



**JANUARY 2023**

**VOLUME XXXI ISSUE 6**

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Submit Articles at  
[floridalegion.org/submit](http://floridalegion.org/submit) or [legionlink@floridalegion.org](mailto:legionlink@floridalegion.org)  
 Questions? [legionlink@floridalegion.org](mailto:legionlink@floridalegion.org)

**A Message from the Department Commander**

**Eunice Butts, Commander**

[commander@floridalegion.org](mailto:commander@floridalegion.org)



**HAPPY NEW YEAR EVERYONE!**

2022 is now behind us, and 2023 is here. Throughout the holidays, there are way too many members, posts, and staff to thank for the outstanding job you have done the first half of the year. So, I will say THANK YOU to "The American Legion Department of Florida members and staff.

On December 7, 2022 I was honored to be the keynote speaker at the 4th Annual Pearl Harbor/ Doris "Dorie" Miller Remembrance Day Program. I also participated in a wreath laying with the commander of Post 331 and was presented with a "Proclamation" from Jerry Demings, Orange County Mayor. Thank

you, post 331, for the invitation to participate in your post activities. The hospitality was very humbling. Special thanks to Melanie Caputo for protecting me from the sun with her umbrella.

In December, I completed The Department Commanders' visitations in Districts 16, 7, 13, 15, and 8. The Central Area and Southwestern Areas are complete. Thanks to each District and Area members for the warm welcome and hospitality.

Now is the time to work on Membership, Children and Youth, etc. Continue to do your Buddy Checks. We have many things coming up for the next five months. CONGRATULATIONS to all posts which made 100% by December 31, 2022.

I wish each of you, your Post, and your families a healthy, happy, and prosperous New Year.

**COMMANDER'S CHARITIES**  
 PROJECT: VetRelief and Jackson InAction 83

5K	10K	15K	20K	25K	30K	35K	40K	45K	50K
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Commander's Goal: \$50,000 (Current funds raised **\$21,055.00**)



PLEASE SUPPORT  
 PROJECT: VETRELIEF

**GOD ♥ FAMILY ♥ COURAGE**

[www.floridalegion.org](http://www.floridalegion.org)  
[legionlink@floridalegion.org](mailto:legionlink@floridalegion.org)

**Disaster Relief Fund**

**Michael Raymond, 1st Vice Commander**  
[1stvice@legionmail.org](mailto:1stvice@legionmail.org)



If you attended the Fall Conference, you would've heard about a couple of resolutions that were passed by our DEC. But in case you did not, I'd like to give you a brief description of one that is very important, and I am surprised it took 103 years to come up with. It's called the "Disaster Relief Fund," designed to solicit and receive funds voluntarily given by Posts, Members, and Departments of the American Legion and members of the general public on an annual basis. We finally realized we could not wait for a disaster to happen to play catch up. We will then

distribute these funds to our comrades in areas stricken by natural and other disasters to meet their most urgent needs. We will also maintain these funds, so they are available in the event of future disasters.

As we all know, Florida is known for being a major target of many of these disasters. We must be better prepared, and you can do this by helping raise these funds and submitting them to the Department of Florida. Small or large, your donations to this fund will make a huge difference in helping our members and Posts make it through another disaster. I encourage you to have at least one designated fundraiser at your Post or District to build this fund. Who knows, the money could come right back to you. You never know.

JANUARY 2023	
1-15	🍊 Oratorical Post Level Contests
1	🗓️ New Year's Day
1	🍊 Baseball Registration Opens
1	★ Legacy Scholarship Application Opens
4	🍊 Deadline: FALBS Fees
8	🗓️ District 5: Meeting
11	🍊 FALBS: Delegate/Alternate Registration Opens
11	🍊 Department Membership 80% Goal
13	♥️ District 5: Commander's Visit
14	🗓️ Post 99: Scavenger Hunt Extravaganza
14	🗓️ Unit 323: Luncheon for Women Veterans
15	🍊 Deadline: Homeless Vets Nominations
15	🍊 Deadline: Employment Nominations
16	🗓️ Martin Luther King, Jr Day
16	🍊 Department Headquarters Closed
21	🗓️ Vice Presidents' Hillbilly Hoedown
21	🗓️ District 14: Meeting
22	🗓️ District 4: Meeting
27	🗓️ Vietnam Cease Fire (1973)
28	🗓️ Southern Area Ball
30	🗓️ Start of 1968 Tet Offensive
30 - 12	🍊 Oratorical Area Level Contests

- ♥️ Commander Eunice Butts' Attendance Tentative.
- 🍊 Department Event
- ★ National Event

Events are subject to change. Additional details can be found at [www.floridalegion.org](http://www.floridalegion.org). We share the information we are provided.

In closing, let me again express how proud I am to be associated with such a strong, dynamic, diverse, generous group of people called The American Legion Department of Florida. Thank you for just being you. "Keep It Real." See you on the road.

**Strong Legion Family**

**Chris Hamrick, 2nd Vice Commander**  
[2ndvice@legionmail.org](mailto:2ndvice@legionmail.org)



Let me start by saying to you, "Happy New Year." I sincerely hope that 2023 brings more Joy than 2022. This month I have only a few things to write, so my article is very short. As I mentioned in my Article last month... We still have our mission. We're a Strong family. Let us

look ahead and continue to work together to accomplish all that we have set out to do. This month we have several program registrations opening. Let's keep a close eye on our calendars and stay ahead of the game. Busy times ahead as we're moving into the 2nd half of the year. Keep our brothers and sisters in SW Florida in our thoughts and prayers, as there's a real Journey ahead. Let's be willing to continue to step up to support and assist them. You know... "To Consecrate and Sanctify our Comradeship by our Devotion to Mutual Helpfulness."

**Amazing Learnings and Support**

**Jessica Moore, 3rd Vice Commander**  
[3rdvice@legionmail.org](mailto:3rdvice@legionmail.org)



Welcome to 2023! It's hard to believe that last year is already over. I've learned many things that I plan on bringing forth in the new year. The hurricane that deeply affected so many of our districts in Florida was enormous.

Though the devastation was overwhelming, your support matched it.

I witnessed so many districts wanting to help and actively participate. Your camaraderie, donations, and call to action will not be forgotten by everyone in Districts 8 and 13.

As I travel around the state, you all restore my energy, passion, and, most importantly, the mission of #oneteamonedream!

I wish each and every one of you a happy and healthy New Year, and I look forward to seeing you, your posts and everything you're doing for the American Legion!



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Please keep yourself informed, members, and how?

Jim Ramos, NEC  
nec@legionmail.org



How to stay informed by going to Legion.org and signing up for all the notifications you need each week. By staying informed, you can help your members and your Post with updated information from National Headquarters, for example, Legislative, VA news, Legion Riders, Oratorical Contest, and more.

If you want to have a good Post meeting, show an up-to-date video by going to Legion.org "Featured Videos" and looking for a video on what you are going to discuss, or get a new program started by checking out a video for that program. There are a million things you can do to assist your Post in getting better and help with membership, and who doesn't want to make 103% in membership? We all must help, but how? Please go to Legion.org and see

for yourself; if you need assistance, let me know by email or contact me if you need assistance.

Also, the 2022 Officer's Guide and Manual of Ceremonies is an excellent start to getting information from and letting your members know about Post Officer duties and all kinds of programs, like the Auxiliary, and how they can assist the Legion. The Sons of the American Legion, how do they work with the Legion? Our biggest program is the Legion Riders because it's bringing the whole family together with more; we can do more. How many of you have done the Basic Training course online? One more thing you can do to assist your Post is to learn more about the American Legion and what we do.

**"Welcome new members into the Legion by assigning them a mentor familiar with our Traditions, Customs, Policies, and Programs."**

Vincent J. "Jim" Troiola, National Commander of The American Legion is set to tour the state of Florida, Western Area, February 2-6, 2023. The Commander will arrive in Tallahassee,

Wednesday, February 1 around approximately 3:00 PM.

He will then begin his tour starting with the State Capitol Building, on Thursday, February 2nd. and ending with Post 193 in Pensacola on Monday, February 6th.

Please give Commander Triola a warm welcome to the Sunshine State.

Visit <http://bit.ly/3ZkGQRJ> for the full schedule (subject to change).

Finally, please be Nice and Respectful to one another, and we can be better every time we see each other. Our American Legion is full of traditions and good people, but we still must be better than the last Generation.

I hope we are all safe and back to work in the New Year, 2023.

If you have any questions, please get in touch with me by phone at 352-226-4370 or email to [NEC@legionmail.org](mailto:NEC@legionmail.org)

Resolutions and Praises

Jerry Brandt, ANEC  
anec@legionmail.org



Comrades, I hope everyone had a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year, but it is back to work now.

I would like to update you on the Fall Meetings held in Indianapolis this past October. A number of Resolutions were presented to the NEC's for approval. The full list of the Resolutions can be found at: WWW.Legion.org, search

(Resolutions and then Resolutions from the body of the paragraph that comes up). Of the 25 Resolutions, some are Housekeeping Resolutions, I.E. Resolution No. 7, American Legion Family Day is an example. However, there are some resolutions that will make you proud to be a Legionnaire. I.E. Resolution No. 24, GI Bill Fairness for Activated National Guard and Reserve Servicemembers. Resolution No. 12, Implementation of the MISSION Act. Resolution No. 15: Oversight of Camp Lejeune Justice Act. Resolution 16: Furthering Research Pertaining to Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI), Chronic Traumatic Encephalopathy (CTC), and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), just to name a few.

Again, please review the 3 pages of the Fall 2022 National Executive Committee Resolutions. If you have any questions, let me know, and I will reach out to National and get you the correct answer.

As you may know, the National Commander is going to visit the Department of Florida in February, I am sure that NEC Ramos will have more information coming out about the visit soon. The visit will be to the Western Area of Florida, consisting of the 1st and 2nd Districts.

I hope to see you soon, if I don't, please take care.

FLORIDA'S AMERICAN LEGION RIDERS  
**SUMMIT & EXPO**  
HOLIDAY INN RESORT, ORLANDO, FL  
FEBRUARY 8-11, 2023  
www.floridalegion.org/riders

**Central Area Supports**

**Bob Matheson, Central Area**  
[centralarea@legionmail.org](mailto:centralarea@legionmail.org)



Well, the Holidays are now behind us, and we move into the New Year. I hope everyone had a very Merry Christmas, a great Holiday, and a Fantastic New Year!

The Central Area has been extremely busy.

During December, we had the opportunity to have the Department Commander come and visit almost every Post in the district. I know that the Posts were all appreciative of her inspiring words and her message of hope for the future.

The districts have all been involved in continued support to those affected by hurricane IAN. The Mighty 16th District took monetary donations to provide Thanksgiving meals and Christmas gifts for children. All the Districts have continued to provide both

material and financial support. As always, we will come together to do everything we can to aid and assist those still in need.

Membership has been on the rise in the Central Area, with the 16th District moving into second place in Department, along with District 7 having the first Post in the Central Area to reach 100%. Great job by Crest Haven Post 339!

**Half way**

**Jim Bowers, Northern Area**  
[northernarea@legionmail.org](mailto:northernarea@legionmail.org)



We are now halfway through our year. Now is the time to look forward. We should not look toward the end of this year but ahead to next year. If you are a member, now is the time to recruit your

replacement in the American Legion.

If you are in a leadership role or, in the past, have been in a leadership role, now is when you should be mentoring your replacement. Everyone should always be planning for the future. Commanders need a one-year goal and a five-year goal. Why keep our Posts, Districts, and Department moving forward and looking for a chair position that you will program for more than one year? Now is the time if you are thinking about seeking

a Legion office to gather the tools that are needed for that position.

I want to wish all a Happy and prosperous New Year.

**Summit Information and Future Schedule**

**Jim Wineland, American Legion Riders**  
[alr@legionmail.org](mailto:alr@legionmail.org)



Happy New Year! We hope everyone had a Very Merry Christmas and looking forward to a great New Year.

It is going to be a short article this month. We are still putting the final touches on just about everything.

- We have 17 classes scheduled for this year's Summit and instructors for all.
- The three routes have been completed for the In-State Unity ride, but it is still a problem with a couple of motels, but I'm sure it will be final before Christmas.

That's it for now; lots of things to get completed before the Holidays.

Thanks to all who participated; Ride Safe, looking forward to seeing you soon.

**Your 2022 – 2023 Schedule**

**Summit**

*Meet & Greet*, February 8, 2023  
 Classes, February 9-11, 2023

**"Round Robin"**

Month of April 2023

**In-State Unity Ride**

*Meet & Greet*, April 16, 2023  
*Ride*, April 17-21, 2023  
*Rally*, April 22, 2023, Orange County Chopper Museum

If you have any ideas, please share!

Thank You for what you do, and we are proud to be part of your Leadership Team of such an excellent group! *"For the Cause, not the applause"*



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**A New Year**

**Doug Hockenberry, Americanism**

[americanism@legionmail.org](mailto:americanism@legionmail.org)

Happy New Year, Department of Florida Legion Family. I trust everyone had an opportunity to spend time over the holidays with family, loved ones, and friends. Simply enjoying one another, making new memories, and of course, plenty of hugs. So, here is what is on the calendar for January. Baseball Registration opens on January 1st. Then we have the Boys State Registration Fee deadline of January 4th, and Boys State Delegate/Alternate Registration begins on January 11th. Next, we have Post level Oratorical Program Competitions that should be completed by January 22nd. Speaking of Oratorical, remember that Department needs to have all District and

Area level Oratorical Competition dates submitted to them no later than January 20th. So, as you see, we have a lot to do this month on the Americanism front.

Sound the trumpets and beat the drums. Yes, that's right, folks. February is just around the corner, and February is Americanism Month. Legionnaires, this is our time to shine, get the word out about Americanism, and promote our programs within the American Legion. I have said it before, and I will repeat it – through our programs, we can positively influence young minds. Simply teaching a class how to fold a flag properly may be more meaningful than you realize. If we affect one student positively, then we are successful. Whether it is one student

or twenty students, we must continue to march forward and promote Americanism throughout our communities. Is your Post or District holding a special event to promote Americanism? Do you have it listed on the Department calendar? The senior level officers love to attend post events, so make sure you submit dates for those special events up to Department and get them on the Department calendar. Again, if there is anything I can do to assist, please feel free to contact me via email or phone.

In closing, again, please accept my sincere best wishes for a Happy New Year filled with kindness, respect, and love. "BE THE ONE"

*Hang Tough!*

**Important Video to Watch**

**Dianne Boland, Children & Youth**

[cy@legionmail.org](mailto:cy@legionmail.org)



Greetings: I hope everyone had a wonderful Christmas and a safe New Year. I also hope you had time to spend with family & Friends. Carry forward all those good feelings and thoughts.

A video was played during our fall conference. It was called "Responsible Citizenship: the Center of Americanism

Youth Programs." I received many positive comments about this film. National has suggested that departments & posts be encouraged to share this video with their youth program participants as well. This can be found by going to National's website ([legion.org](http://legion.org)) and then search for "Responsible citizenship: the center of Americanism youth programs."

Also, during the conference, I taught a class on Children & Youth. I briefly went over all the slides that were presented during the National Children & Youth Conference. I received a couple of requests for a copy

of these. The ones who requested have already received the info needed. Anyone interested in C & Y might also want to see them. Some show what other departments have done. One is a very good explanation of Auxiliary's C&Y programs. To find these, go to National's website ([legion.org/youth/presentations](http://legion.org/youth/presentations)). There you will see a lot of good information.

Remember that April is Children & Youth month, and the date for the C&Y picnic is April 15th. Next month I will have flyers and hotel information. The picnic itself will be at post 323, Lehigh Acres.

**Florida American Legion College**

**Jim Ramos, Florida Legion College**

[falc@legionmail.org](mailto:falc@legionmail.org)



The Florida American Legion College (FALC) application deadline is Jan 31, 2023.

If you want to go to the Florida American Legion College, now is the time to submit your application to Department Headquarters.

The FALC is intended to teach the principles, techniques, and skills needed for programs and effective leadership at the Post and higher levels.

**Some of the topics to be addressed during the FALC are as follows:**

- Team building to set and accomplish goals
- Communicate using face-to-face, social media, and written
- Critical thinking and problem solving

- Develop, instruct, and support the Post, District, and Department level training
- Salesmanship and marketing (community networking strategies)
- Training tips to hopefully aid your District to be the best in the Department of Florida
- Motivate members to increase their Legion knowledge
- Offer incentives for new members to learn and increase their skills

*Florida Legion College continued on page 6 >>*



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<< Florida Legion College continued from page 5

There will be computer-based training (please bring your laptops). All other course materials will be supplied. The dress for FALC is business casual (trousers and collared polo

shirt, preferably Legion polo for men and appropriate parallel dress for women).

Students attending the FALC should expect after-hours group homework, which will be expanded on from day to day.

Have a safe New Year 2023. We need to start working again. Thank You.

If you have any questions, please get in touch with me by phone at 352-226-4370 or email to [FALC@legionmail.org](mailto:FALC@legionmail.org)

**Three Months Later and still Rebuilding**

**Bill Hoppner, Disaster Preparedness**  
[disaster@legionmail.org](mailto:disaster@legionmail.org)



It has been just over three months since the deviating beast Hurricane Ian came ashore in southwest Florida. Business as usual was and is not the case. This storm has corrupted the lives of many. They are just starting to pick up the pieces and regroup. The Legion family has come together, working as a fine-oiled machine.

Many individuals' homes were destroyed, but we were there to help. Many people were there to help, and their homes were intact.

They told me it could have been them; others stated they had been there and were to help and pay it forward. The department staff put together a video shown to the Legion Family at the fall conference. Did it make an impact on those who watched it, the answer is YES, it did. The generosity and thoughtfulness was and is still overwhelming. The video is posted on YouTube for people to watch.

On November 14, the National Team came to town from Indianapolis to do a story on the aftermath of hurricane Ian. They were not ready to experience the destruction and devastation they saw and recorded. We visited eight posts and traveled throughout the area, taking videos and doing interviews. The footage and interviews can be seen on the national website to view.

On a personal note, there is no way for me to thank each and every one of you, from the Department level all the way down to post members, for your contribution to the cause. The task at hand would not have been possible if it wasn't for your mutual helpfulness. It shows that the American Legion Department of Florida is truly a family. **WE ARE FLORIDA STRONG, AND WE WILL REBUILD!**

**DONATE**  
[floridalegion.org/aid](http://floridalegion.org/aid)

**VOLUNTEER**  
[floridalegion.org/volunteer](http://floridalegion.org/volunteer)

**RESOURCES**  
[floridalegion.org/relief](http://floridalegion.org/relief)

**JSSP Registration in Progress**

**Loretta Young, JRTOC / JSSP**  
[jrotc@legionmail.org](mailto:jrotc@legionmail.org)



I would like to emphasize that the JSSP Postal Target Orders are well underway. The deadline for registration is Dec. 14th. The time quickly passes, and I cannot stress enough how important it is to get to your schools or teams that have a marksmanship program to register early. The deadline to register is Dec. 14th. Registration and payment are made online through the Department or National website with a credit card.

The Legion Post Commander/Officer must see the document receipt/certificate for the background check and Protect Youth Sports training prior to signing the Post Affiliation

Form. Since this part of the registration takes a little time, it's important to ensure that your sponsored team has this step completed before you sign the form. I have had several individuals contact me regarding Legion Posts, which have a marksmanship program at the post. Although I have had several posts contact me regarding a startup program, I have not had anyone advise that they have already started their program. The startup and operation of a marksmanship program is on the Department website and is a great guide to putting one in place. As a backup to any request regarding current programs, I refer to the Civilian Marksmanship Program website as an excellent source to find active youth clubs that offer Air Rifle Programs.

I hope the posts are in touch with your JROTC Units and will be sharing some time at their Raider, Color Guard, Drill Events, or any other after-school or weekend programs. They

are also an excellent partnership for next month's upcoming Veteran's Day Programs or assisting your veterans at the posts or your events. Thanks so much for your support of our Youth Programs, and please share any photos of events that you may be having in your communities.



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**Legislature Information**

**Stuart Scott, Legislative**  
[legislative@legionmail.org](mailto:legislative@legionmail.org)



Happy New Year, everyone! I pray that the 2023 year brings you Happiness and Joy! As we settle down from all the holiday festivities, let's focus on the Goals of 2023 for the Legislature, that is, passing bills and, most importantly, the State Budget.

Things to remember about our Legislature process: we have already had a committee week in preparation for the 2023 season and a special session. Future committee weeks are as follows: 1/3 – 1/6; 1/17 – 1/20; 1/23 – 1/27; 2/6 – 2/10; 2/13-2/17; 2/20-2/24. Then

the session will begin on 3/7 and last for 60 days.

What to expect from committee weeks – this is when bills are filed, and information is provided to aid the legislators in determining whether they should back the bill or not. It allows the subject matter experts to provide testimony so that it is better understood and the reasoning behind the filing of the bill. This is also the time for last-minute bill filings. Last year over three thousand bills were filed, and less than 300 were passed. So, it is important to pay attention to the weekly updates that will begin on March 13th. These weekly updates will let you know what the position is on each of the bills filed that we are tracking. These positions are based on bill analysis and if it will benefit our veteran community.

When you get these updates and wish to reach out to your local legislator, please keep it professional and concise. For example – if you are reaching out via email – introduce yourself and what post you are from. This lets them know you are a vote in their district. Then inform them about The American Legion and what we do for our veterans and community. Lastly, let them know the stance you and your post take on the matter. The stance can be brought up during your meetings at the post.

Keep an eye out for the date for March on Tallahassee, where we assemble to meet our legislators.

If at any time you wish to have more information about where we stand as an organization during the legislative process, feel free to contact me.

**Revitalization and Mentorship**

**Bruce Thurber, Membership**  
[membership@legionmail.org](mailto:membership@legionmail.org)



We have successfully survived 2022, one of the busiest years this decade. Hurricanes, Major Elections, inflation, and the Holidays. All of these have affected our membership. It is now time to try and recover while helping those

who are in need. As our National Vice Commander Harris stated, it's time for us all to BE-THE-ONE.

Revitalization is a priority. Each District should hold at least two revitalizations a membership year and share your results so we all benefit from lessons learned. In those areas needing assistance, contact our Department Revitalization Chair, who can assist in getting Department and National Assistance.

PDC Ramos once said: As the American Legion continues its drive to protect

and preserve veteran benefit programs –especially in the area of medical care—the numerical strength of the organization is very important. Make sure your Post is doing its part in the nationwide drive to increase the Legion's position of power. This still holds true today as it did 10 years ago.

CPRs are now online. The Consolidated Post Report was established in 1975 in order to assist departments in the documentation of the various activities a specific post has done during the twelve-month reporting period from June 1 through May 31. The Consolidated Post Report (CPR) may be the most important document your post will complete this year. Your post's information, combined with other posts, is used when the National Commander and others testify on Capitol Hill on behalf of all veterans. Each post has a story to tell, and when we speak collectively, our strength is magnified. The Post Adjutant, through myLegion.org, can begin filling it out immediately so they can submit it in May.

Mentorship is when an individual with perspective and experience (the mentor)

instructs and guides another person with less experience (the mentee). The mentoring relationship helps the mentee navigate the obstacles and challenges they are likely to face in their job and personal life. With their own experiences in hand, the mentor can help prepare the mentee, leading them to see success. If you work with membership, it is time to mentor your replacement. Put together a checklist of things to cover, i.e., myLegion, recruiting, retention, revitalization, and how to find information.

Here are a couple of links to help.

- <https://www.legion.org/publications/229409/access-granted>
- <https://www.legion.org/betheone>
- <https://www.legion.org/publications/257033/be-one-local-brochure>
- <https://www.legion.org/publications/257032/be-one-national-brochure>
- <https://www.legion.org/publications/252001/buddy-check-toolkit>



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**National Security Issues and Information**

**Raymond Olsen, National Security**  
[security@legionmail.org](mailto:security@legionmail.org)

First, I apologize for not submitting an Article for the Legion Link in December. I was at a loss to put into words the thoughts I was having regarding National Security. A strong National Defense is one of the Four Pillars upon which the Legion Stands. Maybe I am a worrier, but I see our Nation undergoing one of its most difficult periods, and I do not see that the pendulum is set to swing back to where it has been for several years.

1) The war here at home is becoming more and more serious. Power stations in North and South Carolina were sabotaged by gunfire causing power outages. Power is still out for some folks. While looking at these events, I noted that similar attacks had also occurred in Oregon and Washington State. Electric substations that control Gas and oil pipelines in California and South Dakota, causing supply issues with gas and oil, have also been attacked. Various manifestos and groups on Social Media platforms have been advocating for this. Is it from Americans? Who is responsible?

2) A strong National Defense is not only physical outside our borders but physical at and within our borders as well. We need to stop the illegal immigration of people into our country. I just watched the news two days ago that showed folks lining up to get into America in the thousands, a woman carrying her baby across a river was interviewed. All of this was in broad daylight. What we have in place for adjudication is not going to work. It has been a problem forever, but things are so bad in other countries that the numbers here are multiplying.

I worked on a Resolution this summer that was presented to Congress. It was the subject of one of my Legion Link notes. Immigration reform is the answer. The problem must be fixed if we are to survive as a country.

3) Speaking of Social Media, I find that Facebook has made communication with Legion Members much easier than years ago. News can be immediate and reach more folks in a timely matter. Questions can be asked, solutions provided. It is a good thing. But the problem with Facebook and other Social Media Platforms is that it allows us to step away from our internal filters that parents, teachers, religious groups and mentors have taught us we should maintain. Standards of Social behavior are being eroded.

I scroll along my timeline and see postings from friends or friends of friends of things that I would never say about another person or organization. You can throw it out there and get people to like it. That is all we are after right, recognition and admiration? But is it false? Do they really like it or are they just trying to start a social media war. Are these folks true friends and acquaintances or are they fake accounts and Chinese or Russian agents, or event domestic agents trying to bring down society? There is an awful lot of hurt speech going on out there. The truth is, I believe that every person should be treated the way that I would like to be treated.

People who break the law should be punished. We should all believe and act with the Four Pillars of the American Legion. We should all respect the flag. We should all pay taxes. We should all work and support

ourselves if we can. We should respect our First Responders, Veterans, Teachers, and especially our Parents. There are those out there that have different views than my own. I fought for their right to have those views. I will not denigrate them, deride them, and insult them just because they are different. That is what our enemies want to happen. They do not want us to have a 100% Americanism. They want us to divide so we can be conquered. All we as Legionnaires can do is set the example for 100% Americanism, Support of Veterans and their Families, Support of Children and our Communities, and Support of a strong National Defense.

4) What else can we do to keep America Strong? We need to be in frequent contact with our elected representatives. I have personally met Senator Rubio and Congressman Gaetz and have spoken with them about issues important to Legionnaires on several occasions. I have written all of my representatives about issues on behalf of myself and on behalf of the Legion.

We need to Vote when it is election time. We need to help and encourage others to Vote, likeminded or not. And we need to make sure that all American Citizens have the right to vote without interference or impediments.

If nothing else, I hope this article will encourage debate, foster ideas, or help you become more involved in our country's security and economy. By the time you read this, it will be January, so I hope you had a Happy Holiday and that your New Year's celebration was fun and safe. Work your membership, attend your post meetings and remember to support the Four Pillars.

if they can help the squadron out. As always, reach out to your District and Area Commanders if you need help. They are very knowledgeable and very willing to help. I wish you all a prosperous new year.

**Happy New Year**

**Richard Smith, SAL Advisor**  
[sal@legionmail.org](mailto:sal@legionmail.org)

Happy New Year. Welcome to 2023. Now is the time to get your membership buttoned up for the year. Send out letters, make

calls or visit those who have yet to renew. Check on them and make sure everything is good with them. All your SAL officers should be paid. We should have no squadrons at zero. Post commanders should be asking



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Women Veterans: Growing in Strength

Deanna Hall, Women Veterans  
womenvets@legionmail.org



*"She never begins the attack, nor, when once engaged, ever surrenders; she is, therefore, an emblem of magnanimity and true courage. She never wounds 'till she has generously given*

*notice, even to her enemy, and caution him against the danger of treading on her."*—  
American Women Veterans

Our hearts and prayers continue to go out to the Veterans, their families, and all the communities affected by hurricane Ian. Women Veterans are the fastest-growing population in the Veteran community.

However, as the number of women increases to serve our country, our nation needs to catch up in meeting their needs. In May 2022, a Fact-Finding Committee on Women Veterans Benefits and Communications was formed to assess the needs of Women Veterans in Florida. The committee wanted to ensure that the 164,000 women veterans in Florida knew about their benefits. You can find the report at <https://floridavets.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/FDVA-Report-on-Women-Veterans-2022-Final.pdf>.

As military experts shared with Congress

last year, many of our almost 2 million living women veterans struggle to transition back to civilian life due to unmet needs, including employment counseling, financial guidance, and health and mental health support. The Department of Veterans Affairs reports that veteran women are almost twice as likely as non-veteran women to experience homelessness.

We must do better for women who put everything aside to serve our country. This means providing transition and follow-up support to all.

As a female veteran, I know it can sometimes feel lonely in a world where no one understands what happened to you in the military. Also, it can be harder to connect with non-Veteran females. The American Legion Department of Florida has heard you. We are conducting District/Area wide Women Veteran Forums throughout Florida to ensure we listen to women veterans and understand their challenges. The forums are open to any female veteran; they do not have to belong to the American Legion.

The following is the schedule:

- 10:30 am - 11:00 am Meet and Greet
- 11:00 am - 11:30 am Ceremony
- 11:30 am - 12:00 pm Lunch
- 12:00 pm - 1:30 pm Female Veterans Forum (FEMALE VETERANS ONLY)

Our next forums is:

1. Women Veterans Forum  
January 14, 2023  
American Legion Unit 323  
1124 Ashlar Avenue  
Lehigh Acres, Florida 33936

WOMEN VETERANS' MANTRA: "JUST BREATHE"

When you feel angry, sad, frustrated, anxious, depressed, or need a moment to "JUST BREATHE."

Please repeat your mantra as many times as needed:

- You are "Brave"
- You are "Resilient"
- You are "Essential"
- You are "Amazing"
- You are "Timeless"
- You are "Heroic"
- AND YOU ARE "ENOUGH"

"Just BREATHE"!

Thank you for supporting Women Veterans!

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**BERTS RIDING TO END VETERAN SUICIDE**

**BENEFITING:** Net proceeds to **PROJECT: VetRelief - Suicide Prevention Initiative**

**DRAWING:** April 22, 2023, 5:30 PM, OCC Road House & Museum in Clearwater, FL

**TICKETS:** Available with ALR District and Area Chairs, also at the Summit

*Tickets are \$20 each or six (6) tickets for \$100. Purchase is not necessary to enter.  
Details at [floridalegion.org/riders](http://floridalegion.org/riders)*











# HAPPY NEW YEAR!

## NEW YEAR, SAME GOALS!

As we begin 2023, we must take a moment and reflect on the previous year! For 2022, PROJECT: VetRelief was able to meet many milestones despite dealing with the coronavirus pandemic and massive hurricanes. We recently shared that this past spring we reached a goal of **providing over \$1,000,000 in support!** Although this is something we are extremely proud of, take a look at these other accomplishments, too.

- Welcomed 1 new member to our Board of Directors; Legion's Jason Skobel
- Added 3 new organizations to our network through our Suicide Prevention Initiative (SPI), once vetted they could be new strategic partners
- Provided our largest funding round to our SPI strategic partners - \$54,000!!
- Hosted a successful networking event for our Board

Members, Advocates and Strategic Partners during Fall Conference

- Increased our level of support to provide Publix gift cards to veterans who experienced damage due to the hurricanes.

Looking ahead to 2023, PROJECT: VetRelief is full steam ahead on providing the necessary support our veteran community continues to rely on. However, it is necessary that we continue to have our fundraising events for our emergency assistance program and our funding cycles to our strategic partners for suicide prevention.

We hope that we can continue to rely on our Legion Family! Remember, we are one of Commander Butts charities of choice. If you are hosting a fundraiser let us know so that we can help promote it and add to our calendar of events!



## BUDDY CHECK - IT COULD SAVE A LIFE!

The holiday season can bring lots of joy for many as they carry out traditions, give gifts, and spend time with loved ones. But, it can also be a period of sadness for those who are away from their families, like our deployed service members, or if they've lost a close friend or relative.

Now is a good time to reach out to members of your Post, family or friends, especially if you haven't heard from them or seen them in awhile. It could be your phone call or presence that helps them through a dark time in their life. You never know, it could even save their life!

If you or someone you know needs emotional support, the Suicide & Crisis Line is available 24/7. Please call or text 988 to be connected with a trained and caring counselor.

EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE STATS: YEAR 9 JULY-NOV 2022

157 VETERANS ASSISTED

\$159,155 FINANCIAL AID AWARDED

**DEC Meets in Regular Session**

A regular meeting of the Department Executive Committee (DEC), called by Department Commander Eunice Butts, was held at the Caribe Royale on Sunday, November 20, 2022, at 9:30 AM. Forty-Eight DEC members were present.

Decisions of the DEC, in the order in which they were discussed, included:

**1. Ratification of New Posts**

The temporary charter of Spring Hill Post 418 was ratified.

**2. Post Charters to be Cancelled**

Reports were heard on Tavares Post 76 and Coconut Creek Post 170. Both posts voluntarily turned in their charter, which the DEC voted to accept.

**3. Post Charters to be Discussed**

Reports were heard on four Posts (59, 91, 131, and 114), which were tabled during the June DEC regular meeting to allow the District Commanders to continue to work with the posts and conduct revitalizations.

- The DEC voted to cancel Branford Post 59's charter due to not being at charter strength.
- The DEC voted to continue working with Trenton Post 91 and Greenville Post 131 revitalizations until the DEC meeting held during Department Convention in June.
- Post 114 is now above charter strength. Therefore, the DEC took no action.

**4. Squadron Charters to be Cancelled**

A motion passed to cancel the charters of Lake Wales Squadron 71, Zephyrhills Squadron 118, Key Biscayne Squadron 410, and Rockledge Squadron 374 due to having zero members for the past three years.

**5. Department Finance Report**

The following finance report was given by Department Finance Officer Ken DeMello:

Department's Financials for the 2021-2022 fiscal year, ending June 30, 2022: The Profit & Loss statement shows a total income of \$3,734,422 and total expenses of \$3,618,389, giving Department a net income of \$5,644 when we were budgeted to have a deficit of \$46,713. The balance sheet statement shows total assets of \$4,048,388 and total liabilities of \$148,356.

Department's Financials for the first three months of the 2022-2023 fiscal year, as of September 30, 2022: The Profit & Loss statement shows a total income of \$1,358,640 and total expenses of \$1,192,454, giving Department a net income of \$166,185. The balance sheet statement shows total assets of \$4,196,095 and total liabilities of \$129,873.

Department's annual audit was performed from August through October of 2022 by MKA CPA's and Advisors. Reading directly from the audit opinion letter, it states, "In our opinion, the financial statements referred to above present fairly, and the changes in net assets and cash flows for the year then ended in accordance with accounting principles generally accepted in the United States of America."

**6. Resolutions Approved**

The following Resolutions were approved by the DEC:

- Department of Florida Disaster Relief Fund Resolution – The Resolution will be presented to the 2023 Department of Florida Convention delegates.
- Veterans Compensation & Benefits Act Resolution – The resolution will be sent to National Headquarters to be reviewed by the subcommittee during the 2023 Washington Conference before the NEC votes on it during the National Spring Meetings. (Per Article 7, Section 4 of the Department's Constitution gives the DEC the ability to pass a resolution in an emergency situation)

**7. Constitution and By-Laws Ad-Hoc Committee**

Commander Eunice Butts announced her appointments to serve on a Constitution and By-Laws Ad-Hoc Committee. Both the Ad-Hoc Committee and appointments were ratified.

**8. Rules of Procedure**

The proposed Rules of Procedure for the 104th Department Convention was approved.



December 22, 2022 Membership Target Report (75%)		
4	John Bennett	78.39%
16	Eric Nestler	75.98%
8	John Rauh	75.95%
7	Burl Thomas	75.73%
1	Ronnie Grover	74.46%
17	Bruce Howe	74.35%
3	Stuart Scott	73.65%
6	Joe Marcheggiani	73.16%
5	Lena Heredia-Perez	72.90%
2	Roger Hewitt	72.50%
11	Harry Malecki	72.01%
15	Victor Kelly	71.46%
9	Geo Bograkos	71.43%
13	Bud Boyer	70.79%
12	Wayne Mulligan	69.31%
14	Angela Glover	67.61%
Central	Bob Matheson	74.69%
Northern	Jim Bowers	74.52%
Western	Sonny Decker	74.16%
Southwestern	Skip Felicita	73.08%
Eastern	Dennis Mallon	71.45%
Southern	Johnny Castro	70.71%
Post 400		67.28%
Post 208		62.99%



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- Cash benefits sent to Legionnaire members diagnosed with cancer
- We send you money - even if you don't have cancer

Next Membership Goal 2022-2023:  
January 11, 2023  
**80%**

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AMERICAN LEGION POST 117

189 VETERANS DRIVE PALM BAY, FL



PROCEEDS  
BENEFIT



**PROJECT: VETRELIEF**

They Fought for Us. We Fight for Them.