



# Up To Now!

[www.sdlegion.org](http://www.sdlegion.org) - 605-886-3604 - [adjutant@sdlegion.org](mailto:adjutant@sdlegion.org)

Issued Monthly from State Headquarters in Watertown, SD

C.P. Van Delist – Department Adjutant

## No. 33699

February 6, 2025

- 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 Post 200, 11:30 meal, 1pm meeting
- Mar 8 DIST 4 Meeting- Redfield Post 92, Meeting 1pm, meal follow
- Mar 11 MEMBERSHIP TARGET- LEGION BIRTHDAY 90%
- Mar 14 DIST 6 Meeting- Arlington Post 42, 11:30 social, noon meal, 1pm meeting
- Mar 15 DIST 3 Meeting- Gregory Post 6, registration 11:30am, lunch 12:30pm, meeting 1pm
- Mar 26 Monthly DEC Meeting, MS Teams 7pm
- Mar 28 DIST 8 Meeting- Vermillion Post 1, Vermillion Main St Center, 10am
- Mar 28 DIST 7 Meeting- Sioux Falls Post 15, 3pm, or 15 min after the arrival of the Dept Officers
- Apr 3-5 EASTER HOLIDAY Office Closed
- Apr 8 MEMBERSHIP TARGET DATE- CHILDREN AND YOUTH 95%
- Apr 11 DIST 1 Meeting- Spearfish Post 164, 3102 E Fairgrounds Loop, Spearfish, Lunch 12pm Meeting at 1pm
- Apr 12 DIST 2 Meeting- Rapid City Post 22, 11 social 12 meal 1pm meeting
- 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
- May 10 Mother's Day
- May 13 MEMBERSHIP TARGET DATE- ARMED FORCES DAY 100%
- May 14 DEC Meeting 7pm via MS Teams
- May 15 Peace Officer's Memorial Day
- May 15-17 National Oratorical Contest, Hillsdale College, MI
- May 16 Armed Forces Day
- May 25 MEMORIAL DAY Office Closed
- May 25-29 Boys State, Northern State University
- June 1 Department Convention Go Getter certification due to HQ
- June 1 SDALPA Newspaper Awards inputs due
- [June 1 Consolidated Post Reports due](#)
- June 4 Convention Delegate and Alternate Delegate Credentials due
- June 18-22 Department Convention, Aberdeen
- June 18-23 National Commander & National Vice Commander Visit to SD
- June 19 JUNETEENTH HOLIDAY, Office Closed
- June 20 Post History Awards input due to Convention Registration desk by 1 pm
- June 21 Father's Day
- June 22-26 Youth Trooper Academy, Pierre
- July 3-5 INDEPENDENCE DAY Happy 250th, Office Closed

## DEPARTMENT COMMANDER'S MESSAGE

Dear Legion Family,

Can't believe it is already February, not sure where January went. We had a bit of a pause for December and January for events, but the schedule is starting to get very busy. We have our Mid-Winter in Oacoma February 20-22 and I believe there will be some very good training provided by the Training Committee for those that attend. We will also host our Department Oratory contest on Sunday. I am looking forward to seeing everyone there. That will be followed by the annual Washington DC trip to talk to our legislators about our Legion priorities for the year. And that will be followed with the start of our District Spring meetings.



I did make a number of trips and conferences in January including: membership video teleconference; SD Veterans Council meeting and Legislative reception at Post 8; Dept Executive Committee video teleconference; Legion Trust Fund video teleconference; Legion day at the Capitol with our Legion Family, Boys State and Girls State Governors followed by our Dept Legislative Committee meeting and legislative reception again at Post 8; attended the Legion Family social in Springfield and finally helped man the Legion booth at the Sioux Falls Farm Show.

I want to thank all those working hard on our membership this year and we are still number one in the nation. Please don't stop pushing now. As I stated last month, this is the time when the Department often begins to drop back. Please continue to just ask our members to renew as well as those who may not be members.

We all know that this is our country's 250th birthday. I am hoping all the Posts are working on some kind of program or community event to honor this significant milestone. If you have not started yet, please work on it.

Spring is around the corner, but remember winter is still here. Be safe out there.

Kevin Hempel  
Department Commander



*Legion family working together,  
Involved in our communities,  
Serving our veterans, children, and communities  
Telling our stories.*

## COMMANDER'S TOWNHALL

Commander Hempel will be holding a virtual townhall on [April 14<sup>th</sup>](#) 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#

## DEPARTMENT MEMBERSHIP MESSAGE

We are close, we are moving, and this is exciting. Even the groundhog saw his shadow this week, which means a little more winter ahead, but our membership momentum is heating up fast.

As of February 3, our total membership stands at 13,583, placing us at 89.36% of our goal. We are only 97 members away from reaching 90% by the Mid-Winter Conference. That milestone is right in front of us.

The Big 12 membership contest is one we have proudly won the last two years, and this is not the year to let it slip away. Current Big 12 numbers show a total membership of 13,847, or 91.1%, with 265 members needed to reach their next benchmark. This is a contest we know how to win, and it will take all of us working together to keep that streak alive.

Looking ahead, our next major goal is April 8, 2026. By that date, we are aiming for 95% membership, which equals 14,440 members. From where we are today, we are only 857 members short of that goal. That is a strong position to be in. Way to go, team. This goal is absolutely within reach.

Most importantly, thank you. Your outreach, follow-up, and commitment are what make these numbers possible. This progress belongs to every member who has taken the time to invite, encourage, and support others.

We are also excited to share that a cash incentive will be announced at the Mid-Winter Conference. This will be something new, something that has not been done before. Get ready.

Please remember that the Post Award contest ends February 14, 2026. There is still time to push and finish strong, and every additional member makes a difference.

The momentum is real. The goals are clear. Let's protect what we've earned and keep this winning streak alive.

Bill Peters, Membership Chairman, 605-360-6547

## MYLEGION TRAINING

Dear Commanders and Adjutants, You are invited to attend **MyLegion Training on Monday, February 9, 2026.**

 **Time-** Training begins at **1800 hours**, Please arrive by **1730**

 **Location-** Miller American Legion Post 38

 **Virtual Option-** Is available for those unable to attend in person via **Microsoft Teams meeting**

**Join:** <https://teams.microsoft.com/join/25807631928343?p=ccY3hin10oG0wHgogu>

Meeting ID: 258 076 319 283 43 Passcode: kn3mz6BT

**By phone** +1 872-239-6022 Phone conference ID: 297 477 651#

**What This Training Covers-** This session is designed to help Posts better understand and effectively use MyLegion. Whether you are new to MyLegion or just need a refresher, this will be practical, hands-on training you can take back to your Post.

**Please Bring (in person or virtual)-** A laptop, tablet, or smartphone with internet access. Your MyLegion login credentials (username & password). If you are unsure of your login info, please attempt to recover it in advance at [mylegion.org](https://mylegion.org), or bring your device and we will assist where possible.

**A light meal will be provided.-** Please RSVP if possible so we can get an accurate count. If you don't respond, you're still welcome to attend.

## 2026 SD AMERICAN LEGION DEPT COLLEGE

*April 18–19, 2026 | Oacoma, SD*

The South Dakota American Legion Department College returns this April with a focused, high-impact leadership program designed to strengthen the future of our organization. This two-day course provides current and emerging Legion leaders with a deeper understanding of our history, structure, programs, and the essential responsibilities of effective post, district, and department leadership.

Participants will explore:

- The mission, values, and organizational framework of The American Legion
  - Roles and responsibilities at every level of leadership
  - Best practices in membership, communication, and community engagement
  - Parliamentary procedure, meeting management, and governance
  - Department programs, resources, and strategic priorities
- This is a hands-on, discussion-driven course built to prepare the next generation of Legion leadership with the knowledge and confidence to serve effectively.

**Per Diem & Travel Support-** Attendees will receive per diem at the Dept. rate to help cover travel, meals, and lodging. The Department is committed to removing barriers so that dedicated members can participate.

**Limited Class Size-** To ensure a high-quality learning environment, class size is capped at ten (10) participants. Early application is strongly encouraged.

**How to Apply-** Applications are available online at: <https://sdlegion.org/ufile/fl/pdf/training/department-training-tools/2024-SDLC-Application.pdf>

As of this publication, **we have one applicant.** If you, or someone in your post, has been considering stepping into leadership, this is the perfect opportunity. **Submit your application today and help us build the strong, informed leadership our organization deserves.**

## AMERICANISM 250 UPDATE

**By Carol Howitz, Department Americanism Officer**

February has been a productive month for Americanism across the Department. Thank you to every Post and District that hosted and supported Oratorical Contests. These events succeed because Posts engage students, schools, and volunteers.

I attended several District contests, and the quality of the presentations was outstanding. As a result of that work, we will have SEVEN contestants advancing to the Dept Contest—a clear testament to Posts' active solicitation of students. Well done.

Several youth program deadlines are approaching quickly:

- Girls State applications due 1 March
- Youth Trooper Academy applications due 21 March
- Boys State applications due 1 May

We must hit parents, schools, and homeschool networks hard now. Use every available outlet—schools, bulletin boards, civic and community meetings, and local advertising—to reach parents. Students cannot apply for programs they do not know exist.

We are also working to expand our Big 3 programs into a Big 4 by adding Junior Shooting Sports. This will require coordination with local shooting clubs and interested Posts. Congratulations to Custer Post 46 for taking early steps toward becoming the next American Legion shooting sports club in South Dakota.

As part of America 250, plan to participate in the nationwide reading of the Declaration of Independence on 8 July at 6:00 p.m. EST. Consider a Legion Family reading paired with apple pie & ice cream or an All-American BBQ, & invite your community to join.

Also, remember the National America 250 Field Trip Essay Contest for students in grades 3–12. There are many National and SD opportunities at [america250.org](https://america250.org) and <https://americas250th.sd.gov/> for your Post and local community.

Let's celebrate independence and freedom throughout 2026, not just on one day. See you in Oacoma.

## DISTRICT ORATORICAL CONTEST WINNERS

Congratulations to the District Oratorical Winners! These young women will now advance on to the State Contest on Feb 22 at 10:30am at Cedar Shores in Oacoma.

- DIST 1- Ian Cho, Spearfish
- DIST 2- Lewis Carlyle, Kinsey, MT
- DIST 3- Emma Schlachter, Gettysburg
- DIST 4- Ada Sharp, Aberdeen
- DIST 6- Ellowyn Schutt, Huron
- DIST 7- Emma Andrews, Beresford
- DIST 8- Cash Martinez, Ethan

**BOYS STATE AND YOUTH TROOPER ACADEMY**

**Applications Now Open!**

It's that time of year again—when we help launch the next generation of South Dakota's leaders! Applications are officially open for **South Dakota Boys State** and the **Youth Trooper Academy**, two of the most dynamic, confidence-building youth programs in the state.

These aren't just summer programs, they're life-changing experiences where students discover their strengths, build lifelong friendships, and learn what it means to lead with purpose.

**South Dakota Boys State-** A week of hands-on government, leadership, and teamwork. Delegates run for office, pass legislation, debate issues, and experience the responsibilities of citizenship in a fast-paced, immersive environment. Many alumni say it's the moment they first realized they could lead.

**Youth Trooper Academy (YTA)-** For students ready for a challenge, YTA offers an inside look at law enforcement, teamwork, and personal discipline. Cadets train alongside Highway Patrol troopers, learn real-world skills, and push themselves in ways they never expected.

**Recruitment Starts NOW-** These programs fill quickly—and the impact lasts a lifetime. Now is the perfect moment to start talking with schools, parents, counselors, and community partners. Encourage motivated young people to step forward and take advantage of these incredible opportunities. Applications for both programs are available at: <https://sdlegion.org/programs>

Let's help shape the leaders of tomorrow, get the word out today.

**2026 MIDWINTER SCHEDULE- Subject to CHANGE 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

9:25am Legislative Update- Wheeler/Oacoma

9:40am Training Committee Report- Wheeler/Oacoma

9:50am Recess Joint Session to separate meetings

10:00am BREAKOUT SESSION 1:

Class A- 21 Century Membership Planning - Wheeler/Oacoma

Class B- Running a Meeting and Robet's Rules- Glass

Class D- Welcoming New Members- Howe

11:00am SAL American Legion Basic Training- Hale

11:30am BREAKOUT SESSION 2:

Class A – 21 Century Membership Planning- Wheeler/Oacoma

Class B- Running a Meeting and Robert's Rules- Glass

Class C- Constitution and Bylaws & Reports and Awards- Howe

1:00pm LUNCH BREAK

SAL Business meeting- Hale

1:30pm BREAKOUT SESSION 3:

Class A - 21 Century Membership Planning - Wheeler/Oacoma

Class D- Welcoming New Members- Glass

Class C- Constitution and Bylaws & Reports and Awards- 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**

**Tickets are still available!!!** Ticket requests have been extended to no later than **February 13, 2026**. No tickets will be sold at the event. Tickets can be picked up at the conference registration table. A taco bar lunch buffet will be served at noon on Fri Feb 20th and a burger bar (beef burger or grilled chicken breast) on Sat Feb 21st of the Mid-Winter Conference. Tickets are \$20 per person each day.

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

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	= \$
		<b>TOTAL</b>	= \$

**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.

### 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 25, 2026. *Total amount of scholarship funds awarded in 2024: \$1,645,558.* <https://www.legion.org/get-involved/scholarships/the-american-legacy-scholarship>

### 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 for the 2026 membership year who was not a member of during the 2025 year. Transfers do not count. [Download the form](#)

**103% Membership Award-** Commander Wiley will award his Be the One membership incentive pin to any post, county, district, or department or membership chair who achieves 103% of their assigned membership goal for 2026. [Download Award Form](#)

To qualify for the **Post Excellence Award** a post must achieve in four areas: membership, Consolidated Post Report, 90% renewal rate, and community activity. Standard to be achieved 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.

### 2026 SOUTH DAKOTA EDUCATOR OF THE YEAR

**Nominations Now Open!** It's time to shine a spotlight on the incredible teachers who are shaping South Dakota's future! The Dept Education Committee is calling on all local Posts to partner with their area schools and help identify outstanding educators worthy of the title **South Dakota Educator of the Year** for the 2025–2026 school year.

Every community has that one teacher who goes above and beyond—who inspires, motivates, and makes a lasting impact. *This is your chance to help them get the recognition they deserve.*

#### How It Works...

- Local Posts should work directly with their schools to find exceptional candidates.
- Submit your nominee to your **District Commander** before your Spring District Meeting.
- District Commanders forward district selections to Dept HQ **no later than May 1, 2026.**

**Learn More-** Full program details and nomination materials are available at: <https://sdlegion.org/educator-of-the-year>

Let's celebrate the educators who pour their hearts into our youth every day. Start the conversation in your community and help us honor South Dakota's best!

### THE RACE IS ON FOR DEPARTMENT OFFICERS...

Sioux Falls Post 15 endorses Bill Peters for Department Commander.

Greer Post 11 of Wagner endorsed Greg Geiman for State Sergeant-At-Arms.

Spearfish Post 164 endorses Fred Nelson for National Executive Committeeman

Chamberlain Potter Post 3 endorses Doug Feltman for Alternate National Executive Committeeman

### C&Y ACTIVITIES PICK UP AS FEBRUARY MOVES FAST

February is already here, and while our focus is beginning to shift toward spring activities, winter is far from over. Unfortunately, unforeseen hardships can still arise—especially for our young service members and veterans with children at home.

If you become aware of a veteran's family facing unexpected financial difficulty, please consider what support may be available at the Post level. Veterans should also be encouraged to explore local community assistance programs first, such as short-term help with food, funds, or family support. Many communities offer temporary assistance for families in need.

While local resources are being explored, Posts are encouraged to work with veterans who may qualify for Temporary Financial Assistance (TFA) through The American Legion. The current TFA application is available at [www.sdlegion.org/sdal-tfa-form](http://www.sdlegion.org/sdal-tfa-form). The application process has been streamlined, and the maximum possible award has increased to \$2,500.

It is critical that all required documentation be gathered, reviewed, and submitted as a complete packet to the State Adjutant as quickly as possible to help reduce processing time. Required documents include: Two months of work history, Banking statements, Utility bills, DD214, Marriage certificate (if applicable), Statement of financial need, Home Post document review, Home walkthrough with the veteran, Repair quotes, if applicable.

In certain cases, funds may be needed immediately to begin repairs. In those situations, Posts should contact the Department Children & Youth Chair, who will coordinate with the Department Adjutant to determine whether authorization to proceed with repairs can be granted prior to National approval.

Please note that it is very important to read the entire TFA request carefully before starting the process, as there are specific exceptions that can disqualify an application. When all required documents are submitted and the walkthrough is completed, the entire process can often be completed within a few weeks.

If TFA does not fit the veteran's specific situation, there are many other organizations that may be able to assist, including Wounded Warrior Project, Tunnel to Towers, the South Dakota National Guard Family Readiness Center, and Operation Homefront, among others.

If you have questions at any point, do not hesitate to contact the Department Children & Youth Chair, who will work with the Department Adjutant to provide guidance and support.

Submitted by, Harry Boner, C&Y Chairman 📞 605-691-4571

### 2026 CONSOLIDATED POST REPORTS **\*\*CHANGES\*\***

Consolidated Post Reports have transitioned from the traditional three-page carbon copy format to a streamlined single-page version. This change reduces waste, simplifies processing, and aligns with updated administrative practices. Posts that wish to retain a copy for their records will now need to make their own photocopy or digital scan, as duplicate carbon copies will no longer be provided. As always you can also submit directly from your MyLegion account.