



**105TH ANNUAL
CONVENTION
PROCEEDINGS**

**THE AMERICAN LEGION
DEPARTMENT OF
SOUTH DAKOTA**

INCLUDING
**REPORTS OF OFFICERS
AND COMMITTEES
2023-2024**

**JUNE 20-23, 2024
PIERRE, SOUTH DAKOTA**

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PROCEEDINGS

ONE-HUNDRED-FIFTH ANNUAL CONVENTION

THE AMERICAN LEGION

Department of South Dakota

June 20-23, 2024

The Pre-Convention meeting of the American Legion Department Finance Commission was held at 10:00 a.m., Thursday, June 20, 2024, in Gallery ABC at the Ramkota Conference Center, Pierre, South Dakota, followed by the meeting of the South Dakota American Legion Department Executive Committee, also in the Gallery ABC Room of the same facility, at 1:00 p.m.

The Convention Resolutions Committee's initial meeting was held at 10:00 a.m., Friday, June 21, 2024, in the Lewis & Clark A Room in the Ramkota Conference Center, Pierre, South Dakota. The meetings of the other Convention Committees were held in rooms so designated in the Conference Center at 1:30 p.m. The South Dakota American Legion Foundation met in Gallery G at 3:00 p.m.

A joint Convention, American Legion/American Legion Auxiliary/Sons of the American Legion, memorial service was held in Gallery ABC of the Ramkota Conference Center, at 4:30 p.m.

The American Legion/American Legion Auxiliary/Sons of The American Legion Joint Banquet was held at 7:00 p.m. on Friday, June 21, 2024, in Gallery ABC at the Ramkota Conference Center, Pierre, South Dakota. Lisa Williamson, National American Legion Auxiliary President, Department of Alaska, was the guest speaker.

The 105th Annual Convention of The American Legion Department of South Dakota was called to order at 9:00 a.m., Saturday, June 22nd, 2024, at the Ramkota Conference Center, Pierre, South Dakota, by Department Commander Courtney Steffen of Madison, SD, (Chester Post #136) after a mini concert by the State American Legion Band.

The Colors were advanced and posted by the Color Guard. The National Anthem was played. Immediate Past Department Commander, Doug Feltman, led the delegates in the Pledge of Allegiance. The invocation was given by Department Chaplain Mike Kumm, after which Department Adjutant C.P. Van Delist conducted the POW/MIA ceremony. Department Commander Steffen led the delegates in reciting the Preamble to the Constitution of The American Legion in unison.

The Call for Convention was read by Department Commander Steffen.

**OFFICIAL CALL FOR THE
ONE-HUNDRED-FIFTH ANNUAL CONVENTION
OF THE AMERICAN LEGION
DEPARTMENT OF SOUTH DAKOTA**

The ONE-HUNDRED-FIFTH ANNUAL CONVENTION of The American Legion Department of South Dakota is hereby called, and in conformity with action taken on February 21, 2020, at a meeting of the Department Executive Committee, will be held in Pierre, South Dakota, June 20, 21, 22, and 23, 2024.

PURPOSE

The Convention is called to elect officers for the ensuing year and delegates to the 105th 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 5th, 2024. 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 5th, or turned in at the Department Convention Registration desk in Oacoma. Note that the 2024 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 Ramkota Hotel and Conference Center, Pierre, Thursday, June 20th, 2024, 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 Ramkota Hotel and Conference Center, immediately following the adjournment of the 105th 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 22nd, 2024, 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 21st, 2024, at 1:30 p.m. at the Ramkota Hotel and Conference Center, Pierre, SD, in rooms designated for that purpose. The directory of meeting rooms will be available upon entry into the

Ramkota Conference 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 21st, 2024, at 10:00 a.m., in the Ramkota Conference Center, Pierre, 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 6th, 2024. 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 105th 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 23rd, 2024, or at the conclusion of all other business of the Department Convention, whichever occurs first.

C.P. Van Delist
Department Adjutant

Courtney Steffen
Department Commander

Commander Steffen introduced Ft. Pierre Mayor, Gloria Hanson, who welcomed the Legion Family and brought greetings from the city.

Convention host, Post #8 Commander, Aaron Swan, delivered his greetings and welcomed the assembled delegates to Pierre.

State Vice Commander for Districts 1-2, Doug Harris, responded to the welcome.

Department of South Dakota Disabled American Veterans 1st Jr. Vice Commander, Amy Lucas, was introduced by Commander Steffen, and delivered greetings.

The Chair then recognized the Commander of the Veterans of Foreign Wars, Department of South Dakota, Glynis Collier, who brought greetings from their organization.

Greg Whitlock, Secretary of the SD Department of Veterans Affairs was introduced by Commander Steffen and addressed the assembly.

Department Commander Steffen introduced Andy Lyngen of Garretson, Chairman of the Convention Credentials Committee, for the purpose of providing the Credentials Committee's initial report. Chairman Lyngen presented that report to the Convention.

Department Commander Steffen then recognized Warren Aas, Watertown, SD, (Sisseton Post #50), Department Chairman of the Veteran's Affairs and Rehabilitation Commission and also Chairman of the Convention Rehabilitation Committee for the purpose of giving those reports.

CONVENTION REHABILITATION COMMITTEE REPORT

Commander:

The Convention Rehabilitation Committee meeting was called to order by Chairman Warren Aas of Watertown, at 1:30 p.m., Friday, June 21, 2024, in the Lake Sharp A Room in the Convention Center, Pierre, SD.

Those present besides Chairman Warren Aas of Watertown were: Liaison – Matthew Pillar of Lake Preston; District 1 – Absent; District 2 – Dick Daily of Oral; District 3 – Absent; District 4 – Aaron Grant of Groton; District 5 – Warren Aas of Watertown; District 6 – Vilas Kurtenbach of Dimock; District 7 – Nancy Grandy of Sioux Falls; and District 8 – Greg Geiman of Scotland.

Chairman Aas led the Pledge of Allegiance and read the duties of the Convention Rehabilitation Committee on page 17 of the Uniform Code of Procedures.

Matthew Pillar of Lake Preston was appointed as secretary.

The Convention Rehabilitation Committee was assigned 1 resolution for review and action.

**RESOLUTION 24-07 The American Legion Department of South Dakota
June 21-23, 2024, Pierre, SD**

**SUBJECT: IMPROVING HEALTH AND WELLNESS CARE FOR
VETERANS. ORIGIN: VETERANS AFFAIRS AND REHABILITATION
COMMISSION, DEPARTMENT OF SOUTH DAKOTA**

WHEREAS, The American Legion is committed to advocating for the comprehensive well-being of veterans, ensuring they receive the care and support they deserve; and

WHEREAS, Veterans often face unique health challenges stemming from their service, requiring specialized care and support to maintain their physical and mental well-being; and

WHEREAS, Studies show that eight of the ten leading causes of death among Veterans are directly related to physical and mental well-being whose risk is lowered through diet and exercise; and

WHEREAS, Access to regular exercise and fitness activities plays a crucial role in promoting the overall health and wellness of veterans, aiding in physical rehabilitation, mental health management, and overall quality of life; and

WHEREAS, Many veterans face barriers to accessing affordable fitness facilities and programs, hindering their ability to engage in regular physical activity and maintain a healthy lifestyle; and

WHEREAS, The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has a responsibility to provide comprehensive healthcare services to veterans, including proactive measures to promote health and wellness beyond traditional medical treatment; and

WHEREAS, The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) already has in place Whole Health and Well-being Programs, designed to equip Veterans with tools for skill building and self-care that provide access to well-being services to support health and wellness; and

WHEREAS, Providing access to gym memberships and fitness programs under established Whole Health and Well-being Programs can significantly enhance Veterans ability to engage in regular physical activity, manage chronic conditions, and improve overall health outcomes; and

WHEREAS, Studies have demonstrated the positive impact of regular exercise on veterans' physical and mental health, reducing the risk of chronic diseases, alleviating symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and depression, and promoting social interaction and community engagement; and

WHEREAS, Approximately 4.6 million rural veterans in all 50 states are particularly affected; and

WHEREAS, Offering gym memberships as part of VA healthcare benefits aligns with the VA's mission to provide comprehensive, patient-centered care that addresses the holistic needs of veterans; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, The American Legion Department of South Dakota at Department Convention June 21-23, 2024, in Pierre, SD, request The American Legion call upon the Department of Veterans Affairs to prioritize and enhance health and wellness care for veterans by including gym memberships as a covered benefit under VA healthcare services; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That the American Legion advocates for the integration of fitness and wellness programs into VA healthcare facilities, providing on-site resources and support for veterans to engage in regular physical activity and receive personalized wellness guidance; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That the American Legion calls upon Congress and the Administration to allocate adequate funding and resources to support the implementation of this initiative, recognizing its importance in promoting the health and well-being of our nation's veterans; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That this resolution be forwarded to the National Adjutant of The American Legion for consideration at the 105th Annual National Convention of The American Legion to be held in New Orleans, Louisiana, August 23-29, 2024.

After discussion, Aaron Grant of Groton made a motion, seconded by Dick Daily of Oral that the Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Convention Committee send this resolution to the convention floor with a DO PASS recommendation.

There being no further business to come before the committee, the Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation Convention Committee meeting was declared adjourned at 2:05 p.m.

**Respectfully submitted,
Warren L. Aas, Chairman**

Chairman Aas moved for the adoption of the report of the Convention Rehabilitation Committee Report, the motion was duly seconded and carried. Department Commander Steffen declared the Convention Rehabilitation Committee Report adopted.

As Chairman of the Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Commission, Mr. Aas delivered the annual report of that committee, which can be found in the Annual Reports section of this publication. It was adopted. Chairman Aas and Commander Steffen then announced the VA&R awards. The 2024 award went to Spearfish, Inc. Post 164, Spearfish.

Commander Steffen introduced Major Laura Hayden, Public Affairs Officer for Ellsworth Airforce Base who spoke to the assembled delegates.

Department Commander Steffen read the 2023-2024 American Legion Auxiliary Department President Patsy Madsen's biography and introduced her to the convention body. President Madsen brought greetings from the Auxiliary. When President Madsen finished addressing the convention body, Commander Steffen turned the gavel over to Department Vice Commander Doug Harris as she departed the convention hall to go address the Auxiliary.

Department Vice Commander Harris recognized Kevin Hempel, Watertown, SD, (Chester Post #136), Chairman 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

Madam Commander,

The meeting of the Convention Rules Committee was called to order by Chairman Kevin Hempel, Chester Post 136 at 1:28 pm, Friday, June 21, 2024, at the Ramkota Hotel and Conference center in Pierre SD. Chairman Hempel lead the participants in a salute to the colors and the Pledge of Allegiance.

In addition to Chairman Hempel, the following were present: District 1 – Doug Henwood of Spearfish; District 2 – PDC Rick McDonald of Hermosa; District 3 – Larry Eliason of Pierre; District 4 – Ted Kimball of Redfield; District 5 – Betty “Sam” Vaughn of Brookings; District 6 - PDC Gary Wolkow of De Smet; District 7- John Bachmeier of Sioux Falls and District 8 – absent. Travis Flisrand was assigned as Liaison for the committee.

Chairman Hempel read Section 10, of the Duties of the Convention Committees from the Uniform Code of Procedures for the Organization of Department Conventions of The American Legion Department of South Dakota to the committee members.

There were no resolutions to be discussed by the Committee. However, the Committee did a review of the Uniform Code of Procedures for the Organization of Department Conventions of The America Legion Department of South Dakota with the intention of updating the document as may be needed. It was recommended to change the document to be gender neutral as well as make several corrections to punctuation.

Discussion was held regarding the requirement for a Convention Committee Liaison. Ted Kimball moved to remove the requirement for a Liaison for each Convention Committee. PDC McDonald seconded. Motion Carried.

Discussion was also held regarding clarifying the duties of the Resolutions Convention Committee to ensure all resolutions were reviewed and forwarded to the various Convention Committee without recommendations.

The Rules Committee felt it was important to add an additional section under **RESOLUTIONS TO BE CONSIDERED BY THE CONVENTION** that ensured all submitted resolutions must be consistent with the four pillars of The American Legion.

The Committee agreed all recommended changes to the document would be consolidated and presented to the Department Executive Committee for consideration and approval.

With no other items for discussion, Chairman Hempel lead 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 2:23 pm.

**Respectfully submitted,
Kevin Hempel, Chairman**

Larry Eliason, Pierre, moved for an addition to the recommendations to include that all resolutions submitted for review, be consistent with the South Dakota American Legion Constitution and By-Laws. Chairman Hempel moved for the adoption of the report of the Convention Rules Committee, the motion as amended was duly seconded and carried. Department Commander Steffen declared the report of the Convention Rules Committee adopted.

Department Commander Steffen read Senator John Thune's biography and introduced him to the convention body. Senator Thune then addressed those in attendance.

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

CONVENTION RESOLUTIONS COMMITTEE REPORT

Madam Commander,

The initial meeting of the Resolutions Committee was called to order by Chairman Marvin Tisdall of Box Elder Post 315, at 9:58 a.m., Friday, June 21, 2024, at the Ramkota Hotel and Conference Center in Pierre, SD.

Those present besides Chairman Tisdall of Box Elder were as follows: District 1 – Marvin Tisdall, Box Elder, Post #315; District 2 – Eugene Iron Shell, Rosebud, Post #125; District 3 – Gene Bruns, Colome, Post #146; District 4 – Perry Schmidt,

Redfield, Post #92; District 5 – Krisma DeWitt, Castlewood, Post #250; District 6 – Ron Falor, Kimball, Post #130; District 7 – Greg Johnson, Hartford, Post #118; and District 8 – Robert Kucera, Wagner, Post #11.

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

Kevin Morello of Piedmont, Post 311 was appointed as secretary.

The Convention Resolutions Committee reviewed 7 resolutions.

Resolution SDAL 24-01 submitted by Internal Affairs. CONSTITUTIONAL CHANGE OF DEPARTMENT OF SOUTH DAKOTA DUES.

RESOLVED, at The American Legion Department of South Dakota Department Convention June 21-23, 2024, in Pierre, SD, hereby amend The Department of South Dakota American Legion's Constitution & By-laws ARTICLE VI DUES, Section 2. DUES – DISPOSITION. to read "Each Post shall pay annually to the headquarters of the Department of South Dakota the sum of \$20.00 plus the amount of National dues assessed each fiscal year for each of its individual members, which said sum shall be distributed as follows:" and be it further

RESOLVED, The Constitution and By-laws of the American Legion Department of South Dakota, ARTICLE VI, Section 3, be revised as follows "PAYABLE DATE. Annual dues shall be payable July 1st of each year, for the succeeding calendar year."; and be it further

RESOLVED, that said increase from \$15.00 to \$20.00 of the Department of South Dakota American Legion Dues shall be effective 1 July 2025 for the subsequent years, and be it further

RESOLVED, Increased dues revenue generated by this adjustment shall be allocated towards supporting essential programs, services, and administrative functions of the American Legion Department of South Dakota; and be it finally

RESOLVED, That the Adjutant of the American Legion Department of South Dakota shall take necessary actions to update membership materials, including membership applications and renewal forms, to reflect the new dues structure.

Moved by Gene Bruns, seconded by Robert Kucera to not make any recommendation on this resolution as it was included in the resolution package in error. Motion carried.

Resolution SDAL 24-03 submitted by Post 22 of Rapid City. SUPPORT OF PROVIDING POSTSECONDARY CREDIT FOR MILITARY SERVICE.

RESOLVED, at The American Legion Department of South Dakota Department Convention June 21-23, 2024, in Pierre, SD, That the American Legion supports the establishment of a standardized system to recognize and appropriately award academic credit or certification for military service based on American Council on Education recommendations of evaluation of the Joint Services Transcript System standards; and be it further

RESOLVED, That the American Legion urges all post-secondary institutions to work collaboratively with the Department of Defense and relevant military agencies to develop and implement a comprehensive framework for assessing military training and experience for college credit; and be it further

RESOLVED, That the American Legion calls upon Congress to enact legislation that requires all postsecondary institutions that accept federal government funding to adopt policies recognizing the educational value of military service and provide appropriate postsecondary credit in accordance with American Council on Education recommendations and validated competencies; and be it further

RESOLVED, That the American Legion encourages all post-secondary institutions to establish clear and transparent procedures for evaluating military training and experience, granting credit where appropriate, and ensuring that veterans receive fair and equitable treatment in the pursuit of higher education; and be it finally

RESOLVED That National Executive Committee Resolution No. 12, Fall 2014, "Support Joint Services Transcript Evaluation of Military Training and Experience of Veterans, Active-Duty, Reserve and National Guard Personnel" and National Convention 2016, Resolution No. 322, "Support Joint Services Transcript Evaluation of Military Training and Experience of Veterans, Active-Duty, Reserve and National Guard Personnel" be superseded and rescinded.

Moved by Perry Schmidt, seconded by Krisma DeWitt to send to the Employment Committee. Motion carried.

Resolution SDAL 24-04 submitted by Potter Post 3 of Chamberlain. SOUTH DAKOTA VETERANS COUNCIL MEMBER AT LARGE.

RESOLVED, By the American Legion Department of South Dakota in annual convention assembled, June 20-23, 2024, in Pierre, SD, That the member at large appointed by the Commander serve on the SDVC for a term of three years; and be it finally

RESOLVED, That at the end of the initial three year term the current Department Commander may appoint that same member at large to serve an additional three-year term, for a maximum total of six years consecutively representing the SDAL.

Moved by Krisma DeWitt, seconded by Perry Schmidt to send to the Internal Organization Committee. Motion carried.

Resolution SDAL 24-05 submitted by Birch-Miller Post 9 of Milbank. BIRCH-MILLER POST 9 OF MILBANK, SD TO HOST THE STATE A, THE STATE B AND THE JUNIOR LEGION BASEBALL TOURNAMENTS IN CELEBRATION OF THE 100TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE BIRTHPLACE OF AMERICAN LEGION BASEBALL IN MILBANK, SD.

RESOLVED, at The American Legion Department of South Dakota Department Convention June 21-23, 2024 in Pierre, SD, that in commemoration of the 100th Anniversary of The Birthplace of American Legion Baseball that the State B Senior and Junior Legion State Baseball Tournaments be held at the newly constructed Legion Field Complex in Milbank, SD Birthplace of American Legion Baseball in

2025 with final dates to be determined prior to the 2025 baseball season; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That Convention Resolution No. 22-14 “That in commemoration of the 100th Anniversary of The Birthplace of American Legion Baseball that the State A, State B and Junior Legion A and B State Baseball Tournaments be held at the newly constructed Legion Field Complex in Milbank, SD Birthplace of American Legion Baseball in 2025 with final dates to be determined prior to the 2025 baseball season” be superseded and rescinded.

Moved by Krisma DeWitt, seconded by Eugene Iron Shell to send to the Americanism Committee. Motion carried.

Resolution SDAL 24-06 submitted by Roy Hickman Post 78 of Leola. SUPPORT OF THE UNITED STATES CONSTITUTION REGARDING PROPERTY RIGHTS.

RESOLVED, at The American Legion Department of South Dakota Department Convention June 21-23, 2024, in Pierre, SD, that the American Legion supports the rights of property owners; and be it further

RESOLVED, the American Legion urges that Eminent Domain be used only for the good of all citizens and be approved through proper channels that do not violate our National Constitution; and be it further

RESOLVED, the American Legion calls upon Congress and state legislatures to enact legislation that fairly and justly defines due process under the Fourth and Fourteenth Amendments of the United States Constitution that allows for protection of property owners from private entities applying for the use of Eminent Domain; and be it finally

RESOLVED, the American Legion encourages any projects with any foreign ownership or interests receive increased scrutiny by the State of South Dakota and the United States Government when requesting the use of Eminent Domain.

Moved by Gene Bruns, seconded by Ron Falor to send to the Internal Organization Committee. Motion carried.

Resolution SDAL 24-07 submitted by Veteran Affairs and Rehabilitation Commission, Department of South Dakota. IMPROVING HEALTH AND WELLNESS CARE FOR VETERANS “An Ounce Of Prevention Is Worth A Pound Of Cure.”

RESOLVED, The American Legion Department of South Dakota at Department Convention June 21-23, 2024, in Pierre, SD, request The American Legion call upon the Department of Veterans Affairs to prioritize and enhance health and wellness care for veterans by including gym memberships as a covered benefit under VA healthcare services; and be it further

RESOLVED, That the American Legion advocates for the integration of fitness and wellness programs into VA healthcare facilities, providing on-site resources and support for veterans to engage in regular physical activity and receive personalized wellness guidance; and be it further

RESOLVED, That the American Legion calls upon Congress and the Administration to allocate adequate funding and resources to support the implementation of this initiative, recognizing its importance in promoting the health and well-being of our nation's veterans; and be it finally

RESOLVED, That this resolution be forwarded to the National Adjutant of The American Legion for consideration at the 105th Annual National Convention of The American Legion to be held in New Orleans, Louisiana, August 23-29, 2024.

Moved by Eugene Iron Shell, seconded by Perry Schmidt to send to Rehabilitation Committee. Motion carried.

Convention Resolution SDAL 24-09 submitted by Post 42 of Herrick. MEMBERSHIP CHAIRMAN APPOINTMENT OF FINANCE COMMITTEE.

RESOLVED that the Membership Chairman of the Department of South Dakota American Legion shall be appointed as a voting member of the Finance Committee effective July 1, 2024; and be it further

RESOLVED that the Membership Chairman shall actively participate in Finance Committee meetings and deliberations, providing valuable insights and contributions to financial decision-making; and be it further

RESOLVED that this appointment shall enhance coordination between membership and financial strategies, ensuring Department's fiscal sustainability and alignment with organizational objectives; and be it finally

RESOLVED that the Membership Chairman's appointment to the Finance Committee shall be communicated to all relevant parties and documented accordingly in official Department records.

Moved by Krisma DeWitt, seconded by Gene Bruns to send to the Internal Organization Committee. Motion carried.

The Convention Resolutions Committee drafted 2 resolutions.

Convention Resolution SDAL 24-08 was drafted by the Convention Resolutions Committee supporting the commissioning of the USS Pierre (LCS-38) and its sponsor Larissa Thune-Hargens.

RESOLVED, at The American Legion Department of South Dakota Department Convention June 21-23, 2024, in Pierre, SD, That the American Legion Department of South Dakota, hereby express wholehearted support and enthusiasm for the upcoming commissioning of the USS Pierre (LCS-38); and be it further

RESOLVED, That deepest gratitude and congratulations are extended to Larissa Thune-Hargens for her role as sponsor, her contributions are instrumental to the successful commissioning and future endeavors of the USS Pierre; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That the officers and crew of the USS Pierre (LCS-38) be hereby commended for their dedication and service, fair winds, and following seas as they embark on their mission to protect and defend the interests of the United States of America.

Moved by Perry Schmidt, seconded by Krisma DeWitt to send to National Security. Motion carried.

Convention Resolution SDAL 24-10 was drafted by the Convention Resolutions Committee to express thanks to Pierre Post 8, for hosting a great convention.

Moved by Robert Kucera, seconded by Perry Schmidt to Recommend Do Pass. Motion carried.

There being no further business to come before the committee, the Convention Resolutions Committee meeting was recessed at 10:40 a.m.

Resolution committee reconvened at 11:45am on June 21st, 2024, to readdress SDAL 24-06 and 24-08 with all members present for the exception of Districts 2 and 8. Continued recess at 12:00pm.

**Respectfully submitted,
Marvin Tisdall, Chairman**

Chairman Tisdall moved for the adoption of the report of the Convention Resolutions Committee, the motion was duly seconded and carried. Department Commander Steffen declared the Convention Resolutions Committee report adopted.

At this time, a 15-minute recess was taken.

Department Commander Steffen reconvened the Convention business session after the 15-minute break and recognized PDC Hugh Holmes, Mitchell, Chairman of the Department Education Committee to give the Annual report of that committee which can be found in the Annual Reports section of this document. PDC Holmes announced that Chad Johnson of the Lyman County School District, had been selected as the National Educator of the Year. The report was adopted. PDC Holmes continued on with a report on the Legionnaire Insurance Trust.

Department Commander Courtney Steffen introduced Doug Harris, Rapid City Post #22, Chairman of the Convention Americanism Committee, to give that report to the convention delegates.

CONVENTION AMERICANISM COMMITTEE REPORT

Ms. Commander:

The Americanism Committee was called to order by Doug Harris of Rapid City, at 1:30 p.m., Friday, June 21, 2024, at the Ramkota Hotel and Conference Center, Pierre, SD.

Those present besides Chairman Harris were as follows: Liaison – Dan Wyatt, Madison; District 1 Mike Pauling, Piedmont, Post #311; District 2 Doug Harris,

Rapid City, Post #22; District 3 Gene Bruns, Winner, Post #146; District 4 Dale Strom, Aberdeen, Post #24; District 5 Mike Kraft, Britton, Post #80; District 6 Annette Dunham, Iroquois, Post #280; District 7 Tony Grandy, Garretson, Post #23; and District 8 Jim Hornstra, Springfield, Post #323.

Chairman Harris led the Pledge of Allegiance and read the duties of the Convention Employment Committee on page 16 of the Uniform Code of Procedures.

Mike Pauling of Piedmont was appointed as secretary.

The committee reviewed one resolution. Chairman Harris led general discussions concerning the following Resolution.

Resolution 24.05, Birch-Miller Post 9 of Milbank, SD to host the “State A”, the “State B”, and the Junior Legion Baseball tournament in Celebration of the 100th Anniversary of the birthplace of American Legion Baseball in Milbank, SD.

Motion to “Do Pass” was made by Dale Strom, Mike Kraft seconded the motion. The resolution was read, and the floor was opened for discussion. Chairman Harris explained what was trying to be accomplished. **The Americanism Committee recommended a “Do Pass” motion. Motion carried.**

The floor was opened for discussion on the Americanism Programs.

- Mike Pauling talked about getting home schoolers involved with Americanism programs and offered advice on how to increase participation.
- Chairman Harris asked Americanism Chairman Dan Wyatt to speak on the Americanism programs. He talked about spending four days at Boys State and his very positive impression of the program, the boys, and staff. He also discussed the status of Youth Trooper and the Oratorical Program.
- Mike Kraft talked about Shooting Sports and how we could do more to promote it. He plans to bring a Resolution to the 2025 Convention on his ideas and how to fund them.
- Chairman Harris spoke briefly on American Legion Baseball and the changes in Leadership. Policies are being strictly enforced. He asked Dan Wyatt to talk about how the South Dakota High School Activities Association wants to consider changes to High School Baseball and how they will affect Legion Baseball. In the end, it sounds like they will seek and respect our position on those proposed changes.

Chairman Harris summarized the activities of the meeting and asked for any additional input. Several members shared ideas on how to get into the schools to promote the Americanism Programs.

There being no further business to come before the committee, the Americanism Committee meeting, Chairman Harris asked for a motion to recess the Committee, Mike Pauling made the motion, seconded by Annette Dunham, motion carried. The meeting was declared adjourned at 2:31 p.m.

**Respectfully submitted,
Doug Harris, Chairman**

Chairman Harris moved for the adoption of the report of the Convention Americanism Committee, the motion was duly seconded and carried. Department Commander Steffen declared the Convention Americanism Committee Report adopted.

The Chair recognized Dan Wyatt, Madison, Chairman of the Department Americanism Commission, for the purpose of providing the Americanism Commission Annual report. The report was adopted.

Mike Kraft, Britton, member of the Americanism Commission, gave a report on Shooting Sports.

The South Dakota Shooters that were in Michigan taking part in the National Tournament were sitting in 2nd Place. The first awards for Americanism programs were for some of our Youth Shooters. Post 15 Precision and Sporter team members competed in the American Legion National 3p match this year, and both did great!

In round 1, the Sporter team scored 2055.52, and that resulted in a 2nd place finish in the state, and 15th in the nation. Team members were Zoe Dissing, Ema Dissing, Skyler Plucker, and Sutton Plucker.

The Precision team scored 2272.10, resulting in a 1st place finish in the state, and 18th in the nation. Team members were Josie Eichmann, Ashley Tieszen, Sydney Baker, and Mausten Stelter.

Several athletes advanced to round two. Round 2 determines the lineup for the national matches in Michigan this summer. In round two, Zoe Dissing scored 544.14 in the Sporter match, resulting in 11th place and Josie Eichmann scored 586.34 in the Precision match, resulting in a 25th place finish. These two ladies earned a trip to the National match. All were applauded for their accomplishments.

Chairman Wyatt and Commander Steffen presented the Americanism Awards for the Department for the 2023-2024 year: Each of the goal-size group award winners were presented with the Golden Eagle "Americanism Excellence" traveling trophies. The Golden Eagle Award is presented to a post in each goal size group that submits the best Americanism Program and is based on the number of activities the Post participated in as well as the documentation of the programs.

Post Americanism Award for 15-45 goal-size group awarded to
Goeres-Woods Post #5 of Plankinton, 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
Urban-Hanson, Inc. Post #118 of Hartford, SD.

Post Americanism Award for 125-350 goal-size group awarded to
Spearfish, Inc. American Legion Post #164 of Spearfish, SD.

Post Americanism Award for 351 and larger goal-size group awarded to
Rapid City American Legion Post #22 of Rapid City, SD.

A smaller Golden Eagle mounted on a base was presented to the five Posts who won the Golden Eagle in 2022-2023 to take back to their post and display as a past award winner. Those posts were Aurora Post #230, Castlewood Post #250, Salem Post #140, Spearfish Post #164, and Rapid City Post #22.

Overall, best Department Americanism program winners for 2022-2023 were:

Certificate of Distinguished Service awarded to
Spearfish, Inc. American Legion Post #164 of Spearfish, SD.

Certificate of Meritorious Service awarded to
Rapid City American Legion Post #22 of Rapid City, SD.

Individual Americanism Award awarded to
Jack French of Spearfish, Inc. American Legion Post #164, Spearfish, SD.

All other Posts that turned in Americanism Reports will receive an Americanism Certificate, signed by the National Commander for participating in this program.

Chairman Wyatt then announced the 2024 Department Oratorical Champion was Elena Andrews of Beresford, SD. Unfortunately, she could not be with us for further recognition she did however, send a letter which was read.

Department Commander Steffen recognized Department Boys State Director, Gene Opbroek, Spearfish Post #164, to provide the Annual Boys State Report. The report was adopted. Director Opbroek then introduced the 2024 American Legion Boys State Governor, David Yuston Jr. of Sioux Falls who then addressed the Convention body, speaking on his experience at Boys State.

The Chair recognized PDC Fred Nelson, Spearfish, American Legion Riders Liaison, to give that groups annual report. The report was adopted.

The Chair recognized PNVC/PDC Byron Callies, Watertown, Chairman of the Convention Internal Organization Committee and also Chairman of the Department Internal Affairs Commission to give those reports.

CONVENTION INTERNAL ORGANIZATION COMMITTEE REPORT

Ms. Commander:

The Internal Organization Committee was called to order by Chairman Byron Callies of Watertown, at 1:30 p.m., Friday, June 21, 2024, at the Ramkota Hotel and Conference Center, Pierre, SD.

Those present besides Chairman Callies were as follows: Liaison – Nathan Hoffman, Leola; District 1 - Dave Booze, Blackhawk, Piedmont Post #311; District 2 - Donald Hone, Custer, Post #46; District 3 - Travis Hedrick, Ft. Pierre, Post #20; District 4 - Nathan Hoffman, Leola, Post #78; District 5 Harry Boner, Castlewood, Post #250; District 6 Charemon Dunham, Iroquois, Post #280; District 7 Gary Lyngen, Garretson, Post #23; District 8 Clayton Rados, Wagner, Post #11.

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

Harry Boner of Castlewood was appointed as secretary.

The committee reviewed three resolutions. Chairman Callies led general discussions concerning the following three Resolutions.

Resolution 24.04, South Dakota Veterans Council Member At Large

Motion to “Do Pass” was made by Charemon Dunham, seconded by Clayton Rados. Discussion was held about how the total of the six years appointment to the South Dakota Veterans Council could be served. Department Judge Advocate, Jay Leibel noted that the total six-year appointment would not need to be consecutive.

The Internal Affairs Committee recommended a “Do Pass” motion. Motion carried.

Resolution 24.06, Support of the United States Constitution Regarding Property Rights

Motion to “Do Pass” was made by Charemon Dunham. Motion died for lack of second. Motion to “Do not Pass” was made and seconded. Discussion was held. Nathan Hoffman, sponsor of the resolution, spoke on the use by the legal system of “Eminent Domain” to take individual property for the public good.

Department Judge advocate, Jay Leibel, spoke on the use of “Eminent Domain” and how the use of “Eminent Domain” is being used more as a political tool. Terry Hanson spoke on how the use of this political tool should not be endorsed by the American Legion for political gains. Charemon Dunham stated that a better definition of “Eminent Domain” is needed. Byron Callies stated that “Eminent Domain” cannot be defined by the State Legislature as it is a legal process to follow.

The Internal Affairs Committee recommended a “Do Not Pass” motion, Motion carried by a six to two vote.

Resolution 24.09, Membership Chairman Appointment to Finance

Motion to “Do not Pass” was made by Charemon Dunham, seconded by Gary Lyngen. Discussion was held. Terry Hanson spoke in favor of having the Membership Chairperson to be a part of the Finance Committee as based on the Department Constitution and Bylaws. Terry added that membership helps to drive the budget and the need to increase funding to the Membership Committee helps drive membership is a necessity.

Krisma Dewitt spoke on the function of the Finance Commission and that it is not a committee. The Finance Commission appointments are defined within the Department Constitution and Bylaws.

Judge Advocate, Jay Leibel noted that the Department Constitution and Bylaws change process is the only way to offer better clarification of how the commission should be defined and by allowing the Membership Committee Chairperson to be added to the Finance Commission would set a precedence that all Committee Chairpersons should also be allowed to be a part of the Finance Commission.

The Internal Affairs Committee recommended a “Do Not Pass” motion, motion carried.

There being no further business to come before the committee, the Internal Organization Committee meeting, a motion was made by David Booze, seconded by Gary Lyngen to adjourn the meeting, motion carried. The meeting was declared adjourned at 1:58 p.m.

**Respectfully submitted,
Byron Callies, Chairman**

Chairman Callies moved for the adoption of the report of the Convention Internal Organization Committee Report, the motion was duly seconded and carried. Department Commander Steffen declared the Convention Internal Organization Committee Report adopted.

Commander Steffen introduced Lyle Tolsma of Rapid City, Department Athletic Commission Chairman, for the purpose of presenting the Athletic Commission Annual Report. Chairman Tolsma presented the annual report of the South Dakota American Legion Department Athletic Commission, and the report was adopted. Athletic Commission Chairman Tolsma presented four, winning team-autographed, 2023 State Baseball Tournament baseballs to Department Commander Steffen.

Department Commander Steffen called Jack French, Spearfish, Chairman of the Training Committee, to the podium to give the Annual Report of that Committee. After finishing his report, the report was adopted. He then recognized the South Dakota American Legion College graduates and presented them with a pin.

Department Adjutant, C.P. Van Delist made a point of order to approve the Internal Affairs Commission Annual Report. This Report was approved.

At this time, Department Commander, Courtney Steffen, announced that the Convention body would recess until 12:48.

Department Commander Steffen reconvened the meeting at 1:00 and then recognized the 2023-2024 Membership Chairman, Bill Peters, Sioux Falls Post #15, who gave the Annual Membership report. Chairman Peters announced that the 2024-2025 goal would be the ending number of members from the 2023-2024 year. The report was adopted. At this time, Department Adjutant Van Delist announced, and Department Commander Steffen and Membership Chairman Peters handed out membership awards.

The National Honor ribbon is presented to posts whose 2023-2024 membership on January 1st of 2024 exceeded the 2023 end of year membership on December 31, 2023. Those Posts that met this requirement are as follows:

District 1: Timber Lake Post #83

District 2: Kadoka Post #17, Murdo Post #75, White River Post # 94, Midland Post #143, Edgemont Post #172, Wall Post #246

District 3: Winner Post #169, Vivian Post #157

District 4: Rockham Post #57, Hecla Post #68, Doland Post # 69, Hosmer Post #189, Cresbard Post #213, Long Lake Post #276

District 5: Clear Lake Post #49, Volga Post #114, Grenville Post #267,

District 6: Plankinton Post #5, Artesian Post #47, Erwin Post #241, Badger Post #260

District 7: Canton Post #53, Flandreau Post #70, Alcester Post #86, Egan Post #97, Ramona Post #216

District 8: Irene Post #193, Greenwood Post #257, Corsica Post #274, Springfield Post #323.

The next award is the Post Go-Getter Medallion. Posts must have reached or exceeded 95% of their membership by the March Target date.

District 1: Lead Post #31, Spearfish Post #164, Piedmont Post #311, Box Elder Post #315

District 2: Wood Post #19, Rapid City Post #22, Kadoka Post #27, Hot Springs Post #71, Murdo Post #75, White River Post #94, Midland Post #143, Edgemont Post #172, Philip Post #173, Kenebec- Reliance Post, Wall Post #246,

District 3: Dallas Post #91, Vivian Post #157, Winner Post #169

District 4: Groton Post #39, Rockham Post #57, Columbia Post #58, Hecla Post #68, Doland Post #68, Mellette Post #151, Herreid Post #170, Hosmer Post #189, Cresbard Post #213, Brentford Post #242, Bowdle Post #264, Long Lake Post #276

District 5: Rosholt Post #48, Clear Lake Post #49, Brookings Post #74, Pierpont Post #99, Volga Post #114, Carpenter Post #153, Lily Post #156, Strandburg Post #171, Estelline Post #184, Elkton Post #198, Bruce Post #200, Grenville Post #267, Agency Village Post #314

District 6: Chamberlain Post #3, Plankinton Post #5, Wessington Springs Post #14, Gann Valley Post #16, Artesian Post #47, Lake Preston Post #63, Kimball Post #130, Emery Post #166, Badger Post #260,

District 7: Garretson Post #23, Madison Post #25, Canton Post #53, Flandreau Post #70, Alcester Post #86, Egan Post #97, Nunda Post #105, Chester Post #136, Wentworth Post #161, Colton Post #206, Ramona Post #216, Tea Post #266, Colman Post #278, Renner Post #307, North Sioux City Post #319

District 8: Lake Andes Post #10, Wakonda Post #13, Geddes Post #56, Springfield Post #132, Irene Post #193, Marion Post #235, Freeman Post #248, Delmont Post #249, Corsica Post #274

The Department Commander's ribbon will be given to all Posts that achieved 100% of their membership goal by the February target date. These awards go to the following Posts:

District 1: None

District 2: Wood Post #19, Kadoka Post #27, Murdo Post #75, White Post #94, Midland Post #143, Edgemont Post #172

District 3: Vivian Post #157

District 4: Rockham Post #57, Doland Post #69, Hosmer Post # 189, Cresbard Post #213, Bowdle Post #264, Long Lake Post #276

District 5: Clear Lake Post #49, Pierpont Post #99, Volga Post # 114, Carpenter Post #153, Lily Post #156, Elkton Post #198, Grenville Post #267

District 6: Plankinton Post #5, Gann Valley Post #16, Artesian Post #47, Emery Post #166, Badger Post #260

District 7: Madison Post #25, Canton Post #53, Flandreau Post #70, Egan Post #97, Nunda Post #105, Ramona Post #216, Brentford Post #242, Tea Post #266, Colman Post #278, North Sioux City Post # 319

District 8: Lake Andes Post #10, Irene Post #193, Freeman Post #248, Springfield Post #323

The Department had 10 Post Families earn the 100% Family Ribbon. To earn this award, the Post, the Auxiliary, Sons of the American Legion, and the Legion Riders, if the Post has them, must all achieve 100% membership. These included: Wakonda Post/Auxiliary #13, Murdo Post/Auxiliary # 75, Nunda Post/Auxiliary #105, Volga Post/Auxiliary #114, Irene Post/Auxiliary/SAL #193, Marion Post/Auxiliary #235, Polo Post/Auxiliary/SAL #299.

The "Pride of the Prairie" Post Excellence Award will be presented to the Post that achieves the highest two-year membership average for their goal group. As this is

now a Post Excellence Award, the Post must also have submitted the Post Data Report, Consolidated Post Report, certified their officers, and submitted their Post Americanism Report. Additionally, they must have submitted a Legionnaire of the Year package to their District Commander for consideration.

In goal groups 1, 2, and 3, there were a number of Posts that completed 4 of the 5 requirements but none that completed them all.

In goal group 4, which is 50-90 members, the Post with the highest membership average and having completed all 5 requirements was Homestake Post # 31 in Lead.

In goal group 5, which is 91-150 members, the Post with the highest membership average and having completed all 5 requirements was Urban-Hanson Post #118 in Hartford.

In goal group 6, which is more than 150 members, we had a number of Posts that completed all five requirements and the one with the highest average membership percentage was Sioux Falls Post #15.

Commander Steffen asked Department Scouting Chairman, Chris Rendon, Rapid City #320, to give the Annual report of that Committee. The report was adopted.

Commander Steffen called on Reagan McClurkin, of Summerset, Piedmont Post # 311, Chairman of the Convention National Security Committee, who gave the Convention National Security Committee Report.

CONVENTION NATIONAL SECURITY COMMITTEE REPORT

Ms. Commander:

The National Security Committee was called to order by Chairman Regan McClurkin of Summerset at 1:30 p.m., Friday, June 21, 2024, at the Ramkota Hotel and Conference Center, Pierre, SD.

Those present besides Chairman McClurkin were as follows: Liaison Ryan Skjoldal District 2; District 1 - Regan McClurkin, Summerset SD, Piedmont Post #311; District 2 - Al Tallman, Hot Springs, Post #71; District 3 - absent; District 4 - Bob Thomason, Selby, Post #100; District 5 - Clayton Nei, Castlewood, Post #250; District 6 - Edward Moeller, DeSmet, Post #138; District 7 - Dale Hill, Sioux Falls, Post #15; District 8 - Steve Mueller, Springfield, Post # 132

Chairman 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 1 resolution. Chairman McClurkin read resolution No. 2408 to the group and opened the floor for discussion.

Mr. Mike Mehlhaff spoke on behalf of the Pierre Commissioning Committee. He drafted this resolution with the assistance of the Department Adjutant. Mr. Mehlhaff also discussed the christening of the ship in Mobile, AL in May of 2024 and how it is currently going through sea trials. He also discussed the capabilities and purpose of the ship and how the ship will aid in Naval superiority. The commissioning of the ship will be in California in summer of 2025. The ship will have a life expectancy of 30 years. This ship will be vital in keeping a working partnership with the State of South Dakota and the US Navy. USSPierre.org is the official website for the commissioning of the vessel.

Al Tallman made a motion to approve and seconded by Steve Mueller. Dale Hill from district 7 and Steve Mueller from district 8 commended Mr. Mehlhaff on the drafting of the resolution. Motions passed unanimously.

There being no further business, the National Security Committee meeting was declared adjourned at 1:56 p.m.

**Respectfully submitted,
Regan McClurkin, Chairman**

Chairman McClurkin moved for the adoption of the report of the Convention National Security Committee Report, the motion was duly seconded and carried. Department Commander Steffen declared the Convention National Security Committee Report adopted.

Rod Smith, Chester Post #136, Chairman of the Convention Employment Committee, was called to the podium by Commander Steffen to give that report.

CONVENTION EMPLOYMENT COMMITTEE REPORT

Madam Commander:

The meeting of the State Convention Employment Committee was called to order by Chairman Rodney Smith of Chester, Friday June 21st, at 1:30p.m., at the Ramkota Hotel and Convention Center in Pierre SD.

The following committee members were present besides Chairman Smith: District 1 – Jerry Lolly of Sturgis, Post #33; District 2 – Tricia Daily of Hot Springs, Post #71; District 3 – LeRoy Madsen of Gregory, Post 6; District 4 – Gary Warne of Aberdeen, Post 24; District 5 – Noel Cummins of Milbank, Post 9; District 6 – Ken Anderson of

Chamberlain, Post 3; District 7 – Brian Havard of Salem, Post 140; District 8 - John Crisman of Wagner, Post 11;

Chairman Smith led the Pledge of Allegiance and read the duties of the Convention Employment Committee on Page 6 of the Uniform Code of Procedures.

Brian Havard was appointed secretary.

The committee reviewed 1 resolution.

The author of the resolution came in and gave an explanation of the resolution and explained that it had Legislative intent. All members had a copy of the resolution and after hearing the explanation and reviewing the resolution it was recommended Do Pass with referral to the Legislative Committee for their review. Tricia Daily delivered the resolution to them for further review.

With no more resolutions to review, the floor was opened to other employment discussions. Noel Cummins brought up the issues faced by veterans returning from the service and having difficulty being hired back by their former employer, his solution was to call a military representative to come and speak on the veteran's behalf. It worked out for the veteran to return to his former job and continue employment.

Gary Warne encouraged all of us to find those employers in our communities who hire veterans and put them in for the awards that the American Legion Sponsors. With no further business or discussion, we went into recess at 2:00.

**Respectfully submitted,
Rodney Smith, Chairman**

Chairman Smith moved for the adoption of the report of the Convention Employment Committee Report, the motion was duly seconded and carried. Department Commander Steffen declared the Convention Employment Committee Report adopted.

Commander Steffen called PDC Larry Price, Chairman of the Public Safety Committee, to the podium for the purpose of that Committee's annual report. Chairman Price gave his report. The report was adopted.

Chairman Price talked about the Public Safety Awards and continued with the presentation of the Firefighter of the Year Award. This year's recipient was Richard Gruenwald of Redfield. The American Legion Emergency Medical Technician of the Year was presented to Brian Hambek of Spearfish and the Law Enforcement Officer of the Year was presented to Neville Smith of Sioux Falls. All 3 award recipients were called to the stage to accept their awards.

Department Commander Steffen called Department Chaplain, Mike Kumm of Sioux City, IA, (North Sioux City Post #319), for the purpose of a presentation. Chaplain Kumm and Commander Steffen presented the South Dakota American Legion Good Samaritan Award to Jeff Gifford of Sioux Falls.

Commander Steffen recognized Department Finance Officer, Krisma DeWitt of Watertown, (Castlewood Post #250), who gave the financial report for the Department. A full financial report will appear in the Convention Proceedings. The report was adopted.

Department Commander Steffen called Jim Kurtz, Garretson, Chairman of the South Dakota American Legion Foundation Board of Directors for the annual report on the foundation. The report was adopted.

Department Commander Courtney Steffen called all of the 2024 District Legionnaires of the Year to the front of the stage to be recognized. Commander Steffen presented a framed Certificate of Commendation to each of them.

District 1 — Derek Besler of American Legion Post #164, Spearfish.

District 2 — Ryan Skjodal of American Legion Post #22, Rapid City.

District 3 — Ken Rausch of American Legion Post #8, Pierre.

District 4 — None submitted.

District 5 — Don Lokken of American Legion Post #88, White.

District 6 — Dr. Martin Christensen of American Legion #18, Mitchell.

District 7 — Nancy Grandy of American Legion Post #23, Garretson.

District 8 — John Crisman of American Legion Post #11, Wagner.

Commander Steffen called upon PDC Charemon Dunham, Iroquois, to announce the selection of the 2024 South Dakota American Legion "Legionnaire of the Year."

PDC Dunham announced the selection of Nancy Grandy, Garretson American Legion Post #23, as the 2024 Department Legionnaire of the Year. Nancy was presented with the 2024 South Dakota American Legion Legionnaire of the Year plaque to commemorate this important achievement.

PDC Dunham then proceeded to announce the recipient of the Robert C. Gabrielson Memorial Leadership Award. The 2024 winner of this award was Brian Dean of Spearfish Post #164.

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

Department Historian Lee announced that there was only 1 entry in the Department History contest and called the winner to the stage and presented them with a certificate to commemorate their achievement:

1st Place

Sioux Falls Post 15, Sioux Falls
Sharon Taplett-Lundgren, Historian

Department Adjutant Van Delist made announcements and returned the podium back to Commander Steffen. The Commander then announced that the caucuses to elect 2 new Department Vice Commanders, one from Districts 1-2 and one from Districts 3-8, would convene 15 minutes after convention is recessed with the current Department Vice Commanders to be in charge.

The single candidate running for the Department Vice Commander representing Districts 1 and 2 was Brian Dean of Spearfish Post #164. The delegates from those Districts unanimously voted and elected Brian Dean as the Department Vice Commander to represent District 1-2 for the 2024-2025 year.

The single candidate running for the Department Vice Commander representing Districts 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, and 8 was Kevin Hempel, Chester Post #136. The delegates from those Districts unanimously voted and elected Kevin Hempel as the new Department Vice Commander to represent Districts 3-8.

Department Commander Steffen led the convention delegates by paying proper respect to our Flag with a hand salute and then declared the 105th Annual Department Convention in recess until Sunday morning, June 23rd, 2024, at 9:00am.

SUNDAY, JUNE 23, 2024

The final session of the 105th Annual Convention of the South Dakota American Legion was reconvened at 9:00 a.m., Sunday, June 23, 2024, by Department Commander Courtney Steffen following patriotic music selections by the South Dakota American Legion Band. Commander Steffen led the delegates in a salute to the Colors after which the invocation was offered by Chaplain Mike Kumm.

Commander Steffen called on Andy Lyngen, Garretson, Chairman of the Convention Credentials Committee for the purpose of presenting the committee's second report.

Commander Steffen recognized Mike Mehlhaff, Chairman of the Legislative Committee and Chairman of the Convention Legislative Committee for the purpose of a giving his reports. Chairman Mehlhaff gave his Annual Legislative Committee report, which was adopted and can be found in the Annual Reports section of this document. He then proceeded to give his Convention Legislative Committee report.

CONVENTION LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE REPORT

Ms. Commander:

The Legislative Committee was called to order by Mike Mehlhaff of Pierre, at 1:30p.m., Friday, June 21, 2024, at the Ramkota Hotel and Conference Center, Pierre, SD.

Those present besides Chairman Mehlhaff were as follows: Liaison – Doug Feltman, Chamberlain; District - 1 Derek Besler, Spearfish, Post #164; District - 2 Jim Welch, Custer, Post #46; District - 3 Randy Slama, Pierre, Ft. Pierre Post #20; District - 4 Bruce Babcock, Groton, Post #39; District - 5 Arlo Jurrens, Elkton, White Post #88; District - 6 Doug Feltman, Chamberlain, Post #3; District - 7 Paul Evenson, Garretson, Post #23; District 8 – absent.

Chairman Mehlhaff led the Pledge of Allegiance and read the duties of the Convention Employment Committee on page 16 of the Uniform Code of Procedures.

Doug Feltman of Chamberlin was appointed as secretary.

At 1:35p.m., Chairman Mehlhaff called for a recess.

At 1:55p.m., Chairman Mehlhaff called the meeting into session.

The committee reviewed one resolution. Chairman Mehlhaff led general discussions concerning the following resolution.

Resolution 24.03, Support of Providing Post Secondary Credit for Military Service

The resolution was read by Chairman Mehlhaff. Motion to “Do Pass” was made by Jim Welch, Arlo Jurrens seconded the motion. The floor was opened for discussion on the resolution. The Chairman Mehlhaff asked for proponent testimony on the resolution. Legionnaire Chris Van Delist spoke in favor of this resolution. The Chairman asked for opponent testimony. There was none.

The Legislative Committee recommended a “Do Pass” motion. Motion carried.

There being no further business to come before the committee, the Legislative Committee meeting, Chairman Mehlhaff adjourned the meeting at 2:10 p.m.

**Respectfully submitted,
Mike Mehlhaff, Chairman**

Chairman Mehlhaff moved for the adoption of the report of the Convention Legislative Committee Report, the motion was duly seconded and carried. Department Commander Steffen declared the Convention Rehabilitation Committee Report adopted.

Department Commander Steffen called National Executive Committeeman Denny Brenden, Watertown, to the podium to address the delegates and give his annual NEC report. The report was adopted. Then NEC Brenden asked the Convention Body for an endorsement for Dr. Mike Kumm to run for the position of American Legion National Chaplain. The motion was duly made, seconded, and passed.

Sons of the American Legion Detachment Commander, Shane Lamer from Hartford, (Montrose Squadron #154), was introduced by Department Commander Steffen. Commander Lamer reported on the SAL year.

Commander Steffen recognized Kate Schmidt, Wessington Springs Post #14, Chairman of the Children and Youth Committee, who gave that committee's annual report. The report was adopted but was not submitted for inclusion in these proceedings.

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

Department Commander Courtney Steffen delivered her Annual Commander's Report. The report was adopted.

Commander Steffen called PDC Charemon Dunham, President of the South Dakota American Legion Press Association for a report on that organization's activities. PDC Dunham also announced that she will remain as President for the coming year and then announced the winners of the South Dakota American Legion Press Association's Newsletter competition.

First Place — Sioux Falls American Legion

Post #15, Sioux Falls, SD.

Editor, Diane Diekman

Second Place — Burrows Young American Legion

Post #114, Volga, SD

Editor, Kim Chase

Third Place — Piedmont Valley American Legion

Post #311, Piedmont, SD

Honorable Mention — Thayer-Waters American Legion

Post #146, Colome, SD.

Editor, Jeff Hrabanek

Honorable Mention — Greer American Legion

Post #11, Wagner, SD

Editor, Jerry Seiner

Commander Steffen called Steve Stier of Onida, Chairman of the Convention Next Meeting Place Committee, who gave that committee's report.

CONVENTION NEXT MEETING PLACE COMMITTEE REPORT

Ms. Commander:

The meeting of the Convention Next Meeting Place Committee was called to order by Chairman Steve Stier of Onida at 2:15 P.M. Friday, June 21, 2024, at the Ramkota Hotel and Conference Center, Pierre, SD to consider applications for future Mid-Winter Conferences and Department Conventions.

The following members were present: Chairman Stier, Liaison Chris Rendon; District 1 – Jack French, Spearfish, Post #164; District 2 – Chris Rendon, Rapid City, Post #320; District 3 – Steve Stier, Onida, Post #79; District 4 – Lenny Schroeder, Selby, Post #100; District 5 – Ed Timm, Elkton, Post #198; District 6 – Jake Salathe, Huron, Post #7; District 7 – Fred Lee, Humboldt, Post #62; District 8 – Wesley Rye, Irene, Post #193.

Chairman 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.

Christine Seidl of District 1 was appointed as secretary.

There were 3 Posts bidding for Mid-Winter 2028. After discussion, it was decided that the 2028 Mid-Winter Conference would be held in Oacoma at Arrowwood Conference Center Feb 18-20.

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, the Next Meeting Place Committee meeting was declared adjourned at 2:19 p.m.

**Respectfully submitted,
Steve Stier, Chairman**

Chairman 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 Steffen declared the Convention Next Meeting Place Committee Report adopted.

Commander Steffen announced the 2024 Department Convention Sweepstakes winners as follows:

\$1000 – Kristen Timmermans of Corsica

\$500 – Kevin Josephsen of Garretson

\$300 – Don Borgen of Veblen

\$200 – Veryl Altman of Sioux Falls

\$100 – Hank Sunne of Valley Springs

Commander Steffen recognized Andy Lyngen, Chairman of the Convention Credentials Committee for the final reading of the Credential report.

Department Commander, Courtney Steffen announced the time had arrived for the election of delegates and alternate delegates to the 105th Annual National American Legion Convention in New Orleans, Louisiana. District Delegates and Alternate Delegates were nominated from the Spring District Meetings held in March and April. Department Adjutant C.P. Van Delist read the nominations for delegates to the national convention, nominated during those spring district meetings.

ELECTION OF DELEGATES AND ALTERNATE DELEGATES

Department Adjutant Van Delist announced that South Dakota will be entitled to five at-large Delegates (The Department Commander, Adjutant and immediate Past Department Commander are automatic at-large Delegates), 1 automatic Delegate (NEC), as well as 16 additional Delegates to the 105th National Convention, for a total of 22 Delegates. Seven Delegates had been nominated at Spring District Meetings. At the 101st Department Convention, a resolution was approved for all national call-ins to be automatic Delegates, of which there are 10, leaving 1 vacancy to be filled this year as a Delegate at-large.

The following Legionnaires were elected as Delegates to the 105th Annual National Convention of The American Legion in New Orleans, Louisiana during spring district meetings; Brian Dean of Spearfish, Chris Rendon of Rapid City Post #320, Steve Stier of Onida, Vern Prickett of Stratford, Noel Cummins of Milbank, PDC Doug Feltman of Chamberlain, and Bill Peters of Sioux Falls Post #15.

PDC Feltman moved into a call-in spot which meant that 2 delegates could be selected from the Convention floor. Andy Lyngen of Garretson, Kevin Hempel of Chester Post #136, Pat Branco of Sioux Falls Post #15, Rick MacDonald of Hermosa, and Derek Besler of Spearfish were nominated from the floor. A roll call vote was held; Lyngen and Hempel were selected to fill the 2 spots.

Department Adjutant Van Delist announced that there were 10 unfilled Alternate Delegate slots. The following Legionnaires were elected as Alternate Delegates to the 105th Annual National Convention of The American Legion in New Orleans,

Louisiana during spring district meetings: Marv Tisdall of Box Elder, PDC Rick MacDonald of Hermosa, Bruce Babcock of Groton, Ward Chapman of Milbank, PDC Hugh Holmes of Mitchell (who moved into a call-in spot) and Dale Hill of Sioux Falls Post #15.

Following nominations from the convention floor, the following Legionnaires were elected as Alternate Delegates to the National Convention: Rod Smith of Chester, PDC Charemon Dunham of Iroquois, Annette Dunham of Iroquois, Pat Branco of Sioux Falls Post #15, John Bachmeier of Sioux Falls Post #15, Jeff Hrabanek of Colome Post #146, Derek Besler of Spearfish, Dan Wyatt of Madison, and Kate Schmidt of Wessington Springs.

Automatic Delegates included: PDC Paul Evenson Garretson Post #23, Warren Aas of Sisseton Post #50, PDC Terry Hanson of Arlington, PDC Jim Huls of Salem Post #140, PDC Doug Feltman of Chamberlain, PDC and Alt NEC Fred Nelson of Spearfish, Doug Harris of Rapid City Post #22, PDC Hugh Holmes of Mitchell, PDC Tim Jurgens of Milbank, Travise Flisrand of Badger Post #260, PDC and NEC Denny Brenden of Watertown. Immediate Past Department Commander Courtney Steffen of Chester Post #136, Department Commander Kevin Morello of Piedmont Post #311, and Department Adjutant Chris Van Delist of Rapid City #22

Department 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.

Department Commander Steffen opened nominations for Department Sergeant-at-Arms for 2024-2025.

Greg Geiman of Scotland, SD, (member of Wagner Post #11), was nominated by Rod Smith, Chester, and seconded by Dan Wyatt, Madison, 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 2024-2025 Department Sergeant-at-Arms for The American Legion Department of South Dakota. The motion carried.

Department Adjutant Van Delist announced that Brian Dean of Spearfish Post #164, was elected during the District 1 and 2 caucus as their Department Vice Commander and that Kevin Hempel of Chester Post #136, was elected during the caucus of Districts 3-8 as their new Department Vice Commander. Their nominations were duly motioned and approved by the convention body.

Department Commander Courtney Steffen opened nominations for the office of Department Commander of The American Legion, Department of South Dakota.

Kevin Morello of Black Hawk, SD (Piedmont Post #311), was nominated for Department Commander by Regan McClurkin of Piedmont Post #311 and seconded by David Booze, Piedmont Post #311 and PDC Terry Hanson, Arlington Post #42. Subsequent calls for further nominations were unanswered and nominations were closed. A unanimous ballot for Kevin Morello for Department Commander was cast. Department Commander Courtney Steffen announced that Kevin Morello was duly elected to serve as Department Commander of The American Legion, Department of South Dakota for the 2024-2025 American Legion year.

Commander Steffen asked the Convention Body for nominations for the endorsed position of National Vice Commander. Andy Lyngen, Garretson Post #23, nominated Hugh Holmes for the position of endorsed candidate for National Vice Commander. PDC Jim Huls, Salem Post #140 seconded the nomination.

Subsequent calls for further nominations were unanswered and nominations were closed. A motion was made to endorse PDC Hugh Holmes as South Dakota's endorsed candidate for National Vice Commander. The motion was seconded and carried.

Department Commander Steffen opened nominations for the office of Alternate National Executive Committeeman of the American Legion, Department of South Dakota. PDC Doug Feltman of Chamberlain was nominated for Alternate National Executive Committeeman by Jim Kurtz of Garretson. The nomination was seconded by Ken Anderson of Chamberlain Post #3.

Subsequent calls for further nominations were unanswered and nominations were closed and that a unanimous ballot be cast for PDC Feltman. Commander Steffen declared PDC Doug Feltman the winner and is duly elected to serve as Alternate National Executive Committeeman of the American Legion Department of Sout Dakota.

Department Commander Steffen opened nominations for the office of National Executive Committeeman of the American Legion, Department of South Dakota. PDC Fred Nelson of Spearfish was nominated for National Executive Committeeman by Brian Dean of Spearfish. Ryan Skjodal of Rapid City seconded the nomination.

Subsequent calls for further nominations were unanswered and nominations were closed and that a unanimous ballot be cast for PDC Nelson. Commander Steffen declared PDC Fred Nelson the winner and is duly elected to serve as National Executive Committeeman of the American Legion Department of Sout Dakota.

The newly elected officers were called to the stage and PDC Doug Feltman conducted the Oath of Office installation ceremony. Deb Morello, the newly installed Department Commander's wife, pinned the Department Commander's lapel pin on Department Commander Kevin Morello's lapel and presented him with his white Department Commander's cap.

The newly elected Department Commander, Kevin Morello, along with the rest of the newly sworn-in leadership, was presented to the assembled delegates. Commander Morello gave his acceptance speech. Commander Morello then assumed the chair for the closing ceremonies and following the benediction and the retirement of the colors, declared the ONE-HUNDRED-FIFTH ANNUAL CONVENTION of The American Legion, Department of South Dakota, adjourned.



THE
AMERICAN LEGION
DEPARTMENT OF SOUTH DAKOTA

105th ANNUAL CONVENTION
Pierre, South Dakota
June 20-23, 2024

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."

DEPARTMENT OFFICERS FOR 2023 – 2024

Department Commander, Courtney Steffen.....	Madison (Chester Post #136)
Department Vice Commander Doug Harris., (Districts 1-2).....	Rapid City Post #22
Department Vice Commander Rod Smith, (Districts 3-8)	Chester
National Executive Committeeman, Denny Brenden	Watertown
Alternate Executive Committeeman, Fred Nelson	Spearfish
Adjutant, C.P. Van Delist	Watertown (Rapid City Post #22)
Department Service Officer, Brian Havard.....	Salem
Finance Officer, Krisma DeWitt	Watertown (Castlewood Post #250)
Sergeant-at-Arms, Greg Geiman.....	Scotland (Wagner Post #11)
Judge Advocate, Jay Leibel	Madison
Chaplain, Mike Kumm.....	Sioux City, IA (North Sioux City Post # 319)
Historian, Fred Lee	Sioux Falls (Humboldt Post #62)
Americanism, Dan Wyatt.....	Madison
Children & Youth, Kate Schmidt.....	Wessington Springs
Membership Chairman, Bill Peters.....	Sioux Falls Post #15

DISTRICT COMMANDERS

District 1: Brian Dean.....	Spearfish
District 2: Christopher Rendon.....	Rapid City
District 3: Travis Hedrick.....	Pierre (Ft. Pierre Post #20)
District 4: Bob Thomason.....	Selby
District 5: Clayton Nei.....	Castlewood
District 6: Jim Pekron.....	Mitchell
District 7: Andy Lyngen.....	Garretson
District 8: Joe Knoer.....	Vermillion

LEGISLATIVE LOBBYISTS

Mike Mehlhaff.....	Pierre
C. P. Van Delist.....	Rapid City
Courtney Steffen.....	Madison (Chester Post #136)
Kevin Hempel.....	Watertown
Nathan Juelfs.....	Belle Fourche (Buffalo Post #147)

VA HOSPITAL REPRESENTATIVES

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

COMMITTEE AND COMMISSION CHAIRPERSONS

Aeronautics, Rodney "Buck" Deweese.....	Spearfish
Athletic, Lyle Tolsma.....	Rapid City Post #22
Boys State, Gene Opbroek.....	Spearfish
Cemetery, Glenn Bahley.....	Box Elder
Educational Scholarship, Hugh Holmes.....	Mitchell
Employment, Greg Diaz.....	Spearfish
Internal Affairs, Byron Callies.....	Watertown
Legislative, Mike Mehlhaff.....	Pierre
Marketing, Media & Communications, Travis Hedrick.....	Pierre (Ft Pierre Post #20)
National Security, Regan McClurkin.....	Summerset (Piedmont Post #311)
Public Safety, Larry Price.....	Redfield
Scouting, Chris Rendon.....	Rapid City Post #320
SDAL Foundation, Jim Kurtz.....	Garretson
Training, Jack French.....	Spearfish
Trust Fund, Randall Rakness.....	Watertown
VA&R, Warren Aas.....	Watertown (Sisseton Post #50)
VAVS, Charemon Dunham.....	Iroquois

THE AMERICAN LEGION, DEPARTMENT OF SOUTH DAKOTA

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION - MODIFIED CASH BASIS

June 30, 2024

See Independent Accountant's Compilation Report

ASSETS**Current Assets**

Cash and cash equivalents	\$	234,571
Certificates of deposit		32,000
Education loans receivable		120,507
Inventory		5,858
Prepaid expenses		3,643
Total Current Assets		396,579

Other Assets

Marketable equity securities		849,754
Total Other Assets		849,754

Property and Equipment

Equipment		40,648
Leasehold improvements		3,320
Vehicles		52,576
Accumulated depreciation		(96,502)
Total Property and Equipment		42

Total Assets	\$	1,246,375
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LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS**Current Liabilities**

Accrued expenses	\$	1,189
Dues payable		1,593
Total Current Liabilities		2,782

Net Assets

With donor restrictions		204,085
Without donor restrictions		1,039,508
Total Net Assets		1,243,593

Total Liabilities and Net Assets	\$	1,246,375
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THE AMERICAN LEGION, DEPARTMENT OF SOUTH DAKOTA

STATEMENT OF ACTIVITIES - MODIFIED CASH BASIS

Year Ended June 30, 2024

See Independent Accountant's Compilation Report

	With Donor Restrictions	Without Donor Restrictions	Total
Revenues and Gains			
Membership dues	\$ -	\$ 229,283	\$ 229,283
Sales of merchandise	-	14,366	14,366
Donations	9,042	74,040	83,082
Interest and dividends	82	35,494	35,576
Realized gain on sale of investments	-	1,443	1,443
Unrealized gain on investments	-	51,744	51,744
Other	10,800	44,314	55,114
Net assets released from restrictions	(14,539)	14,539	-
Total Revenues and Gains	5,385	465,223	470,608
Expenses			
Program services:			
Children and youth	-	2,000	2,000
Athletic commission	-	14,239	14,239
Label	-	20,453	20,453
Emblem - Cost of sales	-	16,792	16,792
Post 500	-	25,668	25,668
General support	-	250	250
	-	79,402	79,402
General and administrative	-	280,752	280,752
Fundraising	-	1,365	1,365
Total Expenses	-	361,519	361,519
Change in Net Assets	\$ 5,385	\$ 103,704	\$ 109,089
Net Assets, Beginning	\$ 198,700	\$ 935,804	\$ 1,134,504
Change in net assets	5,385	103,704	109,089
Net Assets, Ending	\$ 204,085	\$ 1,039,508	\$ 1,243,593

THE AMERICAN LEGION, DEPARTMENT OF SOUTH DAKOTA

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION - MODIFIED CASH BASIS

June 30, 2024

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
Current Assets								
Cash and cash equivalents	\$ 150,993	\$ 23,922	\$ 17,879	\$ 8,902	\$ 500	\$ 12,110	\$ 20,265	\$ 234,571
Certificates of deposit	32,000	-	-	-	-	-	-	32,000
Education loans receivable	-	-	-	-	-	-	120,507	120,507
Inventory	5,858	-	-	-	-	-	-	5,858
Prepaid expenses	3,643	-	-	-	-	-	-	3,643
Total Current Assets	192,494	23,922	17,879	8,902	500	12,110	140,772	396,579
Other Assets								
Marketable equity securities	849,754	-	-	-	-	-	-	849,754
Total Other Assets	849,754	-	-	-	-	-	-	849,754
Property and Equipment								
Equipment	40,648	-	-	-	-	-	-	40,648
Vehicles	52,576	-	-	-	-	-	-	52,576
Leasehold improvements	3,320	-	-	-	-	-	-	3,320
Accumulated depreciation	(96,502)	-	-	-	-	-	-	(96,502)
Total Property and Equipment	42	-	-	-	-	-	-	42
Total Assets	\$1,042,290	\$ 23,922	\$ 17,879	\$ 8,902	\$ 500	\$ 12,110	\$ 140,772	\$1,246,375
LIABILITIES								
Current Liabilities								
Accrued expenses	\$ 1,189	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 1,189
Dues payable	1,593	-	-	-	-	-	-	1,593
Total Current Liabilities	2,782	-	-	-	-	-	-	2,782
Net Assets								
With donor restrictions	-	23,922	17,879	8,902	500	12,110	140,772	204,085
Without donor restrictions	1,039,508	-	-	-	-	-	-	1,039,508
Total Liabilities and Net Assets	\$1,042,290	\$ 23,922	\$ 17,879	\$ 8,902	\$ 500	\$ 12,110	\$ 140,772	\$1,246,375

STATEMENT OF ACTIVITIES - MODIFIED CASH BASIS
Year Ended June 30, 2024
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
Revenues and Support								
Membership dues	\$ 229,283	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 229,283
Sales of merchandise	14,366	-	-	-	-	-	-	14,366
Donations	74,040	3,309	-	-	-	5,733	-	83,082
Interest and dividends	35,494	22	22	7	-	11	20	35,576
Realized gain on investments	1,443	-	-	-	-	-	-	1,443
Unrealized gain on investments	51,744	-	-	-	-	-	-	51,744
Other	44,314	-	10,800	-	-	-	-	55,114
Net assets released from restrictions	14,539	-	(14,239)	3,000	-	(3,300)	-	-
Total Revenues and Gains	465,223	3,331	(3,417)	3,007	-	2,444	20	470,608
Expenses								
Program services:								
Children and youth	2,000	-	-	-	-	-	-	2,000
Athletic commission	14,239	-	-	-	-	-	-	14,239
Label	20,453	-	-	-	-	-	-	20,453
Emblem - Cost of sales	16,792	-	-	-	-	-	-	16,792
Post 500	25,668	-	-	-	-	-	-	25,668
General support	250	-	-	-	-	-	-	250
	79,402	-	-	-	-	-	-	79,402
General and administrative	280,752	-	-	-	-	-	-	280,752
Fundraising	1,365	-	-	-	-	-	-	1,365
Total Expenses	361,519	-	-	-	-	-	-	361,519
Change in Net Assets	\$ 103,704	\$ 3,331	\$ (3,417)	\$ 3,007	\$ -	\$ 2,444	\$ 20	\$ 109,089
Net Assets, Beginning	\$ 935,804	\$ 20,591	\$ 21,296	\$ 5,895	\$ 500	\$ 9,666	\$ 140,752	\$ 1,134,504
Change in net assets	103,704	3,331	(3,417)	3,007	-	2,444	20	109,089

STATE COMMANDERS ANNUAL REPORT TO THE LEGION MEMBERSHIP

Greetings Legion Family,

It has been an incredible year serving as your Department Commander, and I thank you immensely for the opportunity. I ran on the motto of “Pursue Purpose,” and have seen wonderful iterations of that in my travels. I’ve loved canvassing these country roads, telling stories of small post success and large post victories. There is no shortage of incredible work being done in the name of the South Dakota American Legion every day.

Like every Commander before, I’ve run ragged across South Dakota, going to banquets, emergency rooms, farm shows, expos, District Meetings, Post meetings,



community suppers, fairs, baseball games, and more. I never imagined so many miles in one year! And while the places have been neat, my passion has always been the Veteran themselves, and in this position, I’ve had the luxury of meeting so many new people with such interesting stories to tell. From why they joined the service to the problems they’ve had with the VA, from the time in the sandbox to the granddaughter that just joined as the third generation—I will always cherish the seemingly endless connections that the Veteran world provides.

This year has come with its challenges: to those who supported me, thank you. To my kids, thank you for tagging along with my busy schedule—and to all those who gave them extra candy and desserts, know that you are adored by three Legion kids. To my Vice Commanders, Doug & Rod, thank you for filling in for me when the schedule wouldn’t allow me to wander too far from home—absolutely necessary this year! To my DEC, especially my District Commanders, thanks for all the hard work. As Commander, I guide—you guys do the heavy lifting when it comes to Department policy and procedure. I love how much you all care. To my Department Officers and Chairmen, thank you for running your respective shows. There was a certain relief knowing that programs flowed without constant supervision—in particular, I want to shout out Lyle Tolsma in Athletics, Warren Aas in VA&R, Mike Mehlhaff in Legislative and Bill Peters in Membership. The work you have all done is more than appreciated.

A special thank you to Van, Judy and MaryJo. These three have had to deal with a working single mother Commander for the last year and are probably counting down the days toward a more reliable calendar. All joking aside, they are the absolute bedrock of this organization, the first people I call if I need anything and always a sympathetic shoulder when I’ve needed it. Truly the best.

Finally, thank you to each South Dakota Legionnaire. You are what makes this organization worth the energy and time. It has truly been an honor crossing the state and even the country representing South Dakota, and I can only hope that in the end, the work I put in helped to amplify your voices too.

Courtney Steffen

Department Commander, 2023-2024

ANNUAL REPORT OF THE DEPARTMENT ADJUTANT

Department Commander Steffen,

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.

As I wrap up my first year as Adjutant, I am proud to report that since June 12th, 2023, I have visited 34 separate Posts, with over 75 Post visits in total, attended 16 district meetings/conventions, attended eight Department Executive Committee Meetings, attended the Oratorical Contest, Boys State and the Youth Trooper Academy, executed the Mid-Winter Conference (which thanks to District 1 and COL David Booze of Post 311 it was a great success.) Attended more than 80 internal department meetings, 21 meetings with outside organizations, and spent 31 days conducting National Level meetings and activities, in total I have spent 109 nights on the road. It has been a very 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.

One of the most significant challenges we have faced this year was Mitchell Baseball. As actions in the court are pending, I can say that this situation has been a black eye on a program that has changed the lives of so many young people in a positive way. Next year we celebrate one hundred years of American Legion Baseball and in that celebration let us all remember how a small program from right here in South Dakota has grown to be the premiere nationwide baseball program and has done so much good for our nation’s youth.

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. We moved as much as feasible away from mailing hard copies, we are in the process of reorganizing the Department vehicles. We negotiated savings on hotel stays for all veterans in the state and we are now looking at our annual meeting schedules to see where we can reduce travel and expenses. 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 or we will price ourselves out

of membership. I trust the newly approved Fundraising Committee will facilitate the reforming of our revenue model.

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. That means \$2000 for investing in technology, the current plan is to update the website, and email hosting.

We continue to make changes and updates to the Department Headquarters. In the past year we have reorganized, painted and are working to display our 105 years of history. We have partnered with the South Dakota Historical Society to categorize, archive, and digitize our historical documents, minutes, and proceedings. They will start this process in the next year and when complete they will open the archives to the public for anyone to access. We have upgraded our internet and phone systems allowing for more functionality to conduct video-teleconferences, rearranged the offices to have a more functional meeting space and cleaned out years of clutter. The project is not complete, we will continue to improve our home in the Codington County War Memorial and Courthouse building where we have called home since 1928.

The headquarters staff consists of the Mrs. Judy Greenfield, our Membership and Bookkeeper who has been with the department for 31 years, Mrs. MaryJo Boner Executive Assistant and Programs Coordinator who has been with the department for six years and myself, the Department Adjutant, I have just completed my first year. 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.

Madam 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 first Commander, you have left some big shoes for your successors to fill.

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

NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEEMAN REPORT

From the NEC:

My term as your National Executive Committeeman will end at the close of the National Convention in New Orleans this year. I would like to thank you for allowing me to serve you in this office. I enjoyed the term and it is time for a new NEC to be elected at our state convention in June.

We have a great National Commander this year. Commander Seehafer's program this year was the Veterans and Children Foundation and his priority was to eliminate veteran suicide. Each Department in the American Legion was given a goal in order to build the endowed fund. Our goal in South Dakota was \$30,500. As of October of 2023, our department reached and surpassed this goal. I would like to thank all the Posts who donated to this fund and the South Dakota American Legion Foundation for stepping up. On the NEC's desk at National Headquarters there are spots for 2 urns. After we achieved over 50 percent one was placed on South Dakota's desk. At the May meeting in Indianapolis, our desk should have 2 urns for completing our goal. You can walk around the NEC room and see where each Department stands. This foundation was started to fund our 3,000 American Legion Service Officers and to offer Temporary Financial Assistance to veterans with children who are in need.



In late February 9 Legionnaires from South Dakota attended the American Legion's Legislative Conference in Washington, D.C. The National American Legion priorities for 2024 were discussed and the South Dakota delegation went to Capitol Hill and discussed these issues with our congressional delegation. Most of these issues this year are the same as last year but they still are priorities to the American Legion. **The legislative priorities for the upcoming year are Mental Health & Suicide Prevention, VA Healthcare Modernization, Implementation and Oversight of the Pact Act, Protect Veterans from Predatory Actors, Concurrent Receipt, Guard and Reserve GI Bill Parity, GI Bill for Honorable Service, Allowing Alternative Treatments, Improving the TAP program, Access to Health Care for Overseas Military and Families, Military Quality of Life, Pay the Coast Guard and Protect the American Flag.**

Our National Commander urges all Posts to make the "Buddy Check Calls". Make contact especially with those Legionnaires and veterans you haven't seen for a while. Remember all veterans may need someone to talk to and someone who is willing to listen. This being my final report as a State Officer, I would like to thank all Legionnaires and Posts who supported me for all the Department offices I've held. The American Legion is truly a great family.

NEC Denny Brenden

DEPARTMENT FINANCE OFFICER ANNUAL REPORT

Commander Steffen,

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, Tim Brookes, and Dave Gutzmer. 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 2023 to prepare a budget for the Fiscal Year 2023-2024 which was then presented to the Department Executive Committee for their approval. The DEC approved a 2023-2024 budget of \$319,237.88. 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 May 31, 2024 income for the Department from membership has been \$254,065.06 (72% of budgeted). Outside income from Emblem Royalty, SD American Legion Foundation and Mid-Winter Sweeps totaled \$30,595.83. Additional anticipated income will be from LIT which has not been received as of this report but is anticipated to be approximately \$38,000. 2024 Convention Sweeps as of the end of May has earned \$15,263.86.



As of May 31, 2024, Department expenditures total \$234,308.39 (79.6% of projected budget) with a remaining budget of \$65,172.82. The chances are good for not exceeding our income this year. The Cash Balance Report at the beginning of the year had \$988,104.88 and at the end of May the Cash Balance Report indicated a balance of \$1,111,245.08. It should be noted that that amount includes the Trust Fund Account which has gone from \$647,336.57 to \$846,070.44. The Department has converted one of the two car CDs to the Trust Fund and a \$100,000 CD to the Trust Fund as well. Earnings are stronger in

the Trust Fund than CDs currently. A more detailed report will be in the Proceedings from this Convention once the financials have been reviewed by an outside agency.

During the Fiscal year, the Finance Commission met not only at Mid-Winter but also several times during the year via Teams to discuss and monitor the budget. In November, the DEC requested that the Finance Commission develop a recommendation for DEC action related to dues based on the National Dues. The Commission met and made a recommendation to the DEC based on this increase and corresponding impact to Department dues and anticipated expenditures.

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

DEPARTMENT SERVICE OFFICER REPORT

I would like to thank Commander Courtney Steffen for appointing me to serve as Department Service Officer for 2023-2024.

As Department Service Officer. I have the privilege of directly serving Veterans and their families in helping them obtain and utilize the benefits they earned through their service to our country.

It has been a busy year for VSOs throughout our state helping veterans and their families that now qualify under the PACT Act.

On March 5, 2024, VA announced that all Veterans who were exposed to toxins and other hazards while serving in the military – at home or abroad – are now eligible to enroll directly in VA health care.

This means that all Veterans who served in the Vietnam War, the Gulf War, Iraq, Afghanistan, the Global War on Terror (Operation Enduring Freedom, Operation Freedom's Sentinel, Operation Iraqi Freedom, Operation New Dawn, Operation Inherent Resolve, and Resolute Support Mission), or any other combat zone after 9/11 are eligible to enroll in VA health care without first applying for VA benefits. Additionally, Veterans who never deployed but were exposed to toxins or hazards while training or on active duty in the United States are eligible to enroll.

Under this expansion of care, any Veteran who participated in a Toxic Exposure Risk Activity (TERA) – at – home or abroad – is eligible for VA health care. VA has determined that Veterans who were exposed to one or more of the following hazards or conditions during active duty, active duty for training, or inactive duty training participated in a TERA: air pollutants (burn pits, sand, dust, particulates, oil well fires, sulfur fires); chemicals (pesticides, herbicides, depleted uranium, with embedded shrapnel, contaminated water); occupational hazards (asbestos, industrial solvents, lead, paints including chemical agent resistant coating, firefighting foams); radiation (nuclear weapons handling, maintenance and detonation, radioactive material, calibration and measurement sources, X-rays, radiation from military occupational exposure); warfare agents (nerve agents, chemical and biological weapons). VA will use all available information to determine if Veterans participated in a TERA, including military records and service connection.



Respectfully submitted,
Brian Havard
Department Service Officer

AMERICANISM COMMISSION CHAIRMAN REPORT

Commander Steffen:



Thank you for the opportunity to serve as your Department Americanism Chairman. Your support and leadership for the programs of this core American Legion Program has been greatly appreciated. Our American Legion here in South Dakota faced a hard challenge early with the criminal incident involving the Legion Baseball team in Mitchell, SD. Despite the immediate public uproar our core values and rules were upheld by the dedicated efforts put forth by our entire Executive Leadership Committee and the members of the SDAL Athletic Commission who worked non-stop on the issue. It should be noted that our Department Judge

Advocate General Jay Leibel provided steady and forthwith legal counsel. Additionally, our Department Adjutant Chris VanDelist stepped up and became the Legions public face addressing our positions on the matter to local and state news agencies.

The great news is that Americanism is alive and well in South Dakota. Stepping into this position of State Americanism Commission Chairman has been a huge learning curve. Having the guidance and support of prior dedicated Americanism Chairmen, Larry Madsen, Doug Harris and Harry Boner was an incredible resource. With their assistance, I was quickly able to get a deeper understanding of the terrific programs that several of our Posts in SD are participating in such as Boys State, Youth Trooper, Scouting and High-School Oratory Contests. It's also no secret that working with the Youth Program Administrator at State HQ, Mary Jo Boner and Secretary Judy Greenfield is a blessing.

Building off the efforts put forth in the past, I believe we moved forward and successfully proved the "Big 3" marketing campaign devised by department staff, various marketing teams and Boy's State Board members. By having a single page document available to our members, it was easier to explain why the American Legion was involved with Oratorical, Boys State, and Youth Trooper programs to High School administration, counselors, teachers, students, parents, and community leaders. It also provides easy copy and paste advertisements on social media platforms such as Facebook and Tik-Tok. Add to that the direct mailing to Post/District Americanism officers and High schools worked to some degree, however there is room for improvement. Mainly trying to reach out to those households that Home School. We need to continue to share ideas that work.

We held our Oratorical program finals at our Mid-Winter Conference, which was held the Lodge Resort in Deadwood, SD. Unfortunately, we had only three contestants from around the state competing on the last day of the Conference. The winner of the State contest from District #7, Elena Andrews, who represented Post #72 in Beresford, also took home the honors last year. She will now advance to the National Oratory competition to be held at the 105th National Convention in New Orleans Aug, 23-29. I would like to once again thank all the volunteers that helped to Judge, escort, keep time, and monitor the contestants. A special thank you to former chairmen, Doug Harris and Larry Madsen for helping us all through the process.

One of the fastest growing opportunities for our American Legion is getting involved with the South Dakota 4-H Shooting Sports program. This program focuses on developing safe shooting habits with the participating youth members. The program in South Dakota is founded upon National 4-H Shooting Sports curriculum. Several counties in South Dakota have in recent years opened 4-H Youth Shooting programs across the State. Several Posts have already stepped forward and have supported these programs. The program has over 3000 youth involved from age 8-19. There are several platforms available from BB guns, Archery, Pistol, Black Powder, Rifle and Shotgun [skeet] which can provide for positive progression as the participants grow and improve. The program doesn't require the Youth to be gifted athletes. In essence, if you have a firm grip, steady breath control, good eyesight, and the desire, you can participate. We have our kids move onto and place in National and Olympic Competitions.

American Legion Baseball. South Dakota is the birthplace of Legion Ball, and we are celebrating our 99th year and look forward to our 100th year in 2025. However Legion Baseball in South Dakota is looking at a serious challenge by the South Dakota High School Activities Association [SDHSAA]. They are looking at getting Baseball, to become a sanctioned High School Sport much like football and basketball. One of the proposed/talked about scenario's would move the High School playing season to the end of June with playoffs in July. If this was to happen it would effectively end Legion Baseball in South Dakota as we know it. In April I attended as a guest the SDHSAA meeting where the topic was brought up and the Board recognized me. I provided information on where this has taken place in 48 other states and how it led to American Legion Baseball programs shutting down or moving onto abbreviated season. The two schools that sponsored the inquiry indicated that they were only looking to play baseball during the current/spring school year. Other board members did come out in support of Legion Baseball, however the board also voted to accept the proposal and the earliest that any action if it was to proceed would be 1-2 years and they would be involving the American Legion with further discussions. Our position must be that High School baseball continue as it is today and that it ends at the end of School year.

The 2024 Boy's State session was scheduled for May 27th-31st, Aberdeen, SD at Northern State University. Our Highschool Juniors and Seniors from across the state will be traveling to this great event to learn about how Government works from the local level up to the national level. Attendance is a continuing issue and again this year we fell short of goals, but the 206 students that signed up is a positive improvement. There are several possible factors for the decline in the past 10 years. Often the Boys are involved in sport activities or engaged in summer employment that compete with the Teen's time. How do we change this? We must promote not only to School officials, but also to directly contact the parents and grandparents. Often, we just make a 5-minute presentation to a classroom full of 17-18 years old teens and that doesn't usually work. We need to track down Scout and Church leaders and get them involved. The normal channels of mass media do not reach our target audience. We must contact your last year Boy's Staters and have them use social media to assist us. Then we cannot forget our SAL Squadron's and Auxiliary units. Auxiliary is out recruiting for Girls State, find out if there is a younger brother, who might be a future candidate, and be sure to help them with their recruitment as well. Boy's State "Blue Cap" day, which was held on Thursday, the 30th, is a day that Legion Posts members can come visit and out and check out the activities the Boy's go through. I encourage all Posts to take time in the coming years make the effort to stop in and check this out.

The 2024 South Dakota Youth Trooper Academy runs June 24 – 28, 2024 in Pierre at the State Law Enforcement Training Academy. I have seen 1st hand the benefits of the YTA program. For the Cadets this is an intensive week of living and learning what to expect of a typical cadet attending a law enforcement training school. The course is designed to help recruit tomorrow's new law enforcement and military minded members. Thank you to our Posts who sponsor these young men and women to attend this event. Also don't forget about Blue Cap Day on Thursday June 27th at the shooting range. Come and watch these Cadets participate in demonstrations from

the drug dogs, swat team and run through shooting courses. Also, if you want to see something special attend Graduation ceremonies at the State Capitol. In the conversations with Parents of the Cadets they are always pleasantly surprised at the positive change they see in their child. Once again, let's congratulate the South Dakota Highway Patrol, the dedicated training cadre staff and the "Vision" that Legionnaire Larry Price had years ago into making this happen.

The Boy Scouts started back in 1910 and it was the American Legion's first Youth Program dating back to 1919. Boy Scouting has evolved over the years, and it took a positive shift in 2017. At that time, the BSA Board of Directors voted to allow girls to join all of its programs. The core values of Scouting being trustworthy, loyal, helpful, kind, brave and reverent, for example – are important for both young men and women, and it develops character and leadership for young people. Just recently The Scouts have rebranded, and moving forward the name of the organization is "Scouting America". Leadership wanted a name going forward that made clear that all children and teens are "very, very welcome." To participate in the organization. Now more than ever it is important that the American Legion continues to stay involved with our local Scouting Unit's and assist them with activities, events and even funding. Those Cub Scouts troops will grow into Eagle Scouts. The American Legion supports program's that the top Eagle Scout can earn scholarships for college.

Lastly, It has been a pleasure serving as your Department Americanism Chairman for the last year. I could not have done it without all the Legion family's support. I hope that the members of the Americanism Commission and I have helped answer questions about all our programs. I also must point out that as we move forward, information and resources at both the National and State level will continue to make our jobs easier. But don't sit back and expect it to be easy. Think outside the box and always continue to push the envelope and never be satisfied with the "Status Quo". There is always room for new ideas and improvement.

I will see you all at the Department Convention in Pierre.

Daniel L. Wyatt

Americanism Commission Chairman

ATHLETIC COMMISSION CHAIRMAN REPORT

Commander Steffen,

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. The recent retirement of some committee members who have spent many valuable years on the Athletic Commission, I want to say thank you to each of them for what they have done for SD American Legion Baseball over the past several years.

With the selection of three new committee members, the Athletic Commission has expanded to a total of eight



commissioners who all look forward to working together to keep SD American Legion Baseball a priority for our youth who wish to participate.

The 2024 American Legion Baseball registration is in full swing with a total of 90 teams already registered with two more weeks to go, ending on May 31st.

The state championship host sites and dates for this year (2024) are:

- Class “A” Senior – Brookings, SD (July 30 – August 3)
- Class “B” Senior – Salem, SD (August 2 – 6)
- Class “A” Junior – Pierre, SD (August 1 – 4)
- Class “B” Junior – Groton, SD (August 9 – 11)

On December 10th, 2023, selections were made for the 2025 host sites. This will be the 100th year anniversary for American Legion Baseball which started in Milbank, SD. They are as follows:

- Class “A” Senior – Watertown, SD
- Class “B” Senior – Milbank, SD
- Class “A” Junior – Rapid City, SD, Post 22
- Class “B” Junior – Milbank, SD

This year’s American Legion Golf Tournament will be hosted by Webster Post 40 on September 7th & 8th, 2024. This tournament is open to any American Legion or Son of American Legion member. The host/chairman is Chad Hesla of Webster along with Commissioner’s Elton Blemaster and Gene Gillen.

There continues to be talk about the SDHSAA sanctioning baseball as a High School sport. I’ve spoken with members of the SDHSAA, and they are going to conduct a study which will take a couple of years. As of right now the earliest this would take place is in the school year 2027.

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

Respectfully submitted,
Lyle W. Tolsma, Chairman
SD American Legion Athletic Commission

ATHLETIC COMMISSION FINANCIAL REPORT

Balance, 6-30-2023		\$20,226.16
RECEIPTS:		
Entry Fees	\$13,150.00	
Interest	<u>\$ 27.03</u>	
	\$13,177.03	<u>\$ 13,177.03</u>
TOTAL		\$ 33,403.19
TOTAL DISBURSEMENTS:		
Committee Expenses, Tournament Fees	<u>\$15,523.79</u>	
TOTAL	<u>\$15,523.79</u>	<u>\$15,523.79</u>
BALANCE, 6-30-2024		\$17,879.40

BOYS STATE DIRECTOR REPORT

Commander,

As of this writing I can report we are a GO for the 81st Session of South Dakota American Legion Boys State, May 27 – May 31, 2024, at Northern State University. We currently have 195 boys signed up; we are up almost 30 registrations at this time from 2023. Again, this year we decided to include seniors in the session to allow them an opportunity.

We will hold our annual meeting for the corporation the Sunday before Boys State May 26th at Northern State University. Some agenda items are future incorporation of Seniors, 2024 Session Dates, marketing strategies, creation of a Boys State Alumnus.

I would like to thank every Legionnaire for their continued support of this great program. Additionally, I thank all the volunteers who come together to put on such an important event. Without all their dedication we could not fulfil our mission to help America's youth understand and appreciate the American system of government and way of life including the rights and responsibilities of citizenship, and to give young men a better knowledge of the fundamental principles of South Dakota State government.



Respectfully submitted,
Gene Opbroek, Director
South Dakota American Legion Boys State

CHILDREN AND YOUTH CHAIRPERSON REPORT

No Report Submitted

CHILDREN AND YOUTH FINANCIAL REPORT

Balance, 6-30-2023		\$19,166.97
Memorial/Donations	\$4,728.06	
Interest	\$ <u>26.64</u>	
TOTAL	\$4,754.70	<u>\$ 4,754.70</u>
		\$23,921.67
DISBURSEMENTS:		
TFAs	\$-----	
TOTAL	\$-----	<u>\$ -----</u>
BALANCE, 6-30-2024		\$23,921.67

EDUCATIONAL SCHOLARSHIP COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN REPORT

Ms. Commander,

Two thousand twenty-three/twenty-four was a fair period for the Educational Scholarship Committee. In 2019, we changed from a loan concept to a scholarship format investing \$120,000.00 with the South Dakota Community Foundation.

Our beginning fund balance (1/1/2023) was \$123,309.68 and ending fund balance (12/31/2023) was \$130,511.91. A gain of \$7,202.8823. In the account at State HQ, we have \$20,239.51. We received zero donations in the last year.



Ten applications were received for this year's scholarships. Recipients are Megan Linke (Woonsocket), Allison Gross (Brookings), Donovan Knecht (Selby), Julia Larson (Watertown), and Charlene Mohler (White). Applications and brochures are online at www.SDlegion.org.

The 2024 Educator of the Year packets were due May 1, 2024. Because the deadline for this article was May 15, 2024, the committee did not have time to review the packets. The winner will be announced at the state convention and *Up To Now*. The education scholarships offered by the Department of South Dakota are for children of veterans, grandchildren of veterans, and veterans who meet the requirements as set forth in the Education Scholarship brochure attending post-secondary education, college, or technical schools. Please read the brochure for all the current changes. In all cases, the veteran listed on the application must be a member of the South Dakota The American Legion. The student must attend a higher education school in the state of South Dakota unless their plan of study is not taught in a South Dakota school. The fund is self-sustaining through donations.

Annually, the brochure and application processes are reviewed. No monies were added to the fund from the Department's outside income programs. More specific details can be obtained from State Headquarters, your District Education Loan Chairperson, or a member of the state Education Scholarship Committee. The state committee consists of Michael Pauling, Piedmont, Philip Egeberg, Brookings, Perry Schmidt, Redfield, Eugene Iron Shell, Jr., Rosebud, and Hugh Holmes, Mitchell.

To all, this is my last year as Chairman. Thank you to everyone for your support. It's been an interesting 10-year ride; from a loan program, with many phone calls, to a scholarship program. Good luck to Mike Pauling as the upcoming Chair.

Ms. Commander, thank you for selecting me as chairman of the prestigious Education Scholarship Committee. It is a great honor. Remember Calvin & Hobbs in their cartoon career!

Respectfully Submitted,
Hugh W. Holmes
Chairman, Education Scholarship Committee

EDUCATIONAL SCHOLARSHIP

Balance, 6-30-2023 \$20,244.56

RECEIPTS:

Loan Repayments	\$	-----	
Interest	\$	20.28	
Memorials and Donations	\$	-----	
	\$	20.28	\$ 20.28

TOTAL

DISBURSEMENTS:

Scholarships	\$	-----	
TOTAL	\$	-----	\$ -----

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

EMPLOYMENT COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN REPORT

No Report Submitted

**SOUTH DAKOTA AMERICAN LEGION
FOUNDATION REPORT**

Your South Dakota American Legion Foundation was established in 2010, as a 501 (C)(3) tax exempt organization. The purpose is to attract and distribute charitable funds for the benefit of the South Dakota American Legion programs. The corpus, or principal, is an endowed fund, meaning that this principle is not to be spent. The funds are professionally managed by the South Dakota Community Foundation. The earnings from the invested principal are made available for distribution to the Legion, and any unused portion of the earnings are retained back into principal for further growth. This past year, \$15,000 was granted back to the Legion, to assist with programs as determined by the Executive Committee of the SD American Legion.



Income to the Foundation comes from many sources. Outright gifts from individuals, businesses, Legion Posts and other military organizations. Gifts can be in the form of cash, property or even real estate. Memorials are a great way to honor friends and family with a lasting gift to the Foundation, which will give on forever. The 501(C)(3) designation makes it ideal to name a gift to the SD American Legion Foundation in one's will, and the giving be accomplished after death through their estate. A huge thank you to every individual, Post, and business that have contributed over the years! Your gifts will continue to benefit your SD American Legion for perpetuity. Thank you also for your support of Foundation fund raising activities over the years. These have included several raffles, with the most recent one being the meat raffle that concluded at this year's Mid-Winter. It netted approximately \$10,000 to the Foundation. Each year a Fun Auction is held at the Department Convention,

usually netting \$7,000 to \$9,000. Thank you to everyone who has ever contributed to the auction, bid on and purchased items!

If an individual or business contributes \$10,000 or more, you can name the program that you wish to have the earnings support. Because of the generous donation from a Legionnaire and spouse, there is now a sub-fund for Youth Law Enforcement Education (Youth Trooper Academy). Thank you very much! Now it enables you to designate your contribution to go specifically to the Youth Law Enforcement training if you wish. The potential is also there to start funds specifically for programs such as Legion Baseball, SD Boys State, etc. Again, your gifts will continue to pay out for ever and ever!

A year ago, at the time of the Department Convention, the funds within your Foundation totaled \$290,112.19. At the time of this writing (prior to this year's Convention), the total of the funds is \$329,262.71. In the past year, the additions to the Foundation were \$56,813 (contributions, dividends and unrealized capital gains) and subtractions from the Foundation totaled \$17,663.10 (grants back to the Legion of \$15,000, and administrative fees). At the present time, \$17,238.92 is available for distribution.

It is working! A big thank you to all individuals, Posts and businesses who have supported the Foundation over the years! We ask for your continued support.

James N. Kurtz, Bd. President
South Dakota American Legion Foundation

DEPARTMENT HISTORIAN REPORT

Commander Steffen,

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 will 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 21st 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 CHAIRMAN REPORT

Fellow Legionnaires,

The annual meeting of the Internal Affairs Commission was held on May 3, 2024, with the following present on virtual presence: Chairman Byron Callies, PDC Mark Weinmann, PDC Terry Hanson, Kevin Hempel, Judge Advocate Jay Leibel, and SAL Vice Commander Wyatt Reis. ALT NEC Nelson was in attendance as Riders Liaison.

The Internal Affairs Commission duties include the review of any resolutions that affect the Constitution of the American Legion, Department of South Dakota, and to recommend distribution of resolutions that do not affect the Constitution.

The following were reviewed and recommendations made: 24-01; Dues recommendation – amended and recommended do pass, 24-03; Credit for Service, no action necessary, sent to Resolutions Convention Committee; 24-04, no action necessary and sent to Resolutions Convention Committee; 24-05, no action necessary and sent to Resolutions Convention Committee, 24-05, no action necessary and sent to Resolutions Convention Committee, 2406, no action necessary and sent to Resolutions Convention Committee.

Reports for the SAL and Legion Riders were given by SAL Vice Commander Wyatt Reis and ALT NEC Fred Nelson respectively.

Finally, Commander Steffen, it was a pleasure to serve as Chairman of the Internal Affairs Commission. As you know, the Commission is an integral part of the Legion, and I am proud that you have confidence in me. Also thank you to those members who willingly serve on the Commission.



Byron Callies, Chairman

LEGION RIDERS REPORT

Commander Steffen and Fellow Legionnaires,

Serving as the Department Commander's Liaison for the American Legion Riders (ALR) this past year has been a privilege. The ALR program is one of the American Legion's most visible and celebrated initiatives. The program's success largely stems from the grassroots efforts of its chapters at the post level, which are managed by their members, including Legionnaires, Auxiliary members, and Sons of the American Legion.



The American Legion Riders guide their activities around the American Legion's Four Pillars: Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation, National Security, Americanism, and Children and Youth.

Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation

ALR chapters provided a final salute to fallen veterans through escort services and flag lines at funeral services across various venues, including Black Hills National Cemetery (BHNC). They honored unaccompanied veterans with dignified services quarterly at BHNC. On-site support at VA facilities includes organizing events like Christmas in July and National Salute to Veteran Patients Week. Riders are actively involved in Veterans Day and Memorial Day ceremonies.

National Security

Chapters emphasized accountability for POW/MIAs and enhanced community and youth awareness through various ceremonies and educational events. They actively supported our troops by organizing escorts, flag lines, and sending care packages. One notable initiative this year is the second annual Colonel Mike Kain Memorial Blood Drive hosted by Black Hills Chapter #164.

Americanism

Education aimed at fostering flag protection awareness among youth is a priority. This past year, Flag etiquette programs reached hundreds of young learners across various schools, teaching respect and honor. Riders conducted Veterans Day programs in schools. Rapid City Chapter #22 adopted a classroom and coordinated a monthly activity with the students.

Children and Youth

The Black Hills Chapter #164 took eleven children of deployed soldiers shopping for school supplies, spending \$1,000. The Rolling Plains Chapter #66 provided medical assistance to local families. The Warner Chapter #137 has undertaken a unique initiative called the Teddy Bear Ride to comfort hospitalized children. The Battle Mountain Chapter #71 coordinated a Trunk-n-Treat event for Halloween. The Fort Pierre Chapter #20 helped raise funds to help support the Missouri Shores Domestic Violence Center.

Growth and Community

The ALR's commitment to the community and veterans and shared passion for motorcycles continue to attract new members. Riders' patriotism is made evident each year with several high-profile events. During each Sturgis Rally, the Riders lead

the Jacket Ride with flagged motorcycles. This ride raises money for Veterans' Scholarships. Riders also participate in the opening parade of the Sturgis Rally. In the Sioux Falls area, Riders escort Midwest Honor Flight buses.

Statewide Coordination

Statewide Riders' meetings facilitate collaboration during the Midwinter Conference and State Convention. In May, the Riders gather in Pierre for the ALR River Rendezvous, an event that brings Riders from chapters throughout the state to discuss business and plan for the coming summer. At this event, the Riders gather at the Soldiers and Sailors Memorial for a wreath-laying ceremony in honor of Memorial Day.

Looking Forward

The Department of South Dakota currently has 13 ALR chapters, but I encourage all Posts to consider the benefits of adding an ALR chapter to their American Legion Family. Let's discuss the potential for furthering our mission together. I extend my heartfelt appreciation to all South Dakota American Legion Riders for their unwavering commitment and efforts in serving their communities and advocating for veterans. We anticipate another year of impactful service.

Respectfully Submitted,
Fred Nelson, Department ALR Liaison

LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN REPORT

Commander Steffen,



It was my pleasure to serve the American Legion Department of South Dakota as Chairman of the 2023-2024 Legislative Committee. Committee members were Kevin Morello, Nathan Juelfs, Dan Fritz, Kevin Hempel, and Rod Martens. Lobbyists were Commander Courtney Steffen, Adjutant C.P. Van Delist, Kevin Hempel, Nathan Juelfs, and Mike Mehlhaff.

The committee met on January 22nd, 2024, to review bills submitted up to that point and plan our lobbying strategy. Members in attendance were Commander Courtney Steffen, Chairman Mike Mehlhaff, Adjutant Van Delist, Kevin Morello, and Nathan Juelfs (remote.)

Unable to attend were Dan Fritz and Rod Martens. That evening a Legislative dinner was held at the Pierre Post 8 American Legion cabin. Post 8 did a great job hosting the event and the members turned out to man the kitchen and assist with the event. Special recognition should go to Post 8 members Mona and Kyle Weinman for an excellent meal. With over 100 people in attendance, everyone had an opportunity to discuss legislation and its effect on Veterans.

Below are the bills that would impact veterans from the 2024 Legislative Session, what action the committee took, and the final disposition of the bill:

HB 1007 amend the requirement to employ a county veterans' service officer.

Monitored by Committee Signed by the Governor February 27th, 2024

HB 1008 modify the eligibility for admission to the state veterans' home and repeal the residency requirement.

Supported By Committee Signed by the Governor February 27th, 2024

HB 1056 increase the property tax exemption allowed for certain veterans with a disability.

Supported by Committee Signed by the Governor February 27th, 2024

HB 1067 designate Medal of Honor Recognition Day.

Supported by Committee Signed by the Governor February 21st, 2024

HB 1068 allow disabled veterans to obtain a standard issue county motor vehicle or motorcycle license plate.

Monitored by Committee Signed by the Governor February 5th, 2024

HB 1082 change the eligibility requirements, and the exempt value, of a property tax relief program for disabled veterans and surviving spouses.

Supported By Committee Signed by the Governor March 4th, 2024

HB 1101 provide a special motor vehicle license plate for recipients of the Legion of Merit award.

Supported By Committee Signed by the Governor February 12th, 2024

HB 1121 make an appropriation to provide a grant for the construction of a veteran's skilled trade center.

Monitored by Committee Deferred by House Education January 31st, 2024

HB 1138 establish a sales tax exemption for certain disabled veterans.

Monitored by Committee Deferred by House Taxation February 6th, 2024

HB 1191 require an official declaration of war or other Congressional action before the South Dakota National Guard may be deployed by the federal government.

Monitored by Committee Deferred by House Military and Veterans Affairs February 6th, 2024

HCR 6007 Encouraging the United States Department of Veteran Affairs to allow veterans to receive long-term care services at facilities that do not otherwise meet the requirements set by the department.

Supported By Committee Resolved by both chambers February 15th, 2024

SB 29 allow eligible members of the South Dakota National Guard attending an in-state private, nonprofit post-secondary institution to receive the state tuition benefit.

Supported By Committee Signed by the Governor March 13th, 2024

SB 105 provide for the employment of veterans' service officers by the Department of Veterans Affairs.

Monitored by Committee Deferred by Senate Appropriations February 15th, 2024

SB 148 provide permissive authority to a governing body of a municipality or county to deny reissuance of an on-sale license not actively used.

Supported By Committee Signed by the Governor March 6th, 2024

SB 162 make an appropriation for the erection of the South Dakota Sioux Code Talker Memorial and to declare an emergency.

Supported By Committee Tabled by Joint Appropriations February 22nd, 2024

SB 180 modify provisions pertaining to unethical conduct and improper collection of fees relating to assistance or referrals in a veteran's benefits matter.

Supported by Committee Deferred by Senate Military and Veterans Affairs February 13th, 2024

SC 803 Honoring the outstanding military service of Major General Michael L. Place.

Supported By Committee Enrolled by Senate January 26th, 2024

If anyone wants more information on a particular bill listed above, please contact me at 605-988-4488 or mikemehlhaff@aim.com.

Thank you, Commander Steffen, for the opportunity to serve as Chairman for the Legislative Committee and thank you to all the members of the committee who worked to make this a highly successful year in the legislature for Veteran and Military related items.

Respectfully Submitted,
Mike Mehlhaff
Legislative Committee Chairman

MEDIA AND COMMUNICATIONS

No Report Submitted

MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN REPORT

The membership committee is delighted to report an exceptional year. We met multiple times to establish a goal for South Dakota, initially setting it at 16,100. Following a July meeting with the National, our target was adjusted to 16,261. Our efforts redoubled after returning from Indianapolis. This year's motif, "The Eye of the Tiger," may have overstayed its welcome by the fall meetings, but it highlighted

our collective effort. I attended all the Fall District meetings, underscoring that my role was that of a coach and cheerleader; the substantive work rested on your shoulders. By this point, you may be tired of my emails urging you to spare no effort. We've achieved all our goals save for the last two: 95% and 100%. We are currently at 94.8%. Your efforts this year are greatly appreciated; with one final push, we can hit 16,100 by June 30.



We also celebrated a victory in the Big 12 contest. I remember sending an email during the '2-minute warning,' calling for everyone's collaboration to secure the win. Out of the entire organization, only six departments triumphed. We competed with 16 other Departments in our division, and our success is a testament to your hard work.

Moreover, our float has been increasingly visible, participating in events such as the Castlewood Days Parade and the Elkton Harvest Day Parade. It also made an appearance at the Department Convention in Chamberlain. The float's durability was tested when it journeyed to Deadwood for the Mid-Winter meeting amidst a February snowstorm.

I want to express my profound gratitude to the leadership team, from Courtney to the past leaders, for their unwavering support this year. Although I've received numerous accolades, the real acknowledgment belongs to you, who have backed me in this endeavor. I concede that there have been challenging moments, especially now as we strive to support the budget with 16,100 members.

Thank you once more.

May God bless you and your families.

May God bless the United States of America.

May God bless the American Legion.

Bill Peters

MEMBERSHIP FUND

Budget Amount 2023-2024	\$ 8,000.00
Membership award from National	\$ -----
TOTAL	\$ 8,000.00
DISBURSEMENTS:	
Committee, Travel & Awards	<u>\$6,601.30</u>
BALANCE in Fund, 6-30-2024	\$1,398.70

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 on January 17th 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 11th SDYTA. Unfortunately, we had one individual who was not able to attend so we graduated 23. Yet again, 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 as Mentors. The logistic duties are taken care of by SGT Schoenefeld and SGT 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 Sarah Poncelow from Wessington Springs. Congratulations Sarah!! 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 the District Commanders, or their designees, who work hard with Posts, applicants, scheduling and conducting interviews. Good work!!

The 2024 YTA will be held June 24th -28th. Announcement: “BLUE CAP DAY” 27 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. The instructions for filling out these applications are on the State website. We will be adding to the (sdlegion.org) website, a list of documentation required to accompany your applications. 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.

This year’s recipients of these awards are: “Law Enforcement Officer of the Year” Neville Smith, Neville was sponsored by the Hartford Post. “Firefighter of the Year” Richard Gruenwald, sponsored by the Redfield Post and Brian Hambek, sponsored by the Spearfish post.

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 Pierre.

We look forward to an even better year in 2024-25.

Thank you,
Larry Price
Chairman
SDAL Public Safety Committee

DEPARTMENT SCOUTING REPORT

Commander:

As a Boy Scouts of America Assistant Council Commissioner for the Black Hills Area Council and a Legionnaire, it has been an honor to serve as the chairman of the Department Scouting Committee this past year. Our committee includes Matt Lagerstrom, Fred Nelson, Richard MacDonald, and myself. The mission of the Boy Scouts of America is to prepare young people to make ethical and moral choices over their lifetimes by instilling in them the values of the Scout Oath and Scout Law. Scouting units in South Dakota and their local



American Legion posts that sponsor them have impacted each other as well as the communities where they live. Scouts from the Sioux Council in the east and the Black Hills Area Council in the west produced a combined total of 56 Eagle Scouts this year. Their projects impacted local churches, state and national parks, local veteran cemeteries, VA hospitals, and various community centers. Unfortunately, this year we did not have an eligible candidate for American Legion Scout of the Year for South Dakota. The application specifies that any registered scout who is a member of a unit sponsored by the American Legion, American Legion Auxiliary unit, or Sons of The American Legion or who has parents or grandparents possessing an active membership in the American Legion family may apply.

On its 115th anniversary, Boys Scouts of America will undergo a name change to Scouting America. Although the new name should be used immediately, the official change will occur in February 2025. This name change will reflect the organization's commitment to welcoming every youth and family in America to experience the benefits of Scouting. Another change in scouting will be the membership and unit renewal process. For those American Legion posts that sponsor a scouting unit, you will now have an active process for those adult members applying to sponsor units. The change will allow charter organizations to know what adult members are participating in the units in addition to the assigned leadership. Also, the change will give another layer of protection to the youth participating in the program.

The values and commitment of the scouting organization are still intact and remain the same as it was back in 1919 when the American Legion began sponsoring scouting. The goal of this partnership is to strengthen our young people to become good, strong, Americans who support their country and take care of their families and themselves.

Chris Rendon
Scouting Committee Chairman

SONS OF THE AMERICAN LEGION ANNUAL REPORT

This 2023-2024 year has been a fun filled year. Right after the 2023 state convention our Detachment went to work. We chartered Gary SD right away then ended up with five more squadrons chartered. They are Egan, DeSmet, Box Elder,



Winner, and Alcester. I attended all eight of the Fall District meetings along with all of the 8 Spring meetings. I was able to attend over half of our squadron meetings and drove over four thousand miles.

We are leading the Midwest region along with leading the nation in membership. WE have grown by 251 members this year and currently sit with 1862 members. We are at 115.58% membership and a renewal rate of 91.22%. Our detachment officers have put in a lot of work, and I could not be prouder of all their dedication and efforts that they have all devoted to growing our organization.

Wyatt, Detachment Vice Commander, and I were able to attend the wreath laying ceremony in Washington DC. We got to visit the WWII memorial, Korean memorial, Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, Arlington Cemetery, and the Vietnam memorial. We laid our SD wreath at the Vietnam memorial in honor of Wyatt's cousin that lost his life during the war but also to honor all Vietnam Veterans.

We had a Pre-DEC meeting for our State Convention in Mitchell and went over all our awards that we will be handing out at our 2024 convention. We will be having a My Legion and membership workshop at the convention to get our members familiarized with each of them. We wrote a resolution to put District Commanders in place for each District. We feel that this will help with communication and getting information to all our squadrons.

What a momentous year this has been, and we are looking forward to having a great State Convention and hope for a record-breaking attendance. We hope to finish this year strong and on top of the nation. If we end up being on top of the nation, we are planning to have a celebration in Chamberlain where we hope all squadrons can attend and celebrate our victory.

Detachment Commander Shane Lamer

TRAINING COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT

Commander,

It has been a privilege to serve as the Training Committee Chair with the following members: PDC Fred Nelson, Kevin Morello, Krisma DeWitt, Kevin Hempel, and Bill Peters.



The Training Committee is a Standing Committee of the Department of South Dakota American Legion as approved by resolution at the 2021 Department Convention in Huron, SD.

The Training Committee met several times through zoom this year and has completed the following goals: Provided the following classes at the 2024 Mid-winter conference: MyLegion: Kevin Morello and Bill Peters, American Legion Reports & Awards- Kevin Hempel, Be the One & S.A.V.E. Training – David Nilsen, SCAMS – Fred Nelson, and American 250– Ben Jones

The committee held the second annual SDALC in Chamberlain, SD on April 27-28, 2024. The following classes were taught; Mentorship – Fred Nelson, Running A Meeting – Krisma DeWitt, Resolution Writing – Kevin Hempel, Train-The-Trainer – Doug Harris, American Legion Organizational Structure – Kevin Morello, and Capstone Project – Jack French. SDALC was a success and had five graduates; Linda Hessaa, Post 266; Patrick Branco, Post 15; Gregg Burrer, Post 189; Arlo Jurrens, Post 88; Marv Tisdall, Post 315.

The 3rd Annual SDALC is being planned for 2025. The Training Committee encourages all Legionnaires to provide input, suggestions, and ideas for classes, instructional methods, and instructors.

Respectfully submitted,
Jack French
Training Committee Chair

TRUST FUND COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN REPORT

Commander,

This past year has been one of change and so far it has been very good for the American Legion trust fund. The transferred balance was \$636,622 and the present balance is \$804,854. On 3/27/2024, \$103,063 was added to the account from other Legion investments. The net account balance is \$701,791 for a growth of \$65,169 for the year. The current asset allocation is considered conservative/growth with cash at 2%, income at 48%, large cap at 47% and small and midcap at 3%. The overall growth this past year has been around 10%.



The committee met this past year and agreed that these funds can be used for whatever needs the American Legion has for them. The market has been good this past year and we hope it will continue.

Working with Travis and Taylor has been outstanding, and we look forward to working with them in the future.

Respectfully submitted,
Randy Rakness, Chairman, Trust Committee

VA&R COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN REPORT

Commander,

On behalf of the Department Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation (VA&R) Commission, which members are Chairman Warren Aas of Watertown, Vice Chairman PDC Tim Jurgens of Milbank, Noel Cummins of Milbank, Jim Childers of Spearfish, Brian Havard of Salem, Carole Gregg of Rosebud, 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 chairman.

There are numerous awards every post in our department can win throughout the year and be recognized for their achievement either at our MidWinter 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 1st 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 2024 in Washington D.C. to listen and participate in the national VA&R agenda. PDC Tim Jurgens and Noel Cummins, both of Milbank, and members of the department VA&R Commission, were also in attendance. We listen to many speakers and take action on several resolutions dealing with veterans' benefits, veterans' health as well as the National Cemeteries. We make a point to provide all the information we can get my 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 that 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 our American Legion Department Service Officer.

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

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

V.A.V.S. COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN REPORT

I would like to thank Commander Courtney Steffen for the appointment to Chairman 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, Dupree Chavez, Joe Sande.



In the past we had asked for donations for the popcorn fund, but these funds are used for many more necessary items than just popcorn. Therefore, we decided to rename the fund "VAVS Recreational Activities Fund" to more accurately indicate what the funds are used for. They are used to purchase toiletries, clothing, stamps, envelopes, backpacks, tumblers, etc.

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

Respectfully submitted,
Charemon Dunham
VAVS Committee Chairman

VAVS COMMITTEE FINANCIAL REPORT

Balance, 6-30-2023		\$9,665.89
RECEIPTS:		
Interest	\$ 10.91	
Memorials and Donations	<u>\$5,733.05</u>	
	\$5,743.96	<u>\$5,743.96</u>
		\$15,409.85
TOTAL DISBURSEMENTS:		
VA Facilities	<u>\$3,300.00</u>	
	<u>\$3,300.00</u>	<u>\$3,300.00</u>
Balance, 6-30-204		\$12,109.85

**SUMMARY OF 2024 AMERICAN LEGION
DEPARTMENT OF SOUTH DAKOTA
CONVENTION AND CONVENTION
COMMITTEE RESOLUTIONS**

2024 CONVENTION RESOLUTIONS

The following Convention resolutions were reviewed for the 2024 year to be considered at the Department convention.

Resolution No. SDAL 24-1

Submitted by: Internal Affairs Commission

Title: Constitutional Change of Department of South Dakota Dues

Internal Affairs Commission Action: No recommendation on this resolution as it was included in the resolution package in error.

Resolution No. SDAL 24-3

Submitted By: Rapid City Post #22

Title: Support of Providing Postsecondary Credit for Military Service

Convention Resolution Committee Action: Send to Convention Employment Committee.

Convention Employment Committee Action: Do Pass with referral to the Legislative Committee for their review.

Convention Legislative Committee Action: DO PASS recommendation.

The resolution was adopted.

EXSUM

In its resolution, The American Legion advocates for the recognition and appropriate awarding of academic credit or certification for military service.

The American Legion recognizes the dedication of the Department of Defense (DoD) to provide top-notch training and education to military personnel, often equivalent to or exceeding civilian standards. This resolution emphasizes that American Council on Education (ACE) already evaluates military training and calls for collaboration between post-secondary institutions, the DoD, and relevant agencies to establish a comprehensive framework for assessing military training and experience for civilian postsecondary credit and/or certification.

The Legion compels Congress and state legislatures to enact legislation requiring post-secondary institutions that accept federal funding to adopt policies recognizing the educational value of military education, training, and experience. Additionally, it calls for transparent procedures from all postsecondary institutions for evaluating military training and experience and granting credit where appropriate based on established ACE standards. The American Legion underscores that federal funds, already invested in military training, should not be duplicated in programs like Tuition Assistance or the GI Bill, and advocates for a system that facilitates the

transition of servicemembers into post-secondary education and civilian careers while addressing critical skills shortages in the workforce.

WHEREAS, The American Legion is dedicated to the well-being and advancement of veterans, active-duty military personnel, and their families; and

WHEREAS, Veterans are in need of academic post-military degree, certification and credentialing universally recognizable by employers for employment opportunities; and

WHEREAS, The Department of Defense (DoD) spares no expense to provide servicemembers with some of the best training and education in the nation paid for by federal budgets of the United States in various technical, leadership, and academic fields; and

WHEREAS, Military service often involves extensive training and education that is equivalent to or exceeds the standards of civilian colleges and universities; and

WHEREAS, The American Council on Education (ACE) has evaluated most training of military occupations using Joint Services Transcripts and provides “recommendations and validated competencies” for awarding post-secondary credit for such training; and

WHEREAS, Approximately 2,800 institutions of higher learning signed the Department of Defense Voluntary Education Partnership (DoDVEP) Memorandum of Understanding formerly Servicemembers Opportunity Colleges (SOC) agreement, to provide educational opportunities to servicemembers who, because they frequently moved from place to place, had trouble completing college degrees; and

WHEREAS, DoDVEP functions in cooperation with higher education associations to expand and improve voluntary post-secondary education opportunities for servicemembers worldwide; and

WHEREAS, There are many high demand technical career fields in critical shortage of qualified employees in the civilian workforce that require training, education and certification; and

WHEREAS, Recognizing and providing standard credit for military service can facilitate the transition of servicemembers into postsecondary education, civilian careers, and promote lifelong learning; and

WHEREAS, Such recognition can contribute to the attainment of educational goals and further professional development among veterans and recognition can contribute to fulfilling the critical skills and employment shortages in the civilian sector of employment; and

WHEREAS, Federal taxpayers spend more than \$150 billion a year on federal financial aid, \$30 billion on GI Bill benefits, and \$1 billion on military tuition assistance, while students, states, and employers spend billions more, servicemembers are still required to take courses that have been recommended by ACE for credit; and

WHEREAS, The DoD has already paid for the training of its personnel for their military occupations and the taxpayers of the United States should not be burdened by paying for the training again in the form of the Tuition Assistance, GI Bill or any federally funded training programs; and

WHEREAS, DoD Tuition Assistance, Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) education or any form of the GI Bill requires this evaluation, and a fully completed degree or certificate plan to ensure compliance with DoD and VA regulations; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, at The American Legion Department of South Dakota Department Convention June 21-23, 2024, in Pierre, SD, That the American Legion supports the establishment of a standardized system to recognize and appropriately award academic credit or certification for military service based on American Council on Education recommendations of evaluation of the Joint Services Transcript System standards; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That the American Legion urges all post-secondary institutions to work collaboratively with the Department of Defense and relevant military agencies to develop and implement a comprehensive framework for assessing military training and experience for college credit; and be it further

RESOLVED, That the American Legion calls upon Congress to enact legislation that requires all post-secondary institutions that accept federal government funding to adopt policies recognizing the educational value of military service and provide appropriate postsecondary credit in accordance with American Council on Education recommendations and validated competencies; and be it further

RESOLVED, That the American Legion encourages all post-secondary institutions to establish clear and transparent procedures for evaluating military training and experience, granting credit where appropriate, and ensuring that veterans receive fair and equitable treatment in the pursuit of higher education; and be it finally

RESOLVED, That National Executive Committee Resolution No. 12, Fall 2014, "Support Joint Services Transcript Evaluation of Military Training and Experience of Veterans, Active-Duty, Reserve and National Guard Personnel" and National Convention 2016, Resolution No. 322, "Support Joint Services

Transcript Evaluation of Military Training and Experience of Veterans, Active-Duty, Reserve and National Guard Personnel” be superseded and rescinded.

Resolution No. SDAL 24-4

Submitted By: Potter Post #3 of Chamberlain

Title: South Dakota Veterans Council Member at Large
Convention Resolution Committee Action: Send to Convention Internal Organization Committee.

Internal Affairs Commission Action: DO PASS recommendation.

The resolution was adopted

WHEREAS, The South Dakota Veterans Council (SDVC) plays a very important role in the Legislative process in South Dakota advocating for veterans; and

WHEREAS, For the SDVC to remain effective in this process it must establish long term goals and become visionary; and

WHEREAS, All of the Veteran Service Organizations (VSOs) on the SDVC have a three person voting seat on the council; and

WHEREAS, The South Dakota American Legion (SDAL) is structured that the current Department Commander, and the Department Adjutant have a seat at the table and the Department Commander appoints one other Legionnaire and those three are the voting representatives of the SDAL, this occurs annually; and

WHEREAS, The Department Commander changes each year, and the appointed member could change each year it is not conducive to building and maintaining the vision of the SDVC; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By the American Legion Department of South Dakota in annual convention assembled, June 20-23, 2024, in Pierre, SD, That the member at large appointed by the Commander serve on the SDVC for a term of three years; and be it finally

RESOLVED, That at the end of the initial three year term the current Department Commander may appoint that same member at large to serve an additional three-year term, for a maximum total of six years consecutively representing the SDAL.

Resolution No. SDAL 24-5

Submitted By: Birch-Miller Post #9 of Milbank

Title: Birch-Miller Post 9 Of Milbank, SD To Host The State A, The State B And The Junior Legion Baseball Tournaments In Celebration Of The 100th Anniversary Of The Birthplace Of American Legion Baseball In Milbank, SD

Internal Affairs Commission Action: Refer To Convention Americanism Committee.
Convention Americanism Committee Action: DO PASS recommendation.

The resolution was adopted

WHEREAS, Milbank is the Birthplace of American Legion Baseball, July 17, 1925 by action of the South Dakota American Legion at the Department State Convention in Milbank, SD 1925; and

WHEREAS, A Baseball Granite Monument recognizing Milbank as the Birthplace of American Legion

Baseball is visibly located and displayed along Highway 12 near the entrance to the Grant County Veterans Park. The monument was erected by Birch-Miller Post 9 American Legion on the 25th Anniversary; and

WHEREAS, American Legion Baseball is one of the premiere youth programs of the American Legion; and

WHEREAS; The American Legion Baseball program has been successful for ninety seven (99) years and has enabled thousands of American youth to participate in the American sport; and

WHEREAS; Due to the loss of what was Legion Field properties to the Milbank School District, a new state of the art baseball complex named Legion Field Birthplace of American Legion Baseball is being constructed with plans for multiple fields to accommodate all levels of baseball with the main field completed for playing in 2023; and

WHEREAS; Birch-Miller Post 9 has hosted over the years numerous American Legion Baseball Tournaments, including but not limited to, Regional, State, Central Plains Division II Tournaments, American Legion All Start as well as our own Arnold Larsen Invitational Tournament which is held the first weekend in June; and

WHEREAS, American Legion Baseball Teams from as far away as Las Vegas, Kansas City, Missouri and Viroqua, WI have played in Milbank, SD the Birthplace of American Legion Baseball; and

WHEREAS, Milbank is capable of handling such tournaments with four motels including most recent Grand Stay Motel, several eating establishments, tennis courts, golf course and Unity Square fitness center with swimming pool; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, at The American Legion Department of South Dakota Department Convention June 21-23, 2024 in Pierre, SD, that in commemoration of the 100th Anniversary of The Birthplace of American Legion Baseball that the State B Senior and Junior Legion State Baseball Tournaments be held at the newly constructed Legion Field Complex in Milbank, SD Birthplace of

American Legion Baseball in 2025 with final dates to be determined prior to the 2025 baseball season; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That Convention Resolution No. 22-14 “That in commemoration of the 100th Anniversary of The Birthplace of American Legion Baseball that the State A, State B and Junior Legion A and B State Baseball Tournaments be held at the newly constructed Legion Field Complex in Milbank, SD Birthplace of American Legion Baseball in 2025 with final dates to be determined prior to the 2025 baseball season” be superseded and rescinded.

Resolution No. SDAL 24-6

Submitted By: Roy Hickman Post #78 of Leola

Title: Support of the United States Constitution Regarding Property Rights
Convention Resolution Committee Action: Refer To Internal Organization.
Convention Internal Organization Committee Action: DO NOT PASS recommendation.

The resolution was not adopted.

EXSUM

In its resolution, The American Legion advocates for the fair and just treatment of landowners provided under the Constitution of the United States of America.

The American Legion recognizes the value and importance of the Constitution, which is the Supreme Law of the Land and by our Pre-amble, are sworn to uphold and protect it.

The American Legion compels Congress and state legislatures to enact legislation defining consistent due process to protect our citizens from un-just practices regarding Eminent Domain Laws. Additionally, it calls for transparent communication regarding any and all requests for the use of Eminent Domain including disclosing any foreign interests involved with the application.

WHEREAS, property rights have come into question within our own state and nationally due to Eminent Domain laws, and

WHEREAS, Roy S. Hickman Post 78 of the Department of South Dakota by our Preamble is dedicated to the preservation of the Constitution of the United States, and

WHEREAS, we believe that the Fourth and Fourteenth Amendments of the Constitution have been violated in regards to "The right of the people to be secure in their person, houses, papers, and effects against unreasonable searches" and "No state shall make or enforce any law which shall abridge the privileges or immunities of the citizens of the United States; nor shall any state deprive any person to life, liberty, or property, without due process of law; nor deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws.", and

WHEREAS, these Amendments have been violated in the disguise of Eminent domain to be used for private gain or profit.

RESOLVED, at The American Legion Department of South Dakota Department Convention June 21-23, 2024, in Pierre, SD, that the American Legion supports the rights of property owners; and be it further

RESOLVED, the American Legion urges that Eminent Domain be used only for the good of all citizens and be approved through proper channels that do not violate our National Constitution; and be it further

RESOLVED, the American Legion calls upon Congress and state legislatures to enact legislation that fairly and justly defines due process under the Fourth and Fourteenth Amendments of the United States Constitution that allows for protection of property owners from private entities applying for the use of Eminent Domain

RESOLVED, the American Legion encourages any projects with any foreign ownership or interests receive increased scrutiny by the State of South Dakota and the United States Government when requesting the use of Eminent Domain.

Resolution No. SDAL 24-7

Submitted By: Veteran Affairs and Rehabilitation Commission, Department of South Dakota

Title: Improving Health And Wellness Care For Veterans “An Ounce Of Prevention Is Worth A Pound Of Cure.”

Convention Resolution Committee Action: Refer To Rehabilitation Committee.

Convention Rehabilitation Committee Action: DO PASS recommendation.

The resolution was adopted

WHEREAS, The American Legion is committed to advocating for the comprehensive well-being of veterans, ensuring they receive the care and support they deserve; and

WHEREAS, Veterans often face unique health challenges stemming from their service, requiring specialized care and support to maintain their physical and mental well-being; and

WHEREAS, Studies show that eight of the ten leading causes of death among Veterans are directly related to physical and mental well-being whose risk is lowered through diet and exercise; and

WHEREAS, Access to regular exercise and fitness activities plays a crucial role in promoting the overall health and wellness of veterans, aiding in physical rehabilitation, mental health management, and overall quality of life; and

WHEREAS, Many veterans face barriers to accessing affordable fitness facilities and programs, hindering their ability to engage in regular physical activity and maintain a healthy lifestyle; and

WHEREAS, The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has a responsibility to provide comprehensive healthcare services to veterans, including proactive measures to promote health and wellness beyond traditional medical treatment; and

WHEREAS, The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) already has in place Whole Health and Well-being Programs, designed to equip Veterans with tools for skill building and self-care that provide access to well-being services to support health and wellness; and

WHEREAS, Providing access to gym memberships and fitness programs under established Whole Health and Well-being Programs can significantly enhance Veterans ability to engage in regular physical activity, manage chronic conditions, and improve overall health outcomes; and

WHEREAS, Studies have demonstrated the positive impact of regular exercise on veterans' physical and mental health, reducing the risk of chronic diseases, alleviating symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and depression, and promoting social interaction and community engagement; and

WHEREAS, Offering gym memberships as part of VA healthcare benefits aligns with the VA's mission to provide comprehensive, patient-centered care that addresses the holistic needs of veterans; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, The American Legion Department of South Dakota at Department Convention June 21-23, 2024, in Pierre, SD, request The American Legion call upon the Department of Veterans Affairs to prioritize and enhance health and wellness care for veterans by including gym memberships as a covered benefit under VA healthcare services; and be it further

RESOLVED, That the American Legion advocates for the integration of fitness and wellness programs into VA healthcare facilities, providing on-site resources and support for veterans to engage in regular physical activity and receive personalized wellness guidance; and be it further

RESOLVED, That the American Legion calls upon Congress and the Administration to allocate adequate funding and resources to support the implementation of this initiative, recognizing its importance in promoting the health and well-being of our nation's veterans; and be it further

RESOLVED, That this resolution be forwarded to the National Adjutant of The American Legion for consideration at the 105th Annual National Convention of The American Legion to be held in New Orleans, Louisiana, August 23-29, 2024.

Resolution No. SDAL 24-8

Submitted By: Convention Resolutions Committee

Title: Supporting the Commissioning of the USS Pierre LCS and it's Sponsor Larissa Thune-Hargens

Convention Resolution Committee Action: Refer To National Security Committee.

Convention National Security Committee Action: DO PASS recommendation.

The resolution was adopted

WHEREAS, The American Legion is dedicated to the well-being and advancement of veterans, active-duty military personnel, and their families; and

WHEREAS, the USS Pierre (LCS-38) is an Independence-class Littoral Combat Ship named in honor of Pierre, South Dakota, reflecting the city's rich heritage and contribution to the United States Navy; and

WHEREAS, the Littoral Combat Ship is designed to operate in coastal waters, offering flexibility in a variety of missions including mine countermeasures, anti-submarine warfare, and surface warfare, thereby playing a crucial role in maintaining the Navy's dominance in littoral zones; and

WHEREAS, Larissa Thune-Hargens, a distinguished citizen and daughter of Senator John Thune, has been selected as the sponsor of the USS Pierre LCS-38, a role which includes the esteemed honor of bestowing good fortune and protection upon the ship and all who sail aboard her; and

WHEREAS, Larissa Thune-Hargens' dedication, commitment, and ties to the community of Pierre, as well as her family's longstanding service to the nation, make her an exemplary sponsor for this significant naval vessel; and

WHEREAS, the commissioning ceremony of the USS Pierre LCS-38 will not only celebrate the ship's entry into active service but also strengthen the bonds between the Navy and the citizens of South Dakota, fostering a spirit of patriotism and support for our armed forces; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, at The American Legion Department of South Dakota Department Convention June 21-23, 2024, in Pierre, SD, That the American Legion Department of South Dakota, hereby express wholehearted support and enthusiasm for the upcoming commissioning of the USS Pierre LCS-38; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That deepest gratitude and congratulations are extended to Larissa Thune-Hargens for her role as sponsor, her contributions are instrumental to the successful commissioning and future endeavors of the USS Pierre; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That the officers and crew of the USS Pierre LCS-38 be hereby commended for their dedication and service, fair winds, and following seas as they embark on their mission to protect and defend the interests of the United States of America.

Resolution No. SDAL 24-10

Submitted By: Convention Resolutions Committee

Title: Express Thanks to Pierre Post #8 for hosting a great Convention
Convention Resolution Committee Action: DO PASS recommendation.

The resolution was adopted

ADDENDUM:**DEPARTMENT VICE COMMANDER'S (DISTRICTS 1 AND 2)
ANNUAL REPORT**

I would like to thank the members of Districts 1 and 2 for the honor of serving as their State Vice Commander for the last two years. It has been a fruitful year for “West River”, with two hardworking District Commanders and our Legion Posts doing a lot of great things for their communities. Most notable, District 1 hosted a very successful Midwinter meeting in Deadwood as well as the annual Golf Tournament hosted by Post 303 of Hermosa, here in the Rapid City area. The Fall and Spring District meeting went off without a hitch at some of our smaller communities like Piedmont (Post 311) and Hermosa (Post 303) in the Fall and Lemmon (Post 66) and Martin (Post 240) in the Spring.

One of my first duties for my second year was to represent the Department Commander at the funeral of Past Department Commander Gerald Goetzinger in my hometown of Martin (Post 240) on June 21st. PDC Goetzinger was also very active at the National Level and spent a year as a National Vice Commander. On a happier note, I attended “Blue Hat” day at Youth Trooper Academy in Pierre SD to watch our youth learn from the State’s finest Highway Patrol Troopers.

In July I attended the annual Department Executive Committee meeting to finalize the budget in Oacoma SD and Department Commander Steffan’s homecoming in Chester, SD. Closer to home, I represented the Department at the annual Tee It Up For The Troops Golf Tournament/fundraiser and the Ellsworth AFB Homefront Backpack giveaway, joining forces with volunteers from Posts 22, 33, 164, and 311.

In August I had the privilege of welcoming the players and coaches to the Central Region National Baseball Tournament in Rapid City, SD. I spoke at their welcoming banquet and took part in the tournament for several days as the person reciting the Code Of Conduct with the players. This month also saw the Grand Opening of the new VA CBOC in Rapid City and I and other members from the area attended the ceremony. I also received an Americanism “call-in” for the National Convention in Charlotte NC and joined the South Dakota Delegation for 6 days.

September found me participating in the State Golf Tournament with members from across the state. It was very nice to have it on this side of the state and as I mentioned earlier, Hermosa Post 303 did an outstanding job of hosting the tournament. I was unable to attend the District 1 and 2 Fall meetings because occasionally a person is called to attend important family events.

October is generally a beautiful weather month in SD and this year was no exception. I was able to make Post visits to Spearfish 164, Piedmont 311, Hot Springs 71, Custer 46, Box Elder 315 and of course Rapid City Post 22.

November saw a little less travel, but I spent time in Sturgis enjoying the annual Northern Hills Veteran’s Appreciation event with members from Post 22, 33, 31, 164, 311 and 315, as well as many other Veteran Organizations like the VFW and

DAV. Most of the planning is handled by members of Post 164, and they did an exceptional job again this year taking care of our Veterans. Thank you for all your hard work! I followed that visit up with a “tasty” visit to Post 315 in Box Elder to judge a chili contest. Veterans Day was spent attending the parade in Rapid City and speaking at the annual Veterans Day Post 22 Turkey Dinner appreciation event. There were over 200 veterans and their families served at this event and all the Legion Family Members (SAL/ALA/Riders) did their part to make it a resounding success. Post 22 also hosted a Legislative Roundtable on the 18th. The weather remained pleasant this month and I was able to attend a Post meeting in Lead (Post 31).

In December I made Post visits to Sturgis (33) and Hermosa (303). The remainder of the month was spent on planning and holding Post Oratorical contests. The start of 2024 had me busy with the District 1 and 2 Oratorical Contests and getting very involved in our Americanism programs. District 1 Americanism Chairman Michael Pauling held an outstanding Oratorical contest with 5 competitors (2 of whom were homeschoolers), the best showing in years. I began making school visits (Custer HS) to help with recruiting for our Boys State programs. I also travelled to Pierre for the annual “Governors Day” festivities for the Boys and Girls State Governors.

In February, the school visits became more frequent, with stops at Rapid City Central and Rapid City Stevens. These were followed up by the trip to Midwinter meetings in Deadwood SD, where I attended the Boys State meetings, took part in the Department Executive Committee meeting, and moderated the State Oratorical Contest. The entire event was a resounding success due to the efforts of the District 1 Posts who worked for months to bring it all together. I also travelled to Sturgis to represent the Department at the Four Chaplains ceremony and enjoyed the delicious chili feed hosted by Post 33.

March was of course the Legion Birthday month and I travelled to Custer Post 46, Rapid City Post 22 and Spearfish Post 164 to represent the Department and perform keynote speaker duties. These events seem to get better and are better attended every year.

April is a big Americanism month with the Youth Trooper Academy interviews in Districts 1 and 2. Both District Commanders did an excellent job of setting these up and making sure the candidates were there. It is also the time when the applications start rolling in for Boys and Girls State. I commend both Districts for making that extra effort this year to recruit boys and Girls for these amazing programs. The training committee also held their second annual SD American Legion College in Chamberlain, where I had the honor to teach one of the classes. Several of the other instructors and staff are members of District 1 and 2 and represented West River very well.

As I wrap up this report, it is the middle of May and absolutely everyone is busy getting ready for SD Boys and Girls State. I put together the District 1 and 2 Orientation on the 11th of May at Post 22, with a lot of help from the Americanism Officers from our area Posts. This year we had approximately 100 people attend our Orientation “Pizza Party”. I would like to thank the Auxiliary members from both Districts who brought salads and desserts and helped make this event a huge success.

I believe that the teamwork I see throughout our Posts has translated to a very successful year in multiple areas of our “4 pillars work”.

Thank you all for supporting me for the last 2 years as I’ve tried to represent Districts 1 and 2 as your SDAL Vice Commander.

Douglas D. Harris

DEPARTMENT VICE COMMANDER’S (DISTRICTS 3-8) ANNUAL REPORT

It has been a pleasure and a great experience serving as Vice Commander for Commander Courtney Steffen and the Department of South Dakota.

Summer was fairly quiet, with some meetings and then a trip to Charlotte NC for the National Convention. It was educational and meeting friends from around the country is always great. The meetings went well, and the Department Caucus allowed us to hear from all the Delegates about the business that was addressed in their meetings. Some had many resolutions to address, and some had very few.



Fall brought Post visits that just happened to be during sweet corn time. The food and hospitality were great, and I was able to meet many Legion family members and get their views on what was needed and what was going well. It was great to meet veterans from WWII and those who are just getting started. Each generation had some things that are unique to their era, but it is amazing to see and hear how similar we all are.

The Mid-Winter Convention was a little rough to get to the day we left and apparently got worse as the day went on. It was still a good convention and those who set it up and organized it did an amazing job. I helped as an usher for the Oratorical Contest and the students who made it that far are amazing. I hope that those who didn’t win to go on to the National Contest will try again.

I have been able to go where Commander Courtney wanted me to go this spring and attend a few more Post meetings. The last one as of this writing was at Estelline for the dedication as a Purple Heart City. It was a very nice program, and the Post meeting was later that evening so I attended that too. They have a lot going for a little town and were planning the Memorial Day schedule with services at three cemeteries and a program too. Just one example of our small town Post doing all they can for the community, State and Nation. Veterans serving veterans.

For the good of the Legion

Rodney Smith

Vice Commander, Districts 3-8

2023-2024



COURTNEY STEFFEN PURSUE PURPOSE

DEPARTMENT COMMANDER
THE AMERICAN LEGION
DEPARTMENT OF SOUTH DAKOTA

