

THE AMERICAN LEGION
Department of California
Joanne Evans, Vice Commander, Representing Fifth Area

Press Release:

**ATTORNEY LEADING AMERICAN LEGION ANTI-ACLU, PRO
“PUBLIC EXPRESSION OF RELIGION ACT” CRUSADE NAMED
“LEGIONNAIRE OF THE YEAR” IN SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA**

A longtime civil rights attorney and American Legion activist who is leading a national Legion crusade against the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), and for the “Public Expression of Religion Act of 2005,” Rees Lloyd, who resides in Banning in Riverside County, has been named “Legionnaire of the Year, 2004-2005” for the five Southern California counties comprising the “Fifth Area” of the state American Legion.

Joanne Evans, a former Marine and a Vice Commander of the American Legion, Department of California for the Fifth Area, said Lloyd was chosen as the “Legionnaire of the Year” from among more than 40,000 Legionnaires in the five Southern California counties in the Fifth Area – Imperial, Orange, Riverside, San Bernardino and San Diego.

“The ‘Legionnaire of the Year’ award for outstanding service in promoting the goals and ideals of the American Legion is one of the most prestigious awards that can be bestowed on a veteran,” Evans said. “We are very proud of Rees Lloyd, who was nominated by District 21 which comprises all Posts and members in Riverside County, and who was selected by Fifth Area delegates.”

Lloyd is Past Commander of the San Geronio Pass Post 428 in Banning; the incoming Second Vice Commander of Riverside Post 79 and a member of its Memorial Honor Detail at Riverside National Cemetery, and has been elected as 3rd Vice Commander for District 21 (Riverside County) for the coming year.

The citation supporting Lloyd’s recognition as “Legionnaire of the Year” award recounts that what is now a national American Legion crusade began when the ACLU sued in the Riverside Federal District Court under the Establishment Clause of the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution to remove a solitary cross honoring WWI veterans at what is now the Mojave Desert Veterans Memorial.

A Judge Advocate for a San Jacinto Legion Post 848, James Drake, called Lloyd when he learned that a Riverside Federal District Judge had granted an order to the ACLU for the cross to be destroyed – and had awarded the ACLU some \$40,000 in attorney fees, to be paid by taxpayers, for bringing the lawsuit.

Lloyd, a solo practitioner civil rights attorney for almost 25 years who himself was a staff attorney for the ACLU for approximately two years after graduating from law school and passing the California State Bar in 1979, was himself outraged at the ACLU’s precedent-setting attack on a veterans memorial, and the fact it sought and received taxpayer-paid attorney fees for doing so when, Lloyd said, “the ACLU and its clients have no attorney fees. This is pure profit, pure exploitation of a benevolently intended Civil Rights Act, for financial enrichment of the ACLU, which pretends to act pro bono.”

Lloyd wrote what is now known as American Legion Resolution 326, which was passed unanimously at every level of the American Legion – from Post 428 in Banning, to District 21 in Riverside County, to the Fifth Area covering Southern California, to the Department of California, which sponsored it at the 2004 National American Legion Convention which adopted it unanimously.

American Legion Resolution 326, Preserve Mojave Desert Veterans Memorial, calls on Congress to amend the Civil Rights Attorney Fees Act of 1976, 42 United States Code Section 1988, to withdraw the authority of judges to award attorney fees to the ACLU, or any other litigant, in Establishment Clause lawsuits against the Boy Scouts, or against the public display of the Ten Commandments or other symbols of America's religious history and heritage, including at veterans memorials, as has happened at the Mojave Desert Veterans Memorial.

The result was the introduction at the Memorial Day weekend 2005, of the "Public Expression of Religion Act of 2005," by Rep. John Hostettler (R-Ind.).

"It does everything that the American Legion has called for, and everything every American should work for – the withdrawal of the authority which Congress previously gave to judges to award attorney fees in lawsuits brought under the Establishment Clause to destroy symbols of our religious history and heritage as Americans," Evans said.

"Most veterans – and most Americans – are under the impression that the ACLU has been bringing these lawsuits at its own expense, pro bono," but that is far from the truth: The ACLU has been profiting in these lawsuits, which most Americans detest, in the millions of dollars by judge-ordered attorney fee awards to the ACLU which have to be paid by taxpayers," Evans said.

"The Public Expression of Religion Act of 2005 will end that abuse, if enacted," Evans said. "That one Legionnaire can sit down and write a resolution which can reach the highest level of the American Legion, the National Convention, and even result in legislation in Congress, is evidence of the democracy that exists in the American Legion.

"We are proud to recognize Rees Lloyd as 'Legionnaire of the Year' for initiating Resolution 326 here in California and leading the effort to have it adopted as national American Legion policy by vote of the members," Evans said. "We veterans in the American Legion are dedicated to fighting this crusade until Congress enacts the Public Expression of Religion Act and until victory over the ACLU is won."

Lloyd, in accepting the award at a Fifth Area meeting in Escondido, said:

"I am honored and humbled by this award, because of the source – American veterans, the salt of the American earth; those who answered the call of our country to serve in times of peril; veterans still serving America in the American Legion, including by working to make the Public Expression of Religion Act of 2005 the law of the land, protecting the free exercise of religion in the public sphere, and combating the historical revisionism and secular cleansing of symbols of our true American religious history and heritage by the fanatic Establishment Clause litigation of the ACLU, which I believe has become, by its fanaticism, the Taliban of American secular totalitarianism."