



EVENT PLANNING AND PUBLICITY TOOLKIT  
FOR PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS



 VETERANS  
HISTORY  
PROJECT

Library of Congress  
American Folklife Center  
[www.loc.gov/vets](http://www.loc.gov/vets)



# VETERANS HISTORY PROJECT

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*This guide is intended to provide you with the planning tools that will lead you through the steps needed to conduct a successful Veterans History Project event. In this guide, you will find information to help you with the logistics and technical aspects of event planning, as well as working effectively with the media.*

*This toolkit is designed for those of you who have asked for more planning advice on events and conducting media outreach, rather than for those with extensive experience in these areas. In either case, we encourage you to review the information provided here.*

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## OVERVIEW

There are 19 million war veterans living in the United States today, and every day we lose 1,600 of them. Motivated by the urgent need to collect the stories and experiences of war veterans while they are still among us, the United States Congress created the Veterans History Project.

The authorizing legislation, sponsored by Representatives Ron Kind, Amo Houghton, and Steny Hoyer in the U.S. House of Representatives and Senators Max Cleland and Chuck Hagel in the U.S. Senate, received unanimous support and was signed into law by President Clinton on October 27, 2000. Public Law 106-380 calls upon the American Folklife Center at the Library of Congress to collect and preserve audio- and videotaped oral histories, along with documentary materials such as letters, diaries, maps, photographs, and home movies, of America's war veterans and those who served in support of them.

The Veterans History Project covers World War I, World War II, and the Korean, Vietnam, and Persian Gulf wars. It includes all participants of those wars — men and women, civilian and military. It documents the contributions of civilian volunteers, support staff, and war industry workers as well as the experiences of military personnel from all ranks and all branches of service — the Air Force, Army, Marine Corps, Navy, and U.S. Coast Guard and Merchant Marine.

Knowing that this and future generations of Americans have much to learn from those who served, we at the Library of Congress and the American Folklife Center, in addition to founding sponsor AARP, have embraced this project. We are pleased that your organization has decided to join us in making the Veterans History Project a success.

For information and updates on the project, visit the Web site at [www.loc.gov/vets](http://www.loc.gov/vets).

## MISSION AND GOALS

The goals of the Veterans History Project are:

- To stimulate opportunities for public learning by inviting, advising, and supporting individuals and groups participating in the Veterans History Project.
- To engage veterans, military, history, educational, and civic organizations as partners to identify, interview, and collect documents from war veterans and civilians who served to support them.
- To preserve and present the collected materials to the public through the Library of Congress' exhibitions, publications, public programs, and Web site.
- To identify veterans' oral history programs and archives; to recognize and work with them to expand the Veterans History Project initiative.
- To create a comprehensive and searchable national catalog of all oral histories and documents collected as a result of this project.

## **THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS, THE AMERICAN FOLKLIFE CENTER, AND AARP**

### *The Library of Congress*

The Library of Congress, founded in 1800, is the oldest federal cultural institution in the nation. With more than 120 million items on approximately 530 miles of bookshelves, it is the world's largest library. It is recognized as the national library of the United States and is a great resource to scholars and researchers through its on-site services, interlibrary loan, publications, and Web site.

### *The American Folklife Center*

The American Folklife Center at the Library of Congress was created in 1976 to preserve, present, and document all aspects of traditional culture and life in America. With more than 1.5 million items, it maintains the largest repository of traditional cultural documentation in the United States.

### *AARP*

In 2002, AARP became the founding corporate sponsor and partner of the Veterans History Project. AARP will inform its 35 million members and its national volunteer network about the project and the importance of getting involved. Through 2005, AARP will be sponsoring national- and state- level events to raise awareness and encourage involvement in the project.

AARP is a nonprofit, nonpartisan membership organization for people aged 50 and over. The national organization provides information and resources; advocates on legislative, consumer, and legal issues; assists members in serving their communities; and offers a wide range of unique benefits, special products, and services for its members.

## **THE VETERANS HISTORY PROJECT PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS**

Your organization is one of hundreds of organizations throughout the country that are working nationwide, statewide, or in local communities to gather personal accounts of wartime veterans for the collections of the Library of Congress. Partner organizations range from major institutions with thousands of members to small libraries in rural communities. Each organization determines its activities in support of the Veterans History Project so it can best use the community resources and increase interest.

Partners agree to promote the project and use the organization's resources in some or all of the following ways: recruiting volunteers to identify and interview war veterans; distributing or reproducing Veterans History Project brochures and how-to kits; using the project guidelines to train volunteers; providing or lending equipment or materials to record interviews; using publications and broadcasts to increase public awareness of the project; creating events to present the stories and materials collected; and preserving veterans' histories and making them accessible to the public.



## EVENT BASICS

Those organizations that wish to hold public events, large or small, in support of your Veterans History Project activities may benefit from expert advice on making your events a success.

The purpose of your event is to increase public awareness about and involvement with the Veterans History Project through media (newspaper, radio, television) coverage and interest as well as to publicly recognize the organizations and individuals in your community who are involved in the Veterans History Project. Careful attention to details of logistics, programs, and outreach will ensure that both goals are reached.

The initial considerations of planning an event are:

- WHAT** What kind of event is it — a news conference, opening of a special exhibit, an “oral history fair,” or a demonstration?
- WHO** Who is the audience? Whom do you invite? Who are the speakers?
- WHEN** What date and time are most convenient for your audience? What time of day is appropriate for local press deadlines? What date and time are most appropriate for the location? When are the speakers available?
- WHERE** What location is appropriate for the message, for partnering organizations, and for the target audience? Should it take place outdoors or indoors?

You should start by organizing a committee of several key people who will make the most informed choices and help your event to be embraced by your community. Moreover, these individuals will aid your decision-making process by addressing these considerations. While answering each of these questions individually is easy, determining which are the most important ones is difficult. Essentially, they all have to be addressed at the same time. For instance, you discover that your first-choice speaker may not be available on your preferred date. Do you change the speaker or the date? The same is true for location. A major news conference may not be optimally successful if it is held on or after your local media deadlines. Flexibility and agility are key assets for the event committee in the planning stage.

### *What*

The first question, depending on the needs of your event committee, will likely be the **What** — what kind of event do you propose? Following are a few suggestions.

- A *news conference* announcing a local partnership (for example, the Veterans History Project and a school classroom group, the project and a local AARP chapter, the project and a veterans group, or the project and a volunteer group in a library or museum), which could include information on how to conduct and record an oral history or where to go for assistance.
- An *exhibit opening* at a partnering organization. The local historic or civic museum may mount an exhibit and auxiliary programming on the Veterans History Project or, more specifically, on the history of veterans in your community. A special exhibit opening could include a reception with speakers or a longer event with a training session on how to give or take an oral history.

- A special daylong “*veterans history fair*” in a strategic downtown or mall location to encourage veterans to give their oral histories or to encourage volunteers to work with family and friends to take an oral history. A festive, patriotic event can be staged with flags, banners, and lots of music.
- An event, either live or taped, that demonstrates an oral history. A group of civic organizations might want to have a joint meeting where the partnering organizations demonstrate how to conduct and record an oral history. This format is particularly useful in illustrating how informal the sessions can be even within the project’s guidelines. A knowledgeable facilitator who can explain what is going to happen and then takes questions would be especially helpful in this format.

For all of these events, special local focus and texture can be added by the recognition of local war veterans — whether they are considered heroes or not. A key message of the Veterans History Project is that every veteran’s story is important to our nation’s memory. To showcase the number of veterans in any one community — rather than focus on the decorated ones — is a strong message.

### *Who*

By *Who* we mean both audience and speakers. First, recognize that you have two potential audiences — the immediate audience and the remote audience. The immediate audience consists of those who attend the event. The remote audience consists of those who experience or learn about the event through the media. Both audiences are important, although the remote audience, the general public, is likely much larger. Outreach to the remote audience through the media is addressed in the media section of this document.

Once you identify the immediate audience, you need a plan for outreach to inform them of the event. Whether they are informed/invited by phone calls, formal invitations, mass mailings, or through the media, your planning committee should develop and implement a plan for these methods and appropriate follow-up action. Ideally, one person on your committee should be assigned to this task. Depending on the size and complexity of the event, this coordinator may need a more extensive subcommittee for assistance.

Another important question is how to identify speakers or notable participants for your event. Dignitaries can draw an audience, and they will help attract media attention. Their participation will also require some special logistical support and attention. Seek to involve dignitaries who have some relevance to the subject of the Veterans History Project — even if that is as simple as identifying a local celebrity or public official who may have a compelling story about his or her own wartime memories. Watch the news for dates when celebrities will be in your community for theatrical or concert performances or personal appearances. You may be able to engage them for your event while they are in your area.

In addition to special celebrities or guest speakers, the *Who* should include other local public officials or heroes who should be recognized in order to demonstrate the community wide appeal of the project. It is usually better to be more expansive in this category than exclusive.

### *When*

*When* is the best time to stage the kind of event you have identified, at the venue of your choice, at the most convenient time for the audience and speakers, and for your community? Some common-sense considerations will guide this decision. For instance, do not schedule a daytime event if your ideal audience is composed of primarily working people. If a member of Congress is a key speaker, then Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday are not choice days. An exhibit opening should be held during the day instead of at the usual reception hour for optimum media coverage. However, as a result, most working people and school-age young people will not be able to attend. Thinking through the logistics of who will come and how they will get there will help identify the best date and time for the event.

Always check the community calendars for potential conflicts before deciding the **When**. Conflicts in scheduling can result in smaller audiences and less media attention than your event deserves. The chamber of commerce office, convention and visitors bureau, and friendly members of the media will have information about other events that have been previously scheduled. In addition, don't forget to check your own organizational partners' calendars. For optimum media coverage, Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays are the best days. In smaller communities, Sundays may work well. Newspaper readership on Saturdays is the lowest of the week, so a follow-up article about a Friday event does not reach as wide an audience as an article might on other days.

### **Where**

The **Where** of your event will depend on the **What** (e.g. news conference in a hotel ballroom or at a partnering organization or city hall; exhibit opening at a museum; or veterans' fair at a reunion); the **Who** (How many people are expected? Are there specific access considerations or a special activity that requires a unique location? Special considerations for the celebrity/speaker?); and the **When** (Is the museum available on the date that you prefer? Is the time of day appropriate?).

Once you have settled these essential questions, implementing the event plan may look like an easy task!



## CHECKLIST - LOGISTICS AND TECHNICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Here is a practical checklist to get you started on filling in the logistical details of a planned public event.

### *Room/Space*

- Is there enough space for your anticipated crowd plus main stage and an area for the news media?
- Is it handicapped- accessible?
- Is the location easy to find or recognizable to your audience and the media?
- Are there traffic patterns (vehicular or foot) that would cause interference with your event?
- Are there adequate bathrooms for the size of your audience? Should you consider portable toilets?
- If the location is outdoors, is the sun in front of the speakers rather than behind them? Do you have a backup plan in case of inclement weather?

### *Main Stage*

If it is possible to have a raised platform or stage for your event, everyone's sightlines will be improved.

**SIZE** Plan at least 3' in length per person, (plus 3' for the podium), and add some extra space. For example, if you plan to have five people onstage, your stage should be at least 24' long. A too-crowded stage is unattractive and unsafe. The width should be at least 4' and possibly more if participants have to walk behind the podium. Height will vary depending on crowd size: 12" for a small event with guests seated; 24" for a standing crowd; up to 40" for large gatherings such as an outside event with 500-plus people.

**PODIUM** A podium with a plain front is always best so that your particular logo can be strategically placed. Be sure that the podium is stable and that the height is appropriate for most speakers and adjustable, if possible.

**BACKDROP** A dark blue backdrop curtain always works. Also consider any interesting architectural or other significant visual features at the site. At the minimum, a flat, solid wall surface that does not reflect light will suffice, especially if you also use a logo banner.

The message of your event should be visible in the focus of cameras, so be sure to design your backdrop so that either the words or logo of your message, or both, can be seen over the shoulders of the speakers.

A grouping of people can sometimes be used as an interesting backdrop if they are significant to your message, such as veterans wearing uniforms, military insignia, or veterans' caps. A photograph of a group of prominent local veterans whom the public will recognize would also work well as an "endorsement" photo.

**CHAIRS** The decision to use chairs on the stage is dependent on the length of the program, the age of the participants, and sometimes on simply how it looks. If you use chairs, be sure to make the stage wide enough to allow room for speakers to move in front of them.

### *Lighting*

For television broadcast purposes, whether video or live, in-house lighting is not enough. If television exposure is your goal, find a good lighting vendor to light the space for you. Lighting is also required sometimes for outside venues, depending on the time of day and existing shadows.

### *Sound*

Many well-planned, worthy events have been ruined, either for the audience or for the media covering them, by poor sound. If you use in-house systems of venues such as hotels, be sure that the technician is on hand during the event. An outside vendor should always provide a technician. Test the system many times before the event and again before your audience begins to arrive.

If your event is in a building that pipes background music to function rooms, ask the management to disconnect the sound or paging/announcement system to your event site. For outdoor events, factor in traffic or other distracting noises into your sound requirements.

### *Video Equipment*

If your program involves viewing videotapes of recorded oral histories or the Veterans History Project feature video, ensure that the video screen or television screen is large enough and positioned so that it can be seen by everyone in the audience. For more complex projection needs, consult your video vendor. Test all equipment and tapes before the event.

### *Rope and Stanchion Systems*

Rope and stanchions are always helpful to direct traffic into the room as well as to cordon off certain areas — media, main stage, etc. — from the audience.

### *Press Areas and Platforms*

Unless your event is very relaxed and low-key, you may want to provide a raised platform where members of the press can gather to tape your event or take good photos.

- SIZE** Allow 3' for each camera (both television and stills) expected. Representatives of the print media can either stand on the elevated platform that you provide (if there is a large crowd) or be seated in front. Platforms should be 4' deep and the same height as the main stage.
- STABILITY** To ensure a quality picture for video and still cameras, a secure, stable press platform is a must. Unstable press risers make for shaky pictures, which usually don't get broadcast.
- ELECTRICITY** Provide multiple outlets for electricity. Most news media bring battery packs, but it is a good idea to tell the media in advisories if electricity is not available.
- MULT BOX** A mult box (multiple audio outlets) is used to allow radio and television crews at the event to get a direct audio feed from the speaker's microphone. It provides better audio quality for broadcasting purposes and eliminates an unsightly gaggle of microphones on the podium. Your sound technician can provide the mult box and hook it up. Be sure to test it carefully. Also, be sure to alert media in advisories that a mult box will be provided.
- SIGNAGE** Be sure to provide clearly stated directional signage to the media, especially if they are to use a different entrance or hallway than others. A lost reporter usually does not report your story.

### *Musical Groups*

You may want to plan to include a live-music component at your event. Bands and other forms of entertainment are frequently used to add a fun element as well as to entertain the audience before the program begins. Placement of musicians should take into consideration the size of the event space, the proximity of the audience, and the major traffic flow — either of audience coming into the room or the speakers to the stage — and should not be an obstacle.

### *Balloons, Signs, and Flags*

Keep vertical obstructions out of the sightline of cameras. Avoid placing them between the press riser and the podium.

### *Audience*

**TRAFFIC FLOW** Allow as many entrances as possible to your event to avoid backups. If security is an issue, be sure that there are enough security staff or magnetometers to process your audience in the time allowed.

**GREETERS** Volunteers can serve as greeters and can be positioned at the entrance of the room/location with check-in tables for name tags, if applicable. Greeters can help direct arriving guests into the event and redirect media or speakers to another entrance, if necessary.

**ACCESSIBILITY** Provide signs indicating handicapped access to the event space. Allow space for wheelchairs and chairs for people who accompany those in wheelchairs. If you are using a signer for the hearing-impaired, reserve seats for the hearing-impaired that are in direct sightline with the signer.

**VIP SEATING** If you have special seating for VIPs, be sure that it is clearly communicated on all VIP correspondence such as invitations, signs, and even the directions given by event greeters.

### *“Green Room”/Holding Room*

A holding room is where special guests and speakers assemble before the event begins. It could be simply a space set off from the event area itself. It should be located conveniently close to the event site but separated enough to allow easy movements from outside entrances. It should also have easy access to bathrooms.

### *Exhibits/Tables*

Allow space in your site plan for tables or free-standing exhibits to allow dissemination of information about the Veterans History Project, your organization, and other partner organizations.



## GUIDE TO MEDIA OUTREACH

Media outreach is a key component in increasing public awareness of your organization's activities with the Veterans History Project. It requires work in advance of your event and can bring needed attention to your project.

The goal of media outreach is to increase public awareness about the Veterans History Project and to generate interest and participation. Publicizing your Veterans History Project event will highlight your organization's programs, encourage veterans to tell their stories, and show others how to conduct an oral history. Here are some steps you can take to successfully promote the Veterans History Project through the media.

### *Getting Organized*

Begin by developing a list of media contacts that might be interested in reporting your event. This list should include all daily and weekly newspapers, radio and television stations, magazines, and any other outlets in your area. Find their mailing addresses, e-mail addresses, and phone and fax numbers.

While you can send your information generically to an editor or producer, you are much more likely to get a response if you personalize the information for the person who is most likely to cover the story. Call newspapers and television and radio stations to find out which reporter or producer covers the "beat" (the subject matter the reporter covers) that your event falls under. Reporters who are likely to cover the Veterans History Project might be feature or lifestyle reporters. Community or metro reporters are also good contacts. Read the newspapers, watch television, and listen to radio shows or segments to get a better sense of to whom you should send your event information.

### *Contacting the Media*

Your first communication with the media should take place three or four weeks before the event. Send information about the event to newspaper and television community calendars. About two weeks before the event, mail every reporter a media kit that you have prepared with information about your Veterans History Project event. Include a copy of a news release (sometimes known as a press release) that includes the time and date of the event as well as other pertinent details (see sample). Also, include a personalized cover letter explaining the event and its importance. Follow up with courtesy calls to explain the event and its significance.

About one week before the event, e-mail or fax a media advisory (see sample) to all of the contacts on your list. Most reporters, especially those in larger cities, prefer to receive information by e-mail, although faxes are typically accepted. After a day or two, make a second round of calls to your contacts. Because most reporters have afternoon deadlines, it is best to contact them between 10 a.m. and 1 p.m. The best time to reach television contacts is in the early afternoon. Be sure that the reporter knows the time and date of the event, the purpose of the event, and which local figures will be in attendance. For broadcast media or photography editors, be sure to tell the reporters what the photo opportunities might be.

In addition to releases and advisories, reporters appreciate receiving local interest stories about the topic. For instance, be prepared to provide reporters with the names of local veterans in your community who have interesting stories about their wartime experiences and who are willing to share their war memories with the media.

The day before the event, fax advisories to local media daybooks. The Associated Press maintains daybooks for most large cities. The day of the event, fax or e-mail the press release to all contacts on your media list. Even if a reporter cannot attend, he or she may write a brief story based on the information you provide in the press release. You may also want to make a pre-event reminder call to media that had expressed interest.

*At the Event*

Before the event, set up a press table where media can sign in and pick up a press kit that you have prepared including news releases, biographies of speakers, background on the program, and contact information.

You should designate a media spokesperson who will answer all media questions. All questions should be directed to that person. The spokesperson and all event staff should be well-versed in the event's messages, but only the spokesperson should respond on the record. Plan responses in advance by outlining possible questions. Prepare a short list of "talking points" to help remember points that you want to make in talking to the media. Reporters may ask the spokesperson detailed questions, which he or she should attempt to answer. However, if the spokesperson doesn't know the answer to a question, he or she should say so and get back to the reporter at a later time.

*Follow-Up*

A few hours after the event, call the reporters who attended to see if they have any additional questions.

## NEWS RELEASES AND MEDIA ADVISORIES

A *news release* is designed to inform the media and public about an upcoming event, activity, or issue. It should be double-spaced and no more than one or two pages in length. Quotations from individuals involved with that issue should be included along with detailed information (with facts to support your points). Use simple words and short paragraphs. The release should answer the “who, what, where, when, and why” questions in the first or “lead” paragraph. The remainder of the release should offer supporting information.

A *media advisory* (or media alert) is an invitation for the media to attend your event. It should be no more than one page in length and should simply state the who, what, where, and when and why in an easily readable format.

Remember that news organizations get hundreds of releases and advisories every day. Make sure that you send information only when it is appropriate.

### *Tips to Remember*

- \* Always send releases or advisories on plain white paper or organization letterhead.
- \* Keep releases short and to the point. Include an attention-grabbing headline.
- \* Releases should not be longer than two pages. If you must extend to a second page, include “-- MORE --” on the bottom of the first page to let the reporter know that there is in fact a second page.
- \* At the bottom of the last page, include “###,” which indicates the end of the release or advisory.
- \* Always include the name of a contact person and his or her phone number in the top right-hand corner of the release and the advisory. In the top left-hand corner, always write “For Immediate Release” with the date.
- \* Always be truthful. Be certain that your story is complete and in context. Remember that your credibility is at stake. Do not exaggerate.
- \* Never assume that you are speaking off the record. If you don’t want to see it in print or on the air, don’t say it.
- \* You may ask to see a story before it is printed, but this is generally not done, even for fact-checking purposes.
- \* Be aware of deadlines. Material that does not get to the media in time will not be used. If a reporter calls for information that is not immediately available, get the exact day and time of the deadline and try to meet it.
- \* Media-related activities — news releases, news conferences, etc. — should always be followed by a personal phone call to the reporter or editor to establish contact and credibility, solicit an interview, answer questions, encourage coverage, or thank reporters for their coverage.
- \* Be prepared to provide backup materials. If you don’t know the answer to a question, refer the reporter to someone who can help or arrange to get the information for the reporters.

**NEWS RELEASE SAMPLE**

The following is a sample press release or news release. It is provided here for guidance only and is not for local use.

For Immediate Release  
[DATE]

Contact: [CONTACT NAME – NUMBER]

*LIBRARIAN OF CONGRESS INAUGURATES COUNCIL  
TO LEAD VETERANS HISTORY PROJECT*

**First National Collection of Veterans' Personal Accounts**

Librarian of Congress James H. Billington today announced the leadership and founding private-sector sponsorship for the Veterans History Project, a program that was established by Congress last year to record the first-person accounts of those who served the country during wartime. The librarian said that AARP, the nation's leading organization for people aged 50 and over, has agreed to become the project's founding private-sector sponsor. The librarian also announced the names of more than 100 partner organizations that have agreed to participate in the project.

Leadership and counsel for the project will be provided by the Five-Star Council, a group of prominent leaders — veterans, elected officials, historians, and journalists — each with a relevant personal connection to this endeavor. Members include former U.S. House of Representatives Republican Leader Bob Michel; Lt. General Julius Becton U.S.A. (Ret.); AARP Executive Director William Novelli; Major General Jeanne Holm USAF (Ret.); The Secretary of Veterans Affairs Anthony J. Principi; former U.S. Representative Sam Gibbons; former Tuskegee Airman Lt. Col. Lee Archer U.S.A. (Ret.); Tony Hope, son of USO entertainers Bob and Dolores Hope; Senator John Kerry; author Stephen Ambrose; and NBC news anchor Tom Brokaw. (See attached list for complete membership.)

"The Library of Congress is proud to have these distinguished individuals and organizations as valuable partners in the Veterans History Project," said Librarian of Congress James H. Billington. "More than 1,500 World War II veterans are dying each day, so there is an urgent need to collect their stories and experiences. This project will also allow the next generation to learn about and speak to those who have fought to sustain the freedom that we find challenged throughout the world today as well as those who kept the home front running during some of America's most difficult times. The Library of Congress is honored to add these eyewitness accounts of American history to the vast record we have preserved for more than 200 years."

For additional information about the Veterans History Project, please visit the project's Web site at [www.loc.gov/vets](http://www.loc.gov/vets).

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**MEDIA ADVISORY TEMPLATE**

The following is a sample media advisory. It is provided here for guidance only and is not for local use.

*Media Advisory*

[DATE]

Contact:

[Name]

[Telephone Number]

**WHAT:** Librarian of Congress James H. Billington will announce 100 partners participating in the Veterans History Project at the first meeting of the project's Five-Star Council.

The **Veterans History Project** is a project of the Library of Congress to collect and preserve oral histories and documentary materials from veterans of World War I, World War II, and the Korean, Vietnam, and Persian Gulf wars.

The **Five-Star Council** is a group of prominent leaders — veterans, elected officials, historians, and journalists — each with a relevant personal connection to this endeavor and who are providing leadership and counsel for the project.

**WHEN:** Thursday, November 8  
10:30 — 11:30 a.m.

**WHERE:** Library of Congress  
Thomas Jefferson Building, Members Room  
10 First Street S.E., Washington, D.C. 20540

*Interview Opportunities*

Council members available for comment on November 8 are: Lt. General Julius Becton U.S.A. (Ret.); The Secretary of Veterans Affairs Anthony J. Principi; former U.S. Representative Sam Gibbons; and former Tuskegee Airman Lt. Col. Lee Archer U.S.A. (Ret.).

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## OP-EDS

Opinion editorials, commonly known as Op-Eds, are in-depth opinion pieces that newspapers publish on issues and are written by prominent citizens or officials. They typically run 800 words or less. Each newspaper has individual standards for length and format; confirm these standards before submitting your Op-Ed. Check with your local newspaper for its preferred manner of submitting Op-Ed pieces. Always use facts to support your primary point(s). Be sure to sign your Op-Ed, and include a one-line identification of the author. Also check with your local newspaper for its preferred manner of submitting Op-Ed pieces. The following Op-Ed sample is intended for guidance only and is not for local use.

### *Sample*

The Veterans History Project, led by the Library of Congress, is waging a war on historical amnesia.

Created by the Library of Congress 18 months ago to coordinate and expand a national repository of veterans' oral histories and writings, the Veterans History Project — which is part of the library's American Folklife Center — honors those who served on the war front and the home front.

It's a critical mission that has my strong support. The project builds on our nation's ever-evolving collective memory. And because war, with more force than perhaps any other historical event, can radically transform not just the men and women who fought but also the people and society for which they fought, the Veterans History Project has an important contribution to make.

Collective memory is a key element of our understanding of our shared identity, and the Library of Congress — America's library — is the principal steward of America's memory. Collective memory offers a common narrative that can bind the people of a community or a nation to one another — an essential role, especially in a society like ours, which is made up of such diverse and independent people.

Abraham Lincoln invoked the power of collective memory, offering this plea to a fractured nation on the eve of the Civil War: "The mystic chords of memory, stretching from every battlefield and patriot grave to every living heart and hearthstone all over this broad land, will yet swell the chorus of the Union when again touched, as surely they will be, by the better angels of our nature."

Oral history adds richness to the "mystic chords of memory." But oral history can bring us close to the experience of the concussions of an artillery barrage; the intense camaraderie with others upon whom your life literally depends; the fear that comes with being under siege; or the uncertainty of waiting on the home front for a loved one to return.

Oral history brings history down from a lofty distance. "Most histories of war are written from the perspective of the generals and admirals," said Jerry Brenner, 82, of Columbia, Md., who recently donated to the Veterans History Project the 1,261 letters he and his wife exchanged while he was in combat in Europe from mid-1944 through the end of World War II.

"The people who actually fight the war are not mentioned too often," Brenner says. "My letters to [my wife] and her letters to me were a good perspective of the war. They were the letters of a young man in combat and his young bride and mother of his daughter, who was three months old when he left."

With more than 225 partners around the country — veterans organizations, state libraries and historical societies, oral history groups, and an army of local volunteers from AARP, which is the project's founding private sponsor — the Veterans History Project is reaching out to as many veterans as it can find to tell their stories.

It's a daunting task, because for many veterans, it can take years and substantial emotional strength to speak openly about traumas they'd rather forget. It's also challenging because the principal raw material of oral history — the veterans themselves — is exhaustible and depleting rapidly. There are almost 19 million war veterans living in the nation today, according to U. S. Department of Veterans Affairs, but 1,600 veterans die every day.

Perhaps just as important, the Veterans History Project is recruiting Americans of all ages, both veterans and nonveterans, to be part of the process of recording this vast store our collective memory. The Veterans History Project is a tremendous outlet for veterans' sons and daughters, many of whom have long been curious about their father or mother's wartime stories but never heard them out. By sitting down with audio or video recorders and guiding veteran relatives and even acquaintances through their military and civilian exploits, these volunteers are adding to the nation's collective memory.

The Veterans History Project is our opportunity today to "swell the chorus" of America's "mystic chords of memory" and to honor the people who sacrificed to sustain the nation. It's an opportunity not only for professional historians and librarians but also for any Americans who want to contribute to the never-ending and critical task of building our collective memory and, along the way, to discover themselves in it.

[Signed]

[One-sentence identification of signer]

## PROGRAM MESSAGES

As your organization's involvement in the Veterans History Project continues to develop, you and your representatives may be called on to speak publicly about that involvement. To guide them, you should develop key messages that all spokes-persons can use. In addition, these messages should be repeated in written materials. The following are a sample message and supporting points for the Veterans History Project. You should develop localized versions for your community.

***Message No. 1* — The Veterans History Project is a unique opportunity for Americans of all ages and backgrounds to play an important role in the preservation of our national collective memory and to learn important lessons from the rich historical resource we have in our military veterans and civilians who served in support of the war effort.**

### *Supporting Points*

- There is an urgent need to collect veterans' stories and experiences while they are still among us. For example, while there are almost 19 million war veterans living in the United States today, according to the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, 1,600 die every day, and many have never recorded their wartime recollections.
- This project will allow future generations of Americans to learn about those who have fought to sustain the freedom we so often take for granted and those who kept the home front running while they were away.
- The Veterans History Project collects oral histories, along with letters, diaries, photographs, and home movies from veterans of World War I, World War II, and the Korean, Vietnam, and Persian Gulf Wars as well as from those who served in support of them.
- The Veterans History Project encourages participation from a wide range of veterans organizations, military installations, civic groups, youth groups, museums, libraries, historical societies, students and teachers, and colleges and universities.
- The Veterans History Project was authorized by enactment of Public Law 106-380 and signed into law by President Clinton on October 27, 2000. The bipartisan legislation was sponsored by Representatives Ron Kind, Amo Houghton, and Steny Hoyer in the U.S. House of Representatives and by Senators Max Cleland and Chuck Hagel in the U.S. Senate. It was passed unanimously.

***Message No. 2* —XXX's sponsorship of the Veterans History Project extends well beyond the scope of this event.**

(Create a message about your organization's involvement and commitment.)

***Message No. 3* —There are XXX veterans in our community, and we should individually make a commitment to record their wartime memories for the benefit of us all.**

(Use local statistics and anecdotes to make the message yours.)

## LOC/VHP LOGO USAGE GUIDE

*If you use the Library of Congress and/or Veterans History Project logo(s) for printed material, please ensure that the following guidelines are followed. (As a partner organization, you should have already received a copy of these guidelines.)*

The purpose of the library's logo policy is to ensure that the name of the Library of Congress and its designated logos are used in an appropriate and dignified manner and that any use is conducted in accordance with the Library's Regulation 112. Requests for copies of this regulation or questions regarding the appropriate use of the Library's name or logos should be referred to the library's public affairs office at (202)707-2905.

### 1. Definitions

A. The Veterans History Project denotes an initiative of the Library of Congress to collect the oral and written histories of American veterans (and associated artifacts) of World War I, World War II, the Korean War, the Vietnam War, and the Persian Gulf War.

B. Veterans History Project "partners" are those entities with which the library collaborates to celebrate and publicize the library's Veterans History Project. These entities might include veterans groups, libraries, schools, or commercial entities.

### 2. Credit and Recognition

#### A. Overview

These Veterans History Project and American Folklife Center logos symbolize the library's authority and standing as an official agency of the federal government. As such, they shall be displayed in the context of activities, programs, publications, and productions that relate directly to the Veterans History Project.

#### B. Cooperative Partnerships

1. The size, location, and other attributes of the logos and credit lines should be positioned in such a way that they:
  - a. Convey appropriately and in a tasteful manner the partnership, publication, product, or event. The logo of the partner should be of an equivalent size but not larger.
  - b. Do not imply library endorsement unless such endorsement is expressly agreed upon by the library.
2. The library requires that a credit line accompany reproductions of images or items from its collections or of its buildings that reflects the nature of the relationship, such as "from the collections of the Library of Congress ..." or "in cooperation with the Library of Congress ..."

#### C. Commercial Partnerships

The library requires that partners agree in writing not to knowingly harm, misuse, or bring into disrepute the name or logos of the Library of Congress. If the library enters into a commercial relationship with a partner that allows the partner to use the name and Veterans History Project logo(s) of the Library of Congress in connection with the promotion of an event, product, or service, the library shall have the right of final approval of all materials relating to the use of its name and logos. Failure to gain the library's approval of the use of its name or logos could result in civil and criminal penalties pursuant to law.

#### D. Electronic Partnerships

Links to other sites from the Library of Congress' site should adhere to the *Appropriate Use Policy for External Linking* and the *Appropriate Use Policy for Sales and Marketing*. Copies are available upon request from the public affairs office at (202)707-2905.

**LOGOS**

*Veterans History Project Logo*



*Library of Congress Logo*



*American Folklife Center Logo*



*AARP Logo*





### *Three months before the event*

- Plan the type of event and its programming content
- Identify partners or organizations in your area that will co-sponsor the event with you
- Name event-planning committee members
- Identify event site, date, and time
- Research community calendars to identify potential conflicts
- Create plan for outreach to the audiences
- Identify local celebrities or public officials for speaking opportunities and send letters of invitation to the event; follow up later with a phone call

### *Six weeks before the event*

- Develop a media list
- Develop budget and identify funding sources
- Print invitations
- Draft invitation lists

### *Four weeks before the event*

- Set up system for receiving and documenting R.S.V.P.s
- Send media advisories announcing the time and place of the event
- Identify equipment and furnishing needs at site; contact vendors
- Identify signage needs, including backdrop; contact vendors
- Identify permits required, if any, and make applications
- Review event plan with partner organizations, site organizations, and other officials as required

### *Three weeks before the event*

- Confirm speakers; send background information on event and project
- Mail invitations/notices to audience
- Determine speaking program (order and duration of speakers, etc.)
- Identify media spokesperson
- Write media materials (advisories and releases)
- Discuss arrangement with vendors, including catering (if any) and printing of program and signage

### *Two weeks before the event*

- Determine volunteer needs; recruit volunteers; identify training and material needs
- Track and evaluate R.S.V.P.s; if necessary, broaden outreach to ensure adequate audience
- Confirm special needs (table for handouts, exhibit space, etc.) and incorporate into site plan
- Make initial calls to media; send press kits

### *One week before the event*

- Finalize content
- Finalize site plan with vendors, including contract and method of payment
- Confirm speakers and special guests; brief speakers on full program
- Schedule walk-through of event site with site manager, vendors, speakers or their representatives, event-planning committee, volunteers, etc.
- Continue outreach to media, including phone calls and faxed advisories/releases
- Continue to evaluate R.S.V.P.s
- Receive delivery of printed materials and check them for accuracy

### *Day Before the event*

- Continue contact with media
- Continue to evaluate R.S.V.P.s; if necessary, revise site plan to accommodate new audience size (either larger or smaller)
- Finalize introductory, emcee, and closing remarks, if necessary

### *Day of the event*

- Fax or e-mail final press release to all media contacts
- Review setup of all vendors; check lights and sound and allow enough time for corrections after review
- Post signs (directions, visuals)
- Set up media table for check-in and distributing of media kits
- Set up kiosk/information tables for yourself and other co-sponsors or involved partners

### *One hour before the event*

- Position volunteers
- Monitor audience arrival; make necessary adjustments to shorten lines and eliminate logjams
- Greet media representatives and escort them, if necessary, to press area
- Greet each special guest and escort to holding room or event site; advise of any last-minute program changes including names of people in the audience to be recognized in announcements

### *During the event*

- Monitor everything — lights, sound, catering, audience movement, program timing — and be prepared to make necessary adjustments
- Staff the media table and media area; be prepared to answer questions on background about project, event, and speakers

### *After the event*

- Supervise breakdown by vendors
- Remove all signs; if usable, save them for next event
- Monitor audience departure; make necessary adjustments to eliminate logjams
- Make follow-up calls to media
- Collect sign-in sheets, if any, and put them in possession of appropriate entity
- Implement any follow-up action required by event's call to action
- Send thank-you letters to VIPs, speakers, partner organizations, donors, etc.
- Prepare final accounting of event expenses