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floridalegion.org/submit or legionlink@floridalegion.org Questions? legionlink@floridalegion.org

Keepit Real

Chris Hamrick, Commander commander@floridaleaion.ora



Happy New Year to You All!

The first half of our year has passed, and we're already a month into the second half. We've come out of the locker room after the holidays and

hit the ground running, so to speak. Our membership numbers are climbing rapidly, and I'm confident we will maintain our momentum. Thank you all for your outstanding efforts!

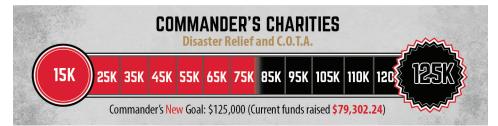
January has been a busy month for all of us. A big "CONGRATULATIONS!" to the 15 graduates of our 2025 Florida Legion College, held at Department Headquarters from January 9th through the 12th. Job well done! This event coincided with

our National Commander's visit to our Department, where he was able to witness some of the Legion College sessions firsthand before continuing his visit to the 6th. 4th. and 3rd Districts.

February promises to be an extremely active and busy month for us all. I'm looking forward to the Southern Area Ball, followed the next morning by a great Four Chaplains ceremony. (These ceremonies will be taking place throughout February in various locations.) Our National Vice Commander will be visiting from February 5th through the 9th. During this time, we will be working at several Posts on membership efforts and making general visits to Posts in the 17th and 12th Districts, finishing with the 17th District meeting and the Eastern Area Ball.

Next, we have our Annual American Legion Riders Summit from February 12th through the 15th, and

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<< Commander continued from page 1

we'll close out the month with National Meetings in Washington, D.C., where we will meet with our elected representatives to discuss our Legislative Priorities. That's just a glimpse of the Department Officers' and my schedule for the month. But you—our members and Posts—have events and programs happening all over our great state! Many programs will come to fruition in the next couple of months, and the rest of the year will be a whirlwind of activities.

I'm incredibly grateful to be a part of this **Great Organization**, and I want you all to know how much
I appreciate each and every one of you. Sometimes,
in the midst of our busy schedules and activities,
we forget to say "THANK YOU." Please know that

your efforts do not go unnoticed—they are truly appreciated. Without MEMBERS, we wouldn't have programs... or an American Legion!

You are where the rubber meets the road. Our Department, our Officers, and I work for YOU—not the other way around. Always remember that.

Please don't hesitate to reach out for assistance with any Legion-related matter. Leadership and resources are just an email, phone call, or text away. Use them. I look forward to seeing more of you in my travels.

Let's keep this train moving down the tracks—we're **FLORIDA STRONG!**

TEORIDA SIRONO:

February Updates: Membership, Service, and Strength

Jessica Moore, 1st Vice Commander 1stvice@legionmail.org



Hello, Fellow Legionnaires, and Welcome to February!

I'd like to begin with a very big thank you to everyone who participated in and

donated their time and money to the Commander's Charities at the Vice Commander's event. Without your support, we would not be able to accomplish the wonderful things the Legion does.

This month, we will be visited by our National Vice Commander, whose focus will be on membership. Please continue to push membership at your Posts and throughout the district. Encourage those who have not yet paid their dues to do so.

Everyone's input is extremely important. If your dues are not current, you technically have no

voice at meetings and cannot be served at your canteen.

The Riders Summit will be held February 13th through the 15th. If you missed any classes at the Conference, this is a great opportunity to attend, learn new information, or get a refresher. There will be excellent classes, and the instructors work hard to make it a great weekend. They truly appreciate everyone who attends.

Important Upcoming Holidays

- February 17th Presidents' Day
- February 19th Coast Guard Reserve Birthday
- February 3rd through the 15th National Salute to Veteran Patients

In closing, I am continually humbled as I attend Legion events across the state and witness the incredible work being done. I am so proud to be part of the world's greatest veterans' organization. Thank you, members, for all that you do!

UPCOMING

EVENTS

FEBRUARY 2025

- 1 Be The One Day
- 1-28 Americanism Month
- 1-28 Black History Month
 - 1 National Freedom Day
 - 1 JSSP 1st Targets Due to CMP *
 - 1 Youth Law Cadet Application/Fees Open *
 - 1 Four Chaplains Ceremony
 - 1 ALR: Chapter 316 Meeting
 - 1 District 15: Meeting
 - 1 District 4: Meeting
 - 22 Southern Area Ball
 - 2 Groundhog Day
 - 2 Southern Area Four Chaplins Ceremony
 - 2 Post 112 Four Chaplains Ceremony
 - 3 Four Chaplains Day
 - 3 Black History Month Celebration
 - 4 USO Birthday (1941)
 - 5 Dept Membership Goal 85% *
 - 5 ALR: Chapter 136 Meeting
 - 8 Post 243 Four Chaplains Ceremony
 - 8 District 7: Meeting
 - 8 District 17: Meeting
 - 8 Eastern Area Ball
 - 9 Oratorical District Competitions Completed
 - 9 ALR: Chapter 8 Meeting
 - 9 District 5: Meeting
 - 12 Lincoln's Birthday (1809)
 - 12 Membership Renewal Cut-Off Date 🛨
 - 12 ALR Meet & Greet *
- 13-15 ALR Florida Summit *
 - 12 ALR: Chapter 10 Meeting
 - 14 Valentine's Day

UPCOMING EVENTS CONTINUED ON PAGE 3 >>





The Importance of Training in The American Legion

Bob Matheson, 2nd Vice Commander 2ndvice@legionmail.org



Is Training Really Necessary? Absolutely!

Is training something we really need? How many times have we attended a class and thought, Why am I here? I'm sure you've

asked yourself that question at some point. Well, the simple answer is **YES**!

When we stop training, we stop learning. Nearly everyone who has spent time in The American Legion has attended training at the Post, Area, or Department level. Some of us have taken the same class multiple times, but each time, there is something new to learn. It could be a fresh perspective from a different instructor or an

insightful question that sparks new understanding.

Properly utilizing training can have a direct impact on a Post's productivity and The American Legion's overall performance. Training provides members with a better understanding of their responsibilities, as well as the knowledge and skills needed to carry out their duties effectively. It also helps develop new abilities and refine existing ones, leading to improved performance and results.

An added benefit of attending training is the opportunity to connect with fellow Legion members. These interactions help build a network of support, creating valuable relationships that can assist you in the future.

So, is training worth it? **YES**!!

FEBRUARY 2025 - CONTINUED

- 15 Legion Link Articles Due 🗰
- 15 JSSP 2nd Targets Mailed Out ★
- 15 Baseball Insurance Available *
- 15 District 12: Meeting
- 15 District 1: Meeting
- 16 District 3: Meeting
- 17 President's Day (Dept HQ Closed) *
- 17 Washington's Birthday (1732)
- 19 US Coast Guard Reserve Birthday
- 22 District 3: Third Annual Bike Give-a-way
- 22 District 11: Meeting
- 22 ALR: Chapter 10 Bike Night
- 23 Oratorical Area Competitions Completed
- **For more events and updates visit our website at www.floridalegion.org**
- Commander attendance anticipated.
- Department of Florida event.
- ★ National event.

Events are subject to change. More details at <u>floridalegion.org</u>

National Commander LaCoursiere Visits Department

Jim Ramos, NEC nec@legionmail.org



From January 9-14, 2025, our National Commander, James "Jim" A. LaCoursiere Jr., visited the 3rd, 4th, and 6th Districts, making stops at various posts within each district. While his introductions

remained consistent, his message on "BE THE ONE" and suicide prevention was delivered with slight variations each time to emphasize its importance.

January 9, 2025

National Commander LaCoursiere and his aide, Harry "Butch" Hansen, arrived from Phoenix, AZ, where they were welcomed to Florida by NEC Jim Ramos. After checking in at the hotel, they had dinner at 4 Rivers Smokehouse, followed by a meeting to discuss the scheduled events, beginning with the 6th District.

January 10, 2025

The first stop was Post 80 in St. Cloud, where they met with post leadership and members for breakfast and a brief tour. Discussions focused on membership, and after introductions by NEC Jim Ramos, ANEC Raymond, Department Commander Hamrick, and National Commander LaCoursiere, the Commander delivered his "BE THE ONE" message:

"Someone you know—or even someone you don't—may be thinking about suicide. How do you recognize the signs? What should you do? What should you say—or not say? What resources are available?"

He encouraged everyone to take advantage of the "BE THE ONE" training, which is free and available online at Legion.org/BETheOne. He emphasized that it's okay not to be okay and that reaching out for help through the Veterans Crisis Line can save lives. After a Q&A session, Post 80 presented a donation to the National Commander's Charity—Veterans & Children Foundation (VCF).

The 6th District escort team included:

- NEC Jim Ramos
- ANEC Michael Raymond
- Department Commander Chris Hamrick
- 6th District Commander Joan Suelter

NEC continued on page 4 >>





<< NEC continued from page 3

What is the Veterans & Children Foundation (VCF)?

"VCF provides critical aid to military and veteran parents facing unexpected financial hardships that threaten the stability of their homes. This one-time Temporary Financial Assistance Grant helps with housing, utilities, food, and other basic needs for families with minor children."

The next stop was Post 286 in Pine Castle, where the team was warmly greeted by leadership and members. After a delicious lunch and a post tour, Post 286 also presented a donation to VCF, to which the National Commander expressed his gratitude.

After a short break at the hotel, the team moved on to Post 183 in Fern Park, where they were served steak, potatoes, and broccoli, along with refreshments.

January 11, 2025

The day began with breakfast, followed by a tour of Department Headquarters and a visit to Florida American Legion College (FALC). The National Commander stayed with the class until lunch, once again delivering his "BE THE ONE" message. The FALC students collectively donated \$233.00 to VCF, and the Commander thanked them for their generosity.

The next stop was the Lady Lake Hotel for a brief

rest before heading to Post 347 for dinner, where Post Commander Dave presented two checks for the National Commander's Charity.

January 12, 2025

The visit to the 4th District began with Post 155 in Crystal River, where the team enjoyed breakfast and received another donation for VCF. They continued to Post 166 in Homosassa for a meet and greet, followed by Post 77 in Inverness, where Post 354 and Post 225 gathered to meet the National Commander. After coffee and pastries, Post 77 also presented a donation to VCF.

The evening concluded with dinner at Bonefish Grill in Ocala, hosted by Department Commander Hamrick.

January 13, 2025

The day started at Post 230 in Hawthorne for breakfast and a meet and greet, followed by Post 56 in Starke for lunch. 3rd District Commander Stuart Scott then took over as the escort for visits within the 3rd District.

One of the unique stops was at Post 421 in Lake City, a Correctional Post. Although they could not meet with the veteran inmates due to illness among both inmates and staff, the team held a productive meeting with the correctional facility leadership. Discussions focused on helping incarcerated veterans reintegrate into society upon release, providing them with resources for a better future.

The day ended with dinner at Post 57 in Lake City, where members from Post 215 and Post 224 also attended to meet the National Commander.

January 14, 2025

The final day of the visit began at Post 383 in Old Town for coffee, pastries, and a post tour. The team then headed to Post 291 in Steinhatchee for a lunch that was described as "five-star restaurant quality." The Legion Family and County Leadership were in attendance, making it a memorable visit.

The journey continued to Post 107 in Live Oak, where members provided light snacks and engaged in meaningful conversations. The final stop was Post 83 in Macclenny, where the Legion Family gathered for dinner, marking the conclusion of the National Commander's Florida visit.

As the visit came to an end, National Commander LaCoursiere bid farewell to the Florida Legion Family and expressed his appreciation, saying:

"Our #1 mission is 'BE THE ONE.' Save lives and help our veterans—and anyone—from suicide."

A Message from NEC Jim Ramos

"I am Jim Ramos, your NEC from Florida, here to help Florida. If you have any questions, please email me at NEC@legionmail.org or call (352) 226-4370. Please leave a message, as I may not have everyone's phone number. Thank you!"













Honoring Our Legacy, Strengthening Our Future

Elbert Ziegler, Historian historian@legionmail.org



In Memoriam: Past
Department Commander
Phillip R. "Phil" Hearlson
It is with deep regret that
I share the passing of Past
Department Commander Phillip
R. Hearlson of Summerfield. FL.

Our thoughts and prayers are with his family and friends during this difficult time.

We are also keeping
Commander Miguel Garcia and
Eastern Area Commander Bruce
Thurber in our prayers for a
speedy and full recovery.



PDC Phil Hearlson

National Commander's Visit to Florida

The American Legion's National Commander, James A. LaCoursiere Jr., visited Florida from January 9th to January 15th, 2025, covering Districts 3, 4, and 6. Although I was unable to be present for the tour, I am requesting any images of National Commander LaCoursiere Jr., Department Commander Hamrick, and other Department officers participating in events.

Please send images along with your name, a caption describing the moment, the date, and the time so I can properly credit those who submit them. Send

all images to historian@legionmail.org. If the files are large, let me know, and I will provide a transfer application for you to download.

2nd Annual District 13 Winter Stamping Tour

The 2nd Annual District 13 Winter Stamping Tour is in full swing! This exciting event, which began on November 1, 2024, runs until February 28, 2025. Participants collect stamps in their Passport Books from various locations to qualify for prize drawings.

As a proud participant, I've already collected my first 10 stamps and am eligible for the first prize drawing! My goal is to collect at least 10 more before the tour concludes.

One of the highlights of my journey was visiting The Twisted Fork in Port Charlotte. If you haven't been there, it's a must-visit destination with incredible food and entertainment. I had the pleasure of meeting the manager, Mr. Parsley, an exceptional host

Another memorable stop was Bert's Black Widow Harley-Davidson, where the stunning collection of bikes is truly a sight to behold. George "Snook" offers engaging tours, so be sure to say hello to him if you stop by!

Historians: Tools for Success

A reminder for our dedicated historians: invaluable resources are available to assist in creating comprehensive yearbooks or narrative histories. These

tools serve as the foundation for preserving our Posts' activities and proud heritage. You can find all the necessary information in one place at Dept. Historian Resources.

Additionally, if you missed the Fall Conference Historian and Social Media training classes, as well as the Judge Advocate Mock Trial, the materials are available at Training Classes. These resources are essential for enhancing your skills and ensuring our history is well-documented.

Recovery Efforts

We hope that everyone's recovery efforts—whether personal or community-related—are progressing well. Let us continue to support one another as we work toward rebuilding and thriving together.



Berts Black Widow



Twisted Fork

YOU COULD WIN \$25K on your next Harley®

floridalegion.org/bike



TRAINING ★ MENTORSHIP ★ CONTINUITY



The Power of Loyalty

Rick Orzechowski, Central Area Commander central@legionmail.org



Loyalty is a strong feeling of support—a steadfast faithfulness that remains firm even in the face of temptation to renounce, desert, or betray.

In the military, we are taught to be loyal to one another, standing together and supporting each other in battle. As members of The American Legion, we must uphold that same loyalty to those who lead us, even when we may not fully agree with their direction. We were the ones who chose them as our leaders, and therefore, we must be loyal to them and support their endeavors. Only through loyalty can we achieve true success.

8 Things Loyal People Do:

- They show up—not just during the good times but also through the bad times.
- 2. They communicate openly.
- 3. They respect boundaries.
- 4. They remain consistent.

- 5. They forgive and ask for forgiveness.
- They support their leader's dreams and aspirations
- They prioritize their leader's goals as if they were their own.
- 8. They choose to follow their leaders every day.

If we commit to these principles, success will follow in everything we do. Loyalty is the foundation of unity, strength, and achievement.

February Updates and a Look Back in History

Bruce Thurber, Eastern Area Commander eastern@legionmail.org



With the holiday season behind us, it's time to get back to work.

- Four Chaplains Ceremony
- February 8th Eastern Area Ball at Post 117
- February 13th Riders'

Summit

- February 14th Valentine's Day
- February 15th 12th District Meeting
- February 22nd Oratorical Contest
- March 1st 6th District Meeting at Post 347
- March 15th District 12 Picnic at Post 117
- March 5th Membership Goal: 90%

When you joined the military, you learned that nothing is impossible if you put your mind to it. As a Veteran of the United States Armed Forces, you have earned the right to join The American Legion. I ask for your help as you continue to serve our country with honor—fighting for veterans' rights.

Each year, The American Legion National Commander addresses the United States Congress to advocate for veterans' rights. This is not about which party is responsible but rather the ability of all parties to work together to improve the quality of life for the men and women who have defended our nation through military service.

You also have access to **valuable resources**, including:

- Department Revitalization Chair
- Past Department Commanders
- Area and District Commanders
- The American Legion Department of Florida Auxiliary
- Detachment of Florida Sons of The American Legion
- The American Legion Riders

A Bit of February's History

One of the first advocates for soldiers' rights was Emperor Claudius II, who banned marriage because he believed married men made poor soldiers. Valentine, believing this was unjust, secretly performed marriages despite the ban.

When Claudius discovered Valentine's actions, he was thrown in jail and sentenced to death. While imprisoned, he fell in love with the jailer's daughter. On the day of his execution—February 14th—he sent her a love letter signed, "From your Valentine."

This is the story behind the holiday we now know as Valentine's Day.



Sign up for TEXT ALERTS.

FLCON to **41372**



TRAINING ★ MENTORSHIP ★ CONTINUITY



Stepping Up: The Call to Leadership in The American Legion

Jim Bowers, Northern Area Commander northern@legionmail.org



The American Legion stands as a pillar of strength, community, and support for veterans and their families. Our mission is as critical today as ever, made possible by the dedication of members who step into

leadership roles. Becoming an officer in The American Legion is not just a position—it's a commitment to service, growth, and making a tangible difference in the lives of many.

Why Consider Becoming an Officer?

1. Empower Your Voice

As an officer, you gain a platform to influence decisions, initiatives, and policies that directly impact veterans and their families. Your ideas and leadership can drive the change you want to see in our community.

2. Build Lifelong Skills

Leadership within The American Legion provides an opportunity to develop and hone skills such as strategic planning, public speaking, organization, and teamwork. These skills are invaluable and transferable to many aspects of your personal and professional life.

3. Forge Strong Bonds

Officers work closely with members, fostering camaraderie and mutual respect. The connections you build within our ranks can become lasting friendships and a network of support that extends beyond your tenure.

4. Leave a Legacy

Your contributions as an officer leave a lasting impact on the organization and the people we serve. This is your chance to make a difference and continue the proud tradition of The American Legion.

5. Serve with Purpose

Stepping into a leadership role allows you to further embody the principles of service, patriotism, and advocacy that define The American Legion. Your role as an officer amplifies your ability to support our veterans, their families, and our community.

6. Take the Next Step

If you're passionate about making a difference and ready to embrace a leadership challenge, consider running for an officer position. Whether you are a seasoned member or new to the organization, your fresh perspective and enthusiasm are vital.

To learn more about the responsibilities and opportunities of being an officer or to express your interest, reach out to former and current officers, members, or district officers—they are valuable sources of information.

Finishing Strong: Preparing for the Final Stretch

Kalvin Thompson, District 7 Commander district?@legionmail.org



We've had a great year so far, and as we enter the final stretch, time will undoubtedly fly by. In the coming months, we will hold elections, submit reports, and begin planning for the future of our Posts, District,

Area, and Department.

Mentoring for the Future

As we prepare for elections, let's make it a priority

to mentor our members, especially those new to their offices, our Posts, and The American Legion. Just because you took office without formal training or guidance doesn't mean we should allow others to face the same challenge. Let's ensure our successors are well-prepared.

Time to Work on CPRs

Now is the time to start working on your Consolidated Post Reports (CPRs). These reports require time to complete, but they are vital to the future of The American Legion. National uses these reports to advocate for veterans on Capitol Hill, helping push key legislation. Your efforts in completing these reports make a difference.

Membership: A Continuous Effort

While we continue to make good progress, membership remains an ongoing effort. It is a crucial part of The American Legion's success. Our goal of achieving 100% membership as a District is within reach, but it will take all of us working together. If you need assistance or have any questions, please don't hesitate to reach out.

Let's finish the year strong!

WANT TO VOLUNTEER FOR NATIONAL CONVENTION?





TRAINING ★ MENTORSHIP ★ CONTINUITY



Stay Alert for Email Scams & Keep Pushing Membership

Daniel Martin, District 12 Commander district 12@legionmail.org



Beware of Email Scams

A scam email is circulating, claiming that the Commander needs your help with something urgent. Remember:

- No legitimate officer will ever ask for gift cards.
- If you receive an email like this, block and report the senders.
- Two known scam email addresses to watch out for:
 - o <u>legionamerican74@gmail.com</u>
 - o <u>americanlegio2456@gmail.com</u>

It is possible that the department's email list has been compromised. If you have any doubts about an email, call me before responding—most of you have my phone number.

Membership: The Key to Growth

We have entered a new year—2025—and we need 2,200 members in District 12 to reach 100% membership for the year. Keep up the great work in recruiting and retaining members!

Our team will be visiting posts and asking how we can assist. If you are a small American Legion post with fewer than 100 members, most should be aiming for 100% membership. We understand that members move or pass away, but the biggest challenge is retaining current members.

Membership is vital to the growth of The American Legion as a whole. To ensure our success:

• Update your post locator on the Department of

Florida website under Resources.

- Use the site to find forms, manuals, and other essential tools.
- Work with Post 400—their membership fees recently increased, and if your post's fee is under \$55, many members may be willing to transfer.
- Vet all transfers to confirm they meet military service eligibility requirements.

If you have any questions about eligibility, refer to the 2024 Officer Manual, pages 99-105.

Thank You for Being the One

Your dedication and volunteer efforts are what keep The American Legion thriving. Let's continue working together to make a positive impact!

District 13 Kicks Off the New Year with Strong Membership and Exciting Events

Keith Berres, District 13 Commander district13@legionmail.org



The holidays are over, and
Posts are getting busy with
renewals and new membership
drives. District 13 has moved
up to 4th place in the
Department and successfully
reached the 80% membership

goal for January. Posts continue to work hard, making this one of our best membership years in a while.

- Nine Posts have exceeded 80% membership
- All other Posts are over 70%

Thank you to all Posts for your dedication and hard work—keep it going!

1st Annual Meatball Throwdown — "Battle of the Balls"

On January 12th, Post 303 hosted the 1st Annual Meatball Throwdown (aka Battle of the Balls), with 16 entries competing.

Winners:

- 3rd Place Annette (Post 90)
- 2nd Place Michael Nigbor
- 1st Place Judy Basler

The event raised \$600 for the Department Disaster Relief Fund! A special thanks to Laurene Allen-Flower, Jan Farrington, and Post 303 for all their hard work in making this event a success.

Upcoming Event: "BE THE ONE" & Project Vet Relief Resource Fair

 February 16th — Post 303 (Bonita Springs) — Starts at 1:15 PM

Join us for this important event to support the "BE

THE ONE" campaign and Project Vet Relief Resource Fair. **The event will include:**

- A walk to raise awareness
- Special guest speakers
- Vendors and resources for veterans
- Food and refreshments

Please **show your support** and make plans to attend!

Next District 13 Meeting

• March 16th - Post 303

It's great to see Post 303 back strong and supporting many District functions. I also want to thank all Posts in the District for their continued support and encourage everyone to support one another. Together, we make District 13 stronger!



TRAINING ★ MENTORSHIP ★ CONTINUITY

Stay Safe and Get Ready for the Summit

Jim Wineland, American Legion Riders Chair legionriders@legionmail.org



Please stay alert while riding and watch for potential hazards. We have lost too many riders and passengers in recent months, so caution is crucial. To address these safety concerns, we have introduced additional

safety classes at the Summit, and we encourage everyone to take advantage of them.

Summit Updates

The final planning stages for the Summit are complete, and we are ready to move forward! As mentioned, we have added:

- A hands-on new riding course
- First responder training
- Enhanced safety information for the Road Captains course

Additionally, we have included a class to review our approved Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) and Conflict Resolution strategies. These sessions will help everyone better understand the Riders' role as part of the Department/Post program.

We have made considerable progress and have contributed to several American Legion initiatives. Now, it's time to focus on the program's purpose with a clear and unified vision.

In-State Unity Rides Are Open for Registration

Our In-State Unity Rides have been finalized and are now open for registration! These rides offer:

- Great routes
- Wonderful camaraderie
- Opportunities to visit Posts across the Department
- Fundraising for Project Vet Relief

If you're traveling a long distance, consider staying for the Rally to see who wins the raffle!

Thank you all for your dedication and commitment. Let's make this a year of purpose and progress.

"For the Cause, Not the Applause."

Your 2024-2025 Schedule

- Summit
 - Meet & Greet February 5, 2025
 - Classes February 6-8, 2025
- "Round Robin" Month of April 2025
- Children and Youth Picnic April 5, 2025 (Note, Holy Week April 13-19th; Easter April 20, 2025)
- In-State Unity Ride
 - Meet & Greet April 6, 2025
 - Ride April 7-11, 2025
- Rally April 12, 2025 OCC Clearwater, FL

If you have any ideas or suggestions, please share them! Thank you for all that you do. We are proud to be part of such an outstanding leadership team!

"For the Cause, Not the Applause."

Staying Organized and Utilizing Resources

Wayne Mulligan, Americanism Chair americanism@legionmail.org



As deadlines approach, staying organized can be challenging as we are often pulled in multiple directions. When you face challenges or encounter potential problems, remember to utilize those around you—

many hands make light work.

Your Chairmen are in a position to guide you in the right direction. There is no such thing as a dumb question, so do not hesitate to ask for assistance or clarification.

Ultimately, our goal is to strengthen The American Legion and ensure the community recognizes our efforts in improving the lives of those around us. Whatever your interests or strengths, there is a program your Post can contribute to and support.

By working together and making use of available resources, we can continue to grow and make a lasting impact.

TRAINING ★ MENTORSHIP ★ CONTINUITY



The Importance of Blood Drives: A Call to Action

Jamie Grinis, Blood Donor Chair blooddonor@legionmail.org



Florida has felt the wrath of Mother Nature this year, enduring both hurricanes and freezing weather—conditions we are not accustomed to facing. With that in mind, have you worked to help those in

need? Now is the time to think of our fellow man by organizing a Blood Drive at your Post.

If you are reading this article, you may have been a recipient of a pint or two of donated blood. Imagine what could have happened if the Blood Bank did not have your blood type in stock. Would you still be here today?

We are now past the halfway mark for our calendar year, yet many Posts have not restarted their Blood Drives as they have in previous years. It is time to get back in the groove and renew our efforts.

The American Medical Society has determined that giving blood is one of the easiest and most impactful ways to help others. The blood you donate today could very well save the life of someone you know and love dearly. To prepare for the future, let's take action today by ensuring that the Big Red Bus is parked at your Post every eight weeks to keep the blood supply flowing.

It is up to each of us to continue this vital program. Blood drives not only support those in need but also serve as a powerful recruitment tool for new members. Bringing in new faces helps sustain and strengthen your Post. You never know what a new member might bring to your Post and its mission.

When hosting a Blood Drive, remember to visit the Department's website and submit your activities using the easy-fill form in the Blood Drive Program. These reports are essential for tracking your Post's progress. As we prepare for the next quarterly CPR submissions, be sure to double-check your records and report each Blood Drive accordingly.

By working together, we can continue saving lives, building stronger Posts, and making a lasting impact in our communities.

Department Launches New Civil Air Patrol Program

Rico Thomas, Civil Air Patrol civilairpatrol@legionmail.org



I would like to extend my gratitude to Department Commander Hamrick for recently appointing me as Chair of the Department's newest program, Civil Air Patrol (CAP). One of the four

foundational pillars of The American Legion is Youth Development, and thanks to a resolution from Post 365 Sunrise, adopted by the Department of Florida in 2024, the Civil Air Patrol (CAP) has officially become one of our newest programs.

The Civil Air Patrol (CAP) is a congressionally chartered, federally supported non-profit organization that serves as the official civilian auxiliary of the United States Air Force (USAF). CAP is a volunteer-based program with an aviation-

focused membership that includes individuals from diverse backgrounds. The program is established by Title 10 of the United States Code and its purpose is defined by Title 36.

Who Can Join?

CAP membership consists of:

- Cadets (ages 12 to under 21) Participate in a structured program modeled after the U.S.
 Air Force, developing leadership skills, technical training, and discipline
- Senior Members (ages 18 and up) Serve as instructors, supervisors, and operators, mentoring cadets and assisting with CAP missions.

What Does CAP Do?

CAP is a major operator of single-engine general aviation aircraft used in a variety of missions, including:

- Orientation flights for cadets
- Search and rescue missions
- Emergency services
- STEM and aviation training
- Because of the hands-on flight opportunities, many
- CAP members go on to become licensed pilots.

Firsthand Experience with CAP Cadets

I recently had the opportunity to visit a middle school in Broward County to observe their CAP Cadet program. Their curriculum included:

- Robotics buildin
- Formation training and drill

Additionally, I attended an Aviation Day event at a local airfield, where I explored training aircraft and flight simulators. The level of education and

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<< Civil Air Patrol continued from page 10

engagement in the program is truly inspiring.

Get Involved!

Each month in The Legion Link, I will share more information about our new CAP program. If your Post is interested in supporting a CAP program, please reach out to me using the contact information listed.

Together, we can empower the next generation of aviation leaders and expand opportunities for our youth.











Preparing for a Disaster Ahead of Time

Jamie Grinis, Disaster Preparedness Chair disaster@legionmail.org



Florida has felt Mother Nature's wrath in ways we haven't experienced in many years. We endured three hurricanes, each impacting different parts of the state in one way or another. Even cold northern weather has

crept into Florida, reminding us all of the power of nature.

Disaster Relief Efforts

The Disaster Relief Committee has assisted over 1,000 veterans and their communities in hurricane-stricken areas. Immediately after the storms passed, the Disaster Relief Team went to work, identifying the areas most in need and ensuring that the Department was informed. This allowed us to set up central distribution locations where donated supplies could be organized and distributed efficiently to our

veteran community in Florida.

Our disaster relief efforts are still ongoing, helping veterans in need. In the past, the Department of California has assisted us, and we have reciprocated by sending funding to help their veterans. The Florida Disaster Relief Project has been highly effective in vetting claims submitted to the Department. Once we review and approve these claims, we forward them to NEF for processing and benefits distribution.

The Importance of Emergency Preparedness

Emergency preparedness is not something to consider only when a disaster strikes—it is an ongoing effort. We must start today in preparation for tomorrow's catastrophic events.

How Can You Prepare?

It's simple:

 When shopping at your favorite grocery store, take advantage of Buy One, Get One (BOGO) sales.

- Purchase the BOGO items and set aside the free products for disaster relief.
- Store extra canned goods and essential supplies in a labeled cardboard box at home.
- When your box is full, you will have provisions ready in case of an emergency.
- If you find you do not need these supplies, donate them to your Post or an established collection site to assist others in need.

A Win-Win Situation

If Mother Nature gives us a breather, these supplies can be donated during the holiday season, helping those less fortunate. Either way, your efforts make a difference in disaster preparedness and community support.

Let's take action now so we are ready when it matters most.



facebook.com/floridalegion



TRAINING ★ MENTORSHIP ★ CONTINUITY



Honoring Excellence: The Superintendent's Regimental Ball and JROTC Programs

Loretta Young, JROTC/JSSP Chair

jrotc@legionmail.org



Last month, I had the opportunity to attend the Superintendent's Regimental Ball in Broward County, an event held for all 31 JROTC units in the area. These annual or semi-annual events are organized in

some districts to showcase outstanding cadets and reinforce the purpose of the Cadet Creed: "Building Better Citizens."

The event closely resembles a Military Ball, with one key difference—the Superintendent of Schools is the honored guest. It is a formal affair, with attendees dressed in military dress uniforms or formal gowns. The evening begins with a "Welcoming Guest Line," which includes the Superintendent of Schools, JROTC District Staff, Cadets and Instructors, and invited guests.

The program includes:

- A keynote guest speaker
- The MIA/POW Ceremony
- A centerpiece contest
- Dinner, followed by music and dancing

If given the opportunity, I highly recommend attending one of these events—it is a remarkable experience that truly highlights the dedication and achievements of JROTC cadets.

Upcoming Event: JROTC Performance Accreditation (JPA)

The next major event on the JROTC calendar is the JROTC Performance Accreditation (JPA), where I plan to visit several schools to observe the Formal Inspections of cadets and records.

These inspections are just one aspect of the comprehensive JROTC program, which also **includes**:

- Drill competitions
- Raider competitions
- Drone and robotics programs
- JCLC Adventure/STEM wrap-ups at the end of the year

If you have any questions about these programs or would like more information, please feel free to reach out to me.

Wishing everyone a successful year ahead!



Understanding DUI Laws in Florida: Consequences and Prevention

Daryl Bass, Law & Order Chair laworder@legionmail.org



Getting a DUI in Florida comes with some of the strictest penalties in the nation. If you plan to drink at your Post or elsewhere, consider the serious consequences of driving under the influence. Always have a

designated driver or call a rideshare service such as Uber to ensure your safety and the safety of others.

Florida DUI Laws and Penalties

The severity of DUI penalties in Florida depends on the number of prior convictions. Below is

an overview of Florida's DUI laws and associated penalties.

Florida DUI Law

Florida law prohibits driving or being in actual physical control of a vehicle if:

- Your blood alcohol concentration (BAC) is .08% or higher
- You are under the influence of alcohol, harmful chemical substances, or illegal controlled substances
- You are impaired to the extent that you are deprived of full possession of your normal faculties

For commercial vehicle drivers, the BAC threshold is lowered to .04%.

Additionally, law enforcement agencies now have the ability to test for illegal substances in drivers.

DUI Penalties in Florida

First Offense:

- Up to six months in jail
- Fine of up to \$1,000
- License revocation: 180 days to one year
- Ignition interlock device (IID) required if BAC is .15% or higher

Second Offense:

- Nine to twelve months in jail
- Fine of up to \$2,000

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TRAINING ★ MENTORSHIP ★ CONTINUITY



<< Law & Order continued from page 12

• License revocation: 180 days to one year Ignition interlock device required for two years

Third Offense: (within 10 years)

- Up to twelve months in jail
- Fine of up to \$5,000
- License revocation: 180 days to two years
- Ignition interlock device required for two years
- Misdemeanor conviction

Fourth Offense (or any additional DUI convictions):

- Up to five years in jail
- Fine starting at \$5,000
- License revocation: Minimum of 10 years
- Felony conviction

Any Further DUI Convictions:

Mandatory five years in jail Permanent revocation of your license I hope this information is useful to you. Please share it with your Post family. As members of The American Legion, we must lead by example, prioritize responsibility, and ensure the safety of our community.

Set an Example: Keep Each Other Safe

When in doubt, choose safety—never drive under the influence.

February Membership Update: Keep Pushing, Team Florida!

Bruce Carl, Membership Chair

membership@legionmail.org



Welcome to February, Team Florida! Love is in the air, and I love seeing our membership numbers grow. We are getting closer to the end of the Race to the Top competition for District Commanders.

As of this writing, eight districts are approaching qualification:

4th District	17th Distric
2nd District	7th District
9th District	8th District
14th District	3rd District

This does not mean other districts cannot reach qualification, but they must work harder to meet the March 31st deadline. That means we still have two full months to hit the goal!

Membership Update

Our membership numbers look strong, and I believe we have a real chance of hitting 100% again.

 Florida is currently at 78.94%, ranking 18th nationally.

- We have been steadily climbing since December.
- 21 Posts have reached 100%, and 11 Posts have surpassed 103%.

May 7th is the deadline to qualify for 100% membership coins and pins. However, the membership year does not end until June 30th—so let's keep pushing to secure another 100% year for the Department!

Helpful Tips to Reach 100% Membership

- Contact DMS400AD members from 2024 and 2025
 - They count toward your goal, even if they have already paid for 2025.
 - Regular Post 400 members will only count when they renew—unless they are paying for 2025 now
- 2. Set up membership tables at events.
 - Ask store managers for permission to set up outside their establishments to recruit new members.
- 3. Follow up with members who have not renewed.
 - Email them—if undeliverable, call.
 - If calls are unsuccessful, send a letter by mail.
 - Text messaging is effective, especially for younger members.

- Need a good text template? Contact the Department Commander or me, and we will provide the text and response that has been working for us.
- Use sample letters from the Membership Manual to contact expired and DMS members.
- 5. Encourage members to renew for three years.
 - This option is only available through mylegion.org, not at the Post level.
- 6. Work as a team!
 - Coordinate with District and Area Commanders to call members together.
 - A group effort makes contacting unrenewed and DMS members much more efficient.
- If a Post needs revitalization, contact Judith Richards to coordinate a plan.
- 8. Need assistance? Contact me!
 - Whether it's phone calls, membership setup, or guidance, I am here to help.

Let's Secure a Top 10 Spot!

Since Florida is hosting the National Convention this year, it would be an honor to sit near the front of the stage. To achieve this, we must finish in the top 10 nationally.

We can do this, Team Florida! Thank you all for your dedication and hard work!





The American Legion's 2025 Legislative Agenda and Upcoming Washington Conference

Michael Sherman, National Security Chair security@legionmail.org



On January 3, 2025, the 119th Congress was sworn in, ushering in a new term for the Legislative Branch of the United States. In response, The American Legion's Legislative Team is in the process of finalizing the 2025

Legislative Agenda in preparation for the upcoming Washington Conference.

In 2024, The American Legion focused on several **key issues affecting veterans**, service members, and their families, includina:

- Implementation and oversight of the PACT Act
- Expanding access to mental health resources to prevent suicide
- Ensuring Coast Guard personnel are paid during government shutdowns
- Improving the quality of life for military personnel and their families
- · Modernizing the military's Transition Assistance
- Program (TAP)
- And many more critical initiatives

Representing Florida at the Washington Conference

On Monday, February 24, 2025, I will once again have the honor of attending The American Legion's annual Washington Conference in Washington, D.C., as a representative from the Department of Florida on the National Security Council. I look forward to learning more about national security concerns that The American Legion will be monitoring throughout the year.

Additionally, on Tuesday, February 25, 2025, I will meet with our elected representatives on Capitol Hill to discuss The American Legion's Legislative Agenda and engage in critical discussions on policy priorities.

National Commander's Testimony to Congress

On Wednesday, February 26, 2025, American Legion National Commander James LaCoursiere will deliver his testimony before a joint session of the House and Senate Committees on Veterans' Affairs.

This session is typically broadcast live on The American Legion's YouTube channel (https://www.youtube.com/@americanlegionHQ). If you have never watched a session, I highly encourage you to

tune in. For reference, you can watch Past National Commander Daniel Seehafer's testimony from last year's session (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jVQRM5ZnvHI).

Join the American Legion's Grassroots Action Center

If you haven't already, I encourage you to sign up for The American Legion's Grassroots Action Center. While there are no active campaigns as of now, once the 2025 Legislative Agenda is finalized and Congress begins new legislative initiatives, The American Legion will need your help to ensure our voices are heard.

This platform is the most effective way to engage with Congress and advocate for issues affecting veterans and service members. Please visit The American Legion's Grassroots Action Center (https://www.votervoice.net/AmericanLegion/home) to sign up.

I look forward to advocating for our veterans, service members, and their families at the Washington Conference and working to advance The American Legion's mission at the national level.

"The Final Six" – Who Will Represent the Department of Florida at Nationals?

Doug Hockenberry, Oratorical Chair oratorical@legionmail.org



Hello, Department of Florida. I hope everyone is doing well.

February is a critical month for the Oratorical Program, as District-level contests conclude on February 9, and

Area Contests take place from February 10-23. That's right, Team—we have reached the stage

where selections will be made to determine who will represent each Area at the Department Contest.

With Area Contests underway, the top six candidates will advance to compete in the Department Contest on March 15. These students are truly deserving and, without a doubt, represent the "Best of the Best." Now is the time for Post, District, and Area Oratorical Chairs, who have worked tirelessly over the past seven months, to join forces and give these students every opportunity for success.

Preparing for Success

To ensure your candidate performs at their best, encourage them to:

- Practice their speech regularly—at least a few times per week.
- Focus on stage presence—body language and posture are key.
- Dress for success—a polished appearance boosts confidence on stage.

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<< Oratorical continued from page 14

A student who feels good about their appearance will exude self-confidence and perform better.

Attend the Department Oratorical Contest

I strongly encourage all District Oratorical Chairs to attend the Department Oratorical Contest and witness these six outstanding students deliver powerful speeches on our Constitution. Believe me—you won't regret it!

Thank You for Your Support

In closing, I want to thank all Post, District, and Area Chairpersons for your dedication and support throughout this year's Oratorical Program.

If you have any questions, please feel free to call me at (727) 514-3742, send a text, or email me at oratorical@legionmail.org.

One Final Question:

Will your Post's candidate represent the Department of Florida at the National Oratorical Competition in May?

The Importance of Re-Engagement in The American Legion

Judith Richards, Post Development Chair revitalization@legionmail.org



What Does Re-Engagement Mean?

Re-engagement means:

 To become involved or have contact with someone or something again—whether for a second, third, or more

times.

 To reignite interest in something and keep people thinking about it.

How to Re-Engage Your Members

One of the best ways to re-engage members is through regular communication. A simple yet effective method is to write a letter to your members, informing them about what is happening at the Post.

Keep them updated on:

- Post activities and events
- Community involvement
- State and national-level initiatives

Let your members know that they are valued, and remind them that their Post needs their support—whether by volunteering a small amount of time or simply by showing up.

Encouraging Buddy Checks

Buddy Check calls are highlighted in every Legion Link, and they are a great way to reconnect with members. Invite members to help make calls—sometimes, simply asking for help is all it takes to get people involved.

Post 46: A Case Study in Re-Engagement

Post 46 Commander Eric has been actively engaging with the community and working to revitalize the

Post. Through regular communication and outreach, he has fostered greater member involvement. A big event isn't always necessary—consistent interaction with members and the local community is just as important.

The Key to Success: Continuous Communication

As the definition of re-engagement suggests, communication must happen again, again, and again!

I work closely with Bruce Carl, Department Membership Chair, as well as Area and District Commanders, to ensure continued engagement and membership growth.

By keeping members informed, involved, and valued, we can strengthen The American Legion's mission and create a thriving community of support.

Operation Homecoming: Honoring POW/MIAs and Their Legacy

Denny Luke, POW/MIA Chair powmia@legionmail.org



February marks the anniversary of a significant event in the Vietnam War regarding Prisoners of War (POWs). A total of 591 American prisoners were returned to the United States following the Paris Peace Accords, which ended U.S. involvement in Vietnam. The effort to bring these POWs home was called **Operation Homecoming**.

Prisoners were released in February and March 1973, with those held the longest generally returning first.

Operation Homecoming: Bringing American POWs Home

On January 27, 1973, Henry Kissinger, then National Security Advisor to President Richard Nixon, negotiated a ceasefire agreement with representatives of North Vietnam. The agreement outlined the withdrawal of U.S. military forces from

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<< POW/MIA continued from page 15

South Vietnam and the release of all American POWs within 60 days of U.S. troop withdrawal.

On February 12, 1973, three Lockheed C-141 Starlifter aircraft were sent to Hanoi, North Vietnam, and one C-9A aircraft to Saigon, South Vietnam, to transport the first group of released prisoners. The first flight of 40 POWs departed Hanoi aboard a C-141A, later named the "Hanoi Taxi." This aircraft is now on display at the National Museum of the United States Air Force near Dayton, Ohio.

A total of 54 C-141 missions transported POWs home. Early in Operation Homecoming, groups of prisoners were selected for release based on length of time in captivity or urgent medical needs. The final group of POWs was returned on March 29, 1973, completing the operation and bringing the total number of repatriated Americans to 591.

Who Were the POWs?

Of the 591 repatriated POWs, their military branches included:

- 325 U.S. Air Force (many were bomber pilots shot down over North Vietnam)
- 138 U.S. Navy
- 77 U.S. Army
- 26 U.S. Marine Corps
- 25 Civilian employees of U.S. government agencies

Most POWs were held in camps in North Vietnam, with others imprisoned throughout Southeast Asia.

- 69 POWs were held in South Vietnam and released from Loc Ninh.
- 9 POWs were released from Laos.
- 3 POWs were released from China.

Notable POWs from Operation Homecoming included:

- Senator John McCain (Arizona)
- Vice Presidential Candidate James Stockdale
- Representative Sam Johnson (Texas)
- Colonel Bud Day Awarded both the Medal of Honor and the Air Force Cross

Colonel Bud Day and Military Medical Benefits

Colonel Bud Day, a former POW held at the Hanoi Hilton and a roommate of John McCain, is the only individual to have received both the Medal of Honor and the Air Force Cross.

After retiring in 1996, Colonel Day filed a classaction lawsuit against the U.S. government on behalf of military retirees, challenging the decision to strip them of their promised free lifetime military medical care benefits at age 65.

- In 2001, the district court ruled in favor of military retirees.
- In 2002, the U.S. Court of Appeals overturned the decision.
- Congress later rectified the issue by creating TRICARE for Life (TFL), which restored military medical benefits for retirees over age 65.

Resources and Updates on POW/MIA Efforts

The Department of Florida maintains a *POW/MIA* Facebook Page, which you can like and follow for updates:

FL Legion POW MIA (https://www.facebook.com/falpowmia/)

For a one-stop resource for POW/MIA information, visit:

https://gr.link/GvHRau

The Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency (DPAA) provides regular updates on personnel accounted for and missing in action (MIA). As of December 24, 2025, the DPAA has identified the following number of MIA personnel for FY 2025:

- World War II − 10
- Korean War -6
- Cold War -0
- Vietnam War 1

Personnel Accounted for in December 2024

During December 2024, the following 17 previously missing personnel were officially accounted for:

December 20, 2024:

- Airman Hansen, D. (World War II)
- Airman Mann, J. (World War II)
- Airman Bradbury, G. (World War II)

December 19, 2024:

- Airman McLaughlin, H. (World War II)
- Soldier Grace, L. (Korean War)
- Airman McCollum, R. (World War II)

December 18, 2024:

- Airman Bruntmyer, L. (World War II)
- Sailor Frye, N. (USS West Virginia, World War II)
- Soldier Bowman, J. (Korean War)

December 17, 2024:

- Airman Yeary, H. (World War II)
- Airman Jackson, L. (World War II)

December 13, 2024:

Airman Danneker, J. (World War II)

December 10, 2024:

Airman Nyberg, H. (World War II)

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December 6, 2024:

• Soldier Crossland, A. (World War II)

December 5, 2024:

- Airman Kovaleski, E. (World War II)
- Sailor Auld, J. (USS Oklahoma, World War II)

December 4, 2024:

Pilot Trudeau, A. (Vietnam War)

For more information on each individual, visit the **Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency** website at: www.dpaa.mil

As we reflect on the sacrifices of our POWs and MIAs, let us continue to honor their service, support recovery efforts, and advocate for those still unaccounted for.

Guidelines for Submitting Proposed Resolutions

Clarence Hill, Resolutions Chair resolutions@legionmail.org



If you are considering transmitting a proposed resolution beyond your Post, you should ensure that the subject matter is relevant to the principles of our organization. The *Preamble to the Constitution*

can be used as a general guide to define the boundaries within which the subject matter should be kept. Posts should also be wary of becoming a channel through which non-Legion organizations seek to achieve their own goals.

- Is it relevant? A resolution that calls for saving the environment of the spotted woodpecker might make some people happy, but what does it have to do with the mission of The American Legion? The American Legion might support legislation that would open up the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge Coastal Plain for oil exploration since it impacts our national security and economic well-being as a nation.
- Does The American Legion already have a position on the subject? If so, the proposed resolution will be "received and recorded."

- Can the subject matter be taken care of administratively without the need for a resolution? If so, there is no need for the proposed resolution.
- Does the resolution involve a local issue? If so, again, there is no need for the proposed resolution.
- What legislation is involved? Avoid quoting references to the numbers or titles used in the proposed legislation, whether the bills proposed are at the local, county, state, or national level. The text of these bills may change to such an extent that you end up appearing to support legislation that is not good for veterans or your particular cause. Always write directly about the subject, not a title or bill number.
- Is it reasonable that the intent of the resolution can be realistically attained? Calling for the elimination of terrorism sounds great, but why draft such a resolution if it cannot be realistically accomplished—unless there are sound ideas and suggestions in the resolution as to how this can be done?
- Does the resolution deal with a
 politically sensitive issue? Article II, Section
 2, of the Constitution states: "The American
 Legion shall be absolutely nonpartisan and shall

- not be used for the dissemination of partisan principles nor for promotion of the candidacy of any person seeking public office or preferment." The Corporate Charter, 36 USC Section 21706, states: "The corporation shall be nonpolitical and may not promote the candidacy of an individual seeking public office."
- Should The American Legion be involved in the issue? Because we do not have research physicians on staff, we should not recommend or advocate for a specific medication. However, you can certainly call upon the VA to use the most appropriate medication to treat the patients under their care, regardless of cost.
- Is it simple or complex? Remember to keep the resolution focused on one subject. If there are two different objectives, submit two separate resolutions.

We are now four months away from the Convention. Please do not wait until the last minute to submit proposed resolutions for review. Keep in mind that proposed resolutions must be received by each Post at least 40 days prior to the Convention.



VISIT OUR WEBSITE

floridalegion.org

NEWS, FORMS, VETERAN RESOURCES, UPCOMING EVENTS, AND MORE



TRAINING ★ MENTORSHIP ★ CONTINUITY

PROJECT: VETRELIEF

SUPPORT FLORIDA'S HEROES - HOST OR ATTEND AN EVENT!

PROJECT VetRelief is committed to providing emergency financial assistance and suicide prevention support to veterans in need. Now, you have an opportunity to make a real difference by supporting one of the upcoming fundraising events—or even hosting your own!

Why Your Support Matters

Many veterans struggle with financial hardships, mental health challenges, and unexpected crises. PROJECT VetRelief steps in to offer immediate assistance, ensuring that our heroes receive the support they deserve. Your support goes directly to those who have given so much.

Join an Upcoming Fundraising Event

Several events are already planned in the coming months, bringing communities together in support of our veterans. There are plenty of ways to get involved. Attending one of these events not only raises funds but also shows our veterans that they are not alone.

Host Your Own Fundraiser

Can't find an event near you? Consider organizing your own! Whether it's a community BBQ, a corporate challenge, a golf tournament, or an online donation drive, every effort makes a difference. PROJECT VetRelief offers guidance and support to help you create a successful fundraiser. Just give us a call!

>>RECENT EVENTS

American Legion Post 69 in Avon Park hosted their Veterans Expo in early January. Not only were they able to raise \$26,000, but they engaged their local community to give veterans the opportunity to see all resources within their area. We are incredibly thankful for the Legion Family from Post 69 and all those involved in making this event such a huge success this year!

>>UPCOMING EVENTS

FEBRUARY 22 - CASINO NIGHT Jacksonville Post 129

MARCH 1 - CENTRAL AREA RIDE IN Starting at Post 138 (Tampa)

MARCH 22 - CHALLENGE 22 EVENT Jacksonville Beach

MARCH 29 - SPI FUNDRAISER

Palm Bay Post 117

APRIL - ROUND ROBIN Legion Riders' month-long efforts

APRIL 7-11 - UNITY RIDE Legion Rider's state-wide ride

96 Veterans Received Financial Support







ANNUAL IMPACT REPORT July '24 - June



Join us in giving a warm welcome to Shenicia, a proud U.S. Army Veteran who has already made a fantastic impact in just a few weeks! We're honored to have her on the team and excited to see all the great things she'll accomplish. **Welcome aboard!**



Important Year-End Reporting for SAL Squadrons

Michael Sherman, SAL Advisory

sal@legionmail.org



Greetings on behalf of Detachment Commander Rocky Cirigliano!

The new year is upon us, and the end of the 2025 business year will be here before we

know it. Post Commanders and Adjutants are familiar with the year-end reports due before the Convention, such as the Consolidated Post Report (CPR). However, did you know that SAL Squadrons also have several required reports that must be submitted?

Historically, the completion rate for these Squadron reports has been very low, so the Detachment is asking for your help. We urge Post Commanders and Adjutants to communicate with your SAL Squadrons

(if applicable) to ensure they complete and submit these reports on time.

Upcoming Reporting Process

In the coming months, Squadrons will receive a yearend reporting packet, just like Posts do. These report forms will be uploaded to the Detachment website and will be available for digital submission.

Required SAL Squadron Reports

- Squadron Information Report (SIR) To be completed immediately after Squadron elections.
- National Consolidated Squadron Report (CSR)

 The SAL version of the Consolidated Post
 Report (CPR); can be submitted via mylegion.
 org.
- 3. Detachment Consolidated Squadron Report (CSR) A separate report required at the

Detachment level.

- 4. Children & Youth (C&Y) Report A required supplemental report.
- Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation (VA&R)
 Report A required supplemental report.
- Americanism Report A required supplemental report.

Next Steps

More details on the submission process and due dates will be released in the coming weeks as they are finalized. However, I wanted to take this opportunity to bring this to everyone's attention. The Detachment needs the support of Posts and the Department to ensure these critical reports are submitted on time.

Please feel free to reach out to me if you have any questions. Thank you for your support!

National Convention Planning Update: Volunteers and Support Needed

Clarence Hill, 2025 National Con Corp President pnchill@legionmail.org



The committee chairpersons for various aspects of the convention are as follows:

- Badges and Packets:
 Keith Berres
- Distinguished Guests:

Dennis Boland

- Information/Registration: James Burk
- Memorial Service/Special Events: Karen Warren
- Liaison: Don Hinst

Their names and contact information have been provided to National Headquarters, and each

chairperson will assemble their respective teams. I have already forwarded the volunteer forms submitted thus far and will continue to provide them as I receive them. Many of you have volunteered for multiple committees, so you may hear from more than one chairperson.

Advocating for State Transportation Funding

It is critical to contact your state representatives to lobby for transportation funding from this year's budget for the convention. The Legislature convenes in March, and we need to push hard to secure this funding. A one-page information sheet used for last year's session will be posted on the website for reference.

The transportation contract for the Tampa convention

has been negotiated, awarded, and signed for \$236,000, with 10% of the cost paid at signing. We need your help in persuading the Florida Legislature to contribute to these expenses. National estimates that 8,000—10,000 members will attend, and the economic impact of this influx of visitors should be emphasized in discussions with legislators.

Memorial Service Planning

The Memorial Service Committee is working with the National Chaplain to coordinate the service. Their **responsibilities** include:

- · Setting up the memorial service
- Arranging rooming accommodations

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Providing volunteers to assist with seating and program distribution

At this time, we have not received any recommendations for well-known groups in the Tampa area willing to perform at the Memorial Service on Sunday. We need to provide National Headquarters with performance options as soon as possible so they can make the necessary bookings.

If you have any suggestions, please submit them to Bruce, Karen, or me.

Volunteers Needed for a Successful Convention

Hosting a National Convention is an immense project that requires strong support and volunteer efforts. We estimate needing between 50 and 100 volunteers. As we approach the event, deadlines will move quickly, and your participation will be critical to our success.

This is a major opportunity to showcase Florida, and we need your help to make it a success. Hosting a National Convention is no easy task, involves significant costs, and invites scrutiny from all other Departments.

If you can volunteer or have ideas for improving the event, please let us know. The volunteer form is available at floridalegion.org. Your support and dedication will be greatly appreciated!

American Legion Programs and Updates

Dennis Boland, Child Well Being Fdn. President pdcboland@legionmail.org



American Legion Baseball (ALB)

As of January 1, registration has officially opened for the 2025 Centennial season of American Legion Baseball. Teams may begin the online registration

process at: https://baseball.legion.org/

Payment of team fees and insurance purchases will begin on February 15.

Scouting

The American Legion Eagle Scout of the Year nomination window is November 1 — March 1. Nomination packets must be received by each applicant's respective American Legion Department Headquarters no later than March 1.

For application details, visit: <a href="https://www.legion.org/get-involved/youth-programs/scouting/nominate-eagle-scouting/n

Oratorical

The website for volunteer registration is currently being updated. Once completed, the registration link will be opened for volunteers to sign up. This information will be posted here and sent to Department Chairs and Adjutants.

Scholarships

- The American Legion Legacy Scholarship application is now open.
 Learn more and apply at: https://www.legion.org/get-involved/scholarships/the-american-legion-legacy-scholarship
- The Samsung American Legion Scholarship online application is now open for eligible youth attending an American Legion Boys State or American Legion Auxiliary Girls State program this year.

Learn more and apply at: https://www.legion.org/get-involved/scholarships/samsung-american-legion-scholarship

Boys State

All Boys State program dates and locations are now listed on Legion.org.

Check details here: https://www.legion.org/get-involved/youth-programs/boys-state-boys-nation/boys-state-eliaibility-dates

Please review for accuracy and report any updates or changes to jbennett@legion.org.

Boys Nation

Boys Nation is still looking for talented volunteer staff to actively participate in "a week that shapes a lifetime." Applications were provided to Department Adjutants and Boys State Directors.

Department-vetted applications can be sent to: boysnation@legion.org.

Department Convention

Hilton Orlando | Lake Buena Vista, FL

June 12-15, 2025







Doris "Dorie" Miller Post 331 Recognizes Service and Achievements

George McZeal Jr., Post 331



Doris "Dorie" Miller Post 331 reaffirms its commitment to youth by supporting Evans High School junior Beatrice Adrien, selected by Representative Bruce Antone as a Messenger for the Florida Legislature.

Congratulations to Mr. Darrell E. Gray on completing the Florida American Legion College Course in January 2025. As Post 331's Information Officer, his expanded knowledge will be a valuable asset.

The Commander and members thank Comrade Grav for his dedication and service to the Post.



Under the leadership of Post 331 Americanism Officer CAP Ron Beasley, Post 331 successfully recruited and commissioned Dr. Carlos Matorial into the U.S. Navy Medical Service Corps.

The Commander and members express their gratitude to CAP Ron Beasley for his tireless efforts and commitment to the Post.



Captain Ronald Beasley













Post 331 Children's Christmas Give-a-way





Florida American Legion Summit & Expo

Holiday Inn Resort, Orlando, FL February 12-15, 2025



www.floridalegion.org

Post Everlasting

"If they are remembered, they are not gone truly, they simply change duty assignments and are amongst the best

Phillip R. "Phil" Hearlson



It is with deep regret that we announce the passing of Past Department Commander Phillip R. "Phil" Hearlson of Summerfield, FL, at the age of 86 on January 10, 2025. Phil is survived by his wife, Past Department President Peggy

Hearlson; son, Brian; and daughter, Karen. At this time, there are no details regarding services. Updates will be shared via email and posted on our website as they become available.

Phil was a proud U.S. Marine and a Vietnam War veteran. He joined the Marines immediately after graduating high school in 1956 and served honorably for 30 years, retiring in 1986. A devoted member of Veterans Memorial Post 347, Phil demonstrated 28 continuous years of service and commitment to The American Legion.

Throughout his years of dedication, Phil held numerous leadership roles at various levels within the organization.

At the Post level, he served in every capacity, most notably as Post Commander from 2001 to 2003 and again from 2012 to 2013. At the District level, Phil served as 4th District Vice Commander from 2003 to 2004 and District Commander from 2004 to 2006. His exceptional leadership was recognized during the 2004—2005 term when he was awarded a membership ring for achieving the highest renewal percentage in the District.

At the Department level, Phil's contributions were vast. He served as Department Sgt-at-Arms from 2006 to 2007, Northern Area Commander from 2007 to 2008, Department Vice Commander from 2008 to 2009, and Department Commander from 2009 to 2010. Phil also held several committee roles, including serving on the Department Time & Place Committee from 2002 to 2007 and again from 2010 to 2015, chairing the committee from 2010 to 2014. Additionally, he served on the Department Finance Committee from 2010 to 2015 and as Department National Security Chair from 2019 to 2022.

Phil's influence extended to the national level, where he served on the Americanism Council from 2003 to 2013 and again from 2015 to 2017. He was a member of the Legislative Council from 2011 to 2019 and the National Security Commission from 2020 to 2022.

Phil's unwavering commitment to The American Legion, his community, and his country will be deeply missed. His legacy of service and dedication will remain an inspiration to all who knew him.

Condolences may be sent to his wife, Peggy Hearlson, at: 14050 SE 53rd Ave.; Summerfield, FL 34491

Funeral services will be held on Friday,
February 7, 2024, at Hiers-Baxley Funeral Home
in The Villages, FL. A viewing will begin at 10:00 AM,
followed by a service at 11:00 AM. Interment will take
place at Bushnell National Cemetery in Bushnell, FL.

A celebration of life will follow at Post 347 in Lady Lake.







TRAINING ★ MENTORSHIP ★ CONTINUITY



MEMBERSHIP TARGET REPORT

January 30, 2025 (85%)

Janioar y o		
District 4	Doug Hockenberry	90.26%
District 5	Miguel Garcia	88.95%
District 17	Bryant Thorpe	88.18%
District 13	Keith Berres	86.10%
District 7	Kalvin Thompson	85.16%
District 6	Joan Suelter	83.57%
District 2	Doyle Combs Jr.	83.29%
District 12	Daniel Martin	82.98%
District 1	Jason Skobel	82.63%
District 8	Charlie Magnus	82.54%
District 9	Jim Tewes	81.96%
District 14	Faustino Benitez	81.86%
District 11	Toni Sutherland	81.65%
District 3	Stuart Scott	80.49%
District 16	Michael Harley	80.33%
District 15	Andrew Davis	78.51%
Northern	Jim Bowers	88.01%
Southwestern	John Rauh	84.48%
Eastern	Bruce Thurber	83.31%
Western	Shelby Windham	82.72%
Southern	Teddy Pomerantz	81.80%
Central	Rick Orzechowski	80.51%
Post 400		78.04%
Post 208		63.78%



TRAVEL WITH CONFIDENCE

Learn How the Legionnaire Emergency Assistance Plus (EA+®) Helps You Handle Travel Emergencies.



Any time you have an accident or sudden illness while traveling away from home, Emergency Assistance Plus provides a crucial safety net that helps coordinate and provide for emergency medical transportation your health or travel

insurance generally will NOT cover. EA+ steps in to provide Medical Evacuation, Transportation Home, Medical Assistance, Travel Assistance, and Assistance for Companions.

Secure your EA+ protection today!



1-888-293-4008



www.TheLIT.com/Emergency-Assistance-Plus

Emergency Assistance Plus® (EA+®) is not insurance, it is a membership plan. This is only an outline of the plan's features. Hospitalization (admitted as an inpatient) is a requirement to be eligible for some services. All services must be arranged and provided by EA+. Please read the EA+ Member Guide carefully to understand all the services available to you, as well as any rules and regulations. Visit www.TheLIT.com/Emergency-Assistance-Plus to view a sample of the EA+ Plan details.









National Convention Volunteer Interest Form

August 22-28, 2025 in Tampa Bay, FL

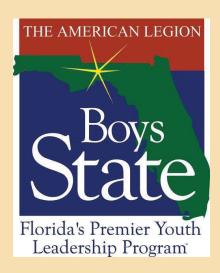
Return to Department or email to resolutions@legionmail.org

Name:				
Phone:	Email:			
When is the best time to contact you? ☐ Anytime ☐ Morning ☐ Afternoon ☐ Evening				
What is the best way to contact you? ☐ Email ☐ Phone ☐ Either Method				
VOLUNTEERING				
How would you like to volunteer? (Selection	ct all that apply)			
☐ Badges and Packets Committee☐ Distinguished Guests Committee☐ Memorial Service Committee	☐ Information/Registration Committee☐ Special Events Committee☐ Tampa Liaison	☐ National Commander's Driver☐ National Adjutant's Driver☐ General Tasks		
Are you interested in serving as Chair fo	or any of the committees you selected? \Box	Yes □ No □ Undecided		
Are you a member of any of the following	ng? (Select all that apply)			
☐ The American Legion☐ Sons of The American Legion☐ Not a member	☐ American Legion Auxiliary ☐ The American Legion Riders			
Do you have any special skills or experie	ence that would be beneficial? (Please expla	in)		
Are you able to attend the 2025 Nations	al Convention? □ Yes □ No □ Not Sur	e		

*Lodging and travel expenses will be the responsibility of the volunteer. Parking will be provided.







SAVE the DATE

To Support Our Future Leaders



When: May 10, 2025

Time: 5pm

What: Dinner and Auctions

Price: Single \$35 or Couples \$65

Where: The American Legion

Department of Florida Headquarters

1912 A Lee Rd, Orlando, Fl 32810

Blocked & Discounted rooms at Marriott.

Be on the lookout for more information!





American Legion Riders

February 12-15, 2025

Summit & Expo

Help the Florida ALR Leadership team
"Building Foundations, One Mile at a Time".
Learn about the Four Pillars and how we as
Legion Riders can build our Chapters and
support The American Legion Family while
doing what we love, RIDING.

Registration and Information



Made with PosterMyWalf.com



Join us Wednesday, February 12, 2025 from 6:00pm - 8:00pm for a fun networking event.

Holiday Inn Resort Orlando Lake Buena Vista 13351 State Road 535 Orlando, FL 3282











THE CENTRAL AREA LEADERSHIP

Presents



SATURDAY MARCH 8

AT WINTER HAVEN POST 8

COCKTAILS/GAMES AT 5:00PM DINNER SERVICE AT 6:00PM TICKETS:

\$45

PER PERSON OR \$80 PER COUPLE Tickets include dinner and casino "cash" that can be used to play your favorite casino games.

Dress like 007 or your favorite Bond girl or villain!



CASINO GAMES - LIVE DJ - RAFFLES - DOOR PRIZES

PROCEEDS BENEFIT: C.O.T.A, OPERATION 300, AND OPERATION COMFORT WARRIOR

MENU: 1905 SALAD - STUFFED MUSHROOMS - BEEF TENDERLOIN - POTATOES - DESSERT -

RSVP /Make checks payable to: Michael Sherman (813) 541-3452 - vccentral@floridasons.org Mail to: 7519 Winging Way Dr, Tampa, FL 33615



Mail Checks to: Commander Joe Kiley, Post 120, 461 Walker St.; Holly Hill, FL 32117 Credit card payment call 407 484 6020



DEPARTMENT OF FLORIDA SOUTHERN AREA BALL!!

DATE: SATURDAY FEBRUARY 1, 2025

Please join us in celebrating the American Legion Department of Florida's Southern Area.



4 Chaplains, Sunday, February 2nd @2pm
IT Parker Community Center,
901 NE 3rd Street, Dania Beach, FI

After party Post 304, Dania Beach

Featuring Sounds by "Top Shelf"

Program Ad Forms

\$120, Full page \$100
Half page \$50

form on Dept. website

Cocktail hour 6pm with hors d'oeuvres

Dinner served at 7pm

ENTRÉE OPTIONS:
PRIME RIB
CHICKEN MARSALA

Admission ticket: \$40
Business Casual

Deadline: Jan. 23, 2025

STERLING MCCLELLAN

American Legion Post 142

171 SW 2nd St Pompano Beach, FL 33060 954-942-2448

or

Contact: Johnny Castro

Zelle payment option-

(Ads and Tickets)

561-290-9980

American Legion Southern Area Ball

Advertising Agreement

YES! I want to advertise in the American Legion Department of Florida's Southern Area Ball

Program Book. Premium Full Page \$120.00

Full Page	\$100.00	
Half Page	\$50.00	
Business Name:	Ame	
Point of Contact	i:	Amt. Paid
Phone#:		
E-mail:		Cash:
		Check #
Must be submitted	d by January 23, 2025	
	Q;	onature:

Make Checks Payable To: American Legion Post 142 171 SW 2nd St Pompano Beach, FL 33060 Contact: Rob McCarten

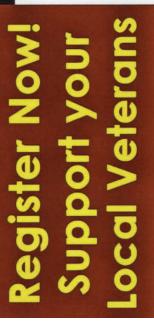
Mobile: (646) 246-5948 Njirish11@gmail.com

Johnny Castro

Zelle payment option:

561-290-9980





at American Legion Post 127 Race Starts at 8:00 am March 15, 2025 Saturday



















WESTERN AREA COMMANDER'S BALL
JOIN US FOR A NIGHT OF HONORING HERITAGE

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WESTERN AREA HOEDOWN

9/000/0

MARCH 29TH 2025

POST 75 898 EAST JAMES LEE BLVD CRESTVIEW. FL SOCIAL HOUR 4:30 DINNER 5:30

WEAR YOUR FAVORITE WESTERN ATTIRE

ALL PROCEEDS GO TO RALLY CHILDHOOD CANCER RESEARCH



WE WILL HAVE STAFF OPERATED CATERING ENTREE OPTIONS: BRISKET OR CHICKEN

SUGGESTED DONATION

TICKETS: \$35 INDIVIDUAL

PURCHASE HERE



TIVE MUSIC BY

CHEVENNE

STARTS AT 7:30 PM

American Legion Post 75 is a nonprofit, tax-exempt charitable organization under section 501 c(19) of the Internal Revenue Service. Donations