40:06:06 - 00:40:20:23

Speaker 6

Thank you. to all my friends here. Thank you very much.

00:40:20:25 - 00:40:57:24

Speaker 6

And along with that comes the, contribution from all the chapters. I believe it's, I don't know the amount, but, remember that, each chapter contributes for the gift for the Queen. And we are pleased to have committed to that. And, you will get that as well. Okay. Thank you. The next one is for.

00:40:57:27 - 00:41:25:19

Speaker 6

A special queen that we all wish it was that we also had in the area. Her name is Gloria Foster. Gloria wasn't able to make it today. her sister is getting married, and she's in the wedding party. However, I have, one of the queen contestants that participated, along with Gloria. And she will receive the award for Gloria.

00:41:25:22 - 00:41:42:18

Speaker 6

And I would like to introduce, Margarita mengele. Margarita, please.

00:41:42:20 - 00:41:50:25

Speaker 6

And thank you to.

00:41:50:27 - 00:42:04:04

Speaker 6

The next student to receive this award is Susana. Seven.

00:42:04:06 - 00:42:12:27

Speaker 6

Thank you so much. In case you want to say a few words. well, I would just like to say thank you to everyone in the American GI forum for awarding me this.

00:42:12:27 - 00:42:23:14

Speaker 7

Scholarship and giving me the opportunity to continue in my education. Thank you.

00:42:23:16 - 00:42:40:26

Speaker 6

The next student is Anthony Martinez, and I believe that Anthony was unable to attend today.

00:42:40:29 - 00:43:09:09

Speaker 6

Joe Garcia was unable to attend, so we we're just going to skip him. the next one will be for, Jose Martinez. But before, we present his his award, we have Frank Clemente. That is going to give you a little background about Jose.

00:43:09:11 - 00:43:28:27

Speaker 5

How's everybody doing? Food was good, I'd like to thank the GI forum for giving me this opportunity to come and, speak very briefly today. I'm the head wrestling coach at Turlock High School, then teaching there for 12 years and, coaching there for, 17 years. These past five years, I have been running the program.

00:43:28:29 - 00:43:49:20

Speaker 5

Today we hear so many negative things about youth. And, I guess, you know, that's what sells. We hear about the teen pregnancy. We hear about, the gangs and the killings and the drugs and everything else but being involved with young people as I am on a regular basis, there is far more positive things, going on.

00:43:49:22 - 00:44:14:21

Speaker 5

And this right here is a very good example of it. Joseph Martinez came in our program four years ago. At that time, I really didn't know much of the young man. he has done some amazing things. He's a true leader. He led by example. Many people feel or think of a leader as someone who's going to go in there and tell and be boisterous and so on and so forth.

00:44:14:21 - 00:44:39:23

Speaker 5

But, Joseph led by example. I've never been around anybody with the work ethic that Joseph has, not only in the wrestling room as well as in the classroom. he has done more for our program, I think, than he even realizes. along with that, we have people now who are younger than him who are doing things that he was doing as a senior, and they're trying to do them now.

00:44:39:25 - 00:45:07:04

Speaker 5

And, a student athlete is, is truly, gifted individual. to go to college and participate and get some scholarships for athletics, means that, the amount of time they're putting in for that sport, they're doing the same for the classroom as well. Joseph maintained at 3.2, grade point average all through. And he is currently going to go on to, UC Davis.

00:45:07:06 - 00:45:28:15

Speaker 5

Some of the things he has done, he is a three time league champ. He is a, subsection champ, three times a section champ, two times. His junior year, he made the state meet in, placed fourth. And, this year, as a senior, he made the finals of the state meet and took second place. Ladies and gentlemen, I thank you for this opportunity.

00:45:28:15 - 00:45:51:21

Speaker 5

And I thank you for what you're doing for the young people today. And we just need to read more about it in the paper. I'd like to present to you Joseph Martinez.

00:45:51:23 - 00:46:06:00

Speaker 6

we would also like to, entities. Mr. and Mrs. Martinez, the parents of Joey that are also here at this table. Would you please stand up?

00:46:06:03 - 00:46:10:05

Speaker 6

Okay.

00:46:10:07 - 00:46:21:13

Speaker 6

And also the proud grandparents, Mr. and Mrs. Joe Cardenas.

00:46:21:15 - 00:46:41:23

Speaker 6

We wish to, award this to Joey Martinez on behalf of the American G.I. forum. Thank you. But as the chapter.

00:46:41:26 - 00:46:44:09

Speaker 2

00:46:45:01 - 00:46:56:13

Speaker 5

first, I would like to thank, Modesto G.I.. Forum chapter and, my parents, Frank and Jolene, because, they helped me through a lot of, what I get.

00:46:56:15 - 00:46:58:12

Speaker 2

What I'm receiving today.



00:46:58:15 - 00:47:28:29

Speaker 5

and my coach, Frank Clemente, was right there. And introducing me and my grandparents, Joe Fanning for, nominate me for this one. And everybody else has supported me or, you know, helped me out through my four years. Thanks.

00:47:29:02 - 00:47:38:08

Speaker 6

Our next special award is for a young lady that has done so much for the G.I. forum.

00:47:38:10 - 00:48:13:17

Speaker 6

This young lady has come through and help with the, a newsletter that Leo, prepared when he was state commander. And for. I think she worked for about four years doing this, job for the American G.I. forum, and she never got paid for that. We are so appreciative. Along with that. I prepared a newsletter also for the National because I'm a national officer as well.

00:48:13:19 - 00:48:49:06

Speaker 6

And, she prepared a newsletter for me. in March. And, Patricia did it with, all the love that she has for this organization. And, we want to present to her an award, and she'll tell you where her studies are going to be continued. She graduated from Berkeley. I know that, and she's been working with Latino Issues Forum, but, she has a future ahead of her and her educational future.

00:48:49:09 - 00:49:03:14

Speaker 6

She will describe it to you. Patricia, please.

00:49:03:16 - 00:49:06:10

Speaker 2

Thank you. Thank you. Okay.

00:49:06:12 - 00:49:11:22

Speaker 7

first of all, I'd like to thank the American GI forum for giving me this opportunity. It's been a pleasure.

00:49:11:22 - 00:49:13:06

Speaker 6

Working with everyone.

00:49:13:08 - 00:49:38:11

Speaker 7

I've been at Latino Issues Forum as a project director. I'm pretty much out of college, working on different issues. And that's where I came into contact with Leo and Anita. And, we've been working real closely on a lot of different issues, and I was really pleased to have the opportunity to work with the GI forum and to, do whatever I can to help the organization as a whole.

00:49:38:13 - 00:49:44:28

Speaker 7

I went to Berkeley and in the fall, actually, next month, it's coming around quick. I'm going to the University of Texas at.

00:49:44:28 - 00:49:46:12

Speaker 6

Austin to pursue a.

00:49:46:12 - 00:50:10:13

Speaker 7

Degree in public affairs from the Lyndon Johnson School of Public Affairs. And I want to continue the work that I started at Latino Issues Forum. we've been working on lots of different things, from energy to telecommunications to higher education. And I think it's very important that our youth, are educated and are actually brought up to speed with the changes that are going.

00:50:10:13 - 00:50:16:17

Speaker 6

On in the world, particularly with technology. So that's what I want my focus to be on.

00:50:16:19 - 00:50:23:21

Speaker 7

youth education and telecommunications in the future. So hopefully I will be back here in California.

00:50:23:23 - 00:50:27:18

Speaker 6

Soon so that I continue the work, that I've done.

00:50:27:22 - 00:50:39:01

Speaker 7

Over the last couple years. Thank you.

00:50:39:04 - 00:50:59:06

Speaker 6

This is truly a family affair, as we say in the American differ, and we're all family here with the next student. It gives me great pleasure because I have a special interest in my grandson, Tommy Rodriguez. Tommy.

00:50:59:09 - 00:51:02:26

Speaker 2

You want to?

00:51:02:29 - 00:51:38:18

Speaker 5

first, I'd like to thank the GI forum, for presenting me with this award. And I'd like to thank the GI forum from Modesto for putting on this wonderful convention here we're having today. I'd like to thank my

nana and my papa, B Acosta and Abel Acosta, for just nominating me and pressuring me. To, put in the application for the scholarship and.

00:51:38:21 - 00:52:09:06

Speaker 5

In honor for, make it well, pushing me to put the, scholarship application in to making me get some recommendations from my teachers and just to write some words about what I want to do in the future. But I just want to thank you. Thank everybody for coming.

00:52:09:08 - 00:52:28:22

Speaker 1

a lot of thank you. There. Thank you. Ladies, a couple of, introductions. I failed to make the first one. Of course. most of you know who I am and have seen me already. I don't know how many times, but for the rest of you, they have not. I failed to introduce myself. My name is Leland Castro.

00:52:28:24 - 00:52:41:19

Speaker 1

I'm the, state convention chair of the 1996 convention here in Modesto.

00:52:41:21 - 00:52:57:24

Speaker 1

The other important person I forgot to mention, as we introduced the ladies earlier was Anita Avila, who's been doing so many things. You tend to forget the. But I forgot to introduce you, Anita. Any travel?

00:52:57:27 - 00:53:09:29

Speaker 1

Who's the bus? Leo said I'm the boss. Although she's the boss, we don't,

00:53:10:02 - 00:53:30:09

Speaker 1

It's, It's been a lot of fun. And one of the things that I, I get a good feeling from. And until you're up here and doing some of these things, is, truly is giving. And I think that's what we're doing today. We're giving to you to help you and your future, and you're giving to us because you're going to be our help in our future.

00:53:30:11 - 00:53:54:05

Speaker 1

At this time, I'd like to introduce our, convention chair, our state, chairperson of the, 1996, 1995, 1996 chairperson for American G.I. forum of California. Willie Galvan.

00:53:54:08 - 00:54:16:04

Speaker 3

Thank you, Leland and, Raul, for this wonderful conference that we have today. I want to welcome everybody again, and I want to say hi to the Queens and the green candidates and all the committees that have worked so hard. Today. We have a speaker from Washington, and I want to talk a little bit about this lady that's made a lot of things possible for us in Washington.

00:54:16:06 - 00:54:42:29

Speaker 3

When we go to Washington to meet with the Veterans Affairs, to meet with a congressman, she's the lady that opened the doors for us and Leo more often than than I have been there. And she's been in her department. Her office has been real good to us. There. This lady was confirmed by the Senate on November 8th, 1993, following her nomination by President Clinton to be the Assistant Secretary for Public and Intergovernmental Affairs.

00:54:43:02 - 00:55:10:22

Speaker 3

She directs policy governance in VA public and internal communications programs, as well as and as well as intergovernmental and consumer affairs. This was the Department of Veterans Affairs before coming to, Washington and Virginia. Mrs.. she was director of government relations for the University of South Florida, Tampa, responsible for state of federal relations for the second largest university in the Florida State University system.

00:55:10:24 - 00:55:51:15

Speaker 3

She served on the Presidential Transition Team, which briefed the incoming cabinet secretaries of the Departments of Housing and Urban Development, Health and Human Services, and Veterans Affairs. In 1992, she directed press operations for the Clinton-Gore election campaign in Florida and serve as press secretary and travel. Later, Hillary Clinton. Her Washington experience includes many things, but her tenure as an associate with a government and public affairs consulting firm in Fort Collins, Roslyn and Fayette in Arlington, Virginia, she represented client interests to Congress and state legislature.

00:55:51:18 - 00:56:16:12

Speaker 3

She began her career as staff assistant for the US House of Representatives Committee on Post Office and Civil Service. Following graduation from the University of Notre Dame with a degree in government and International Relations. She was born in and raised in Tampa. She comes from a Puerto Rican and, American, descent, said she is a lady that has helped us a lot.

00:56:16:14 - 00:56:30:13

Speaker 3

I want you to help me welcome Kathy.

00:56:30:16 - 00:56:46:27

Speaker 7

Thank you, Commander Gavin. That was very, very kind of you. And, that resume, when it gets gets long like that, you start to realize how old you are. And and you would not have to look very far, because all you have to do is look at these young faces and you realize how old you are. So the.

00:56:46:29 - 00:57:24:10

Speaker 7

I just like to thank Commander Galvan, state chairperson, the NorCal and national vice chairperson Leo Avila and Anita Vila. I'm very happy to be with you all today. I enjoy so much being part of, GI farm activities, whether they're on the national level, on the state level, I've made very good friends along the way. I've only been at the Department of Veterans Affairs for the last three years, but I have made good friends and the best of the friends that I have made during my tenure at the VA have been those of the GI forum, and I am a member of the GI forum, lifetime member.

00:57:24:12 - 00:57:30:27

Speaker 7

The.

00:57:30:29 - 00:57:51:26

Speaker 7

I am so happy to be with you all today and especially at the youth luncheon. I. I look forward to coming to the GI forum event because all of you young people are going to be here today, and I hope that I can share with you, some insights. I'm going to share some insights for the the older folks in the room, our veterans, because I bring them some news from Washington.

00:57:51:29 - 00:58:13:13

Speaker 7

But but hopefully they'll be a little bit of everything from here. First off, I'd like to say, and I and I hope that that a lot of the youth in the room will be able to go to the national convention in Colorado Springs. I know it's a it's a long trip from here, but I'm very excited to announce that at the national convention in Colorado Springs, Secretary Jesse Brown will be a speaker at the convention.

00:58:13:13 - 00:58:20:09

Speaker 7

And we're very happy that he'll be able to to attend the convention.

00:58:20:11 - 00:58:44:04

Speaker 7

So we work that out with, with national commander ality, just last week and with Tony Morales. And so we're we're very happy that will we have the secretary at the national convention. This has been a tough week in Washington this week. I know that, that everybody has been looking at the papers and that this has hit you all very close to home, but, it's been a tough week in Washington and around the world.

00:58:44:07 - 00:59:25:22

Speaker 7

The tragic bombing this week in Saudi Arabia should remind all of us that the price of peace is still high, and it is our men and women in uniform who bear the brunt of it. Our promise to care for them is just as important now as it was to the veterans of any war in our history. Right here in Modesto, you have experienced both ends of the emotional spectrum of this tragedy, sorrow and mourning for the loss of Airman First Class Justin Wood, who was killed in the blast in Saudi Arabia, and pride in the heroism and relief over the safe return of Staff Sergeant Alfredo Guerrero Junior, who sent something suspicious and ran through

00:59:25:22 - 00:59:53:15

Speaker 7

the building alerting people to get out before the explosion. 19 Americans were killed and over 300 injured in that blast. They were not fighting a war, but the deaths and injuries and psychological scars are just as real as any resulting from combat. Our obligation to care for them and their families is just as solemn today as it was 200 years ago, when the first benefits for American veterans were created.

00:59:53:17 - 01:00:18:28

Speaker 7

So what does that obligation mean to those men and women and their families? For those who were injured, VA will be there to provide medical care, rehabilitation, compensation, education and job training. In short, everything we can give them to offset the negative effects of their experience and that will impede their ability to lead a normal and happy and productive lives.

01:00:19:00 - 01:00:57:25

Speaker 7

Those who witnessed the event and its aftermath and escaped physical harm may find the memory of what they have seen will become more and more troubling with time. VA will be for them, will be there for them with psychological counseling and treatment to help them deal with the effects of post-traumatic stress. And for those who were killed, VA provides much more than a dignified burial and a payment of insurance to the families for the widows and children and dependent parents, VA will pay dependency and indemnity compensation, a monthly payment to take the place of the income of the veteran.

01:00:57:27 - 01:01:26:13

Speaker 7



We will provide educational benefits so that the spouse and the children can go to college or get vocational training. The spouse can qualify for a VA home loan guarantee to purchase a home, and their health insurance needs will be met by the VA Civilian Health and Medical Program.

01:01:26:15 - 01:01:55:18

Speaker 7

This is what keeping the promise to America's veterans means. Anyone who serves in the armed forces must be secure in the knowledge that if anything happens to them, and they and their families will be taken care of. We have a phrase, a VA, that serves as a constant reminder of our mission. We call it putting veterans first. And over the past three years, the Clinton administration and we have formed a partnership with veterans organizations like the GI forum.

01:01:55:25 - 01:02:20:26

Speaker 7

And we have made significant progress in many areas that affect veterans. Veterans who come to the VA for compensation benefits have experienced long delays because of a backlog that had built up. We have cut that backlog more than in half, and we are working towards having that backlog in a very manageable rate so that we can process claims within 100 days.

01:02:20:29 - 01:02:43:10

Speaker 7

We have new veterans, veterans from the Persian Gulf War who are experiencing illnesses, unexplained illnesses from their service. And we are doing everything we can in partnership with DoD and with the Health and Human Services Department to try to find out what is making these veterans ill. We are doing research, but we're not waiting for the answers of research.

01:02:43:16 - 01:03:11:23

Speaker 7

We are compensating those veterans who are ill and who are disabled as a result of their illness. We are also providing health care, priority health care for our Persian Gulf veterans. And we also have a program now that enables the spouses and children of Persian Gulf veterans to come in and get an exam at our affiliated facilities around the country, and we have a Persian Gulf hotline that enables them to talk to us, on a 24 hour basis about their issues.

01:03:11:23 - 01:03:33:03

Speaker 7

So we're very happy with the progress that we've made for Persian Gulf veterans. But it's not enough. We still need to find the answers of their illness. I know that some of you in the room will be. We're very happy. last month, when the president came forward and announced the newest illnesses that will be covered for exposure to Agent Orange.

01:03:33:06 - 01:04:03:12

Speaker 7

this is an ongoing process, and I know many of you don't remember a lot of the controversy that has gone on from from the, Vietnam War. But, the soldiers in the Vietnam War were exposed to Agent Orange, a defoliant. And it has, caused diseases as a result of their being exposed and in a process of going through a constant review of the scientific material that's available, it was determined that there would be new diseases added on that, that veterans could be service connected for.

01:04:03:12 - 01:04:45:06

Speaker 7

And those were, acute and subacute peripheral neuropathy. And, prostate cancer. And that's added to a long list of of cancers and myeloma, respiratory cancers and myeloma that were on the list already. And there was one, you know, very, precedent setting announcement as well regarding the children of Vietnam veterans. And that is it. The president also announced that we would, be producing, developing legislation that would cover those children of Vietnam veterans who are suffering from spinal bifida, which is an ailment that affects the spinal cord and causes a, for deformation of the spinal cord.

01:04:45:08 - 01:05:15:16

Speaker 7

And and that is very precedent setting. We have never in the history of the VA ever covered the children. But in this particular disease just of spinal bifida, there is there is evidence that perhaps there is an association with the the, Parents Service in Vietnam. So so we're right now drafting legislation, and I know that this is an issue that the GI forum has followed very closely for many years, and we had represented well at this announcement by the president, the GI forum.

01:05:15:22 - 01:05:31:29

Speaker 7

There were, 3 or 4 members of the GI forum in from the Washington area in the audience to, to receive the president's announcement. So this is something that you will work very hard for.

01:05:32:02 - 01:05:48:05

Speaker 7

And and we had a little conversation a minute ago about technology. You know, we at the VA, we think that we're we're right in the middle of the technological age and the GI forum, you're on the cutting edge because you're out amongst the youth. And I'm sure that you've all got your computers at home and you're tapping into the World Wide Web.

01:05:48:07 - 01:06:08:23

Speaker 7

Well, the VA has the largest World Wide Web site. We see this as a wonderful opportunity to be able to connect with our veterans. Those who are interested in finding out about their benefits, they can tap into the World Wide Web, go to the VA site, and if they speak Spanish, they can just punch up the Spanish version of their federal benefits book for veterans.

01:06:08:23 - 01:06:31:16

Speaker 7

And we're very, very proud of that. And we hope that this will help us communicate more and better with veterans around the country regarding their benefits. On the health care side of the VA, we have a new undersecretary for health that, that some of you may have, had an opportunity to meet out here in California because he's from California, from UC Davis originally.

01:06:31:16 - 01:06:50:28

Speaker 7

His name is Ken Kaiser. He has completely turned the VA health care. You know, on its ear upside down, turned it back around and reorganized the whole place. We're very proud of him. We're very proud of the reorganization. for for those of you who go to the VA hospitals, we hope you don't notice anything except for better service.

01:06:51:01 - 01:07:08:17

Speaker 7

But a lot is happening. We're we're streamlining. We're changing our management structures. What we're trying to do is we're trying to take our resources, and we're trying to put the resources where we need them. That sounds very simple, doesn't it? We should be able to just put the resources where we need that. Well, it never was ever that simple.

01:07:08:17 - 01:07:29:10

Speaker 7

We have all sorts of congressional mandates and laws restricting us. Well, Ken Kaiser, through all of those out the window and, and I'm actually kidding about that because you can't throw congressional laws out the window. But he has managed to get around a few of them. And what we are doing is we are looking at the country in regions and we are saying, where are the veterans concentrated?

01:07:29:10 - 01:07:55:10

Speaker 7

What kind of needs do they have? What are their hospital and outpatient needs and inlets and long term care needs. And let's move the resources into where the needs are. And we're doing this very effectively around the country. And something a little bit more close to home. I give you an update on Travis Air Force Base, the, the VA medical center that we have slated that was proposed in the president's budget last year.

01:07:55:10 - 01:08:16:11

Speaker 7

And this year as well, for funding of the of the new VA, medical Center at Travis Air Force Base. This is the facility that was supposed to replace Martinez that was closed because of the the structure damage from from the earthquake. what is the status now? And as I just said, the president had it in his budget.

01:08:16:11 - 01:08:37:29

Speaker 7

It's gone through the House committees, and they do have the funding. The House does have the funding for the VA medical Center at Travis in their bill. Now, the Senate has not acted yet, so the Senate still remains to act. And then, of course, if they come up with anything different, they have to go to conference. But, on the House side, Travis is looking good.

01:08:37:29 - 01:08:58:25

Speaker 7

They put about \$32 million into the construction, in for the construction. The hospital there is already about 25 million there. So there's that. There is \$57 million in a pot, you know, waiting to build that hospital. If, in fact, the Senate will, will be in concert with the house and, and move forward with Travis, Travis funding.

01:08:58:27 - 01:09:20:18

Speaker 7

And I know that that's important to a lot of the Northern California and, in the room because, because it's right up road. How far is Travis from here? About 100 miles. 100 miles? About 100 miles, but it is. Travis is located in a catchment area that serves about 400,000 veterans. So it's a it's a much needed facility.

01:09:20:18 - 01:09:28:13

Speaker 7

About 400,000 veterans are in that catchment area. And that hospital does need to be replaced.

01:09:28:15 - 01:09:49:09

Speaker 7

We are in addition to Travis and I talked to, to State Commander Galvan about this just a little bit before we started. But in in our we're building this one hospital. But this is probably going to be one of the last hospitals that we build at the VA. And there is a big concern. It's a concern of State Commander Galvan that we have more access point in the VA.

01:09:49:09 - 01:10:13:19

Speaker 7

We need to have it's fine to have great health care, but if it's not where everybody needs the health care, then it's not doing anybody any good. So what we're very hopeful is that in the very near future, that Congress will allow us to develop new access points. Right now, Congress has approved a pilot program to allow us to open up 15 new access points.

01:10:13:19 - 01:10:33:24

Speaker 7

And what this is, is it's a little bit different than having a, a hospital somewhere. It's having a storefront, if you will. It's being able to contract out or to put a physician and a nurse in a location where they can provide storefront access to health care, where someone can go and get a prescription filled and and go and get outpatient treatment.

01:10:33:26 - 01:10:53:17

Speaker 7

We think that this is our future at the VA. It's very important that we be able to take our resources and put them where the veterans need them. That isn't necessarily in a hospital, it's at a storefront. Access. It's at an access point where they can get to it. And we have been, contemplating, you know, how we're going to do this.

01:10:53:17 - 01:11:16:28

Speaker 7

We made a proposal to Congress, and they're going to let us do a pilot with 15, access, additional access points around the country. And and when there's not a lot of money to, to go around in Washington, this is a real victory for for Doctor Kaiser and for the Veterans Health Administration. So we are very pleased, and we hope that, we will be able to provide, more access points for veterans in the future.

01:11:16:28 - 01:11:43:00

Speaker 7

And this will be the wave of the future. And now that I have board all these youth with, you know, with the finer points of the VA issues, but I, you know, everybody behind you was very interested. I just want you to know, okay. The, the, what I'd like to do is I'd like to take a minute of your time to discuss the importance of the GI Forum's mission of advocacy.

01:11:43:02 - 01:12:13:02

Speaker 7

Mariana got into it just a little bit a while ago, and I'd like to echo that issue. You know, the VA has come a long way since Doctor Hector Garcia began his fight for the right of Hispanic veterans and founded the American GI forum. You know, today, VA has an Office of Minority Affairs that represents the Hispanic community in decisions facing veterans and we have programs to meet the challenges of reaching out to the Hispanic community.

01:12:13:02 - 01:12:28:29

Speaker 7

But those programs only came about because someone spoke up for them and fought for them. And and those same ones are in this room. They're part of the GI forum.

01:12:29:02 - 01:12:49:27

Speaker 7

And this is something that is only beginning. It needs to continue. In the tradition of Doctor Garcia, you must join together and let your voices be heard. You must make yourselves known, not just in your communities, but in the halls of Congress. And you must forge yourself into a political force that can be there, that needs to be reckoned with.

01:12:49:29 - 01:13:16:07

Speaker 7

And and I know that, you know, that these are big words for, for young lives. But there is a real strong message here. You know, all you have to do to look around you for examples of advocates are the people around you. They are your advocates. They all of the, the scholarship awardees today, everybody in this room and everybody who worked to get you the scholarship that you have, they're all advocates on your behalf.

01:13:16:10 - 01:13:44:13

Speaker 7

And why are they doing that? Because they see you as the advocates of the future. They know how important you are to this community, and they want you to be prepared, and they want you to be educated, because an educated advocate is always the best advocate. You know, I am a Hispanic appointee of President Clinton's, administration, and I'm very proud to have him as an example to me of advocacy.

01:13:44:13 - 01:14:04:07

Speaker 7

And I've had many, many examples and many people to look up to in my life. And but but he has been one of the strongest examples of an advocate. He has appointed more Hispanics to his cabinet and throughout his government than any president previous to him.

01:14:04:09 - 01:14:24:15

Speaker 7

Than his administration. He has said, well, yes, of course you have to do your job. You know what I do? You have to be the communications head of the VA. But you also have a responsibility to be an advocate for the Hispanic community. That's why I put you there. That's what I want you to do. That's what I'm holding you responsible for.

01:14:24:21 - 01:14:48:16

Speaker 7

All of the appointees in my administration. They have a responsibility to their community. I want to build an administration that looks like America, so that not so that they can just sit there and look like America, so that they can work for America so that they can go out and represent the Hispanic communities in America.

01:14:48:19 - 01:15:11:13

Speaker 7

But the the president doesn't just rely on internal advocates like myself for the Hispanic community. Oh, no, no, no, that would be that would be, you know, just taking too many chances. He's got to hear it for himself. He's got to have it in his own ears. So he calls people into the white House, says, oh, come on in and tell me what your issues are and, and how we can make this government work better for these communities.

01:15:11:16 - 01:15:35:14

Speaker 7

A perfect example, just a couple of weeks ago, the president sat down and he had a round table discussion, very small, you know, probably 30 people in the room, roundtable discussion with veterans organizations, specifically on veterans issues. They wavered a few a few times on some issues, and they had all the veterans organizations in there, and they all went around the table and asked the president questions about their issues.

01:15:35:14 - 01:16:00:26

Speaker 7

Well, of course, the GI forum was represented at this very small gathering with the president, and Alma Esparza in Washington, D.C., sat amongst these groups. You know, that included the American Legion



and the VFW and everybody else. And what was AMA as far as his question to President Clinton, she wanted to know what the president was doing about hiring Hispanics in the federal government.

01:16:01:02 - 01:16:22:11

Speaker 7

The numbers were too low. And what was he going to do about bringing those numbers up? And she had a specific issue. She had the issue of Kelly Air Force Base, which is closing, which, which employed, a huge number of Hispanics. The number of Hispanics in the federal government will go down substantially when when Kelly Air Force Base closes in San Antonio, Texas.

01:16:22:14 - 01:16:49:07

Speaker 7

And so she she raised that issue. And in the president gave her very emotional response. He said he was very unhappy with the Kelly closure. He had stated this when when Kelly was closed and that he was working with, with Secretary Cisneros of HUD and others to try to privatize a lot of the jobs in Kelly. But on the greater issue, on the greater issue of all of the federal government and Hispanic employment, he said he was very troubled by this issue.

01:16:49:07 - 01:17:15:08

Speaker 7

He and he didn't know how to fix it. He wasn't sure how to fix it. He knew the numbers were low. He he knows that the Hispanic population is regionalized in the country, and he doesn't know how to fix the problem, how we're going to get that Hispanic employment number up in the government. Because as I told you before, he once he wants the federal government to look like America, and there are not enough Hispanics represented in the federal government at the very highest level of appointees.

01:17:15:08 - 01:17:32:03

Speaker 7

He's been able to do a good job, but on the lower levels, he wants to unpack that. So what did so what did he do? He looked at almost four hours and he said, please go back to your organization, go back to the G.I. forum. I need you to tell me what I can do to help. I mean, these are very these are very tough budget times.

01:17:32:03 - 01:18:00:22

Speaker 7

Tell me what I can do to try to improve this situation. That is unfair with respect to Hispanic employment in the government. And, you know, should we be surprised by this? Should we be surprised that the president would charge the G.I. forum with coming up with solutions to two problems? No, this shouldn't surprise us at all. This president, since the beginning of his administration, has said that this nation faces many challenges.

01:18:00:25 - 01:18:20:15

Speaker 7

But he also said that there is nothing wrong with America that can't be fixed by what is right in America. And the G.I. forum is what is right with America.

01:18:20:17 - 01:18:41:17

Speaker 7

Thanks to Doctor Garcia and all of you in this room, the GI forum is growing and has the potential to become the next great force of advocacy for America's Hispanic veterans and for the Latino community nationwide. And the youth in this room should see this as a challenge. You know, there.

01:18:41:17 - 01:18:42:10

Speaker 6

Are.

01:18:42:13 - 01:19:03:10

Speaker 7

Opportunities, but there is work to be done. You know, you are living in a wonderful, wonderful time and you have so many opportunities for you in the future. But those opportunities, they don't come cheap. You know, you have to work and you have to represent your community because you didn't get here by yourself and you're not going anywhere else by yourself.

01:19:03:10 - 01:19:23:22

Speaker 7

And you owe a debt to your community, and we're all going to help you repay that debt. And in repaying that debt, you will get more satisfaction out of contributing to your community than anything else that you'll do in your life. I encourage.

01:19:23:24 - 01:19:39:23

Speaker 7

I encourage you to join together and realize the potential that you all have, and become the force that I know that you can be. Challenge yourselves to be advocates for the Latino community. If you do, America will be better for it. Thank you.

01:19:39:26 - 01:19:53:22

Speaker 2

Thank you.

01:19:53:25 - 01:20:02:05

Unknown

Thank you, thank you, thank you, thank you very much.

01:20:02:07 - 01:20:27:04

Speaker 3

We really appreciate Kathy being here. And, for all the work that she does for veterans in our community. One thing that I want to tell you is that, our national chairman, Jake Reed and Tony Morales are today probably, still in Saudi Arabia. They went to Bosnia to visit Bosnia, and they went at the special invitation of Jesse Brown, Secretary of Veterans Affairs.

01:20:27:07 - 01:20:39:09

Speaker 3

And then they headed to, Saudi Arabia to see the disaster there. And, that's why our national chairman is not here, National commander. And I think, Kathy, again, for all the help that she has.

01:20:39:12 - 01:20:45:17

Speaker 1

Given us in Washington.

01:20:45:20 - 01:20:52:28

Speaker 1

Thank you, commander. Was that great or what?

01:20:53:00 - 01:21:07:09

Speaker 1

You okay? All you young people. What do you think this is, your challenge? Is this a role model? All right.

01:21:07:12 - 01:21:28:06

Speaker 1

Thank you. You didn't. I was just going to say that they didn't realize how close you do not realize. All of us realize how close you are to the president by being associated. The American GI forum. At this time, I'd like to, recognize another guest that we have here that I overlooked. And that's the, high representative for Mujeres Latinas.

01:21:28:06 - 01:21:47:03

Speaker 1

Christina. She left already. What's your last name? Viejo. Christina Vega with the mujeres Latinas and, overlooked a couple other people. Helen Galvan, vice chair, state chair, women's chair.

01:21:47:06 - 01:21:56:28

Speaker 1

And Paula Lopez, secretary of state and national. Excuse me. Paula.

01:21:57:00 - 01:22:08:02

Speaker 1

Okay. Both. And as well as Anita Avila.

01:22:08:04 - 01:22:17:26

Speaker 1

This concludes our our luncheon. I want to thank everybody, all our guests and our speakers. we'll, reconvene at 2:00. And our general session. Thank you again for coming.