

Up To Now!

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February 7, 2025

Feb 12 President's Day Membership Target date 85%

Feb 14-16 MidWinter Conference, Cedar Shores, Oacoma

Feb 16 Dept Oratory Contest, Cedar Shores, Oacoma

Feb 17 President's Day HQ Closed, Fly the Flag

Feb 22-26 National American Legion Washington Conference

Mar 1 Eagle Scout of the Year applications due to Dept HQ

Mar 5 Commander's Call, 7pm, MS Teams

Mar 9 U.S. Hostage and Wrongful Detainee Day, Fly the Flag

Mar 12 Legion Birthday Membership Target date 90%

Mar 13 Training Committee Meeting, 5pm, MS Teams

Mar 15 Dist 3 Spring Meeting, TBD

Mar 16 Dist 6 Spring Meeting, Plankinton, Plank Inn 9-12 Pancake Breakfast, 1pm Meeting

Mar 17 St Patrick's Day, Fly the Flag

Mar 22 Dist 5 Spring Meeting, Volga, time TBD

Mar 23 Dist 4 Spring Meeting, Cresbard, 1pm meeting, lunch follows

Mar 26 Dept Executive Committee Meeting, 7pm, MS Teams

Mar 29 Dist 8 Spring Meeting, Tabor, time TBD

Mar 29 National Vietnam War Veteran's Day, Fly the Flag

Mar 30 Dist 7 Spring Meeting, Garretson, 11am Social, 12pm Meal, 1pm Meeting

Apr 2 Commander's Call, 7pm, MS Teams

Apr 4-7 National Vice Commander Visit to South Dakota

Apr 5 Gold Star Spouses Day, Fly the Flag

Apr 5 Dist 1 Spring Meeting, TBD

Apr 6 Dist 2 Spring Meeting, Hot Springs

Apr 9 National Former Prisoner of War Day, Fly the Flag

Apr 9 Children & Youth Membership Target date 95%

Apr 15 Tax Day!

Apr 15 Post Data Reports due to Dept HQ

Apr 18-20 Easter Holiday HQ Closed, Fly the Flag

Apr 22 Earth Day, Fly the Flag

Apr 23 Dept Executive Committee Meeting, 7pm, MS Teams

Apr 26-27 SD Legion College, Chamberlain

May 1 Dist submit Good Samaritan of the Year to Dept HQ

May 1 Dist submit Educator of the Year to Dept HQ

May 1 Post Americanism Reports due to Dept HQ

May 1 William Lenker VA&R Award for Excellence due to HQ

May 4 Dist 2&1 Boys & Girls State Orientation, Post 22, RC 1pm

May 4 Dist 7 Boys & Girls State Orientation, Post 15, SF 3pm

May 4 International Firefighters Day, Fly the Flag

May 11 Mother's Day, Fly the Flag

May 15 Peace Officer's Memorial Day, Fly the Flag, (half-staff)

May 17 Armed Forces Day, Fly the Flag

May 26 Memorial Day, Fly the Flag, (half-staff to noon)

May 31 June 6 Boys State, Northern State Univ (NSU), Aberdeen

May 31 Final Day to Register a Baseball Team for the 2025 Season

June 1 Convention Go Getters Certification due to Dept HQ

June 1 SDALPA Newspaper Awards due to HQ

June 1 Consolidated Post Report Reports due

June 4 Convention Delegate and ALT due to Dept HQ

Jun 5 Blue Cap Day at Boys State, NSU

June 6 Remember D-Day, Fly the Flag

June 14 Army Birthday, Fly the Flag

June 15 Father's Day, Fly the Flag

June 19-22 Dept Convention, Huron

June 19 Juneteenth National Independence Day, Fly the Flag

June 21 Post History submissions due to Con Registration Desk

DEPARTMENT COMMANDER'S MESSAGE

Greetings from your Department Commander. Unfortunately, I was not able to be here during the first half of January, but the last half really finished out with a memorable tour of duty. To start with, I had the pleasure of being at the Capital during our Legislative Day. Had lunch with the Boys State Lt Governor and Girls State Governor as well as being extremely honored to be introduced to both the Senate and House of Representatives - what a



highlight. Then it was on to Post 8 for a Legislative Committee meeting to go over the Veteran related bills being submitted this year. At the beginning of February, I was honored to attend the Four Chaplains Memorial at the Sturgis Veterans Center. There were many VSOs represented and boy what a strong show of support from the Black Hills area Legion Riders - great job guys!!!

As we've reached a bit more than halfway mark of the year, it's a perfect time to pause, reflect, and renew our focus on the mission that unites us—our American Legion Family's dedication to serving our communities. From supporting veterans to advocating for youth, this American Legion Family continues to demonstrate the power of unity, making a tangible difference in the lives of those who need it most.

Throughout the year, our members have stood as pillars of strength, often working behind the scenes to organize events, provide support, and lead efforts that reflect our values of service, loyalty, and respect. Whether its assisting veterans transitioning back to civilian life, providing scholarships for local students, or coming together for community service projects, our American Legion Family has always been a force for positive change. This commitment to service doesn't just impact on the lives of those directly involved, it strengthens the very fabric of our communities. Our shared efforts show that when we unite, we do more than make a difference. We inspire others to join us, creating a ripple effect of generosity, care, and resilience that extends far beyond our membership.

Not to take too much thunder away from the Membership Chairman but we are killing it when it comes to membership. We are now number one in the entire National American Legion lineup with 88.83%. So proud of you ALL!!!!!

Looking ahead to the second half of the year, let's keep our momentum strong. We have already achieved so much, but there is always more to be done. Whether it's participating in a fundraiser, hosting a community event, or simply offering a helping hand, every action counts. As we continue to unite as a family, let's remember that our collective impact is immeasurable.

Kevin Morello, Department Commander "Legion Family Uniting Communities"





CAMPING SCHOLARSHIPS FOR SCOUTS

Commander Morello's program this year is to support Scouts to go to Camp. It costs \$400 to send a Scout to camp and the Commander is encouraging all Post to send at least one Scout. Total raised to date is \$5,916.25. Send funds to Dept HQ marked "For Scouting"

COMMANDER'S CALL

Commander Morello is hosting a monthly "Commander's Call" open to all Legionnaires the first Wednesday of the month at 7pm central time. The video link and call in number are below. Join the meeting now

Meeting ID: 225 775 090 784 Passcode: N2jZoD Dial in by phone +1 872-239-6022 Conference ID: 532 867 600#

HAT IN THE RING

Post 136 endorses Kevin Hempel for Dept Commander Post 15 endorses Bill Peters for Dept Commander Post 154 endorses Shane Lamer for Dist 3-8 Vice Commander Post 11 endorses Greg Geiman for Dept Sergeant-at-Arms Post 266 endorses Linda Hessaa for Dist 7 Commander

SD ALA OPENING

The SD American Legion Auxiliary currently has an opening for a Department Treasurer. Job description will be available soon in an upcoming Legionette. Interested candidates can contact Hiring Committee Chairman Linda Holmes, linda.holmes14@icloud.com or 605-770-6228.

SD LEGISLATIVE SESSION

The SD Legislature in session and The Legion needs your help. Below is the official position of the Department. Contact your legislators and let them know where we stand. Daily updates can be found at https://sdlegion.org/legislative-bill-watch-list

HB 1010: Title: Require cost model reports for certain programs and institutions. *Position:* The Dept is monitoring this legislation. **HB 1038 Title:** Repeal provisions regarding the state payment for burial of veterans. *Position:* The Dept opposes this legislation. This would repeal the state payment for burial of a Veteran and Headstone setting reimbursement putting an added burden on a Veteran's family following their passing.

HB 1046 Title: Revise the General Appropriations Act for fiscal year 2025. Position: The Dept is monitoring this legislation. HB 1068 Title: Allow students to wear certain military decorations at a school graduation ceremony. **Position:** The Dept supports this legislation and asks that it be revised to include post-secondary graduations as well not just "A student who is enrolled in a school district". If passed into law this would allow service members to wear a sash, stole, or other military decoration at a school graduation ceremony.to show their pride in taking a solemn oath to Defend this great nation.

HB 1076 Title: Modify provisions pertaining to unethical conduct and improper collection of fees relating to assistance or referrals in a veterans benefits matter. **Position:** The Dept supports this legislation. The American Legion stance is that only Dept of Veterans Affairs (VA)-accredited representatives, properly trained on correct processes and procedures in filing VA claims, should be authorized to file initial claims. We support legislation to restore criminal penalties for persons or companies, including those with foreign ownership, violating VA rules regarding representing or charging veterans fees to file, prepare or prosecute initial VA claims without VA accreditation. Additionally we urge legislation supporting the efforts of VA-accredited organizations, such as The American Legion, who provide appropriate and accurate representation for our nation's veteran. We oppose any legislation that would allow unaccredited parties to become legal representatives without completing the accreditation process. We ask the state attorney general, and state bar associations to identify and prosecute unaccredited individuals and private companies operating as legitimate veteran representatives to the fullest extent of the law. The

American Legion supports this legislation.

HB 1084 Title: Provide free state park and recreation area admission to current and former members of the South Dakota National Guard and their spouses and dependents. Position: The Dept is monitoring this legislation.

HB 1160 Title: waive the driver license renewal period for members of the military and their families, and employees of the state Dept. *Position:* The Dept is monitoring this legislation until further research can be done to ensure the language is in the best interest Military Service Member and their family.

HB 1161 Title: allow additional forms to verify military service for a veteran designation on a commercial driver license or commercial learner's permit. **Dept Position:** The Dept supports this legislation.

HB 1162 Title: require the reporting of the number of veterans who die by suicide in this state. Position: The Dept supports this legislation as it is in line with our Be the One Campaign.

HB 1163 Title: make an appropriation for a grant to assist in the construction and equipping of a veteran's skilled trade center. Position: The Dept is monitoring this until further research can be done to ensure the language is in the best interest of Veterans

HB 1188 Title: allow nonresident military members to purchase three-day temporary nonresident waterfowl licenses. *Position: The* Dept **supports** this legislation.

HB 1198 Title: modify the tuition benefit for dependents and spouses of disabled and deceased veterans. **Position** The Dept fully supports this legislation and askes that the verbiage be changed from "bona fide resident of this state for the five-year period immediately preceding service" to "bona fide resident of this state for a five-year period.'

HCR 6002 Title: Urging the United States Congress and the President of the United States to remove the requirement of a project labor agreement for federal construction projects. **Position:** The Dept is **monitoring** this until further research can be done to ensure the language is in the best interest Military Service Member

SB 6 Title: Make an appropriation to support capital and infrastructure necessitated by the expansion of Ellsworth Air Force Base and to declare an emergency. **Position:** The Dept fully supports this legislation. This would provide grants in support of capital and infrastructure projects that address community needs due to the projected expansion of Ellsworth Air Force Base and its personnel. **SB 16 Title:** Set aside certain contractor's excise tax collections relating to Ellsworth Air Force Base, to create a fund for the collec-

tions, and to provide an appropriation therefor. **Position:** The Dept is monitoring this legislation.

SB 52 Title: Authorize the expansion of the South Dakota Veterans Cemetery and make an appropriation therefor, and to declare an emergency. Position: The Dept fully supports this legislation. This would appropriate general funds and other funds, to meet the federal requirement of the state to put forward state funds to qualify for a federal grant needed for expansion of the South Dakota State Veterans Cemetery.

SB 82 Title: Require official declaration of war or other Congressional action before the SD National Guard may be deployed by the federal government. Position: N/A killed in the Senate.

SB 109 Title: permit a school district to implement a new or revised section 504 plan, individualized family service plan, or individualized education program for a student who is the child of an active-duty member of the United States armed forces. Position: The Dept is **monitoring** this legislation until further research can be done to ensure the language is in the best interest Military Service Member and their family.

SCR 603 Title: Supporting the establishment of a standardized system to recognize and award academic credit or certification for military service. **Position:** The Dept fully supports this legislation. It calls for collaboration between relevant agencies to establish a framework for assessing military training and experience for civilian postsecondary credit and/or certification. Additionally, it calls for transparent procedures from all institutions for evaluating military training and experience and granting credit based on established standards. The American Legion believes Veterans should receive credit where credit is do.

SCR 604 Title: Supporting the expansion of transportation services for veterans receiving medical care in this state. Position: The Dept fully supports this legislation. This resolution urges the United States Dept of Veterans Affairs to expand the availability of transportation services for veterans seeking medical care, expand eligibility requirements for travel reimbursement to include veterans without a service-connected disability and for travel to any treatment at an approved facility.

2025 SD AMERICAN LEGION DEPT COLLEGE

The 2025 South Dakota American Legion College will be April 26 & 27th. Training will include Organizational Structure, Running a Meeting, Mentorship, Resolution Writing, Train-the-Trainer and a Capstone Project. The course is designed to help current and future leaders to gain a better understanding of the American Legion and its operations. Course goers will receive per Diem at the department rate for travel, food and lodging. Class size is limited to ten (10). Applications can be found at https://sdlegion.org/ufile/f1/pdf/ training/department-training-tools/2024-SDLC-Application.pdf

As of this publishing we only have four applicants- get your applications in NOW!!!!

DISTRICT ORATORICAL CONTEST WINNERS

Congratulations to the District Oratorical Winners! These young women will now advance on to the State Contest on Feb 16 at 10:30am at Cedar Shores in Oacoma.

DIST 1- Christian Carley, Piedmont

DIST 2- Blixa L. Broussard, Rapid City

DIST 3- Madi Alexander, Gettysburg

DIST 4- Ada Sharp, Aberdeen

DIST 5- Xander Haagensen, Castlewood

DIST 6-Preston Singrey

DIST 7- Elna Andrews, Beresford

BOYS STATE REGISTRATION IS OPEN

The Commander challenges every Post to Send at least one Boy to Boys State. Boys State registration can be found on the South Dakota Boys State website, the address for applicants:

https://southdakotaboysstate.org/apply The registration fee for Boys State is \$250 per student and is payable to the Boys State Treasurer. Registration closes on May 1, 2025. We currently have **28 Boys signed up.** The following Posts have Boys Registered: ABERDEEN Post 24- 7 Boys, GARRETSON Post 23- 4 Boys SIOUX FALLS Post 15-3 Boy, CASTLEWOOD Post 250-1 Boy VERMILLION Post 1-1 Boy, PIEDMONT Post 311-1 Boy SPEARFISH Post 164- 1 Boy, WARNER Post 137- 1 Boy LAKE PRESTON Post 63-1 Boy, PIERRE Post 8-1 Boy WARNER Post 137- 1 Boy, HARRISBURG Post 45- 1 Boy MADISON Post 25- 1 Boy, BELLE FOURCHE Post 32- 1 Boy RAPID CITY Post 22- 1 Boy, EMERY Post 166- 1 Boy MARTIN Post 240–1 Boy, BRANDON Post 318–1 Boy

YOUTH TROOPER REGISTRATION IS OPEN

The Youth Trooper Academy is another outstanding program of the South Dakota American Legion. Registration/Application forms can be found on the website here: https://sdlegion.org/sd-youthtrooper-academy The deadline for applications is March 21, 2025. We currently have 6 applicants.

Brandon Valley HS- 1 Boy, Roosevelt HS - 1 Girl, Yankton HS- 1 Boy, Jefferson HS 1 Boy, Mitchell HS- 1 Boy, Lennox HS- 1 Boy

POST THAT HAVE NOT CERTIFIED THEIR OFFICERS. 30 PARKER, 44 ALSEN, 82 BULLHEAD, 86 ALCESTER, 89 PRESHO, 125 ROSEBUD, 158 OLDHAM, 201 PUKWANA, 238 OELRICHS, 239 LITTLE EAGLE, 251 PINE RIDGE, 265 KYLE, 269 WANBLEE, 269 PORCUPINE, 295 PARMELEE, 301 DRAPER, 302 MANDERSON, 317 ALLEN

FUTURE DEPARTMENT CONVENTION AND MIDWIN-TER DATES AND LOCATIONS

2025 Convention, Crossroads Hotel, Huron, June 19-22

2026 MidWinter, Cedar Shores Resort, Oacoma, Feb 20-22

2026 Convention, Ramkota, Aberdeen, June 18-21

2027 MidWinter, Cedar Shores Resort, Oacoma, Feb 19-21

2027 Convention, Ramkota, Sioux Falls June 17-20

2025 MID-WINTER CONFERENCE

The Mid-Winter Conference is being hosted by Potter Post 3, and will be held at the Cedar Shore Resort, in Oacoma, 14-16 February 2025. All the rooms are full at the hotel but you can request to be placed on the waiting list by calling the resort at 605-234-6376. Other lodging in the area are: Best Western Lee's Motor Inn 605-234-5575 (2.4 miles), A Bridge View Inn 605-234-5566 (2.5 miles), Bel Aire Motel 605-234-5595 (2.7 miles), Baymont 605-215 -5766 (2.8 miles), Oasis Inn 605-734-6061 (2.8 miles), Econo Lodge 605-734-4100 (3.3 miles), Howard Johnson 605-679-6367 (3.4 miles), Quality Inn 605-7354-5593 (3.5 miles), Super 8 605-299-1059 (3.6 miles), AmericInn 605-496-9493 (5.6 miles)

2025 MIDWINTER CONFERENCE AGENDA

Cedar Shore Resort & Conference Center, Oacoma, SD

Friday, February 14, 2025

10:00 a.m. Department Finance Commission Meeting

SAL Detachment Executive Committee Meeting

12:00 p.m. Registration Desk Opens

Boys State Board of Directors Meeting

1:00 p.m. Department Executive Committee Meeting

3:00 p.m. SAL Detachment Executive Committee Meeting

4:30 p.m. SDAL Foundation Meeting

5:30 p.m. No-Host Social

6:30 p.m. Joint Legion Family Banquet

Saturday, February 15, 2025

7:30 a.m. Registration Desk Opens 8:00 a.m. Joint Opening Session

9:00 a.m. Boys State Planning Session

9:55 a.m. Recess Joint Session

10:00 a.m. **BREAKOUT SESSION 1:**

Be the One Training

Post Constitution and By-Laws

Navigating the new Websites Legion+ App Training

11:30 a.m. **BREAKOUT SESSION 2:**

Be the One Training

American Legion Reports & Awards

Navigating the new Websites

Legion+ App Training

1:00 p.m. LUNCH BREAK

1:00 p.m. SAL Business meeting

1:30 p.m. **BREAKOUT SESSION 3:**

Be the One Training

American Legion Reports & Awards

Post Constitution and By-Laws

3:00 p.m. Department Reconvene

4:15 p.m. Sweepstakes Drawing

4:25 p.m. Announcements and Adjourn Assembly

4:30 p.m. American Legion Rider meeting

4:30 p.m. Membership Meeting

6:00 p.m. Go-Getter Reception & Smorgasbord

Sunday, February 16, 2025

8:30 a.m. Non-Denominational Service Four Chaplains 10:30 a.m. SD American Legion – Oratorical Contest

THE AMERICAN LEGION LEGACY SCHOLARSHIP

Children of post-9/11 veterans having been assigned a combined disability rating of 50 percent or greater or who died while on active duty on or after Sept. 11, 2001 are eligible. All applications new or renewal must be submitted using the online scholarship submission system begin NO LATER THAN Wednesday, March 26, 2025. Total amount awarded in 2024: \$1,645,558 https://www.legion.org/getinvolved/scholarships/the-american-legion-legacy-scholarship

SOUTH DAKOTA EDUCATOR OF THE YEAR

The Dept Education Committee is asking all locals Posts to coordinate with their local Schools to identify potential candidates for the South Dakota Educator of the Year for School Year 2024-2025. Posts must submit nominees to their District Commander prior to Spring District Meeting. District Commander will submit to the Dept HQ no later than May 1, 2025. For more information visit https:// sdlegion.org/educator-of-the-year or contact Mike Pauling at 443-619-2049.

TRAINING TUESDAY UPDATE

There is an exciting lineup for National's Training Tuesday sessions. Below is the current schedule:

- Feb 25, 2025: Programs *SAL*
- Mar 25, 2025: Resolutions Workshop Ideas to Resolutions
- April 29, 2025: Be The One Addiction Resources
- May 27, 2025: Membership CPR/CSR
- June 24, 2025: Resolutions Socializing Resolutions
- July 29, 2025: Be The One *UPDATE*

Get more info at www.legion.org/information-center/training/ training-tuesdays

NATIONAL COMMANDER POST EXCELLENCE AWARD

To qualify for the Post Excellence Award, a post is required to achieve excellence in four areas:

- 1) Membership: Attain at least 103% of their membership goal. At least one post officer attends district meetings.
- 2) Consolidated Post Report: CPRs submitted by July 1.
- 3) 90% Renewal Rate: Renew at least 90% of their 2024 members
- 4) Conduct an event that connects the community and Post.

The district commander responsible for the post will certify a post as having achieved the four specified criteria and submit to Dept HQ. List should include the post name, phone number, address, and commander's name. If possible, attach copies of press releases. Dept HQ will send Posts that qualify to National HQ.

NATIONAL COMMANDER 103% MEMBERSHIP GOAL DOG TAG COIN

Any Post, District, County, Department Commander or Membership Chair who achieves 103% of their member goal in 2025 can receive a dog tag coin. Complete the form online at www.legion.org/about/ leadership/national-commander/103-percent-membership-award & send it to Dept HQ hq@legion.org for verification.

NATIONAL COMMANDER'S MEMBERSHIP INCENTIVE DOG TAG COIN

A National Commander's "Be the One" dog tag coin will be awarded to any Legionnaire who obtains three new members. A new member is anyone who was not a member during the 2024 member year. Transfers, Auxiliary and Sons members don't count. Only one coin per individual. Complete the form online at www.legion.org/about/ leadership/national-commander/national-commanders-incentiveprogram and send it to National HQ kadams@legion.org

REMINDER TO ALL AMERICAN LEGION POSTS TO FILE **IRS FORM 990**

Federal tax regulations require every Post to file IRS form 990. This must be filled out by the 15th day of the fifth month after the end of your organizations accounting period. If the IRS does not receive this form, they will revoke the tax-exempt status of the Post. To get your Tax-exempt status back you have to apply and pay a sizeable fee. This process takes time (months) and can challenge even the most patient of individuals. The form can be down-loaded at https://www.irs.gov/ pub/irs-pdf/f990.pdf

POST DATA REPORT

PDR are being mailed directly to your Post soon. They are critical this year with the dues increase. The minimum member dues should be \$43.50 or the Post will have to make up the difference. Please return them to Dept HQ no later than April 15, 2025.

2024-2025 MEMBERSHIP DUES

The 2024-2025 dues are \$38.50 for each member sent to HQ. **DEPARTMENT DUES INCREASE!**

At the 2024 Department Convention a \$5 dues increase was passed that will take effect July 1, 2025. This increase will require all Posts to charge more for membership and makes submitting *Post Data Reports* critical this year. 2025-2026 minimum dues will be \$43.50 for each member. More information to follow in future UTNs.

MEMBERSHIP CHAIRMAN'S MESSAGE

Mid-Winter Conference Alert!

Hey Team, all members of the South Dakota American Legion, The Mid-Winter Conference is just a few days away, and I couldn't be more excited! February marks the start of the second half of the year, and as a team, South Dakota hangs in there. As of today, we're at 13,926 members—just 114 members short of our 90% goal that I set a while back. I need your help to reach that 90% mark. Let's make it happen! Here's the breakdown:

South Dakota: 89.27%

France: 88.77%

North Dakota: 88.29%

Arizona 80.17%

Congratulations and a huge thank you for all the support you've shown to me and the Legion this year. Let's take a moment to celebrate these small milestones and victories, but remember, our work is not done yet! 🔗

Our next big milestone is the **Big 12 Contest**. For those of you wondering, "What is the Big 12 Contest?" when South Dakota, along with all the other Departments, met in Indianapolis this last fall, we had to commit to a membership number to achieve by March 12, 2025. The contest is right around the corner, and we're in it to win it! There is \$2000.00 on the line for your Department.

As of today, we need **458 more members** to qualify and have a shot at winning the Big 12 back-to-back. Our friendly rivals are on the move:

North Dakota: 92.21% (currently at 88.29%)

Kentucky: 93% (currently at 79.46%)

To secure our victory, we need to hit that 92.2% mark and ensure North Dakota and Kentucky stay below their thresholds. It's a thrilling race, but I know we've got the spirit to come out on top!

Let's keep pushing forward with the Eye of the Tiger spirit, and together, we'll achieve greatness!

See you all in Chamberlain February 14-16, 2025.

Go Team South Dakota! 🜮 Bill



