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## News & Notes from National President Skip Witunski

June 2016



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### **President's Message**

I have held many positions of leadership in my 15 years as a Navy Leaguer. There are essential common threads that connect us - from Council President to National Director to National President - and they are commitment to our mission and teamwork. Our challenges have been great this past year, but together we are making great progress.



Since June 2015, I aligned our Steering Committee with portfolios suited to their skills. We have been working collaboratively, along with their National Committees, to take hard looks at their areas, recommend changes, automate and streamline processes, and push for growth. As a result, we are seeing changes, and will continue to introduce more for continued improvement and growth. The changes we're making are setting the tone for a brighter and more secure future for our organization. We are on course to see growth in ways that we haven't seen in decades. Our achievements thus far include:

### **Financial Stability Advancements**

- Formulated a balanced Operating Budget approved by the Board of Directors in December 2015 for the first time this millennium. Headquarters staff has been entrusted with executing in accordance within budget constraints and without using funds from the refinance, Line of Credit (except for timing differences) or investments.
- Refinanced our most valuable NLUS investment asset by closing a \$60 million building loan refinance transaction, resulting in significant cost savings.
- Increased Headquarters building lease occupancy from 75% to 100%.
- Building free operating cash flow is expected to net over \$22 million during the next 10 years.

- \$12 million invested in the stock market. If we do not use these funds, and assuming past long-term stock market trends, this amount has the potential to double over the next 10 years.
- At the end of a decade we could, for the first time ever, have the ability and option to pay off our building mortgage debt and be debt free. This strategy to be debt free and generate significant cash flow from the building can then be used to strengthen and grow our NLUS core mission.

### **Membership and Communications**

- At the end of 1st Quarter 2016, Individual Membership is up 8%.
- We are reorganizing and realigning staff, and making strategic hires to fill key positions to support the field.
- Implementing a 21st Century membership and finance software systems solution to eliminate antiquated systems, dependency on costly contractors and consultants, and to support the field in an effective way. This will provide significant long-term savings and a return on investment is expected (tangible and intangible).
- New software will enhance our ability to communicate with our members and the public by taking advantage of web technologies to relay our message.
- Our Spring membership campaign is in full swing. Recruit new members for a cash reward. Top recruiter earns \$500 and \$250 for his/her council. Regular Premium Membership is \$55; add a spouse for E-membership at only \$25. Full details can be found [here](#).

### **2016-2017 Goals**

- Continue to execute financial strategy for significant long-term stability, with timely and transparent reporting of financial health.
- Stimulate membership retention by creating great membership experiences through communication and engagement.
- Introduce social media across councils to enhance our legislative grassroots approach and continual engagement.
- Develop and attract new "non-defense" corporate partnerships.

### **Closing Remarks**

The National President's job description is varied and long. The most important function is being the Chief Executive Officer. This means meeting with our clients and customers - the Sea Services - being the public spokesperson and representative for the organization and, most of all, leading this diverse volunteer group as the team leader. It has been my pleasure to endeavor to keep our organization moving forward realizing that working together as a team has allowed us to accomplish our mission and our goals.

The following information comes from the field for your information:

### **National Convention**

The hotel room block and registration have been extended! The room block will now close on June 11 and you can book your hotel room [here](#). Because this is an Embassy

Suites by Hilton facility, there is a free, made-to-order breakfast each morning and complimentary drinks and snacks every night. Also, the final day to register for the 2016 National Convention is now June 7 and you can register [here!](#)

## **Elections & the Navy League**

As local and presidential campaigns heat up, it is important to remember what the Navy League can and cannot do. Participating in elections on behalf of our organization is not allowed. The Navy League could lose its tax-exempt 501(c)3 status if we are found to be in violation. Below are some best practices:

- Do not endorse a candidate.
- Do not support a particular political party.
- Do not invite candidates to speak, unless you invite all of them.
- Do not give Navy League Council money or time to any campaign, this includes using Navy League money to attend a fundraiser. Individuals are allowed to volunteer or donate as private citizens, but not as representatives of the Navy League.
- Do not tell your members how to vote. Messages do not have to state a name or party to be in violation; anything that refers to distinctive features of a candidate's platform or biography can be considered an endorsement.
- Do not approach candidates and ask them to endorse the Navy League's policy positions.
- Do not link to a candidate's page or otherwise endorse on your council's website, Facebook page, Twitter account, or other social media.

You can, however, still invite incumbents to speak in their current role - not as a candidate. You can still engage in public advocacy and education through our Grass Roots program. If you have any questions or would like to see if your council can move forward with a potential event, contact [Sara Fuentes](#).

## **Make Your Voice Heard**

It's a very important time of year on Capitol Hill as members of Congress begin marking up spending and authorizing bills that will determine how the sea services are funded next year. You can make a difference! Please visit our [Write Congress](#) site to tell your Representatives and Senators where you stand. The sea services depend heavily on our advocacy and outreach to tell their story.

"Is Tighter Pentagon Spending Killing Troops?" This is a headline Americans should never have to read. But [Time magazine](#) is asking this very question, after it was revealed in congressional testimony that our military leaders see a direct correlation between reduced funding and troop fatalities. Congressional budget restrictions reduced training, and reduced training leads to more accidents and crashes. This is unacceptable. We need you to inform and educate Congress on the needs of the men and women of the sea services by visiting the Write Congress site and making your voice heard on [this issue](#).

## **Navigating the Website**

If it has been a while since you visited the Navy League's public [website](#), or just need to quickly locate information, there is a site map that was developed by the

Communications & Marketing Committee. The site map is a quick reference to the drop-down menu items under each tab. The one-page handout, "[NLUS Website Navigation Guide](#)," is located under the Communications tab, Media & Marketing Resources.

I look forward to seeing you at the National Convention!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Skip Witunski". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'S'.

Skip Witunski  
National President  
Navy League of the United States