



Perris News

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American Legion Convention Highlights



Perris City Councilwoman Joanne Evans (left), a former Marine, salutes the American flag during the opening ceremony of the American Legion convention this month in Riverside.

Members of the American Legion make no secret of their core values: honor, country, patriotism, Americanism.

Those values took center stage recently during the Legion's 91st annual convention in Riverside, where the three most prominent colors were red, white and blue and the No. 1 song was the National Anthem.

Perris City Councilwoman Joanne Evans was at the center of much of the activities, handling public relations activities, writing press releases, introducing dignitaries and politicians and arranging media interviews with Legion executives. Evans, a former Marine, is a longtime member of American Legion Post 585 in Perris and has served in various positions on the state level.

"We have to continue advocating for what we believe," Evans said. "If we don't, who will?"



The Honor Guard prepares for the opening ceremony in Riverside.



Rows of combat decorations and awards tell of veteran Ed Abbey's service to America.

The Legion advocates for veterans benefits and money to treat veterans affected by post-traumatic stress disorder and traumatic brain injuries. The Legion also sponsors Law and Order awards and operates several programs geared at instilling pride and patriotism in America's youth.

There was plenty of pomp and circumstance on display at the Riverside Convention Center, where about 3,500 Legionnaires from California gathered. Many Legionnaires wore their military decorations and service ribbons. The audience stood at attention and saluted during the playing of the "Star-Spangled Banner." A black POW/MIA flag was placed across an empty chair, a reminder that members of the military never forget comrades who were held as prisoners of war and those listed as missing in action whose fate remains unknown.

The Riverside County Board of Supervisors, U.S. Rep. Darrell Issa, R-Vista, and numerous California legislators sent proclamations praising the Legion and its work to promote American values.

A special proclamation honored Riverside native Bobby Castillo, a longtime member of the American Legion who died in 2008. Castillo served in the Navy during World War II, was badly wounded while supporting the Allied invasion of Normandy and returned to Riverside, where he spent the next 50 years advocating for veterans. He founded a Memorial Honors Detail at Riverside National Cemetery and performed military honors at more than 1,000 burials at Riverside National Cemetery.

Navy veteran Alan Lennox, the top Legionnaire in California, said the values promoted by the American Legion are timeless. Extolling love of country, service above self-indulgence and respect for hard work and thrift put America on the map and continue to inspire generations today, Lennox said.

"There would be a void without the efforts of the American Legion," he said.

[See a short video clip about the convention](#)