

Welcome to American Legion Post _____, _____, SD



Introduction

Welcome to The American Legion. This booklet is designed to introduce new members to the structure, traditions, programs, and expectations of the American Legion at the Post, District, Department, and National levels.

About The American Legion

The American Legion is the largest veterans' organization in the United States. It was chartered by Congress in 1919 as a patriotic, mutual-help organization for wartime veterans.

Today, the American Legion is a proud community service organization with nearly two million members, men and women, dedicated to supporting veterans, youth, and their communities.

The organization includes about 15,000 local Posts worldwide. These Posts are organized into 55 Departments, representing the 50 U.S. states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, France, Mexico, and the Philippines. Each Department is divided into Districts, and each District is made up of several local Posts that carry out the Legion's mission at the community level.

In South Dakota, the American Legion Department is organized into 8 Districts, with 229 local Posts spread across the state.

Membership Eligibility and Structure of The American Legion

Membership in The American Legion is open to those who served at least one day of honorable active military service during a recognized period of war as defined by Congress.

National

The American Legion's National Headquarters is located in Indianapolis, Indiana, with additional offices in Washington, D.C. Across the country, thousands of dedicated volunteers serve in leadership roles and help implement Legion programs within their local communities. The National organization also employs full-time staff who support these efforts.

To learn more, visit <http://www.legion.org/>

The Four Pillars

The four pillars of The American Legion are Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation, National Security, Americanism, and Children & Youth. These pillars guide the organization's work in supporting veterans, promoting a strong national defense, upholding American values and civic duty, and ensuring the well-being of young people.

- **Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation:** Support for veterans, including assistance with VA benefits, healthcare, employment, and transition back to civilian life.
- **National Security:** Promotes a strong national defense, homeland security, and support for active-duty service members and their families.
- **Americanism:** Emphasizes patriotism and civic responsibility, with programs that promote the Pledge of Allegiance, support youth organizations like the Boy Scouts, and encourage voter registration.
- **Children & Youth:** Dedicated to the healthy development of children and youth through programs related to child welfare, education, and combating issues like drug abuse and child exploitation.

Department of South Dakota

The Department of South Dakota's headquarters is in Watertown, South Dakota.

The Department of South Dakota Headquarters

P.O. Box 67

Watertown, South Dakota 57201

Phone (605) 886-3604

<https://www.sdlegion.org>

Districts of South Dakota

There are eight Districts in South Dakota. The breakdown is as follows:

District One: Butte, Harding, Lawrence, Meade, Corson, Dewey, Perkins, and Ziebach Counties.

District Two: Bennett, Haakon, Jackson, Jones, Mellette, Todd, Custer, Fall River, Pennington, and Oglala Lakota Counties.

District Three: Hughes, Hyde, Potter, Stanley, Sully, Gregory, Lyman, Tripp, and Hand Counties.

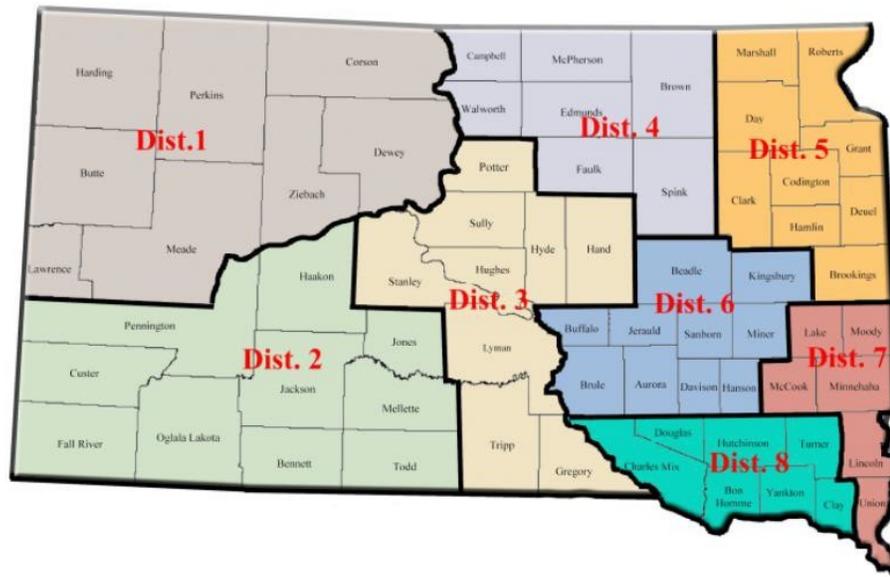
District Four: Brown, Campbell, Edmunds, McPherson, Walworth, Spink, and Faulk Counties.

District Five: Day, Grant, Marshall, Roberts, Clark, Codington, Deuel, Hamlin, and Brookings Counties.

District Six: Beadle, Kingsbury, Miner, Aurora, Brule, Buffalo, Davison, Hanson, Jerauld, and Sanborn Counties.

District Seven: Lake, Lincoln, Moody, McCook, Minnehaha, and Union Counties.

District Eight: Turner, Bon Homme, Charles Mix, Clay, Douglas, Hutchinson, and Yankton Counties.



Officer's Duties

Commander– Elected Position - The Commander leads and supervises all Post operations in accordance with the Constitution, By-Laws, and the direction of the Executive Committee. The Commander may not commit the Post to any legal or financial obligation without approval from the Executive Committee and the membership. Responsibilities include ensuring bills are paid, and IRS filings are completed properly, maintaining a monthly record of significant activities with a year-end summary, appointing or adjusting committees as necessary, establishing an Advisory Committee of four to five past Commanders, and working with the Advisory and Executive Committees to address and resolve issues related to committee responsibilities or Post governance.

Vice Commander – Elected Position - The Vice Commander, operating under the Constitution and By-Laws, serves as second in command and assumes the duties of the Commander when the Commander is absent or unable to serve. The Vice Commander chairs the Membership Committee, oversees and reviews membership records, assigns follow-up lists for unpaid members to the Junior Vice Commanders, typically in January, and monitors the 400 Post list to encourage member transfers. The Vice Commander should maintain a thorough understanding of Post operations and be prepared to assume leadership, as the role traditionally progresses to Commander.

Adjutant - Appointed Position - The Adjutant oversees the administrative operations of the Post. Responsibilities include maintaining accurate membership records, monitoring the Post 500 list, handling incoming mail, and managing correspondence with Department Headquarters. The Adjutant records minutes at Post meetings, oversees Post charge cards, maintains inventory of flags and emblems, and supervises Post rentals and related cleanup. The Adjutant also helps ensure Post property is properly maintained by notifying Building and Grounds of needed repairs and informing the Commander of any significant concerns.

Finance Officer – Elected Position -The Finance Officer manages the Post's financial operations, including preparing the annual budget, paying expenses, filing IRS forms, and ensuring all financial documentation is provided to the CPA for audits. The Finance Officer chairs the Finance Committee, reviews unbudgeted spending requests, oversees Post investments and renewals, deposits incoming funds, transfers money between accounts to prevent overdrafts, and alerts the Finance Committee when income falls short or expenses exceed the approved budget.

Post Historian - Elected Position - The Post Historian shall maintain a scrapbook, by year, of Post events and happenings that attract local media, other organizations, and patriotic events. The Post Historian will be reimbursed for any out-of-pocket expenses in maintaining the scrapbook. These expenses include, but are not limited to, film, development, printing of photos, printer paper, and other miscellaneous expenses associated with the historian's duties. The Historian shall submit a budget request to the Finance Officer each fiscal year.

Post Chaplain – Elected Position - The Chaplain is responsible for the spiritual leadership of the post. The Chaplain should be ready to provide spiritual leadership during the initiation of new members, the dedications of halls and monuments, and the funeral services for comrades.

Sergeant-at-Arms – Elected Position - Serves as the outer guard of the Post. Assists with the setting up of the meeting room, ensures the proper display of the flags, and introduces and guides new members during meetings and activities.

Post Service Officer – Appointed Position - The job of the Post Service Officer is to assist veterans in locating assistance.

Post Executive Committee – Elected Positions - Consists of the officers of the Post, along with two members at large. The management of the Post is entrusted to the Executive Committee. The administrative affairs of our Post, unless otherwise stated in our by-laws, will be under the supervision of the Executive Committee.

Judge Advocate – Appointed Position - The Judge Advocate interprets the Constitution and Bylaws of our Post. They may be called on to rule on the legality of the Post Officers' actions and decisions insofar as they affect the good of the American Legion.

Americanism Officer – Appointed Position- The Post Americanism Officer promotes patriotism, civic responsibility, and good citizenship within the Post and the local community. This officer helps organize and support patriotic events, including ceremonies for Memorial Day, Flag Day, and Veterans Day. They also encourage youth participation in programs such as the National High School Oratorical Contest, Boys State, the Youth Trooper Program, the Boy Scouts, and American Legion Baseball.

Additional responsibilities include promoting U.S. flag education in local schools, assisting with reports and records, and working with community organizations to strengthen understanding and appreciation of American government, history, and values.

American Legion Family



American Legion Riders (ALR)

<https://www.legion.org/get-involved/community-programs/american-legion-riders>

The American Legion Riders

If you own a motorcycle, The Legion Riders is for you. Members must belong to the American Legion, the Auxiliary, or the Sons of the American Legion. The Spouses of Legion Riders are eligible and encouraged to join as full members.

To be eligible, your motorcycle must be 350cc or above. The American Legion Riders was formed to give prospective, new, and current members who are interested in motorcycles and riding a chance to join our group and participate in various rides together.



The American Legion Auxiliary & Jr. Auxiliary

About Us: The American Legion Auxiliary exemplifies unselfish giving. With almost a million members from all walks of life, the Auxiliary administers hundreds of volunteer programs, gives tens of thousands of hours to its communities and to veterans, and raises millions of dollars to support its own programs as well as other worthwhile charities familiar to most Americans. It is all accomplished with volunteers.

The Auxiliary, organized in 1919 to assist The American Legion, is much more than the name implies. The organization has achieved a unique identity while working side by side with veterans of The American Legion. Like the Legion, the Auxiliary's interests have broadened to encompass the entire community.

The American Legion Auxiliary is the world's largest family patriotic service organization. With nearly 10,500 units in every state and in some foreign countries, the Auxiliary embodies the spirit of America that has prevailed through war and peace. Along with The American Legion, it solidly stands behind America and her ideals. <https://www.legion-aux.org/>



Sons of the American Legion (SAL)

The Sons of The American Legion was created in 1932 as an organized program within The American Legion. The S.A.L. is made up of boys and men of all ages whose parents or grandparents served in the United States military and became eligible for membership in The American Legion. Together, members of The American Legion, The American Legion Auxiliary, The Sons of The American Legion, and the American Legion Riders make up what is known as The Legion Family. All four organizations place high importance on preserving our American traditions and values, improving the quality of life for our nation's children, caring for veterans and their families, and, perhaps most importantly, teaching the fundamentals of good citizenship. <http://www.sal.legion.org>

Meeting Locations and Scheduled Times

American Legion – The Post _____ monthly meetings are held at **7:00 PM** on the first **Wednesday** of **each month** at _____ . **The meetings feature a social and meal starting at 6:15 PM!**

Post Executive Committee (EC) – **The EC monthly meeting is held on the last Tuesday of each month at 7:00 PM in the American Legion Room at _____ .** During the Executive Committee Meeting, the details of the upcoming Post meeting are discussed, and the agenda is finalized. Post finances are reviewed. The Commander may call an Executive Committee meeting at any time to discuss Post business.

American Legion Riders – The Chapter _____ monthly meeting is held on the **second Wednesday** of each month at **6:00 PM** at _____ .

American Legion Auxiliary – The Unit _____ meeting is usually held on the **third Saturday at 9:30 AM, with some meeting dates and times adjusted for special projects.** The meetings are held in the American Legion Room at _____ .

Sons of the American Legion – Squadron _____ meetings are held on the **first Wednesday of each month at 5:30 PM** at _____ .

Frequently Asked Questions

- What do the raps of the gavel mean during a meeting? *One rap calls the meeting to order or seats the group if standing. Three raps are a call for all who are present to stand.*
- How do I approach the head table? *Approach from your right if possible. If you must approach from the left, stop and salute the flag as you approach the head table. You must reverse the above procedure when you return to your seat.*
- Where do members get their caps and any Legion supplies needed? *The American Legion supplies can be purchased through the Post Adjutant or ordered by phone or online. Shop online at <https://emblem.legion.org> or call toll-free: 1-888-453-4466*

Caps of the American Legion and Sons of the American Legion Post, County and Squadron Level



Men's Cap
Post Caps, Navy Blue
American Legion
Legion



Women's Cap
Post Caps, Navy Blue
American Legion



County Commander Cap
Navy Blue, White letters
American Legion



Squadron Cap
French Bleu, yellow letter
Sons of The American

The caps shown above are worn by members of a Post, County or Squadron.

District Organization



District Cap, Legion
Navy Blue Bottom white top



District Cap, SAL
French Blue Bottom white top

The state of South Dakota is divided into eight American Legion Districts, each comprised of multiple counties that include the cities where local Posts are located.

The purpose of each District is to serve as a liaison between the Department (state level) and the local Posts. Districts help communicate information between these levels and assist Posts with any procedural or organizational issues that may arise.

Members of a District are also members of their local Post and/or Squadron, ensuring close cooperation at every level of the organization.

Department and Detachment Levels



Men's Cap



Women's Cap



Men's Cap

Department (State)
American Legion
All White

Detachment (State)
Sons of The American Legion
French Blue Bottom Gold top

The Department (for the American Legion) and Detachment (for the Sons of the American Legion) serve as the state headquarters. They are responsible for collecting annual dues from local Posts and Squadrons and forwarding those funds to the National Organization.

At this level, the Department and Detachment oversee operations across the entire state. They work through the Districts to keep local Posts and Squadrons informed about organizational policies, regulation updates, and the planning and coordination of conferences and conventions.

Members serving at the state level are also members of their local Post and/or Squadron, and many may hold Post or District positions.

National Level



Men's Cap



Women's Cap



Men's Cap

National Legion Cap, All Red

National SAL Cap, All Gold

The National Level oversees all 55 Department (state) organizations and is responsible for administering The American Legion's national programs. This level establishes national policies and maintains direct contact with members of Congress to ensure that our veterans' needs and rights are always represented and protected. Even at this level, members remain first and foremost Post or Squadron members, and many also serve as District or Department (state) officers.

Wearing the American Legion cap, Uniform and Regalia

1. A Legionnaire is in uniform if wearing an official American Legion cap.
 - a. Therefore, it is not proper to wear an American Legion cap while eating a meal at an official Legion or civic luncheon or dinner.
2. The cap should be worn in a place of worship only by the Honor Guard, Color Guard, and the Commander of the same while in marching order or standing guard. When returned to and seated in pews, the cap should be removed.
3. Legion Posts marching in formation into a place of worship should uncover, at the door, hold the cap with the right hand over the heart until arrival in the pews, and be commanded to take seats! They should remain uncovered during the entire service. At the close of the service, upon command, the Post shall arise, the members holding the cap with the right hand over the heart, march out of the place of worship, recovering after marching through the door.
Note: The hat should be held over the heart as one approaches the casket and is not at any time worn in a place of worship except by the Honor Guard, Color Guard, or Commander of same while in marching order or standing guard.
4. Legionnaires not in formation will uncover upon entering the place of worship and remain uncovered during the entire service and will re-cover after leaving the place of worship.
5. At the graveside, the cap should be held in the right hand over the heart (*) during the entire service. In cold and inclement weather, the cap should not be doffed.
6. In Legion meetings, the cap should be worn except during moments of the "Pledge of Allegiance," prayer, and when standing in silent reverence in memory of departed comrades, when the cap should be held with the right hand over the heart.
7. A Legionnaire wearing the cap should behave in proper accordance as to salutes, etc., the same as if the member were wearing the military uniform. If not wearing the Legion cap, the ordinary rules of etiquette for civilian dress should be observed.
8. Female members of The American Legion should wear their caps in the manner prescribed for female personnel of the armed services.
9. Legionnaires wishing to attach decorations and/or other official insignia to their caps are advised of the following excerpts of a National Executive Committee Resolution on this subject:

- a. POST CAPS (members and officers)—All blue, piped in gold and lettered in gold with optional basic lettering, additional lettering, and restrictions as indicated below:
- b. Post numerals at the right front between the piping and the front crease. The full Department name is on the left side, beneath the emblem. The lettering on the emblem side is to be in a straight line. Example: “335” (at right front) “South Dakota” (on left side beneath emblem).
- c. The town name in full and the Department abbreviated on the left side beneath the emblem. Lettering on the emblem side is to be in a straight line. Example: “335” (at right front) “Sylvester, Ga.” (on left side beneath emblem).
- d. Where any additional lettering is desired, this must be on the right side of the cap. This lettering is restricted to the name of the Post, such as “J.S. Jones,” or officer title, such as “Commander” or “Past Adjutant.” Where present or past officer cap insignia or badges are used in place of embroidered titles, these must be on the right side of the cap.
- e. Consecutive membership insignia, membership stars, and/or decorations (authorized American Legion or military services) must be attached to the right side of the cap. Fraternal or civil organization insignia cannot be used on American Legion caps.
- f. Names or nicknames of individual members cannot be used on caps.

Cap Restrictions

- a) The left side (emblem side) of any American Legion cap cannot contain anything other than the official American Legion emblem and lettering as set forth previously in this resolution for Post, County, District, Department, or National caps.
- b) No member of any organization, such as drum and bugle corps, bands and so forth, sponsored by any Post or intermediate organizations between the Department and Post levels, or by any Department, shall wear the official caps having the color, or combination of colors, authorized for the sole use of County, District, Department or National officers, when the members of uniformed groups are not appearing in the full uniform of their group.

American Legion Training

Basic Training- All American Legion members are encouraged to complete the American Legion Basic Training. You will learn how our organization started and what Pillars (core values) we focus on. The following link will take you to the basic training page: [American Legion Education Institute | The American Legion](#)

Mid-winter - The Department of South Dakota Annual Mid-winter conference is primarily devoted to training. Attending Mid-winter is a good opportunity to learn more about the American Legion and how it operates.

South Dakota American Legion College - The South Dakota American Legion College is conducted once annually. This is a great opportunity to prepare Legion members for leadership positions. South Dakota American Legion College applications are available each January and are sent to all Posts.

National American Legion College – The National American Legion College is a six-day immersive experience that goes beyond traditional leadership education, fostering a deep understanding of The

American Legion's core values, the power of collaboration, and service-driven leadership. [American Legion College | The American Legion](#)

Preamble to the Constitution

FOR GOD AND COUNTRY, WE ASSOCIATE OURSELVES TOGETHER

FOR THE FOLLOWING PURPOSES:

- To uphold and defend the Constitution of the United States of America;
- To maintain law and order;
- To foster and perpetuate a one hundred percent Americanism;
- To preserve the memories and incidents of our associations in all wars;
- To inculcate a sense of individual obligation to the community, state, and nation;
- To combat the autocracy of both the classes and the masses;
- To make right the master of might;
- To promote peace and goodwill on earth;
- To safeguard and transmit to posterity the principles of justice, freedom, and democracy;
- To consecrate and sanctify our comradeship by our devotion to mutual helpfulness.