



Up To Now!

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VA GOVERNMENT SHUTDOWN IMPACTS

Congress failed to reach an agreement by the Oct. 1 deadline to ensure the Federal Government is funded and continues operating as normal. Essential government functions will continue, however, veterans, service members, federal employees and other Americans will be impacted.

What does a Government Shutdown Mean?

During a shutdown, non-essential government employees are dismissed from their work, and programs using discretionary spending are paused. Discretionary spending includes the operating costs of most federal agencies, programs, and departments, including the National Park Service, the Department of Education, and the Department of Defense.

Federal employees whose jobs are deemed “essential” are still required to report to work as usual, but they will not receive their paychecks until the shutdown ends.

What does this Mean for the Department of Veterans’ Affairs and My Benefits?

During a shutdown, VA Medical Centers, Outpatient Clinics, and Vet Centers will be open as usual and provide services. Veteran health care is not impacted. VA Medical Centers, Outpatient Clinics, and Vet Centers will be open.

VA benefits will continue to be processed and delivered, including compensation, pension, education, and housing benefits. Burials will continue at VA national cemeteries. Applications for headstones, markers, and burial benefits processing will continue. The Board of Veterans’ Appeals will continue decisions on veterans’ cases.

VA Contact Centers (1-800-MyVA411) and the Veterans Crisis Line (Dial 988, Press 1) are open 24/7.

Available services are subject to change depending on the length of the shutdown.

What Services are Going to be Paused During the Shutdown?

The following services will be paused during the length of the shutdown:

- VA will not provide veteran career counseling or transition assistance program activities.
- The GI Bill Hotline will be closed.
- VA regional benefits offices will be closed.
- VA will cease public affairs and outreach to veterans.
- VA will not permanently place headstones or maintain the grounds at VA national cemeteries.
- VA will not process applications for pre-need burials.
- VA will not print new presidential memorial certificates.

What is The American Legion Doing to Help?

Through the shutdown, The American Legion will provide frequent outreach containing updates on next steps, as well as updates on how national staff is working with partners to help end the shutdown.

Be on the lookout for an official statement from National Commander Dan K. Wiley, which will include resources you can utilize if your salary is impacted by the shutdown.

What Can I Do to Help?

We are strongly urging the entire American Legion Family to contact their members of Congress ASAP to fully fund government programs and re-open the federal government.

(UPCOMING EVENTS ON LAST PAGE)

DEPARTMENT COMMANDER’S MESSAGE

Dear Legionnaires,

Here it is the start of October and I cannot believe my year as being Department Commander is one fourth complete. Time is going quickly. Six out of eight fall district meetings have been held and a number of department leaders are getting ready to head to Indianapolis for National fall meetings.

Many of you know that my campaign theme was L.I.S.T. Previous messages discussed the “L” and “I” so this month I would like to focus on the “S.” This is Serving our veterans, children & youth, and our communities. I know we all work on the big things for our veterans, like helping with benefits, medical help, and funeral honors. But I would like everyone to focus on some of the smaller items that can have a big impact. Simple acts like helping a home bound veteran get to medical appointments, helping with some home repairs or just stopping by to talk with them can make a big difference in that veteran’s life. Another item that can make a big difference in a veteran/service member’s life is being there for the family during deployments. Many of our National Guard members come from small towns where there may not be an organization to help families while the member is serving this great country. Letting the family know if they need help, they can certainly call the Post. To make it simple how about the post adopt the family while the service member is deployed. Serving our children and youth can come in many forms for a post, but supporting programs such as Oratory, Boys/Girls State, Youth Trooper Academy, baseball and shooting sports can have a big impact on our youth. Please get out into the community, schools, community organizations, and parent’s groups and discuss the impact we can have on the youth.

As I finish this month’s column, I would like to add that I am still looking for several Legionnaires to serve on the education committee, VA&R Commission and especially someone from the Sturgis area to serve on the National Cemetery/SD Veterans Cemetery Support Council. If you are interested, please contact me or the Adjutant in the office. Have a great October.



Kevin Hempel
Department Commander
L.I.S.T.
Be The One to make a difference



MEMBERSHIP CHAIRMAN'S MESSAGE – RENEW BEFORE NOVEMBER 11 – KEEP OUR LEGION STRONG!

As we move toward Veterans Day, now is the time to renew your 2026 dues. Every renewal strengthens The American Legion's voice in Washington, Pierre, and right here in our local communities. By renewing early—before November 11th—you ensure your Post is strong, active, and ready to continue our mission of service.

A special reminder: The Post Membership Award is in full swing! Posts that reach their goals will be entered into the \$200 drawing at Mid-Winter Conference. Don't wait—renewing today not only secures your membership, but it also helps your Post qualify for this exciting award.

We've already completed six Fall District Meetings with great participation. Congratulations to District 6 for leading the way with the best attendance so far this fall! There are still two opportunities to join in:

- District 4 – October 11 in Stratford
- Oct 11 District 4 Meeting Stratford, SD on Saturday, October 11, 2025 - the meeting will be at 1 p.m. with a meal to follow.
- District 5 – October 12 in Sisseton
- Oct 12 District 5 Meeting 12:30 at Rosalie's Restaurant - 9 - 8th Ave East, Sisseton - it will be order on your own off the menu, the Legion meeting will start at 2:00 p.m. and a social will follow. The Auxiliary will meet at 1:30 p.m. at the St. Peters Catholic Church

Remember—you don't have to attend the meeting in your own district. Come where it works for you! Commander Hemple will be presenting his plan for the year, along with important updates from Department staff. We hope to see you at one of these meetings.

Take a moment, renew now, and encourage your fellow members to do the same. Together, we can hit our goals and celebrate our victories at Mid-Winter.

Renew your dues today at: legion.org/renew.

contact your Post, or scan the QR code.

USA! USA! USA!

Bill Peters, Membership Chair

605.360.6547 bpeters0551@gmail.com



USA 250 CHALLENGE: WHO'S READY FOR BRAGGING RIGHTS?

The USA 250 Challenge is off and running — and it's not just about running! This year-long celebration invites every American Legion Family member to get involved through fitness, mental wellness, and community service. The best part? Many posts, units, and squadrons already have activities on the books that count — everything you've been doing since July 5, 2025, and all the way until July 4, 2026, can be part of the challenge.

Think about it: that post-blood drive, the color guard's miles marched, the hours you've spent mentoring youth, or even the time you carved out for stress-relieving activities — it all adds up. And now it's time to see just how much we can accomplish when we put it together.

We're cooking up some friendly competition between posts and districts to keep the fun going. Imagine your post earning bragging rights for the most hours of community service, or your district being recognized for its support of mental wellness. Stay tuned for details — but trust us, you'll want your team in the game!

So grab your USA 250 Challenge shirt, keep track of what you're already doing, and get ready to show off what the Legion Family can accomplish. Together, we'll honor America's 250th birthday in a way only we can: through service, wellness, and a little bit of fun competition.

Learn more and sign up at legion.org/usa250/challenge.

BOYS STATE AND YOUTH TROOPER

Applications are now being accepted for Boys State and YTA. Applications can be found at <https://sdlegion.org/programs>. Now is the time to get out and start recruiting for these great programs.

DISTRICT ORATORICAL DATES

DIST. 1- Melanie McDonald, caminal228@proton.me 15030 Countryside Church, Spearfish, 1/11/26, 2pm, Storm date, 1/18/26

DIST. 2- Doug Harris doughnut@gmail.com, SDSM&T Classroom Bldg, 1/4/26 10am, Storm date, 1/11/26

DIST. 3- Larry Madsen, larry_madsen@hotmail.com, Faith Lutheran Church Christian Living Center, Pierre, 1/18/26, 2pm, Storm date, 1/25/26

DIST. 4- Dale Strom, dale_strom@yahoo.com, Post Home, 1/10/26 contestants arrive at 12:30pm.

DIST. 5- Arlo Jurens, arlo@century21gka.com 48228, Castlewood Community Center, 1/11/26, 1pm, Storm date, 1/18/26

DIST. 6- Jim Pekron, Pekronjim@gmail.com, Kimball American Legion Post, 1/17/26, 1pm, Storm date, 1/24/26

DIST. 7- Dan Wyatt, dakotasarge@gmail.com, 1/11/26 1 Storm date 1/18/26

DIST. 8- TO BE DETERMINED. Steve Mueller, 605-661-0694, stevemuel195@gmail.com, Springfield Community Center, 1/10/26, 10am, Storm Date 1/17/26

NOW RECRUITING: 2025–2026 AMERICAN LEGION AIR RIFLE PROGRAM

The American Legion's Junior 3-Position Air Rifle Shooting Sports Program is now open for the 2025–2026 season. Legion Posts are encouraged to recruit youth participants by partnering with local organizations such as JROTC, 4-H, CMP, USA Shooting, and the NRA.

This annual competition fosters discipline, focus, and marksmanship while promoting community engagement—core to the Legion's Americanism mission.

New for South Dakota:

The Department Convention approved a scholarship program awarding two annual scholarships to top youth competitors. To qualify, participants must:

- Compete in the first round of the Junior 3-Position Tournament at their local club

- Register for the Winter Classic Sporter Tournament in Pierre (Feb 2026)

- Be in one of two age groups:

 - J1 & J2: Ages 15–19, still in high school

 - J3: Under age 15

Now is the time to engage schools, youth clubs, and community groups. Whether starting a new team or expanding an existing one, your efforts help shape responsible, skilled citizens.

Registration Deadline: December 14, 2025 (Midnight ET)

- Register here <https://www.legion.org/get-involved/youth-programs/junior-shooting-sports/postal-match>

- Program Info legion.org/jssp-club-registration.

Let's continue the proud tradition of American Legion youth programs by supporting the Junior Air Rifle Tournament.

BASEBALL BIDS DUE

Bids for the 2027 Regional and State tournaments are due to the Athletic Commission no later than December 1, 2025. If you are interested in hosting one of the tournaments contact Beau Garcia for more information. beau.garcia2@gmail.com or 605-206-0347

2025 SDAL GOLF TOURNAMENT

The 2025 American Legion Golf Tournament was hosted by Post 13 of Wakonda. The tournament was held September 20th at Glenridge Golf Course in Irene and on September 21st at the Bluffs in Vermillion. There was also a banquet that was held at Post 13. Our featured speaker was our State Commander.

Thirty-two participated in the tournament. The winning teams were Post 13 of Wakonda and Post 118 from Hartford. The tournament was declared a tie!!

A special thanks go out to Wakonda Post for setting up the tournament and the Banquet. Also a special thanks to the staff at both Glenridge and The Bluffs for their hospitality. Commission-

ers: Randy Miller, Gene Gillen, Elton Blemaster

MEMBERSHIP CARDS

Cards are in the mail!!!

Headquarters has received the 2026 membership cards. Certify your officers **NOW** to receive your cards. The form is in the Post Adjutant's Administrative and Awards Manual or you can email the information to hq@sdlegion.org or give Judy a call at Dept HQ.

POSTS THAT HAVE NOT CERTIFIED OFFICERS

10 Lake Andes, 19 Wood, 41 Alexandria, 77 Blunt, 125 Rosebud, 145 Howard, 148 Conde, 157 Vivian, 239 Little Eagle, 248 Freeman, 251 Pine Ridge, 256 N Underwood, 265 Kyle, 269 Wanblee, 289 Mansfield, 294 Porcupine, 295 Parmelee, 297 St Francis, 310 Norris, 317 Allen, 324 Rock Creek

LEGION INVOLVEMENT IN POLITICS

Article II, Section 2, of the Constitution of The American Legion states, "The American Legion shall be absolutely nonpolitical and shall not be used for the dissemination of partisan principles nor for the promotion of the candidacy of any person seeking public office or preferment." Additionally the National Charter, approved by Congress, stipulates The American Legion as an organization is nonpolitical. Therefore, The American Legion as an organization is never to help or endorse a candidate. As a private citizen and not speaking for the organization, can do whatever is legal and ethical to advance his/her candidacy. If attending a political event, The American Legion cap, or any clothing with The American Legion emblem visible, must be removed so as not to imply any endorsement by The American Legion. This includes in person or over social media.

The American Legion values its independence and effectiveness on veterans' issues. This stance is best maintained by neutrality on all individual candidates or political parties. The American Legion, by legal definition, is non-partisan and supports "or opposes as necessary" only issues which impact the Four Pillars.

FUTURE DEPARTMENT CONVENTION AND MIDWINTER DATES AND LOCATIONS

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
2028 MidWinter, Cedar Shores Resort, Oacoma, Feb 18-20

2030 & 2031 DEPT CONVENTION & MIDWINTER

Bids for the 2030 Convention are being accepted, at this time there is one bid from Chamberlain Post 3 for convention. Posts and Convention Centers who desire to submit bids to host either events should send that information to the Dept Adjutant. Application forms are available from Dept. Arrowwood Resort, in Oacoma was selected for the 2030 MidWinter Conference. Bids for 2030 Convention are due to the Dept ADJ by Feb. 15 for consideration during the MidWinter Conference and bids for the 2031 Convention and MidWinter are due by June 12, 2026.

2026 MID-WINTER

The Mid-Winter Conference is being hosted by Potter Post 3, and will be held at the Arrowwood Resort, in Oacoma, 20-22 February 2026. The entire hotel is blocked off for the Midwinter, reservations can be made by calling the resort at 605-234-6376. The rate for the Standard King or Double Queen room is \$104 plus taxes. Be sure to mention you will be attending the American Legion Midwinter Conference. Other details such as the Joint Banquet, Go-Getters, and training sessions will be coming soon. Other lodging available:

- AmericInn 605-234-0985 \$105. 10 rooms blocked until 2 Feb, must state with The American Legion to get that rate.

- Best Western 605-734-5575 2 beds \$98, 1 bed 2 people \$88
- Baymont 1-888-712-6558 \$119
- Howard Johnson 605-234-4222 \$89
- EconoLodge 605-734-4100 \$69 1 queen, \$79 2 queen
- Quality Inn 605-734-5593 1 queen \$ 89, 2 queen \$ 99, 1 king \$94

LEGIONNAIRE INSURANCE TRUST (LIT)

This Year the Department received \$22,500 from the LIT Program.

Every legionnaire who signs up for any of the LIT programs brings money right back here to our Department.

As a member of the Legion Family, you're eligible for No Cost LegionCare Insurance. \$5,000 NO COST To You Accidental Death Protection if traveling on official American Legion business. \$1,000 Accidental Death Protection for all other covered accidents. Activate your NO COST To You insurance coverage today.

<https://www.thelit.com/no-cost-legioncare/>

The Legionnaire Insurance Trust is a trusted provider for Medicare Supplement and Medicare solutions, offering protection designed for American Legion members. Upcoming Medicare Open Enrollment period is October 15 - December 7, 2025. For those turning 65, or already eligible, this is your time to review and enroll. [e-Health Medicare](#), through LIT, connects members to: A+ rated Medicare Supplement & Advantage plans Nationwide access to top carriers.

SDAL FOUNDATION

Did you know that the SDAL can facilitate donations directly to your Post or programs. Many donors are reluctant to donate to a Veteran Non-Profit 501c19 and only want to donate to a 501c3 for various tax reasons. Well that is where the SDAL Foundation can help. Call or email the Dept Adj for the application and more information.

AMERICAN LEGION TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES

The National Regional Information Conference (NRIC) is your chance to connect in person with Legion Family leaders, sharpen your knowledge of Constitution & Bylaws, Post Operations, Be The One, and more. These one-day conferences are designed to strengthen leadership, improve member engagement, and equip you to serve veterans and communities more effectively.

Indianapolis, IN – Saturday, January 31, 2026

Marriott East, 7202 East 21st Street

[Register for Indianapolis](#)

Atlanta, GA – Saturday, February 7, 2026

The Westin Atlanta Airport, 4736 Best Road

[Register for Atlanta](#)

If you missed earlier sessions of Training Tuesday, find them at: legion.org/information-center/training/training-tuesdays.

Both NRIC and Training Tuesday are built to prepare members for effective leadership, stronger Post operations, and mission-driven resolutions that make a difference.

NATIONAL COMMANDER'S INCENTIVE PROGRAM

National Commander's Incentive Program

National Commander Dan Wiley will award his national commander Be the One membership incentive pin to any Legionnaire who obtains two new members into The American Legion.

A new member is any eligible person joining for the 2026 membership year who was not a member of during the 2025 membership year. Transfers do not count as new members.

Each member listed must be eligible for membership in The American Legion. Auxiliary and Sons members do not count toward this incentive.

Only one coin per individual. Staff will confirm the names in the database and mail the coin directly. [Download the form](#)

103% Membership Award

National Commander Wiley will award his Be the One mem-

bership incentive pin to any post commander, district commander, county commander, department commander or membership chairman who achieves 103% of their assigned membership goal for 2026. Coins will be mailed directly to the recipient unless otherwise stated.

[Download Award Form](#)

Post Excellence Award

To qualify a post must achieve in four areas: membership, Consolidated Post Report, 90% renewal rate, and community activity.

The standard to be achieved in each area is as follows:

Membership: The post must attain at least 103% of their membership goal. At least one post officer attends district meetings.

Consolidated Post Report: CPRs must be submitted by July 1.

90% Renewal Rate: The post must renew at least 90% of their members that were on the 2024 roster.

Community Activity: The post must conduct an event that connects the local community with The American Legion post.

Certification for the award: The district commander responsible for the post will certify a post as having achieved the four specified criteria. The district commander will submit a list of posts meeting the criteria to Dept HQ. That list should include the post name, phone number, address and commander's name. If possible, accompany the last two criteria with copies of press releases submitted to the local media about the projects. Dept ADJ will Forward to Nat HQ.

100% American Legion Family Ribbon

Commander Wiley will award his 100% American Legion Family Ribbon to any American Legion Family that achieves 100% membership by the 2026 100% membership target date. For this award, the Legion Family is defined as a post and/or any combination of an Auxiliary unit or Sons squadron. Each must achieve 100% membership to qualify for the award. Dept ADJ will Forward to Nat HQ.

OCTOBER HISTORY

Oct 13, 1775 The Continental Congress established the Continental Navy, which later became the U.S. Navy.

Oct. 17, 1923 The American Legion National Convention in San Francisco passes a resolution (still in effect) that expresses its firm support of equal rights and opportunities "without distinction as to race, color, creed or class." The resolution condemns any individual, group or organization that "creates or fosters racial, religious or class strife among our people, or which takes into their own hands the enforcement of law, determination of guilt, or infliction of punishment, to be un-American, a menace to our liberties and destructive to our fundamental law."

Oct 27, 1943 Captain Arlo L. Olson of Toronto, SD paid the ultimate sacrifice near the Volturno River in Italy during WWII. For his conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity at the risk of his life above and beyond the call of duty he was awarded the Medal of Honor.

Oct 1, 1946 - Twelve Nazi leaders were sentenced to death at the International War Crimes Tribunal in Nuremberg, Germany

Oct. 20, 1951 During action with a hostile enemy near Sangsan-ni, Korea, Master Sergeant Woodrow W. Keeble of Waubay displayed extraordinary courage, selfless service, and devotion to duty earning him the Medal of Honor awarded Mar 17, 2008

Oct. 20 1978 Disestablishment of the Women's Army Corps.

Oct. 23, 1983 The Grenada Campaign begins.

Oct. 11, 1990 The Legion creates the Family Support Network to assist families of servicemembers deployed for operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm in the Middle East. Through local posts, the network offers a wide range of assistance, including financial assistance, mowing lawns, baby-sitting and more.

Oct. 7, 2001 start of the Afghanistan War.

Oct. 10-11, 2001 The American Legion creates the American Legacy Scholarship Fund for children of military members killed on active duty on or after Sept. 11, 2001.

Oct. 17-18, 2007 American Legion Riders becomes a national program of The American Legion.

Oct. 1, 2023 American Legion accredited service officers secure what is believed to be an all-time one-year high in VA of \$18.8 billion. Claims related to the PACT Act account for a \$4 billion increase in benefits between 2020 and 2023.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Oct 3 Fallen Hero Bridge Dedication, SGT Dirk Abbas, Britton Event Center, 2pm

Oct 6-9 National Fall Meetings, Indianapolis

Oct 9 Leif Eriksson Day

Oct 7 Midwest Honor Flight Mission 28

Oct 8 Fallen Hero Bridge Dedication, PVT Leroy Goosen (location and time to be determined)

Oct 11 District 4 Meeting, Stratford Post 207, Meeting 1pm social and meal to follow

Oct 12 District 5 Meeting Rosalie's Restaurant Sisseton 1230 meal (pay for yourself), 2pm Meeting

Oct 13 Native American Day, **Office Closed**, Fly the Flag

Oct 14 Commander's Town Hall 7pm, MS Teams

Oct 15 VAVS Committee Meeting, MS Teams 10am

Oct 15 SD Vets Council Meeting, Virtual, 1pm

Oct 15 MEMBERSHIP TARGET DATE- FALL MEETINGS 55%

Oct 21 Finance Commission Meeting, 7pm, MS Teams

Oct 23 DEC Meeting 7pm via MS Teams

Oct 31 Halloween (All Hallows' Eve)!

Nov 8 Northern Hills Veterans Appreciation Fair, Sturgis Community Center, 11am-2pm

Nov 8 Day County Vets Banquet, Webster Armory, 5pm

Nov 8 Northern Hills Vet Appreciation Fair "We've Got Your Six" Sturgis 11am-2pm

Nov 11 Veterans Day, **Office Closed**, Fly the Flag

Nov 13 MEMBERSHIP TARGET DATE- VETERANS DAY 65%

Nov 13 DEC Meeting 7pm via MS Teams

Nov 15 Employment Awards due to Dept HQ

Nov 16-21 National American Legion College

Nov 19 SD Vets Council Meeting, DAV HQ, Sioux Falls, 9am

Nov 19 Legislative Round Table, Sioux Falls DAV HQ 1-4pm

Nov 20 Legislative Round Table, (North East)

Nov 21 Legislative Round Table, Rapid City

Nov 22 Legislative Round Table, Pierre

Nov 27-30 Thanksgiving, **Office Closed**, Fly the Flag

Dec 2 Governor's Budget Address 1pm

Dec 10 MEMBERSHIP TARGET DATE- PEARL HARBOR 75%

Dec 13 Wreaths Across America Ceremony, SD Vet Cemetery, Sioux Falls, 11am

Dec 13 Athletic Commission Meeting, Pierre Post 8, 11am

Dec 24-28 Christmas, **Office Closed**

Dec 31-Jan 4 New Year's, **Office Closed**

Dec 31 Law Enforcement Officer of the Year nominations due to HQ

Dec 31 Firefighter/EMT of the Year nominations due to HQ

Dec 31 EMT of the Year nominations due to HQ

Jan 4 DIST 2 Oratory SDSM&T Classroom Bldg, Rapid City, 10am storm date Jan 11

Jan 11 DIST 1 Oratory Countryside Church, Spearfish 2pm, storm date, Jan 18

Jan 11 DIST 5 Oratory Castlewood Community Center 1pm, storm date, Jan 18

Jan 11 DIST 7 Oratory Humboldt Community Center 1pm, storm date, Jan 18

Jan 10 DIST 4 Oratory Post Home, 617 S 15th St, Aberdeen 12:30pm, no storm date

Jan 10 DIST 8 Oratory Springfield Community Center 10am, storm date, Jan 17 Jan 13 SD Legislative Session Opens

Jan 13 Commander's Town Hall 7pm, MS Teams

Jan 14 MEMBERSHIP TARGET DATE- MID-WINTER 80%

Jan 14 SD Veterans Council Meeting, Pierre Post 8 2-5pm

Jan 14 SD Veterans Council Legislative Reception 5:30-7:30pm

Jan 17 DIST 3 Oratory Kimball American Legion Post, 1pm storm date, Jan 24

Jan 18 DIST 3 Oratory Faith Lutheran Christian Living Center, Pierre, 2pm storm date, Jan 25

Jan 19 Martin Luther King Jr Day, **Office Closed**

Jan 22 Monthly DEC Meeting, MS Teams 7pm

Feb 1 MidWinter Go-Getter certification due to HQ