



Up To Now!

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Issued Monthly from State Headquarters at Watertown, S.D. 57201-0067

Phone (605) 886-3604

No. 33676

March 8, 2024

SOUTH DAKOTA AMERICAN LEGION COLLEGE

The second class of South Dakota American Legion College will be April 27-28, 2024 in Chamberlain, SD. Only ten applicants will be selected for the program. The prerequisites are: Minimum of three years continuous membership, Completion of the American Legion Basic Training Course (include copy certificate of completion with application) and Post Commander or Adjutant endorsement. Applications can be found on the SD Legion website under Training or by contacting HQ. <https://www.sdlegion.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/2024-SDLC-Application.pdf>

Stipend is available for travel, lodging and food.

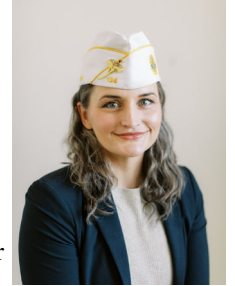
Application deadline is March 30, 2024 sign up TODAY!

- Mar 13 Membership Target Date– Legion Birthday 90%
- Mar 15 Post 15 American Legion Birthday Party, at the Alliance Center in Sioux Falls 5pm Social, 6pm Dinner
- Mar 16 District 3 Post 8 Pierre 11:30am Social, 12pm Lunch, 12:30pm Meeting,
- Mar 17 District 6 Meeting Post 5 Plankinton Breakfast 9am-1pm Meeting 1:30pm
- Mar 26 Yankton County What’s Brewing, VFW Post 791, 209 Cedar Street, Yankton, 10am
- Mar 29 Easter Holiday **HQ Closed**, Display Flag
- Mar 30 Application deadline for SDAL College
- Apr 4 Brule County What’s Brewing, Chamberlain Center, 1pm
- Apr 6 District 8 Meeting 11am Social and Lunch, 12:30pm Meeting Yankton VFW
- Apr 7 District 7 Meeting Sioux Falls Post 15 Breakfast 8am-12pm Meeting 1pm
- Apr 10 Membership Target Date– Children and Youth 95%
- Apr 10 American Legion Legacy Scholarship Application deadline
- Apr 13 District 1 Meeting Post 66 Lemmon 11:30am Social, 12pm Lunch, 12:30pm Meeting
- Apr 14 District 2 Meeting 11am Social, 12pm Lunch, 12:45pm Meeting, Martin Post 240
- Apr 15 Post Data Report due to Dept HQ
- Apr 16 McPherson County What’s Brewing, Eureka School, 1pm
- Apr 27-28 SD American Legion College, Chamberlain
- May 1 SDAL Educator of the Year Award due to HQ
- May 1 SDAL Good Samaritan Award due to HQ
- May 1 William Lenker VA&R Award for Excellence due to HQ
- May 1 Post Americanism Report due to HQ
- May 6-9 National Spring Meetings
- May 7 Corson County What’s Brewing, McIntosh Pavilion 10am
- May 7 Midwest Honor Flight Mission 18 Welcome Home Ceremony, Sioux Falls Convention Center 9:30 pm
- May 12 Mother’s Day, Display Flag
- May 15 Membership Target Date– Armed Forces Day 100%
- May 15 Peace Officer Memorial Day, Display Flag
- May 17-19 National Oratorical Contest
- May 18 Armed Forces Day, Display Flag
- May 21 Midwest Honor Flight Mission 19 Welcome Home Ceremony, Sioux Falls Convention Center 9:30 pm
- May 27 Memorial Day **HQ Closed**, Flag at half-staff until noon
- May 27-31 Boys State, Northern State University, Aberdeen
- May 27 SDDVA Memorial Day Program, SD Vets Cemetery 12pm
- May 30 “Blue Cap Day” at Boys State, 8am
- June 1 Consolidated Post Report due to Dept HQ
- June 20-23 Department Convention, Ramkota Hotel, Pierre

MESSAGE FROM THE DEPARTMENT COMMANDER

Greetings Legion Family!

It’s hard to believe that we’re in the beginning of March, and the ice is already out in South Dakota lakes. Crossing fingers that this weather holds out for the remainder of our Spring Meetings!



With Spring comes new beginnings, and our Posts are subject to that possibility of change too. April elections are just around the corner! If you’ve ever had a *thought* to run for a position in your post, consider this your sign to step up and throw your hat in the ring.

It’s always an exciting time, but I caution balance. New leaders, don’t run away and leave others in the dust. For those stepping down, please don’t take your ball and go home. New ideas and new energy can do wonders for a Post, especially when coupled with the experience and reliability of more seasoned members.

I’ve witnessed this in my home Post of Chester #136, where we’ve gone from a relatively quiet Post of 32 members to an active Post with a goal of 98, all within a decade. There’s a whole slew of old school Vietnam era Vets in Wakonda Post #13 who have long gone out of their way to recruit every single kid who enlists out of the high school, and they’re seeing the return on that investment. I’ve seen it in Polo Post #299—now our youngest Post by demographics, and with a completely remodeled Post home. They thoroughly and publicly admit they couldn’t be where they are today without the right guidance and mentorship. Rapid City Post #22 is the first Post meeting I’ve ever walked into and felt old—which is saying something. Whatever they’re doing to encourage younger Legionnaires, especially in leadership, they’re doing it right. Is that an attaboy, Doug?

The right energy and enthusiasm can reinvigorate even the sleepiest of Posts, if given the support.

In closing, and if this article has excited you at all, one of these likely applies:

Step up, be that leader. Listen.

Step back, and be that mentor. Support.

Pursue Purpose,

Courtney Steffen
Department Commander



NATIONAL DUES INCREASE!

At the 2023 National Convention, a \$5 dues increase was passed that will take effect July 1, 2024. This increase will require all Posts to charge more for membership and makes submitting Post Data Reports critical this year. More information to follow.

UP COMING REQUIRED REPORTS

The following reports or inputs will soon be due. Please take the required actions as needed:

1. Post Data Report (PDR). With the National dues increase the PDR is critical this year. This report was mailed to Posts in February. The PDR identifies the dues amount for the post as well as the mailing address for the dues and post. At a minimum member dues should be \$38.50 or the Post will have to make up the difference. PDRs are due to HQ by **April 15**.
2. Post Americanism Report. This form reflects what the Post has accomplished for Americanism programs. It is used to select the Golden Eagle award for excellence in Americanism programs. This report can be found in the Department's Post Adjutant's Administrative and Awards Manual, page 18, and is due to HQ **May 1st**.
3. Post Officer Certification. This form is found in the Department's Post Adjutant's Administrative and Awards Manual, page 27, and is to be submitted to HQ in after the Post officers have been sworn in for the next year.
4. Consolidated Post Report (CPR). The CPR is the Post's method to report what has been accomplished for the year. The data is used by the Department and National Headquarters to report on activities of The American Legion. The form will be included in this Up To Now or can be found on the Department website. It is also available on line on the National website and is due **June 1st**.

2024 DEPARTMENT CONVENTION

The 105th Annual American Legion Department of South Dakota Convention will be June 20-23 at the Ramkota Hotel and Conference Center in Pierre. A block of Rooms are available at the rate of \$109 a night. To make reservations call (605) 224-6877. More information to come in future UTNs.

2024 SOUTH DAKOTA LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

The SDAL Legislative Committee met Jan 22, 2024 to discuss the SD Legislative Session and Bills in the que for this session. The following was the outcome of this year's session.

Support:

HB 1008 modify the eligibility for admission to the state veterans' home and repeal the residency requirement. Signed by the Governor on February 27, 2024

HB 1067 designate Medal of Honor Recognition Day. Signed by the Governor on 2/21/24

HB 1082 (Amended) change the eligibility requirements, and the exempt value, of a property tax relief program for disabled veterans and surviving spouses. Delivered to the Governor on 2/27/24

HB 1101 provide a special motor vehicle license plate for recipients of the Legion of Merit award. Signed by the Governor 2/12/24

HCR 6007 Encouraging the United States Congress to allow veterans to receive long-term care services at facilities that do not otherwise meet the requirements set by the United States Department of Veterans Affairs. Enrolled 2/20/24

SB 29 allow eligible members of the South Dakota National Guard attending an in-state private, nonprofit post-secondary institution to receive the state tuition benefit. Awaiting Governor signature

SB 30 prohibit discrimination based on military status. Withdrawn

SB 148 provide permissive authority to a governing body of a municipality or county to deny reissuance of an on-sale license not actively used. Delivered to the Governor on 2/29/24

SB 162 make an appropriation for the erection of the South Dakota Sioux Code Talker Memorial and to declare an emergency. Tabled

SB 180 modify provisions pertaining to unethical conduct and improper collection of fees relating to assistance or referrals in a veterans benefits matter. Tabled

SC 803 Honoring the outstanding military service of Major General Michael L. Place. Enrolled

Monitor:

HB 1007 amend the requirement to employ a county veterans' service officer. Signed by the Governor on 2/27/24

HB 1068 allow disabled veterans to obtain a standard issue county motor vehicle or motorcycle license plate. Signed by the Governor on 2/5/24

HB 1121 make an appropriation to provide a grant for the construction of a veteran's skilled trade center. Deferred to the 41st day

HB 1138 establish a sales tax exemption for certain disabled veterans. Deferred to the 41st day

SB 105 provide for the employment of veterans' service officers by the Department of Veterans Affairs. Deferred to the 41st day

MIDWINTER SWEEPSTAKES WINNERS

The winners of the MidWinter Sweepstakes were drawn at the end of the Conference on Saturday. A huge thank you to all those that sent in their sweepstakes tickets and donations. It was a very success fund raising program for the Department. Congratulations to the following winners:

\$1000 Alan Nielsen	\$500 Timothy Hein
\$300 Ken Bodewitz	\$200 David Booze
\$100 Pam Werdel	

STATE ORATORICAL CONTEST WINNERS

Congratulations to the Department Oratorical Winners!

Elena Andrews, Beresford – 1st place trophy and \$1500; Annelise Carley, Rapid City – 2nd place trophy and \$1000; and Aspen Kline, Aberdeen - 3rd place trophy and \$500.

Elena will also receive a plaque to be displayed in her high school's trophy case as the first-place winner of the state contest. She will have the opportunity to represent The South Dakota American Legion at the National Contest, to be held May 17-19, 2024 in Hillsdale, MI. Elena will receive an additional \$2,000 scholarship for participating in the first round of competition at the national level and an additional \$2,000 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 \$25,000 for first place, \$22,500 for second place, and \$20,000 for third place.

BOYS STATE NUMBERS ARE DOWN!!!

Last year was the smallest South Dakota Boys State since it's founding with less than 170 Boys in attendance. There is no limit to how many Boys a Post or school can send. If a Post can not afford to pay the tuition fee, please reach out to the Director or Registrar, there are others that can assist. Registration is open to all juniors and only seniors who have not attended in the past. This year Boys State will be May 27-31, 2024 at Northern State University in Aberdeen. Registration can be found on the South Dakota Boys State website, the address for applicants:

<http://www.southdakotaboysstate.com/boys-state-application/>

The registration fee for Boys State is \$250 per student and is payable to the Boys State Treasurer. Registration closes on May 1, 2024.

YOUTH TROOPER REGISTRATION IS OPEN

South Dakota Youth Trooper Academy (YTA) runs June 24 – 28, 2024. YTA is an intensive, one week, residential learning experience for young adults who are entering their senior year of high school or have just graduated high school in 2024. YTA is held at the South Dakota Law Enforcement Training Academy in Pierre. The program is mentally and physically demanding. Candidates should be highly motivated, of good moral and ethical character, and have an interest in a career in law enforcement. **Space in the program is limited to 24 students from across the state.**

Registration/Application forms can be found on the website here: www.sdlegion.org/sd-youth-trooper-academy
The deadline for applications is March 22, 2024.

2028 & 2029 DEPT CONVENTION & MIDWINTER

Bids for the 2028 MidWinter are being accepted, at this time only one bid has been submitted from Chamberlain Post 3. Posts and Convention Centers who desire to submit bids to host the Midwinter should send that information to the Dept Adjutant. Application forms are available from Dept HQ.
Bids for the 2029 MidWinter and Department Convention are being accepted at this time as well.

FUTURE DEPARTMENT CONVENTION AND MIDWINTER DATES AND LOCATIONS

2024 Convention, Ramkota, Pierre, June 20-23
2025 MidWinter, Arrowwood Resort, Oacoma, Feb 14-16
2025 Convention, Crossroads Hotel, Huron, June 19-22

VETERANS, SEE WHAT'S BREWING!

The SD Dept of Veterans Affairs will be hosting "Coffee and Conversation" programs in Yankton, Chamberlain, Eureka and McIntosh. These programs are in partnership with County Veterans Service Officers. The department welcomes the opportunity to visit one-on-one with veterans and see what's brewing!
Mar 26 Yankton County What's Brewing, VFW Post 791, 209 Cedar Street, Yankton, 10am
Apr 4 Brule County What's Brewing, Chamberlain Center, 1pm
Apr 16 McPherson County What's Brewing, Eureka School Multi Purpose Room, 1pm
May 7 Corson County What's Brewing, McIntosh Pavilion 10am

THE AMERICAN LEGION LEGACY SCHOLARSHIP

This needs-based scholarship is designed to fulfill a financial gap remaining after all federal and state educational grants/scholarships available to an eligible applicant have been utilized. Children of post-9/11 veterans having been assigned a combined disability rating of 50 percent or greater or who died while on active duty on or after Sept. 11, 2001 are eligible. All applications new or renewal must be submitted using the online scholarship submission system **NO LATER THAN Wednesday, April 10, 2024.**
<https://www.legion.org/scholarships/legacy>
Total amount of scholarship funds awarded in 2023: \$1,484,122

REMINDER TO ALL AMERICAN LEGION POSTS TO FILE IRS FORM 990

Federal tax regulations require every Post to file IRS form 990. This must be filled out by the 15th day of the fifth month after the end of your organizations accounting period. If the IRS does not receive this form, they will revoke the tax-exempt status of the Post. To get your Tax-exempt status back you have to apply and pay a sizeable fee. This process takes time (months) and can challenge even the most patient of individuals. The form can be downloaded at <https://www.irs.gov/pub/irs-pdf/f990.pdf>.

NATIONAL COMMANDER MEMBERSHIP INCENTIVE

Commander Seehafer will award a "Be the One" pin to any Legionnaire who obtains two new members, one to replace you and one for growth.
A new member is any person joining for the 2024 year who was not a member in the 2023 year. Transfers do not count.
Only one pin will be awarded per individual. Upon receipt, national membership staff will confirm the names in the national database and mail the pin directly to the person who earned it.
https://www.legion.org/sites/legion.org/files/legion/documents/seehafer_twonewmembers.pdf

103 PERCENT MEMBERSHIP AWARD

National Commander Seehafer will award his "Be the One" pin to

any post, district, county, and/or Dept commander and membership chair who achieves 103% of their membership goal for 2024.
https://www.legion.org/sites/legion.org/files/legion/documents/2024_103percentmembership.pdf

NATIONAL COMMANDER POST EXCELLENCE AWARD

To qualify, a post must achieve excellence in four areas: membership, submit a the Consolidated Post Report (CPR), attain a 90% renewal rate, and community activity. The standard is as follows:
Membership: Attain at least 103% of their membership goal. At least one post officer attends district meetings.
Consolidated Post Report: CPR submitted by July 1.
90% Renewal Rate: Renew at least 90% of their 2023 members.
Community Activity: The post must conduct an event that connects the local community with The American Legion. The objective is to open your doors, welcome the community in, and educate them on what The American Legion is all about and how the post is an asset to the community.
Certification for the award: The district commander responsible for the post will certify a post as having achieved the four specified criteria. The district commander will submit a list of posts meeting the criteria to Dept HQ. List should include the post name, phone number, address and commander's name. If possible, provide with copies of press releases submitted to the local media about the projects to show that the projects were to enhance the image of The American Legion through local media. Dept HQ will forward to National Headquarters.

100% AMERICAN LEGION FAMILY RIBBON

American Legion National Commander Seehafer will award his 100% American Legion Family Ribbon to any American Legion Family that achieves 100% membership by the 2024 100% membership target date. For this award, the Legion Family is defined as a post and/or any combination of an Auxiliary unit or Sons squadron. Each must achieve 100% membership to qualify for the award. The Dept HQ will forward to National Headquarters.

VA HEALTH CARE EXPANSION

The VA has announced that all veterans who were exposed to toxins and other hazards while serving in the military – at home or abroad – will be eligible to enroll directly in VA health care beginning March 5, 2024. All veterans who served in the Vietnam War, the Gulf War, Iraq, Afghanistan, the Global War on Terror, or any other combat zone after 9/11 will be eligible to enroll directly in VA health care without first applying for VA benefits. Additionally, veterans who never deployed but were exposed to toxins or hazards while training or on active duty will also be eligible to enroll.

SD DEPT OF VETERAN AFFAIRS RESOURCE BOOK

The South Dakota Department of Veteran Affairs (SDDVA) has developed a resource book to educate veterans on the benefits and resources that are available to them and their family. This is a great guide with our 60 pages of useful information. You can access the guide at the SDDVA website <https://vetaffairs.sd.gov/>
Or directly at: [https://vetaffairs.sd.gov/publicaffairs/Other%20Publications/2023%20Resource%20Book%20\(July\).pdf](https://vetaffairs.sd.gov/publicaffairs/Other%20Publications/2023%20Resource%20Book%20(July).pdf)

LEGIONNAIRE INSURANCE TRUST (LIT)

As a member of the Legion Family, you're eligible for No Cost LegionCare Insurance.
\$5,000.00 NO COST To You Accidental Death Protection if traveling on official American Legion business.
\$1,000 Accidental Death Protection for all other covered accidents.
Activate your NO COST To You insurance coverage today.
<https://www.thelit.com/no-cost-legioncare/>
You may also qualify for Medicare Supplement and Medicare Advantage Plans through LIT with a portion of your dollars spent coming right back here to the Department. Last year alone LIT returned to the department \$17,917.65. <https://www.thelit.com/>

OPERATION HOMEFRONT NEEDS AND SERVICES

It was great to visit with so many of you during the 104th Midwinter Conference of the American Legion, Department of South Dakota, in Deadwood, SD in February. There were many folks interested to learn more about Operation Homefront and how they could do more for this program. There are many Posts, Units, and Squadrons surrounding Ellsworth AFB that have been able to come and help with the yearly backpack distribution program, which is sponsored by Operation Homefront (OH). This event is held at many military bases during the last weekend in July every year. Operation Homefront also distributes school supplies and toys collected from the Dollar Tree every year. Both of these programs take financial donations, volunteers, and coordination to ensure successful events. There will be more information to come on these two programs in the April newsletter.

In addition to these two highly successful programs, there are also temporary assistance programs, spouse appreciation and support programs, and scholarships opportunities for children of our active-duty and National Guard service members that are or have been deployed on Title 10 orders. See the requirements and types of assistance available below.

Critical Financial Assistance – Eligibility

Documents Required:

Copy of deployment orders for enlisted, title 10 orders for National Guard, documentation of all household income, line of duty documentation or other official record of a wound, illness, or injury being sustained in the line of duty.

Typical use of Financial Assistance:

Auto Payment, Auto Repair, Child and Dependent Care, Critical Baby Items, Dental, Essential Home Items, Food Assistance, Home Repairs*, Medical, Moving and Relocation, Rent and Mortgage, Travel and Transportation, Utilities, Vision Care, Other.

I am sure you will agree that helping our young service members in times of need can be a game changer during desperate times. Many of us can recall how difficult life can be in times of need, as we have been there. Your time and consideration to volunteer or support Operation Homefront is appreciated. If you have any questions, please contact myself.

Remember, April is Children and Youth month. You can help to support our young service members' families by collecting school supplies for distribution, holding a family fun day, or even make financial donations to Operation Homefront and/or other Youth and Children programs that you support.

Kind regards,

Harry Boner
Operation Homefront, Advisory Council Member
hb.boner@yahoo.com
605-691-4571

HATS IN THE RING FOR 2024-2025 LEADERSHIP

Post 311 has endorsed Kevin Morello for Dept Commander
Post 136 has endorsed Rod Smith for Dept Commander
Post 164 has endorsed Brian Dean for Dept Vice CDR Dist 1&2
Post 136 has endorsed Kevin Hempel for Dept Vice CDR Dist 3-8
Post 11 has endorsed Greg Geiman for Dept Sergeant at Arms
Post 164 has endorsed Fred Nelson for Natl Exec Committee
Post 18 has endorsed Hugh Holmes for National Vice Commander
Post 3 has endorsed Doug Feltman for Alt Natl Exec Committee

DEPARTMENT MEMBERSHIP CHAIRMAN MESSAGE

With the time change coming this weekend and the first day of spring later this month we are close to saying goodbye to winter, time flies when you are having fun. This Legion year is fast coming to an end. Armed Forces Day is just a little over two months away when we are asked to be at 100% or 16,261. Before we worry about the finish line, we have one important goal to reach and that is the Big 12 number by March 12. As of today March 6, 2024, we need just 40 more renewals or new members to qualify for \$2000 that the Department can use to upgrade our computers and technology. Thanks to all of you, the Department of South Dakota has reached all the goals this year including the one coming up next week March 13.

From the day Courtney was elected Commander she along with the Leadership have talked and continue to talk about "Pursue Purpose" not membership. You may ask then why all I talk about is membership. Membership is our number 1 source of income. I believe we all know why we belong to the Legion and if we can tell that story to others, we will continue to be successful in not only supporting the big picture IE: National, the Department but your Post. I have said it many times. It is Leadership and the members of the Post that are in the trenches that make the Department of South Dakota what it is. I'm very proud of what you all have done so far this year, it is not me it is you and I want you not to forget that.

In closing, I as your Membership Chairman, am asking for your help in renewing or signing up 40 members by next week March 10 which gives Judy at Headquarters time to get them into the system.

Thank you again for all you do.

God Bless

Bill

Bill Peters
2023-2024 Membership Chairman
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