

No. 33696

November 7, 2025

Nov 8 Day County Vets Banquet, Webster Armory, 5pm
 Nov 8 N. Hills Vet Fair "We've Got Your Six" Sturgis 11am-2pm
 Nov 10 USMC 250th Birthday
 Nov 11 VETERANS DAY, Office Closed, Fly the Flag
 Nov 11 Bridge Naming Ceremony, The Alliance, Sioux Falls, 2pm
 Nov 12-15 USS Pierre Commissioning
 Nov 13 MEMBERSHIP TARGET DATE- VETERANS DAY 65%
 Nov 13 A Night with Heros, The Alliance, Sioux Falls, 6:30pm
 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 12-1:30pm
 Nov 20 Legislative Round Table, Watertown Post 17, 11-12pm
 Nov 21 Legislative Round Table, Rapid City VFW 1273, 11-12pm
 Nov 22 Legislative Round Table, Pierre Post 8 11-12pm
 Nov 27-30 THANKSGIVING, Office Closed, Fly the Flag
 Dec 2 Governor's Budget Address 1pm
 Dec 3 MidWinter Planning Meeting, Oacoma, 11am
 Dec 8 Training Committee Meeting, MS Teams, 4pm
 Dec 10 MEMBERSHIP TARGET DATE- PEARL HARBOR 75%
 Dec 12 Dept Christmas Open House, 12-4pm, Dept HQ Watertown
 Dec 13 Wreaths Across America, SD Vet Cemetery, 11am
 Dec 13 Athletic Commission Meeting, Pierre Post 8, 11am
 Dec 24-28 CHRISTMAS, Office Closed
 Dec 31 Firefighter, EMT & Law Enforcement Officer of the Year nomination due to HQ
 Dec 31-Jan 4 NEW YEAR'S, Office Closed
 Jan 4 DIST 2 Oratory SDSM&T Classroom Bldg, Rapid City, 10am
 Jan 11 DIST 1 Oratory Countryside Church, Spearfish 2pm
 Jan 11 DIST 5 Oratory Castlewood Community Center 1pm
 Oratory Humboldt Community Center 1pm, storm date, Jan 18
 Jan 10 DIST 4 Oratory Post 24, 617 S 15th St, Aberdeen 12:30pm
 Jan 10 DIST 8 Oratory Springfield Community Center 10am
 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 6 Oratory Kimball American Legion Post, 1pm
 Jan 18 DIST 3 Oratory Faith Lutheran Living Center, Pierre
 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
 Feb 11 MEMBERSHIP TARGET DATE- PRESIDENT DAY 85%
 Feb 16 PRESIDENT'S DAY, Office Closed
 Feb 18-21 Candidate for National Commander Jay Bowen visit SD
 Feb 19-22 MidWinter Conference
 Feb 23 Office Closed
 Mar 1 Eagle Scout of the Year applications due to HQ
 Mar 1-4 Washington Conference
 Mar 7 Dist 5 Meeting- Bruce
 Mar 8 Dist 4 Meeting- Redfield
 Mar 11 MEMBERSHIP TARGET- LEGION BIRTHDAY 90%
 Mar 14 Dist 6 Meeting- Arlington
 Mar 15 Dist 3 Meeting- Gregory
 Mar 26 Monthly DEC Meeting, MS Teams 7pm

DEPARTMENT COMMANDER'S MESSAGE

Dear Legionnaires,

First let me wish you a happy Veterans Day as well as a happy Thanksgiving. This is the time to gather with family and friends to recognize what a great country we are thankful we live in. As veterans, it is even more important because we know what many have sacrificed to safeguard the country we live in. This is also the time we should be contacting those veterans who may be struggling, either physically or mentally. Our neighbors may be also struggling with financial or food insecurities. Please take the time to check on them and support Post activities that can help them. Please do your buddy checks.



It is going to be a busy month for me. I will be attending several post membership dinners as well as heading to Sturgis for their annual "Got Your Six" event for veterans that have fallen on hard times. I will be attending the Fallen Heros Bridge dedication in Sioux Falls on Veterans Day where the SDDVA and SD DOT will be dedicating bridges to six different fallen heroes. Then heading to Panama City, FL where I will be attending the USS Pierre (LCS 38) commissioning ceremony. As a 30-year Naval Officer, I am sure this ceremony will have significance for me.

I guess I would be remiss if I did not mention membership in my column this month. The close of the 2025 membership year is fast approaching (DEC 31, 2025) and we are pushing for our 2026 membership. Please make a final push for the 2025 members.

In closing this month's column, I ask you to please remember our L.I.S.T.:

Legion Family working together
Involvement in our communities
Serving our veterans, children and communities
Telling our stories

Please enjoy your Veteran's Day and have a happy Thanksgiving!



Kevin Hempel
Department Commander



MEMBERSHIP CHAIR'S MESSAGE – NOVEMBER 2025



Current Membership: 11,000 – That's 72.37%!

We've got momentum—but we're not done yet.

As of now, we've reached **10,785 members**, putting us at **70.95%** of our goal. That's a strong number, and it shows the power of our commitment. But November isn't the month to slow down—it's the time to lock in and finish the year with purpose.



November Is Veteran Month

This month carries weight. It's a time to recognize service, honor sacrifice, and renew our own dedication. One way we do that is by making sure every member is current.

The deadline is November 11.

If you haven't renewed yet, now's the time. And if you know someone who hasn't, reach out. Encourage them. Remind them. A single conversation can make the difference.



Check Out the Avatar Message

There's a powerful message from my Avatar waiting for you on **Facebook@ American Legion Department of South Dakota**. It's more than a reminder, it's a rally cry. Watch, share, and let it recharge your drive. Let's spread that energy throughout the membership.



Keep the Momentum Going

We're pushing toward the finish line, and every member counts. We're proud of the 70.95%, but we're aiming higher. Keep making those calls. Keep checking in. Keep showing up for one another. Together, we can take that number higher before the month is out.



Celebrate, Reflect, and Give Thanks

As Thanksgiving approaches, take the time to **celebrate with your families and give thanks for all we have been given**. It's a season to appreciate not just what we've achieved, but the people who helped us get there.

We're grateful for each and every one of you—for your time, your voice, and your heart for this mission.

Enjoy the holiday. Renew if you haven't. Encourage others to do the same. And we'll talk to you next month—stronger than ever. Let's finish November with fire. Let's finish the year with pride.

Bill Peters, Membership Chair 605.360.6547

bpeters0551@gmail.com

🏆 ARMY-NAVY GAME RECRUITMENT CHALLENGE: WIN YOUR WAY TO BALTIMORE!

Get ready to rally, Legionnaires! National Commander Dan K. Wiley is launching the ultimate recruitment showdown—and the prize? Two tickets to the 2025 Army-Navy Game in Baltimore on Sat, Dec 13 at 3pm! The top three recruiters across the American Legion will each score this coveted reward. Transportation and lodging aren't included, but the bragging rights? Priceless.

To qualify, recruit at least 3 *new* Legion members between Oct 1 and Nov 1. That means eligible veterans joining for the 2026 membership year who weren't part of the Legion in 2025. (Sorry—paid transfers, Auxiliary, and SAL members don't count.) Submit your certification form and list of new members, with full name, ID number, department, and post—by Nov 14. All new members must be verified in the national database by the deadline.

Winners will be announced Nov 17. So fire up your post's outreach, and let's pack the ranks! And when game day arrives? You'll be cheering from the stands as Army secures the win. **Go Army—beat Navy!** 🌟 More details and to plan your watch party go to: <https://www.legion.org/about/organization/national-alliances/army-navy-game>

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, 77 Blunt, 25 Rosebud, 145 Howard, 148 Conde, 157 Vivian, 238 Oelrichs, 239 Little Eagle, 248 Freeman, 251 Pine Ridge, 265 Kyle, 269 Wanblee, 289 Mansfield, 294 Porcupine, 295 Parmelee, 297 St Francis, 310, Norris, 317 Allen, 324 Rock Creek

CHALLENGE 250 —

EVERY POST • EVERY FAMILY • EVERY COMMUNITY

South Dakota Legion Family- let's think through a 250 lens. Keep doing what you already do best, and wrap a "250" thread through your existing events and traditions: miles logged, hours served, buddy checks, honor guards, patriotic programs- track it, total it, and tell the story as Challenge 250 tied to America 250 and South Dakota250. Combine them to celebrate and educate through July 4th.

Share your progress with #SouthDakota250 and #America250SD and send me your updates/photos to display on social media. (If you want one fresh idea to consider: a time capsule to be opened in 2075.) **Challenge on, South Dakota! Oratorical Season Is Here- Get Those Students Signed Up!**

Recruiting for the Oratorical Contest should be in full swing now. Post competitions should be held in December so winners can advance to their respective Districts in January.

Americanism Chairs: please check your email from me for sample messages you can send to schools. Ask members, Auxiliary, and Sons to contact speech/debate coaches and civics teachers — personal outreach works. Get those flyers out to community groups, bulletin boards, and local newspapers.

This year's Oratorical program is significant as we build toward America 250. It's our opportunity to strengthen two Legion pillars of Americanism and Children & Youth — by inspiring the next generation to study, defend, and speak proudly about the U.S. Constitution. Every student who participates learns what our founders built and why those values still matter today.

Let's give South Dakota students the chance to shine — and ensure the principles of liberty and citizenship endure for the next 250 years.

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 start recruiting for these great programs.

JUNIOR SHOOTING SPORTS

Reminder to Posts, you need to have your air rifle coach registered with their teams and safety tests completed by December 10th.

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

DEPARTMENT OPEN HOUSE FOR THE HOLIDAY

The Department Headquarters will host an Open House for the Holidays on Dec 12 from 12-4pm in the HQ Office (14 1st AVE SE, Watertown.) All available are welcome, there will be hot cider, coco, eggnog and snacks. Join us in your favorite holiday costume.

FIREFIGHTER, EMT & LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICER OF THE YEAR

These award recognizes the professionalism and dedication of our

local community heroes. The Dept winners are submitted to compete at the National level for Firefighter and Law Enforcement Officer. Nomination packages cover the time period of 1 July to 30 June. Nominations should be submitted directly to Dept HQ by Dec 31st. <https://sdlegion.org/firefighter-of-the-year>
<https://sdlegion.org/south-dakota-emt-of-the-year>
<https://sdlegion.org/law-officer-of-the-year>

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

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 1981 King Street, (605) 234-0985) \$105. 10 rooms blocked until 2 Feb, must state with the Legion to get that rate.
- Best Western 220 West King Street (605) 734-5575 2 beds \$98, 1 bed 2 people \$88
- Baymont 1100 East Hwy 16, 1-888-712-6558 \$119
- Howard Johnson 203 E Hwy 16 (605) 234-4222 \$89
- EconoLodge 400 East Hwy 16 (605) 734-4100 \$69 single queen bed, \$79 2 queen beds
- Quality Inn 100 Hwy 16 (605) 734-5593 single queen bed \$ 89, 2 queen beds \$ 99, one king bed \$94.00

2025 MID-WINTER LUNCH & BANQUET TICKETS

Friday and Saturday at MidWinter there will be a buffet style lunch, tickets will be required. The Joint Banquet will be Friday at social at 5:30 meal at 6:30 tickets will also be needed. Look for more information in the next *Up to Now*.

GO GETTER CERTIFICATION

Please send your Go Getter Certification to Dept by Feb 1st for Mid-Winter. judy@sdlegion.org The form is available online in the Post Adjutant Manual Forms <https://sdlegion.org/post-adjutant-manual-forms>. **Go out and Get them, all!**

NATIONAL TRAINING UPDATE

The **National Regional Information Conference** 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 – Sat, Jan 31, Marriott East, 7202 E 21st Street
Atlanta, GA, Feb 7, The Westin Airport, 4736 Best Road
Register here: <https://web.cvent.com/event/a66f4ed3-dd18-451d-b85d-5d995bf371ca/summary>

Training Tuesdays- The last Tuesday of the month National HQ presents a 60-90-minute session on topics aimed at post commanders & adjutants. Sessions are recorded and made available for later viewing. <https://www.legion.org/information-center/training/training-tuesdays>

LEGIONNAIRE INSURANCE TRUST (LIT)

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

Since 1965, LIT has proudly protected Legionnaires and their families with trusted Supplemental Health and Accident Plans, customized by veterans, for veterans. Backed by 50 American Legion Departments and 1.5 million members strong, they've spent over 50 years standing shoulder to shoulder with those who served.

But they're more than insurance, they're a force for good. Your enrollment fuels impact: over \$90 million returned to Departments for baseball field upgrades, VA Service Officer support, and vital veteran services, **including more than \$138,000 directly to the Department of South Dakota in the last 5 years!**

Every dollar you invest helps honor the past, serve the present, and inspire the future. Together, we're building stronger communities and brighter tomorrows. Thank you for trusting LIT—where protection meets purpose. Sign up at <http://www.thelit.com>.

SDAL FOUNDATION

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

AMERICAN LEGION BASIC TRAINING COURSE

Have you taken the Basic Training Course? It's a great way to deepen your understanding of the American Legion. The course covers five areas: history and organization, Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation, National Security, Americanism, and Children & Youth. Each section shows how Legion Family members can promote the organization's values locally. After the course, participants take a 40-question exam. Graduates may print a certificate and order a Basic Training Graduate pin from Emblem Sales. Enroll at www.legion.org/training.

2025 SD AMERICAN LEGION DEPT COLLEGE

The 2026 South Dakota American Legion College will be April 18th & 19th. 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/fl/pdf/training/department-training-tools/2024-SDLC-Application.pdf>

As of this publishing we only have no applicant– get your applications in NOW!!!!

CHILDREN AND YOUTH UPDATE

The month of October seemed to pass quickly, but it was filled with meaningful community impact. Across the state, many Posts, Units, Squadrons, and Rider Chapters hosted food drives and safe Halloween events for families. It is inspiring to see these efforts in action. Food insecurity remains a growing concern nationwide, and these activities show our communities who we are and what we stand for as members of the American Legion.

As the holiday season approaches, families traditionally gather to celebrate yet, due to current instability and economic strain, many face hunger for the first time. Now more than ever, our Legion Family plays a vital role in providing support, awareness, and relief. I encourage all Legion Family members to continue their outstanding efforts within their communities.

Earlier this fall, we collected donated school supplies from Dollar Tree locations throughout the state. We plan to gather more items this month, assemble them into backpacks, and distribute them

across districts to support students in need. Posts may also donate these backpacks to their local schools so they have resources available when children need them most.

Please continue to watch for young military families, especially those with children—who may be struggling. Unexpected expenses can quickly create financial hardship. Reach out, visit, and encourage them to apply for Temporary Financial Assistance (TFA). Details and application information can be found at SDLegion.org. If your Post Family has funds available and wishes to support a meaningful cause, consider donating to the Children and Youth Fund so we may continue assisting families who rely on TFA support.

Remember, other community resources are available for young veteran families, including programs such as Operation Homefront, which provide valuable support for military households across the country.

As always, please record all volunteer hours, costs, and the impact of your Children & Youth initiatives throughout the year. Be sure to update your Consolidated Post, Squadron, and Unit reports, along with the Americanism and Children & Youth reports, for Spring meetings and award submissions.

Thank you for your continued commitment to serving our youth and strengthening our communities year-round.

Harry Boner, Children and Youth Chair

NOVEMBER HISTORY

Nov 10, 1775- the 2nd Continental Congress resolved to raise two battalions of Marines. Commissioning Samuel Nicholas as captain of the fledgling force of Continental Marines. From Tun Tavern (yes, a bar) in Philadelphia, Nicholas raised two battalions and began the long illustrious history of the United States Marine Corps.
Nov 25, 1783 - At the end of the Revolutionary War, the last British troops left New York City.

Nov 26, 1863 - President Abraham Lincoln made Thanksgiving Day official in 1863. He declared a national day of Thanksgiving for the last Thursday of November each year.

Nov 11, 1885- GEN George S. Patton Jr. born in San Gabriel, CA
Nov 11, 1918- Veterans Day, originally “Armistice Day” commemorating the end of World War I, now a day to honor all American Veterans

Nov 10-12, 1919- The 1st American Legion National Convention. Membership at this point exceeds 684,000. Among the delegates are 140 women veterans of World War I, and The Constitution and Preamble are adopted. Delegates consider 350 resolutions but approve only 50, including equal treatment for women who served in the war, employment programs for veterans, fair government benefits for those who came home disabled from service, support for the Boy Scouts, mandatory patriotic exercises in schools and the establishment of an air branch of service.

Nov 11, 1921-American Legion leaders join Allied generals and President Warren G. Harding in ceremonies to dedicate the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier at Arlington National Cemetery. The tomb was the culmination of Legion-supported legislation introduced by U.S. Rep. Hamilton Fish, Jr., a founder of the organization.

Nov 8, 1942 - Operation Torch, the Allied landings in North Africa, began as 400,000 soldiers under the command of General Dwight D. Eisenhower landed at Morocco and Algeria.

Nov 22, 1963- President John F. Kennedy assassination. Kennedy was a member of Somerville, Massachusetts Post 281 and spoke at the SD Dept Convention in June 19, 1960 in Sioux Falls.

Nov 11, 1972 - The U.S. turned over its military base at Long Binh to the South Vietnamese, symbolizing the end of direct American military participation in the Vietnam War.

Nov 4, 1979 - About 500 Iranian militants stormed the U.S. Embassy in Teheran, Iran, taking 90 hostages, including 52

Americans that they held captive for 444 days.

Nov 9, 1989 - The beginning of the destruction of the Berlin Wall and the Iron Curtain. East Berlin transit restrictions were overwhelmed, discarded and sections of the wall were breached.

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 Legion members. A new member is any eligible person joining for the 26 membership year who was not a member of during the 25 membership year. Transfers do not count. [Download the form](#)

103% Membership Award- National Commander Wiley will award his Be the One membership 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. [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. Standard to be achieved in each area is:

1. Membership: 103% of Post goal. At least one post officer attends district meetings.
2. Consolidated Post Report: CPRs must be submitted by July 1.
3. 90% Renewal: Of their members that were on the 2024 roster.
4. 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 and submit to Dept 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.

FEEDING SD FOOD DRIVE

SD Department of Veteran Affairs and the Alliance are hosting a Food Drive to help ensure no one goes hungry this season. Drop off bins are located at the Alliance, 1600 W. Russell St in Sioux Falls and can be delivered during normal business hours. They are accepting canned goods, peanut butter, box meals and other nonperishable food items.

A NIGHT WITH HEROES

On Thursday, November 13, 2025, 6:30pm, at the South Dakota Military Heritage Alliance. Medal of Honor recipient Clint Romesha, a true American hero, will be the keynote speaker for this exclusive event called, *A Night With Heroes*, celebrating service, sacrifice, and the enduring spirit of our South Dakota military community.

As part of this event - for the first time ever - the South Dakota Military Heritage Alliance will provide a “welcome home” for South Dakota’s active duty servicemembers who have honorably completed their active-duty commitments. Never before has there been such an organized opportunity to come alongside South Dakotans who have served their country and are now returning or relocating to the greatest state in the Union. This event will honor and assure them that South Dakota’s people, organizations, and businesses are thankful for their service and committed to their successful reintegration.

<https://www.trailblz.info/southdakotamilitaryheritagealliance/eventcomplete.aspx?eventid=42>

THE RACE IS ON FOR DEPARTMENT COMMANDER...

Sioux Falls American Legion Post 15 proudly and unanimously endorses Bill Peters for the office of Department Commander for the 2026-2027 term, in recognition of his exemplary service, steadfast dedication, and enduring commitment to veterans and their families.

