

Legion News



VOLUME 86, NUMBER 5

STILL SERVING AMERICA

April 2019

101st State Convention in Sioux Falls to Feature Elections



Fred Nelson
Dept Commander Candidate



Kevin Morello
Dept Vice Commander Candidate

The 2019 State Convention in Sioux Falls, SD, will feature elections for several department offices to include electing a new state commander on Sunday, June 9, 2019.

Fred Nelson has been endorsed by Spearfish Post #164 for the office of Department Commander. He is currently running unopposed.

Also running unopposed is Kevin Morello, Post #311, for the office of Department Vice Commander representing Districts 1 & 2.



Harry Boner
Dept Vice Commander Candidate



Verle Whipple
Dept Sergeant-at-arms Candidate

Harry Boner has been endorsed by Castlewood Post #250, he is vying for Department Vice Commander representing Districts 3-8.

Verle Whipple of Gary Post #109 is seeking re-election as Department Sergeant-At-Arms.

Every vote counts! Be sure to pay for your delegates and be present to vote.



PDC Jim Huls

Jim is from Post #140, Salem, SD and seeking re-election as National Executive Committee-man

Every vote counts! Be sure to pay for your delegates and be present to vote.

2019 Boys State

To every Legionnaire, thank you for your support in making Boys State 2018 a great success. Last year we had 260 Boys attend the event. Those numbers were down from years past and we are hoping with your support we can get as many boys to this year's event as possible. Boys State 2019 is scheduled for May 27th to 31st, 2019 on the Campus of Northern State University in Aberdeen, SD.

American Legion Boys State of South Dakota has a two-fold purpose. First, to better help youth understand and appreciate the American system of government and way of life including the

Continued on page 6

VA asks Legion members to help 'break the code' of veteran suicides

VA Acting Deputy Secretary Jim Byrne

Washington DC, Feb. 26, 2019 - Fourteen of the 20 to 22 veterans who commit suicide every day are not on VA's radar screen, estimated Jim Byrne, the department's Acting Deputy Secretary. "The number of veterans taking their lives every day is completely unacceptable," Byrne told American Legion Family members Feb. 26 during the Commander's Call at the annual Washington Conference. "It is the Number 1 clinical priority for the Department of Veterans Affairs. There are some good things going on but this is not one of them. It is an area where we are concentrating a lot of our effort and time but we have not broken that code."

Since 2007, the Veterans Crisis Line has handled 3.5 million calls, 400,000 online chats and nearly 100,000 texts. (To access the crisis line, call 800-273-8255 and press 1. or www.veteranscrisisline.net. Or text 838255.) "Through the crisis line they have dispatched emergency services nearly 100,000 times," Byrne said. "Those are some pretty shocking numbers. The problem is that we are reaching only six of those veterans." Byrne asks for help from the American Legion Family, supporters and communities. "We're asking for your help to not only reach out to veterans but to connect with their families and to let them know that we can help them by providing treatment," he said. "But if we don't know who they are, we don't have a chance to do that. That's where you can be tremendously helpful."

During his 25-minute address, Byrne detailed areas where he says VA is showing improvement. "The state of the VA is good but more importantly it is getting better," he said. "We are in the midst of the greatest transformation of the VA since Gen. Omar Bradley was at the helm." He noted several independent surveys that lauded VA's care, including a study by Dartmouth College. "VA health care is as good or better than any care that American people get in any part of the country," the December report concluded. Among the goals, Byrne said, is a VA "that veterans choose to come to." Still, he outlined several key priorities of the department. The first, Byrne said, is customer service. "It's tremendously important; providing care, services and benefits for our veterans in a fashion worthy of their service." He told the audience that VA created a Veterans Experience Office that scores several key areas including "effectiveness of service, ease of access, emotional experience and overall satisfaction. I am pleased to report that all of those numbers are climbing in the right direction."

Next up is the Mission Act. Byrne described it as "the most transformational piece of legislation in the VA." Simply put, it is getting veterans "the care they need, when and where they need it. It combines seven community care programs into one and into a more efficient manner." Byrne credited the Mission Act for the success of Telehealth, which allows patients and doctors in different states to communicate directly. Telehealth had more than 1 million such visits in the past fiscal year, an increase of 19 percent, Byrne said. He also discussed the collaboration between VA and the Department of Defense (DoD). "We want to make sure that our veterans are transitioning well."

As an example, Byrne cited the \$16 billion project on electronic health records. "We're taking the veterans' footprint from the time they step on the yellow footprint to the end of their lives. It's a seamless record."

Among the differences, he noted, is that the electronic record shows lab results, prescriptions, MRIs and other details.

Continued to page 2

"Leave No Veteran Behind"

Denny Brenden
State Commander

**Fellow Legionnaires**

As I write this article, it is less than three months until our State Convention. The year has gone by fast and I've truly enjoyed being your State Commander, and thank you all very much for having that honor. I have represented The American Legion to the best of my abilities.

In a short time, Spring District meetings will begin. Every year for the past twelve years I've looked forward to seeing many friends and comrades at the fall and spring meetings. Many Legionnaires that don't normally attend conventions or midwinters will attend these meetings. It gives me a chance to visit with Legionnaires all across the state. I hope these meetings are well attended.

This year being our centennial, I hope all Posts are planning some event in their local communities. Parades, meetings or any other event that brings the public and media to let them know "who we are and what we do" and to honor the 100 years the American Legion has been around. If you are unaware of the history of the American Legion, please contact State Headquarters or myself for assistance. Be ready to talk on how we were started and the pillars on which the American Legion was built 100 years ago.

Please have a representative present at this year's State Convention in Sioux Falls. Presentations will be made to all Posts whether your Post is 100 years old or not. This will be a very special event. If your Post has a color guard, have them enter the color guard contest on Friday morning of the convention. We have excellent leaders running for offices in The American Legion. Come to the convention and support their elections. This year's State Convention should be a great time for all Posts to enjoy.

Our centennial committee has worked hard in coming up with different ways we can best celebrate our centennial. The centennial committee approved and built a beautiful float that really exemplifies The American Legion. Get the float in your community for the event you've scheduled.

Every article I've written in the Legion News, I've talked on membership. This year our leadership have been active in enrolling new members. Many have accomplished the goal I asked them to reach. Some have gone way beyond my expectations and a few have yet to get started. My feeling is that leadership shouldn't talk membership to Posts unless they are actively working on membership themselves. Many Posts have done a great job and reached their goal plus one, other Posts are so close but are doing their best to find new members and other Posts are holding back and keeping their new members for next year. There could be some serious problems for a Post if they received a new member's check in March or April and not send it in until July.

Now is the time that we must make sure everyone on your roster has been contacted. If you are still under goal, contact State Headquarters for a list of members who haven't paid their dues for the last three years. Use these lists to contact previous members. You'll be surprised not all will rejoin but many will. I just ask that you don't give up. Keep trying. When you were in the service and were given a mission, you weren't done until the mission was complete. Look at membership the same way.

If you would like me to come to any event in the next three months don't hesitate to contact me or the State Adjutant. I would be honored to help your Post celebrate our centennial.

Thank you for all you do for The American Legion.

Denny Brenden
State Commander

Please send all original photos
and news materials to:
SD American Legion
P.O. Box 67
Watertown, SD 57201-0067
Email:
hq@sdlegion.org or
dave@sdlegion.org

**New District
Commander
Seminar
Scheduled**

The annual new District Commander's Seminar has been scheduled for April 27-28, 2019, at the Post 17 in Watertown, SD.

The seminar is conducted annually to assist new District Commanders on the rules, responsibilities, budgets, public relations, communications, veterans rehabilitation, youth trooper academy, membership, resolutions, legislative process, and more.

It also provides an excellent opportunity to network with fellow District Commanders, as time is spent sharing best practices and brainstorming answers to common challenges.

The department leadership will serve as the facilitators for the seminar.

Upon completion of the seminar, a tour of the South Dakota American Legion Headquarters is offered to all that wish to see their state headquarters.

District Vice Commanders are welcomed and encouraged to attend the training if they wish, however per diem is not authorized.

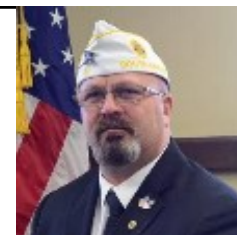
Facilitators for the District Commander Seminar will be Commander Denny Brenden, State Adjutant Travis Flisrand, National Executive Committeeman Jim Huls, Alternate National Executive Committeeman Terry Hanson, Past Department Commander Hugh Holmes, Membership Chairman Gene Opbroek, Finance Officer Gary Wolkow, Department Service Officer Courtney VanZanten and Assistant State Adjutant Dave Manning.

**Secretary of Veterans
Affairs Greg Whitlock**

spoke at the Mid-Winter Conference to council and committee members on several issues. He spoke of the urgency of attending to the needs of the Michael Fitzmaurice Veterans Home, commenting on the staffing and high quality of care. He also discussed economic issues that the home is facing as it looks towards the future.

**Department Adjutant
Thoughts**

Travis Flisrand
State Adjutant



At no point in time, has any American Legion member ever said "I would love to do some paperwork!" with any amount of enthusiasm. I know personally, that has never come out of my mouth, that is, until it is time to write awards for members and then I am thankful that I have information to back up the stories of what we do. The "Post Adjutants" job is often a thankless job that few members want to take on, but they are often the ones who ensure that those members of the Post who are active, get the recognition they deserve for the countless hours they put into this organization and make it what it is today.

It is that time of year when the leadership of the Post gets to sit down and count everything that they do in their communities and complete the Consolidated Post Report (CPR). Thankfully, with the computer era it has gotten easier to complete and update forms through MyLegion (for those who actively use it). I have seen some Posts do updates on the MyLegion version of the CPR from January through the June 1st deadline so it isn't as intimidating to complete.

For those who feel that local level Post involvement doesn't make a significant impact on the whole of our Department, I want to give you highlights from our Department's CPR. These numbers are a culmination of all the Posts who actually submit their CPR reports.

The numbers below are the highest recorded number over the past 4 years in reporting, with typically 160 out of 240 Posts reporting.

Emergency Aid	\$15,430
Money spent on C&Y	\$15,818
Money spent for Boys State	\$60,260
Money spent for Baseball	\$157,391
Total Money spent	\$608,353
Post Service Officer Cases	1,590
Pints of blood given	1,420
Total Volunteer Hours	33,840

The point of bringing up this statistical data is so those who are recruiting can tell future Legion members what we do in South Dakota and the impact we have as a whole. This also gives the Post Public Relations officer information to share in their local newspapers. By sharing this information, we can show to our communities what we have achieved over the past year.

State Commander Denny Brenden needs your help to capture this information and record it on your CPR reports. No matter how small your Post is, what you do in your Post is worth reporting on the CPR. With this information we will have proof to show our communities and our State, just how important The American Legion, Department of South Dakota, is in our State. This gives the "Why you should belong?" answer to those future Legionnaires.

Travis Flisrand
State Adjutant

Suicides

Continued from page 1

"It's so that the providers for our veterans have a holistic picture of the veteran for their wellness. There's also a safety component: to prevent over-prescriptions or double prescribing things that could be harmful to veterans."

Listed below are good resources for Vets and families
The Veterans Crisis Line: 1-800-273-8255
Internet: VeteranCrisisLine.net
Text: [838255](tel:838255)

Congressional Contact Information

Senator John Thune (R-SD), 511 Dirksen Senate Office Building, Washington DC 20510, Phone: 202-224-2321, Fax: 202-228-5429, Toll Free: 1-866-850-3855, Web site: <http://www.thune.senate.gov>

Senator Michael Rounds (R-SD), Hart Senate Office Building, Suite 502, Washington, D.C. 20510, Phone: 202-224-5842, Fax: 202-224-7482, Toll-Free: 202-875-5268, Website: <http://www.rounds.senate.gov>

Representative Dusty Johnson (R-SD), 1508 Longworth House Office Building, Washington DC 20515, Phone: 202-225-2801, Toll-Free: 855-225-2801, Web site: <http://dusty.johnson.house.gov>



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DEPARTMENT OFFICERS

State Commander — Denny Brenden, Watertown

State Vice Commanders — Ed Thompson Dist 1,2, Ed Stringer Dist 3-8

National Executive Committeeman — Jim Huls, Madison

Alternate National Executive Committeeman — Terry Hanson, Arlington

State Adjutant — Travise Flisrand, Castlewood

State Assistant Adjutant — Dave Manning, Watertown

State Americanism Officer — Larry Madsen, Gettysburg

State Membership Chairman — Gene Opbroek, Rapid City

State Service Officer — Courtney VanZanten, Chester

State Chaplain — Larry Klumb, Ethan

State Finance Officer — Gary Wolkow, De Smet

State Historian — Fred Lee, Sioux Falls

State Judge Advocate — Gary Schumacher, De Smet

State Sergeant-At-Arms — Verle Whipple, Clear Lake

State Children and Youth Chairman — Miranda Krumm, Chester

DISTRICT COMMANDERS

1—David Booze, Summerset

5—Matt Lagerstrom, White

2—Eugene Iron Shell, Jr., Rosebud

6—Doug Feltman, Chamberlain

3—LeRoy Madsen, Pierre

7—Roger Klos, Sioux Falls

4—Perry Schmidt, Redfield

8—Gregory Geiman, Scotland

Advertising rates upon request; we reserve the right to refuse any advertisement

To add a memorial on <https://www.legion.org/memorials>, you need the following:

A photo or photos (required), easily taken with a smart phone
Location of the memorial, mapped if possible

Purpose of the memorial, such as who it honors and why, in a sentence or two

Date of the memorial's installation and who originally installed it
A brief assessment of its condition today

We still only have 3 memorials listed in South Dakota—Can we do better?

State Adjutant Travise Flisrand - adjutant@sdlegion.org
State Assistant Adjutant Dave Manning - dave@sdlegion.org
Membership/Bookkeeper Judy Greenfield - judy@sdlegion.org
Youth Programs Manager MaryJo Boner—maryjo@sdlegion.org
Department Service Officer Courtney VanZanten
dso@sdlegion.org



No Goose Eggs in District 1!

2019 District Membership Chairman's Award goes to District 1 CDR Kevin Morello. Kevin managed to achieve an average higher than 75% membership goal by November 15th to earn the title. Congratulations to everyone who worked hard to achieve this!

District 1 also has earned the District Membership Award. They managed to earn the highest percentage over 95%. They will receive the \$250.00 cash award for hitting their mark by the 2019 target date.

2019

Post Honor Ribbon's

Alcester	82.14%
Allen	94.12
Belvidere	88.24%
Bison	89.36%
Box Elder	100%
Buffalo	93.75%
Canistota	133.33%
Chamberlain	107.06%
Chester	111.27%
Columbia	97.44%
Custer	105.88%
Draper	88.24%
Eagle Butte	208.33%
Emery	89.47%
Ethan	111.76%
Fairfax	88.24%
Faith	53.33%
Greenwood	115%
Grenville	91.67%
Hayti	91.49%
Herreid	88.10%
Highmore	90.74%
Isabel	93.33
Kyle	100%
Lead	105.21%
Lily	93.33%
Little Eagle	103.33%
McIntosh	84.38%
Midland	103.45%
Montrose	100%
New Effington	93.85%
North Sioux City	104.08%
Northville	88.24%
Oelrichs	80%
Oldham	80%
Parmelee	106.67%
Philip	97.06%
Pine Ridge	46.67%
Plankinton	100%
Porcupine	53.33%
Rosholt	92.31%
Salem	101.41%
Timber Lake	106.25%
Vermillion	111.54%
Wakonda	90.91%
Wanblee	100%
Warner	90.38%
Wolsey	88.37%
Worthing	80.77%

Department Constitution and Bylaws Resolutions Deadline April 25, 2019

The deadline for submission of resolutions calling for the amendment of the Constitution and Bylaws of The American Legion Department of South Dakota is rapidly approaching.

Proposals for amendments to the Constitution and Bylaws must be received in State Headquarters at least (6) six weeks prior to the annual state convention. This requirement is to allow sufficient time for the resolutions to be reviewed by the Department Internal Affairs Commission and to allow sufficient time for the Department Adjutant to forward copies of all recommendations for amendment, along with the recommendation of the Department Internal Affairs Commission to all posts.

The deadline to submit a resolution to amend the Department Constitution and Bylaws to State Headquarters is April 25, 2019.

April is Post Election Time

The Constitution of the American Legion states, "A Commander, Vice Commander, and Executive Committee of each Post shall be elected by its membership at the first regular meeting of the Post in April and installed prior to the Department Convention. All other officers of the Post may be elected or appointed as may be provided by its constitution and bylaws, except that in a Post with a membership of more than 100 members, all officers except the adjutant shall be elected."

After the election, the current post adjutant is required to certify the new officers to State Headquarters.

Mark Your Calendar

April 2019

- 1: American Legion CHILDREN & YOUTH MONTH
- 1: Deadline for SD American Legion Boys State Registration
- 3: BH National Cemetery Unaccompanied Veterans Memorial Service
- 5-7: 82nd National Oratorical Contest Finals, Indianapolis, IN
- 6: U.S. entry into World War I
- 14: Palm Sunday
- 13: VA&R Commission Meeting
- 19: Good Friday
- 21: EASTER SUNDAY
- 22: Earth Day
- 25: Deadline for Constitution & By-Laws Amendment
- 26: Arbor Day
- 27: Internal Affairs Commission Meeting
- 27-28: District CDRs In-Service, (Watertown)

May 2019

- 6-9: American Legion National Spring Meeting
- 7-9: SDDVA Mini Conferences (Rapid City, Pierre, and Sioux Falls), Topics of the training include: National Guard/VA Benefits, Appeals Modernization Act, Nuts and Bolts of what is in the 38 CFR, How to use the 38 CFR, and Hot Topics.
- 8: V-E Day (1945)
- 8-9: National Spring Mtg, Indianapolis, IN
- 12: Mother's Day
- 12-18: National Law Enforcement Week
- 18 Armed Forces Day
- 27: Memorial Day
- 27-31: Boys State, Aberdeen

June 2019

- 6-9: State Convention, Sioux Falls
- 24-28: Youth Trooper Academy, Pierre

EDITORIAL POLICY DISCLAIMER

The South Dakota Legion News is published six times a year to serve its members and interested parties by informing them about Department activities and other relevant issues concerning the veterans of South Dakota. The news and opinions expressed in this publication does not necessarily reflect the views of The American Legion Department of South Dakota, its officers, members, or the Editor. The Editor has the right to edit all articles.

2019 Midwinter Conference - Holiday Inn - Spearfish, SD



State Commander Denny Brenden from Watertown, addressed the Legionnaires during the 2019 Mid-Winter Conference at the Holiday Inn, Spearfish, SD. Commander Brenden introduced and welcomed guest speakers, presided over the agenda and presented several membership awards. Commander Brenden thanked all Legionnaires for their attendance.

Guest speaker from Whitesboro, Texas was Paul Dillard who is running for 2020-2021 National Commander. His motto is "No Veteran Left Behind". Candidate Dillard believes and encourages Legionnaires to use the programs that are offered through the American Legion and believes in Family first, Integrity and Service above self.

The keynote speaker at the 2019 Mid-Winter Conference at the Holiday Inn in Spearfish, SD, was American Legion National Vice Commander James Sweet from the Department of Mississippi. National Vice Commander Sweet thanked the Department of South Dakota for their hospitality.



Pictured left to right above: Department Commander Denny Brenden, 2019 Department Champion Keilly Gunther of Aberdeen, Erica Houser of Rapid City, Shaina Determan of Alexandria, Elise Heesch of New Effington, Julia Ebbinga of Hartford, Morgan Roberts of Spearfish, Jaslee Kerner of Gregory, and Americanism Commission Chairman Larry Madsen of Gettysburg, SD.

South Dakota American Legion 2019 Oratorical Contest

SPEARFISH—Keilly Gunther of Aberdeen emerged victorious as the top orator in the final round of competition of The South Dakota American Legion High School Oratorical Scholarship Program "A Constitutional Speech Contest" in Spearfish this past weekend. Keilly is the daughter of Kris and David Gunther of Aberdeen. First, contestants were required to deliver a prepared oration of 8-10 minutes on the U. S. Constitution. Second, a constitutional topic was assigned to the contestants and a 3-5 minute extemporaneous oration was required on that topic. They were allowed five minutes of preparation time.

Each of the five contestants in the finals had previously won competition at the local and district levels of competition.

Those eligible to compete at the finals this past weekend consisted of Gunther, a senior at Aberdeen Central High School; 2nd place Morgan Roberts, a senior at Spearfish High School; 3rd place - Jaslee Kerner, a junior at Gregory High School; Erica Houser, a junior at Hill City High School; Shaina Determan, a senior at Hanson High School; Elise Heesch, a senior at Sisseton High School and Julia Ebbinga, a junior at West Central High School. Second place received a \$500 scholarship; third place received a \$300 scholarship and fourth, fifth, sixth, and seventh places a \$100 scholarship.

Gunther was awarded a championship trophy, a \$1,000 scholarship, and a plaque to be displayed in her high school's trophy case as the first place winner of the state contest. She now has the opportunity to represent The South Dakota American Legion in the National Contest which will be held April 5-7 in Indianapolis at the Wyndham Indianapolis West Hotel in Indianapolis, Indiana. Gunther will receive an additional \$1,500 scholarship for participating in the first round of competition at national and an additional \$1,500 if she advances to the second round of national competition but does not make it into the final round. Scholarship awards possible in the national level competition are \$18,000 for first place, \$16,000 for second place, and \$14,000 for third place.



A Storm Trooper was caught on guard duty at the Codington Post 17, in Watertown, SD.

Advance Ticket Form for 2019 State American Legion Convention deadline is May 10, 2019

NO TICKETS WILL BE AVAILABLE AT THE EVENT

Name _____
 Address _____
 City _____ State _____ Zip _____ Phone _____

Auxiliary Noon Luncheon, Saturday June 8th, 2019
 Menu: American Classic Sandwich, Turkey, Ham, Swiss Cheese, Lettuce, Tomato served on French Roll, Pasta Salad, Chips, Coffee & Iced Tea
 Number of Tickets requested @ \$ 21.00 per ticket _____
 () check box for special dietary needs and list need with your check

Auxiliary Banquet, Friday, June 8th, 2019
 Menu: Chicken Breast stuffed with Spinach & Artichokes, with a Chardonnay Cream Sauce, Spinach Salad with Red Onions, Mushrooms, Walnuts & Dried Cranberries, Potato, Vegetable, Fresh Rolls, Caramel Apple Pie and Coffee
 Number of tickets Requested @ \$ 35.00 per ticket _____
 () check box for special dietary needs and list need with your check

Legion and Auxiliary Joint Banquet Saturday June 9, 2019

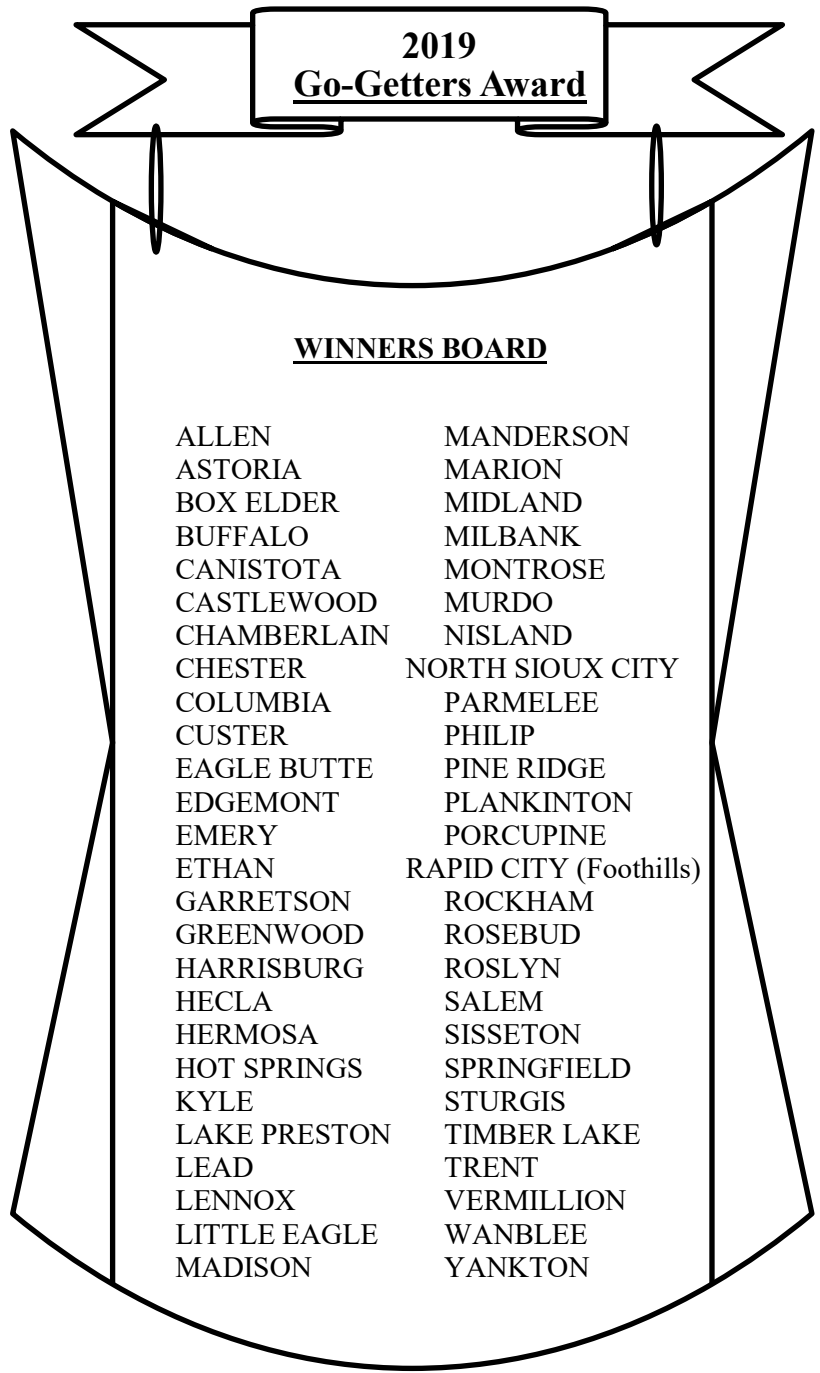
Menu: You have a choice of Pork Medallions _____
 Grilled Pork Tenderloin finished with a Tangy Plum Sauce
 OR
 Grilled Chicken _____
 Lightly Seasoned Grilled Breast with Mango Salsa

Both entrees are served with Salad, Potato, Vegetable and Dessert, Bakery Fresh Rolls and Butter and Coffee

Number of tickets requested @ \$35.00 per ticket _____
 () Check box for special dietary needs and list need with your check

TOTAL amount of all meals \$ _____

Make checks payable to The American Legion Post 15 and mail to:
 Laurel Stringer
 208 Elm Rd
 Hartford, SD 57033



PICTURES REQUEST FOR CONVENTION

In planning for the State Convention in June, we are requesting that all Posts and Legionnaires who have pictures of the South Dakota American Legion in action or in portraits to scan and e-mail good quality photos to the DSO Courtney Van Zanten. If you know who is in the photos, it would be GREATLY appreciated if you identify who they are in the pictures and when the pictures were taken. We want the Legionnaires of all levels within the Post/County/District/State membership, pictures taken between 1919-2019 are all accepted! Pictures can be serious or entertaining. Please send them to dso@sdlegion.org. Note: If you send pictures by email please try to send them in jpeg format.

April is Children and Youth Month
Understanding Temporary Financial Assistance

“The American Legion strives to improve the lives of veteran’s young people through the forth Pillar: Children and Youth. Today in a ever changing world, our veteran families are faced with financial hardships from time to time that leave them with no outlets left to go to for assistance. Luckily, through the Temporary Financial Assistance, (TFA), program, the organization can help meet the basic needs of minor children of veterans, when all else has failed. Our organization is the light for so many veteran families. Here’s a short story of a South Dakota veteran our TFA program helped this pass year from the Watertown post:

An Army Veteran, this single father of a six year old girl resides in Watertown, SD. 2018 was a year of unfortunate events that led him to the state headquarters asking for help. With all other resources depleted, he had heard of the TFA program through the American Legion from the local VSO. He made his way through the steps of filling out the form, gathering the documentation and sitting through the investigation/answering questions. This veteran had injured his back and was on medical leave with a cut on his income until his recovery. To top his tight budget off, shortly after his accident, his furnace had a small electrical fire, leaving it unrepairable. Slowly his rent began to get behind and he was honest and kept his landlord up-to-date of his situation, however, his landlord told him in the near future he would have to enforce the contract and take back the property leaving the veteran and his daughter nowhere to go. Winter was approaching as and heat was going to become a concern in the upcoming weeks. It was time for the American Legion TFA at the state and national level to step in and help! We caught up his rent payments and we donated towards a new furnace for his home. This veteran family kept their home and stayed warm this winter and we were able to take that burden away from a veteran that was struggling. An amazing feeling!

One of the main objectives of Children and Youth is to strengthen the family unit and I believe you have to start that by keeping the children in their homes, with all the basic amenities of food, warmth, and light to keep them safe.”

Miranda Krumm, Department Children and Youth Chairman

Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation

Courtney VanZanten
Department Service Officer



Greetings Legionnaires!

Getting settled back into the swing of things following the Washington, D.C. Department Service Officer training. What an incredible opportunity it was to learn from the best, network with other DSOs and come home energized with new information and new ideas.

As many of you may have heard, the Appeals Modernization Act has been enacted in the VA's Disability and Compensation world. The AMA has the potential to effectively reduce the number of cases backlogged from the previous system—here's a quick overview.

The AMA consists of three lanes—one to match up with each of the following statements:

Supplemental: "We help Veterans who didn't understand what they needed to prove to submit the evidence needed to win." Essentially, supplemental appeals will allow you to submit more evidence to help round out your claim within one year from the initial denial of your claim. Need another medical opinion, civilian medical records or additional statements to prove your case? This is your lane.

Higher Level Review: "We point out simple errors to more experienced staff at the RO." Mistakes happen, even in (or especially in) the VA world. Cases can be thousands of pages thick, and the Regional Office Claims Examiner often only gets a matter of hours with each case. That said, evidence that is already there can be overlooked. Higher Level Review puts cases with all the evidence already gathered into the hands of a more experienced case examiner, who will do a more stringent review and make a decision.

Appeal: "We help Veterans take medically and legally complex cases to the Board." If you've submitted all possible evidence, and a higher review still doesn't come back in your favor, it is still possible to file a Notice of Disagreement and present your case to the Board of Veterans Appeals (BVA).

One major bonus to the AMA is the ability to treat an unfavorable decision as a learning opportunity—as long as you, the veteran, file to seek further review within one year, you preserve the effective date of your claim. Additionally, you can use separate lanes for separate issues—if your initial claim had three things denied, it's possible to use a different AMA lane for each.

The current wait for a decision from a BVA case is about seven years. It is hoping, by opening up the flexibility of the first two lanes, that many cases can be solved at lower level appeal processes, and we can drastically reduce both the number of cases presented to the BVA and the amount of time it takes to get a final decision.

If you have any questions about your VA disability claim, reach out to your local County Veterans Service Officer, or me!

Always here to help,
Courtney VanZanten

A Thousand Words

Pictures from our past highlighting the rich heritage of the South Dakota Legion

Photo taken at the 1949 National Convention in the city Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Notice where our great state is sitting?



National Executive Committeeman

Jim Huls
NEC



The Washington Conference was held on February 24-27 in Washington, DC with a group of South Dakota Legionnaires attending including our VSO Courtney VanZanten who was there for training. The group visited with Senators Thune and Rounds and an aide for Congressman Johnson as he was voting in the House at the time of our meeting. We presented to them the American Legion's legislative agenda for the 116th Congress. The American Legion's agenda seemed to be well received. The following is the American Legion's Priority list of the Legislative agenda items.

1. Redefine "wartime service" period. The American Legion passed Resolution 1 at its Fall 2018 National Executive Committee meeting calling on congress to direct VA to expand the definition of "wartime veteran" to include all military personnel who served honorably since December 7 1941 under title 10 orders or at least one day during this continuous period of armed conflict.
2. Support VA's suicide-prevention efforts
3. Implement, oversee new laws. The 115th Congress passed multiple American Legion supported bills that help veterans and their families, from the backlog aimed VA Appeals Modernization Act to the omnibus VA Mission Act. The Legion now calls on the 116th Congress to ensure these measures are accurately and quickly implemented as designed.
4. Fully Fund a superior national Defense
5. Improve health care for women veterans
6. Expand Agent Orange benefits to include Blue Water Navy Veterans
7. Programs to end Veteran homelessness
8. Re-Employment rights for veterans
9. Access to business capital via GI bill
10. Citizenship for honorable service
11. Repeal unfair VA offsets
12. Protect the American Flag
13. Support for Gold Star Families

Finally on Wednesday, Commander Brenden and I attended Commander Reistad's testimony before the combined House and Senate Veterans Affairs Committee. Will see all of you at the Spring Meetings

For God and Country
Jim Huls
NEC South Dakota

Chaplain's Words

Larry Klumb
State Chaplain



There are some things that change in our lives and some that do not. Each and everyone of us are like the snowflakes that have fallen upon us for the past four maybe five or what feels like six months. Each and every snowflake is unique, not one alike, just like each of us is unique as well. Just as God has made every snowflake special and unique in its own way; he has made each and every one of us in our own unique way. It is really sad, but the fact of the matter is, we have to die before people stop to think of you and your life and realize how special and unique you truly were. Especially the night right before the funeral, some call it a wake, some a prayer service--truthfully it does not matter what they call it. It is the time people slow down to look back and reflect how unique that person was. It would do each and everyone of us so much good if we could only slow down and reflect how unique the creator of the world, God, has made us--the things we are good at, the things we may struggle with. Like a good basketball player, you practice the things you are good at, but work hard on the things you are not--all to become the better version of yourself!! So should each of us, everyday. But perhaps more important than that we need to stop and reflect on the good things God has given us, and the unique things about our lives--our significant other, kids, grand kids, friends, and our neighbors!

Yes indeed, it's been cold, miserable, dreary, and at times rather depressing when you think about the weather! But if we just stop for one single minute- guess what?? There are so many wonderful things in your life as well as mine to think about. At the end of the day, God has blessed me as well as you, more than any one of us could have ever imagined. With great friends, great wife and family, the best country-America. On top of all of that the birds are headed our way, the trees are budding, the grass is coming, the Easter Lilies will be blooming, and we will be celebrating the death and resurrection of our Lord, Jesus. Forget the snow and cold--we have so many more blessings to think about, Amen.

Your Chaplain,
Larry Klumb

Boys State

Continued from page 1

rights and responsibilities of citizenship.

Secondly, to give a better knowledge of the fundamental principles of government within the State of South Dakota. These objectives are sought by establishment of a mythical 51st State of Union, comprised of cities and counties, giving Boys State's actual experience in control and operation of these units of government. The American Legion wants the Boys of South Dakota to understand the problems of government as well as how it functions.

Tuition is again \$200 and transportation is the posts' responsibility to arrange. Thursday again is Legion Day and we welcome as many members to come visit the program to see one of our premier Americanism Programs. For more information, please feel free to contact our team below.

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2019 Legislative Results State Capitol in Pierre

During the 2019 Legislative Session, the Department of South Dakota followed 14 bills and 2 concurrent resolution: HB 1007, HB 1043, HB 1044, HB 1080, HB 1081, HB 1111, HB 1171, HB 1201, HB 1203, HB 1257, HB 1260, HB 1263, SB 9, SB 58. Also tracked, was one commemoration: HC 1007, honoring Calico Ducheneaux of Mobridge, for being the Girls State Governor and Seamus Duffy of Sioux Falls, for being the Boys State Governor as well as commending and the South Dakota American Legion and Auxiliary for their sponsorship and coordination of the Girls State and Boys State programs. SCR 3 commending, honoring, and thanking South Dakota's numerous women veterans for their service to our country and state. HC's 1020, 1021, 1022, 1023, 1024, 1026, 1027, 1028. Along with SCR 11: Requesting that the President of the United States designate a single state funeral be held upon the death of the last living Medal of Honor recipient from World War II. Senate Resolution's 6, 7.

HB 1007: Revise certain provisions regarding the exemptions from the twelve-month residency requirement for university students.

Signed by the Governor on February 13, 2019. H.J. 403

HB 1043: Require the Department of Social Services to collect and report certain information regarding the military affiliation of a parent whose child is subject to a report of abuse or neglect.

Signed by the Governor on February 14, 2019. H.J. 426

HB 1044: Authorize certain children who are subject to a pending military relocation to apply for enrollment in a school district.

Signed by the Governor on February 14, 2019. H.J. 426

HB 1080: Increase the property tax exemption allowed for certain veterans with a disability and the surviving spouses of certain veterans with a disability.

Delivered to the Governor on March 6, 2019

HB 1081: Authorize certain paraplegic or amputee veterans or their surviving spouses to retain a property tax exemption without having to reapply each year.

Delivered to the Governor on March 6, 2019

HB 1111: Provide for professional or occupational licensure for certain active duty military personnel and spouses.

Delivered to the Governor on March 11, 2019

HB 1171: Allow certain veterans to attend courses offered at postsecondary technical institutes without payment of tuition.

House of Representatives Conference Committee Report H.J. 714 Amendment Cc1171a

HB 1081: Authorize certain paraplegic or amputee veterans or their surviving spouses to retain a property tax exemption without having to reapply each year.

Delivered to the Governor on March 6, 2019

HB 1111: Provide for professional or occupational licensure for certain active duty military personnel and spouses.

Delivered to the Governor on March 6, 2019

HB 1201: Revise provisions regarding group pheasant hunts for disabled veterans.

Delivered to the Governor on March 11, 2019

HB 1203: Authorize certain poker tournaments for restricted purposes.

State Affairs Deferred to the 41st legislative day, Passed, 10-3. H.J. 337

HB 1257: Authorize the Department of the Military to construct two storage buildings, to make an appropriation therefor, and to declare an emergency.

Signed by the Governor on March 1, 2019. H.J.596

HB 1260: Make an appropriation to continue the veteran's bonus program and to declare an emergency.

Signed by the Governor on March 1, 2019. H.J.596

HC 1007: Honoring Calico Ducheneaux of Mobridge, SD Girls State Governor and Seamus Duffy of Sioux Falls, SD Boys State Governor and commending the South Dakota American Legion and Auxiliary for their sponsorship and coordination of the Girls State and Boys State
Legislative Results continued...

HC 1028: Celebrating and commemorating the commissioning of the USS South Dakota

SB 9: Provide for the Servicemember Firearms Protection Act.
Referred to Senate Military and Veterans Affairs, Passed, 6-1. S.J. 95.

Senate Do Pass Amended, Failed, 4-31 S.J.506

SB 58: Authorize the Bureau of Administration to conduct a study of the

Flaming Fountain on Capitol Lake, to make an appropriation therefor, and to declare an emergency.

Joint Committee on Appropriations Deferred to the 41st legislative day, Passed, YEAS 15, NAYS 1. S.J. 445

SCR 3: Commending, honoring, and thanking South Dakota's numerous women veterans for their service to our country and state.

House of Representatives Concurred in Resolution, Passed, 68-0.

SCR 11: Requesting that the President of the United States designate a single state funeral be held upon the death of the last living Medal of Honor recipient from World War II.

House of Representatives Concurred in Resolution, Passed 63-1.

Habitat for Humanity

We appreciate your interest in Habitat for Humanity's Veterans Build. Through this initiative, you can help us provide volunteer, homeownership and employment opportunities to U.S. veterans, military service members and their families.

Facts about veterans

The National Low Income Housing Coalition finds that 2.5 million veterans heading households are at least 55 years of age. Of those 2.5 million veterans, 24 percent have housing cost burdens. Unlike our older civilians, our older veterans are more likely to have a disability — 35 percent versus 28 percent — which may require home modifications, health and other supportive services as they age.

Our female veteran population is in need as well. According to a report by the National Housing Conference, nearly half of our veterans who are single mothers spend more than 30 percent of their income on housing. Our female veterans face significant economic and housing challenges and are particularly vulnerable to housing cost burdens compared with our overall veteran population.

Likewise, our most recent veterans who served following 9/11 have returned to a slow-growing economy and rising housing costs. These economic factors have made the transition from military service to civilian life difficult for many of our veterans.

In addition, nearly 4 million of our veterans pay at least 30 percent of their income toward rent or mortgage, while more than 1.5 million pay at least 50 percent. As you can imagine, using half of your income to pay your rent or mortgage is an enormous strain on any budget.

Five areas we focus on:

Building

Safe, decent, affordable housing is the centerpiece of Veterans Build. In many communities, we are expanding programs to maintain and preserve homes and make them more energy-efficient and affordable. In partnership with The Home Depot Foundation, Habitat developed the Repair Corps program to offer critical home repairs to military veteran homeowners.

Employment

We value skill sets gained from your military service. We recruit veterans to work at Habitat as employees, board members, extended volunteers, AmeriCorps members, interns and fellows. You can find a position at Habitat for Humanity International or find a Habitat office near you for employment opportunities in your community.

Volunteer engagement

We provide volunteer experiences that bring together veterans, military families and their neighbors. These experiences help bridge the gap and ease the transition to civilian life with fulfilling community engagement. You can find a Habitat office near you for volunteer opportunities in your community. You can also learn more about our long-term volunteer opportunities.

Education

We offer financial education and financial literacy programs. Our programs support successful homeownership among veteran and military homeowners. We also train Habitat employees and community volunteers throughout the U.S. to better understand the military culture. This increases our effectiveness in interacting with veterans and military families. You can learn more about our financial education and financial literacy programs.

Honor

Throughout the year, we host special events that pay tribute to veterans, raise awareness and mobilize volunteers. We invite you to join one of our build events.

For additional information, please contact us at VeteransBuild@habitat.org.

American Legion Centennial Commemorative Coins

The American Legion Commemorative coins produced by the US Mint is now on sale. *Prices vary based on the quality of the coin and the price of gold and silver during the time of the sale.* The half dollar sells for around \$28, the silver dollar for around \$55 and the "\$5" gold coin is around \$430. A "Proof" quality set of each coin is selling around \$500.

To purchase go to: <https://catalog.usmint.gov/coins/>

2019 Legislative Reception

Event well attended by Legionnaires and Legislators

The 2019 annual South Dakota American Legion Legislative Reception was held at the Pierre Post Home in Pierre, SD, on Wednesday, February 6, 2019, and the event was another huge success.

State Commander Denny Brenden and South Dakota Auxiliary President Jeanine Loesch greeted and welcomed several South Dakota State Legislators as they arrived.

Legionnaires and Legislators mingled and visited before they were served a delicious meal prepared by the Legionnaires of Pierre American Legion Post #8.

For the past several years, Pierre American Legion Post #8 has hosted this event and always does an outstanding job. We congratulate and thank all of the Legionnaires of Pierre Post #8 for their volunteer help and hours preparing their post.

County Commander's Award

15-199 goal size: Perry Keller (83)
Dewey CO, 135.71%

200-349 goal size: Jim Childers
(164) Lawrence CO, 87.33%

350-549 goal size: David Driscoll
(18) Davison CO, 83.09%

550-and UP size: Darrel Barry
(33) Meade CO, 86.4%

WANTED: Auction Items for State Convention

For the past several years, a fun auction has been held during our annual state convention to raise money for the South Dakota American Legion Foundation.

We ask that you please consider donating your item(s) for this worthwhile cause. You may drop them off at State Headquarters in Watertown or just bring them to the state convention in Sioux Falls in June 2019.

State Commander Denny Brenden will be the Auctioneer for this fun auction event. Several thousand dollars have been raised over the past years and those proceeds are donated to the South Dakota American Legion Foundation. The auction is scheduled for the evening of June 7, 2019.

SD Veterans Affairs Jobs

<http://vetaffairs.sd.gov/publicaffairs/Job%20Listings.aspx>

Membership

"20,000 Plus One!"

Gene Opbroek
State Membership Chairman



As I sit this morning in a little coffee shop in Gregory, SD and after watching the early morning news. I sometimes wonder about this great nation. What is in our future, not only as Veterans, but also as Americans? As a free people living in a free nation where we can work, have families, practice our own Christianity, vote, own firearms without fear of retribution by an overpowering entity, whether individual or governmental.

I think about our history, the great men and women who allowed us to proceed to this point. Did they have the same thoughts and desires for America as we do now? I think their desire for America to prosper was a lot stronger than it is today. Deep down inside have we lost that? Do we just go day to day and not think of the sacrifice it takes to live in a world like ours?

It is quiet and peaceful here, this morning. A small community waking up to everyday life. People stopping for their morning coffee, maybe a donut or scone. Conversation is, of course about the weather, The President, what is happening at school, normal small-town talk.

Will we lose this someday, this closeness, this relaxed yet necessary morning ritual that we all go through, in our own small town, or own coffee shop that we frequent every day? I sure hope not. This is just like your community, you keep it strong and thriving with your support through your membership in the American Legion. Supporting small and large communities, families, students, veterans.

I think now more than ever it is a time to come together. To push harder, to expect a little more from each other, and ourselves. To thank the good Lord above for all our blessings and ask for his help to give us strength and knowledge to move forward. It is not the time to slow down or stop, we must never do that!!

We all gave something to get where we are now, in America, in the American Legion and in our communities. I am asking that you stay strong for them.

I know you will not let me down, you never have!!

God bless you and yours!

Gene O
Department Membership Chairman

Membership Percentages by Posts / Districts *as of March 18, 2019

Listed below are the membership percentages by Posts / Districts as of March 18, 2019. Congratulations to those posts that have met or exceeded their 2019 membership goal.

DISTRICT 1	
Belle Fourche	77.78%
Nisland, Newell, Vale	93.75%
Buffalo	100.00%
Lead	105.21%
Spearfish	92.65%
Box Elder	110.17%
Piedmont	90.31%
Sturgis	103.83%
Faith	53.33%
Bullhead	56.52%
Little Eagle	106.67%
McIntosh	84.38%
McLaughlin	85.11%
Thunder Hawk	98.48%
Eagle Butte	208.33%
Isabel	93.33%
Timber Lake	106.25%
Bison	91.49%
Lemmon	84.00%
Dupree	52.94%
DISTRICT 1	96.08%

DISTRICT 2	
Allen	105.88%
Batesland	50.00%
Belvidere	88.24%
Custer	111.76%
Draper	88.24%
Edgemont	100.00%
Hermosa	100.69%
Hill City	72.22%
Hot Springs	91.08%
Kadoka	79.07%
Kyle	106.67%
Manderson	109.52%
Martin	69.17%
Midland	103.45%
Mission	66.67%
Murdo	115.00%
New Underwood	126.67%
Norris	20.00%
Oelrichs	80.00%
Parmelee	106.67%
Philip	97.06%
Pine Ridge	113.33%
Porcupine	106.67%
Rapid City	87.93%
Rapid City Foothills	95.74%
Rosebud	117.39%
St. Francis	26.67%
Wall	82.61%
Wanblee	100.00%
White River	83.67%
Wood	86.67%
DISTRICT 2	89.67%

DISTRICT 3	
Blunt	88.00%
Bonesteel	81.40%
Burke	92.86%
Colome	86.41%
Dallas	90.00%
Fairfax	88.24%
Fort Pierre	89.17%
Gettysburg	83.46%
Gregory	94.29%
Herrick	84.00%
Highmore	90.74%
Hoven	93.14%
Kennebec-Reliance	89.41%
Miller	81.67%
Onida	77.53%
Pierre	84.00%
Polo	131.58%
Presho	78.79%
Vivian	82.35%
Winner	92.36%
Witten	82.61%
DISTRICT 3	87.99%

DISTRICT 4	
Aberdeen	86.96%
Claremont	76.09%
Columbia	97.44%

Frederick	74.19%
Groton	86.57%
Hecla	96.00%
Stratford	90.70%
Warner	90.38%
Herreid	88.10%
Pollock	75.86%
Bowdle	87.23%
Hosmer	86.49%
Ipswich	85.71%
Roscoe	77.97%
Eureka	84.82%
Leola	73.00%
Long Lake	71.43%
Mobridge	85.95%
Selby	87.50%
Brentford	65.00%
Conde	89.33%
Doland	77.78%
Mansfield	81.25%
Mellette	67.86%
Northville	88.24%
Redfield	90.00%
Tulare	85.19%
Cresbard	84.44%
Faulkton	80.00%
Rockham	100.00%
DISTRICT 4	85.13%

DISTRICT 5	
Andover	81.25%
Astoria	96.00%
Aurora	91.18%
Big Stone City	81.72%
Bradley	68.75%
Britton	89.19%
Brookings	87.06%
Bruce	92.31%
Bryant	87.14%
Carpenter	85.71%
Castlewood	95.45%
Clark	70.79%
Clear Lake	75.61%
Elkton	77.19%
Estelline	78.22%
Gary	78.57%
Grenville	91.67%
Hayti	91.49%
Kidder	83.33%
Langford	81.82%
Lily	93.33%
Milbank	96.10%
New Effington	93.85%
Old Agency	6.98%
Pierpont	52.63%
Raymond	89.66%
Rosholt	92.31%
Roslyn	96.30%
Sinai	80.95%
Sisseton	93.64%
Strandburg	93.55%
Toronto	75.68%
Veblen	92.42%
Volga	91.67%
Watertown	84.14%
Waubay	79.22%
Webster	87.69%
White	90.80%
Willow Lake	87.50%
Wilmot	87.50%
DISTRICT 5	84.99%

DISTRICT 6	
Alexandria	80.85%
Alpena	86.11%
Arlington	89.77%
Artesian	80.00%
Badger	80.77%
Canova	91.18%
Chamberlain	110.59%
DeSmet	93.67%
Emery	100.00%
Erwin	79.31%
Ethan	113.73%
Ful-Frm-Epiphany	85.71%
Gann Valley	86.36%
Hetland	84.21%
Hitchcock	88.89%
Howard	80.00%
Huron	77.35%
Iroquois	78.41%

Kimball*	85.07%
Lake Preston	100.81%
Letcher	83.08%
Mitchell	85.28%
Mount Vernon	89.58%
Oldham	80.00%
Plankinton	100.00%
Pukwana*	80.00%
Stickney	84.38%
Virgil	87.27%
Wessington	80.95%
Wessington Sprgs	82.58%
White Lake	73.33%
Wolsey	90.70%
Woonsocket	71.43%
DISTRICT 6	86.73%

DISTRICT 7	
Alcester	82.14%
Baltic	88.57%
Beresford	87.50%
Brandon	91.76%
Bridgewater	81.82%
Canistota	140.00%
Canton	92.45%
Chester	111.27%
Colman	91.30%
Colton	81.58%
Dell Rapids	91.32%
Egan	84.21%
Elk Point	82.26%
Flandreau	70.31%
Garretson	98.18%
Harrisburg	97.75%
Hartford	85.03%
Hudson	81.95%
Humboldt	81.18%
Lennox	93.10%
Madison	100.81%
Montrose	102.25%
North Sioux City	106.12%
Nunda	81.82%
Ramona	75.86%
Renner	75.64%
Salem	101.41%
Sioux Falls	83.51%
Tea	75.00%
Trent	96.00%
Valley Springs	92.47%
Wentworth	78.38%
Worthing	80.77%
DISTRICT 7	87.71%

DISTRICT 8	
Alsen	70.37%
Armour	93.62%
Avon	85.37%
Centerville	82.95%
Chancellor	80.31%
Corsica	82.26%
Davis	84.21%
Delmont	78.18%
Freeman	72.00%
Gayville	68.42%
Geddes	79.71%
Greenwood	115.00%
Hurley	82.00%
Irene	81.63%
Lake Andes	75.00%
Marion	107.50%
MDSP Springfield	113.33%
Menno	85.00%
Parker	16.67%
Parkston	88.37%
Pickstown	57.14%
Platte	78.95%
Scotland	83.72%
Springfield	78.16%
Tabor	80.52%
Tripp	74.39%
Tyndall	88.52%
Vermillion	117.31%
Viborg	68.18%
Wagner	88.35%
Wakonda	91.82%
Yankton	101.37%
DISTRICT 8	85.26%

March 18, 2019 — In State Headquarters Area Vice/District Commanders Membership Standings

State Vice Commanders	2019 GOAL	2019 MMBShp	% of GOAL	POS	
AREA 1-2 Ed Thompson	3,535	3,268	92.45%	1	
AREA 3-8 Ed Stringer	16,216	14,005	86.37%	2	
District	CDRs	2019 GOAL	2019 MMBShp	% of GOAL	POS
Dist 1	David Booze	1,531	1,471	96.08%	1
Dist 2	Gene Iron Shell	2,004	1,797	89.67%	2
Dist 3	Leroy Madsen	1,881	1,655	87.99%	3
Dist 4	Perry Schmidt	2,058	1,752	85.13%	7
Dist 5	Matt Lagerstrom	3,304	2,808	84.99%	8
Dist 6	Doug Feltman	2,682	2,326	86.73%	5
Dist 7	Roger Klos	4,100	3,596	87.71%	4
Dist 8	Greg Geiman	2,191	1,868	85.26%	6
Post 500		250	171		
State Totals		20,001	17,444	87.22%	