

President General J. Michael Tomme, Sr. Inaugural Remarks

126th Annual Congress of the National Society of the Sons of the American Revolution

Westin Copley Hotel • Boston, MA • 13 July, 2016

Golden Opportunities for the Future of the SAR “Where the past embraces the future”.

Compatriots, distinguished guests, and ladies. What an honor and a privilege it is to stand before you this evening as your 113th President General of the National Society Sons of the American Revolution. I am humbled and I appreciate the confidence that you have bestowed upon me, by electing me to this position. I am excited to serve you and this worthy organization.

First, I want to thank PG Tom Lawrence for a great year and wonderful 126th Congress.

At this time, allow me to take a couple of minutes to introduce members of my family:

My wife, Cilla Leed and your First Lady.

Our son, John M. Tomme, Jr., and his wife Jenny.

Our two daughters, Leslie and Laura (whom are not in attendance due to work schedules) and our five grandchildren are all at home in Georgia. My Dad, at age 88, is unable to attend due to his current medical conditions. I want thank each of my family members for supporting me in this journey.

I also want recognize my Georgia SAR “family” as these are the individuals who first introduced me to the SAR. Will the members of the Georgia Society please stand, and be recognized?

I take great pride in that I am a member of the SAR. This is your society and each of us has an important role to play. We should take every opportunity to educate the public on who we are and why we are relevant. I believe we can increase our identity and have the SAR become more recognizable to the public. Over the years, a lot of our compatriots and colleagues have worked hard to make this organization into the largest, strongest and best society that it can be. However, there is still a lot of work to do, both now and into our future.

At the Spring Leadership and Trustees meeting, we took an important step into the future. We engaged in discernment and debate of the proposal, and then the Trustees voted to pay the final installment of the interpretive plan to Solid Light and approved moving ahead with the Educational Outreach Center, when we have the money in hand. I believe that our compatriots like our Patriot ancestors, came away from this session with an overall appreciation of the process and agreed to move forward.

This facility will be a wonderful addition to our Society not only now, but into the future of our organization once it is completed. With our headquarters located on Main Street, among numerous museums and tourist attractions, this Educational Outreach Center once completed will not only enhance our visibility, but should attract new prospective members

who visit the area. Visitors could tour our Educational Center and then exit next door to our library to conduct research on their own family history.

I will continue the Implementation Committee that PG Lawrence started. This will be chaired by PG Nathan White. This committee will continue to be made up of stakeholders from the following committees: SAR Foundation, IT, Education, Budget, Finance, and Strategic Planning Committees. They will continue to review our existing plans, programs and needs as we progress into the future and continue to prioritize them. The Committee will continue to set forth and present to the ExCom and Trustees a list of priorities.

I am also continuing the following committees and programs, which were in place before I was elected:

Compatriot Doug Collins will continue as chair the Patriot Ancestors' Biographies.
PG Brock will chair SAR Medal of Honor Recipients and work to finish this project.
Compatriot Chuck Sweeney will chair the Veterans Recognition Committee.
Compatriot Paul Callanan will chair the Congress Review Committee.
Compatriot Dr. Rudy Byrd will chair the Council of Youth Awards.
Compatriot John Dodd will chair the Governance and Organization Committee.

An important part of SAR mission is patriotic education and therefore it is our responsibility to share our knowledge of the founding of this country and the struggles of our forefathers and ancestors. That is why my first initiative is Education Outreach. To enhance our Educational Outreach beyond the borders of Louisville, KY, this new Educational Outreach Team initiative will extend this mission into our chapters and reach out to the children in their schools, scout organizations, civil groups, religious institutions, and other patriotic societies.

The long range goal of this initiative is to develop and share educational program presentations by SAR members. These presentations would be Colonial Living History (era before or during the American Revolution), a discussion about or founding documents, presentations on battles or personalities, or other appropriate patriotic programs targeted for children. The long term goal is to have a NSSAR data base of all Educational Outreach Teams and their programs. This would allow educators a data base of our nationwide programs including contact information and scripts and/or videos.

Colleen Wilson, NSSAR Education Director; Brooks Lyles, Educational Committee Chairman; Bill Stone, Educational Outreach Center Production Chair; and Tom Jackson, Web-based Educational Learning Subcommittee Chair, and others on the NSSAR Educational Team will work together to develop this initiative. The NSSAR Educational Director could assist in the developing of new presentations.

The details of this long range initiative can found on the NSSAR website. There will be two levels of the program, (1) for those chapters who have never offered an educational outreach program and (2) for those chapters who already have an educational program in place. The basic requirements are the same and will require chapters to share their program information with NSSAR to be included in the national education website. Streamers will be

available for those chapters who complete this initiative between now and 31 May 2017. But this initiative does not stop in 2017. It continues for many years into the future.

My next initiative is the Mentor Program.

When does the mentor process begin? It begins when a new prospective member inquires/seek information on becoming a member of the Sons of the American Revolution by a casual conversation, email inquiry, or responding to an ad in local paper. At that time, the process should be an offer to assist or a referral to a mentor in the chapter. The President should have a list of mentors in the chapter to assist in this endeavor. Each chapter should have mentors regardless of the size of the chapter. The mentor should assist the applicant through the process of acceptance and continue on once he becomes a member *to assimilate the new member ensuring a meaningful relationship with the current members and a commitment to the mission of the society.*

It has been recognized that the retention rate of members, especially new members should be increased. I believe the retention rate may be significantly increased by involving a new member in the activities of the chapter, state and national level through “mentoring” of new members. The mentoring of members is a responsibility of all SAR members and especially the 1st line sponsor and chapter.

Therefore, I am asking the *Membership Committee* to spear head this project. I am requesting that they review their policies, pamphlets and brochures and bring them up to date. Their publications should be “eye catching” to the public. I would charge the Membership Committee to work with the Medals and Awards Committee to look into the possibility of tying a portion of this program to the Liberty Medal. The goal of this initiative is to create an effective mentorship program which will enhance not only our enrollment numbers, but the quality and quantity of our SAR programs.

Our Youth programs continue to be strong. We continue to have strong leadership in these committees. Our Council of Youth Awards has put together a wonderful brochure listing all of Youth Awards. I am aware that additional money is required to increase the awards provided by the various programs. Therefore, I am issuing a *challenge* to each *State Society* to donate \$1,000.00 or more to the Council of Youth Awards (*not to the individual youth programs*) between now and 1 June 2017. Those states that meet the \$1,000 challenge will receive a streamer. If *100% of the state societies* donate \$1,000, Cilla and I will donate \$10,000 or more to the Council of Youth Awards. The total donations would then be divided amount the various programs. I would charge the Committee to look at the various programs and determine how to equalize the awards.

Our NSSAR CAR program continues to grow. I am asking Chairman Darrin Schmidt to make sure that each State Society has a State CAR Chairman. I would like the State CAR Chairman to *encourage* each chapter to create a CAR Liaison. Chapters should encourage SAR members to become Senior Leaders in the local and state CAR societies, as well as at the National level. I would like each SAR chapter to enroll CAR members as Junior Members in our society. Once they become SAR Junior Members, the chapters are *encouraged* to get them involved in our committees. Many of the CAR members are already serving on committees in the CAR, why not with the SAR? This would increase our membership. Once the Junior Member ages out, they would continue on into the parent organization.

This year the National Park Service is celebrating its 100th year of service. This is wonderful opportunity for the *Historic Site and Celebrations Committee* to build our relationship with the Park Service and partner with them in their year of celebration. The Park Service is engaging in a campaign to reintroduce the national parks and the work of the National Park Service to a new generation of Americans. Therefore, I am issuing a *challenge* to the Historic Site and Celebrations Committee to build upon our relationship with the National Park Service. Many of our American Revolutionary historic sites our maintained by the Park Service and with our increased involvement, this would bring increased visibility and promotion of the SAR to a potential new member base.

In closing, I would like reflect on the exceptional members we have in the SAR. We have all given of our time, talents and financial assets to make this organization prominent. Now is our opportunity to take the SAR to a new level and commitment. We must continue to promote the SAR to the public, so that we are recognizable. We must constantly tell our ancestor's stories and those of the early patriots who fought for our independence. We live in the greatest country and enjoy the freedoms that our forefathers fought for over 230 years ago. *We are obligated to continue to preserve our heritage, our mission, and the historic principals for which this country was founded upon.*

I ask that you please keep Cilla and me in your thoughts and prayers as we travel this great nation, to carry out the business of our society. We both look forward to a wonderful year. Thank you once again for the confidence you have placed in me. I look forward to working alongside you for our Society, a society of gentlemen, the Sons of the American Revolution.

Now for a few announcements:

Cilla and I are excited to announce our "Road to Saratoga" tour that will be held next May 4-11, 2017. We will begin in Quebec, Canada visiting the sights of Old Quebec. We will then travel on to Montreal, where we will visit the Old Montreal and Fort Lennox National Historic Site and then on to Burlington, VT, and visit the Ethan Allen homestead. We will travel on to Fort Ticonderoga and then on to Saratoga National Park. It will be a great trip and we encourage you to register as soon as possible. We will have flyers available in the back of the room. God Bless America and each of you.

Yours in Patriotism,

J. Michael Tomme, Sr.

J. Michael "Mike" Tomme, Sr.