



Up To Now!

www.sdlegion.org - 605-886-3604 - adjutant@sdlegion.org

Issued Monthly from State Headquarters in Watertown, SD

C.P. Van Delist – Department Adjutant

No. 33697

December 5, 2025

- 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 13 Army Navy Game, **Go Army Beat Navy!!!**
- Dec 20 Space Force Birthday
- 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 8 Public Safety Committee Meeting, DeSmet 11am
- 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
- Jan 26 Legion Day at the Capital
- Jan 26 Legion Legislative Reception, Pierre Post 8, 5:30pm
- 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, 11:30 meal, 1pm meal
- Mar 8 Dist 4 Meeting- Redfield, Meeting 1pm, meal following
- 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
- Mar 28 Dist 8 Meeting- 10am Vermillion
- Mar 28 Dist 7 Meeting- Sioux Falls Post 15, 2pm
- Apr 3-5 EASTER HOLIDAY Office Closed
- Apr 8 MEMBERSHIP TARGET DATE- CHILDREN AND YOUTH 95%
- Apr 11 Dist 1 Meeting- Post 164 Spearfish
- Apr 12 Dist 2 Meeting- Post 22 Rapid City
- Apr 14 Commander's Town Hall 7pm, MS Teams
- Apr 15 Tax Day ☺
- Apr 15 Post Data Reports due to Department Headquarters
- Apr 18-19 SD American Legion College
- Apr 23 Monthly DEC Meeting, MS Teams 7pm
- May 1 Dist CDRs submit Good Samaritan of the Year to HQ
- May 1 Dist CDRs submit Educator of the Year to HQ
- May 1 Post submit Americanism Reports to HQ
- May 4-7 National Spring Meetings

DEPARTMENT COMMANDER'S MESSAGE

Legion Family,

I figured many of the Auxiliary, Sons and Riders may read this column in the Up To Now, so thought I should address this to all. I hope everyone had a safe and happy Thanksgiving. This holiday season is a great time to gather and celebrate, but it can also be a time of loneliness for those that may not have family or are not celebrating because of distance. Please take the time to not only do buddy checks on our veterans, but check on family and friends who may need a quick call to let them know they are remembered and being thought about.



A quick shout out about membership. South Dakota is in first place for membership at national. Thanks for all your hard work at the post level. Having said that, this is the time of year that we seem to let up and we start to fall behind. Please keep the push on, especially for those that have not yet renewed for this year. I had a good friend that always said, you just have to ask!

For those of you close to a VA hospital. The Auxiliary Christmas parties for the veterans at the hospitals are coming soon. Dates and times are: Sioux Falls VA Dec 9 at 2:00 pm; Hot Springs VA Dec 14 at 1:00 pm; Ft Meade VA Dec 15 at 1:00 pm and State Veterans home on Dec 16 at 2:00 pm.

I am still taking donations for my Commander's project. This year it is being split between the newly formed SD American Legion shooting sports program and our SD American Legion Foundation. For those posts and to the individuals that have donated, thank you for supporting those programs. If you or your post would like to donate, you can send the donation to HQ and address the check to SD American Legion and in the memo section make sure you put "Commander's Project."

My next Commander's Town Hall will be held on January 13th at 7 pm central time. This is a chance for me to inform you of upcoming events and give you a chance to ask questions. It is done via video teleconference or you can also join by phone. Watch the Up To Now for information on how to join.

Lastly, please remember my L.I.S.T. Our legion family working together, involved in our communities, serving our veterans and communities and finally telling our stories.

Thanks and have a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year to all.

Kevin Hempel
Department Commander



COMMANDER'S TOWNHALL

Commander Hempel will be holding a virtual townhall on **January 13th** over video teleconference. You can log in over your computer, or smart device or even call in. this is your chance to discuss what is going on with the American Legion and find out from the top the answers to your questions. It is open to everyone. Log in information is:

[Click here to Join the meeting now](#)

Meeting ID: 225 775 090 784 Passcode: N2jZoD

By phone [1-872-239-6022](tel:1-872-239-6022), ID: 532 867 600#

Merry Christmas – Department Membership Message

American Legion Department of South Dakota

By Bill Peters, Department Membership Chairman

As Christmas approaches, we are reminded once again of the blessings we enjoy as Americans and as members of this great organization. This season brings us back to the values that shaped our service — **faith, family, patriotism, and a commitment to one another.**

Christmas is a time to look upward with gratitude and outward with compassion. We give thanks to God for the freedoms we enjoy as citizens of this great nation —

freedoms protected by generations of men and women who wore the uniform. And today, as Legionnaires, we continue that service in a new way: by standing together for veterans, families, and communities across South Dakota.

I am proud to share that **South Dakota remains #1 in the nation** — still holding the top spot by a slim margin. That does not happen by accident. It happens because of your dedication, your patriotism, and your belief in the mission of The American Legion. For that, I am truly grateful.

As we celebrate this season of faith and hope, please remember that **2025 membership dues expire on December 31, 2025.**

To those who have already renewed- **thank you** for your continued commitment. Your support strengthens our posts and keeps our programs thriving. In the spirit of Christmas giving, I encourage each of you to **gently remind a fellow member or friend** to renew as well. A simple nudge may be just what they need. But beyond the numbers and deadlines, let us remember the deeper meaning of this season.

Christmas invites us to slow down, reflect, and **reach out to those who are hurting** — those facing loneliness, illness, financial stress, or the silent battles many veterans carry. No one should walk this road alone. I ask each of you:

Check in. Lift someone up. Extend a hand, a prayer, or a word of encouragement.

This is how we live our values. This is how we honor our oath.

This is how we serve God and Country.

Let us also keep in our hearts the families of the fallen, the deployed, and those who cannot be home for Christmas. May they feel the strength, warmth, and unity of this American Legion family.

As we look ahead to a new year, may we continue to serve with purpose, lead with compassion, and uphold the values that bind us together as patriots and as believers.

From my family to yours, I wish you a **Merry Christmas**, a season of peace and blessing, and a New Year filled with hope and renewed strength.

Together Everyone Accomplishes More — and with God’s guidance, South Dakota will continue to lead the way.

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

Congratulations to Charlie Rose and Jerry Price, both of Post 118, on winning tickets to the Army Navy game in Baltimore. These lucky gents will attend the game on December 13th to see Army stomp Navy into a mud hole! **Go Army Beat Navy!!!**

COUNTDOWN TO 250: YOUTH VOICES, YOUTH LEADERS & AWARDS!

December is prime time for our American Legion youth programs—especially the Oratorical Contest. Post contests should be completed no later than 22 December, with District competitions held in January. We’re excited to hear young patriots speak out on the U.S. Constitution—and with our nation’s 250th year of Independence in 2026 coming fast, this year’s speeches carry added

meaning.

When you recruit, don’t stop at traditional classrooms—make sure you reach homeschool students too. Use social media to extend your reach: tag your local schools, school districts, and homeschool groups/pages in your posts, and ask them to share your flyers and deadlines.

Momentum is growing across South Dakota: one Post has already moved forward to launch a Junior Shooting Sports program. Let’s build on that—get the word out, partner with local shooting organizations, and expand SD junior shooting opportunities in your communities.

Looking ahead to SD Youth Trooper Academy (SDYTA): Chairman Larry Price and the SDAL Public Safety Committee have coordinated with the SD Highway Patrol for 2026, and recruiting is underway. Since the SDHP will make limited school visits this year, Posts must step up school outreach and help drive applicants.

Now is the time to get on school calendars for early in the new year to talk to eligible students about Boys State, Girls State, and SDYTA—and remind counselors, teachers, and families that online applications are open now.

And don’t forget Challenge 250: send me what your Post and Legion Family are doing—250 chapters read, 250 yoga minutes, 250 walking miles, 250 buddy checks, and more—so we can highlight progress across State and Legion social media.

Finally, many awards are coming due, so ensure your Post is tracking accomplishments now and moving submissions forward. Let’s finish the year strong and head into 2026 with purpose.

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.



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, cocoa, eggnog and snacks. Join us in your favorite holiday costume.

FIREFIGHTER, EMT & LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICER OF THE YEAR

These awards recognize 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>

2026 MIDWINTER LODGING

The MidWinter Conference is being hosted by Potter Post 3, and will be held at the Cedar Shore Resort, in Oacoma, 20-22 February 2026. The entire hotel is booked. Other lodging available is below. Be sure to mention you will be attending the American Legion Midwinter Conference.

- 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

2026 MIDWINTER SCHEDULE

Thursday, February 19, 2026

TBD Strategic Planning Ad-hoc Committee Meeting- Hale

Friday, February 20, 2026

10:00am Department Finance Commission Meeting- Hale

12:00pm LUNCH BREAK

Registration Desk Opens- Reception Area

1:00pm Department Executive Committee Meeting- Hale

Boys State Corp- Board Room

3:00pm SDAL Foundation Meeting- Hale

SAL Detachment Executive Committee Meeting- Howe

4:00pm American Legion Rider meeting- Hale

5:30pm No-Host Cocktails- Reception Area

6:30pm American Legion Joint Family Banquet

Saturday, February 21, 2026

7:30am Registration Desk Opens- Reception Area

8:00am Joint Opening Session- Wheeler/Oacoma

8:05am Department Commander- Wheeler/Oacoma

8:10am Department Auxiliary President- Wheeler/Oacoma

8:15am Sons of the American Legion- Wheeler/Oacoma

8:20am American Legion Rider Liaison- Wheeler/Oacoma

8:25am National Executive Committeeman- Wheeler/Oacoma

8:30am Legion Family Open Town Hall- Wheeler/Oacoma

9:00am Boys State Planning Session- Board Room

9:15am Department of Veterans Affair- Wheeler/Oacoma

9:35am Legislative Update- Wheeler/Oacoma

9:45am Training Committee Report- Wheeler/Oacoma

9:55am Recess Joint Session to separate meetings

10:00am BREAKOUT SESSION 1:

Class A - Wheeler/Oacoma; Class B- Glass; Class C- Howe

11:00am SAL American Legion Basic Training- Hale

11:30am BREAKOUT SESSION 2:

Class A - Wheeler/Oacoma; Class B- Glass; Class C- Howe

1:00pm LUNCH BREAK

SAL Business meeting- Hale

1:30pm BREAKOUT SESSION 3:

Class A - Wheeler/Oacoma; Class B- Glass; Class C- Howe

3:00pm Reconvene Legion Session- Wheeler/Oacoma

SAL Open Forum Question and Answer- Hale

3:05pm Membership Update & Turn-Ins- Wheeler/Oacoma

3:20pm VAVS Chairman- Wheeler/Oacoma

3:30pm Boys State Update- Wheeler/Oacoma

3:40pm Youth Trooper Update- Wheeler/Oacoma

3:50pm Athletic Commission Update- Wheeler/Oacoma

4:00pm Children and Youth Update- Wheeler/Oacoma

4:10pm Youth Shooting Sports Update- Wheeler/Oacoma

4:20pm Scouting Committee Update- Wheeler/Oacoma

4:50pm Sweepstakes Drawing- Wheeler/Oacoma

5:00pm Announcements and Adjourn Assembly- Wheeler/Oacoma

6:00pm Go-Getter & Awards- Chamberlain Community Center

Sunday, February 22, 2026

8:30am Four Chaplains Service- Wheeler/Oacoma

10:30am Oratorical State Finals- Wheeler/Oacoma

2026 MIDWINTER LUNCH & BANQUET TICKETS

A taco bar lunch buffet will be served at noon on Friday Feb 20th and a burger bar (beef burger or grilled chicken breast) on Saturday

Feb 21th of the Mid-Winter Conference. Tickets are \$20 per person each day.

Chicken Marsala with lettuce salad, baked potato, corn, dinner rolls will be served at the banquet Friday evening Feb 20th with a ticket cost of \$30 per person.

Ticket requests for all Legion, Auxiliary and SAL members must be received no later than January 26, 2026. No tickets will be sold at the event. Tickets can be picked up at the conference registration table. One check can be made for the total lunch and banquet ticket costs.

Please make checks payable to Potter Post #3. Ticket requests should be sent to:

John Payer
25120 344th Ave
Chamberlain, SD 57325

NAME _____

PHONE NUMBER _____

ADDRESS _____

FOOD ALLERGIES _____

EVENT	PRICE	NUMBER OF TICKETS	COST
Friday lunch	\$20	x	= \$
Saturday lunch	\$20	x	= \$
Friday banquet	\$30	x	= \$
		TOTAL	= \$

BREAKFAST AT CEDAR SHORE FOR MIDWINTER

A breakfast buffet will be available both Friday and Saturday mornings in the cafe starting at 6:30am at a cost of \$12.86 plus gratuity. This is on your own and no tickets are required.

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!**

THE AMERICAN LEGION LEGACY SCHOLARSHIP

This needs-based scholarship designed to fulfill a financial gap remaining after all federal and state educational grants/scholarships available to an eligible applicant have been utilized. 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 beginning January 1 and NO LATER THAN Wednesday, March 26, 2025. *Total amount of scholarship funds awarded in 2024: \$1,645,558.*

<https://www.legion.org/get-involved/scholarships/the-american-legion-legacy-scholarship>

GIVING TO SD AMERICAN LEGION FOUNDATION

By: Jim Kurtz, Foundation Bd. President

You can maximize your tax benefit of a gift to your SD AL Foundation if you are 70 ½ or older, by making a Qualified Charitable Distribution (QMD) from your IRA.

- Contact your IRA administrator (bank or depository where the IRA is), to request that the funds be sent directly to the SD American Legion Foundation.
- As a 501(C)(3) non-profit corporation, your SD AL Foundation

is a qualified charity.

- The amount of your gift is up to you of course, but the maximum is \$108,000 in 2025 (amount may change in future years).
- Your Qualified Charitable Distribution can be used to satisfy all or part of your RMD (if you are required to take a minimum distribution).
- By giving in this manner, the distribution is not taxable income to you.

Other charitable giving tools are available to give from one's assets, rather than from after tax cash. The Board members of your SD AL Foundation would be very happy to help direct you to the proper expertise for these types of giving.

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!!!!

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.

THE RACE IS ON FOR DEPARTMENT OFFICERS...

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.

Greer Post 11 of Wagner has endorsed Greg Geiman as a candidate for State Sergeant-At-Arms.

BUDDY CHECKS FOR THE HOLIDAYS

While Buddy Checks can be conducted year-round, the Holiday Season is a good time to make a special effort to check on members and Veterans in your community.

Buddy Checks are not membership or fundraising calls; they are simple check-ins with veterans in the community to see how they are doing and to learn if the local post can help with anything.

How do you organize a Buddy Check? Where to start can be daunting but it is not Rocket Surgery here are some tips.

1. Gather a team to make phone calls or visit the veterans in person.
2. Use MyLegion.org to get contact information.
3. Divide up the contact list among your team members.
4. Make a list of resources like, Service Officers, financial aid, employment, and other resources for veterans and families.
5. Start calling.
6. Make a record of the call, and identify who may need a follow up.
7. Thank the veteran in the beginning and end of the call.
8. Leave contact info in case the Veteran needs to follow up later.

Remember you are not alone in doing Buddy Checks, others have done them and they work. For more resources check out <https://www.legion.org/advocacy/be-the-one/buddy-check> or contact the Dept Adjutant.

THIS IS THE SEASON OF CARING FOR OUR VETERANS, CHILDREN, AND YOUTH

As the holiday season approaches, families traditionally gather to celebrate. Now more than ever, our American Legion Family plays a vital role in providing support, awareness, and relief. Across the state, many Posts, Units, Squadrons, and Rider Chapters have hosted food drives and have donated those collected food items to food pantries in their communities. Your efforts do not go unnoticed. 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 are 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.

If your Post family is planning an activity that will help support our programs within the American Legion, please be sure to let your community, District, and Department know about it. Advertise your event by posting fliers within the community, in your local paper, and social media at the local, Detachment, and Department level. 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, in preparation for Spring meetings and award submissions.

I encourage all Legion Family members to continue their outstanding efforts within their communities. Thank you for your continued commitment to serving our youth and strengthening our communities year-round.

Have a Merry Christmas and Joyful New Year!

Best Regards,

Harry Boner, Children and Youth Chair