



MARINE CORPS LEAGUE

Office of National Senior Vice Commandant

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From: National Sr. Vice Russ Miller
To: TJ Morgan, National Commandant, MCL, Inc.
Dist: National Board of Trustees, MCL Membership
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Sir Commandant,

It has been my utmost honor to serve our membership, their families, and our active-duty service members still bearing the cloth of our Nation alongside you and the rest of our officers on the National Board of Trustees this past year. I eagerly look forward to all that is in store for the League as we all continue to march forward together as the preeminent Marine Corps Veteran Organization. With all that has been accomplished in the past year, it is no wonder that the year has seemingly flown by so fast.

- 250th Birthday of our beloved Marine Corps.
- Toys For Tots continues to grow year over year across the nation.
- Purchase of our new headquarters building in the town of Quantico.
- Growth of our Veteran Service Officer program is far ahead of original goals and projections.
- Development and implementation of a business plan that has been long in the making now in place.
- Modern Day Marine Expo continues to grow through our increasing partnership with the Marine Corps Association and HQMC.
- Detachments, Departments, and Divisions making great strides toward increased fiduciary oversight and compliance to government requirements.

Things were not all as rosy as we would like ourselves to believe though. While we do continue to bring in new members every year and see a number of “retreads” (those who joined, left for a time, and rejoined) like myself return for another crack at the bat. Unfortunately, as more Detachments, Departments, and Divisions continue to audit their roles and find that for far too long, life members have continued to be reported as still living, when in fact some have been at their final duty station for many years. As these roles are corrected and tallied with the members that have recently died or chosen not to renew their membership, we find our overall membership continue to decline each year. Whether the misreporting on PLM Audits is due to complacency, ignorance, or attempted fraudulent collection of PLM monies, it is totally unsatisfactory. Just recently a Marine purchased the home of a deceased MCL life member who had passed 12 years ago, and the Semper Fi magazine was still being delivered. We can and must do better. Are we inadvertently communicating to a new member that if they pass, we won’t take time to recognize and remember them or comfort their family? Worse yet, perhaps one

might believe that it's just so a Detachment can continue to appear to have a larger membership than it actually does, or to continue to receive their deceased member's PLM funds. Both of which are defrauding the League and it's membership and can give the impression that we are all just number with a dollar sign in front of it.

I strongly believe that as we complete the process of scrubbing our roles and getting a more accurate picture of our true current membership numbers, we will begin to see a steady rise in our numbers as a result of a couple of factors;

- Looking back at historical data of many of the Veteran Service Organizations, there has been a slight bump in numbers during US involvement in war/conflict. Some theorize it's due to increased patriotism of veterans missing the camaraderie that they had when they were fighting together during their time in service.
- Later, a gradual growth in membership roughly 20-30 years after the beginning of hostilities; occurring about the time that those that initially went off to fight are moving into that part of their life cycle where things are more settled in the family life and career paths. It's then that more of us can attest to having found ourselves with more time to dedicate to outside interests like the League as the children we had either during service or right after we returned home are graduating and moving out and starting their own journeys. Speaking for my Detachment, we are starting to see that sweet spot start to hit now. The new members joining every month have less and less gray hair on their heads and more energy to get out and make things happen.

I hope that it's a short matter of time before we reach the tipping point that over the next 5 years carries us to critical mass. As we march together into the next chapter of the League and wrap up our America 250 celebrations of our nation's independence and get closer to the 251st Birthday of our Corps, it remains so important that we take every opportunity to talk to every Marine we meet and invite them to join our ranks. Whether it's to connect them to our Veteran Service Officers to help them with a claim, or to introduce them to the Marine for Life Rep to assist with a job change, or help them understand how to get the most out of their education benefits. Maybe for now, they just want to attend a Birthday Ball again or hang out at a Marine Family Night or go bowling together. Perhaps that younger Marine you ran into is looking for something positive like Young Marines for her kids to be involved in. The big key to retention that too many of us are missing the mark on though is, "staying connected". It's not as much about the numbers as it is the level of impact. And I am very proud to report that as I traveled around to more detachments, departments, and divisions this past year, that was what I heard being emphasized all over. Our members asking the prospective member, "what can I/we do for you?" "What do you need from us?" "How can we help you?"

Lead through service to others and don't forget to turn the map OVER!! *If you know what this means, share it with a friend.*

Very respectfully submitted,

Russ Miller,

*National Senior Vice Commandant
Marine Corps League*