



**106<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL  
CONVENTION  
PROCEEDINGS**

**The American Legion  
Department of  
South Dakota**

**Including  
REPORTS OF OFFICERS  
AND COMMITTEES  
2024-2025**

**June 19-22, 2025  
Huron, South Dakota**



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**PROCEEDINGS**  
**ONE-HUNDRED-SIXTH ANNUAL CONVENTION**  
**THE AMERICAN LEGION**  
**DEPARTMENT OF SOUTH DAKOTA**  
**June 19-22, 2025**

The Pre-Convention meeting of the Department Finance Commission was held at 10:00 am, Thursday, June 19, 2025, in Prairie AB rooms at the Huron Event Center, followed by the meeting of the Department Executive Committee, also in the Prairie AB rooms, at 1:00pm

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The Convention Resolutions Committee's met at 10:00am, Friday, June 20, 2025, in the Board Room of the Huron Event Center. All Convention Committee Chairs met with Commander Morello and Adjutant Van Delist for an instructional meeting, information and supplies for their respective meetings. Convention Committee meetings took place at 1:30 pm in rooms throughout the Events Center. The South Dakota American Legion Foundation originally scheduled to meet at 3:00 pm but met earlier at 10:30am to better accommodate.

A joint Convention American Legion Memorial Service was held in Dakota CDGH at 4:30pm. Following the Joint Memorial Service, Senator John Thune addressed those in attendance.

At 7:00pm, Friday, June 20, 2025, in Prairie ABC The Joint Banquet took place with The American Legion National Commander, James A. LaCoursiere, Jr., Department of Connecticut, as guest speaker.

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Department Commander Kevin Morello of Blackhawk, SD, (Piedmont Post 311) called the 106th Annual Convention of The American Legion Department of South Dakota to order at 9:00am, Saturday, June 21st, 2025, after a mini concert by the State American Legion Band.

The Color Guard advanced and posted the colors, The National Anthem was played, and the commander led all in the Pledge of Allegiance. Department Chaplain Mike Kumm gave the invocation followed by the POW/MIA ceremony by Department Adjutant C.P. Van Delist. Commander Morello led the delegates in reciting the Preamble to the Constitution of The American Legion. The Call for Convention was read by Adjutant Van Delist.

**OFFICIAL CALL FOR CONVENTION OF**  
**THE AMERICAN LEGION DEPARTMENT OF SOUTH DAKOTA**

The ONE-HUNDRED-SIXTH ANNUAL CONVENTION of The American Legion Department of South Dakota is hereby called, and will be held in Huron, South Dakota, June 19-22, 2025.

**PURPOSE**

The Convention is called to elect officers for the ensuing year and delegates to the 106th National Convention of The American Legion, to consider any proposed

amendments to the Constitution and to transact such other business as may be brought before it.

## **REPRESENTATION**

Representation at the convention will be by Posts. In accordance with the provisions of the Constitution, each Post is entitled to two delegates and two alternates plus one additional delegate and alternate for each fifty or major fraction thereof, memberships shown on the books of the State Adjutant fifteen days prior to the convention, or this year on June 4<sup>th</sup>, 2025. The Constitution requires that the delegates to the Department Convention be chosen by each Post by election from its own membership. Alternates will have power to vote only in the absence of the regular delegates.

Forms for listing the Department Convention Delegates and Alternates are sent to Post Adjutants. These forms need to be signed by the officers of the Post and mailed to reach State Headquarters, PO Box 67, Watertown, SD 57201 by June 4<sup>th</sup>, or turned in at the Department Convention Registration desk in Huron. Note that the 2025 membership identification number of each Delegate and Alternate is required.

In accordance with the Department of South Dakota Constitution and Bylaws, Article IX, Section 3: Every Legionnaire attending the Department Convention shall register and pay a registration fee of \$1.00 and upon proper identification as a Legionnaire in good standing shall receive a Convention badge and be entitled to the privileges of the Convention. The Legion Post hosting the Department Convention shall retain this \$1.00 fee to help defray expenses incurred in holding the Convention. The registration fee for each Post's delegate strength, regardless of attendance, shall be \$7.00 per delegate payable to The American Legion Department of South Dakota, in advance of the election at the annual Department Convention. Department Headquarters shall retain \$2.00 of each delegate registration fee and forward the remaining \$5.00 to the Department Convention host Post to help defray Convention costs.

## **DEPARTMENT EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**

A pre-convention meeting of the Department Executive Committee, as constituted, is hereby called and will be held in the Huron Event Center, Huron, Thursday, June 19<sup>th</sup>, 2025, at 1:00 p.m.

A post-convention meeting of the Department Executive Committee, as constituted, is hereby called and will be held in the Huron Event Center, immediately following the adjournment of the 106<sup>th</sup> Annual Department Convention of The American Legion Department of South Dakota.

## **POST/DISTRICT OFFICIALS**

Post and District Officials, unless elected as Delegates or Alternates to the Department Convention, have no privileges in the Convention except as guests of their respective Posts and Districts.

## **CAUCUSES**

Area Caucuses, for selection of State Vice Commander nominees, will be held in assigned areas, Saturday afternoon, June 21<sup>st</sup>, 2025, immediately following completion of that day's convention business session.

## CONVENTION COMMITTEES

In accordance with the Uniform Code of Procedures for the Organization of Department Conventions of The American Legion Department of South Dakota, convention committees are to be convened for the purpose of compiling policy forming reports to the General Session of the Convention.

Each District shall designate Delegates or Alternates for service on each convention committee and shall file with the Department Adjutant a list of such designees at least two weeks prior to the convening date of the meetings of said convention committees.

The convention committees consist of the following:

*Americanism* — 1 Delegate per District

*Credentials* — 1 Delegate per District

*Employment* — 1 Delegate per District

*Internal Organization* — 1 Delegate per District

*Legislative* — 1 Delegate per District

*National Security* — 1 Delegate per District

*Next Meeting Place* — 1 Delegate per District

*Rehabilitation* — 1 Delegate per District

*Resolutions* — 1 Delegate per District

*Rules* — 1 Delegate per District

The Department Commander will appoint Legionnaires, with membership in good standing, as the Chairperson and Liaison to each of the convention committees.

All convention committees will meet on Friday, June 20th, 2025, at 1:30 p.m. at the Huron Event Center, Huron, SD, in rooms designated for that purpose. The directory of meeting rooms will be available upon entry into the Huron Event Center, on the day of the meetings, and also in the Convention Program Book.

The Convention Resolutions Committee will hold its initial meeting, for the purpose of reviewing all convention resolutions to determine the distribution of said resolutions to the other convention committees, on Friday, June 20th, 2025, at 10:00 a.m., in the Huron Event Center, Huron, SD. Room assignments will be announced in the Convention Program Book and will be posted in the convention facility.

Each convention committee chairperson will be responsible for compiling a final report of the actions of their respective committees to the Department Adjutant after their committee has adjourned and prior to the scheduled report of the convention committee to the convention body.

## RESOLUTIONS

Resolutions emanating from a Post shall be forwarded to the Department Adjutant to be in his hands no less than two days prior to the opening session of the Department Convention.

Resolutions which call for an amendment to the Constitution of The American Legion Department of South Dakota must be submitted to the Department Adjutant in the proper form by May 5th, 2025. This will ensure that the Department Internal Affairs Commission can screen them in time to allow for the commission's recommendations for approval or disapproval and for the Department Adjutant to distribute copies of these resolutions to all Posts within the Department at least 30 days prior to the convening of the Department Convention.

## ELECTIONS

The election of all Department Officers as well as Delegates and Alternates to the 106th National Convention of The American Legion, shall be a Special Order of Business of the Convention and in accordance with the Uniform Code of Procedures for the Organization of Department Conventions of The American Legion Department of South Dakota, will be conducted at 12 O'clock noon on Sunday, June 22nd, 2025, or at the conclusion of all other business of the Department Convention, whichever occurs first.

C.P. Van Delist  
Department Adjutant

Kevin Morello  
Department Commander

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Commander Morello introduced Mark Robish, Mayor of Huron who welcomed & brought. He additionally pointed out activities of interest in the community. Convention host, Post 7 Commander, Howard Alter, delivered his greetings and welcomed the assembled delegates to Huron.

State Vice Commander for Districts 3-8, Kevin Hempel, responded to the welcomes and thanked Huron for their hospitality as well as the Huron Post for all the hard work that went into hosting the Convention.

Commander Morello introduced Department of South Dakota Disabled American Veterans Commander, Tim Walsh, to deliver greetings. Commander Walsh commented on how our programs are second to none and thanked all of the Legion Family for their service to our Nation and communities. He shared a bit about the DAV Transportation Program and their service officers, who, like the American Legion's, assist Veterans in getting the benefits they have earned.

The Chair recognized the South Dakota State Council President of the Vietnam Veterans of America, David Gates, who brought greetings and thanked the American Legion for their work. He informed that in two years, the VVA will reorganize into the VVA Legacy Society so that the VVA will continue into perpetuity.

Jeremiah Schneider, Secretary of the South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs (SDDVA), addressed the assembly. He thanked the Auxiliary for doing all they do. Secretary stated his goal for the SDDVA is to bridge the gap between the Veteran, State, and Federal entities and reconnect with Veterans. He also mentioned how priceless our programs are and encouraged to keep moving forward with them. He then introduced Aaron Pollard, who gave further updates on the SDDVA.

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Department Commander Morello called on Andy Lyngen of Garretson (Garretson Post 23), Chair of the Convention Credentials Committee, to provide the Credentials Committee initial report. Chair Lyngen presented that report to the Convention.

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Department Commander Morello then recognized Warren Aas, Watertown, SD, (Sisseton Post 50), Department Chair of the Veterans' Affairs and Rehabilitation Commission and also Chair of the Convention Rehabilitation Committee for the purpose of giving those reports.

## **CONVENTION REHABILITATION COMMITTEE REPORT**

Mr. Commander:

The Convention Rehabilitation Committee meeting was called to order by Chair Warren Aas of Watertown, at 1:30 p.m., Friday, June 20, 2025, in the Dakota D Room in the Crossroads Convention Center, Huron, SD.

Those present besides Chair Warren Aas of Watertown were: Liaison – Nancy Grandy of Sioux Falls; District 1 – Rodney “Buck” DeWeese of Spearfish; District 2 – Chris Rendon of Summerset; District 3 – Absent; District 4 – PDC Wayne “Red” Vetter of Cresbard; District 5 – Warren Aas of Watertown; District 6 – Ron Falor of Kimball; District 7 – Nancy Grandy of Sioux Falls; and District 8 – Greg Geiman of Scotland.

Chair Aas led the Pledge of Allegiance and read the duties of the Convention Rehabilitation Committee on page 17 of the Uniform Code of Procedures. Chris Rendon of Summerset was appointed as secretary. The Convention Rehabilitation Committee was assigned no resolutions.

Our committee had a very interesting and productive discussion reference head-mounted virtual reality headsets to assist veterans dealing with issues such as PTSD, pain management, and can be programmed to fit the needs of the veterans. During the 2025 American Legion Washington Conference in Washington D.C., the VA Training and Engagement Executive Director of the Strategic Initiative Lab, Dr. Anne Lord Bailey, gave an excellent briefing on Immersive Technology and the use of the virtual headset. She indicated that at least one of these headsets is currently located in every VA Medical Center for use. Our committee had a great discussion reference this is an area that our department should pursue with our National VA&R Division in Washington, and hopefully someday these virtual headsets will become available to all veterans that in need of this help.

There being no further business to come before the committee, the convention committee rendered a hand salute to our flag. Ron Falor of Kimball made a motion to adjourn our meeting, seconded by Rodney “Buck” DeWeese of Spearfish. The Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Convention Committee meeting was declared adjourned at 1:55 p.m.

Respectfully submitted, Warren L. Aas, Chair

**Chair Aas moved for the adoption of the report of the Convention Rehabilitation Committee Report; the motion was duly seconded and carried. Department Commander Morello declared the Convention Rehabilitation Committee Report adopted.**

As the Chair of the Standing VA&R Commission, Mr. Aas delivered the commission's annual report (see Annual Reports section for full report). It was adopted. Chair Aas and Commander Morello then presented the 2025 William Lenker VA&R Award for Excellence to Sturgis Post 33.



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Department Commander Morello recognized Kevin Hempel, Watertown, SD, (Chester Post 136), Chair of the Convention Rules Committee, for the purpose of a report. Kevin Hempel presented that committee's report to the Convention.

## CONVENTION RULES COMMITTEE REPORT

Commander,

The meeting of the Convention Rules Committee was called to order by Chair Kevin Hempel, Chester Post 136 at 1:30 pm, Friday June 20, 2025, at the Huron Convention Center in Huron SD. Chair Hempel led the participants in a salute to the colors and the Pledge of Allegiance.

In addition to Chair Hempel, the following were present: District 1 – Mike Pauling of Piedmont; District 2 – Matt Wendland of Hot Springs; District 3 – Larry Eliason of Pierre; District 4 – Aaron Grant of Groton; District 5 – Harry Boner of Castlewood; District 6 – Ken Andeson of Chamberlain; District 7 – Kevin Hempel; District 8 – was absent. Aaron Grant was assigned as Liaison for the committee.

Chair Hempel read Section 10 of the Duties of the Convention Rules Committee from the Uniform Code of Procedures for the Organization of The American Legion Department of South Dakota to the committee members and asked for any questions.

There were no resolutions assigned to the Rules committee; however, the committee reviewed the current Uniform Code of Procedures for the Organization of The American Legion Department of South Dakota for any updates or corrections. A motion made by Larry Eliason of Pierre, seconded by Ken Anderson of Chamberlain, with unanimous approval, the committee has two recommended changes.

First, under “Officials of the Convention” on page 3, the second line has “~~He~~” that should have been removed after the last update that should be removed from the next update to the booklet.

Second, on page 5, under the section of Duties of Convention Committees”, section 8 currently reads “**Rehabilitation** To formulate and recommend to the convention policies in all phases of veterans affairs as the concern veterans of World War I, World War II, the Korean and Vietnam Wars, and the Wars in Southwest Asia.....” The wording should be changed to “**Rehabilitation** To formulate and recommend to the Convention, policies of concern to all veterans.....”

With no other items of business to discuss, Chair Hempel led the committee in a salute to the colors. A motion was made and seconded to recess subject to recall if needed. The meeting was recessed at 1:52 pm.

Respectfully submitted, Kevin Hempel, Chair

**Chair Hempel moved for the adoption of the report of the Convention Rules Committee; the motion was duly seconded and carried. Department Commander Morello declared the report of the Convention Rules Committee adopted.**

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Commander Morello introduced Marv Tisdall of Box Elder, SD, Chair of the Convention Resolutions Committee, for the purpose of a report. Chair Tisdall presented that committee's report to the Convention.

## CONVENTION RESOLUTIONS COMMITTEE REPORT

Commander,

The initial meeting of the Resolutions Committee was called to order by Chair Marvin Tisdall of Box Elder Post 315, at 10:00 A.M., Friday, June 20, 2025, at the Crossroads Hotel and Huron Event Center in Huron, South Dakota.

Those present besides Chair Tisdall of Box Elder were as follows: District 1 – Marvin Tisdall, Box Elder, Post 315; David Booze, Piedmont Valley Post 311; District 2 – Glen Talley Custer Post 46; District 3 - Larry Eliason Pierre Post 8; District 4 –Perry Schmidt, Redfield Post 92; District 5 – Arlo Jurrens Elkton Post 198; District 6 –Jake Salathe Huron Post 7; District 7 – Greg Johnson Humbolt Post 62; and District 8 – Paul Jensen Wakonda Post 13.

Chair Tisdall of Box Elder Post 315 led the Pledge of Allegiance and read the duties of the Resolutions Committee on page 7 of the Uniform Code of Procedures.

David Booze of Piedmont Valley Post 311 was appointed as secretary.

The Convention Resolutions Committee reviewed 11 resolutions of which eight were acted upon by the Standing Internal Affairs Commission and three resolutions: 25-06, 25-08, and 25-11 required referrals to convention committees.

### **Resolution No.25-06**

Subject: Resolution Expressing Appreciation To William F. Reaves Post 7 For Hosting The 2025 American Legion Department Convention

Origin: Internal Affairs Committee, Department Of South Dakota

Moved by Paul Jensen, District 8 to refer Resolution 25-06 to Internal Organization Committee, seconded by Perry Schmidt, District 4. Motion carried.

### **Resolution No. 25-08**

Subject: Timely Distribution Of Membership Dues To Department

Origin: Post 250, District 5, Department Of South Dakota

Moved by Larry Eliason, District 3 to refer Resolution 25-08 to Internal Organization Committee, seconded by Arlo Jurrens, District 5. Motion carried.

**Resolution No. 25-11** it was noted that a typo on Resolution 25-11 was originally submitted as 24-11 and is corrected to reflect as Resolution 25-11.

Subject: Resolution To Support For America250 And The Commemoration Of The United States Semi-quintcentennial

Origin: Post 15 Of Sioux Falls, District 7, Department Of South Dakota

Moved by Arlo Jurrens, District 5, to refer Resolution 25-11 to the Americanism Committee, seconded by Larry Eliason, District 3. Motion carried.

There being no further business required at present, Larry Eliason, District 3, moved that the Resolution Committee be recessed at 10:40 A.M.

Resolution committee reconvened at 1:55 P.M. on June 20th, 2026, there being no additional business, Paul Jensen, District 8, moved to adjourn the Resolutions Committee. Motion seconded by Regan (Trip) McClurkin, District 1. Motion carried.

Respectfully submitted, Marvin Tisdall, Chair

**Chair Tisdall moved for the adoption of the report of the Convention Resolutions Committee; the motion was duly seconded and carried. Department Commander Morello declared the Convention Resolutions Committee report adopted.**

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At that time, the 2024-2025 South Dakota American Legion Auxiliary Department President AnnaMae Warnier's biography was read, and she was introduced to the convention body. President Warnier brought greetings from the Auxiliary.

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Department Adjutant Van Delist played a pre-recorded message from Department Training Committee Chair Jack French, Spearfish, in which he provided his Annual Report. The report was adopted.

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Department Commander Kevin Morello introduced Larry Madsen, Gettysburg Post 135, Chair of the Convention Americanism Committee, to give that report to the convention delegates.

## **CONVENTION AMERICANISM COMMITTEE REPORT**

Mr. Commander:

The Americanism Committee was called to order by Chair Larry Madsen of Gettysburg Post 135, at 1:30 p.m., Friday, June 20, 2025, at the Huron Crossroads Convention Center – Prairie B room.

Those present besides Chair Madsen of District 3 were as follows: District 1 – Gene Opbroek of Spearfish Post 164; District 2 – Al Tallman of Hot Springs Post 71; District 3 – Larry Madsen of Gettysburg Post 135; District 4 - Dale Strom of Aberdeen Post 24; District 5 – Mike Kraft of Britton Post 80; District 6 - Annette Dunham of Iroquois Post 280; District 7 – Tonya Jeeninga of Sioux Falls Post 911 District 8 – Steve Mueller of Springfield Post 132.

Chair Madsen of Gettysburg Post 135 led the Pledge of Allegiance and read the duties of the Convention Americanism Committee on page 7 of the Uniform Code of Procedures. Carol Howitz of Spearfish Post 164 was appointed as secretary. The committee reviewed 1 resolution.

### **Resolution No. 25-11**

Subject: Resolution To Support For America250 And The Commemoration Of The United States Semi-quincentennial.

Origin: Post 15 Of Sioux Falls, District 7, Department Of South Dakota

Referred To Committee On Americanism

Motion to "Do Pass" was made by Dale Strom, Al Tallman seconded the motion. The resolution was read, and the floor was opened for discussion. Chair Madsen explained what was trying to be accomplished. The Americanism Committee recommended a "Do Pass" motion. Motion carried.

Chair Madsen led general discussion concerning 2026 marking the 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of the United States of America and how posts will support America250 and its mission to unite all Americans in commemorating 250 years of independence and progress. Posts are encouraged to work with their local schools and civic organizations to collaborate in educational programming and patriotic events marking the historical occasion of 250 years of our nation. Posts will actively participate in events, programs and initiatives that honor veterans and promote civic engagement during the Semi quincentennial celebrations.

There being no further business to come before the committee, the Convention Americanism Committee meeting was declared adjourned at 2:14 p.m.

Respectfully submitted, Larry Madsen, Chair

**Chair Madson moved for the adoption of the report of the Convention Americanism Committee; the motion was duly seconded and carried. Department Commander Morello declared the Convention Americanism Committee Report adopted.**

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The Chair recognized David Booze, Blackhawk, (Piedmont Post 311), Chair of the Department Americanism Commission, to provide the Americanism Commission Annual report. The report was adopted.

Chair Booze and Commander Morello presented the Americanism Awards for the 2024-2025 year. The Golden Eagle "Americanism Excellence" traveling trophies were presented to a post in each goal size group that submits the best Americanism Program and based on the number of documented activities of the Post.

**Post Americanism Award for 15-45 goal-size group awarded to Jacob A. Heinrich, Inc. American Legion Post 170 of Herreid, SD.**

**Post Americanism Award for 46-74 goal-size group awarded to Olson-Reid American Legion Post 250 of Castlewood, SD**

**Post Americanism Award for 75-124 goal-size group awarded to Burrows-Young American Legion Post 114 of Volga, SD.**

**Post Americanism Award for 125-350 goal-size group awarded to Hanson, Inc. American Legion Post 118 of Hartford, SD**

**Post Americanism Award for 351 and larger goal-size group awarded to Sioux Falls American Legion Post 15 of Sioux Falls, SD.**

The five Posts who won the Golden Eagle in 2023-2024 received a small Golden Eagle to take back to their post and display as a past winner. Those posts were Plankinton Post 5, Castlewood Post 250, Hartford Post 118, Spearfish Post 164, and Rapid City Post 22.

The overall Department Americanism program winners for 2024-2025 were:

**Certificate of Distinguished Service**

Mead American Legion Post 33 of Sturgis, SD.

**Certificate of Meritorious Service**

Hanson, Inc. American Legion Post 118 of Hartford, SD.

**Individual Americanism Award**

Stan Beckstrom, American Legion Post 118, Hartford, SD.

All other Posts that participated in this program received an Americanism Certificate signed by the National Commander.

Chair Booze then announced the 2025 Department Oratorical Champion, Elena Andrews of Beresford, SD. Ms. Andrews also placed third at the National Oratory Competition in Hillsdale, MI. Over her three years of participation, Elena earned more than \$30,000 in scholarships. Elena addressed the assembly with highlights

from her year. She thanked the Legion for giving opportunities to young people and for the scholarships she won through the Oratorical contest. Last she stated one-third of her college is now paid for from her participation in American Legion Programs.

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Commander Morello recognized Boys State Director, Gene Opbroek, Spearfish Post 164, to provide the Annual Boys State Report. The report was adopted. Director Opbroek then introduced the 2025 American Legion Boys State Governor, Brody Tynan, of Sioux Falls to address the Convention. He spoke on his experience at Boys State saying that Boys State was not only educational but also transformational. He also thanked the Legionnaires for providing a program that allowed him to find himself and regain the confidence that he had lost.

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Chair of the Education Committee, Mike Pauling of Piedmont Post 311, was introduced by Commander Morello to deliver the Education Committee Report which was adopted.

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The Chair recognized PDC/NEC Fred Nelson, Spearfish Post 164, American Legion Riders Liaison, to give that group's annual report. PDC Nelson gave a detailed report of the Ride 605 and thanked everyone who helped, from preparing food to the incredible generosity of donations, report was adopted.

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The Chair recognized PNVC/PDC Byron Callies, Watertown Post 17, Chair of the Convention Internal Organization Committee and Chair of the Department Internal Affairs Commission to give those reports. Chair Callies explained the difference between the Convention Internal Organization Committee and the Internal Affairs Commission. Then gave the following report for the committee which was adopted. The Internal Affairs Commission Annual Report was given and can be found in the Annual Reports section of these Proceedings. That report was also adopted.

## **CONVENTION INTERNAL ORGANIZATION COMMITTEE REPORT**

Commander:

The Internal Organization Committee was called to order by Chair Byron Callies of Watertown, at 1:30 p.m., Friday, June 20, 2025, at the Crossroads Hotel and Huron Event Center.

Those present besides Chair Callies were as follows: District 1 Jim Carlson, Box Elder, Post 315; District 2 Rick McDonald, Hermosa, Post 303; District 3 Liaison Jeff Hrabanek, Winner, Colome Post 146; District 4 Vern Prickett, Stratford, Post 207; District 5 Byron Callies, Watertown, Post 17; District 6 Charemon Dunham, Iroquois, Post 280; District 7 Barry Andres, Sioux Falls, Post 15; District 8 Robert Kucera, Wagner, Post 11.

Chair Callies led the Pledge of Allegiance and read the duties of the Convention Employment Committee on page 16 of the Uniform Code of Procedures. Jeff

Hrabanek of Post 146 was appointed as secretary. The committee reviewed 2 resolutions referred from the Convention Resolutions Committee.

**Resolution No. 24-06**

Subject: Resolution Expressing Appreciation To William F. Reaves Post 7 For Hosting The 2025 American Legion Department Convention.

Origin: Internal Affairs Committee, Department of South Dakota

It was moved and duly seconded to approve a "Do Pass Recommendation". Motion carried.

**Resolution No. 25-08**

Subject: Timely Distribution Of Membership Dues To Department from National.

Origin: Post 250 of Castlewood, District 5, Department of South Dakota

It was moved and duly seconded to approve a "Do Pass Recommendation". Motion carried.

There being no further business to come before the committee, the Internal Organization Committee meeting was declared adjourned at 1:43 p.m.

Respectfully submitted, Byron Callies, Chair

**Chair Callies moved for the adoption of the report of the Convention Internal Organization Committee; the motion was duly seconded and carried. Department Commander Morello declared the Convention Internal Organization Committee Report adopted.**

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In the absence of Chair Lyle Tolsma Athletic Commission, Rapid City Post 22 Commander Morello asked Adjutant Van Delist to read the Commission's Annual Report. The report was adopted. Additionally, Marv Tidsall, Box Elder Post 315, announced the South Dakota High School Activities Association voted down sanctioning High School baseball. This had been a hot topic for the last few years due to possible adverse effects on American Legion Baseball.

Commander Morello announced the Convention body would recess for lunch and delegates should return to the Convention Hall by 12:45 for the afternoon session.

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Commander Morello reconvened the Convention at 12:52 with introducing Governor Larry Rhoden for comments to the assembled delegates. Governor Rhoden shared a story of an undeveloped roll of film from his father's time in the Army during the Battle of the Bulge, that included pictures of a the Mauthausen Concentration Camp. He stated, some of the men in those pictures never made it home but they helped restore freedom. He drew connection between that and his recent trip to Israel, where people were sharing stories of family members who were prisoners at Mauthausen.

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Commander Morello asked Scouting Chair, Chris Rendon, Rapid City Post 320, to give the Annual report of that Committee. The report was adopted. Rendon introduced Eagle Scout of the Year, Slater Humbracht from Troop 17, sponsored by Post 164 Spearfish for his comments.

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Department Commander Morello called Department Chaplain, Mike Kumm of Sioux City, IA, (North Sioux City Post 319), for an award presentation. Chaplain Kumm and Commander Morello presented the South Dakota American Legion Good Samaritan Award to Sue Christiansen of Garretson while Adjutant Van Delist read her nomination submission.

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The Chair then recognized Membership Chair, Bill Peters, Sioux Falls Post 15, for the Annual Membership report which was adopted. Adjutant Van Delist announced, while Commander Morello and Chair Peters presented membership awards.

The District Membership Award of \$200 cash award to each District that enrolled, by the March 12<sup>th</sup>, 2025, at least 95% of that District's goal went to only one District, District 6, Jim Pekron, District Commander.

Posts that meet the following criteria were entered to receive a Post Membership Award of \$200 cash. Posts were entered once when they meet all of the criteria and one additional time for every 1%, they were over goal. One winner was selected from each of the goal groups

1. Minimum membership requirement of 15 members.
2. Meet or exceed 85% of membership goal by Mid-Winter.
3. Meet or exceed 100% of membership goal by June 1, 2025.
4. Meet or exceed 90% retention by June 1, 2025.
5. Submit Post Data Report, Consolidated Post Report, and Officer Certification.

The winner in goal group 1 was Colman Post 278 and the winner in goal group 2 Sioux Falls Post 911.

Posts whose 2025 membership on January 15<sup>th</sup>, 2025, met or exceeded the 2024 end-of-year membership on December 31, 2024, received a National Honor ribbon.

Timber Lake Post 83, Isabel Post 120, Bonesteel Post 36, Columbia Post 58, Faulkton Post 102, Veblen Post 76, Hayti Post 217, Plankinton Post 5, Hitchcock Post 84, Badger Post 260, Egan Post 97, Platte Post 115, Avon Post 150, Corsica Post 274, Pickstown Post 323

Plaques and framed citations were awarded to Posts for five or more consecutive years of continuously meeting membership quotas and stickers for the intermediate years. Those Posts that met this requirement are as follows: Timber Lake Post 83, Isabel Post 120, Philip Post 172, Hecla Post 68, Northville Post 149, Hosmer Post 189, Cresbard Post 213, Roscoe Post 259, Bowdle Post 264, Rosholt Post 48, Sisseton Post 50, Veblen Post 76, New Effington Post 180, Grenville Post 267, Plankinton Post 5, Artesian Post 47, Hitchcock Post 84, Garretson Post 23, Egan Post 97, Trent Post 122, Colman Post 278, North Sioux City Post 319, Tyndall Post 2

The following posts received the Department Commander's Ribbon for achieving 100% of their membership goal by the February target date. Wood Post 19, Kadoka Post 27, Murdo Post 75, White River Post 94, Midland Post 143, Edgemont Post 172, Rockham Post 57, Doland Post 69, Hosmer Post 189, Cresbard Post 213, Bowdle Post 264, Clear Lake Post 49, Volga Post 114, Elkton Post 198, Grenville Post 267

District 6: Plankinton Post 5, Gann Valley Post 16, Artesian Post 47, Emery Post 166, Badger Post 260, Madison Post 25, Canton Post 53, Flandreau Post 70, Egan Post 97, Ramona Post 216, Tea Post 266, Colman Post 278, North Sioux City Post 319, Irene Post 193, Freeman Post 248, Springfield Post 323

The next award was the Go-Getter Medallion given to Posts who reached or exceeded 95% of their membership by the March Target date. Belle Fourche Post 32, Timber Lake Post 83, Isabel Post 120, Buffalo Post 147, Spearfish Post 164, Bison Post 255, Piedmont Post 311, Rapid City Post 22, Custer Post 46, Hot Springs Post 71, White River Post 94, Hill City Post 160 Martin Post 240, Gregory Post 6, Bonesteel Post 36, Miller Post 38, Dallas Post 91, Winner Post 169, Kennebec Reliance Post 179, Aberdeen Post 24, Columbia Post 58, Ipswich Post 67, Hecla Post 68, Doland Post 69, Redfield Post 92, Faulkton Post 102, Mellette Post 151, Herreid Post 170, Hosmer Post 189, Stratford Post 207, Claremont Post 262, Bowdle Post 264, Tulare Post 292, Milbank Post 9, Bryant Post 37, Rosholt Post 48, Sisseton Post 50, Wilmot Post 64, Brookings Post 74, Veblen Post 76, Britton Post 80, White Post 88, Willow Lake Post 113, Langford Post 141, Hayti Post 217, Roslyn Post 253, Grenville Post 267, Chamberlain Post 3, Plankinton Post 5, Gann Valley Post 16, Mitchell Post 18, Woonsocket Post 29, Arlington Post 42, Artesian Post 47, Lake Preston Post 63, Hitchcock Post 84, DeSmet Post 138, Howard Post 145, Badger Post 260, Virgil Post 268, Iroquois Post 280, Garretson Post 23, Madison Post 25, Harrisburg Post 45, Humboldt Post 62, Dell Rapids Post 65, Egan Post 97, Hudson Post 128, Valley Springs Post 131, Lennox Post 174, Colman Post 278, Renner Post 307, North Sioux City Post 319, Sioux Falls Post 911, Tyndall Post 2, Wakonda Post 13, Centerville Post 43, Armour Post 52, Platte Post 115, Avon Post 150, Scotland Post 155, Tabor Post 183, Marion Post 235, Corsica Post 274, Pickstown Post 282,

The Department had 10 Post Families earn the 100% Family Ribbon for the Post, the auxiliary, Sons of the American Legion, and the Legion Riders (if the Post had them) all achieving 100% membership. These included: Chamberlain Post/Auxiliary 3, Gregory Post/Squadron/Auxiliary 6, Milbank Post/Squadron/Auxiliary 9, Wakonda Post/Auxiliary 13, Mitchell Post/Auxiliary 18, Madison Post/Squadron/Auxiliary 25, Belle Fourche Post/Auxiliary 32, Ipswich Post 67, Murdo Post/Auxiliary 75, Hitchcock Post/Auxiliary 84, Dallas Post/Auxiliary 91, Egan Post/Squadron/Auxiliary 97, Volga Post/Auxiliary 114, Platte Post/Auxiliary 115, Scotland Post 155, Hill City Post 160, Lennox Post/Riders 174, Hosmer Post 189, Irene Post/Auxiliary/SAL 193, Stratford Post/Auxiliary 207, Hayti Post 217, Virgil Post 268, Roslyn Post 253, Colman Post/Auxiliary 278, Pickstown Post 282, North Sioux City Post 319.

Post that achieves the highest two-year membership average for their goal group, submitted the Post Data Report, Consolidated Post Report, certified their officers, Americanism Report and must have submitted a Legionnaire of the Year package to their District Commander were awarded the "Pride of the Prairie" Post Excellence Award. The Posts that met all were:

Goal group 1, 15-30 members, Arthur Wissman Post 150 in Avon.

Goal group 2, 31-50 members, Patrick W. Herried Post 911 in Sioux Falls.



Goal group 3, 51-90 members, Frank Holcombe Post 43 in Centerville.  
 Goal group 4, 91-150 members, Porter L. Rich Post 63 in Lake Preston.  
 Goal group 5, 151-190 members, McKibbin-Mosher Post 25 in Madison.  
 Goal group 6, 191+ members, Spearfish Inc. Post 164 in Spearfish.

After all the membership awards were handed out, Membership Chair Peters announced the Recruiter of the Year. This honor went to Doug Harris of Rapid City Post 22 for signing up 17 new members.

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Commander Morello asked PDC Hugh Holmes to provide the body with the Legionnaire Insurance Trust report. South Dakota's portion from LIT this year was \$22,517, down considerably over previous years. PDC Holmes encouraged all to look at what LIT has to offer as a part of what is purchased returns to benefit South Dakota.

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Commander Morello called PDC Larry Price, Chair of the Public Safety Committee, to the podium to provide that Committee's report. Chair Price reported how well-received the Youth Trooper Academy has been. He also reminded everyone to look in their communities for Fire Fighter, EMT, and Law Enforcement Officer of the Year nominees. Recognizing these public servants is important. The report was adopted.

Chair Price talked about the Public Safety Awards and presented Logen Arthurs of Redfield with the Firefighter of the Year Award, Elizabeth Verhey of Spearfish received the Emergency Medical Technician of the Year, and the Law Enforcement Officer of the Year went to Micah Hoffman of Madison.

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Commander Morello called on Reagan McClurkin, of Summerset, (Piedmont Post 311), Chair of the Convention National Security Committee, who gave the Convention National Security Committee Report.

## **CONVENTION NATIONAL SECURITY COMMITTEE REPORT**

Commander:

The National Security Committee was called to order by Chair Regan McClurkin of Summerset at 1:32 p.m., Friday, June 20, 2025, at the Crossroads Convention Center, Huron, SD.

Those present besides Chair McClurkin were as follows: Liaison Ryan Skjoldal District 2; District 1 - Regan McClurkin, Summerset SD, Piedmont Post 311; District 2 - Ryan Skjoldal, Rapid City Post 22; District 3 - Gene Bruns, Colome, Post 146; District 4 - Bob Thomason, Selby, Post 100; District 5 - absent, District 6 - Hugh Holmes, Mitchell Post 18; District 7 - Dale Hill, Sioux Falls, Post 15; District 8 - Paul Jensen, Wakonda, Post 13

Chair McClurkin led the Pledge of Allegiance and read the duties of the Convention National Security Committee on page 17 of the Uniform Code of Procedures. Ryan Skjoldal of Post 22 was appointed as secretary. The committee reviewed 0

resolutions. The floor was opened for any pertinent topic discussions; none were brought forward.

There being no further business, Ryan Skjoldal made a motion to adjourn; Hugh Holmes seconded the motion, and the National Security Committee meeting was declared adjourned at 1:34 p.m.

Respectfully submitted, Regan McClurkin, Chair

**Chair McClurkin moved for the adoption of the Convention National Security Committee Report; the motion was duly seconded and carried. Department Commander Morello declared the Convention National Security Committee Report adopted.**

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Commander Morello recognized Krisma DeWitt, Finance Officer, of Watertown, (Castlewood Post 250), for the Department Financial Report. The full financial compilation can be found in the Annual reports section. The report was adopted.

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With the absence of the Department Employment Committee Chair, Greg Dias, Adjutant Van Delist read the annual report which was then adopted.

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Tricia Daily, Oral, (Hot Springs Post 71), Chair of the Convention Employment Committee, was called to the podium by Commander Morello to give that report.

## **CONVENTION EMPLOYMENT COMMITTEE REPORT**

Commander:

The meeting of the State Convention Employment Committee was called to order by Chair Tricia Daily of Hot Springs, Post 71, Friday, June 20<sup>th</sup>, at 1:30, at the Huron, Crossroads Convention Center in Huron, SD.

The following committee members were present besides Chair Daily: District 1-Kendra Hall of Piedmont, Post 311; District 4-Gary Warne of Aberdeen, Post 24; District 5-Clayton Nei of Castlewood, Post 250; District 6-Gary Wolkow of Desmet Post 138; District 7-Tony Grandy of Garretson, Post 23.

Chair Daily led the Pledge of Allegiance and read the duties of the Convention Employment Committee on page 5 of the Uniform Code of Procedures. Tony Grandy was appointed secretary. With no resolutions to review, the floor was opened to other employment discussions. Gary Warne initiated discussion about job service offices and SD Department of Labor.

With no further business, Gary Wolkow motioned to adjourn, 2<sup>nd</sup> Gary Warne. The meeting was adjourned at 1:43.

Respectfully submitted, Tricia Daily, Chair

**Chair Daily moved for the adoption of the Convention Employment Committee Report; the motion was duly seconded and carried. Department Commander Daily declared the Convention Employment Committee Report adopted.**

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The Chair recognized Jeff Merchant, South Dakota American Legion Trust Committee Chair, for his report. The report was adopted.

Commander Morello called Jim Kurtz, Garretson Post 23, Chair of the South Dakota American Legion Foundation for his annual report. The report was adopted.

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All the 2025 District Legionnaires of the Year were called to the front of the stage to be recognized by Commander Kevin Morello. He presented each a framed Certificate of Commendation.

District 1 — Randall McGruder of American Legion Post 31, Lead.

District 2 — Thomas D. Smith of American Legion Post 22, Rapid City.

District 4 — Brent Wienk, American Legion Post 39, Groton

District 5 — Lawrence “Pete” Eckhoff of American Legion Post 88, White.

District 6 — Brett A. Anderson of American Legion 63, Lake Preston.

District 7 — John Bachmeier of American Legion Post 15, Sioux Falls.

District 8 — Dan Rezac of American Legion Post 11, Wagner.

He went on to call upon PDC Hugh Holmes, Mitchell Post 18, to announce the selection of the 2025 South Dakota American Legion "Legionnaire of the Year." Brett Anderson, Lake Preston American Legion Post 63 was selected as the 2025 Department Legionnaire of the Year and with the 2025 South Dakota American Legion Legionnaire of the Year plaque to commemorate his outstanding achievement.

PDC Holmes then announced Kevin Hempel of Watertown (Chester Post 134) as the recipient of the 2025 Robert C. Gabrielson Memorial Leadership Award.

District Commander Lyngen was called to the stage to accept the 2024-2025 “Outstanding District Commander of the Year Award”. As the District Commander’s duties are broad and difficult this award recognizes one District Commander that goes above and beyond.

\*\*\*\*\*

The Chair recognized the Department Historian, Fred Lee of Sioux Falls (Humboldt Post 62), who gave his report, and the report was adopted.

Department Historian Lee announced that there were only two entries in the Department History contest. With the help of Vice Commander Hempel announcing the winners, Chair Lee and Commander Morello presented certificates to:

1<sup>st</sup> Place: Sharon Taplett-Lundgren, Historian Sioux Falls Post 12

2<sup>nd</sup> Place: Alyssa Mathis, Historian, Greer Post 11 Wagner

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Department Adjutant Van Delist made announcements regarding National Convention packets, joining the Navy League and becoming a plank owner, the Go-getter bus, and returned the podium back to Commander Morello.

Then the Commander announced 15 minutes after convention is recessed caucuses would convene to elect two Department Vice Commanders, one from Districts 1-3 and one from Districts 4-8, with the current Department Vice Commanders in charge.

Department Commander Morello led the convention delegates by paying proper respect to our Flag with a hand salute and then declared the 106<sup>th</sup> Annual Department Convention in recess until Sunday morning, June 22nd, 2025, at 9:00am.

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The single candidate running for the Department Vice Commander representing Districts 1, 2, and 3 was Marvin Tisdall of Box Elder Post 315. The delegates from those Districts unanimously voted and elected Marv Tisdall as the Department Vice Commander to represent Districts 1 - 3 for the 2025-2026 year.

The single candidate running for the Department Vice Commander representing Districts 4, 5, 6, 7, and 8 was Shane Lamer, Montrose Post 154. The delegates from those Districts unanimously voted and elected Shane Lamer as the new Department Vice Commander to represent Districts 3-8.

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## **SUNDAY, JUNE 22, 2025**

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The final session of the 106th Annual Convention of the South Dakota American Legion was reconvened at 9:00 a.m., Sunday, June 22, 2025, by Commander Kevin Morello following patriotic music performed by the South Dakota American Legion Band. Commander led the delegates in a salute to the Colors after Chaplain Mike Kumm offered the invocation.

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Commander Morello called on Andy Lyngen, Garretson Post 23, Chair of the Convention Credentials Committee for committee's second report.

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Commander Morello recognized Mike Mehlhaff, Chair of the standing Legislative Committee, who gave his committee report. The report was adopted; a detailed list of legislative items can be found in the Annual Report.

The Chair went on to recognize Doug Feltman who was the Chair of the Convention Legislative Committee. Chair Feltman gave that report.

## **CONVENTION LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE REPORT**

Commander:

The Legislative Committee was called to order by Doug Feltman of Chamberlain, at 1:30p.m., Friday, June 20, 2025, at the Crossroads Hotel and Huron Event Center, Huron, SD.

Those present besides Chair Feltman were as follows: Liaison – Arlo Jurens, White Post 88; District 1 Phil Anderson, Piedmont, Post 311; District 2 Dick Daily, Oral SD, Hot Springs Post 71; District 3 Leroy Madsen, Pierre, Gregory Post 6;

District 4 Larry Price, Redfield, Post 92; District 5 Arlo Jurrens, Elkton, White Post 88; District 6 Doug Feltman, Chamberlain, Post 3; District 7 John Bachmeier, Sioux Falls, Post 15; District 8 James Hornstra, Springfield, Post 323.

Chair Feltman led the Pledge of Allegiance and read the duties of the Convention Legislative Committee on page 16 of the Uniform Code of Procedures. Dick Daily of Oral, Hot Springs Post 71, was appointed as secretary. The committee reviewed 0 resolutions. There being no further business to come before the committee, there was a motion to adjourn by LeRoy Madsen, seconded by Larry Price. The Motion carried and the Legislative Committee meeting was declared adjourned at 1:45 p.m. Respectfully submitted, Doug Feltman, Chair

**Chair Feltman moved for the adoption of the report of the Convention Legislative Committee Report; the motion was duly seconded and carried. Department Commander Morello declared the Convention Rehabilitation Committee Report adopted.**

\*\*\*\*\*

Department Commander Morello called National Executive Committeeman Fred Nelson, Spearfish Post 164, to the podium to address the delegates and give his annual NEC report. He urged Posts to stay vigilant over our programs while maintaining control, transparency, and compliance with National policies. The report was adopted. Then NEC Nelson introduced the First Leading Candidate for National Commander, Dan Wiley, who addressed the convention body. Wiley discussed the “Be the One” initiative and encouraged everyone to do buddy checks on all our buddies, no matter what color hat they wear. His theme for the coming year is “Better Together”. He stated “We are better when we’re inclusive and not exclusive and when we operate as a family; it’s about the mission and getting the job done.”

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Sons of the American Legion Immediate Past Detachment Commander, Shane Lamer from Hartford, (Montrose Squadron 154), was introduced by Department Commander Morello. Commander Lamer reported on the SAL year. He informed that South Dakota currently has 52 squadrons which has helped the SAL garner its fourth Triple Nickle Award from National. The “Be The One” SAL Mustang traveled over 16,000 miles across the state of South Dakota this year. The SD Detachment donated \$9,100 to the National Commander’s Challenge of raising \$50,000 for the Veterans and Children’s Foundation. Additionally, they donated \$308 to the Auxiliary to help purchase an enclosed trailer for the Veteran’s Home in Hot Springs to help transport bikes and kayaks for recreation. The SD SAL also donated \$12,150 to the South Dakota Cemetery Foundation for small projects and upkeep like maintaining flags and poles.

Lamer then went on to introduce the newly installed South Dakota Sons of the American Legion Detachment Commander, Wyatt Reis. Commander Reis thanked everyone for their support and explained why it’s important to belong; “We must ensure that the sacrifices and duties of so many are never taken for granted, that we may remain free.”

Commander Reis introduced the Midwest Region, Sons of the American Legion National Vice Commander, Mike Monserud, who then addressed the delegates.

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President of the South Dakota American Legion Press Association PDC Charemon Dunham was called by Commander Morello to report on that organization's activities. PDC Dunham also announced that she will remain President for the coming year and then announced the winners of the South Dakota American Legion Press Association's Newsletter competition. She went on to inform that SDALPA has put together rules that will help make Post's newsletters better and they can be found on the SDLegion.org website. Finally reminding all there are no perfect newsletters; "they're all different and they're all great."

**First Place** Burrows Young, Post 114, Volga, Editor, Kim Chase

**Second Place** Sioux Falls Post 15, Editor, Diane Diekman

**Third Place** Thayer-Waters, Post 146, Colome, Editor, Jeff Hrabanek

**Honorable Mention** Greer Post 11, Wagner, Editor, Jerry Seiner

**Honorable Mention** William H. Crippen Post 62, Humboldt, Editor, Fred Lee

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PDC Dunham, who is the Chair of the Veterans Administration Voluntary Services Committee, gave the annual report of that committee. The report was adopted.

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Commander Morello called Steve Stier of Onida, Chair of the Convention Next Meeting Place Committee, who gave that committee's report. It was noted that there were no bids for the 2030 Convention.

## CONVENTION NEXT MEETING PLACE COMMITTEE REPORT

Mr. Commander:

The meeting of the Convention Next Meeting Place Committee was called to order by Chair Steve Stier of Onida at 1:34 P.M. Friday, June 20, 2025, at the Crossroads Hotel and Huron Event Center, Huron, SD to consider applications for future Mid-Winter Conferences and Department Conventions.

The following members were present: Chair Stier, Liaison Phil Egeberg; District 1 – Jerry Lolley, Sturgis Post 33; District 2 – Moe Lamphere, Hot Springs Post 71; District 3 - Steve Stier, Onida Post 79; District 4 – Perry Schmidt, Redfield Post 92; District 5 - Phil Egeberg, Volga Post 114; District 6 – Vilas Kurtenbach, Ethan, Post 261; District 7 – Fred Lee, Humboldt Post 62; District 8 – Wesley Rye, Irene Post 193.

Chair Stier led the Pledge of Allegiance and read the duties of the Convention Next Meeting Place Committee on page 17 of the Uniform Code of Procedures. Phil Egeberg of District 5 was appointed as secretary.

There were 2 Posts bidding for Mid-Winter 2030. Adjutant Van Delist clarified Post versus Department expenses for room equipment. Room Blocks and costs were the biggest concerns. After discussion, it was decided that the 2030 Mid-Winter Conference would be held in Oacoma at Arrowwood Conference Center Feb 8-10. The 2029 Mid-Winter Conference will be held in Deadwood at The Lodge, Feb 8-11.

The 2029 Department Convention will be held in Huron, June 14-17 at the Crossroads Convention Center.

There being no further business to come before the committee, Jerry Lolley moved, and Vilas Kurtenbach seconded the motion to adjourn. Motion carried. The Next Meeting Place Committee meeting was declared adjourned.

Respectfully submitted, Steve Stier, Chair

**Chair Stier moved for the adoption of the report of the Convention Next Meeting Place Committee Report; the motion was duly seconded and carried. Department Commander Morello declared the Convention Next Meeting Place Committee Report adopted.**

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The Chair recognized Harry Boner, Castlewood Post 250, Chair of the Children and Youth Committee, who gave that committee's annual report. The report was adopted. Chair Boner went on to present several Children and Youth awards based on volunteer efforts of individuals and Posts.

A Certificate of Commendation was presented to individuals for outstanding service to Children and Youth based on a comprehensive activities report.

From the Aberdeen Post: Steven Nemmers, Henry Artz, Charles Aldentalder Curt Preszler, Carrie Johnson, Doug Roggow.

From the Brookings Post: Betty "Sam" Vaugn

From the Spearfish Post and Unit: Fred and Micheline Nelson

From Sioux Falls Post 15: John Bachmeier, Dale Hill

From the Clear Lake Post: Joe Ukert

A Certificate of Meritorious Service was issued to Sioux Falls Post 15, and Charles Curry Post 49, Clear Lake for performance of outstanding service to Children and Youth in the area of Temporary Financial Aid.

The last C&Y Award was Post 164, Spearfish for C&Y Legion Family of the Year.

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C.P. Van Delist, Department Adjutant, was recognized by the Chair, to give the Annual Adjutant's Report. The report was adopted.

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Department Commander Kevin Morello delivered the Annual Commander's Report. The report was adopted.

Several raffles were conducted at this time. Huron Post 7 conducted their raffle, the SD Legion Foundation conducted their drawing for a John Greene painting, and the Department Sweepstakes drawing was held. Commander Morello announced the 2025 Department Convention Sweepstakes winners as follows:

\$1000 – Bradley Thompson of Tea

\$500 – Richard Hoppe of Platte

\$300 – Michael Marron of Sioux Falls

\$200 – Dennis Rieckman of Sioux Falls

\$100 – Cliff Ruesink of Castlewood

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Commander Morello recognized Andy Lyngen, Chair of the Convention Credentials Committee, for the final Credentials report.

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Commander, Kevin Morello announced the time had arrived for the election of delegates and alternate delegates to the 106th Annual National American Legion Convention in Tampa, Florida. District Delegates and Alternate Delegates were nominated at the Spring District Meetings held in March and April. Adjutant Van Delist read the nominations for delegate, nominated during those spring district meetings.

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### **ELECTION OF DELEGATES AND ALTERNATE DELEGATES**

Adjutant Van Delist announced that South Dakota is entitled to five at-large Delegates and 15 others for a total of 21 Delegates. The Commander, Adjutant, Immediate Past Department Commander and National Executive Committeeman are automatic at-large Delegates. At Spring District Meetings seven delegates were nominated. As per a resolution from the 101<sup>st</sup> Department Convention, all national call-ins are automatic Delegates, of which there are ten, leaving one vacancy to be filled this year as a Delegate at large.

The following Legionnaires were elected as Delegates to the 106th Annual National Convention of The American Legion in Tampa, Florida during spring district meetings: District 1 - Brian Dean of Spearfish, District 2 - PDC Rick MacDonald of Hermosa, District 3 - Jeff Hrabanek of Colome Post 146, District 4 - Bruce Babcock of Groton, District 5 - Noel Cummins of Milbank, District 6 - PDC Doug Feltman of Chamberlain, and District 7 - Pat Branco of Sioux Falls Post 15. There was no selection from District 8.

Department Adjutant Van Delist announced that there were seventeen unfilled Alternate Delegate slots. The following Legionnaires were elected as Alternate Delegates to the 106th Annual National Convention of The American Legion in Tampa, Florida during spring district meetings: District 1 – PDC Phil Anderson of Piedmont, District 2 – Chris Rendon of Rapid City Post 320, District 3 – Greg Smith of Gregory, District 4 - Vern Prickett of Stratford, District 5 – PDC Tim Jurgens of Milbank, District 6 - PDC Hugh Holmes of Mitchell, and District 7 - Dale Hill of Sioux Falls Post 15. There was no selection from District 8.

The following Legionnaires were selected as National Call-Ins and automatic delegates: PDC Paul Evenson of Garretson, Warren Aas of Sisseton Post 50, PDC Terry Hanson of Arlington, PDC Jim Huls of Salem Post 140, PDC Doug Feltman of Chamberlain, Kevin Hempel of Chester Post 136, Doug Harris of Rapid City Post 22, PDC Hugh Holmes of Madison, PDC Tim Jurgens of Milbank, and Brian Dean of Spearfish. Other automatic delegates included PDC and NEC Fred Nelson of Spearfish, Immediate Past Department Commander Kevin Morello of Piedmont Post 311, Department Commander Kevin Hemple of Chester Post 136, and Department Adjutant Van Delist of Rapid City 22



Delegates Brian Dean (District 1) and PDC Feltman (District 6) moved into call-in spots. District 1 Alternate Delegate Phil Anderson was moved to Delegate. District 6 Alternate Delegate, Hugh Holmes, also moved into a call-in spot, which meant that two total delegates could be selected from the Convention floor. Andy Lyngen of Garretson and PDC Charemon Dunham of Iroquois were nominated from the floor to fill the two Delegate vacancies.

The following were nominations for Alternate Delegates to the National Convention from the convention floor: Annette Dunham of Iroquois, Carol Howitz of Spearfish, Mike Kumm of North Sioux City Post 319, Dave Durfee of Redfield, and Sandy Smith of Gregory.

Adjutant Van Delist asked for a motion to approve both Delegates and Alternate Delegates that have been nominated to attend National Convention with one voice vote. It was moved, seconded, and voted to approve the Delegates and Alternate Delegates as presented.

Commander Morello asked for a motion to permit the Adjutant, with the approval of the Commander, to add individuals who contact Headquarters requesting to be an Alternate Delegate at a later date seeing as there are several Alternate Delegates spots left open. The request was so moved, seconded, and approved.

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Department Commander Morello opened nominations for Department Sergeant-at-Arms for 2025-2026.

Greg Geiman of Scotland, SD, (member of Wagner Post 11), was nominated by Rod Smith, Chester, and seconded by Charemon Dunham, Iroquois, for the office of Sergeant-at-Arms.

Subsequent calls for further nominations were unanswered. A motion was made to close the nominations and that a unanimous ballot be cast for Greg Geiman of Scotland, SD, for 2025-2026 Department Sergeant-at-Arms for The American Legion Department of South Dakota. The motion carried.

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Adjutant Van Delist announced that Marvin Tisdall of Box Elder Post 315 was elected during the District 1, 2, and 3 caucus as their Vice Commander and that Shane Lamer of Montrose Post 154 was elected during the caucus of Districts 4-8 as their new Vice Commander. Their nominations were duly motioned and approved by the convention body.

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Commander Kevin Morello opened nominations for the office of Department Commander of The American Legion, Department of South Dakota.

Kevin Hempel of Watertown (Chester Post 136) was nominated for Department Commander by David Booze of Piedmont Post 311 and seconded by Andy Lyngen of Garretson Post 23.

Bill Peters of Sioux Falls Post 15 was nominated for Department Commander by Al Arndt of Sioux Falls Post 15 and seconded by PDC Terry Hanson of Arlington, SD.

Subsequent calls for further nominations were unanswered, and nominations closed. Adjutant Van Delist called the roll for voting by the delegates. Following the completion of the vote tabulation, Commander Kevin Morello announced Hempel was elected as the Department Commander of The American Legion Department of South Dakota for 2025-2026.

Bill Peters then gave concessions and congratulatory remarks to the body. He gave heartfelt congratulations to Commander Hempel committing to be his membership chair for a third year and encouraged all to work together.

Newly elected Commander Hempel provided acceptance remarks. He thanked his wife of 50 years, Robin and all that contributed to his run for Commander. He highlighted many of the great things Legionnaires are doing around the state pushing his message of L.I.S.T.

*Legion family working together*

*Involved in our communities*

*Serving our veterans, our children, our youth and our communities*

*Telling our story*

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The newly elected officers, including District officers elected at Spring Meetings, were called to the stage, where PDC Kevin Morello conducted the Oath and installation ceremony. Robin Hempel, the newly installed Department Commander's wife, pinned the Department Commander's lapel pin on Commander Kevin Hempel's lapel and presented him with his white Department Commander's cap.

The newly elected Commander, Kevin Hempel, along with the rest of the newly sworn-in leadership, was presented to the assembled delegates. Commander Hempel then assumed the chair. At that time, he re-appointed C.P. Van Delist as Adjutant for the a 2-year term.

The new Commander presided over closing ceremonies. Following the benediction and the retirement of the colors, Commander Hempel declared the ONE-HUNDRED-SIXTH ANNUAL CONVENTION of The American Legion, Department of South Dakota, adjourned.

**THE AMERICAN LEGION  
DEPARTMENT OF SOUTH DAKOTA  
106th ANNUAL CONVENTION  
Huron, South Dakota  
June 19-22, 2025  
REPORTS OF OFFICERS  
AND COMMITTEES**



**DISTRIBUTION OF REPORTS**

Article IV, Section 4 of the Department Constitution provides that: "All Department standing committees shall file written reports with the Department Adjutant 30 days before each Department Convention, and these reports shall be printed and available to Convention Committees and Delegates. Any standing or special Department committee to which Department funds are allocated shall file with the Department Commander at least five days prior to each Department Convention a complete and itemized financial report, showing funds received from whatever source and disbursement made. Such reports shall be placed before the Convention by the Commander and printed in the Annual Convention Proceedings. No further Department Funds shall be turned over from the Department Treasury to any committee until it shall have filed its financial report with the Commander."

**COMMANDER'S REPORT TO THE LEGION MEMBERSHIP**

Greetings Legion Family,

As my time serving as Department Commander comes to a close, I am filled with deep gratitude and immense pride. This journey has been nothing short of extraordinary. It has deepened my love for our great nation, strengthened my dedication to our veterans, and reminded me of the profound power of family and community.

When I stepped into this role, I carried with me not only the legacy of those who served before me, but also the voices of my own family—their encouragement, their sacrifices, and their unwavering belief in service beyond self. Those values guided every decision I made, every mile I traveled, and every hand I shook.

Together, over the past year, we have achieved so much. We've honored our heroes, uplifted our youth, supported our veterans, and extended a hand to families and neighborhoods who needed to hear: the American Legion family is here for you. We built meaningful partnerships with schools, churches, local organizations, and civic groups—reminding our communities that a strong community doesn't just happen. It's built, nurtured, and protected by those who care enough to show up.



What I'm most proud of is how we placed families at the heart of our mission. From post picnics and holiday drives to scholarships and simply opening our doors a little wider, we created spaces where veterans and their loved ones felt seen, valued, and supported. Because service to our country doesn't end with the uniform — it continues at the dinner table, at school events, and in the quiet moments when families shoulder the burden of sacrifice.

To my Department Officers and Chairmen—thank you for leading your areas with commitment and confidence. It was inspiring to see our programs thrive without the need for constant oversight. I especially want to recognize my Vice Commanders for stepping up while I was in California caring for my mother. Your leadership did not go unnoticed, and I'm sincerely grateful.

A heartfelt thank-you also goes to Van, Judy, and MaryJo. Throughout this year, especially during my frequent travels, they were my unwavering support system. They are the backbone of our organization—the people I turn to in times of need and the steady, compassionate presence I've counted on time and again. Simply put, they are exceptional.

To my fellow Legionnaires — thank you for standing shoulder to shoulder with me. Your dedication, resilience, and heart have inspired me daily. To the communities who welcomed me—thank you for showing me that patriotism is alive and well in every corner of our state. And to my family—your love and support made this journey possible. Every hour I gave to this role rested on the foundation of your belief in me.

While I may be stepping down from this position, I am not stepping away from our mission. I remain a proud Legionnaire, dedicated to serving those who served and to the communities that sustain them.

Let us continue to lead with compassion, act with purpose, and never forget united in service, we are stronger. Thank you, and may God bless our Legion family, our communities, and the United States of America.

Kevin Morello, Department Commander, 2024 – 2025

## **VICE COMMANDER'S (DISTRICTS 1-2) REPORT**

No Report Submitted.

## **VICE COMMANDER'S (DISTRICTS 3-8) REPORT**

The following is submitted to report on my activities as the SDAL Vice Commander for Districts 3-8, for the 2024-2025 year.

June was the completion of the Department Convention and following my election as the Dept Vice Commander, I attended the Blue Hat Day at the South Dakota Youth Trooper Academy. It is the 5<sup>th</sup> year I have attended that event and it is always a pleasure to talk to the attendees.

In July, I attended the Finance Commission meeting as well as the District Commander training and Department Executive Committee meeting the 12-14<sup>th</sup>. I helped with My Legion training at Redfield Post, which was held July 21st. Although it was a small group, I believe it was well received and showed that the course could be taught in a large group environment. I also represented the Department Commander at the homecoming of the newly elected SD Auxiliary President AnnaMae Warnier in Alcester.



August started with a visit to the Garretson post for their annual dinner, a trip to Piedmont for the Commander's homecoming, and then to New Orleans for the National Convention as a Department delegate. Although the temperatures are hotter than I would have liked, the convention is always a great event.

I represented the Department Commander at the Annual SDAL golf tournament that was held in Webster September 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup>. The weather was good, and they had good participation this year. On the 14<sup>th</sup>, I participated in the Volga post annual 2.2 for Heroes, which is a 2.2-mile run/walk for Veteran suicide awareness. On the 21<sup>st</sup>, I attended SD Sons of The American Legion homecoming for Shane Lamer also representing the Commander. Also, in September there was the District 4 fall meeting hosted by the Redfield Post on the 22<sup>nd</sup>, District 6 Fall meeting held in Lake Preston on the 28<sup>th</sup> and District 3 fall meeting held in Miller on the 29<sup>th</sup>. That was the first time I had been at the Miller post.

October started with my attendance at the National Fall meetings in Indianapolis the 6<sup>th</sup> - 9<sup>th</sup>. The District 5 fall meeting was held at the White post on the 20<sup>th</sup>, the District 7 fall meeting at the Dell Rapids Post on the 26<sup>th</sup> and the District 8 fall meeting was held at the Wagner post on the 27<sup>th</sup>.

In November I attended the Brookings annual veteran's dinner on the 7<sup>th</sup>, visited the Milbank Post on the 19<sup>th</sup>, and attended the legislative round table at the Watertown Post on the 21<sup>st</sup>.

It should be noted that I started my campaigning for Department Commander about this time and although I did campaign I would also discuss the topics at the various times, such as submitting required reports, membership, submitting the "of the year" packages and other pertinent information at the time.

December was a busy month with post visits to Redfield, Brookings, Lake Preston, Watertown, Aberdeen, Madison and White. I also attended the Egan Post Christmas event, participated in the Training Committee preps for Mid-Winter and the funeral for Pat Huls.

In January I made post visits to Garretson, De Smet, Hartford, Sisseton, Volga, Groton, Stickney, Gregory, Wagner, Lennox, and Mitchell. I also participated in the DEC Teams meeting as well as Legion Day at the capital to honor the Girls State Governor and Boys State Lieutenant Governor. I also spent several days at the Capitol lobbying for or against various bills.

February started with visits to Tea, Pierre, Clear Lake, Wessington and Chamberlain posts. I again spent several days in Pierre at the Capitol to lobby against HB 1278 which would allow noncertified outside organizations to charge veterans in assisting them prepare benefits packages. Unfortunately, the bill was forwarded and eventually approved. Midwinter was held in Oacoma, and I felt was very successful. As part of the training committee, I presented a class on required reports and the various awards from the posts. February ended with a visit to the Lead post.

I had a number of medical items that took up a lot of March, however I still visited the Hudson post as well as the District 3 spring meeting in Winner on March 15<sup>th</sup> and the District 6 spring meeting in Plankinton on the 16<sup>th</sup>. The District 5 spring meeting was held in Volga on March 22<sup>nd</sup>, and District 4 meeting was in Cresbard on the 23<sup>rd</sup>. March ended with the District 8 meeting hosted by the Tabor post on the 29<sup>th</sup> and the Garretson post hosted the District 7 meeting on the 30<sup>th</sup>. I had not been

to Plankinton or the Tabor post before and I felt all the district meetings were well attended.

April was another busy month. Although not under my preview, I visited the Spearfish and Piedmont post on April 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> respectively. I also attended the District 1 spring meeting in Spearfish on the 5<sup>th</sup> as well as was a guest at their Legion Birthday celebration that evening. On Sunday the 6<sup>th</sup> I attended the District 2 spring meeting in Hot Springs. I met with the Sturgis post on the 8<sup>th</sup>. On the 10<sup>th</sup> I was back on the east side of the state visiting the Gary post. April 16<sup>th</sup> was a trip to the Rapid City post to campaign. The 24<sup>th</sup> I attended a Vietnam Veterans pinning conducted by Representative Dusty Johnson hosted by the Watertown post. I was in the Chamberlain April 26<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup> to present a resolutions class to the 3<sup>rd</sup> South Dakota American Legion College. There were 9 attendees, and I think the classes were well received.

May 1<sup>st</sup> I visited the Huron post and had the privilege to swear in their newly elected officers. May 6<sup>th</sup> I visited the Mobridge post and again had the privilege of swearing in their new officers. I visited the Fort Pierre post on the 7<sup>th</sup> and participated in the Internal Affairs commission video teleconference to review submitted resolutions on the 8<sup>th</sup> as well as visited the Webster post that evening.

In that this report is submitted prior to the end of my term as the Department Vice Commander, it is probably fitting to identify future items I will be involved in prior to the upcoming department convention. I will be visiting the Lemmon post on May 13<sup>th</sup> as well as participating in the Aberdeen post Past Post Commander's dinner and ceremony and plan on visiting the Big Stone post on the 21<sup>st</sup>. The beginning of June I will again be a staff member for Boys State as well as participating in a portion of the SDAL 605 ride to raise money for the SDAL Foundation which will then bring us to our annual convention June 18-22.

It has been a privilege to serve our Legion family as one of your Department Vice Commanders this last year.

Kevin Hempel, SDAL Department Vice Commander, Districts 3-8

## **REPORT OF THE DEPARTMENT ADJUTANT**

Department Commander Morello,

This report is written to satisfy the Constitution and By Laws requirement for the Department Adjutant to write and present to the annual convention, a report covering activities not covered in the annual reports of the Committee and Commission Chairs and other Department officials. This report is as of May 8, 2025.

As I wrap up my second year as Adjutant, I am proud to report that since July 1<sup>st</sup>, 2024, I have visited 46 Posts, with over 90 separate Legion Events in total, attended 16 district meetings/conventions, attended eight Department Executive Committee Meetings, attended the Oratorical Contest, executed the Mid-Winter Conference (which thanks to Post 3 and PDC/ANEC Doug Feltman it was a great success.) Attended more than 43 meetings with outside organizations and spent 25 days conducting National Level meetings and activities; in total, I have spent over 75 nights on the road. All this and the year is not over yet. It has been a busy and rewarding year.



Past Department Commander Barns once said, "I think that The Department Adjutant of SD's office is an office that is hard to fill and suit everybody, because you are going to have fault to find with it wherever you are or whatever you do." He said that at the tenth annual Convention of the Department in 1928, and how true he was. I am honored and humbled to be able to work for the department and our members. I have done my best for what I feel is in the best interest of The American Legion.

With diminishing membership, another significant challenge has been finances. Our raw number of members is down, but our market penetration is the highest in the nation. More than 28% of the Veterans in South Dakota are members of The American Legion, this is something for the entire Department to be proud of. With the lower member numbers, our revenue is diminishing. At Department Headquarters, we have been striving to make as many cuts as possible. Continue to move as much as feasible away from mailing hard copies, and we eliminated a Department vehicle. We made changes to our annual meeting schedules to reduce travel and expenses and have conducted more meetings through video teleconference. Some of these changes have been met with apprehension but are necessary for health growth of the department. Finances will continue to be a significant challenge until we can stop depending on Membership dues as our main source of income. We must secure partnerships, sponsorships, and outside donors. If we continue to put the burden on the Posts to fund the department at some point, we will price ourselves out of membership.

This year has not been all challenges; there have been many rewards. Due to the hard work of Membership Chair Bill Peters and the Posts themselves, our department won the Big Twelve Challenge for our category for a second year in a row. That means \$2000 for investing in technology.

We continue to make changes and updates to the Department Headquarters. In the past year we have put on display our 106 years of history. Organized and cleaned out our digital systems to be more functional. We made the switch over to QuickBooks from our outdated antiquated bookkeeping system, and although it is not complete, we are working with our accountant to reconcile. We have overhauled the Department website and have new web hosting services. We dropped redundant email services and application subscriptions. We started using more applications we already have, including AI to build efficiencies in the office. The projects are not complete; we will continue to improve our home in the Codington County War Memorial and Courthouse building where we have been since 1928.

The headquarters staff consists of Mrs. Judy Greenfield, our Membership and Bookkeeper, who has been with the Department for 32 years, Mrs. MaryJo Boner, Executive Assistant and Programs Coordinator, who has been with the Department for seven years, and myself, the Department Adjutant, I will complete my second year in June. Judy and MaryJo are truly the backbone of the Department, without their dedication, our organization would come to a grinding halt. I am sincerely grateful to have these wonderful ladies to work alongside, they have made for a very welcoming first year.

Mister Commander, since most of the Committee Chairs and State Officers have filed complete reports, most of the activities of the Department have been covered and reported on. I would like to congratulate you on a very successful year.

It has truly been a privilege to have you as my Commander; you have left some big shoes for your successors to fill.

Respectfully submitted, C.P. Van Delist, Department Adjutant

## NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEEMAN REPORT

Department Commander Morello and fellow Legionnaires,

I am honored to submit this annual report as the South Dakota National Executive Committeeman (NEC), reflecting our department's engagement and representation at the national level of The American Legion over the past year.



**National Convention – New Orleans** - The 105th National Convention in New Orleans brought together over 6,500 delegates, alternates, and guests. South Dakota was well represented by a dedicated delegation. We actively participated in committee meetings during the convention, engaged with resolutions affecting national policy, and maintained a visible presence on the convention floor.

One convention highlight was the keynote address from Lt. Gen. Russel Honoré, USA (Ret.), who commanded Joint Task Force Katrina. His message on leadership, resilience, and responsibility profoundly impacted attendees.

The convention concluded with the election of **James A. LaCoursiere Jr.** as our new National Commander. His theme, **L.U.V. – Loyalty, Unity, and Valor**, reinforces the foundational principles of our organization. His leadership calls for strengthening veteran suicide prevention efforts through the **“Be the One”** initiative, increasing visibility in our communities, and expanding legislative advocacy.

**NEC Duties and Committee Involvement** - As your NEC, I participated in the National Executive Committee's post-convention meeting and the Fall NEC Meeting, where critical decisions regarding policy, finance, and program direction were made. I worked to ensure South Dakota's values and concerns were presented during deliberations.

I also attended the 2025 **American Legion Washington Conference**, where I had the honor of witnessing **National Commander LaCoursiere** testify before Congress. His powerful testimony reinforced our national priorities and elevated the voice of veterans on Capitol Hill. His commitment to veteran suicide prevention, expanded caregiver support, and protection of earned benefits was well-received and critical to our continued advocacy efforts.

I will continue to represent South Dakota at the upcoming **Spring NEC Meeting**, where we will again deliberate on key organizational priorities, policy development, and resolutions impacting veterans and their families nationwide.

**Legislative Advocacy** - National Commander LaCoursiere emphasized the need to bolster our legislative efforts. This includes support for key initiatives such as:

- **The GI Bill Parity Act**, to support our National Guard and Reserve;
- **The Major Richard Star Act**, to allow concurrent receipt of VA disability and DOD retirement;

- **Funding protection for the Coast Guard** during government shutdowns.

South Dakota's voice is vital in these national conversations. I urge all posts to remain engaged with our Congressional delegation and participate in grassroots advocacy to reinforce these priorities.



**Looking Ahead** - As we move forward, I challenge every Legionnaire to embrace our mission with renewed energy:

- Continue growing the “Be the One” campaign through post-level programs and partnerships.
- Promote our visibility through service projects, public events, and media engagement.
- Encourage membership growth by emphasizing our impact and purpose.

Let us stand united in our efforts, upholding the ideals of Loyalty, Unity, and Valor.

Thank you for your continued trust and support. It remains a great privilege to represent South Dakota at the national level.

Respectfully submitted, Fred Nelson, National Executive Committeeman

## DEPARTMENT FINANCE REPORT

Commander Morello,

As Department Finance Officer and Chair of the Finance Commission, it has been an honor to serve the Legionnaires of the Department of South Dakota. It has been a pleasure to serve alongside the other members of the Finance Commission who are PDC Paul Evenson, David Booze, Dave Gutzmer, and Dale Hill. These individuals continue to be key in monitoring and advising on budget issues, and in helping me in my role as Department Finance Officer.



The Finance Commission met in July 2024 to prepare a budget for the Fiscal Year 2024-2025 which was then presented to the Department Executive Committee for their approval. The DEC approved a 2024-2025 budget of \$324,575.59. This amount was based on known expenditures such as salaries, insurance, office expenditures and program costs. In addition, Commissions, Committees, and programs had additional requests that were used to determine a budget total.

As of March 31, 2025, income for the Department from membership has been \$206,535.29 (64% of budgeted). Outside income from SD Fundraising Account (\$31,265.59), USAA Royalty Payment from National (\$4,011), AGIA (\$38,310.53), Emblem Royalty (\$3,517.78), SD American Legion Foundation (\$16,590), and MidWinter Sweeps (\$16,426.51) which totaled \$110,121.80. Additional anticipated income will come from 2025 Convention Sweeps. Total income to date is \$316,656.70 which is 97.6% of budgeted.

As of March 31, 2025, Department expenditures total \$193,038.91 (59.5% of projected budget) with a remaining budget of \$131,536.68. The chances are good for not exceeding our income this year. The Cash Balance Report at the beginning of the year had a Cash Balance of \$1,124,974.79 and at the end of March the Cash Balance Report indicated a balance of \$1,166,566.24. It should be noted that that amount includes the Edward Jones Account (formally listed as Trust Fund Account) which has gone from \$846,070.44 to \$940,566.01.

A more detailed report will be in the Proceedings from this Convention once the financials have been reviewed by an outside agency. The Financials of the Department of South Dakota have remained viable and stable over this past Fiscal Year.

Respectfully Submitted, Krisma D. DeWitt, Finance Officer

THE AMERICAN LEGION, DEPARTMENT OF SOUTH DAKOTA

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION - MODIFIED CASH BASIS

June 30, 2025

See Independent Accountant's Compilation Report

ASSETS

Current Assets

Cash and cash equivalents	\$	219,513
Education loans receivable		120,507
Inventory		6,311
Prepaid expenses		5,229
<b>Total Current Assets</b>		<b>351,560</b>

Other Assets

Marketable equity securities		999,889
<b>Total Other Assets</b>		<b>999,889</b>

Property and Equipment

Equipment		40,648
Leasehold improvements		3,320
Vehicles		66,230
Accumulated depreciation		(78,467)
<b>Total Property and Equipment</b>		<b>31,731</b>

<b>Total Assets</b>	\$	<b>1,383,180</b>
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LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS

Current Liabilities

Accrued expenses	\$	3,548
<b>Total Current Liabilities</b>		<b>3,548</b>

Net Assets

With donor restrictions		186,193
Without donor restrictions		1,193,439
<b>Total Net Assets</b>		<b>1,379,632</b>

<b>Total Liabilities and Net Assets</b>	\$	<b>1,383,180</b>
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## THE AMERICAN LEGION, DEPARTMENT OF SOUTH DAKOTA

## STATEMENT OF ACTIVITIES - MODIFIED CASH BASIS

Year Ended June 30, 2025

See Independent Accountant's Compilation Report

	With Donor Restrictions	Without Donor Restrictions	Total
<b>Revenues and Gains</b>			
Membership dues	\$ -	\$ 217,489	\$ 217,489
Donations	6,484	111,252	117,736
Sales of merchandise	-	14,070	14,070
Interest and dividends	82	58,793	58,875
Realized gain on sale of investments	-	2,681	2,681
Unrealized gain on investments	-	46,419	46,419
Gain on sale of fixed assets	-	15,500	15,500
Other	13,900	49,503	63,403
Net assets released from restrictions	(38,358)	38,358	-
<b>Total Revenues and Gains</b>	<b>(17,892)</b>	<b>554,065</b>	<b>536,173</b>
<b>Expenses</b>			
Program services:			
Children and youth	-	1,891	1,891
Athletic commission	-	8,265	8,265
Oratory Fund	-	1,018	1,018
Label	-	14,610	14,610
Emblem - Cost of sales	-	16,153	16,153
Post 500	-	20,386	20,386
Education loans	-	18	18
	-	62,341	62,341
General and administrative	-	337,793	337,793
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>400,134</b>	<b>400,134</b>
<b>Change in Net Assets</b>	<b>\$ (17,892)</b>	<b>\$ 153,931</b>	<b>\$ 136,039</b>
<b>Net Assets, Beginning</b>	<b>\$ 204,085</b>	<b>\$ 1,039,508</b>	<b>\$ 1,243,593</b>
Change in net assets	(17,892)	153,931	136,039
<b>Net Assets, Ending</b>	<b>\$ 186,193</b>	<b>\$ 1,193,439</b>	<b>\$ 1,379,632</b>

## THE AMERICAN LEGION, DEPARTMENT OF SOUTHDAKOTA

## STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION - MODIFIED CASH BASIS

June 30, 2025

See Independent Accountant's Compilation Report

ASSETS	General Fund	Children and Youth Fund	Athletic Commission Fund	Oratory Fund	Historian Fund	Veterans Services Fund	Education Loans Fund	Total
<b>Current Assets</b>								
Cash and cash equivalents	\$ 153,827	\$ 24,975	\$ 19,843	\$ 8,892	\$ 500	\$ 11,476	\$ -	\$ 219,513
Education loans receivable	-	-	-	-	-	-	120,507	120,507
Inventory	6,311	-	-	-	-	-	-	6,311
Prepaid expenses	5,229	-	-	-	-	-	-	5,229
<b>Total Current Assets</b>	<b>165,367</b>	<b>24,975</b>	<b>19,843</b>	<b>8,892</b>	<b>500</b>	<b>11,476</b>	<b>120,507</b>	<b>351,560</b>
<b>Other Assets</b>								
Marketable equity securities	999,889	-	-	-	-	-	-	999,889
<b>Total Other Assets</b>	<b>999,889</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>999,889</b>
<b>Property and Equipment</b>								
Equipment	40,648	-	-	-	-	-	-	40,648
Vehicles	66,230	-	-	-	-	-	-	66,230
Leasehold improvements	3,320	-	-	-	-	-	-	3,320
Accumulated depreciation	(78,467)	-	-	-	-	-	-	(78,467)
<b>Total Property and Equipment</b>	<b>31,731</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>31,731</b>
<b>Total Assets</b>	<b>\$1,196,987</b>	<b>\$ 24,975</b>	<b>\$ 19,843</b>	<b>\$ 8,892</b>	<b>\$ 500</b>	<b>\$ 11,476</b>	<b>\$ 120,507</b>	<b>\$1,383,180</b>
<b>LIABILITIES</b>								
<b>Current Liabilities</b>								
Accrued expenses	\$ 3,548	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 3,548
<b>Total Current Liabilities</b>	<b>3,548</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>3,548</b>
<b>Net Assets</b>								
With donor restrictions	-	24,975	19,843	8,892	500	11,476	120,507	186,193
Without donor restrictions	1,193,439	-	-	-	-	-	-	1,193,439
	1,193,439	24,975	19,843	8,892	500	11,476	120,507	1,379,632
<b>Total Liabilities and Net Assets</b>	<b>\$1,196,987</b>	<b>\$ 24,975</b>	<b>\$ 19,843</b>	<b>\$ 8,892</b>	<b>\$ 500</b>	<b>\$ 11,476</b>	<b>\$ 120,507</b>	<b>\$1,383,180</b>

THE AMERICAN LEGION, DEPARTMENT OF SOUTH DAKOTA

STATEMENT OF ACTIVITIES - MODIFIED CASH BASIS

Year Ended June 30, 2025

See Independent Accountant's Compilation Report

	General Fund	Children and Youth Fund	Athletic Commission Fund	Oratory Fund	Historian Fund	Veterans Services Fund	Education Loans Fund	Total
<b>Revenues and Support</b>								
Membership dues	\$ 217,489	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 217,489
Donations	111,252	1,029	-	-	-	5,355	100	117,736
Sales of merchandise	14,070	-	-	-	-	-	-	14,070
Interest and dividends	58,793	24	18	9	-	11	20	58,875
Realized gain on investments	2,681	-	-	-	-	-	-	2,681
Unrealized gain on investments	46,419	-	-	-	-	-	-	46,419
Gain on sale of fixed assets	15,500	-	-	-	-	-	-	15,500
Other	49,503	-	13,900	-	-	-	-	63,403
Net assets released from restrictions	38,358	-	(11,954)	(19)	-	(6,000)	(20,385)	-
<b>Total Revenues and Gains</b>	<b>554,065</b>	<b>1,053</b>	<b>1,964</b>	<b>(10)</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>(634)</b>	<b>(20,265)</b>	<b>536,173</b>
<b>Expenses</b>								
Program services:								
Children and youth	1,891	-	-	-	-	-	-	1,891
Athletic commission	8,265	-	-	-	-	-	-	8,265
Oratory expenses	1,018	-	-	-	-	-	-	1,018
Label	14,610	-	-	-	-	-	-	14,610
Emblem - cost of sales	16,153	-	-	-	-	-	-	16,153
Post 500	20,386	-	-	-	-	-	-	20,386
Education loans	18	-	-	-	-	-	-	18
	62,341	-	-	-	-	-	-	62,341
General and administrative	337,793	-	-	-	-	-	-	337,793
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>400,134</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>400,134</b>
<b>Change in Net Assets</b>	<b>\$ 153,931</b>	<b>\$ 1,053</b>	<b>\$ 1,964</b>	<b>\$ (10)</b>	<b>\$ -</b>	<b>\$ (634)</b>	<b>\$ (20,265)</b>	<b>\$ 136,039</b>
<b>Net Assets, Beginning</b>	<b>\$ 1,039,508</b>	<b>\$ 23,922</b>	<b>\$ 17,879</b>	<b>\$ 8,902</b>	<b>\$ 500</b>	<b>\$ 12,110</b>	<b>\$ 140,772</b>	<b>\$ 1,243,593</b>
Change in net assets	153,931	1,053	1,964	(10)	-	(634)	(20,265)	136,039
<b>Net Assets, Ending</b>	<b>\$ 1,193,439</b>	<b>\$ 24,975</b>	<b>\$ 19,843</b>	<b>\$ 8,892</b>	<b>\$ 500</b>	<b>\$ 11,476</b>	<b>\$ 120,507</b>	<b>\$ 1,379,632</b>

**DEPARTMENT SERVICE OFFICER REPORT**

No Report Received.

**AMERICANISM COMMISSION REPORT**

Commander Morello,

Thanks for the opportunity to have served as the South Dakota American Legion's 2024-2025 Americanism Chair. As of this report's submission, to meet the 1 May 2025 suspense date of the "Big Three Americanism Programs:" Boys State, Youth Trooper Academy, and the Department's Scholarship Oratorical Program, only the Oratory Program has been completed.



I extend my thanks to the past Americanism Officers: Dan Wyatt, Harry Boner, Doug Harris, and Larry Madsen, and to Past Department Commander Doug Feltman, plus committee members Larry Madsen, Clayton Nei, Mike Kraft, and Ken Sabers for their advice and expertise throughout my tenure as Americanism Officer. A special thanks to MaryJo Boner of Department Headquarters for her assistance in preparing and distribution of the annual Americanism Package along with my accompanying Americanism Officer's Letter to each of the District's and Post's Americanism Officers. In recognition that the American Legion is a family, MaryJo Boner also facilitated effective coordination and mutual support with the Auxiliary to incorporate the Auxiliary's Girls States Program and other related interests.

The Americanism 2024-2025 Program year kicked off the year with an Americanism Program Familiarization Presentation to the Department Executive Committee (DEC) and attending guests at the DEC's 13 July 2024 meeting held at Watertown American Legion Post 17.

In the 2024 fall, eligible students, grades 9 through 12 and under 20 years of age, enrolled in public, parochial, military, private, and state accredited home schooling, selected and prepared their oratory thesis based on the United States of America Constitution for Post level oratory competition. Following the Post contests, each District's Oratorical contests were concluded in January 2025. The Department Scholarship Oratorical Contest was held Sunday, 16 February 2025, at 10:30 AM CDT, at the Arrowood Resort and Conference Center in Oacoma, South Dakota at the conclusion of the Department's 2025 Mid-winter Conference.

Originally, seven Districts were scheduled to have contestants at the Department Oratorical Contest. Unfortunately, due to untimely personal and family hardships, two candidates were unable to attend. The five remaining Districts contestants each provided original highly polished, thoughtful, and stimulating prepared 8-to-10-minute presentations. Followed by an assigned constitutional amendment, each contestant demonstrated their in-depth knowledge of the assigned topic, plus an ability to organize their thoughts and discuss for 3 to 5 minutes, our government under the principles of the constitution as related to the assigned topic.

The winner of the Department Contest was Elna Andrews of District 7's Beresford American Legion Post 7. She received Department's \$1,500 Scholarship and 1<sup>st</sup> Place Trophy. Elena and an accompanying sponsor will travel expenses paid to the National Oratorical Competition being held, 16 to 18 May 2025, at Hillsdale College, Hillsdale, Michigan, with an opportunity to win \$25,000 for a 1st place

finish, \$22,500 for 2nd place, or \$20,000 for 3rd place, as well as \$2,000 for each round of participation at the National Competition.

Our second-place Department Contestant and recipient of \$1,000 Scholarship and trophy, was Blixa L. Broussard, sponsored by District 2's Rapid City American Legion Post 22. Placing 3rd and recipient of \$500 scholarship and a trophy was Ada Sharp, representing District 4's Aberdeen American Legion Post 24. Each of our finalists: Preston Singrey sponsored by District 6's Arlington American Legion Post 42, and Christian Carley representing District 1's Box Elder's American Legion Post 315, each received \$200 and a trophy.

I extend my personal thanks to the 22 volunteers from across the American Legion Family of Legionnaires, Auxiliary, SAL, and community citizens, who enabled the Department's 2025 Oratorical Contest to flow smoothly. A special thanks to Past Department Commander Doug Feltman for obtaining the five exceptional judges plus an alternate judge, whose task to evaluate and rank order the contestants and subsequent placings was no easy feat.

Prior to the Department's Mid-winter Conference, the Americanism Commission met via Teams on 30 January to review the progress status of Americanism programs. Of special note, historically Post and Individual Americanism Awards selections were processed by the commission on Blue Hat Day during Boys State Week. There was a need identified to break from history in order to avoid distracting volunteers from Boys State support requirements. It was decided to meet the week prior to Boys State on 29 May at Pierre's American Legion Post 8. After an informative Shooting Sports presentation by Americanism Commission member Mike Kraft, the Commission unanimously agreed to propose inclusion of Shooting Sports as an Americanism Program. Mike Kraft has agreed to chair the Americanism Shooting Sports Committee and to lead its implementation. Within my submission for the 2025-2026 Fiscal Year Americanism Budget, I have dedicated a section for a budget line to be added to Department's Annual Budget Planning process. It is anticipated the initial year funding will be handled with donations and dedicated fund-raising projects, minimizing impact to the upcoming 2025-2026 Fiscal Year Budget. Additional topics included Boys State registration status, Youth Trooper Academy, plus an update by Lyle Tolsma, Athletic Chair, on our 100<sup>th</sup> Year of American Legion Baseball, as well as the current state of High School Baseball Program development.

Due to initial low registration numbers, the Youth Trooper Academy registration was extended two (2) weeks to 4 April, as a result, registrations more than doubled to 55 individuals. Youth Trooper Academy interviews were concluded by 12 April, with quality male and female Academy cadets selected to fill the 24 Academy slots. The Youth Trooper Academy begins immediately following the Department's Annual Convention on Monday, 23 June, concluding on Friday, 27 June, with Blue Hat Day scheduled to be at the shooting range on Thursday, 26 June 2025. A special shout out and congratulations to our 2024 Youth Trooper Academy "Outstanding Graduate," and \$500.00 Scholarship winner, Bowan Ryan from Castlewood American Legion Post 250. Bowan is currently attending Lake Area Technical Institute studying Criminal Justice.

Boys State is scheduled for Monday, 2 June through Friday, 6 June 2025. Registration is currently lagging with registrations currently below last year's rate. This continuing downhill trend is reflective over the past few years. How to reverse

this decline for the upcoming 2025-2026 Program Year will be a topic to be addressed with the Boys State Director and his staff, as well as the Ad-hoc Strategic Planning Committee. This year's fee to be paid by each Post for each Boys State Attendee is \$250.00, plus their transportation costs. Blue Hat Day is scheduled for Thursday, 5 June. I encourage all to visit with Boys State participants and the activities orchestrated by the Program Staff to develop our future community, state, and national leaders.

Our support of the Scouting Program continues to engage in the development of our youth. Of the three applications received for Eagle Scout of the Year, the winner was from Spearfish Post 164. The Eagle Scout winner's project involved making an ADA-compliant accessible wheelchair ramp, with a movable railing to load and unload commodities in and out of the VFW building. This challenging project provides noteworthy service to the physically challenged and disabled individuals of the community.

Unfortunately, it is noted that some schools do not include the Americanism Programs in their curriculum of extracurricular opportunities for students to expand their civic and patriotic education beyond the basic classroom instruction. I encourage the American Legion Family Leadership to engage their school district boards and school administrators, plus teachers to increase participation in all our programs: Flag Education, Veterans in the Classroom, Oratory Scholarship, Boys State to include the Auxiliary's Girls State, Youth Trooper Academy, Athletic Program of Legion Baseball, Scouting Program, and Shooting Sports Program.

As each District and their Post prepares your Post annual Americanism program goals for the next program year, and your Annual Americanism Report for submission, reach out and contact your school officials this spring to schedule appointments involving your Post on the upcoming new school year calendar.

A recap of the Americanism Budget as of submission of this report is reflected below:

<u>Americanism Commission:</u>	<u>Budget:</u>	<u>Expended YTD:</u>	<u>Remaining:</u>	<u>% Used:</u>
Oratory Scholarship:	\$4,000.00	\$1,087.62	\$2,912.38	27.19%
Commission Expenses:	\$2,000.00	\$1,225.37	\$774.63	61.27%
YTA & Scholarship:	\$2,700.00	\$500.00	\$2,200.00	18.52%
Public Safety Committee	\$440.00	\$43.00	\$397.00	9.77%
C&Y Programs	\$1,500.00	\$195.06	\$1,304.94	13.00%
C&Y Committee	\$500.00	\$446.00	\$54.00	89.20%
Americanism Awards	\$500.00	\$0.00	\$500.00	0.00%

**Notes:**

- (1) Above includes \$500 for Americanism Awards budgeted in the HQ's Budget,
- (2) Numerous expenditures occur during the remaining months of May and June.
- (3) The Athletic Committee and Boys State Budgets are managed separately.
- (4) Shooting Scholarship Program Budget Line will be added to the 2025-2026 Budget Year.

Thank you, Commander Morello, the opportunity to represent the Department of South Dakota as Americanism Chair. And thanks again to the Past Americanism Chairmen, and Americanism Commission members for their direction and support.

Respectfully Submitted, David R. Booze, Americanism Commission Chair



ATHLETIC COMMISSION REPORT

Commander Morello,

On behalf of the SD American Legion Athletic Commission, we would like to thank you and your staff for your continued support of SD American Legion Baseball.

This year is the 100<sup>th</sup> year anniversary for American Legion Baseball, which all started back in 1925 in Milbank, SD. Birch-Miller Post 9 of Milbank, SD will be the host of a three-day celebration called “The American Legion Baseball Centennial Classic Tournament” sponsored by National. There will be American Legion Baseball teams from SD, ND, NE, and MN participating in the tournament. We welcome all who would like to join in on the celebration to come to Milbank, SD. The dates for the tournament are July 11<sup>th</sup>, 12<sup>th</sup>, and 13<sup>th</sup>, 2025. There will be two games on the 11<sup>th</sup>, three games on the 12<sup>th</sup> and the championship on the 13<sup>th</sup>.



The 2025 American Legion Baseball registration is in full swing with several teams already registered. As always, the SDAL Athletic Commission continues to work together to keep SD American Legion Baseball a priority for our youth who wish to participate.

The state championship host sites and dates for this year (2025) are:

- Class “A” Senior – Watertown, SD (July 29 – August 2)
- Class “B” Senior – Milbank, SD (August 1 – 5)
- Class “A” Junior – Rapid City, SD, Post 22 (July 31 – August 3)
- Class “B” Junior – Milbank, SD (August 8 – 10)

On December 15<sup>th</sup>, 2024, selections were made for the 2026 state championship host sites. They are as follows:

- Class “A” Senior – Rapid City, SD, Post 22
- Class “B” Senior – Madison, SD
- Class “A” Junior – Sioux Falls, SD, Post 15
- Class “B” Junior – Redfield, SD

This year’s American Legion Golf Tournament will be hosted by Wakonda American Legion Post 13 on September 6<sup>th</sup> & 7<sup>th</sup>, 2025. This tournament is open to any American Legion or Son of American Legion member. The host/Chair is Mark Westergard of Wakonda, along with Commissioners Elton Blemaster and Gene Gillen.

There continues to be talk about the SDHSAA sanctioning baseball as a High School sport. In March, I participated in a meeting with the SDHSAA who are still conducting a study if they are going to sanction High School Baseball in SD. The earliest this would take place is in the school year 2027.

Commander Morello, this concludes this year’s annual Athletic Commission Report.

Respectfully submitted, Lyle W. Tolsma, Athletic Commission Chair

ATHLETIC COMMISSION FINANCIAL REPORT

Balance, 6-30-2024

\$ 17,879.40

RECEIPTS:

Entry Fees

\$13,900.00

Interest

\$ 17.63

\$13,917.63

\$ 13,917.63

TOTAL

\$ 31,797.03

**TOTAL DISBURSEMENTS:**

Committee Expenses, Tournament Fees	<u>\$11,953.94</u>	<u>\$ 11,953.94</u>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$11,953.94</b>	
<b>BALANCE, 6-30-2025</b>		<b>\$ 19,843.09</b>

**BOYS STATE DIRECTOR REPORT**

Commander,

The Annual Boys State Session will be held on the NSU Campus in Aberdeen SD on 2-6 June 2025.

We currently have paltry 128 registered attendees. The Annual Boys State Corporation meeting will be held on Sunday 1 June at 3pm on the campus of NSU.

Respectfully Submitted, Gene Opbroek, Director.

**DEPARTMENT CHAPLAIN'S REPORT**

I was honored and humbled by the appointment by Department Commander Kevin Morello to serve as Department Chaplain for the coming year following the State Convention in June 2024.

During the course of the year, I have had the privilege of attending the newly elected Commander's Homecoming, Fall and Spring District meetings, and a variety of Veterans' events within my own district and neighboring districts. I have participated in a National Chaplain's Teleconference with the National Chaplain and a number of Department Chaplains around the nation.



I've been privileged to publish a variety of faith-based posts on the Department Facebook page at appropriate times of the year for the edification of our members across the Department.

The preparation and conduct of the Four Chaplains Memorial service at the Mid-Winter Conference and my own post in North Sioux City, has been a privilege. I felt that since the service included members from the Auxiliary, Sons, and Riders, that the Chaplain representative from each should have a role in the service. It was well received, and each branch of our Legion Family was represented.

Regarding Department Services, the Memorial Service at the State Convention took on a new look after including the names of Past Sons of the American Legion Department Commanders in the Memorial Rolls on the power-point, and the printed list, as well as Legion Past Commanders and Auxiliary Past Presidents. We updated the slide program with appropriate music to enhance the meditation time during the review of those officers who have been transferred to Post Everlasting. The Department services should be all inclusive of our Legion family.

I am continuing to have discussions with other department Chaplains on the possibility of a workshop for Chaplains at all levels within our Department. I am also continuing to look at increasing faith-based publications on social media for the Department's edification.

Respectfully Submitted, Rev. Michael Kumm, Ph.D, Chaplain

## CHILDREN AND YOUTH REPORT

Commander Morello,

The South Dakota American Legion Children and Youth (C&Y) program has kept me busy. I want to thank you for your leadership and willingness to help direct my efforts with the C&Y program this past year. I greatly appreciate it.

For the past several years, I have worked with the C&Y programs within the Department. I have had the opportunity to work with many great American Legion Family members from across the Department with fundraiser events in support of The Children's Miracle Network, Special Olympics, Holiday Meal gift card program for young service members and their families, plus I have been able to help organize and direct service-related activities on behalf of Operation Homefront.



The service activities that the Department supports at the beginning of every new Legion year are:

- The annual Backpack Distribution program is put on by the Family Readiness Department at Ellsworth Air Force Base near Rapid City the last weekend in July. Just this past July, we had 18 American Legion, Auxiliary, SAL, and Rider members from three Districts helping to hand out 400 donated backpacks filled with school supplies. These activities were reported in last fall's Up to Now, The Rising Son, and The Legionette newsletter, along with photos of the event. This event is expected to grow this coming July, and more assistance will be requested from the Department as time draws closer.
- The second service program that we assisted with was the annual Dollar Tree program, where volunteers were asked to pick up donated school supplies over the summer and donated toys in November. These were to be donated to National Guard Armories, VA facilities, or state organizations to assist our younger veteran families with some of the necessities needed for the school year. We had a great crew from the Aberdeen Post assist with this program where over 100 gift bags of donated items were distributed to the Aberdeen VA CBOC and to the local field office of Social Services.
- These are great programs that I hope the American Legion will continue to be a part of.

We had an early start to the 2024/2025 American Legion year by assisting a few veterans with children at home with filing of TFA (Temporary Financial Assistance) requests.

- The Sioux Falls Post Commander and Children and Youth program Chair did a fantastic job working with a veteran in their area which resulted in that veteran receiving the assistance that was requested.
- Our second veteran worked with the Clear Lake Post and myself for assistance and while a formal request for TFA was not submitted, that veteran was able to receive assistance from Operation Homefront which better suited their needs at the time.
- Most recently, I received a request through the Sioux Falls Post where a veteran grandparent needed assistance with taking care of their child and grandchildren. While there were grandchildren living with the veteran, the rules of how to obtain assistance through a TFA request are clear. The minor children in

need must belong to the veteran or if the older veteran has custody of the minor children, then TFA assistance may be possible. This was as a result of The American Legion passing Resolution No. 5 (May 2022) Titled: Policy and Procedures of the Temporary Financial Assistance Grant Program. The policy clearly states that the minor child must be living full-time in the home of a qualifying veteran or service member. The minor child qualifies if they fall into one of the following categories. Yes, the veteran (the grandparent) could qualify for TFA if the minor child(ren) is living in the veteran's home full-time and is under the veteran's legal guardianship or has been adopted by the veteran. Veterans can apply for assistance through their local American Legion Post if the child is:

- a biological child of the veteran or service member,
- a child legally adopted by the veteran or service member,
- a stepchild by marriage of the veteran or service member, or
- a child who is under the legal guardianship of a veteran or service member.

I have attached a link to the resolution here. <https://archive.legion.org/node/7887>. Forms to start the TFA process can be found at [www.sdlegion.org/sdal-tfa-form](http://www.sdlegion.org/sdal-tfa-form). For questions about this process, please contact me for assistance.

While it has been a busy year, not much of the available budget has been tapped into yet. With April being Children and Youth Month, there are programs and projects where the available funds will be used to assist the programs once the month is over. I have made this known to the Department leadership of our Legion family in the first week of April. I suggested at the time that unless some of the available funds were needed during the month of April, the balance of the funds would be split between programs supported by the leadership of each branch of the Legion Family within the Department, such as;

- Special Olympics and the Children's Miracle Network of South Dakota.

These programs are supported by The American Legion, Legion Riders, and the Sons of the American Legion,

- Project Stuff Sack, which is supported by The American Legion Auxiliary
- Operation Homefront programs that are supported by the entire Department

Family.

The chart below reflects my current budget used to date. I have sent out an email to the Children and Youth Committee requesting their support for these programs. Of the remaining \$1,304.94 in the Program budget, each of these four programs listed above will receive a \$325 check in support of their work. I will use a portion of the Committee funds to help cover cost for C&Y awards and expenses during the convention. There are many Posts from across the Department that represented the C&Y programs over the past month that should be recognized.

	July	Aug.	Sept.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	Apr.	May.	June	Usage
C&Y Programs	\$1,500.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$23.28	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$171.78	\$0.00	\$195.06	\$1,304.94	13.00%
C&Y Committee	\$500.00	\$446.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$446.00	\$54.00	89.20%

On a personal note, I have had a great year where I have learned and grown as a Legionnaire for the Department of South Dakota. I received the Volunteer of the Region Award from Operation Homefront in July. I represented the Department of South Dakota when I attended The National American Legion College in November. I have worked this year in support of all the programs referenced within this report. I was also recently asked to attend the National Awards Ceremony for the Military

Child of the Year Award, which is another program supported by The American Legion through Operation Homefront. I hope to continue to use all I have learned over the past years as I plan to continue to work as, or with, the future C&Y Chair of the American Legion, Department of South Dakota in the years to come.

Again, I wanted to thank you for selecting me as your state C&Y Chair for the 2024-2025 Legion year. It has been a great year working with you. Thank you for your direction and mentorship. I wish you all the best in the coming years!!

Respectfully Submitted, Harry Boner, Children and Youth Chair

**CHILDREN AND YOUTH FINANCIAL REPORT**

Balance, 6-30-2024		\$23,921.67
<b>Memorial/Donations</b>	\$1,028.54	
Interest	\$ 24.36	
<b>TOTAL</b>	\$1,052.90	\$ 1,052.90
		\$24,974.57
<b>DISBURSEMENTS:</b>		
TFAs	\$-----	
<b>TOTAL</b>	\$-----	\$-----
<b>BALANCE, 6-30-2025</b>		\$24,974.57

**EDUCATIONAL SCHOLARSHIP COMMITTEE REPORT**

Department Commander Kevin Morello,

The past year, the Educational Scholarship fund received approximately \$4,144.65 in donations. The cost of some of these donations included the dissolution of Fulton Farmer Post 85 of Epiphany, South Dakota. As seen, in previous years donations to the Education Scholarship fund were zero, this past year's donations have a bittersweet taste. At present, the investing value of the South Dakota Community Fund account is last known at \$147,701.00. Monies not invested currently being held in a Savings Account was last known as \$20,275.03. I would recommend the Department Executive Committee explore the option of rebalancing the Savings Account more towards the Investment Account for succeeding years forthcoming. This recommendation is since 4% of the fund value is used to disburse scholarship award amounts to the successful applicants. More scholarship monies mean more disbursements.



Seven applications were received for this year's scholarships. Of the seven applicants, one was deemed ineligible on it's face and another is under review for eligibility based on the relationship of the applicant to a connected member of the South Dakota American Legion family. The eligibility issue is whether the Legion Member is current in the present membership year. At last check, the member was expired. Resolution of this issue will be addressed prior to disbursement of monies from the Scholarship Fund. As of now, the Education Committee can disburse up to \$6,852.00 to the qualified recipients.

The 2024 State Educator the Year for South Dakota was Chad Long, who was also recognized as the American Legion National Educator of the Year 2024. Mr. Long is an Educator of the Lyman School District.

The Education Scholarships offered by the Department of South Dakota are for the children of Veterans, grandchildren of Veterans, and Veterans who met the requirements set forth in the Education Scholarship brochure, attending post-

secondary education, college or technical schools. The fund is self-sustaining through donations.

After serving on the Education Committee for several years, I will be submitting my proposed changes to the Education Scholarship Fund to the Department Executive Committee prior to State Convention. I am of the mind that the Education Scholarship Fund (now released of its previous Loan component) can be more effectively utilized as a recruitment, retention and revision of mission to better serve the South Dakota American Legion Family as a whole.

Mr. Commander, I will be stepping down as Chair after the State Convention so that I can focus my efforts on other pursuits. I will remain a sitting member of the State Education Committee (with the consent of your replacement) for my remaining obligation.

Yours in Service, Michael Pauling, Chair State Education Committee

### EDUCATIONAL SCHOLARSHIP

Balance, 6-30-2024 \$20,264.84

**RECEIPTS:**

Loan Repayments	\$	-----	
Interest	\$	19.91	
Memorials and Donations	\$	100.00	
	\$	119.91	\$ 119.91

**TOTAL**

**DISBURSEMENTS:**

Service Fee	\$	18.00	
<b>TOTAL</b>	\$	18.00	\$ 18.00

**BALANCE, 6-30-2025** **\$20,366.75**

### EMPLOYMENT COMMITTEE REPORT

Commander,

This letter serves as my annual report as Chair of the Employment Committee for the past year. A core tenet of The American Legion is ensuring the well-being of our veterans, and this extends directly to fostering opportunities for meaningful employment. Recognizing organizations that actively support our veterans through employment is crucial to this mission and benefits both the veterans and our communities here in South Dakota.



Our state is fortunate to have many employers who value the unique skills, training, leadership, work ethic, integrity, and discipline that veterans bring to the workforce. It is vital that we, as Legionnaires, identify and celebrate these employers who provide good-paying jobs, positive work environments, and comprehensive benefits to our fellow veterans.

Unfortunately, the Department did not receive any nominations for our employment awards last year. To ensure deserving organizations are recognized, I strongly encourage all posts to actively seek out and nominate eligible candidates in their local areas this year.

As a reminder, the Department offers the following employment awards, recognizing different aspects of veteran support:

**Employer of Older Workers Award:** Honors employers who demonstrate a commitment to hiring and retaining older workers, including veterans.

Homeless Veterans Outreach Award: Recognizes individuals or organizations making a significant impact in assisting homeless veterans.

Award to Enhance the Lives of Disabled Persons: Celebrates efforts to improve the quality of life and employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities, including veterans.

Employer of Veterans Awards (Small, Medium, and Large Employer): Acknowledges employers of varying sizes who demonstrate outstanding commitment to hiring and supporting veterans.

The Employment Service Award: Recognizes individuals or organizations providing exceptional employment services to veterans.

The deadline for submitting award nominations is November 15, 2025. Detailed information regarding the criteria and nomination process for each award can be found on the Employment Awards Forms page of the Department website: <https://sdlegion.org/employment-award-forms>

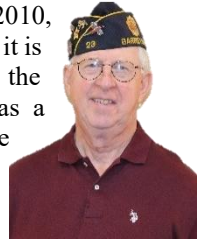
I urge each post to dedicate time to identifying and nominating deserving employers and organizations within their communities. I am readily available to provide assistance with the application process. My contact information can be obtained through the Department Adjutant.

I am optimistic that through a concerted effort by our posts, we will have a strong pool of nominations this year and can appropriately recognize those who champion employment opportunities for our South Dakota veterans.

Respectfully, Gregory K. Dias, Employment Committee Chair

## **SOUTH DAKOTA AMERICAN LEGION FOUNDATION REPORT**

The South Dakota American Legion Foundation began in 2010, because of the foresight of our leaders at the time, in believing that it is important to have a steady source of revenue to help support the valuable programs of the American Legion. It is structured as a 501(C)(3) non-profit corporation as designated by IRS, so that the donations to it can be tax deductible for the donor. The funds are professionally managed by the South Dakota Community Foundation. Donations to the Foundation go into an endowed fund that is invested and are not spendable. It is the return on these investments that becomes available to the SD American Legion to support the programs. In this way, the endowed fund itself is not depleted and will continue to grow. The returns on these investments will continue to come back to the Legion forever. As the endowed funds grow over time, so do the returns coming back to the Legion.



The Foundation has three accounts. A General Fund, with funds that come directly from donors; an Agency Fund, with funds that came to the Foundation in the form of cash or from credit cards, which is then forwarded to the endowed fund; and a Youth Law Enforcement Fund, designed to specifically assist with the Youth Trooper Program. As of this writing, the balance in all three accounts totals \$368,026.22. Volatility in the stock market impacts our funds, but over time, growth has been very positive.

The Foundation is working! In the last three years, \$41,720 has come back to the SD American Legion to support programs. Since inception, over \$90,600 has come back to the Legion to support programs of children and youth. At the present



time, \$13,814.04 is available to “Grant” back to support children and veteran programs.

Donations can be in many forms. Gifts of cash or property; bequests through estates, by naming the SD AL Foundation in your will; memorials in memory of friends and fellow veterans and Legion members who have passed; naming the SD AL Foundation as the beneficiary of a life insurance policy so it will pay out upon death; as an IRS approved “IRA Charitable Rollover Gift”, so that your distribution is paid directly to the Foundation rather than become taxable income to you. All of these gifts help assure that the American Legion programs that you care about will continue to be supported forever. Gifts of \$10,000 or more by an individual entitle the donor to name the specific Legion program that he/she wishes to support. Please let the Foundation know if you would like assistance in structuring a donation.

This past year the Foundation was honored to receive a gift of over \$11,000 in retirement funds left through the estate of deceased individual. We also received a very generous donation of \$10,000 from an individual to honor her Korean War Veteran and dedicated Legion member father, and her dedicated Legion Auxiliary member mother, and to honor “all” veterans. Thank you!

Thank you to all of the individuals, Legion Posts, veterans’ organizations and businesses who have made donations to the Foundation! Many Posts and individuals regularly give memorials to honor friends, fellow veterans and Legion members who have passed on, helping their legacy to continue. Thank you very much! Many Posts have made significant donations to the Foundation. Thank you very much! Your support of fundraisers such as the Fun Auction at the Department Conventions each year, and raffles held over the years help support your Foundation. Thank you!

The Foundation Board members serve staggered terms at the appointment of the Department Commander, with the approval of the Department Executive Committee. Thank you, Mr. Commander, for the privilege to serve!

James N. Kurtz, Board President

## DEPARTMENT HISTORIAN REPORT

Commander Morello,

It has been a privilege and an honor to serve and continue to serve as your Department Historian. I am working on the Department History for the year so you will have a remembrance of your year as Department Commander. I also assist those who are working to put their histories together for the State Convention this year.

Post Historians should be working on their Post Histories right now for the History contest at our State Convention in Pierre. Winners in each category (scrapbook and narrative) can be entered into the National contest. These entries should cover the past year’s term of your Post Commanders election to the end of his or her term.

All the information on guidance and points sheets used in judging History books entered in the contest can be found in the Officers Guide.

Our History Book contest is patterned after the national contest, using the point system in judging the winners in each category. The rules were put together to make the history books better, ie. page numbers, id pictures, chronological





structure, 3x5 card identifying author, table of contents, etc. The rules are available to everyone in the Officers' Guide. On the points sheet, it only gives the general topic with details in the written area of the guide before the score sheet. The intent of the score sheet is to make history books look better.

Certificates will be presented to the first, second, and third place winners at our State Convention. I encourage all post historians to put together a post history. Your Post members will appreciate your hard work in the years to come. I thank all Post historians for their hard work and commitment in preparing these reports.

All Post Histories must be turned in by Friday, June 20th by 1 pm at the Registration Desk. If you can get them to me sooner, that would be great.

Respectfully submitted, Fred Lee, Department Historian

## INTERNAL AFFAIRS COMMISSION REPORT

Commander Morello,

Thank you for allowing me to be the Chair of the Internal Affairs Commission. The Internal Affairs Commission exists to give oversight to several areas of the American Legion in South Dakota. These include reviewing resolutions to amend the Constitution and By-Laws as well as any other resolutions. Also, the Commission has purview regarding the American Legion Riders and Sons of the American Legion. This year, the Commission met on May 8, 2025, and reviewed nine resolutions. After much discussion, these were acted on and, if needed, forwarded to the appropriate convention committee. Discussions included some minor verbiage changes to the Constitution, fundraising issues, Youth Shooting programs, dates of district meetings, Vice Commander changes in oversight, and corrections allowed without general membership consensus. A more detailed report will be given at Department Convention in June.



The Internal Affairs Commission was called to order by Chair Byron Callies on May 8, 2025, at 1000 hours. Tribute to the colors and Pledge of Allegiance was recited. A quorum was established by voice vote or telephone or video conference.

The Commission's duty is to review any resolutions affecting the Department Constitution and By-Law and to forward any other resolutions to the appropriate convention committee. Three resolutions were forwarded to the convention committee. The following resolutions were received and recommendations made.

25-01 Establish a South Dakota American Legion Youth Shooting Sports Program. Action taken to recommend approval as amended.

25-02 A resolution to establish a Department Fundraising Committee. Action was to reject this resolution.

25-03 A resolution to establish a minimum to two District meetings to be held. One being in the fall between September 1 and December 1 of each year. The second to be held between March 1 and May 1 of each year. This resolution also allows the Commander to call special District Meetings as deemed necessary. Action taken to recommend approval of the resolution..

25-04 A resolution to change the area command structure to Area 1, District 1, 2, and 3. Area 2, Districts 4, 5, 6, 7, and 8. The respective Commanders will be designated Western Vice Commander and Eastern Vice Commander. Action taken to recommend approval of the resolution.

25-05 A resolution to change minor wording errors in the current Department Constitution and By-Laws, Section 6, Commissions and Committees.

25-06 A resolution to express appreciation to Post 7 for an exceptional job of hosting the 2025 Department of South Dakota Annual Convention. This resolution was forwarded to the Convention Resolutions Committee.

25-07 A resolution to allow the Department Commander to hold office for one more year by re-election. This term must be consecutive. Action taken was to recommend rejection of this resolution.

25-08 A resolution that National Headquarters be timelier in returning to the Departments, monies that have been collected by annual dues. This resolution was forwarded to the Department Convention Resolutions Committee.

25-09 A resolution allowing the Department Adjutant to make minor corrections to the Constitution and By-Laws, provided that said changes do not alter the intent, meaning, or substance of the wording.

25-10 A resolution updating the ability of the Commander to direct the duties of the Vice-Commanders. Action taken was to recommend approval of the resolution.

25-11 A resolution to support the program America250 by encouraging the participation of local schools and civic organizations to commemorate 250 years independence of the USA. This resolution was forwarded to the Convention Resolutions Committee.

Since there was no other business germane to the Internal Affairs Commission, the Commission was adjourned.

Byron Callies, Chair

## LEGION RIDERS REPORT

Commander Morello and Fellow Legionnaires,

Serving as the Department Commander's Liaison for the American Legion Riders (ALR) during the 2024–2025 year has been an honor. The ALR program remains one of the American Legion's most visible and celebrated initiatives. Its ongoing success is a testament to the grassroots efforts of its post-level chapters, powered by the dedication of Legionnaires, Auxiliary members, and Sons of the American Legion.

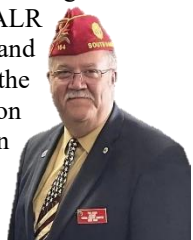
The American Legion Riders continue to uphold the Four Pillars of the American Legion: **Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation, National Security, Americanism, and Children and Youth.**

### **Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation**

Throughout the year, ALR chapters across South Dakota have honored fallen veterans with funeral escorts and flag lines. Unaccompanied veterans continue to receive dignified quarterly honors at Black Hills National Cemetery. Riders remain committed to supporting VA facilities through regular visits and coordinating morale-boosting events such as concerts, game nights, and social activities. Their presence is also strongly felt statewide during Veterans Day and Memorial Day ceremonies.

### **National Security**

Riders continued their unwavering focus on POW/MIA awareness, promoting accountability and remembrance through ceremonies and educational outreach. Their support for deployed service members remains active with care package drives, escort



missions, and community engagement. One of the key recurring initiatives has been the successful coordination of community blood drives, emphasizing their dedication to both public health and military support.

### **Americanism**

Promoting patriotism through education is a key ALR priority. During the 2024–2025 year, Riders reached hundreds of students across the state with flag etiquette presentations and school programs, instilling a sense of respect and national pride. Additionally, Riders conducted Veterans Day presentations and engaged with classrooms through ongoing youth outreach efforts.

### **Children and Youth**

The ALR has made meaningful contributions to the welfare of children and families, particularly those impacted by military service. Activities include providing school supplies to children of deployed service members, supporting youth programs such as CASA, organizing holiday events, and donating essential items to transitional housing and community shelters. Riders also offered medical assistance to families in need and organized events focused on comforting hospitalized children and bringing joy to local youth.

### **Growth and Community**

The ALR continues to grow in both membership and influence. Riders have a visible and inspiring presence at major events like the Sturgis Rally, where they lead high-profile rides supporting veterans' scholarships and participate in parades celebrating service and sacrifice. Their role in helping to escort Midwest Honor Flight participants remains a deeply valued tradition, reinforcing their commitment to honoring those who served.

### **ALR Statewide**

Coordination among chapters is vital to the ALR's continued effectiveness. Department-level gatherings at the Midwinter Conference, the State Convention, and the annual SD-ALR Rendezvous provide key opportunities for collaboration and planning. In June 2025, Riders from across South Dakota will unite in the Black Hills for the ALR Rendezvous, an annual event that blends business with camaraderie. The gathering includes a wreath-laying ceremony at Black Hills National Cemetery and the state-wide meeting.

### **Department Support**

A dedicated group of American Legion Riders will journey across South Dakota to collect donations June 7-10. All proceeds from the ride are donated to the South Dakota American Legion Foundation, which directly benefits veterans and youth programs throughout the state. Last year's ride raised approximately \$6,700 to support these vital initiatives.

### **Looking Ahead**

With fifteen active ALR chapters throughout the state, South Dakota has a strong foundation, but the potential for growth remains. I encourage all Posts to consider the value an ALR chapter can bring to their American Legion Family. Together, we can continue to expand our reach, deepen our impact, and serve our communities and veterans with pride and purpose.

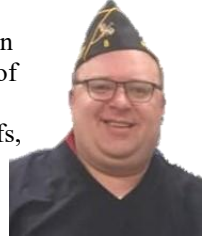
To all Riders across South Dakota, your dedication, patriotism, and service embody the spirit of the American Legion. Here's to another impactful and mission-driven year ahead.

Respectfully Submitted, Fred Nelson, Department ALR Liaison

## LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE CHAIR REPORT

Commander Morello,

I am Mike Mehlhaff, the Chair of the South Dakota American Legion Legislative Committee. First, I must recognize the team of Legionnaires that has helped with the legislative work of the Department: Commander Kevin Morello, Dan Fritz, Nathan Juelfs, Doug Feltman, Dan Heil, and Adjutant Van Delist. In a normal year we would not be as successful without this great team, but doubly so this year, and they have stepped up to represent the legislative interests of the Legion at every crucial moment and I ask you to please recognize them with a round of applause.



The Legislative Committee started our work on Monday, January 27<sup>th</sup> when we met at the American Legion Post 8 in Pierre. Pending Legislation was discussed, and the committee determined the best approach to several bills that affect veterans and the military. As new legislation has been brought forward, we have continued to confer and make decisions on the Legion will lobby and testify on those bills.

Here is an overview of the bills that the Legion Legislative Committee worked with this year: (refer to SD Legion Report)

Following our busy work on January 27<sup>th</sup>, we got to have a little fun by hosting the annual SD Legion Legislative Dinner. A crowd of nearly 100 people joined us for a meal of pulled pork sandwiches and discussed issues important to veterans and our country.

With 30 plus legislators in attendance the dinner was a great success. Legislators have so many choices of events to attend each night, and to have so many of them attend our dinner shows how respected the Legion and its members are when it comes to the legislature.

Putting together a dinner for 100 people is not something that you can do by yourself, and this dinner would not have been so successful without the hard work of the host city's Post. The members of Pierre Legion Post 8 were gracious and hardworking hosts who provided the facility and the manpower necessary to make this dinner the best it could be. I would especially like to recognize Post 8 members Larry Eliason and Ralph Bush for all their hard work and support in completing the mission of hosting a top-quality event.

Commander, I respectfully submit this as the report of the 2025 South Dakota American Legion Legislative Committee. I also want to thank you for the opportunity to serve the great veterans who make up the South Dakota American Legion.

### HOUSE BILLS

**House Bill 1010:** Require cost model reports for certain programs and institutions.  
Department Position: The Department monitored this legislation.

Final disposition: Tabled by House Appropriations on 02/8/2025

**House Bill 1038:** Repeal provisions regarding the state payment for burial of veterans.

Department Position: The Department opposed this legislation.

Final disposition: Failed to pass by the House of Representatives on 02/25/2025

**House Bill 1046:** Revise the General Appropriations Act for fiscal year 2025

Department Position: The Department monitored this legislation.

Final disposition: Signed by the Governor on 03/28/2025

**House Bill 1068:** Allow students to wear certain military decorations at a school graduation ceremony.

Department Position: The Department supported this legislation

Final disposition: Signed by the Governor on 03/11/2025

**House Bill 1076:** Modify provisions pertaining to unethical conduct and improper collection of fees relating to assistance or referrals in a veteran's benefits matter.

Department Position: The Department supported this legislation.

Final disposition: Failed to pass by the House of Representatives on 02/24/2025

**House Bill 1084:** Provide free state park and recreation area admission to current and former members of the South Dakota National Guard and their spouses and dependents.

Department Position: The Department monitored this legislation.

Final disposition: Tabled by House Ag and Nat Res on 01/28/2025

**House Bill 1160:** waive the driver license renewal period for members of the military and their families, and employees of the state department.

Department Position: The Department monitored this legislation.

Final disposition: Signed by the Governor 02/25/2025

**House Bill 1161:** allow additional forms to verify military service for a veteran designation on a commercial driver license or commercial learner's permit.

Department Position: The Department supported this legislation.

Final disposition: Signed by the Governor 03/28/2025

**House Bill 1162:** require the reporting of the number of veterans who die by suicide in this state.

Department Position: The Department supported this legislation as it is in line with our Be the One Campaign.

Final disposition: Tabled by House Military and Veteran's Affairs 02/18/2025

**House Bill 1163:** make an appropriation for a grant to assist in the construction and equipping of a veteran's skilled trade center.

Department Position: The Department monitored this legislation.

Sponsors: Representative Goodwin (prime) and Senator Nelson

Final disposition: Tabled by Joint Approps on 02/27/2025

**House Bill 1188:** allow nonresident military members to purchase three-day temporary nonresident waterfowl licenses.

Department Position: The Department supported this legislation

Final disposition: Signed by the Governor 03/28/2025

**House Bill 1198:** modify the tuition benefit for dependents and spouses of disabled and deceased veterans.

Department Position: The Department supported this legislation.

Final disposition: House Approps sent to 41<sup>st</sup> day on 02/24/2025

**House Bill 1238:** establish protections for a veteran seeking assistance in a veterans' benefit matter.

Department Position: The Department opposed this legislation

Final disposition: Signed by the Governor 03/28/2025

**House Concurrent Resolution 6002:** Urging the United States Congress and the President of the United States to remove the requirement of a project labor agreement for federal construction projects.

Department Position: The Department monitored this resolution.

Final disposition: Passed as a resolution 02/21/2025

### **SENATE BILLS**

**Senate Bill 6:** Make an appropriation to support capital and infrastructure necessitated by the expansion of Ellsworth Air Force Base and to declare an emergency.

Department Position: The Department supported this legislation.

Final disposition: Signed by the Governor 03/28/2025

**Senate Bill 16:** Set aside certain contractors' excise tax collections relating to Ellsworth Air Force Base, to create a fund for the collections, and to provide an appropriation therefor.

Department Position: The Department monitored this legislation.

Final disposition: Failed to pass by the House of Representatives on 02/25/2025

**Senate Bill 52:** Authorize the expansion of the South Dakota Veterans Cemetery and make an appropriation therefore, and to declare an emergency.

Department Position: The Department fully supported this legislation.

Final disposition: Signed by the Governor 03/13/2025

**Senate Bill 82:** Require an official declaration of war or other Congressional action before the South Dakota National Guard may be deployed by the federal government.

Department Position: N/A bill killed in the Senate 02/03/2025

**Senate Bill 109:** permit a school district to implement a new or revised section 504 plan, individualized family service plan, or individualized education program for a student who is the child of an active-duty member of the United States armed forces.

Department Position: The Department monitored this legislation.

Final disposition: Signed by the Governor 03/05/2025

**Senate Concurrent Resolution 603:** Supporting the establishment of a standardized system to recognize and award academic credit or certification for military service.

Department Position: The Department supported this resolution.

Final disposition: Passed as a resolution on 02/13/2025

**Senate Concurrent Resolution 604:** Supporting the expansion of transportation services for veterans receiving medical care in this state.

Department Position: The Department fully supported this legislation.

Final disposition: Passed as a resolution on 02/18/2025

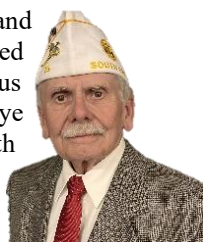
Respectfully Submitted, Mike Mehlhaff, Legislative Committee Chair

## **MEDIA AND COMMUNICATIONS**

No Report Submitted

## MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE CHAIR REPORT

This past membership year has been one of dynamic progress and active engagement. Our collective efforts have not only strengthened our local foundation in South Dakota but have also positioned us powerfully on the national stage — all fueled by the relentless Eye of the Tiger spirit. This spirit reminds us every day that with determination and unity, we win every battle. I'm proud to present a summary of our key activities, strategic meetings, and outstanding achievements during this period. Key Events and Strategic Initiatives:



**Membership Conference in Indianapolis (July 2024):** I had the honor of attending the Membership Conference in Indianapolis, where I engaged with peers from across the nation. The exchange of innovative strategies and success stories underscored our commitment and the Eye of the Tiger spirit that drives us forward.

**Meeting with Incoming National Commander and Staff:** A pivotal moment this year was meeting with the incoming National Commander and their staff to set our ambitious goals for 2025. These discussions were infused with purpose and that fierce, determined energy that we call the Eye of the Tiger spirit, steering our focus into the future.

**National Convention Participation:** Attending the National Convention further solidified our department's connection with the broader Legion community. Engaging with national leadership and fellow members reaffirmed that our success is rooted in the relentless drive and resilience of our members—the very essence of the Eye of the Tiger.

**Fall District Meetings:** I made it a priority to attend every Fall District Meeting. These forums provided an excellent opportunity to ensure that the voices of South Dakota's members were heard, igniting that determined spirit that propels us to excel.

**Ongoing Membership Updates:** Throughout the year, I consistently sent out updates about our progress and strategies. These communications have not only kept every member informed but have also reinforced our shared Eye of the Tiger mindset—always focused, ever resilient, and relentlessly pushing forward.

**South Dakota's Big 12 Contest Victory:** It is with immense pride that I announce South Dakota has once again won the Big 12 Contest for the second consecutive year. This victory is a shining testament to our unity, hard work, and the winning Eye of the Tiger spirit that lives in every one of our members.

**Spring Meetings:** Attending all Spring Meetings helped sustain our momentum and allowed us to renew our focus as we move forward. These meetings have been integral in maintaining the drive and passion that define our department, mirroring the Eye of the Tiger spirit in everything we do.

**Gratitude and Looking Ahead:** I extend my heartfelt thanks to every member and to our leadership for their unwavering support and dedication. Your hard work, enthusiasm, and the Eye of the Tiger spirit have been the cornerstone of our achievements. As we reflect on the successes of this membership year, let us continue to harness that fierce determination to drive our organization to even greater heights in 2025.

Together, with our feet firmly on the ground and eyes set like a tiger on the prize, we will continue to break barriers and achieve greatness.

Thank you for your commitment and support throughout this remarkable year.

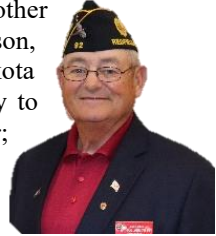
Sincerely, Bill Peters, Membership Chair

### MEMBERSHIP FUND

Budget Amount 2024-2025	\$ 10,500.00
Membership award from National	\$ -----
<b>TOTAL</b>	
<b>DISBURSEMENTS:</b>	
Committee, Travel & Awards	\$ 10,321.40
<b>BALANCE</b> in Fund, 6-30-2025	\$ 178.60

### PUBLIC SAFETY COMMITTEE REPORT

The South Dakota Public Safety Committee enjoyed another great year. After the State Legion Convention, Dianne Johnson, Doug Feltman and I had the privilege to attend the South Dakota Youth Trooper Academy. Our committee met again in January to select the winners of the “Law Enforcement Officer” of the Year; the “Firefighter of The Year”; and the “EMT” of the Year award winners.



#### South Dakota Youth Trooper Academy:

Again, this year, we selected 24 outstanding young men and women from South Dakota High Schools to attend the 12th SDYTA. For the first time, we graduated all 24 Recruits. The SDHP did an outstanding job of hosting the Academy at the Law Enforcement Training Center in Pierre. Ten State Troopers from across the State volunteer to be away from their Duty Stations, family, and friends, to come serve as instructors and Mentors. The logistic duties are taken care of by SGT Schoenefeld and Lt. Brandon Akron. These Troopers, somehow, squeeze these duties into their already very busy schedules.

This year, we had multiple Mentors working at the Academy who are former graduates of this outstanding program. It is very rewarding to see these young Troopers engaged in a very professional manner, as they all do.

Recruits experience a very rigorous week of activities. From learning how to march, engaging in vigorous Physical activities, to learning the basics of the duties of Law Enforcement Officers. They also spend many hours with hands-on activities such as stopping vehicles, drug interdiction, crash scene investigations, negotiating cars through the obstacle course on the Emergency Vehicle Operations Course and firing weapons on the pistol and rifle range.

On “Blue Cap” Day we had several Legion members and guests come to the Rifle Range to see the Recruits in action and to witness several demonstrations. Later in the evening, the American Legion hosted another BBQ, which is always a lot of fun for everyone.

The week is capped off by a very inspirational Graduation Ceremony at the Visitor Center near the reflection pond and the Memorials.

This year, the American Legion \$500 “Outstanding Graduate Scholarship” winner was Bowan Ryan from Castlewood. Ryan is attending Lake Area Technical College in Watertown. He is pursuing a career in Criminal Justice.

Your Public Safety Committee would like to thank everyone for your support for this outstanding program. Because of our efforts, many of our graduates have become Law Enforcement Officers and/or members of the Military. Others will gain a much better appreciation for Law Enforcement and what the American Legion is all about.



A special “Thank You” goes out to MaryJo and the District Commanders or their designees, who work hard with Posts, applicants, scheduling, and conducting interviews. Good work!! The 2025 YTA will be held June 23rd -27th. Announcement: “BLUE CAP DAY” 26 June. Please join us!

### **Of The Year Awards:**

Your SDALPSC met in January to select the LEO, FF, and EMT of the year recipients. Again, we did not receive many applications for these awards. These recognitions are very important to those “First Responders” who work to keep our communities safe. The L.E.O. and the FF of the year are designated, officially, by the National American Legion.

As a Public Safety Committee, we encourage each post to consider recognizing these public servants. There are some small communities who may not have many living in your community to select from. However, first responders can come from anywhere in your area. Also, there are numerous Law Enforcement agencies as well as rural or city fire departments to consider. EMT’s also include Paramedics.

One issue we have had is the difficulty finding the proper documentation to support these applications. This next year, we are going to develop examples of proper documentation for our applications. The instructions for filling out these applications are on the State website. A reminder, it is not the responsibility of the supervisor of the nominee to fill out the application.

Once you have submitted an application, it will be much easier the next time. Feel free to call any member of our committee and we would be happy to assist you. NOTE: Please do not rely on the applicant or their supervisor to complete the application. That final packet should be done by the post.

This year’s recipients of these awards are: “Law Enforcement Officer of the Year” SGT. Micah Hoffman, a Deputy from the Lake County Sheriff’s Office, Madison: The “Firefighter of the Year” is Logan Arthurs, sponsored by the Redfield Post: and the “EMT of the Year” is Elizabeth Verhey from Spearfish. Just as a Note, when a member of our committee has an applicant for one of these awards, we do not vote.

The State Awards will be presented during the State convention this June in Huron. We look forward to an even better year in 2025-26.

Thank you, Larry Price, Chair SDAL Public Safety Committee

## **DEPARTMENT SCOUTING REPORT**

Commander:

As the Council Commissioner for the Black Hills Area Council and a proud Legionnaire, it has been my honor to serve as the Chair of the Department Scouting Committee for the past year. I have been fortunate to work alongside dedicated committee members Matt Lagerstrom, Fred Nelson, and Richard MacDonald, whose commitment to youth development through Scouting has been unwavering.



This year, we were pleased to have three outstanding candidates for the American Legion Scout of the Year award for the Department of South Dakota. After careful review of all the applications, we are proud to announce Slater Humbracht from

Troop 17, sponsored by American Legion Post 164 in Spearfish, as this year's recipient.

Slater completed a remarkable Eagle Scout project: he constructed an accessible wheelchair ramp with removable handrails, connected to a deck that facilitates the loading and unloading of supplies. This project not only enhances accessibility for all individuals but also serves a critical logistical purpose for events such as blood drives and catering for community activities. The recipient of this project was the local VFW post, where both Post 164 and several Scouting units regularly meet, an outstanding example of collaboration between veterans and youth programs.

In alignment with the Commander's initiative to provide every Scout in South Dakota with the opportunity to attend summer camp, the Scouting Committee proudly established a scholarship program. Next year, we will be awarding four \$400 scholarships to support Scouts' attendance at summer camp. We believe this effort continues our mission to foster leadership, service, and adventure among the next generation.

Thank you to everyone who has supported our work this year. Together, we are strengthening the bond between the American Legion and Scouting across South Dakota.

Chris Rendon, Scouting Committee Chair

## **SONS OF THE AMERICAN LEGION ANNUAL REPORT**

No Report Submitted.

## **STRATEGIC PLANNING COMMITTEE REPORT**

Commander Morello,

Thanks for the opportunity to serve as the South Dakota American Legion's Strategic Planning Committee Chair, along with distinguished Committee Members: PDC Doug Feltman, Larry Madsen, Bill Peters, and Matt Pillar. As of this report's submission, the newly established Ad-hoc Strategic Planning Committee met virtually via Microsoft Teams on Tuesday, 8 April 2025, to organize and develop a path forward to accomplish the initial guidance and assigned tasks:



(1) First, to conduct a review of "The National American Legion's Strategic Plan", and its "2019 Ad-hoc Committee Report" to identify National's Strategic Plan's requirements upon Department versus, Department's implementation of those requirements, and

(2) Second of equal strategic importance, develop the Department of South Dakota American Legion's Strategic Plan by assessing the Department's organization structure, functions, and relationships throughout the Department's organization and components to ensure continued relevancy of the American Legion based on its mission, vision, goals, and interrelationships.

The committee adopted an established formal "Five Step Strategic Planning Process" to guide its efforts. Step one starts with assessing current and future operating environment applying "Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats" or SWOT as abbreviated. SWOT is a key component of throughout strategic planning, and next step two identifies goals and objectives, followed by

step three to developing the plan, then step four to communicate and implement the plan, and in step five monitor performance, and if necessary and as required, modify the strategic plan inclusive of organization structure, interrelationships, and functions, to sustain and enhance American Legion's relevancy-based mission, vision, values, and goals.

The committee recognizes that individuals and teams will be working various topic assignments and coordinating with subject matter experts throughout the Department's American Legion Family membership via telephone, virtual meetings, and full committee face-to-face meetings as required to maximize efforts toward the assigned purposes end state.

The committee initial "Face to Face Working Session" will have occurred the day before the start of Annual Department's Convention on Wednesday, 18 June 2025 at the Huron Crossroads Hotel & Convention Center in Huron, South Dakota.

Thank you, Commander Morello for this opportunity, and thank you to the Strategic Planning Committee members for their direction and support as we collectively continue this work to develop, produce, monitor the implementation performance, and modify an active and living Department of South Dakota American Legion Strategic Plan.

Respectfully Submitted, David R. Booze, Strategic Planning Committee Chair

## TRAINING COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT

Commander,

The Training Committee had a productive and impactful year, continuing to expand and improve our educational programs for Legionnaires across South Dakota. At the 2025 Mid-Winter Conference, our breakout training sessions were well attended and positively reviewed. Classes included "Reports and Awards," "Post Constitution & By-Laws," "Navigating the New Department and National Websites," "MyLegion App," and "Be The One." Feedback indicated that sessions were relevant, the instructors were well-prepared, and the material was useful. Some technical issues with connectivity were noted, and we plan to mitigate these in future events by bringing MiFi devices.



The highlight of the year was the Third Annual South Dakota American Legion College (SDALC), held April 26–27, 2025, at the Chamberlain Community Center. Instructional sessions included Mentorship, Running a Meeting, Resolution Writing, Train-the-Trainer, Organizational Structure, and the Capstone Project. Feedback was overwhelmingly positive. Students appreciated both the content and the networking opportunities, including the group dinner at Charlie's Restaurant.

Throughout the year, the committee worked closely to evaluate curriculum, manage logistics, and plan for future development. Notably, we are exploring the addition of classes focusing on the American Legion Family, as well as a potential online Adjutant training course. We also discussed succession planning and identified the need to recruit two new committee members and an instructor for Mid-Winter and SDALC 2026.

The Training Committee is committed to developing knowledgeable leaders who are prepared to support the mission of the American Legion throughout our state.

Respectfully submitted, Jack French, Training Committee Chair

## TRUST FUND COMMITTEE CHAIR REPORT

Commander,

**January 2024** Value of Investment account: \$689,091. Asset allocation: 51% Equities (stocks) and 49% Fixed income (bonds).

**September 2024** Jeff Merchant assumed duties as Committee Chair

Trust Fund Committee Meeting. Discussed the current asset allocation and concerns about the conservative 50/50 split. A traditional 60/40 split would enable growth while maintaining some downside protection. Voted to create an Investment Policy Statement (IPS) for the Department.

**November 2024** Trust Fund Committee Meeting Completed draft of the Department's IPS. Recommendation to forward the proposed IPS to the Department Executive Committee for approval.

**December 2024** Chair presented the IPS to the Department Executive Committee. Investment portfolio closed out the year at \$921,623 (10% growth).

**February 2025** Chair attends Midwinter Conference and briefs Finance Committee on the proposed IPS. Department Executive Committee approves the proposed IPS.

**May 2025** Total value of the Investment Portfolio is \$947,590. Asset allocation is 53% Equities and 47% Fixed Income (bonds). **Comments:** We have engaged with the financial advisory firm to increase our holdings in equities. As outlined in our IPS, we would like to maintain 60% equities and 40% in fixed income. The underpinnings of the US economy remain strong & the outlook for the remainder of the year remains positive, at least by most analysts. We want the portfolio well-positioned to take advantage of improving market conditions. That approved asset allocation remains in our best interests.

Respectfully submitted, Jeff Merchant, Committee Chair



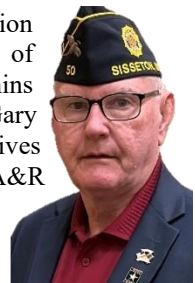
## VA&R COMMITTEE CHAIR REPORT

Commander,

On behalf of the Department Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation (VA&R) Commission, which members are Chair Warren Aas of Watertown, Vice Chair PDC Tim Jurgens of Milbank, Noel Cummins of Milbank, Buck DeWeese of Spearfish, Brian Havard of Salem, Gary Schumacher of De Smet, and Matthew Pillar of Lake Preston, it gives me great pleasure to present the following Department VA&R Commission report.

The Department VA&R Commission meets virtually once per year via Microsoft Teams, with additional meetings called at the discretion of the commission Chair.

There are numerous awards every post in our department can win throughout the year and be recognized for their achievement, either at our Mid-Winter Conference or on stage at our annual Department convention. Is your post aware that it can submit for the Department Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation (VA&R) Award for Excellence? This award is open to every post in our department, regardless of goal size. The award will recognize one post in our department each year for their



outstanding work and accomplishments in VA&R. All posts can apply for the award, and we encourage all posts to submit for the award. The criteria for the award is posted on our Department website or you may contact State Headquarters for assistance. The deadline for all Post applications to State Headquarters for this award is May 1<sup>st</sup> of each year. The winning post will be recognized on stage at the state convention with a beautiful plaque and group photo to commemorate their accomplishments. Please ask your post leadership to apply for the award.

As a member of the National VA&R Commission, I had the privilege of attending the Washington Conference in February 2025 in Washington D.C. to listen and participate in the national VA&R Commission agenda. DSO Matt Pillar, a member of our Department VA&R Commission, was also in attendance. We listen to many speakers dealing with veterans' benefits, veterans' health as well as the National Cemeteries. We make a point to provide all the information we can get our hands on from our meetings and make it available to all VA&R Commission members in our department.

Temporary Financial Assistance (TFA) is available for any veteran in your community who may have fallen on hard times and needs some financial assistance to get back on their feet. TFA is generally one-time grant money, and other requirements apply. Your post commander has more details about TFA.

If you are a veteran and would like to check into getting enrolled in the VA for healthcare, we encourage you to stop in and see your local Tribal or County Veterans Service Officer in your county for assistance or contact DSO Matt Pillar, our American Legion Department Service Officer at 605-696-8260.

Thank you, Commander, for allowing me the privilege to serve as the Chair of the Department Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation Commission during your year.

Respectfully submitted, Warren L. Aas, Chair, VA&R Commission

## V.A.V.S. COMMITTEE CHAIR REPORT

I would like to thank Commander Kevin Morello for the appointment to Chair of the Veterans Affairs Volunteer Services (VAVS) Committee this year. I would also like to thank our VA Hospital Representatives: Sioux Falls VA Hospital VAVS Representative Chris Fischer; Hot Springs VA Medical Center and State Veterans Home VAVS Representative Angela Koch; and our Ft. Meade VA Medical Center VAVS Representative Buck DeWeese. The VA Hospital Representatives are the ones who make sure our veterans get additional help from the South Dakota American Legion. I would also like to thank the additional following members of the committee: Dan Wyatt, Nancy Grande, Joe Sande.



The South Dakota American Legion Auxiliary purchased a trailer to be used at the Hot Spring VA. They were kind enough to let us help with the purchase so veterans can be helped with transporting bikes and other equipment for outdoor activities.

VAVS funds were used to donate \$1,000 to each of the three VA facilities, along with funds going to the Legion VA Hospital representatives to purchase items specifically needed at each of the facilities. This would not be possible without the generous donations received for the VAVS fund.

In the past, we had asked for donations for the popcorn fund because the VA could get a good price in the purchase of popcorn. But these donations are used for many more necessary items than just popcorn. Donations are used to purchase gift cards, toiletries, clothing, stamps, envelopes, backpacks, backpacks, etc.

This year, an article was published on the last page of the April 25 Up-to-now about “How to donate to the Sioux Falls VA through the Amazon Wish List Registry for Voluntary Services.” These donations fulfill requests from departments within the Sioux Falls VA.

I would like to give a big THANK YOU to all Legion Posts, Auxiliary Units, Sons of American Legion Squadrons, and the American Legion Rider Chapters for your very generous donations of time and money that go for a great cause, the Veterans!

Respectfully submitted, Charemon Dunham, VAVS Committee Chair

### VAVS COMMITTEE FINANCIAL REPORT

Balance, 6-30-2024		\$12,109.85
<b>RECEIPTS:</b>		
Interest	\$ 11.38	
Memorials and Donations	<u>\$5,355.00</u>	
	\$5,366.38	<u>\$ 5,366.38</u>
		\$15,409.85
<b>TOTAL DISBURSEMENTS:</b>		
VA Facilities	\$6,000.00	<u>\$ 6,000.00</u>
Balance, 6-30-2025		\$11,476.23

### VETERAN’S COUNCIL REPORT

Commander Morello and Fellow Legionnaires,

It’s been another busy and productive year on the South Dakota Veterans Council (SDVC), and I’m grateful for the opportunity to represent The American Legion as we continue working together to support veterans across our state.

**Who We Are and What We Do:** The SDVC brings together representatives from The American Legion (TAL), Disabled American Veterans (DAV), Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW), Paralyzed Veterans of America (PVA), Vietnam Veterans of America (VVA), and the Military Order of the Purple Heart (MOPH). We meet throughout the year—in person and virtually keeping each other updated, sharing resources, and most importantly, ensuring veterans’ voices are heard at all levels. This past year, we met in places like Pierre, Hot Springs, and Mitchell, which has made it easier for more people from across the state to participate.



#### Highlights and Progress

- **Legislative Work:** We monitored veteran-related bills like SB 52, HB 1010, HB 1038, and HB 1046. In January, we hosted a Legislative Mixer, where we had the chance to connect directly with lawmakers and advocate for better services and benefits for South Dakota veterans.
- **Endowment Update:** The Endowment Fund for the State Veterans Cemetery in Sioux Falls continues to grow. As of January, it held just over \$3.4

million, with nearly \$300,000 available to spend. That fund helps ensure the cemetery remains a place of honor and dignity for generations.

### **Facing Challenges**

- **Staffing at Veterans Homes:** Like many places, our state veterans' home feels the pressure of workforce shortages. The Council supports partnering with colleges and the VA to train and retain good staff.
- **Timing and Visibility:** The Council voted to move officer elections from July to April to better align with the legislative calendar. This should help us stay ahead of key decisions and legislative deadlines.
- **Rural Outreach:** We're exploring new ways, especially online tools and local events, to better reach veterans in rural areas who might not have easy access to the services they need.

**Looking Ahead;** Next year, we'll stay focused on:

- **Mental health and long-term care**—ensuring those needing support get it.
- **Federal legislation**, including the GI Bill Parity Act and the Major Richard Star Act, and ensuring our Coast Guard members aren't left behind during budget talks.
- **Better coordination** across our member organizations so we can work smarter and speak with one voice.

### **Final Thoughts**

It's truly been an honor to serve on the South Dakota Veterans Council and to represent The American Legion. We've made real progress this past year, and I'm confident that we'll keep moving forward for the benefit of all our veterans and their families.

Respectfully submitted, Fred Nelson, SDVC Representative

## **SUMMARY OF 2025 AMERICAN LEGION DEPARTMENT OF SOUTH DAKOTA CONVENTION AND CONVENTION COMMITTEE RESOLUTIONS**

**The following Convention resolutions were reviewed for the 2025 year to be considered at the Department convention.**

### **Resolution No. 25-01**

**Subject:** Resolution To Adopt The South Dakota American Legion Youth Shooting Sports Program

**Origin:** Mike Kraft, Post 80, District 5, Department Of South Dakota

**Internal Affairs Commission Action:** DO PASS recommendation as amended.

*The resolution was adopted.*

**WHEREAS,** The American Legion has a long-standing tradition of supporting youth programs that promote citizenship, responsibility, and sportsmanship; and

**WHEREAS,** The addition of an American Legion Youth Shooting Sports Program in South Dakota would provide young individuals with the opportunity to learn firearm safety, marksmanship, and leadership while reinforcing core values of discipline and respect; and

**WHEREAS**, The primary objective of this program is to foster responsible firearm handling and marksmanship skills among youth while emphasizing safety, teamwork, and personal development; and **WHEREAS**, The program structure includes eligibility for youth ages 12-18, certified instructor-led safety courses, compliance with NRA, CMP, and USA Shooting safety regulations, and competitive opportunities at local, state, and national levels; and

**WHEREAS**, The program will collaborate with the South Dakota Shooting Sports Association, 4-H Shooting Sports, and other local organizations, as well as seek sponsorships from firearm safety organizations and sporting goods companies; and

**WHEREAS**, The program will provide the opportunity to collaborate through the Shooting Sports Program the opportunities the American Legion has with Boys State, Oratory Contest, Scouting Program and Youth Trooper Academy; and

**WHEREAS**, The program will be sustained through departmental and post-level fundraising, corporate and local sponsorships, grant opportunities, and participant fees; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED**, By The American Legion Department of South Dakota in Annual Department Convention assembled in Huron, South Dakota, June 19th – 22nd, 2025, that The American Legion, Department of South Dakota approves the establishment of the South Dakota American Legion Youth Shooting Sports Program; and, be it further

**RESOLVED**, That this resolution shall take effect immediately upon approval.

#### **Resolution No. 25-02**

**Subject:** Resolution To Adopt A Standing Fundraising Committee

**Origin:** Internal Affairs Committee, Department Of South Dakota

Internal Affairs Committee action: DO NOT PASS recommendation.

*The resolution was not adopted.*

**WHEREAS**, the South Dakota American Legion aims to continually support veterans, their families, and the community at large through various programs and initiatives; and

**WHEREAS**, effective fundraising efforts are essential to sustain and enhance the mission and operations of the South Dakota American Legion; and

**WHEREAS**, the establishment of a dedicated committee focused on fundraising activities will streamline efforts, increase efficiency, and maximize the impact of fundraising initiatives; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED**, at The American Legion Department of South Dakota Department Convention assembled in Huron, South Dakota, June 19th – 22nd, 2025, That the following amendments be made to the Constitution and Bylaws of the South Dakota American Legion: *Under*, Article IV: ADMINISTRATION, Section 6: COMMISSION and COMMITTEE, Subsection c) Committees: Subpart a: Permanent Committees

*Add*, xi. Fundraising Committee; and, be it further

**RESOLVED**, The purpose of the Fundraising Committee shall be established to coordinate, plan, and execute fundraising activities in support of the objectives and programs of the South Dakota American Legion; and, be it further

**RESOLVED**, Membership of The Fundraising Committee shall consist of five (5) members, appointed by the Commander one from each of the Membership Committee, Finance Commission, Marketing Media and Communications Committee and two at-large members with approval of the Department Executive Committee; and, be it further

**RESOLVED**, The responsibilities shall be:

- a. Develop and implement fundraising strategies, campaigns, and events to generate financial support for The American Legion programs and initiatives,
- b. Collaborate with Legion leadership, members, and community partners to identify fundraising opportunities and cultivate donor relationships,
- c. Maintain accurate records of all fundraising activities, including donations received, and expenses incurred,
- d. Provide regular reports on fundraising activities and financial status to the Department Executive Committee,
- e. Ensure compliance with all relevant laws, regulations, and policies governing fundraising activities; and, be it further

**RESOLVED**, The terms of the Committee members shall serve an annual term with the exception of the at-large members who shall serve a term of three (3) years, with the term of the at-large members expiring in separate years, with the option for reappointment at the discretion of the Commander and Department Executive Committee; and, be it further



**RESOLVED**, The Fundraising Committee shall meet, at least semiannually, to discuss ongoing initiatives, plan future activities, and address any relevant matters; and, be it finally **RESOLVED**, that upon adoption, this resolution shall take immediate effect and be incorporated into the Constitution and Bylaws of The American Legion Department of South Dakota.

#### **Resolution No. 24-03**

**Subject:** American Legion Department Of South Dakota Fall Meetings

**Origin:** K.R. Hempel, Post 136, District 7, Department Of South Dakota

**Internal Affairs Commission Action:** DO PASS recommendation as amended.

*The resolution was adopted.*

**WHEREAS**, traditionally the eight districts of the Department of South Dakota hold fall meetings with the intent of the newly elected Department Commander to give the attendees his/her requirements, goals and priorities for the year; and

**WHEREAS**, The American Legion Department of South Dakota Constitution and Bylaws, Article IV, Section 7 discuss District Conventions to be held between March 1 and May 1 of each year, and allow the District Commander to call for additional meetings as may be needed; and

**WHEREAS**, the current Constitution and Bylaws does not identify district fall meetings which allows the newly elected Department Commander to address his/her requirements, goals and priorities; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED**, at the American Legion Department of South Dakota Department Convention June 18-22, 2025 in Huron SD, That the Department Constitution and Bylaws be amended by replacing the current Article IV, Section 7 with the following:

“Section 7. DISTRICT MEETINGS. There shall be at least two regular district meetings each year. These meetings shall be called by the Department Commander. There may be other district meetings at the call of the District Commander, and the call for any such meetings shall be given by the District Commander to the Posts in his/her district at least 15 days before such meeting.

a) The Fall District meetings shall be called by the Department Commander not earlier than September 1 nor later than 1 December each year and the call for said district meeting shall be given by the Department Adjutant to the Posts of each District at least 15 days prior to said meeting. The intent of this meeting is to allow the newly elected Department Commander to address his/her requirements, goals and priorities for the year and to allow the District Commander to conduct business as required.

b) The Spring District meetings shall be called by the Department Commander not earlier than March 1 nor later than May 1 each year, and the call for said district meeting shall be given by the Department Adjutant to the Posts of each district at least 15 days prior to such meeting. The intent of this meeting is to allow the District Commander and Department to conduct business as required.”

#### **Resolution No. 25-04**

**Subject:** Changes To South Dakota American Legion Constitution And Bylaws Realigning Districts Under Department Vice Commanders

**Origin:** Sully Post 79 Of Onida, District 3, Department Of South Dakota

**Internal Affairs Commission Action:** DO PASS recommendation as amended.

*The resolution was adopted.*

**WHEREAS**, according to The American Legion, Department of South Dakota Constitution and By-laws, Article IV, Section 16 dated July 2024, the organization is structured with two Department Vice Commanders overseeing different regions; and

**WHEREAS**, the current assignment results in an unequal distribution of districts between the two Vice Commanders; and

**WHEREAS**, a balance of responsibilities and potential candidates is important for effective leadership; and

**WHEREAS**, this proposal was presented at the District 3 Spring Meeting in Winner, SD on March 16th, 2025 and received no objections; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED**, By The American Legion Department of South Dakota in Annual Department Convention assembled in Huron, South Dakota, June 19th – 22nd, 2025, that The American Legion, Department of South Dakota Constitution and By Laws, Article IV, Section 16, be amended

From:

“Two Department Vice Commanders shall be elected at each Department Convention, one from an Area comprised of Districts One and Two, and one from an Area comprised of Districts Three, Four, Five, Six, Seven and Eight.”

To:

“Two Department Vice Commanders shall be elected at each Department Convention, one from Districts One, Two and Three and will be the Western Vice Commander, and one from Districts Four, Five, Six, Seven and Eight and will be the Eastern Vice Commander.”

**Resolution No. 24-05**

**Subject:** Resolution To Amend Section 6 Of The Constitution And Bylaws

**Origin:** Internal Affairs Committee, Department Of South Dakota

Internal Affairs Commission Action: DO PASS recommendation as amended.

*The resolution was adopted.*

**WHEREAS**, the South Dakota American Legion aims to continually support veterans, their families, and the community at large through various programs and initiatives; and

**WHEREAS**, it is necessary to ensure clarity and consistency in the language of the Constitution and Bylaws of The American Legion, Department of South Dakota;

**WHEREAS**, the current phrasing of Section 6, "or the Uniform Code of Procedures for the Organization of Department Conventions or the American Legion Department of South Dakota," contains the conjunction "or," which may lead to ambiguity;

**WHEREAS**, replacing "or" with "of" would provide clearer language and better alignment with the intended meaning of the section; therefore, be it

**RESOLVED** at The American Legion Department of South Dakota Department Convention assembled in Huron, South Dakota, June 19th – 22nd, 2025, That the following amendments be made to the Constitution and Bylaws of the South Dakota American Legion:

In Section 6. COMMISSIONS and COMMITTEES, the sentence:

*"The following commissions and committees shall be permanently established with the chairperson appointed annually except where identified differently in these Constitution and By Laws or the Uniform Code of Procedures for the Organization of Department Conventions or the American Legion Department of South Dakota"*

**shall be revised to:**

*"The following commissions and committees shall be permanently established with the chairperson appointed annually except where identified differently in these Constitution and By Laws of the Uniform Code of Procedures for the Organization of Department Conventions of the American Legion Department of South Dakota."*; and, be it finally

**RESOLVED**, that upon adoption, this resolution shall take immediate effect and be incorporated into the Constitution and Bylaws of The American Legion Department of South Dakota.

**Resolution No. 24-06**

**Subject:** Resolution Expressing Appreciation To William F. Reaves Post 7 For Hosting The 2025 American Legion Department Convention

**Origin:** Internal Affairs Committee, Department Of South Dakota

Internal Affairs Commission Action: Refer to Convention Resolution Committee.

Convention Resolution Committee action: Refer to Convention Internal Organization Committee.

Convention Internal Organization Committee action: DO PASS recommendation.

*The resolution was adopted.*

**WHEREAS**, the WILLIAM F. REAVES Post 7 of Huron, South Dakota, has graciously and diligently hosted the 2025 American Legion Department Convention; and

**WHEREAS**, the members of Post 7 have demonstrated outstanding dedication, hospitality, and commitment to ensuring a successful and meaningful convention for all attendees; and

**WHEREAS**, their efforts have contributed to the continued strength and mission of The American Legion by providing a welcoming environment for discussions, camaraderie, and the advancement of Legion priorities; therefore, be it

**RESOLVED**, by the delegates of the 2025 American Legion Department of South Dakota Convention, assembled in Huron, South Dakota, June 19th – 22nd, 2025, that sincere appreciation and gratitude be extended to the members of WILLIAM F. REAVES Post 7 for their exceptional contributions in hosting this significant event; therefore, and, be it finally

**RESOLVED**, that this resolution be recorded in the official proceedings of the convention and that a copy be presented to WILLIAM F. REAVES Post 7 as a token of our esteem and appreciation.

**Resolution No. 24-07**

**Subject:** Resolution To Permit The Current Department Commander To Seek One Additional Consecutive One-Year Term

**Origin:** Post 15 Of Sioux Falls, District 7, Department Of South Dakota

**Internal Affairs Committee action:** DO NOT PASS recommendation.

*The resolution was not adopted.*

**WHEREAS,** The current Department Commander has provided continuity, stability, and effective oversight of department programs and initiatives; and

**WHEREAS,** The current Constitution and Bylaws of the Department of South Dakota limit the Department Commander to a single term; and

**WHEREAS,** There is broad support among the membership to allow the current Department Commander to continue for an additional one-year term to ensure the continued success of departmental initiatives and leadership consistency; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED, By the American Legion Department of South Dakota in regular Department Convention assembled in Huron, South Dakota, June 19th – 22nd, 2025 that the current Department Commander shall be permitted to seek re-election and, if duly elected, serve one additional consecutive one-year term and only one; and, be it further**

**RESOLVED, That the following amendments be made to the Constitution and Bylaws of the South Dakota American Legion:**

**ARTICLE IV, ADMINISTRATION, Section 15. ELECTION OF OFFICERS.**

*“Such officers, with the exception of the National Executive Committeeman, Alternate National Executive Committeeman, Department Adjutant, Assistant Department Adjutant, Judge Advocate, Chaplain, Americanism Officer, Finance Officer, Department Historian, Service Officer, Children and Youth Chair, and Membership Chair shall be elected at each annual Convention. No Department Commander or Past Department Commander shall be eligible to re-election.”*

**shall be revised to:**

*“Such officers, with the exception of the National Executive Committeeman, Alternate National Executive Committeeman, Department Adjutant, Assistant Department Adjutant, Judge Advocate, Chaplain, Americanism Officer, Finance Officer, Department Historian, Service Officer, Children and Youth Chair, and Membership Chair shall be elected at each annual Convention. The Department Commander shall be eligible for re-election to serve one additional consecutive one-year term and only one.”; and, be it finally*

**RESOLVED, That upon adoption, this resolution shall take immediate effect and be incorporated into the Constitution and Bylaws of The American Legion Department of South Dakota.**

**Resolution No. 25-08**

**Subject:** Timely Distribution Of Membership Dues To Department

**Origin:** Post 250, District 5, Department Of South Dakota

**Internal Affairs Committee action:** Refer to Convention Resolutions Committee.

**Convention Resolutions Committee action:** Refer to Convention Internal Organization Committee.

**Convention Internal Organization Committee action:** DO PASS recommendation.

*The resolution was adopted.*

**WHEREAS,** The American Legion is composed of the National Organization, Departments, Posts, and other intermediate entities, and;

**WHEREAS,** each of these is dependent upon annual dues collected, and;

**WHEREAS,** each of these operates on an annual budget based up on the amount of dues collected to meet their cash flow needs, and;

**WHEREAS,** all dues paid by the members of each Post are collected by the National Headquarters annually, and;

**WHEREAS,** each Department relies on the timely distribution of the dues collected by the National Headquarters to meet their cash flow needs; now therefore be it

**RESOLVED, by American Legion Post 250, Castlewood, South Dakota in regular meeting on May 1, 2025, that National Headquarters distribute dues they collect within 30 days of receipt; and be it further**

**RESOLVED, that a copy be forwarded to the Department of South Dakota Convention in Huron, South Dakota on June 19 - 22, 2025 for their approval; and be it finally;**

**RESOLVED, that a copy if this resolution be forwarded to the 105th National American Legion Convention in Tampa, Florida on August 22 thru 28, 2025 for concurring action.**

**Resolution No. 25-09**

**Subject:** Authorization For Department Adjutant To Make Minor Corrections To The Department Constitution And Bylaws

**Origin:** Internal Affairs Commission

Internal Affairs Commission action: DO PASS recommendation.

*The resolution was adopted.*

**WHEREAS**, The Constitution and Bylaws of The American Legion Department of South Dakota serve as the guiding documents for the governance and operations of the organization; and

**WHEREAS**, Minor corrections, such as typographical errors, formatting inconsistencies, and grammatical improvements, may be necessary to maintain clarity and readability without altering the intent of the provisions; and

**WHEREAS**, The process of amending the Constitution and Bylaws currently requires formal action, which may be unduly burdensome for non-substantive changes; and

**WHEREAS**, Granting the Department Adjutant the authority to make such minor corrections ensures accuracy and consistency while preserving the integrity of the governing documents; now, therefore, be it **RESOLVED**, **The American Legion Department of South Dakota in Annual Department Convention assembled in Huron, South Dakota, June 19th – 22nd, 2025, that The American Legion, Department of South Dakota, that Article XIV of the Department Constitution and Bylaws shall be amended to include a new Section 2, stating:**

*“SECTION 2. The Department Adjutant shall be authorized to make minor corrections to the Department Constitution and Bylaws, limited to typographical errors, formatting adjustments, and grammatical improvements, provided that such corrections do not change the intent, meaning, or substance of the provisions. All corrections shall be documented and reported to the Department Executive Committee at its next meeting.”*; and, be it further

**RESOLVED**, That this authorization does not extend to changes that materially alter the meaning of any provision and that all substantive amendments shall continue to require appropriate approval in accordance with existing procedures.

**Resolution No. 25-10**

**Subject:** Amendment To Article II, Section 2 Of The Department Constitution And Bylaws

**Origin:** Internal Affairs Commission

Internal Affairs Commission action: DO PASS recommendation.

*The resolution was adopted.*

**WHEREAS**, Article II, Section 2 currently outlines the duties of Department Vice Commanders, including travel authorization procedures; and

**WHEREAS**, The requirement for travel approval via written orders and submission of travel documentation may no longer be necessary or may need modification to reflect operational efficiency; and

**WHEREAS**, The removal of specific travel authorization language will allow for updated administrative practices while preserving the role and duties of Department Vice Commanders; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED**, **By The American Legion Department of South Dakota in convention assembled on this [Insert Date] day of [Insert Month and Year], that Article II, Section 2 of the Department Bylaws shall be amended to read as follows:**

*SECTION 2. DEPARTMENT VICE COMMANDERS. The Department Vice Commanders shall represent the Commander as he/she may direct.*

**RESOLVED**, That this amendment takes effect immediately upon adoption and does not alter any other provisions concerning the authority or responsibilities of Department Vice Commanders.

**Resolution No. 25-11**

**Subject:** Resolution To Support For America250 And The Commemoration Of The United States Semi quincennial.

**Origin:** Post 15 Of Sioux Falls, District 7, Department Of South Dakota

Internal Affairs Commission action: Refer to Convention Resolutions Committee.

Convention Resolutions Committee action: Refer to Convention Americanism Committee.

Convention Americanism Committee action: DO PASS recommendation.

*The resolution was adopted.*

**WHEREAS**, the year 2026 marks the 250th anniversary of the founding of the United States of America; and

**WHEREAS**, America250 is a national initiative established to commemorate this historic milestone, reflecting on our nation’s past, celebrating its present, and inspiring its future; and

**WHEREAS**, the American Legion has steadfastly upheld the principles of patriotism, honor, and service to veterans and their families since its founding in 1919; and

**WHEREAS**, the American Legion Department of South Dakota recognizes the importance of honoring the sacrifices of those who have defended our nation and the enduring values that define American democracy; and

**WHEREAS**, America250 provides an opportunity to engage communities, educate future generations, unite the nation around its founding ideals and highlight the contributions of veterans to the nation’s history and progress; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED**, at the American Legion Department of South Dakota Department Convention June 18-22, 2025 in Huron SD, that the American Legion Department of South Dakota fully supports America250 and its mission to unite all Americans in commemorating 250 years of independence and progress; and, be it further

**RESOLVED**, that posts within the American Legion Department are encouraged to work with their local schools and civic organizations to collaborate in educational programming and patriotic events marking the historic occasion of 250 years of our nation; and, be it further

**RESOLVED**, that the American Legion Department of South Dakota will actively participate in events, programs, and initiatives that honor veterans and promote civic engagement during the Semi quinquennial celebrations; and be it finally

**RESOLVED**, that copies of this resolution be forwarded to the National Headquarters of The American Legion, America250 leadership, America’s 250<sup>th</sup>.



**DEPARTMENT OFFICERS FOR 2024 – 2025**

Department Commander, Kevin Morello .....	Blackhawk (Piedmont Post 311)
Department Vice Commander Brian Dean., (Districts 1-2).....	Spearfish Post 164
Department Vice Commander Kevin Hempel, (Districts 3-8)....	Watertown (Chester Post 136)
National Executive Committeeman, Fred Nelson.....	Spearfish Post 164
Alternate Executive Committeeman, Doug Feltman .....	Chamberlain Post 3
Adjutant, C.P. Van Delist .....	Watertown (Rapid City Post 22)
Department Service Officer, Matt Pillar .....	DeSmet Post 138
Finance Officer, Krisma DeWitt.....	Watertown (Castlewood Post 250)
Sergeant-at-Arms, Greg Geiman .....	Scotland (Wagner Post 11)
Judge Advocate, Jay Leibel .....	Madison Post 25
Chaplain, Mike Kumm .....	Sioux City, IA (North Sioux City Post 319)
Historian, Fred Lee .....	Sioux Falls (Humboldt Post 62)
Americanism, David Booze.....	Blackhawk (Piedmont Post 311)
Children & Youth, Harry Boner .....	Castlewood Post 250
Membership Chair, Bill Peters .....	Sioux Falls Post 15

### DISTRICT COMMANDERS

District 1: Marv Tisdall.....	Box Elder Post 315
District 2: Christopher Rendon.....	Rapid City Post 320
District 3: Steve Stier.....	Onida Post 79
District 4: Ted Kimball.....	Redfield Post 92
District 5: Clayton Nei.....	Castlewood Post 250
District 6: Jim Pekron.....	Mitchell Post 18
District 7: Andy Lyngen.....	Garretson Post 23
District 8: Steve Mueller.....	Springfield Post 132

### LEGISLATIVE LOBBYISTS

Mike Mehlhaff .....	Pierre Post 8
C. P. Van Delist .....	Watertown (Rapid City Post 22)
Kevin Morello.....	Blackhawk (Piedmont Post 311)
Kevin Hempel.....	Watertown (Chester Post 136)
Nathan Juelfs .....	Belle Fourche (Buffalo Post 147)
Doug Feltman .....	Chamberlain Post 3

### VA HOSPITAL REPRESENTATIVES

Sioux Falls VA Medical Center, Chris Fischer.....	Sioux Falls Post 15
Ft. Meade VA Medical Center, Buck Deweese .....	Spearfish Post 164
Hot Springs VA Medical Center, Angela Koch .....	Hot Springs Post 71

### COMMITTEE AND COMMISSION CHAIRPERSONS

Aeronautics, Rodney “Buck” Deweese.....	Spearfish Post 164
Athletic, Lyle Tolsma .....	Rapid City Post 22
Boys State, Gene Opbroek.....	Spearfish Post 164
Cemetery, Regan McClurkin .....	Summerset (Piedmont Post 311)
Educational Scholarship, Mike Pauling .....	Piedmont Post 311
Employment, Greg Diaz .....	Spearfish Post 164
Internal Affairs, Byron Callies.....	Watertown Post 17
Legislative, Mike Mehlhaff.....	Pierre Post 8
Marketing, Media & Communications, Courtney Steffen .....	Madison (Chester Post 136)
National Security, Regan McClurkin.....	Summerset (Piedmont Post 311)
Public Safety, Larry Price .....	Redfield Post 92
Scouting, Chris Rendon .....	Rapid City Post 320
SDAL Foundation, Jim Kurtz .....	Garretson Post 23
Training, Jack French.....	Spearfish Post 164
Trust Fund, Jeff Merchant.....	Spearfish Post 164
VA&R, Warren Aas.....	Watertown (Sisseton Post 50)
VAVS, Charemon Dunham .....	Iroquois Post 20)

# 2024-2025



## **KEVIN MORELLO** **“Legion Family Uniting Communities**

DEPARTMENT COMMANDER  
THE AMERICAN LEGION  
DEPARTMENT OF SOUTH DAKOTA

