

Legion News

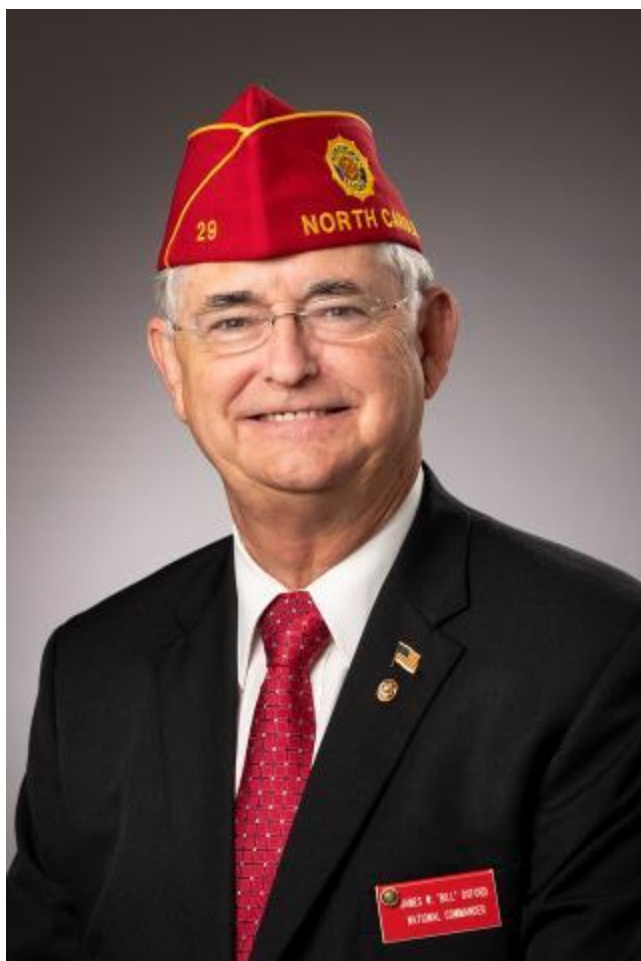


VOLUME 87, NUMBER 4

STILL SERVING AMERICA

February 2020

National Commander Visit Slated for MidWinter Conference



2019-2020 National Commander James W. "Bill" Oxford

Chamberlain American Legion Post #3 is hosting the 2020 Midwinter Conference at the Arrowwood Resort & Conference Center at Cedar Shores in Oacoma, SD, from February 21st-23rd, 2020.

The MidWinter Conference will feature a Joint Banquet, business sessions with multiple guest speakers, breakout training sessions, committee meetings, the Go-Getters banquet, and the Department Oratory Contest. In attendance and a featured speaker at both the Joint Banquet and Business Session is National American Legion Commander 2019-2020 James W. "Bill" Oxford.

James W. "Bill" Oxford was elected national commander of the nearly two million member American Legion on August 29, 2019 in Indianapolis, during the organization's 101st national convention. He has been a member of the nation's largest veterans organization since 1986.

A native of Lenoir, N.C., Oxford is a paid-up-for-life member and past commander of Post 29 in Lenoir. He served as department (state) commander of the North Carolina American Legion from 2010 to 2011. A veteran of the U.S. Marine Corps, Oxford was an aviation electronic technician for the A-6 Intruder and served in Vietnam during his initial enlistment. After being discharged as a sergeant in 1970, Oxford joined the North Carolina National Guard. He subsequently attended officer's candidate

school and transferred to the U.S. Army Reserve, where he ultimately retired as a colonel after more than 34 years of military service.

Oxford has served at every level of The American Legion. A former mayor and city council of Cahah's Mountain, N.C., he has worked since he was a high school student, with most of his career choices being in the maintenance and engineering field. He earned a bachelor's degree in environmental studies and multiple safety and environmental certificates.

Oxford has volunteered as a coach, umpire, referee and administrator in several youth athletic programs, including service as the public address announcer for the Post 29 American Legion Baseball team.

An active volunteer with several organizations, Oxford is a member of Masonic Lodge-York Scottish Rite and the North Carolina Army Retirees Council. His theme as national commander of The American Legion is "a foundation for the future," as the organization enters its second century of service.

Oxford and his wife, Frances, have been married since 1967. They have a son, Charles (married to Deah Reid), and a daughter, Jackie (married to Mike Carr). They also have four grandsons, Isiah, Micah, Jaggar and Dawson.

2020 MidWinter Conference

February 21-23, 2020

Arrowwood Resort & Conference Center at Cedar Shore
Oacoma/Chamberlain, SD

Friday, February 21, 2020

- 10:00 a.m. Department Finance Commission Meeting—Hale
- SAL Det. Executive Committee Meeting – Missouri Winds
- Blood mobile – In front of Convention Center (10 am – 4 pm)
- 12:00 p.m. Registration Desk Opens – Pre-Function Area
- Boys State Board of Directors - Glass
- 1:00 p.m. Department Executive Committee Meeting —Hale
- 4:30 p.m. SDAL Foundation Meeting, —Hale
- 6:00 p.m. No-Host Cocktails- Pre-Function Area, Conference Center
- 7:00 p.m. Joint Legion / Auxiliary / SAL Banquet—Oacoma/Wheeler

Saturday, February 22, 2020

- 7:30 a.m. Registration Desk Opens – Pre-Function Area
- 8:00 a.m. Joint Opening Session - Conference Center State Commander Fred Nelson / Auxiliary President Teresa Huntimer and SAL Detachment Commander Terry Hanson Remarks—Hale/Oacoma
- 8:30 a.m. Bill Oxford, National Commander
- 8:50 a.m. Auxiliary VA&R Report
- 8:55 a.m. Auxiliary Children and Youth Report
- 9:00 a.m. Dept of Veteran Affairs - Telehealth
- 9:30 a.m. Youth Trooper Academy, SD Highway Patrol
- 9:45 a.m. Emblem usage – Dept. Adjutant
- 9:55 a.m. Boys State Program
- 10:00 a.m. Recess Joint Session – Legion/Auxiliary/SAL to separate meetings
- 10:10 a.m. BREAKOUT SESSION:
 - (ADJ) MyLegion – Howe
 - (CDR) Constitution & By-laws– Wheeler
 - SAL – Missouri Winds
 - Boys State Board of Directors Meeting– Glass
- 11:00 a.m. (CDR) Legion Resources, Structure and Delegation - Wheeler
- 12:00 p.m. LUNCH BREAK
- 1:00 p.m. BREAKOUT SESSION:
 - Public Relations & Social Media – Howe
 - (CDR) Legion Programs - Wheeler
 - SAL – Missouri Winds
 - Boys State Board of Directors - Glass
- 2:00 p.m. (CDR) Conducting a Meeting - Wheeler
- 2:55 p.m. All assemble in Conference - Hale/Oacoma
- 3:00 p.m. NEC Jim Huls Remarks
- 3:15 p.m. PDC Rod Martens, Department Legislative Chairman
- 3:30 p.m. David Booze and Eugene IronShell Jr., 2019 National American Legion College
- 3:45 p.m. Ed Stringer – Department Membership Chairman Membership Report/ Awards/Turn-In
- 4:15 p.m. Ken Van Kekerix, VAVS Chairman, Popcorn Fund Turn-In
- 4:20 p.m. Announcements and Adjourn Assembly
- 4:30 p.m. American Legion Rider meeting—Hale/Oacoma
- 5:00 p.m. Dept. Membership Committee Meeting - Chamberlain Community Center
- 6:00 p.m. Go-Getter Reception - Chamberlain Community Center
- 7:00 p.m. Go-Getter Smorgasbord - Chamberlain Community Center
- 8:00 p.m. Hospitality Rooms, Arrowwood Resort Hotel rooms

Sunday, February 23, 2020

- 8:30 a.m. Non-Denominational Service - Wheeler
- 10:30 a.m. SD American Legion – State Finals – Oratorical Contest - Wheeler

2020 MidWinter Conference agenda and times are subject to change



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DEPARTMENT OFFICERS

State Commander — Fred Nelson, Spearfish

State Vice Commanders — Kevin Morello, Black Hawk; Harry Boner, Castlewood

National Executive Committeeman — Jim Huls, Madison

Alternate National Executive Committeeman — Denny Brenden, Watertown

State Adjutant — Travise Flisrand, Castlewood

State Americanism Officer — Doug Harris, Rapid City

State Membership Chairman — Ed Stringer, Hartford

State Service Officer — Courtney VanZanten, Chester

State Chaplain — Patrick Lewellen, Spearfish

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, Piedmont

5—Matt Lagerstrom, White

2—Eugene Iron Shell, Jr., Rosebud

6—Doug Feltman, Chamberlain

3—LeRoy Madsen, Pierre

7—Rodney Smith, Chester

4—Perry Schmidt, Redfield

8—Gregory Geiman, Scotland

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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 HOB Washington, DC 20515; Phone: (202) 225-2801; Web site: <https://dustyjohnson.house.gov/>

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and news materials to:
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Watertown, SD 57201-0067
Email:
dso@sdlegion.org

“Carry on the Legacy”

Fred Nelson
State Commander



Legionnaires,

I hope everyone one had a Merry Christmas and wish our Legion Family a blessed and healthy new year. To “Carry on the Legacy,” each legionnaire, each post, each American Legion leader becomes critical in recruiting new members, retaining members, training and mentoring all members of the great accomplishments of the past and how to carry on the mission of our organization based on the four pillars: Americanism, Children & Youth, National Security, and Veteran Affairs and Rehabilitation.

As we approach the 101st birthday of The American Legion, posts should be preparing to conduct Buddy Checks. National Adjutant Daniel Wheeler calls for extending Buddy Checks beyond twice a year. “Our fellow veterans should hear from us outside of Veterans Day and the Legion’s Birthday.” As your department commander, I extend this wish to all posts in South Dakota. By reaching out to our fellow veterans, we can learn about the many needs of our members. Post members could use a visit for camaraderie, checking if members need transportation to attend a meeting, or share what happened at a meeting when they are homebound. Reaching out by a phone call or a visit, also allows posts to share many American Legion programs that can provide assistance to the veterans and their families, whether that’s the American Legion’s Temporary Financial Assistance program if they have young children at home and are facing financial challenges, Operation Comfort Warrior program to aid wounded veterans with recovery, or connecting them with the Legion service officer for assistance and help with VA claims and benefits; not to forget our youth scholarships and programs.

As of writing this article, National has our membership at 16,113. We are at 86.470 % of the goal. Remember to increase visibility in your community, promote the activities of your post in the press and media, including social media. If you schedule a special recruitment event, please feel free to contact our department membership chairman or myself with details of the event. We’ll make every effort to come and help.

The Midwinter Convention is upon us. One of the sessions will focus on training and mentoring. Training leads to understanding the programs offered by The American Legion and is a learning experience delivered to increase knowledge that can be passed onto others. By having discussions and other forms of interactions, the members attending the training will have the potential to be great mentors. One difference between training and mentoring is that the mentor develops an informal relationship with a fellow member, which may result in friendship and mutual support. This session will give you a chance to become a trainer in your post and a mentor for your members. As far as training, did you know that The American Legion has an online Basic Training course? The Basic Training course is for all members and leaders. I challenged all District Commanders to complete the Basic Training this year. Hopefully, by midwinter, many will have it done.

Incredibly, I have driven over 27,000 miles in the first half of my year. Some of the highlights of being your department commander include how much I enjoy visiting posts of all sizes, seeing how communities support the Legion activities and mission, and listening to our legionnaires’ stories.

In January, I went to the Nebraska Mid-Year Conference. I participated in a couple of forums along with Nebraska Department Commander Gary Wooten and National Vice Commander Bruce Feuerbach. There were some challenging questions. On Saturday night, instead of a banquet, they had the oratorical scholarship contest.

Our success depends on active membership, participation, and volunteerism. The annual consolidated post reports tell the story of each post and carry on the legacy of The American Legion. To my fellow legionnaires, thank you for your dedicated service to our organization and the communities in which it thrives.

For God and Country, we associate together!

Fred Nelson
Your Department Commander

EDITORIAL POLICY

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.

Early Bird Go-Getters Named for MidWinter Conference

Early Bird Go-Getters are entitled to attend the Midwinter Conference Go-Getters Reception at Chamberlain, SD.

2020 GO-GETTERS:

Aberdeen #24: Sidney Beckler, Larry Nupen, Sam Olson, Tom Perrizo, Gene Schumacher, Melvin Volk, Pat Steele and Gary Warne

Alexandria #41: Darin Kayser, James Kayser, Raymond Thomas and Alfred Blankenship

Arlington #42: Rolly Quam, Terry Hanson, Everett Johnson, Leon Josephsen, Tim Holzer, Guy Gronewold and Geneva Madsen

Baltic #175: Larry Maxwell, Darold Diede, Larry Young, Philip Soulek, Abby Bartosh, Anthony Reed, Melissa Peterson, Daniel Hotzler and David Siemonsma

Beresford #72: Robert Haas, Ernest Wevik, Jr, Lyle Savey, Charles Kunstle and Gregg Gettman

Box Elder #315: Joanna Merrill, John MacDonald, Skip Collver, Dan Merrill, Marvin Tisdall and Michelle Eosso

Britton #80: Mike Kraft, Larry Buntrock and Dave Andrews

Brookings #74: Russell Mileham, Betty “Sam” Vaughn, Robert Hurd, Gary Sackman, Roger Simmons and Christopher Gross

Bruce #200: Harlan Feldhus and Roger Bauman

Castlewood #250: Travise Flisrand, Harry Boner, Wendy Flisrand, Clayton Nei, Krisma DeWitt, Larry Dockter, Ryman Dockter, Cecil Wiarda, Warren Ruesink, Charles Greenfield, Clinton Davis and Cliff Ruesink

Centerville #43: Lawrence Austin, Mike Austin, Terry Clayton, David Fisher, Jerry Hult, Lanney Nelson, Matt Olson, Lee Rist and Allen Skotvold

Chamberlain #3: Kenneth Anderson, Tim Solberg, LaVaun Holan, Delores Arbach, Michael Sherman, Tim Thomas, Sr., John Payer, Alex Huff, John Donovan and Doug Feltman

Chester #136: Courtney VanZanten, Miranda Krumm, Rodney Smith, Kevin Hempel and Kevin Uthe

Clark #60: Dave Adam and Darin Lewis

Dell Rapids #65: Jerry Fox, Mike Geraets, Larry Hoyme, Jack Majeres, Robert Risty, Joe Thornell and Ron Welbig

DeSmet #138: Gary Wolkow, Gary Schumacher, Paul Hanson, Jim Pekron, Clifford Poppen, Lyle Richards Laird Beck, Jerry Hutchinsen and Dennis Helms

Ethan #261: Vilas Kurtenbach, Harry Huffman, Dan Schmidt, Delmar Mueller, Jim Pollreis, Ray Sonne, Joe Puetz, Larry

Good Samaritan Award

The Good Samaritan Award serves to recognize those individuals or groups who give of themselves to help others. This award is designed to make the public aware of the many good deeds and acts of kindness that are going on around us each and every day.

A narrative with supporting documentation must be forwarded to the District Commanders ten (10) days prior to the Spring District meeting. District Commanders will forward the District's nominee to State Headquarters in Watertown, SD, no later than May 1, 2020.

An information sheet listing all the criteria and purpose of the Good Samaritan Award can be found on the South Dakota American Legion website at www.sdlegion.org or you may contact the South Dakota American Legion Headquarters at PO Box 67, Watertown, SD 57201-0067 or by email at hq@sdlegion.org.

Once the Good Samaritan Award is announced, the award will be presented at a local venue to honor the recipient. Please take the time to consider submitting a nomination of a Good Samaritan in your community.

County Commanders Win Membership Awards

An award will go to the County Commander in each of the four goal size groups listed below that has enrolled the highest percentage of assigned membership goal for 2020 by the December 11th target date. The award is an armed forces flag desk set. The winners are:

15 to 199 goal size— Perry Keller (83), DEWEY CO. 120.51%

200 to 349 goal size – Robert Condon (154), McCOOK CO. 92.45%

350 to 549 goal size – Calvin Hove (50) ROBERTS CO. 84.37%

550 and Larger size – Sam Olson (24), BROWN CO. 78.34%

Congratulations to all the winners for their work in membership.

Seven Posts Earn All-Time High Membership Numbers

The following Posts have achieved an All-Time High Membership:

District 1: Box Elder #315, 136

District 2: Hermosa #303, 150

District 3: Polo #299, 52

District 4: Stratford #207, 47

District 5: None

District 6: None

District 7: Harrisburg #45, 91; Chester #136, 81; Two Rivers #319, 52

District 8: None

Congratulations to these Posts for their hard work!

Posts Earn Award for Consecutive Membership Years

A special award will be presented at the 2020 District Spring Meetings to the following Posts that have achieved five or more consecutive years at or beyond 90 percent of goal, including 2020, by the target date of January 17, 2020.

Framed citations will be awarded for 5, 10, 15, 20, 25, 30, 35, 40, 45, and 50 consecutive years with attachments awarded for each intermediate year. Posts that will be awarded the Post Award are as follows:

District 1: Thunderhawk #279, 5 years **District 2:** Custer #46, 6 years **District 3:** Hoven #159, 13 years **District 4:** Hecla #68, 6 years **District 5:** none. **District 6:** Lake Preston #63, 72 years; Plankinton #5, 11 years; Ethan #261, 8 years **District 7:** Colman #278, 14 years; North Sioux City #319, 14 years; Chester #136, 7 years, Montrose #154, 7 years **District 8:** none.

Membership Turn-in MidWinter Conference Saturday, February 22, 2020

All Posts are encouraged to bring their Memberships to turn into State Commander Fred Nelson on stage during the 2020 MidWinter Conference at the Arrowwood Convention Center in Oacoma, SD.

Early Bird Go-Getters Continued...

Klumb, Brad Huffman and Roxy Peterson

Eureka #186: Delmar Metzger, Gary Oster, Perry Thompson, Melvin Kary, Jim Mulder and Ken Kunz

Gann Valley #16: Kenneth Wulff, C.J. Wulff and Richard Wooledge

Garretson #23: Rob Meyer, Owen Wiese, Gary Lyngen, Ronald Rekstad, Marty Luebke, Andy Lyngen, Paul Evenson, Steve Warren, Reid Christopherson and Steve Kirton

Hermosa #303: Rick MacDonald, Jim Preston and Curtis Halverson

Humboldt #62: Charles Dubbe, Charles Beck, Jerry Corey and Fred Lee

Huron #7: Lloyd Timperly, Jake Salathe, Steve Oetken, Jerry Mencke, Sharon Reno, Keith McMillan and Steve Martens

Irene #193: Christopher Olson, Wesley Rye, Larry Johnke, Darrell Hansen, Donald Richelieu and Colin Reisner

Lake Preston #63: Brett Anderson, Rodney Anderson, Crystal Larson, Jason Paul, Scott Longville, Dave Casper, Lanny Olson, Robert Jones, Mel Ness, Dave Gutzmer, Scott Ingalls, Blaine Miller and Jana Gutzmer

Milbank #9: Noel Cummins and Tim Jurgens

Montrose #154: Scott Binder, Bob Condon, Dean Kueter, Cliff Hallem, Ken Katzer and Dale Johnston

Newell, Nisland, Vale: Russell Edwards

Platte #115: Clarence Blunck, Ronald VanDriesen, Richard Hoppe, Thomas Jaeger and Robert Westra

Rapid City #22: John Schneider, Lyle Tolsma, Doug Harris, Chris VanDelist, Don Fuller, Mike Ball, John Fleming and Duane Fink

Redfield #92: James Beckrich, David Durfee, James Huckabay, Perry Schmidt, Jason Wurtz and Larry Price

Roscoe #259: Ron Hoffer, Kenneth Vilhauer, Eugene Conn, James Flannery, Ricky Hauck, Ronald Kadlec, Jerome Prisbe, Mike Barondeau and LeRoy Sauer

Salem #140: Brian Havard, Patricia Mayrose, David Huiten, Jacquelyn Montreal, Myron Eich, Wayne Krempges, Bill Eichacker, Joshua Blindert and Keith Aden

Sinai #133: William Buck, Donald Weiss and Donald Langum

Spearfish #164: Fred Nelson, Brian Hambek, Doug Henwood, Ron Schuttler, Brian Dean, Rodney DeWeese, Patrick Lewellen and Barney Wagner

Sturgis #33: Darrel Barry, Craig Sanderson, Paul Haedt III, Jerry Lolley, Ken Sabers, Randy Kieffer and Doug Katchmark

Department Adjutant Thoughts

Travise Flisrand
Department Adjutant



Legionnaires,

In previous columns, I have written on the importance of programs at the Post and the positive impacts upon the community, veteran and the youth. This edition I want to highlight some of the benefits that are often overlooked from the National and State American Legion entities. I have seen some members struggle to remember when speaking to new members, what the American Legion does for them for services and benefits. This should provide a condensed list of some of the those.

National:

- Lobbying in Washington D.C. to advocate resolutions passed at National Convention and at National Executive Committee.
- VA appeal representation in D.C. in front of the VA board. (it is important to make the American Legion your POA when filing a claim)
- Financial assistance. Examples: National Emergency Fund and Temporary Financial Assistance.
- Educational scholarships. Legacy Fund and Oratory scholarships.
- Operation Comfort Warrior. Provide to veterans' items to aid quality of life.
- Membership Discounts.
- Volunteer / Leadership opportunities on National Committees / Commissions.

Department/State:

- Lobbying in Pierre to advocate resolutions passed at National Convention, State Convention, or by Dept. Exec. Committee / Legislative Committee.
- Representation on South Dakota Veterans Council – additional voice to Legislators.
- State Service Officer to provide assistance to American Legion members as needed. Members are encouraged to use a local CVSO, face to face interviews help exponentially with claims.
- Department Emergency fund (similar to National, but on a state level).
- Temporary Financial Assistance (for veterans with dependent children)
- Educational scholarships (Oratory / Boys State / Youth Trooper / or new Education Scholarship fund)
- Volunteer / Leadership opportunities on State/Dept. Committees / Commissions.

The American Legion touches 240 communities across South Dakota. We are over 18,500 strong, making us one of the largest non-profits in the state. Be proud of what we accomplish as an organization, locally, statewide and nationally. We are veterans' advocates, community caretakers and civic leaders. Use that pride to get others to join our cause and get involved.

For God and Country,

Travise Flisrand
State Adjutant

Tabor #183: Alvin Sternhagen and Richard Hovorka

Thunder Hawk #279: Quentin Benson, Del Campbell, William Ericsson, John Goeres, Donald Tomac, Thomas L. Tomac, Joe Warfield, John Ebert, Bruce Kimmes and Dani Kling

Veblen #76: Hans Nelson, Dave Geyer, Aaron Anderson, Richard Halbert and Harlan Hilleson

Volga #114: Philip Egeberg, Russell Bortnem, Verne Hansen, Roger Anderson, Lyle Strande, Joana Sykora, Blaine Hoff, Kim Chase, Rebecca Trygstad, Chester VanderZee and Gary Olson

Wakonda #13: Jim Logue, Paul Jensen, Darrell Vognild, Don Lyso, John Haver, Jim Williams, Tom Larsen, Evan Peterson, John Peterson, Ron Prusa, Mike Hessman, Robert Logue, Marlin Renolds and Richard Andresen

Watertown #17: Jose Romeu, Shelli Romeu, Roger Papka, Paul Kraai, Gerald Zaug, Dennis Brenden, Byron Callies, Allison Keeler, Mark Stolp, Larry Bohms, Dana Jones, Mark Sumner, John Harper, Wolfgang Migge, Joseph Sande and Hilmer Moen

Wentworth #161: Ted Linholm, Tom Leisinger, Dan Lindholm and Jeremy Lindholm

Wessington #110: Jim Major, Marvin Matthews, Marvin Palmer and Jerold Zerfoss

Hats In The Ring: Department Officer Candidates



Ed Stringer
Post #15, Sioux Falls
State Commander Candidate
2020-2021



Doug Feltman
Post #3, Chamberlain
State Vice Commander Candidate
2020-2021



Eugene IronShell, Jr.
Post # 125, Rosebud, SD
State Vice Commander Candidate
2020-2021



Greg Geiman
Post #11, Wagner, SD
Department Sergeant-at-Arms
2020-2021

Legislation From Pierre

The 2020 Legislative Session in Pierre kicked off on Tuesday, January 14, 2020, with the Governor's State of the State Address and the House and Senate in session. This session has a 38 day calendar; below are the current bills The American Legion is monitoring:

- SB 35 revise the appropriation for the State Veterans' Cemetery and to declare an emergency.
- SB 77 make an appropriation for certain costs related to the commissioning of the USS Pierre
- HB 1030 revise certain provisions regarding the Board of Technical Education.
- HB 1034 make an appropriation to fund tax refunds for elderly persons and persons with a disability
- HB 1036 revise provisions regarding the issuance of certain military specialty plates.
- HB 1050 provide for voter registration through an online voter registration system provided by the Sec of State.
- HB 1062 increase the financial empowerment of state residents.
- HB 1069 authorize certain veterans to attend courses offered at postsecondary technical institutes without payment of tuition.
- HB 1073 authorize special event alcohol licenses for full-service restaurant licensees.
- HB 1083 rename the postsecondary technical institutes as technical colleges.
- HC 8001 To honor Chief Justice David Gilbertson for his dedicated services to his community and state.
- HC 8007 Commending the South Dakota Army National Guard's Ellwein family of Rapid City for being awarded the Association of the United States Army Volunteer Family of the Year Award for 2019.
- HC 8008 Recognizing and honoring the Veterans Honor Park in Madison, South Dakota.

Visit <https://mylrc.sdlegislature.gov/> to track legislation and view up-to-date press releases

Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation

Courtney VanZanten
Department Service Officer



Greetings Legionnaires!

On this episode of explaining muddy VA concepts, I'm going to tackle the Power of Attorney and what it means to be an accredited representative. To begin, the legal fun: Under the authority granted in section 5902 of title 38, United States Code, VA may recognize organizations for the purpose of assisting claimants for VA benefits in the preparation, presentation, and prosecution of their claims. These organizations are Veterans Service Organizations, and are congressionally-chartered organizations such as The American Legion.

An accredited representative, a.k.a. your Veterans Service Officer, is an individual who has undergone a formal application and training process and is recognized by VA Office of General Counsel as being capable of assisting claimants with their affairs before VA. Veterans Service Officers (VSOs) are your local resource for dedicated and professional assistance in obtaining federal and state veterans' benefits. They provide the expertise and advocacy that veterans need to optimize access to benefit programs. In South Dakota, the American Legion Power of Attorney has been delegated to the South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs, who then assures that county and state VSOs receive the proper training and continuing education to hold American Legion accreditation.

When you start on a VA claim, one of the first forms you will be asked to fill out is a 21-22, Appointment of Veterans Service Organization as Claimant's Representative. With this form, you're giving the Veterans Service Officer Power of Attorney in regards to your VA claim, under the umbrella of the Veterans Service Organization you select. So, if I were to walk in, choose The American Legion as my Veterans Service Organization, their Power of Attorney will represent my claim from start to finish, with most cases starting and ending with my local VSO.

However, should my case need to appeal to the highest level, the Board of Veterans Appeals—that's where Veterans Service Organizations truly get to flex their muscles. It is in these cases where organizations, such as The American Legion, prosecute claims on a veteran's behalf, at no cost to the veteran. Not to brag, but Bergmann & Moore, the law firm who represents The American Legion, had 96% favorable court results from cases in 2018, compared to a 77.4% favorable rate from assigned board attorneys. These American Legion lawyers truly hold the "power of attorney."

In short, the Power of Attorney gives accredited representatives the ability to work your claim from beginning to end. You can find a list of accredited Veterans Service Officers on the South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs website: <https://vetaffairs.sd.gov/veteransserviceofficers/locatevso.aspx> or through the VA OGC website: <https://www.va.gov/ogc/apps/accreditation/index.asp>

Always here to help,
Courtney VanZanten
Department Service Officer

National Executive Committeeman

Jim Huls
NEC



National Commander Bill Oxford will attend the Mid-Winter Conference at Arrow Wood Resort near Chamberlain. He and aide Larry Kline will arrive on Thursday the 20th and depart on Sunday the 23rd. Please make a point to meet with the National Commander for a short visit, you will find that he is a regular guy who loves to visit with Legionnaires. The Commander is our speaker for the joint Banquet on Friday evening.

The Washington Conference is March 8-11 in Washington, DC. Several Legionnaires from the Department of South Dakota will receive Call-Ins for this event. On Wednesday March 11, National Commander Oxford will testify before the Joint Veterans Affairs Committee to deliver the American Legion's Legislative Priorities. The South Dakota delegation will meet with our Congressman and Senators on Tuesday to review the American Legion's legislative priorities. VSO Courtney VanZanten will attend the Service Officer School in Washington at this time as well.

National Vice Commander Feuerbach from the Dept of Iowa will attend our Convention in Huron from June 18-20 at the Crossroads Convention Center.

For God and Country
Jim Huls NEC

SDDVA Funeral Honors Program



Above: Members of Chester Post #136 provide funeral honors for a local veteran

The South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs (SDDVA) reminds congressionally chartered veterans' organizations of the department's Military Funeral Honors program. SDDVA pays \$50 each time an honor guard detail is conducted at the funeral of a deceased veteran. The program first started in the fall of 2015 and over \$185,000 has been awarded to posts since that time. Payments are made quarterly. Each application submitted must include information on the veteran, the signatures of a funeral director and post honor guard commander or leader, among other details. If your unit's honor guard is interested in applying for the stipend, you can acquire a Military Funeral Honors form by contacting Jeri Smith at the South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs at 605-773-7251 or by visiting the website <http://vetaffairs.sd.gov>.

59th Annual Washington Conference

In early March 2020, twelve Legionnaires from the Department of South Dakota will travel to Washington, D.C. and attend the 59th annual American Legion Washington Conference.

Those called to Washington, D.C., this year include NEC Jim Huls of Madison, Alternate NEC Denny Brenden of Watertown, PDC Paul Evenson of Garretson, PDC Tim Jurgens of Milbank, PDC Byron Callies of Watertown, Warren Aas of Watertown, District 6 Commander Doug Feltman of Chamberlain, District 7 Commander Rodney Smith of Chester, DSO Courtney Van Zanten of Chester, Department Commander Fred Nelson of Spearfish, Finance Officer Gary Wolkow of De Smet., and Department Adjutant Travis Flisrand of Castlewood.

The American Legion has a list of legislative priorities that will be discussed with the South Dakota Congressional Delegation on Tuesday, March 10th, known as "Hill Day" during the conference. The South Dakota delegation will meet with Senator John Thune, Senator Michael Rounds as well as Representative Dusty Johnson to discuss the legislative priorities of The American Legion. Department Service Officer Courtney VanZanten will travel to Washington D.C. on Tuesday, March 10th and will attend The Department Service Officer School in conjunction with the Washington Conference.

2020 Eagle Scout of the Year

The American Legion annually honors The American Legion Eagle Scout of the Year at its National Convention. The winner of the competition receives a \$10,000 scholarship and the three runners-up are each awarded a \$2,500 scholarship.

Forms for nominating Boys Scouts for The American Legion 2020 Eagle Scout of the Year award are now available from State Headquarters. State Headquarters must receive nominations no later than March 1, 2020. A panel will select the Department Eagle Scout of the Year.

Nomination forms may also be downloaded from the internet on The Department American Legion webpage at: www.sdlegion.org/programs/scouting/

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For Admissions information, please contact Lisa Woeppel at 605-745-5127 Ext 1500115



Black Hills National Cemetery Unaccompanied Veterans Memorial Service

April 6, 2020, 9 a.m.
July 6, 2020, 9 a.m.
October 5, 2020, 9 a.m.

Join us as we conduct military honors for Veterans already laid to rest without honors. Questions? Please call (605)347-3930 or (800)743-1070 ext. 7299.

Register Online for Boys State TODAY!

www.southdakotaboysstate.com/



Mark Your Calendar

February 2020

- 2: Four Chaplains Sunday
- 10: Boys / Girls State Governor Commemoration, Capitol in Pierre
- 10: Department Legislative Committee Meeting, Pierre Post Home
- 10: American Legion Legislative Reception, Pierre Post Home
- 14: Valentine's Day
- 17: **PRESIDENT'S DAY**, State Headquarters office closed
- 21-23: **MIDWINTER CONFERENCE** – Arrowwood Resort, Oacoma
- 23: SDAL State Oratorical Contest Finals, Arrowwood Resort
- 26: Ash Wednesday

March 2020

- 1: 2020 Eagle Scout of the Year Nominations due at State HQ's
- 8: Daylight Saving Time Begins (turn clocks ahead)
- 8-11: Washington Conference, Washington, D.C.
- 11-13: Department Service Officer School, Washington, D.C.
- 12: South Dakota 93rd Legislative Session Ends.
- 15: American Legion Birthday
- 17: St. Patrick's Day
- 19: First day of Spring!
- 22: Deadline for Youth Trooper Academy Applications
- 28: District 1 Spring District Convention
- 29: District 2 Spring District Convention

April 2020

- 1: American Legion CHILDREN & YOUTH MONTH
- 1: Deadline for SD American Legion Boys State Registration
- 3: District 7 Spring District Convention
- 4: District 8 Spring District Convention
- 5: District 6 Spring District Convention
- 6: BH National Cemetery Unaccompanied Veterans Memorial Service
- 10: Good Friday
- 12: **EASTER SUNDAY**
- 17-19: National Oratorical Contest Finals, Indianapolis, IN
- 17: District 3 Spring District Convention
- 18: District 4 Spring District Convention
- 19: District 5 Spring District Convention
- 22: Earth Day
- 24: Arbor Day

Americanism

Doug Harris
Department Americanism Chairman



Welcome to 2020!

By now the Post and District Oratorical Contests are complete and we are preparing for the Department Level contest during the Midwinter Conference on February 23rd. I look forward to seeing you and your winners there. The competition starts at 1030 A.M. and your competitors should be there not later than 9:45 A.M., so they have an opportunity to settle in, get a tour of the venue and get themselves mentally prepared for the contest. I'm still seeking volunteers to help with all the logistics, so email me at doughnut@gmail.com or call me at 970-231-8556 if you would like to help.

Now that we've worked our way through the Oratorical portion of the "Big 3", it's time to get back in the schools to recruit for Boys/Girls State and Youth Trooper Academy, all taking place in June of 2020. I honestly believe our best chances for success on recruiting for these programs, will be to follow a 3 step process:

- 1) work with the school counselors/principals/debate coaches/civics and history teachers to find the students;
- 2) get the parents involved by letting them know The American Legion would like their sons/daughters to attend and that there is no cost to the parent or student – mention the scholarship opportunities; and
- 3) complete numerous "follow-up" contacts with each and every applicant/parent to make sure they stay informed and are present for the District orientations. The more information the applicants have, the more likely they are to stay on track and attend. As I've stated in past articles: Don't be afraid to be annoying!

Also, as I mentioned in my last article, don't limit your recruiting efforts to just the schools. Contact your Scout Troop leaders, 4-H organization leaders and local church youth group leaders and ask to attend one of their meetings where you can tell their members about the outstanding programs we offer and the scholarship opportunities that each program has available.

Finally, I thank all of you who've helped this year and in the past, to bring our programs to the youth of your communities. It's a never-ending job, but the rewards are also never ending. Make a difference in the lives of your local youth.

Doug Harris
State Americanism Chairman

District Oratorical Winners Announced

The 2020 District contests for The American Legion High School Oratorical "Constitutional Speech Contest" have been held at seven of the eight South Dakota American Legion Districts. Below are the 2020 District Oratorical Winners.

District 1 Winner:

Elias Grimsley of Spearfish, SD

District 2 Winner:

No Contestant

District 3 Winner:

Samantha Timanus of Gregory, SD.

District 4 Winner:

Fiala Herceg of Aberdeen, SD.

District 5 Winner:

Dorian Sikkink of Castlewood, SD.

District 6 Winner:

No Contestant

District 7 Winner:

Jayden Clark of Garretson, SD.

District 8 Winner:

No Contestant.

Congratulations to all the District winners. The District winners will now compete at the Department Oratorical Finals scheduled on Sunday, February 23, 2020 at approximately 10:30 a.m. in Chamberlain.

The first place winner will advance to the National American Legion Oratorical contest that will be held in Indianapolis, Indiana, April 17-19, 2020.

2020 Youth Trooper Academy

Do you know of a student that is interested in applying for the 2020 Youth Trooper Academy?

The Youth Trooper Academy is a partnership between the South Dakota Highway Patrol and the South Dakota American Legion.

The Academy provides an intensive weeklong experience at the South Dakota Law Enforcement Training Center in Pierre, SD. Veteran Troopers provide mentorship and hands-on training in the following areas: firearms safety, defensive driving, crash investigation, traffic stops, leadership, defensive tactics, and criminal law.

The 2020 Youth Trooper Academy will be conducted in Pierre, SD, on June 22-26, 2020.

The Academy will be limited to 24 applicants, 2 each from the 8 American Legion Districts plus 8 others. Applicants must be a high school junior or senior in good academic standing. The program utilizes a paramilitary approach and is therefore physically and mentally demanding.

Application deadline is March 21, 2020. To apply, find more information and print application at <https://www.sdlegion.org/sd-youth-trooper-academy>

Milbank, Home of American Legion Baseball, Sets Sights On New Complex

Milbank is on a mission: build a new ballfield. In a town where baseball is stitched into their history, it's almost a given to go big.

For those unfamiliar, the American Legion Baseball league was first proposed at an American Legion state convention in Milbank, South Dakota. More than 90 years later, American Legion Baseball continues to be an investment in America's youth. It enjoys a reputation as one of the most successful and tradition-rich amateur athletic leagues and today, the program registers teams in all 50 states plus Canada. Since its inception in 1925, countless Legion Baseball players have gone on to play college and professional baseball, with 68 inducted into the Baseball Hall of Fame.

More than half of current major-league players played Legion Baseball and so did almost every working MLB manager, along with several former commissioners.

Legion Baseball also has a reputation for serving the young people who play for it. Annually, the league awards a total of \$500 - \$25,000 in college scholarships for a player selected from each department based upon leadership, character, scholarship, and financial need. Recently, the organization passed a resolution allowing corporate sponsorship, with the goal of creating more financial aid for college. Diamond Sports funds \$25,000 in scholarships for the Legion Baseball Player of the Year who receives a \$5,000 scholarship and the eight regional players of the year who receive a \$2,500 scholarship.

American Legion Baseball is a national institution, having thrived through a world war, several national tragedies, and times of great prosperity as well as great despair. The league still stands behind the traditional values upon which it was founded in 1925. The program's history proves that on the baseball diamond, America's youth receive a thorough understanding of the value of sportsmanship, leadership, good health, active citizenship, and individual character building. The program also promotes equality, making teammates out of young athletes regardless of their income levels or social standings. American Legion Baseball has been and continues to be, a stepping stone to manhood for millions of young men.

Milbank is the home of American Legion Baseball and since its beginning, more than 10 million young people have participated. States in the Upper Midwest, including South Dakota, boast the most consistent Legion Baseball participation. This summer, 80 teams registered in South Dakota. Because Legion Baseball began in Milbank in 1925, many programs have been established for decades and have been intertwined in small-town communities. In towns with smaller populations, Legion baseball is one of the most consistent forms of activity and entertainment, which lends itself to a greater interest in participation.

Milbank's Legion Baseball Facility was located adjacent to an expanding school campus. In order to allow the growing school to continue expanding, it was determined that the best course of action was to tear down the baseball facility and rebuild it on a new site. The new complex will include two youth fields, a Legion field, a grandstand, and a centralized building with restrooms and a concession stand. This project will not only build a new baseball complex. It will build upon the legacy of Milbank and Legion Baseball and create a memorial that pays respect to the thousands of young men that have participated in the program since Legion Baseball's conception in 1925.



Proposed Milbank American Legion Baseball Facility
Courtesy of <http://birthplaceoflegionbaseball.com/>

SPONSORSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

American Legion Baseball Complex Naming Sponsor	\$1,000,000
American Legion Baseball Field Sponsor	\$750,000
Little League Baseball Field 1 Sponsor	\$350,000
Little League Baseball Field 2 Sponsor	\$350,000
Legion Heritage Grandstand Sponsor	\$300,000
Hall of Fame Community Room Sponsor	\$250,000
Concessions Sponsor	\$100,000
1st Base Locker Room Sponsor	\$50,000
3rd Base Locker Room Sponsor	\$50,000
Press Box Sponsor	\$75,000
Home Team Dugout Sponsor	\$50,000
Away Team Dugout Sponsor	\$50,000
Elevated Patio Legion Club Level Sponsor	\$250,000
Bullpen 1 Sponsor	\$50,000
Bullpen 2 Sponsor	\$50,000
Indoor Batting & Performance Facility Sponsor	\$300,000
Complex Grand Entry Gate Sponsor	\$100,000
Ticketing Booth Sponsor	\$75,000
Legion Legacy Wall of Champions Ground Monument Main Sponsor	\$250,000
Legion Legacy Wall of Champions Plaques : \$10,000/\$25,000/\$50,000	\$1,000,000
Legion Plaza Pavers : \$5,000 Each	\$500,000
Legion Childrens Play Area	\$75,000
Legion Plaza Sponsor	\$250,000
Little League Baseball Field 1 - 1st Base Dugout Sponsor	\$20,000
Little League Baseball Field 1 - 3rd Base Dugout Sponsor	\$20,000
Little League Baseball Field 2 - 1st Base Dugout Sponsor	\$20,000
Little League Baseball Field 2 - 3rd Base Dugout Sponsor	\$20,000
Little League Baseball Field 1 Bleacher Sponsor	\$50,000
Little League Baseball Field 2 Bleachers Sponsor	\$50,000
Total	\$6,455,000

Individuals, businesses and posts interested in sponsorship are welcome to visit the project's website:

<http://birthplaceoflegionbaseball.com/>
Additionally, donors can contact project coordinator Kyle Kvamme at phone number 1-701-369-3030 or email kylek@iconarchitects.com.



HOW MY AMERICAN LEGION BOYS STATE EXPERIENCE SHAPED ME

The following is the work of Ben Garcia, California Boys State Alum, originally published on Studybreaks.com. It provides excellent insight on the student perspective.



“city” (Bidwell, in my case), which turned out to be half a floor of a dorm building. The 50 young men that comprised Bidwell were part of a county, one of five counties spread around campus. Then the work began.

Campaigns took off like jets on a runway, and it wasn't long before many of them came crashing down to a cold reality: Only a little over a third of the boys hold an office during the week-long program's run. The soon-to-be-seniors have the opportunity to run for a city, county or state position, the last of which is the most lucrative. Boys State is not an experience that the idle will enjoy. It's tiresome and grueling, with very little down time. For the delegates, it's more than just a run-of-the-mill summer camp: It's a chance to test your mettle against the top competitors of your age. I don't jest when I say that some of the most impressive people I've ever encountered walked the halls of CSUS that week.

I had no way of knowing prior to my arrival that my American Legion Boys State experience would be one of the most important of my life. So much of who I am today was the result of that seven-day experiment. First and foremost, Boys State refined me as a leader. Quite frankly, to thrive at American Legion Boys State, I had to be a leader. Surrounding me at every turn were the best male leaders my age that the Golden State had to offer; to stand out, I had to differentiate myself from others. Decisiveness separated the successful from the disappointed.

The most impactful lesson I learned about leadership, however, wasn't how to take over a situation. With a thousand high school students vying for limited positions, being louder and more assertive wasn't my key to success — it was becoming the kind of person other leaders would willingly follow. At Boys State, my public speaking skills likewise blossomed. During my campaign for a position within the State Assembly, I gave formal and informal speeches before my city and county, engaged in debates and met with more people than I care to remember. Maintaining a polished image was paramount for my eventual election to office.

Moreover, it was during this time that I learned more about teamwork than I ever had before. I was already a captain for my high school's soccer team and had grown up playing as many sports as I could, but all of that paled to American Legion Boys State.

There were nights when I and my fellow Bidwell citizens would voluntarily forego sleep, congregating secretly in one of the small dorm rooms. There, the small group from Bidwell would scheme and plot through all hours of the night, determined to finish as the highest-rated city of the 22 (Bidwell earned third-place honors). There were pacts and negotiations waged with other cities, and alliances were quickly formed. Bartering, arguing and deals were commonplace — in just a week, the thousand students had become politicians. The American Legion program was especially influential for my personal development, as I collaborated with people who held fundamentally different views and ideologies from me. A more diverse net of individuals could not have been cast. With limited adult supervision, differences had to be solved maturely amongst the delegates themselves. Disorder was a hindrance, and drama was subsequently squashed. By the end of the week, I only saw brothers. The most important change American Legion Boys State instilled in me, however, was motivation. For the first time in my life, I was surrounded by people who had skills, talents and passions in abundance. Some were rich, some were not, but all had a special spark in the way they spoke. Yet, there was never a sense of rivalry between me and my city-mates. Personal success was a ubiquitous goal that bound the group together, so encouragement was widespread. For an achiever like me, it was a perfect microcosm for success. When I walked out of my CSUS dorm for the last time, I felt far older than I had when I'd arrived. Leaving was bittersweet, as I was exhausted and ready for home, but I also knew I'd never see those incredible young people again.

So if you ever get nominated for the American Legion Boys State or Girls State programs, run with it. Even if you don't become a delegate, the interview process is great preparation for job applications in the future. But if you do get to go, a word of advice: Give it your all. After all, you never really know who you'll be when you walk away from it.

What do Bill Clinton, Neil Armstrong and Michael Jordan all have in common? Though it might sound like the opening line of a joke, I first heard the question when I was sitting alone in the center of a conference room in the La Habra City Hall, staring at a panel of individuals. Resting on the table in front of them was an ominous collection of manila folders and clipboards stocked full of charts, questions and graphs. With a slight quiver in my voice, I answered, “They all went to Boys State.”

The American Legion was first founded exactly 100 years ago, when a group of World War I veterans banded together to create an organization that would later brand itself as “one of the most influential nonprofit groups in the United States.” Today, the American Legion offers a number of services, ranging from a Youth Cadet Law Enforcement program to an Amateur Radio Program. Perhaps their most widely recognized programs, however, are Boys State and Girls State. Per the California Boys State FAQ page, “American Legion Boys State is among the most respected and selective educational programs of government instruction for U.S. high-school students.”

I arrived at California State University, Sacramento, early on a Sunday morning the summer before my senior year of high school, the age demographic of American Legion Boys State. Immediately, I was separated from the young men I had arrived with and sorted into a random

SAL Update

Terry Hanson
Detachment Commander



Greetings Legion family!

I hope this article finds everyone in good cheer. A lot of great things are happening this year, so let's start with membership. Every Sons member who recruits a new member is eligible to attend the Midwinter and State Convention Go-Getters Banquet—all free for signing one new member. At Midwinter, the squadrons that have been at no members or under their minimum of 10 members for the past couple of years will have their charters reviewed for termination. A letter of the process will be sent to all squadrons below the minimum of 10 members before Midwinter, and they will be reviewed during the Detachments DEC meeting at the Convention (Friday, February 21 at 10:00 a.m.).

The SAL of South Dakota now has its own emblem! Purchase jackets or shirts at Sign Design & Labeling in Colton, SD via <https://americanlegion.signdesign1977.club/> or 605-446-3353. This company has the right to print the emblem for the state.

I would like at this time to say thank you for the jobs you all do within the state. It's great to work with such a group of fine people.

Now as you all know, we need to keep this Detachment going strong, so I am asking each of you to go out and recruit one new member. Our goal set by National is 700 members this year. My goal is 1,000 members, and I am asking for your HELP. We can make this happen! As I write this article, Montrose Post 154 has begun to form a squadron and already has 29 Charter members. Great job! It would be great to see every Squadron of the Sons have a representative or two at Midwinter on Saturday, February 22, for the SAL general meeting. Hope to see you all there. That evening is also the go-getter dinner, so please come on down and enjoy.

THANK YOU FOR ALL YOU DO FOR VETERANS.

Terry Hanson
Detachment Commander

For God and Country

Patrick Lewellen
Department Chaplain



Greetings to the American Legion Family in the New Year 2020.

It's a new year and a new decade. And that reminds me of my new years resolution I made to myself some years back. Well it isn't really a new years resolution but a word for me to focus on in the new year. As I am writing this Chaplain's message for the American Legion News. I am reminded of my New Years “Word”, the word I am going to use for 2020 is “Difference”, or “Make a Difference with Prayer”. Why is that so important? In the Bible Paul wrote a letter encouraging Timothy. 1 Timothy 2:1-8 NIV:

2 I urge, then, first of all, that petitions, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for all people— 2 for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness. 3 This is good, and pleases God our Savior, 4 who wants all people to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth. 5 For there is one God and one mediator between God and mankind, the man Christ Jesus, 6 who gave himself as a ransom for all people. This has now been witnessed to at the proper time. 7 And for this purpose I was appointed a herald and an apostle—I am telling the truth, I am not lying—and a true and faithful teacher of the Gentiles. 8 Therefore I want the men everywhere to pray, lifting up holy hands without anger or disputing.

In this verse Paul is prompting Timothy and all people to first of all pray, prayers of intercession and thanksgiving for all others. Paul writes “first of all”, because prayer is the highest priority. God wants all of us to be saved and come to know Jesus as our Lord and Savior. I know God works miracles everyday in each and everyone of our lives if we just pray. The Lord Jesus is faithful in many ways to encourage us and others in our prayer life. We might not know what to pray for or know what other people are going through when we pray for them, but God knows and he will help everyone we pray for. So please remember in our prayer time who ever we pray for in this new year can “Make a Difference in Prayer”.

My Prayer is that God will meet the physical and spiritual needs of others. We all can make a difference.

I look forward to seeing all our American Legion Family at Midwinter Conference in Oacoma. God's Blessings for all of you.

With Love and Respect,
Chaplain Patrick Lewellen

Membership

“Membership is Strength, Let’s Get Stronger!”

Ed Stringer
State Membership Chairman



Wow another year gone to the history books. I hope every one had a good year and has a better one in 2020. Looking back on 2019 there is a nation wide increase in membership. That comes from all the efforts put forth by dedicated Legion Members.

I started this year as membership chairman with a lot of hopes that I would get calls from District and Post Commanders for help making their membership grow. I have gotten a few. Some of the districts are doing great and some seem to be struggling a little. I would like to have each District commander to send me a schedule of their upcoming post visits. That way I can come help with them and talk about how membership is so important to the programs we support, and the benefits they can and do receive. NO ORGANIZATION CAN RUN ON MEMBERSHIP ALONE, but they do not exist without it. If there is a post that is having problems, I would like the District Commander to schedule a meeting and let me know when. I do not work miracles, but outside help is sometimes needed to motivate the members to help themselves. As of Jan. 3 2020 we have 31 posts over 90% and 16 over 100%. Well done to them for the added effort they have put in to get to where they are. The majority of the rest are doing well, and some are having problems. The posts that are in the 80% and above at this time are doing great we as a team need to prompt the rest to do what is best for The American Legion. There are members out there that want to join but do not know how. We need to find them and show them we care. A few District Commanders have sent in a schedule of what they are doing to increase membership. Please I ask the rest to get a plan and let every one know what it is. Talk to each other and get ideas for setting information tables up and where they are most effective. Because of National cutting down on what they print, it is up to us as Posts and Districts to download and print. I do not give just anybody an information hand out. Just the ones that are eligible and interested. If you just give it to some one that asks it will possibly end up in the trash. I have walked by the trash can on the way out of an event where a table was set up and seen numerous hand outs. Fairs and gun shows are the worst.

I do not have an updated schedule of guard drills at this time, but most are the first week end of the month. If you try and can not get hold of a guard unit, let me know and I will try. They are listed in the local phone book. Yes they still have phone books, LET YOUR FINGERS DO THE WALKING. Then use your CELL PHONE to call. Or GOOGLE the number and call. JUST MAKE THE CALL and ask to set up a table and talk Legion to the troops. They will listen and a lot will JOIN.

CALL ME, I WANT TO HELP!

MEMBERSHIP IS STRENGTH LETS GET STRONGER!

Ed Stringer
Membership Chairman

Membership Percentages by Posts / Districts

DISTRICT 1		85.4%	DISTRICT 4 (cont)		81.1%	DISTRICT 6 (cont)		80.9%
POST	NO	%	POST	NO	%	POST	NO	%
Lead	31	100.0%	Doland	69	96.2%	White Lake	96	92.9%
Belle Fourche	32	76.8%	Leola	78	81.0%	Wessington	110	77.8%
Sturgis	33	84.2%	Redfield	92	80.6%	Alpena	116	86.1%
Lemmon	66	77.3%	Selby	100	83.3%	Kimball	130	55.2%
Bullhead	82	4.3%	Faulton	102	66.7%	DeSmet	138	93.0%
Timber Lake	83	93.8%	Warner	137	86.3%	Howard	145	69.2%
Faith	106	53.3%	Conde	148	77.3%	Oldham	158	60.0%
Isabel	120	93.1%	Northville	149	94.1%	Emery	166	89.5%
McLaughlin	121	86.7%	Mellette	151	64.3%	Pukwana	201	73.7%
Dupree	124	80.0%	Herreid	170	78.6%	Mount Vernon	210	85.4%
McIntosh	139	67.7%	Eureka	186	75.9%	Erwin	241	64.3%
Buffalo	147	96.8%	Hosmer	189	85.1%	Badger	260	88.5%
Spearfish	164	87.1%	Stratford	207	67.4%	Ethan	261	100.9%
Nisland, Newell, Vale	233	78.1%	Cresbard	213	84.4%	Hetland	263	84.2%
Little Eagle	239	12.9%	Brentford	242	55.0%	Virgil	268	61.8%
Bison	255	82.6%	Roscoe	259	74.6%	Iroquois	280	77.3%
Thunder Hawk	279	95.5%	Claremont	262	68.2%	DISTRICT 7		83.9%
Eagle Butte	308	157.6%	Bowdle	264	86.7%	Sioux Falls	15	83.9%
Piedmont	311	92.8%	Pollock	272	59.3%	Garretson	23	90.5%
Box Elder	315	86.9%	Frederick	273	86.7%	Madison	25	96.0%
DISTRICT 2		73.7%	Long Lake	276	65.4%	Harrisburg	45	79.1%
Wood	19	73.3%	Mansfield	289	75.0%	Canton	53	79.2%
Rapid City	22	84.2%	Tulare	292	85.2%	Humboldt	62	74.1%
Kadoka	27	65.1%	DISTRICT 5		79.8%	Dell Rapids	65	82.2%
Custer	46	100.0%	Milbank	9	81.2%	Flandreau	70	57.8%
Hot Springs	71	72.9%	Watertown	17	77.8%	Beresford	72	79.4%
Murdo	75	130.0%	Bryant	37	81.4%	Alcester	86	81.5%
White River	94	89.8%	Webster	40	80.5%	Egan	97	78.9%
Rosebud	125	43.5%	Rosholt	48	80.8%	Nunda	105	85.7%
Midland	143	89.7%	Clear Lake	49	79.3%	Bridgewater	111	68.2%
Belvidere	144	23.5%	Sisseton	50	91.1%	Hartford	118	82.3%
Hill City	160	61.8%	Clark	60	70.8%	Trent	122	96.0%
Edgemont	172	74.1%	Wilmot	64	90.6%	Hudson	128	73.8%
Philip	173	95.6%	Brookings	74	79.6%	Valley Springs	131	77.2%
Oelrichs	238	53.3%	Veblen	76	86.4%	Elk Point	134	65.0%
Martin	240	67.7%	Britton	80	93.2%	Chester	136	109.1%
Wall	246	82.6%	Toronto	81	45.9%	Salem	140	107.0%
Pine Ridge	251	6.7%	White	88	87.4%	Montrose	154	106.7%
New Underwood	256	20.0%	Pierpont	99	52.6%	Wentworth	161	77.1%
Kyle	265	0.0%	Astoria	103	72.0%	Canistota	162	86.7%
Wanblee	269	11.8%	Bradley	108	68.8%	Lennox	174	79.1%
Batesland	281	0.0%	Gary	109	62.1%	Baltic	175	87.1%
Mission	287	26.7%	Willow Lake	113	68.8%	Worthing	177	87.5%
Porcupine	294	13.3%	Volga	114	99.0%	Colton	206	83.3%
Parmelee	295	20.0%	Waubay	129	58.4%	Ramona	216	82.8%
St. Francis	297	106.7%	Sinai	133	80.0%	Tea	266	80.0%
Draper	301	76.5%	Langford	141	81.0%	Colman	278	104.3%
Manderson	302	9.5%	Carpenter	153	61.9%	Renner	307	64.1%
Hermosa	303	78.9%	Lily	156	93.3%	Brandon	318	81.2%
Norris	310	26.7%	Strandburg	171	73.3%	North Sioux City	319	100.0%
Allen	317	5.9%	New Effington	180	95.4%	DISTRICT 8		82.5%
Rapid City Foothills	320	83.0%	Estelline	184	70.3%	Vermillion	1	81.8%
DISTRICT 3		79.6%	Elkton	198	81.8%	Tyndall	2	88.1%
Gregory	6	81.0%	Bruce	200	76.9%	Lake Andes	10	75.0%
Pierre	8	77.0%	Raymond	209	84.5%	Wagner	11	81.1%
Fort Pierre	20	67.5%	Hayti	217	78.7%	Yankton	12	87.0%
Burke	28	92.9%	Big Stone City	229	79.0%	Wakonda	13	91.6%
Highmore	35	59.6%	Aurora	230	85.3%	Hurley	21	85.4%
Bonesteel	36	70.7%	Castlewood	250	106.1%	Parker	30	106.7%
Miller	38	68.3%	Roslyn	253	92.6%	Centerville	43	74.7%
Blunt	77	95.8%	Andover	258	31.3%	Alsene	44	75.5%
Onida	79	66.3%	Grenville	267	77.8%	Armour	52	85.1%
Presho	89	69.7%	Kidder	298	91.7%	Geddes	56	81.2%
Dallas	91	89.7%	Old Agency	314	90.9%	Platte	115	85.2%
Gettysburg	135	82.7%	DISTRICT 6		80.9%	Viborg	117	63.6%
Colome	146	78.6%	Chamberlain	3	110.6%	Springfield	132	74.4%
Vivian	157	62.5%	Plankinton	5	100.0%	Tripp	142	81.1%
Hoven	159	91.2%	Huron	7	83.9%	Avon	150	79.5%
Witten	167	73.9%	Wessington Sprgs	14	68.4%	Menno	152	81.9%
Winner	169	90.0%	Gann Valley	16	76.2%	Scotland	155	80.5%
Kennebec-Reliance	179	81.2%	Mitchell	18	75.1%	Davis	176	63.2%
Fairfax	187	88.2%	Stickney	26	76.6%	Tabor	183	82.2%
Herrick	220	70.0%	Woonsocket	29	51.4%	Irene	193	87.0%
Polo	299	97.7%	Alexandria	41	78.7%	Parkston	194	92.7%
DISTRICT 4		81.1%	Arlington	42	92.1%	Marion	235	131.0%
Mobridge	4	79.3%	Artesian	47	76.0%	Gayville	237	54.0%
Aberdeen	24	83.7%	Wolsey	59	81.4%	Freeman	248	64.0%
Groton	39	77.6%	Canova	61	93.9%	Delmont	249	86.5%
Rockham	57	128.6%	Lake Preston	63	91.9%	Greenwood	257	110.0%
Columbia	58	97.4%	Hitchcock	84	84.6%	Corsica	274	74.2%
Ipswich	67	88.2%	Ful-Frm-Epiphany	85	79.4%	Pickstown	282	56.5%
Hecla	68	92.3%	Letcher	93	66.2%	Chancellor	283	70.1%
						MDSP Springfield	323	126.7%

Department Membership as of January 15, 2020					
State Vice & District Commanders Membership Standings					
State Vice Commanders		2020 Goal	2020 Mbers	2020 Percent	
Districts 1-2	Kevin Morello	3,536	2,786	78.79%	
Districts 3-8	Harry Boner	15,961	13,010	81.51%	
District Commanders		2020 Goal	2020 Mbers	2020 Percent	Pos.
Dist. 1	David Booze	1,529	1,306	85.42%	1
Dist. 2	Eugene IronShell Jr.	2,007	1,480	73.74%	8
Dist. 3	LeRoy Madsen	1,854	1,475	79.56%	7
Dist. 4	Perry Schmidt	2,046	1,659	81.09%	4
Dist. 5	Matt Lagerstrom	3,300	2,633	79.79%	6
Dist. 6	Doug Feltman	2,658	2,151	80.93%	5
Dist. 7	Rodney Smith	3,979	3,339	83.92%	2
Dist. 8	Gregory Geiman	2,124	1,753	72.53%	3
	Post 500	250	196		
State Totals		19,747	15,992	80.98%	
		18,634	15,992	85.82%	