



Up To Now!

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

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C.P. Van Delist – Department Adjutant

No. 33700

March 11, 2026

- 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 20 Finance Commission Budget Running Estimate deadline
- 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 Committees & Commissions budget projections due to HQ
- June 1 Department Convention Go Getter certification due to HQ
- June 1 SDALPA Newspaper Awards due
- June 1 Consolidated Post Reports due
- June 2 Americanism Commission Meeting, 12pm Pierre Post 8
- June 4 Convention Delegate and Alternate Delegate Credentials due
- June 11 Finance Commission Meeting to draft FY 27 Budget
- July 11-14 Traveling Vietnam Memorial Wall, Brookings
- June 18-22 Department Convention, Aberdeen
- June 18-23 National Commander & Vice Commander Visit to SD
- June 19 JUNETEENTH HOLIDAY, Office Closed
- June 20 Post History Awards due to HQ 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
- July 14-18 Jr Shooting Sports National Championship
- July 17 Baseball Final day for Regular Season A Play
- July 18-19 Sioux Falls Air Show
- July 21-23 B Sr. Baseball Regional Tournament
- July 22-23 A Sr. Baseball Regional Play-In
- July 22-23 A Reserve Baseball Play-In
- July 27-28 B Jr. Baseball Regional Tournament
- July 28-Aug 1 A Sr Baseball State Tournament

DEPARTMENT COMMANDER'S MESSAGE

I can't believe how fast this year is going. Seems like it was just November and now it is the beginning of March.

Thank you to all those that attended the MidWinter in Oacoma. I think we had a great conference with great training. It is always good to see our Legion friends and family. A number of department Legionnaires will also be heading to Washington DC to participate in our legislative priorities and talk to our U.S. legislators. I am hoping for good weather, but the forecast is not so promising.

District spring meetings are coming fast. I highly encourage everyone to attend their district meetings.

The even numbered districts will be electing new leadership and district 3 will be holding special elections also. This is a chance to see and hear what is going on in your district.

Our youth programs need your support. The applications are open for Boys State, Girls State, and Youth Trooper Academy. Please get the word out to the schools, your friends and family. South Dakota Youth Shooting Sports will be holding a tournament in Pierre the first weekend in March also. If in the area, stop by the Isaac Walton in Pierre and take in some of the tournament.

Lastly, I want to briefly talk about membership. I am happy to report that South Dakota Legion still leads the nation in membership. However, historically this is the time when we seem to fade. I am asking everyone to continue to ask those who have not renewed yet to do so. I also ask that you take a look at your friends, neighbors, coworkers, and family who may be veterans or related to a veteran and ask them to join the Legion Family.

Have a safe and productive March and looking forward to seeing everyone at the district meetings.



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 14th. You can log in over your computer, or smart device or even call in. This is your chance to discuss what is going on 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 SOUTH DAKOTA CHARGING AHEAD

Department is in 2nd Place in National Membership Race “Only 10 members separate South Dakota from first place — and we’re not done yet.” The Department of South Dakota is gaining momentum in the 2026 membership year, and the race is getting exciting. As of March 6, South Dakota stands at 13,940 members — 91.71%



of our 15,200 goal. That strong showing has our department in second place nationally, just 10 members behind first place. That is a remarkable accomplishment and a clear sign that posts across the state are putting in the work. Every phone call, every conversation, and every renewal has helped push South Dakota forward in the standings. But the race isn't over.

Departments across the country continue to push hard, and when the difference between 1st & 2nd place is only a handful of members, every renewal and every recruit matters.

Now is the time to build momentum and keep South Dakota climbing. One of the most exciting developments this year is the growth of our organization. So far, 315 new members have joined The American Legion in South Dakota this membership year. That is outstanding work by Legionnaires across the state. To everyone who helped recruit these veterans — great job. Your efforts strengthen our posts, strengthen our communities, and help ensure the future of The American Legion. And to the veterans who recently joined our organization — welcome to the ranks. We are proud to have you with us.

Our next milestone is 95% membership. Five hundred renewals by April 13 sounds big — but when it's just 100 per week across South Dakota, it's a goal we can absolutely achieve together. Reaching 95% would be a tremendous accomplishment and would show the strength and dedication of our entire department. But remember, 95% is not the finish line — it's the next step toward finishing strong in the national membership race.

Districts Leading the Way- Membership success is happening across the state. Several districts are already making strong progress toward their goals:

- District 6 — 95.82%
- District 8 — 93.39%
- District 7 — 93.22%
- District 2 — 92.72%
- District 5 — 92.59%
- District 3 — 91.57%
- District 1 — 91.46%

District 4 — 90.49%

These numbers show the teamwork and dedication happening across posts throughout South Dakota.

Big 12 Competition Nearing the Finish Another important milestone is approaching. The Big 12 membership competition concludes March 11, and South Dakota is in an excellent position to win this 3 years in a row.

Thank you. Thank you.

Your dedication has put South Dakota in position to compete with the very best departments in the country.

Let's Finish Strong. 13,900 Legionnaires have renewed their commitment this year. Now it's time to keep building. Make the calls. Send messages. Reach out to members who haven't renewed. Recruit the next generation of Legionnaires.

South Dakota has never backed down from a challenge, and we're not starting now. Let's finish strong and show the nation what South Dakota Legionnaires can do let's reach 95% and then keep climbing. Let's stay positive. Let's stay united. And let's go win this race. Bill Peters, Membership Chairman, 605-360-6547

2026 SD AMERICAN LEGION DEPT COLLEGE

April 18–19, 2026 | Oacoma, SD

SDAL College returns this April with a focused program designed to strengthen the future of our organization. The class provides current and emerging leaders with an understanding of our structure, programs, and the essentials of post, district, and Dept 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 five applicants.** If you, or someone in your post, have 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.**

MARCH MOMENTUM: DEADLINES, ALUMNI POWER, AND ONE MORE PUSH

March is the month to move—Youth Trooper Academy (YTA) and Girls State deadlines are here, and we need a last-minute surge through schools and homeschool networks. Boys State applications have a longer timeline, with a May 1 deadline, but don't let that extra time turn into "later." Start the push now.

Department Oratorical Contest Winners—Congratulations!

1st: Lewis Carlyle (Dist 2), 2nd: Emma Andrews (Dist 7), 3rd: Ian Cho (Dist 1), Runners-up: Emma Schlachter (Dist 3), Ada Sharp (Dist 4), Ella Schutt (Dist 6), Cash Martinez (District 8)

Thanks to every volunteer who coached, hosted, judged, timed,

and supported—this only happens because you show up.

Also, reach out to established shooting sports organizations in your town about partnering on junior shooting sports and encouraging youth to join competitions.

America 250 momentum is growing—several Posts have flown the ceremonial America 250 SD flag. If you want an easy way to bring it to your town, I can connect you with Mark Nelsen at Maximum Promotions (Sioux Falls)—he does most of the work, and it's a memorable youth-friendly event.

Finally, plan now for the nationwide Declaration of Independence reading: July 8 at 5:00 PM CST / 4:00 PM MST. What is your Post and town doing to be part of it?

See you at the upcoming district meetings,
Carol Howitz, Department Americanism Officer

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 **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 are lifechanging experiences where students discover their strengths, build lifelong friendships, and learn to lead with purpose.

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. **Currently there are 100 applicants!**

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. **Currently there are 26 applicants!**

Recruit NOW these programs fill quickly, and the impact lasts a lifetime. Now is the time to talk with schools, parents, counselors, and community partners. Encourage motivated young people to step forward and take advantage of these incredible opportunities.

Applications are at: <https://sdlegion.org/programs>

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

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-legend-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 it 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 find that educator 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...

Post 15 endorses Bill Peters for Dept Commander.

Post 164 endorses Fred Nelson for National Executive Committee

Post 3 endorses Doug Feltman for Alt National Executive Committee

Post 154 endorses Shane Lamer for Eastern Dept Vice Commander

Post 315 endorses Marv Tisdall for Western Dept Vice Commander

Post 11 endorses Greg Geiman for State Sergeant-At-Arms.

FUTURE DEPARTMENT CONVENTION AND MIDWINTER DATES AND LOCATIONS

2026 Convention, Best Western, 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

2028 Convention, Huron Events Center, June 15-18

2029 MidWinter, The Lodge at Deadwood, Feb 9-11

2029 Convention Huron Events Center, June 14-17

2030 MidWinter, Cedar Shores Resort, Oacoma, Feb 8-10

2030 Convention to be determined...

2028 & 2029 DEPT CONVENTION & MIDWINTER

Posts and Convention Centers who desire to submit bids to host the 2030 & 2031 Convention and the 2031 MidWinter should send that information to the Dept Adjutant.

SUPPORTING VETERANS AND FAMILIES THROUGH THE CHILDREN & YOUTH PROGRAM

As Mid-Winter meetings conclude, members across the American Legion Family are reflecting on the past year and looking ahead at

how to strengthen programs that serve veterans and their communities. While not every Post can participate in every initiative offered by the American Legion, Auxiliary, Sons of the American Legion, or Legion Riders, there is one program that consistently unites everyone: Children & Youth.

Recognized as one of the Legion's four foundational pillars, the Children & Youth program plays a central role in supporting veteran families, especially those facing hardship. Many veterans, particularly those raising young families, tend to keep personal struggles private, relying on pride and determination to manage difficulties alone. However, the bonds formed in military service remind us that no one needs to face tough times without support. The Legion Family stand ready to help, just as they always have.

Across communities, numerous resources exist to assist families in need. These include emergency financial help, food assistance to combat insecurity, school supply donations, mobility support, and even temporary lodging assistance. The American Legion's Temporary Financial Assistance (TFA) program is a vital tool, providing aid to qualifying veteran families with children at home. The Department of South Dakota also offers its own TFA option for cases where national assistance has been denied.

Beyond Legion programs, many veterans are members of other service organizations that offer additional support. Groups such as Operation Homefront, Wounded Warrior Project, and Tunnels to Towers provide meaningful assistance for post-9/11 veterans in areas like financial relief, housing, and family-focused events. Veterans are encouraged to explore available programs before making major financial decisions, as eligibility requirements can influence the type of support they receive.

As we move into spring, more opportunities to uplift military families will emerge. The upcoming April Children & Youth report will highlight ways Posts can promote C&Y activities locally and support statewide initiatives for active-duty and National Guard personnel. Posts will also be asked to share their accomplishments from the past year through C&Y activity reports, ensuring every effort is recognized.

Supporting veterans and their families is a shared mission and together, our Legion Family continues to make a difference.

Best Regards, Harry Boner C&Y Chair 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. Posts that wish to retain a copy for their records will now need to make their own photocopy or digital scan. As always you can also submit directly from your MyLegion account. **CPRs are due no later than June 1st!**

POST DATA REPORT

PDR are enclosed in this mailing. The minimum member dues should be \$43.50, or the Post will have to make up the difference. Please return them to Dept HQ no later than April 15, 2026.

CONSTITUTIONAL RESOLUTIONS

Any resolutions proposing changes to the SD Legion Constitution and By Laws to be considered at the Department Convention must be at headquarters by May 8th. Please send electronically to adjutant@sdlegion.org.

SCHOOL AWARDS

Dept HQ has only four School Awards remaining. Once these are gone, we will not be carrying them in the future. Posts that need School Awards moving forward should order directly from American Legion Flags & Emblems at: <https://emblem.legion.org/>

THE AMERICAN LEGION RIDE 605

Thurs, June 4 – 6:00 PM 6th Annual ALR Meeting – Pierre Pizza Ranch. A memorial ride to Onida for Steve Stier is tentatively planned after dinner and meeting.

Ride 605 – Celebrating America's 250th Birthday. Ride 605 is one of the largest fundraisers for the South Dakota American Legion Foundation. Donors are entered to win an original Vietnam painting by John C. Green, donated by Hugh Holmes. Donations of \$250+ earn an extra entry. Donations may be made at any ride stop, at the Dept Joint Banquet, or mailed to Dept HQ by June 12. Make checks payable to SDAL Foundation with "Ride 605" in the memo. The drawing will take place at the Joint Banquet during the Dept Convention. **Thank you!**

The Ride 605 starts and ends in Pierre: about 1,000 miles.

Day 1: Fri, June 5 (±265 miles) Pierre - Groton

9:30 am: Pierre Capitol Lake: Benediction of Bikes & Donations

10:30 am: Pierre to Gettysburg (60 miles) – **arrive at 11:30 am in Gettysburg** for Program

12:00 pm: Fuel and KSU Gettysburg to Herreid (65 miles) – **arrive at 1:15 pm in Herreid** for Lunch and Program

2:45 pm: Fuel & KSU Herreid to Hosmer (50 miles) – **arrive at 3:45 pm in Hosmer** for Program

4:30 pm: Hosmer to Warner or Aberdeen (65 miles) – **arrive at 6:00 pm in Warner** for Dinner & Program

7:30 pm: Ride to Groton (25 miles) Hunting Lodge and additional accommodation for couples.

Day 2: Sat, June 6 (±200 miles) Groton - Madison

8:30 am: Breakfast provided by Groton

9:30 am: Groton Post for the Program

10:00 am: Groton to Raymond (45 miles) – **arrive at 11:00 am in Raymond** for Lunch & Program

12:30 pm: Raymond to Huron (45 miles) – **arrive at 1:30 pm in Huron** for Program

2:00 pm: Fuel and KSU Huron to DeSmet (45 miles) – **arrive at 3:00 pm in DeSmet** for Refreshments & Program

3:45 pm: DeSmet to Arlington (35 miles) – **arrive at 4:30 pm in Arlington** for Program

5:00 pm: Arlington to Madison (30 miles) – **arrive at 5:45 pm in Madison** for Dinner & Program

Hotel: AmericInn Madison, 504 SE 10th St. Call: 605 646-2689

Day 3: Sun, June 7 (±265 miles) Madison to Gregory

8:30 am: Fuel

9:00 am: Madison to Egan (60 miles) – **arrive in Garretson at 10:00 am** for Post Monthly Breakfast (Omelets) & Program

10:50 am: Garretson to Sioux Falls (30 miles) – **arrive at 11:20 am in Sioux Falls** for Monthly Pancake Fundraiser and Program

12:10 pm: Fuel & KSU Sioux Falls to Ethan (55 miles) – **arrive at 1:20 pm in Ethan** for Program

2:30 pm: Fuel and KSU Ethan to Wagner (50 miles) - **arrive at 3:30 pm in Wagner** for Program

4:45 pm: Fuel and KSU Wagner to Gregory (70 miles) – **arrive at 6:00 pm in Gregory** for Dinner & Program

Hotel: Parkside Motel in Gregory \$80 one bed; \$100 two beds. 605-835-9696 (Reserve early – no group block)

Day 4: Mon, June 8 (±225 miles)

8:30 am: Fuel & KSU Gregory to Winner (35 miles) – **arrive at 9:30 am in Winner** for Breakfast & Program

10:15 am: Winner to Oacoma (60 miles) – **arrive at 11: 15 am in Oacoma**

11:15 am: Al's Oasis for Lunch

12:15 pm: Fuel & KSU Oacoma to Chamberlain Veterans Park (20 miles) – **arrive at 12:45 in Chamberlain** for Program

1:15 pm: Chamberlain to Pierre (Ft Thompson, Lower Brule, Route 1806 – scenic route (110 miles)

3:00 pm: Arrive in Pierre – Capitol Lake – end of the ride