

Report on closure of NALPA.

The National American Legion Press Association held the 2019 annual meeting at the American Legion National Convention in August in Indianapolis, IN. There were over 200 members attending, there has never been more than 30 – 40 for the approximate 10 years I have been attending. During this meeting, the president and executive director stated a new constitution and by-laws was being put in place. There was no required notice at all to the members. Some of the elected officers also did not receive notice. NO ONE was informed why. The members were told that a special guest would attend the later meeting to explain why this had to be done.

At the later meeting, the topic was brought up, however the explanation was somewhat vague and so a number of members began to question the legality of amending the Constitution & By-Laws without the notice required by the constitution. The special guest, who was the National American Legion Judge Advocate, stated: "This wasn't mailed out? You have to mail it out." It was obvious he believed proper procedures had been followed, but had not. There was a long debate which ended with a passed vote to table the matter, with the next officers to form a committee to properly update the constitution. NO ONE, either members or the NJA objected and finally, the meeting continued and concluded with new officers being elected and installed. The Executive Director resigned a week later.

During and after July as NALPA members renewed their membership dues (the year is from August to August) they were given National American Legion Media Association - NALMA - membership cards instead. NO ONE was informed of this or gave authorization. Whatever the reason for the new constitution, to rename NALPA or to make a new association, 'NALMA', the membership had to approve and it was wrong to keep the matter a secret from them. And, if NALMA is a new association, there is no constitution and bylaws. Without a constitution, can NALMA even collect dues money or function in any meaningful way?

If a new constitution and association name, had been approved, it is absurd to believe that the SAME members with the SAME member numbers would have elected any other than the SAME officers who were elected and that those officers elected at the annual meeting are the legitimate representatives of the dues paying association members.

The nine officers elected in August and the several members appointed to positions, had continued to work to resolve this situation for several months. There were a number of emails and conversations between the elected / appointed association officers and National Judge Advocate. After many emails, texts and phone calls and with the advice of at least two judge advocates the elected officers held an executive committee meeting and passed 11 motions to properly start the 'new' association functioning. The actions taken by the elected officers were totally reasonable and in the best interest of the members and association, including appointment of an Executive Director. For several months after the annual meeting, the National American Legion office had been referring members questions to me as president regarding association membership and this situation and I was lead to believe that the situation would be

resolved and our very capable officers would get on with the work at hand, however this was not to happen.

During these months I learned what was not explained at the annual meeting, the reason for moving the corporation from New York to Indiana. There were certain legal documents that had not been filed with the government by past executive directors and moving the corporation was felt to be the best way to avoid any legal issues. So there is an association and a corporation.

So at the fall NEC we presented our executive meeting minutes. Later, the former press association executive director, as media incorporation executive director refused to turn over association property and operations to the association officers. The Legion decided to revoke the corporation's permission to use American Legion name and emblems and to create, another association. Former NALPA (and NALMA) members have been invited to 'join', however, there will be no officers. To run this association along with the National Media & Communications office, a committee has been formed made up of Legion members, no Auxiliary or Sons. None of the communications I've seen in this regard mention what happened at the annual meeting, 'NALMA', or the dues money, however, missing legal documents from some 10 years ago, are.

What happened to the Press Association assets (@\$40k) taken over by the Media corporation? Should it be returned to the members? It's not the money - divided by @700 members, but isn't it required by law? Was it absorbed by NAL? Did all members receive a dues refund that wanted it?

I was contacted by a legion past national commander and we had a very good conversation. He asked if I would work with the new association and of course I said I would. I have not heard from anyone now for about 10 months and decided it was past time to send this.

Unfortunately, the elected officers were completely ignored, some will never be at another Legion meeting or remain members due to the way this situation was mishandled. I did not expect much from the Legion and I was not disappointed. While all of this fiasco may not be the National Legion's doing, I wonder if a better solution could have been worked out.

Kevin Harrington, President 2019