

## **KWVA Federal Charter 2008**

On June 17, 2008, the House of Representatives voted to approve Senate Bill 1692, granting a Federal Charter to the Korean War Veterans Association. Our organization now has the same rights and privileges already exercised by The American Legion, The Veterans of Foreign Wars, The Military Order of the Purple Heart, the Vietnam Veterans of America... to name but a few. The Korean War Veterans Association is at last included when the Veterans Administration or Congress seeks advice from a Veterans Service Organization (VSO) concerning veterans issues.

At this time, we should reflect on the many obstacles that have been overcome in pursuing this quest. The initial step was taken by Blair Cross, a member of Chapter #33, in the Greater Baltimore, Maryland area, who was also a long-time life member of the Jarrettsville, MD Veterans of Foreign Wars Post.

In late 1998 he discovered that Chapter #33 could not purchase rifles from the U.S. Government because the National KWVA did not have a Federal Charter. This setback spurred him into action. At a meeting on January 20, 1999, Chapter #33 approved the formation of a committee, chaired by Blair, charged with the pursuit of a Federal Charter.

Blair then took this matter to the National KWVA and obtained the support of President Harley Coon and the Board of Directors. President Coon named Blair as National Chairman for the Federal Charter and Washington, D.C. Affairs Representative.

At the March 17, 2000 meeting of the Maryland Chapter, Blair related his meetings with Maryland Congressmen and Senators. He subsequently met with Congressman Steny Hoyer, who agreed to submit a Bill to the House of Representatives.

Senator Paul Sarbanes agreed to submit a companion bill to the Senate. However, the House Judiciary Committee had placed a moratorium on the granting of Federal Charters to Veteran Service Organizations, which dated back to 1992. The moratorium was effective under both Democratic and Republican leadership. Nevertheless, the House did periodically permit a Federal Charter to be issued under special circumstances. Apparently the KWVA did not qualify as "special."

Clearly, there were long odds and formidable obstacles to be overcome. Blair continued to press for sponsors of the bills as each new Congress began work. Unfortunately, his health began to fail in 2003. At that time, he had 112 co-sponsors for the House Bill. Finally, early in 2004, Blair agreed that, because of his failing health, the organization needed someone else to pursue this goal. Bob Banker agreed to take over the task.

In February of 2004, the national KWVA had a Board meeting in Washington, D.C., at which time they agreed to consider Bob Banker's proposed plan to continue the organization's pursuit of a Federal Charter. The plan was approved.

Bob enlisted eight members from Chapter # 33 to form a Telephone Committee. The goal was to call all of the Chapter Presidents in the U.S. to persuade the leadership in each Chapter

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to contact their Representatives to request co-sponsorship of the National Korean War Veterans Association Federal Charter Bill. In addition, six members of this group agreed to walk the Halls of Congress to contact Representatives and/or their aides in charge of Veterans Affairs.

A total of thirteen trips were made to Washington, D.C., and 185 Congressional offices were visited. During this time, the number of co-sponsors increased to 156.

Following the election of Louis Dechert as President of the KWVA, on July 27, 2004, his aide, Charley Price, requested that no further efforts be expended because it had been decided to change the wording of the Bill in preparation for the next Congressional session commencing in 2005. Charley spent considerable time and effort to complete this task, and a new Bill was introduced on July 27, 2005.

Over the next year Charley made many attempts to have this new Bill approved, but once again the moratorium proved insurmountable. Subsequently, Charley had to step aside due to other time-consuming business activities. Charley should certainly be given full credit for changing the wording of the bill so that it would better describe the KWVA as a 501(c)(19) Veteran Service Organization.

Late in 2006, President Dechert appointed Ed Buckman (Chapter #270 - Dallas, TX) and Bob Banker as Co-Chairmen of the Legislative Committee to continue the quest for a Federal Charter. Ed and Bob had a number of discussions concerning the format and approach for the introduction of the new bill.

It was evident that previous Bills depended upon the party affiliation of the sponsoring Congressman. As an example, during the Congressional session of 2003/04, the bill was introduced by Congressman Walsh, an upstate New York Republican, rather than Congressman Hoyer, a Maryland Democrat. We therefore decided that the Bill should be bi-partisan in order to avoid party politics.

Ed suggested that Congressman Sam Johnson of Dallas, a much respected Republican and highly decorated Air Force fighter pilot in both Korea and Vietnam (as well as a guest in the Hanoi Hilton for seven years), be included in the initial Bill. In fact, Ed's Chapter was named for Congressman Johnson.

Bob approached the office of Congressman Hoyer in December 2006 and presented this request, which was ultimately approved. H.R. 2852 was truly a bi-partisan Bill.

The moratorium remained in effect, even though the Chairman of the Judiciary Committee, Congressman John Conyers (D-MI), was a co-sponsor of all previous Bills and indeed was a co-sponsor of H.R. 2852. The Bill languished in the Sub-committee on Immigration, Citizenship, Refugees, Border Security and International Law under the responsibility of Chairwoman Zoe Lofgren (D-CA), who continued to enforce the moratorium.

Finally, we began to hear some encouraging news, and the final stage of a ten-year battle was underway. When H.R. 2852 was introduced on June 25, 2007, Senator Ben Cardin (D-MD), who had succeeded Senator Paul Sarbanes, also introduced Senate Bill 1692. In short order, this Bill was approved without dissent and sent to the House, with the result that the House of Representatives had two bills to consider. At this time it became clear that our best chance for a Federal Charter was through the efforts of Congressmen Hoyer and Johnson.

We came to the conclusion that active solicitation of co-sponsors was not a priority. In fact, we purposely avoided any further action, feeling that the goodwill and efforts of two of the most powerful politicians in the Capitol should be allowed to work unhindered. Ultimately, their powers of persuasion prevailed, when the House voted to approve S.1692 on June 17, 2008, without dissent.

There have been many moments when we were convinced that our efforts were not going to be rewarded. However, through Ed's perseverance in maintaining contact with Congressman Johnson and Bob doing the same with the office of Congressman Hoyer, the long anticipated bill was finally passed.

Although there was very little notification that the Bill would be voted on June 17th, Bob volunteered to observe the proceedings and sat in the House Gallery. Congressman Hoyer and Congressman Johnson spoke eloquently on behalf of the Bill. Finally, the vote was taken: the Bill was passed

After the official Presidential signature was appended on 30 June 2008, the long awaited Charter was granted to the Korean War Veterans Association.

The efforts of many people have been involved in the quest for the Federal Charter since 1985 without success. Finally, in 1999, Blair Cross launched a vigorous campaign to obtain a Federal Charter. Acknowledgments are due to Past President Harley Coon and the Board of Directors who approved Blair's request. Thanks are extended to members of Chapter #33, in particular Anthony Cirincione, Jack Cloman, Carl Collier, Sam Fielder, Jr., Ray Glock, James Hussey, Charles Reed, Jr. and Boris Spiroff.

Acknowledgments are also due for the efforts of Past President Dechert, Charley Price, General Ray Davis, Director Jeff Brodeur, Roy Burkhart, Don Duffy, Col. William Weber, Annelie Weber and Sherman Pratt.

If we have omitted any names, please accept our apologies. In addition, thanks are also given to the local Chapter Presidents and members who aided this cause by contacting their local Representatives.

Now that we have the Federal Charter, we have the responsi-

bility for implementing it throughout the Association. That task will be tackled with the same determination given to the effort to obtain the Charter, albeit in a much shorter time frame.

The acquisition of the Federal Charter is our generation's gift to the future of the KWVA and all that it stands for and, more importantly, for those who follow us—the Korean Service Veterans. A baton is confidently passed to the younger generation with our highest expectations for the future.

*Edwin R. Buckman, National Legislative Director  
Robert S. Banker, Past National Legislative Co-Director*

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Website: [www.KWVA.org](http://www.KWVA.org)**



### Right cover, wrong date

Some astute readers have noticed that the date on the cover of the May/June 2008 issue was off by one year. It should have read May/June 2008. We hope that no one looked at the date, said "I read this issue last year," and put the magazine aside.

We do not repeat ourselves from issue to issue, so the content is new even though the date is old, and the date is correct inside the magazine.

I repeat, the date is wrong, but the content is new. We will be more diligent in the future—even though being able to go back a year in time is a welcome idea.

### Dallas Mossman, Sr....

There was a short story on p. 76 of the March/April issue regarding Dallas Mossman. We have a couple revisions to report.

First, the gentleman is Dallas Mossman, Sr., not Jr. And, he was the President of the 2nd Inf. Div. Association, not the Korean War POW Association.

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