

## REMARKS BY BOB SCHNELL

### Chairman, American Legion Rider Committee

General Session Saturday, July 14, 2012

I am here today not as a Rider, although I am a proud member... but as a Legionnaire, and chairman of the American Legion's permanent committee on The American Legion Riders.

As members of The American Legion Riders, no statement better expresses our own Riders Pledge ... a pledge that we recite almost as often as the Legion recites the Preamble to the Constitution ... and the Auxiliary and the sons of The American Legion recite theirs.

In all cases, these recitations remind us of our purposes ... our obligations ... and our relationships. I am concerned that many of our fellow Riders have lost sight of those factors. I am here to clarify and underscore them.

When you look at the emblem of The American Legion Riders, what do you see? The EAGLE, but central to it, is the emblem of The American Legion - an emblem that, until our founding, had never before been authorized for use by any organization other than the Legion.

The Riders were the first, and are the only, group that has been permitted to meld the emblem of The American Legion into its identifying mark. That fact alone, symbolizes our unique relationship. If the significance of that fact is not clear...consider that, although the Legion emblem is proudly worn by not only Rider Legionnaires, but also by Rider Sons and Rider Auxiliary members...only Legionnaires EARNED the right to wear the emblem. Like it or not, your display of the emblem is a privilege. That privilege has been extended to ALL Riders...however, the rights associated with it are retained by The American Legion.

We are NOT The American Legion... We are OF The American Legion . We are a creature of The American Legion... and the creation is NOT greater than the creator. The meaning of that fact I want to make clear today.

According to our constitution, there are only two recognized levels of the Riders, the Post chapter and the state chapter. Charters are not issued to Chapters. Charters are applied for...granted to... and owned by the Post. The power to operate the chapter... approve members... and authorize activities is delegated to the chapter...but is retained by the Post.

What does this mean?

Very simply, it means that any privilege extended can be rescinded. There is no inherent privilege right to be a member of The American Legion Riders. The privilege of wearing The American Legion Riders Logo – resplendent with the Legion Emblem – is earned... earned by the cooperation with the veterans who created the Riders... support of the Post that agreed to sponsor your chapter... and respect for those officers of the Legion elected to watch over the Riders. Anything less than that is cause for removal and, in extreme cases, cancellation of the entire chapter.

I encourage all of you to consider this carefully...and understand that the relationship of the Riders to The American Legion is not one of ...subservience...or inferiority...or...but rather, is a living enactment of the principles and ideals that you pledge yourself to each and every time you recite the Riders Pledge.