



Up To Now!

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Phone (605) 886-3604

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DUES INCREASE!

A National \$5 dues increase will take effect July 1, 2024. This increase will require all Posts to charge at least \$5 more for membership and makes submitting POST DATA REPORTS critical this year.

POST DATA REPORTS are due to HQ
April 15!!!!

- 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
- April 9 Judy Greenfield's 29th Birthday!
- Apr 10 Membership Target Date– Children and Youth 95%
- Apr 10 American Legion Legacy Scholarship Application deadline
- Apr 12 Webster What's Brewing, VFW, Webster, 5pm
- Apr 15—Purple Up for Military Kids
- 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 17 SDVC Meeting, 9am, VFW Rapid City
- 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 9 Gregory, What's Brewing American Legion Post 6, 5pm
- May 9 Resolutions proposing changes to the SD Legion Constitution and By Laws due to HQ for Convention
- 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 21 Yankton County What's Brewing VFW Post 791, 10:00 am
- 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 1 Outstanding Post Commander and Adj awards due to HQ
- June 1 Outstanding District Commander Awards dur to HQ

MESSAGE FROM THE DEPARTMENT COMMANDER

Greetings Legion Family,

It has been an incredibly busy month, and looking forward to more travel as we hit the second half of our Spring District Meetings. We're hitting 3 extreme corners of the state with visits to Yankton, Lemmon and Martin—with Sioux Falls sprinkled in for good measure. The miles are adding up, but it's always wonderful to see my Legion family. You all have made this year fun and successful, and I'll always appreciate the energy, time and enthusiasm South Dakota Legionnaires bring to the table.



It has also been a very busy month at work in the Brookings County Veterans Service Office. I want to take this moment to remind all Veterans and their dependents: EVERYTHING that is done through the VA can be done for FREE.

There is a rising scourge of predatory companies climbing out of the dark recesses of the internet to prey on Veterans and their families. You name the benefit, and there is a company out there trying to make a quick and easy buck off it. These companies do NOT have a magic key to the VA and can often use tactics that are questionable at best. Being unaccredited, there is no guarantee that your information will remain safeguarded, nor are they held to the same ethical principles as those accredited. If fraud is committed by these companies on any sort of claim, it is the Veteran or claimant who will ultimately be held responsible.

At its lowest level, there have been multiple cases crossing my desk recently of Veterans filing for their DD214 through internet companies and being charged anywhere from \$79-\$119. A DD214 can be acquired for FREE at any of the following: your County Register of Deeds, your local County or Tribal VSO, online at archives.gov/veterans, or online at eBenefits.va.gov (you'll need to make an ID.me or Login.gov account first).

In-between, "claim sharks" are flooding social media ads and buying up the top spot in search engines, claiming guaranteed success on claims—for a price, which can range anywhere from \$750 to tens of thousands of dollars. At absolute peak scum, companies are "obituary diving" for the widows that I am working with, offering to do their survivors pension or dependency and indemnity claims for thousands of dollars. All of this is work that your local County or Tribal Veterans Service Officers can do for FREE. Every dollar these companies fraudulently charge should be in the pockets of the Veterans or their dependents.

Scams are prevalent in the Veteran world. Please do due diligence when applying for any benefits, and if you have questions, be sure to reach out and ask. Here to help!

Pursue Purpose,

Courtney Steffen
Department Commander

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. 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 was included the last 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**.

BOYS STATE UPDATE

As of 27 March, we have only seventy out of 238 Posts that have registered applicants for Boys State. That is an average of 2.2 Applicants per Post.

Just imagine if the rest of the Posts who DO NOT have a registered applicant went out and got ONLY ONE applicant, we would have OVER 300 registered applicants for Boys State!! Just one, not two or three or twelve, just one for the top leadership program in South Dakota.

We owe that to our local young men that will go forward after High School and be part of society and come back and be an active member of your community. Maybe be a farmer, rancher, banker, lawyer, or businessman who sits on the city council or county commission, volunteers at church or community events because of what they experienced at Boys State. Maybe serve their nation and become a Legion member or Sons of the American Legion member because during the Memorial Ceremony at Boys State they felt a tug in their heart thinking of a grandpa, Aunt, Uncle, brother, sister or friend that served this great nation. Or had a special admiration for their Counselor who was also a Veteran.

Sometimes we need to take a closer look at the big picture and where the future generations may lead us or stand with us as we try to deal with the challenges that we will face trying to get this nation back on track.

The least we can do is give them the opportunity, we owe them that!

A heartfelt THANKS to all the Posts who have supported Boys State. We cannot do this without your hard work and dedication to the American Legion Boys State. And do not forget another great program, the Youth Trooper Program either of these programs should be a good fit for our young people.

God Bless you all
Gene O

Registration can be found on the South Dakota Boys State website, the address for applicants:

<http://www.southdakotaboysstate.com/boys-state-application/>
Registration closes on May 1, 2024. The registration fee for Boys State is \$250 per student and is payable to the Boys State Treasurer, Doug Harris, 4913 Charmwood Dr, Rapid City, SD 57701, 970-231-8556.

BOYS STATE ORIENTATION

The following locations, dates and times have been identified for up-

coming Boys State Orientations

Dist 1 & 2: May 11, 12pm, Post 22 Rapid City – Pizza Party!

Dist 7: May 5th at 3pm, Post 15 Sioux Falls, Armory

Dist 3, 4, 5, 6, & 8: To be determined

SDAL BASEBALL UP DATE

Team registration is open now the cost is \$100 until May 15th then it will go up to \$200. Registration will close on May 31, 2024.

New this year, Resolution No. 17, Risk Management Mandates for National Youth Programs, adopted at NEC Fall Meetings October 2023, established policies and procedures which mandates sexual abuse awareness training and criminal history background check screenings for adult participants of American Legion Baseball.

ALL Coaches, managers, and volunteer staff members of Junior and Senior American Legion Baseball teams and players, who have or will have attained their 18th birthday before August 20, 2024, must complete a background check and abuse awareness course prior to conducting any meetings, events, practices, or games that involve youth participants.

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.

CONSTITUTIONAL RESOLUTIONS

Any resolutions proposing changes to the SD Legion Constitution and By Laws to be considered at the Department Convention must be at headquarters by May 9th. Please send electronically to adjutant@sdlegion.org.

DEPARTMENT CONVENTION BANQUET INFORMATION

The American Legion Family Joint Banquet will be Friday, June 21st, 2024 at the Ramkota Conference Center, 920 W Sioux Ave, in Pierre. No Host Bar 6:00 pm Banquet 7:00 pm
Transportation to and from the banquet is available. Please ask at the Registration table when you pick up your tickets.

PLEASE PRINT

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ Zip Code: _____

Number of Tickets: _____ Adults \$35 per ticket _____ (Total)

_____ Children \$20 per ticket _____ (Total)

Total enclosed: _____

Please make checks or money orders out to:

American Legion Pierre Post 8

Please Send ticket requests to:

Convention Banquet Tickets

ATTN: Mike Wells, Convention Finance Chairman

PO Box 621

Pierre, SD, 57501

FUN AUCTION AT THE STATE CONVENTION

The annual fun auction will be held in Pierre during the State Convention on June 22. This event has grown through the years and has become an event that is well attended and supported by the American Legion Family. All proceeds from the fun auction are donated to the South Dakota American Legion Foundation. Please consider donating items to the fun auction. **If you have a special talent in any particular area, such as, quilting, wood carving, woodwork-**

ing, baking, etc, please consider making something to be auctioned off at the fun auction.

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!

Apr 16 Mc Pherson County What's Brewing, Eureka School Multi Purpose Room, 1pm

May 7 Corson County What's Brewing, McIntosh Pavilion 10am

May 9 Gregory, What's Brewing American Legion Post 6, 5pm

May 21 Yankton What's Brewing VFW Post 791, 10:00 am

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

2024 NATIONAL AMERICAN LEGION COLLEGE

Applications are now being accepted at Department Headquarters for this year's *National American Legion College* which will be held in Indianapolis November 17-22, 2024. Applications can be found on the National website, <https://www.legion.org/college> and are due to Department Headquarters by July 1st. DO NOT send them to National as they must have the Department's approval first.

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/>

APRIL IS CHILDREN AND YOUTH MONTH.

This is the month to host a family fun event and donation of fund raiser to help show your community what your Legion Post, SAL Squadron and Unit Auxiliary do in the Community. 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, Children Miracle Network, and/or other Youth and Children programs that your Post family supports.

Let's see who had the most fun at these events!! Please send a few photo's with a short narrative of your event over to the South Dakota American Legion and Sons of the American Legion C&Y Chairperson(s) so that we may be able to share your event story, no matter how large or small of an event that you are hosting.

The American Legion C&Y Chairperson

Kate Schmidt at pocet9821@hotmail.com

The Sons of the American Legion C&Y Chairperson

Harry Boner at hb.boner@gmail.com

OPERATION HOMEFRONT NEEDS AND SERVICES

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, however with recent news of around 900 Dollar Tree stores closing, this program may change some in the coming year. In order to host these events, both programs are supported from financial donations, volunteers, and coordination to ensure successful events.

Additionally, there is also **temporary assistance**, **spouse appreciation** and support, and **scholarships opportunities** for children.

Temporary finance assistance is available to service members and their families. It can be used for Auto Payments or Repair, Child & Dependent Care, Critical Baby Items, Dental, Essential Home Items, Food, Home Repairs*, Medical, Moving & Relocation, Rent or Mortgage, Travel, Utilities, Vision Care, among other things.

- All current military service members, rank E1-E6.
- Former service members that have departed the military in the past 10 years, rank E1-E6.
- Former service members that were wounded or killed in action after 9/11/2001, rank E1-E6.
- This included National Guard members that were deployed on Title 10 orders.

To qualify for this program, you will need.

- A copy of Deployment orders for enlisted.
- Title 10 orders for National Guard.
- Documentation of all household income.
- Line of duty documentation.
- Other official record of a wound, illness, or injury being sustained in the line of duty.

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 could be in times of need. Your Financial gift, time, and consideration to volunteer for support Operation Homefront is appreciated. All financial gifts to Operation Home front can be sent to the following address. Please indicate on your donation that the funds are paid to the American Legion Dept of SD, and in the memo, please indicate the donated funds are for Operation Homefront. A check will be forwarded from Legion State HQ to Operation Homefront just after the 2024 Summer Convention in Pierre later this year. If you have any questions, please contact myself at 605-691-4571.

Thank you,

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 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

From Rod Smith of Chester Post 136: "To all members of The American Legion Department of South Dakota—the best Department in The American Legion. It is with regret that I am withdrawing from the run for Department Commander. Family health of both Joyce and I are what caused me to make this decision. I apologize to the Posts in Districts 3-8 for not visiting more of you and will visit as able. Thank you to Chester Post #136 and all post and Legion family who have supported and encouraged me."

DEPARTMENT MEMBERSHIP CHAIRMAN MESSAGE

With Easter behind us and the promise of warmer days ahead, it's indeed time to focus on the task at hand. Achieving a 95% renewal rate by April 10th and 100% by May 15 is a formidable goal, requiring the mobilization of resources and a concerted effort from the entire team. The challenge of re-engaging over 1200 members who have yet to renew their commitment is significant, but not insurmountable. A personalized approach, through phone calls or visits, may prove effective in reminding them of the value and community they are part of. It's a time for collective action and dedication, where every effort counts and the goal of "Be the One" resonates as a call to make a difference. The next few days are crucial, and with a united front, the target is within reach. Let's harness the spirit of renewal this season embodies and channel it into a renewed commitment from our members.

I would like to bring to your attention the recent updates regarding membership dues. As you may be aware, the Legion has increased their dues, and there is a potential increase from the Department next year. To mitigate the impact of these changes, I strongly encourage you to consider the three-year renewal option currently available.

By renewing for three years, you can save \$15 immediately and potentially up to \$25 with the expected increases. This is a prudent opportunity to manage your membership costs effectively over the coming years.

Should you have any questions or need further clarification, please do not hesitate to reach out to me. Your satisfaction and continued membership are of utmost importance to us, and we are here to support you through these changes.

Thank you for your attention to this matter and for your ongoing commitment to our organization.

Visit legion.org/renew for the multiyear membership of 2025, 2026 and 2027.

Legionnaires still needing to renew for 2024 or veterans joining the organization for the first time can also lock-in a three-year membership (2024, 2025 and 2026) by visiting legion.org/renew or legion.org/join.

Here is what you need to know about the three-year membership: - Multiyear membership sign-up is only available on the national American Legion website (legion.org/renew and legion.org/join). Current or potential members cannot renew or join for a three-year membership at the post level or through MyLegion.org.

Until next time, thank you for all you do for the American Legion.

Bill

605.360.6547 bpeters0551@gmail.com