



BE THE ONE

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Submit Articles at
floridalegion.org/submit or legionlink@floridalegion.org
Questions? legionlink@floridalegion.org

Keep it Real

A Message from the Department Commander

Chris Hamrick, Commander

commander@floridalegion.org



American Legion family here in Florida has remained strong and committed.

Across the state, our posts have continued to be centers of service—hosting events, honoring our veterans, mentoring youth, and supporting our communities. Whether it was a flag retirement ceremony, a fundraiser for a veteran in need, or a quiet moment spent helping someone through a tough time, your work made a difference.

Membership remains a focus. We're not quite at last year's numbers yet, but we're pushing hard. Every new member reminds us that what we do still matters. The need is still there—and so are we.

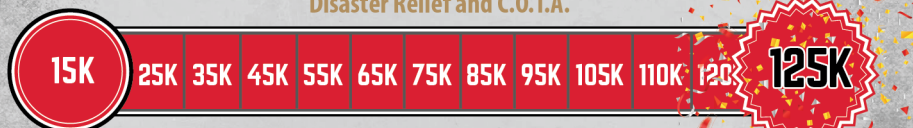
From our youth programs to our advocacy efforts to the daily support we offer our fellow veterans, we've made an impact. And we're not slowing down.

To everyone who gave their time, energy, and heart this year—thank you. Let's carry that same spirit into 2026 and keep showing Florida what the American Legion is all about.

Thank you

COMMANDER'S CHARITIES

Disaster Relief and C.O.T.A.



Commander's New Goal: \$125,000 (Current funds raised \$125,924.24)



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ONE TEAM, ONE DREAM: The Power of Teamwork

Jessica Moore, 1st Vice Commander

1stvice@legionmail.org



When I think of the word teamwork, my mind goes in many directions. I think of the whole state of Florida pulling together after a natural disaster. I think of so many Legion Posts throughout the

state that operate as one united family. I think of all the Oratorical contestants who've had their families, teachers, and friends working together as a team to prepare and support them. And I think of this past weekend, as I watched DCCs and District Commanders come together.

Simply put, teamwork happens when people unite to successfully complete a task or mission. It's about creating a positive environment where everyone feels safe, supported, and motivated to give their best. That spirit leads to better results—and lasting success.

If elected as your Department Commander, I look forward to continuing that spirit. For me, being part of a team means being part of something greater than myself. Teamwork saves time, improves the quality of our work, and allows people with diverse perspectives and talents to collaborate and reach the best outcomes. Relying too much on any one person isn't always efficient—but sharing the load and supporting one another? That's how we succeed.

Today, technology helps us strengthen our teams even further. Through videoconferencing, Zoom calls, and electronic meetings, we can stay connected across time and distance. Members can join from anywhere, at any hour, and teams can "meet" for as long as it takes to reach a goal—be it days, weeks, or months.

My motto—and my hashtag—has been and will continue to be: ONE TEAM, ONE DREAM. Because I truly believe it's all about the team. And I look forward to every family joining mine.

A Heartfelt Thank You as the Year Comes to a Close

Bob Matheson, 2nd Vice Commander

2ndvice@legionmail.org



It's hard to believe that the Legion year is coming to an end. It seems like just the other day we were all together at Convention. This year has been a challenging one for many of our Posts, especially those recovering from storms. As we move into a new year, let's hope we can avoid any further damage to our Posts and our homes.

Throughout the year, I've had the opportunity to travel across the state, promoting and supporting

Training and Programs. I can't thank the Area Commanders, District Commanders, and Posts I've visited enough for the warm hospitality they've shown. I am both humbled and grateful for the opportunity to serve as your 2nd Vice Commander.

As we step into the next Legion year, I look forward to continuing this journey with all of you—and to working together to make the American Legion and the Department of Florida the very best it can be.

UPCOMING EVENTS

JUNE 2025

1-30	PTSD Awareness Month
1	Be The One Day
1	Post Officer Reports Due *
1	Certification of Officers Due *
1	Baseball Team Rosters Due *
2	History Books Due *
6	D-Day (1944)
7	Chapter 316: ALR Monthly Meeting
8	Chapter 8: ALR Meeting
12-15	106th Dept Convention *🇺🇸
12	Women Veterans Day
12	History Books Due by 3:30 PM *
12	Dept Convention Kick-Off Party *🇺🇸
13	Commander's & President's Banquet *🇺🇸
13	Baseball Team Rosters Due to Chair *
14	Spring Raffle Drawing *
14	Flag Day
14	US Army Birthday (1775)
15	Father's Day
15	Baseball Team Roster Freeze *
15-21	81st Boys State Session *🇺🇸
16	Dept HQ Closed *
19	Juneteenth (Dept HQ Closed) *
19	First Day of Summer
20	American Eagle Day
20	US Coast Guard Auxiliary Birthday (1939)
23	Korean War Starts (1950)
25	PTSD Awareness Month

****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 floridalegion.org.



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What's Coming Up in Florida and Beyond

Jim Ramos, NEC

nec@legionmail.org



Plan to join us for the Department of Florida Convention, June 12–15, 2025, at the Hilton Orlando in Lake Buena Vista.

This is a can't-miss opportunity to connect, learn, and prepare for the year ahead. Be sure to check the agenda online—training sessions and classes are available for new officers and anyone who needs a refresher.

What's Happening at the National Level?

The NEC Spring Meetings (May 7–8, 2025) have wrapped up. So what's next?

On Wednesday, the meeting opened by following the 2024 Officer's Guide and Manual of Ceremonies, beginning on page 41 for the NEC regular meeting. The two-day agenda included opening remarks from our National Commander, Past National Commanders (PNCs), program chairs, and special guests, including:

- **Auxiliary National President Trish Ward** (Kansas), who offered greetings and an inspiring message.
- **SAL National Commander Joseph R.**

Navarrette (New Mexico), who also shared his message of unity and support.

National Vice Commanders' Reports

Gary B. Leach (California), James C. Kellogg (Minnesota), Charles K. Robbins (New Jersey), Joseph A. Lysaght (South Carolina), and Roger P. Mathison (Wisconsin) gave updates—each emphasizing the critical need to grow and retain membership.

Resolutions: A Key Focus

One of our most important responsibilities is reviewing and voting on resolutions. You can view the outcomes at <https://www.legion.org/about/organization/resolutions>. These pages are updated manually, so please be patient—it may take a week or two to reflect the latest decisions.

Also of note: The next NEC Spring Meetings will be held May 4–7, 2026, in Indianapolis, IN. Future meeting dates are already posted online for the next three years.

NEC Meeting Highlights:

- **Wednesday, May 7, 2025**

Morning session (Part 1 of Resolutions): 9:00 AM – 11:20 AM

Afternoon session: continued until approximately 3:00 PM

National Commander's Reception: 5:30 PM, followed by dinner at 6:30 PM

- **Thursday, May 8, 2025**

Morning session: began at 8:30 AM

Included confirmation of interim appointments

Charter confirmations and cancellations

Final resolution reviews and special matters

Want to Learn More About NEC?

If you're interested in diving deeper into how the NEC operates, I encourage you to read the following resources, available for free download at <https://www.legion.org/information-center/in-the-media/publications/organization-membership-awards>:

1. National Constitution and By-Laws
2. Rules of the National Executive Committee of The American Legion
3. Uniform Code of Procedure for the Organization of National Conventions
4. [2024 Officer's Guide and Manual of Ceremonies](#)

I'm Jim Ramos, your NEC from Florida, and I'm here to help my fellow Florida Legionnaires. If you have any questions, don't hesitate to reach out:

Email: NEC@legionmail.org

Phone: 352-226-4370 (please leave a message—I don't have everyone's number!) Thank you, and I look forward to serving you.

Honoring Our Legacy: A Year as Department Historian

Elbert Ziegler, Historian

historian@legionmail.org



As this Legion year draws to a close, I write to you with a deep sense of gratitude, pride, and reflection. It has truly been one of the greatest honors of my life to serve as the Department of Florida

Historian. Being selected and entrusted with this responsibility was more than a title—it was a call to preserve our shared legacy, tell our story, and ensure that the deeds of our Legionnaires are never forgotten.

Throughout this past year, I've had the privilege of visiting Posts across our great state—from the Panhandle to the Keys. Each visit reminded me

of the incredible work being done every day by Legionnaires, Auxiliary members, Sons of The American Legion, and Legion Riders. I met veterans who serve with purpose, leaders who inspire with quiet dedication, and communities uplifted by the presence of our organization. These experiences have strengthened my belief in our mission and have left an indelible mark on my heart.

Historian continued on page 4 >>



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<< Historian continued from page 3

To Commander Christopher Hamrick—thank you for your confidence in me. Your leadership and vision for the Department of Florida have guided us through a year of reconnection, rebuilding, and renewed purpose. I am proud to have served on your team and grateful for the trust you placed in me.

As we prepare for the upcoming Department Convention in June, I extend my heartfelt congratulations to Edward Lewis, the incoming

Department Historian for 2025–2026. Edward brings a spirit of excellence and a passion for preserving our history, and I am confident he will carry this torch with honor and integrity. I also congratulate all newly elected and appointed Department Officers—may your term be filled with success, unity, and growth.

One of the highlights of our Convention will be the presentation and judging of this year's Post History Books. I look forward to seeing the dedication, creativity, and detail each Post has poured into

documenting its story. These books are more than records—they are testaments to a year of service, sacrifice, and impact. I am honored to assist in judging them and celebrating the tremendous efforts of our Post Historians.

As I close this chapter, I do so with a full heart. Thank you for allowing me to serve. Thank you for sharing your stories. And thank you for making this year one I will cherish forever.

A Lasting Tribute: Honoring Heroes at Post 273

Rick Orzechowski, Central Area Commander
central@legionmail.org



Honoring Heroes and Their Legacy

On April 25, 2025, a remarkable dedication ceremony took place at Post 273 in Madeira Beach, Florida. The event—an emotional and deeply meaningful tribute—was led by Commander Anthony Torregrossa, who dedicated a 155 MM Howitzer as a memorial to honor three extraordinary individuals: Ray Perez, Monte Palmer, and Daniel Koker. Each of these men exemplified unwavering dedication, both in service to the military and to The American Legion.

Honoring Ray Perez

Ray Perez was celebrated for embodying the true spirit of a Legionnaire. His commitment to service

and leadership left an indelible mark on the Legion community. His legacy is a testament to the values, camaraderie, and integrity that The American Legion upholds.

Celebrating Monte Palmer

Monte Palmer, who lived for more than a century, was an extraordinary individual whose life was a living chronicle of dedication and resilience. His long and storied journey serves as an inspiration to all who knew him, reminding us of the strength, wisdom, and honor that come with a life devoted to service.

Remembering Daniel Koker

Daniel Koker played a pivotal role in bringing this memorial to life. His efforts in requisitioning the 155 MM Howitzer and ensuring its place at Post 273 highlight his enduring commitment to honoring veterans and preserving their memory for future

generations.

A Monument to Perpetuity

The 155 MM Howitzer now stands as a powerful and enduring symbol, commemorating the lives and accomplishments of these three heroes. This monument not only celebrates their extraordinary contributions but also serves as a reminder of the sacrifices and dedication of all veterans. It will remain in perpetuity, ensuring that their stories continue to inspire for generations to come.

The ceremony was a moving celebration of these men's lives, their service to the military, and their invaluable contributions to The American Legion. Their legacies are forever etched into the history of Post 273, the community of Madeira Beach, and the hearts of all who attended.



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Wrapping Up the Year and Reaching Out to the Community

Bruce Thurber, Eastern Area Commander

eastern@legionmail.org



This year is rapidly coming to a close. Post CPRs and addendums are due by May 7th. If you haven't submitted them yet, please reach out to your District Commander for assistance.

As we close out the year, consider taking a moment to share your Post's impact by submitting an article to your local newspaper. It's a great way to let your community know who we are and the vital role your Post plays.

May is also filled with opportunities to engage and honor those we serve. Don't forget the important dates this month:

- Mother's Day
- Armed Forces Day
- Memorial Day

This is a perfect time to open your Post doors to the community—host an event, volunteer, or simply share what we do as Legionnaires. Let's show our neighbors what The American Legion is all about.

Why Every Legionnaire Should Attend the Department Convention

Jim Bowers, Northern Area Commander

northern@legionmail.org



A Legionnaire should consider attending their Department Convention for several compelling reasons:

1. Strengthening Camaraderie &

Brotherhood

The convention is a rare opportunity to meet fellow Legionnaires from across the department, exchange stories, and build lasting bonds with like-minded veterans who share a commitment to service.

2. Influencing Policies & Decisions

Members have a direct voice in shaping the direction of The American Legion within their department. Whether it's voting on resolutions, discussing key veteran issues, or collaborating on initiatives, attending ensures they have a say in policies that affect them and their fellow members.

3. Educational Workshops & Resources

Department conventions often provide valuable training sessions and workshops focused on veteran benefits, leadership development, advocacy efforts, and community service opportunities.

4. Honoring & Recognizing Service

Many conventions include award ceremonies, moments of remembrance, and celebrations of the Legion's achievements—giving attendees a chance to witness and participate in recognizing the extraordinary service of fellow members.

5. Networking & Leadership Opportunities

Whether you're looking to take on a leadership role or simply connect with influential Legionnaires, attending opens doors for mentorship and new ways to make an impact.

6. Rejuvenating Patriotism & Mission Focus

Being surrounded by fellow veterans helps reignite a passion for service. The convention reminds us why we joined and reaffirms our commitment to supporting veterans, military families, and our communities.

Attending a department convention is more than just a meeting—it's a chance to be part of something greater, to make a real difference, and to help ensure that The American Legion remains a powerful force for veterans and communities alike.

Additional Networking Opportunities at Convention

Attending also provides a wide variety of networking opportunities that can help Legionnaires strengthen connections, share knowledge, and build meaningful

relationships. Here are just a few:

1. Meet-and-Greet Sessions

Scheduled mixers or receptions provide a relaxed setting for introductions and camaraderie.

2. Committee & Leadership Meetings

Sitting in on these discussions gives attendees direct access to decision-makers and veteran leaders, offering insight and a platform to contribute ideas.

3. Vendor & Exhibitor Interactions

Many conventions include organizations, businesses, and nonprofits that support veterans. These connections can lead to partnerships, sponsorships, or access to new resources.

4. Panel Discussions & Q&A Sessions

Asking questions or sharing insights during panels can spark deeper conversations with speakers and fellow attendees.

5. Collaborative Service Project Planning

Teaming up with others who share your passions—like youth programs or disaster relief—can help launch initiatives that extend far beyond the convention.

6. Mentorship & Career Networking

Northern Area continued on page 6 >>



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<< Northern Area continued from page 5

Veterans seeking career support or professional development can connect with mentors, explore programs, or engage with employment-focused organizations.

7. Breakout Groups & Workshops

Topic-specific sessions—such as those on fundraising or legislative outreach—encourage

deeper dialogue and stronger relationships among those with common goals.

8. Casual Conversations & Shared Meals

Some of the most memorable networking happens over a cup of coffee or a shared meal, where real friendships and lasting connections are formed.

The Department Convention isn't just about formal business—it's a powerful opportunity to grow your network, strengthen your Post, and reinvigorate your dedication to our mission.

Would you like help drafting an invitation or speech that highlights these opportunities?

Leadership Update and Upcoming Schedule

Jim Wineland, American Legion Riders Chair

alr@legionmail.org



I know my last Link article focused on Bev and me working on our exit plan—here's our current update.

Jason Skobel is our Assistant ALR Chair, and the Assistant

Adjutant position is currently open. Loren King is serving as Chaplain. The Sergeant-at-Arms position is also open, and we are looking for two people to fill this role. Dave Campobasso is handling merchandise and will need help during the Convention, Fall Conference, Summit, and Rally. Lamar Camacho is our Webmaster. Joe Marcheggiani is one of our Road Captains—we still need two more. More updates are coming soon.

Regarding the Summit, we are working with the incoming leadership to assess our current situation and explore all options before committing to any changes in program content or location. Your feedback from the survey is crucial for making these adjustments. As always, your out-of-pocket expenses remain our top priority.

Thank you all for your dedication and commitment.

For the Cause, Not the Applause.

Your 2025–2026 Schedule:

- **Department Convention:** June 12–15, 2025
- **National Convention:** August 22–28, 2025
- **POW/MIA Ceremony, Jacksonville:** September 20, 2025

- **"Merry-Go-Round":** October 2025
- **Fall Conference:** November 21–23, 2025
- **Summit Meet & Greet:** February 18, 2026
- **Summit Classes:** February 19–21, 2026
- **"Round Robin":** April 2026
- **Children & Youth Picnic:** April 5, 2026
- **State Unity Ride:** April 20–24, 2026 (subject to change)
- **Rally:** April 25, 2026 (subject to change)

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!

REMINDER: The Meaning of Americanism

Wayne Mulligan, Americanism Chair

americanism@legionmail.org



To Professor Thompson, America is a country historically unlike any other—born not as an accident of history, but as a decision based on a specific philosophy. He emphasizes that Americanism is not something one is simply born into, but rather something one

chooses.

As Thompson writes, *"I was an American born in the wrong country. Only later did I realize that to be an American is a choice and a way of life."*

What is this "way of life"?

The American way of life is individualistic, dynamic, and pragmatic. It affirms the supreme value and

dignity of the individual. It stresses constant activity and ambition—for one is never to rest, but always to be striving to "get ahead." It promotes an ethic of self-reliance, merit, and character, and it judges individuals by their achievements: "deeds, not creeds" are what truly count. The American way of life is humanitarian, forward-looking, and optimistic.

Americanism continued on page 7 >>



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<< Americanism continued from page 6

Amer-i-can-ism

noun

1. A word, expression, or other feature that is characteristic of American English: *"The term is an Americanism dating back to the late nineteenth century."*

2. Attachment or allegiance to the traditions, institutions, and ideals of the United States: *"Americans in Europe have almost all preserved their Americanism."*

As members of The American Legion, we have a unique opportunity—through our programs and

outreach—to bring the elements of Americanism to the forefront every day. Let us continue to uphold and celebrate these ideals with pride.

A Year of Resilience and Record-Breaking Impact

Jamie Grinis, Blood Donor Chair

blooddonor@legionmail.org



The fiscal year has come to a close—and what a whirlwind it has been.

From fires and tornadoes to hurricanes galore reaching far and wide across our great state

of Florida, it seemed as though Mother Nature was determined to disrupt our way of life. Yet, through every challenge, the American Legion Family remained steadfast. We stayed the course and overcame every obstacle thrown in our path.

Last year, Florida ranked **#1 in Blood Donations** across the entire National Organization. Thanks

to the dedication of Legion Family members like you, we surpassed our previous goals by leaps and bounds.

This year alone, the American Legion Family hosted **416 blood donation events statewide**, resulting in **2,711 donations** and a total of **3,867 pints collected**—**four times** the amount collected the year before!

This vital elixir of life remains one of the simplest and most impactful programs to support and helps keep your charter active. All you need is a Blood Chair at your Post. A few phone calls to your local blood donation centers can keep a regular schedule of drives going all year long. It's a powerful recruitment tool—and a life-saving mission.

As you report your donations on the department website, be sure to consider applying for the **Margaret Skaggs Award**. We can't thank you enough for your efforts in submitting applications, and we encourage everyone to continue aiming for this honor. This year's competition was close, with just one Post emerging as the winner.

Looking ahead, let's continue preparing today so we're not rushing tomorrow when the next disaster strikes. It has been an honor to work with all of you this past year, and I can't wait to see what records we'll shatter together in 2025–2026, no matter what Mother Nature sends our way.

Thanks for a Great Year: Celebrating Achievements and Looking Ahead

Sonny Decker, Boys State Chair

boystate@legionmail.org

As this year comes to a close, there are a few achievements we must take a moment to recognize:

Boys State Fundraiser Success

Thank you to everyone who attended last month's second annual Boys State Fundraiser Dinner. Over 90 Boys State alumni and sponsors were in attendance. It was a wonderful evening where old friends reunited, and newcomers to the program

got a small glimpse of what to expect when Boys State goes into session on June 15, 2025, for its 81st session.

The event raised over \$3,600 through ticket sales and donations. In addition, we collected \$1,500 and received a pledge of another \$1,000 in scholarship contributions.

I can't say it enough—the committee did an outstanding job planning and executing this event. Thank you to each and every one of you who

gave your time and talents to make this such a successful fundraiser.

Record Delegate Attendance Despite Adversity

Despite the hurricanes and disasters that impacted our state, our American Legion Posts came through strong—sending 513 delegates to the 81st session of Boys State. We didn't leave anyone behind.

Make sure the boys your Post sponsored are invited

Boys State continued on page 8 >>



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<< Boys State continued from page 7

back to share their experiences. Consider hosting a welcome-back dinner so members of your Post can meet the young men and women representing them, and start building support for next year's fundraising efforts.

I want to extend my deepest thanks to the Department leadership for their continued support of both Boys State and Girls State. We've

accomplished a great deal this year, but there's still important work ahead. We are committed to getting the Alumni Foundation up and running.

A special thank-you to my Vice Chair, Darcy Bockman Wright—there are not enough words to express how much she does for this program.

Thank you also to Bekki Boorman, who keeps everything running smoothly behind the scenes and

patiently answers all of my questions.

Finally, thank you to the Department of Florida and all the Post members who have supported Boys State this past year. Your dedication is what makes this program possible.

Here's to another great year ahead!



District 1 Boys State Orientation

Supporting Our Future Leaders: Civil Air Patrol Program Update

Rico Thomas, Civil Air Patrol Chair

civilairpatrol@legionmail.org



First, thank you to Department Commander Hamrick for allowing me the honor of stepping into the role of Chair for the Department of Florida's newest program.

Over the past few months, I've worked to share insight into this incredible initiative in hopes that more Posts will consider supporting the young cadets involved. I've shared photos of Civil Air Patrol (CAP) Cadet awards and area awareness events I've attended in the Southern Area. These visits have deepened my understanding and appreciation of this

empowering youth program.

The Civil Air Patrol is congressionally chartered and serves as the official civilian auxiliary of the United States Air Force. The CAP Cadet Program welcomes students ages 12–18 and instills self-discipline, self-worth, and a passion for aviation and leadership.

These cadets could very well be our future leaders, air traffic controllers, or pilots—of both aircraft and drones. Your Post's support can have a big impact on helping these youth take flight (figuratively, of course!). Each squadron also offers adult volunteer leadership opportunities, so if you're interested in getting personally involved, I encourage you to reach out to your local squadron to learn more about their

requirements.

Special thanks to Loretta Young for her mentorship and continued support on this journey!

To find and support a CAP squadron near you, use the link below:

<https://flwg.cap.gov/join/unit-locator>

Please keep reaching out to me with your questions. Together, we can ensure this new youth program thrives across the state.

"Just Keeping It Real" — Thank you, Much Love!



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Honoring Cadet Achievement and Strengthening JROTC Partnerships

Loretta Young, JROTC/JSSP Chair

jrotc@legionmail.org



Over the past few weeks, I've had the privilege of attending numerous JROTC Year-End Awards and Change of Command Ceremonies. This is a special time when cadets are recognized for their hard work and

achievements throughout the semester.

I attended as many ceremonies as time would allow and found that each one was uniquely conducted. Most are organized by the cadets themselves, with the support of their instructors. Many feature presenters from a variety of service organizations—including the American Legion—as well as school faculty and staff. At some events, I witnessed the presentation of more than 180 medals, certificates, and awards. These included scholarships, cords of achievement, letters, and athletic honors.

Ceremonies are held at various times—from early morning (0800) to evening—and are often followed or preceded by dinner. Several schools have reached out to request that a Legion Commander or Chairman present the Scholastic and Military Excellence Medals and Certificates.

Please note: notices have already gone out for Posts to order these medals in the fall so they are ready for spring ceremonies. However, some schools have reported not receiving a response from their local Posts. It's essential that Posts reach out to their schools early in the fall semester. These medals are valuable tools for building relationships and showing our support for young leaders.

Email is the most effective way to contact instructors, as they are frequently out of the classroom. This is particularly true for general elective programs, unlike the full-week curriculum of Leadership Military Academies.

A Special Reminder:

We are still seeking JROTC Color Guard Units to participate in the Legion National Convention Color Guard Competition in Tampa on Friday, August 22nd.

Eligible Color Guard teams must perform drill regularly during the school semester as part of their program. There are only two forms that the Senior JROTC Instructor needs to complete and submit to the National Convention Committee no later than July 29th.

Full details can be found here:

<https://legion.org/convention/contests>

Thank you to everyone supporting our youth programs! If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to reach out. Your continued efforts make a lasting difference in the lives of these future leaders.



AFJROTC Dillard Award Ceremony 2025 Cadet Clark - Military



AFJROTC Dillard Award Ceremony 2025 Cadet Virgile - Scholastic

The Police Officer's Creed

Daryl Bass, Law & Order Chair

laworder@legionmail.org



Author Unknown

I believe in God—the Supreme Being, the Great Provider, and the Creator of all mankind and everything dear to me. In return, I can do no less

than love Him above all, obey His word, seek His guidance in the performance of my sworn duties, and honor Him at all times.

I believe that respect for authority is a duty. I respect and uphold the Constitution, the laws of the land, and all applicable rules and regulations. I recognize the legitimacy and authority of leadership and obey the lawful orders of my superior officers.

I believe in selfless love and service to others. Toward this end, I commit myself to the service of my fellow man, placing duty above personal interest.

I believe in the sanctity of marriage and in respect for women. I shall set the example of decency and morality, hold family life in high regard, and value

Law & Order continued on page 10 >>



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<< Law & Order continued from page 9

marital fidelity.

I believe in responsible dominion and stewardship over material things. I shall refrain from

extravagance and the ostentatious display of wealth. I shall respect both private and public property and prevent others from causing harm. I will help protect the environment and conserve nature to maintain ecological balance.

I believe in the wisdom of truthfulness. I must be trustworthy and speak the truth at all times.

Legislative Delays Impact Key Veteran and Youth Programs

Stuart Scott, Legislative Chair

legislative@legionmail.org



Florida's 2025 Legislative Session has extended beyond its original deadline, with ongoing budget negotiations delaying decisions on several critical issues—including key funding priorities for Florida's veterans and American Legion youth programs.

While lawmakers continue to debate education, healthcare, and infrastructure funding, several veteran- and youth-related initiatives supported by The American Legion remain in limbo.

Still Under Consideration:

- **Florida Department of Veterans' Affairs (FDVA) Enhancements**
Proposed funding increases for mental health services and upgrades to state-run veterans' homes are still being negotiated.
- **Workforce Reintegration Programs for Veterans**
Budget support for employment transition initiatives and certification assistance for recently

separated service members remains pending.

- **Homeless Veterans Support**

A multi-agency initiative to expand housing and social services for homeless veterans is under discussion as part of broader human services funding.

American Legion Youth Program Appropriations

- **Boys State & Girls State Transportation and Program Support**

A request for assistance with housing, meals at Florida State University, and other key program expenses remains on hold.

- **National Convention Transportation (Buses)**

Funding to support the transportation of attendees from hotels to the convention center and back—ensuring safe and efficient travel—has yet to be finalized.

These programs play a vital role in fostering civic engagement, leadership, and patriotism in Florida's next generation—and they rely heavily on state partnership and support.

What We're Doing

Despite the uncertain status of these appropriations, American Legion leadership continues to work diligently to ensure our priorities are heard. We are actively meeting with legislative staff, appropriations leaders, and veterans' caucus members to emphasize the significance of these programs.

Take Action

- **Call or email your state legislators.** Ask them to support full funding for veterans' programs and American Legion priorities.
- **Spread the word** in your Post and local community.
- **Stay informed** as budget talks continue—and be ready to mobilize if called.

The American Legion, Department of Florida, remains committed to advocating for the full spectrum of our programs—from veteran care to youth civic education. Your voice matters—together, we can make a difference.



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Congratulations and Thank You, Team Florida!

Bruce Carl, Membership Chair

membership@legionmail.org



Hello, Team Florida!

As we near the end of another year and prepare for Department Convention—just two weeks away—I want to take a moment to recognize and celebrate your incredible accomplishments.

Congratulations to the 4th and 14th Districts for a job well done in membership! Both qualified for the Race to the Top, with the 4th District finishing 1st in their category and the 14th finishing 2nd in theirs. Well done!

Despite setbacks caused by three major storms—which led to some Posts temporarily closing, rebuilding, and even losing members who relocated—we persevered and had a strong year. That's a testament to the resilience, dedication, and teamwork across our entire Department. From day one, I've referred to all of you as Team Florida, and you've proven exactly why.

A special shoutout to the Northern Area for reaching 100% as an Area! The following Districts also reached 100% by May 15th: the 4th, 5th, and 14th. Even more impressive, 118 Posts reached 100% by the May 7th deadline, with 63 of those Posts achieving 103% or higher. Congratulations to everyone who worked so hard this year to push membership across the finish line!

As of this writing, we still have a couple of weeks before the May 31st deadline to earn the coveted 100% +1 plaque, so final numbers will be announced at the Convention. It's also too early to name other award winners, but we'll find out those results in just a few weeks.

Currently, the Department of Florida is tied for 6th place nationally with a membership rate of 95.26%, needing only 4,912 members to reach 100%. That's within reach!

I want to personally thank Department Commander Chris Hamrick for the honor of serving as your Membership Chair for a second term. It has been a

privilege to lead in this role for the past two years. Thank you to every member of Team Florida for your support and dedication, which have kept us consistently among the top ten Departments in the nation.

I look forward to seeing many of you at Department Convention and again in Tampa for the National Convention in August.

In closing, a heartfelt thank you to our Department staff—your hard work and dedication behind the scenes make everything we do possible. Please be sure to thank them when you see them.

And lastly, I encourage all of you to continue supporting your incoming Membership Chair with the same enthusiasm and commitment you've shown me.

Thank you again, Team Florida! Let's keep moving forward and make our Department even bigger and better than ever before!

Planning Ahead: Let's Keep the Momentum Going!

Judith Richards, Post Development Chair

revitalization@legionmail.org



What a great year for membership! Several Posts reached out, and we shared ideas for revitalization—sparking engagement both within the communities they serve and among their

members. It was truly rewarding to work alongside the Membership Teams and Post Leadership throughout the year.

Rather than waiting until 2026 to schedule revitalizations, let's get them on the calendar now for August, September, October, and November! Plan events around Back-to-School season, Labor Day, Halloween, or Veterans Day to maximize outreach

and community involvement.

Is your District in need of a new Post? Curious about how to get started with Post Development?

Let's talk! I'd love to connect and discuss opportunities during the Department Convention in June.



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Honoring the Missing: POW/MIA Updates and National Advocacy

Denny Luke, POW/MIA Chair

powmia@legionmail.org



The Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency (DPAA) continues its vital mission to locate and identify missing Department of Defense personnel from past conflicts. Through their dedicated efforts, we are

honored to announce the repatriation of U.S. Army Master Sergeant George C. Manring of Lake Wales, Florida. Master Sergeant Manring was killed in action during the Korean War and was officially accounted for on March 17, 2025. His return home was completed on May 28, 2025.

Special thanks to Rick Orzechowski, Central Area Commander, for his outstanding work as a liaison between The American Legion, the DPAA, and Marion Nelson Funeral Home. It is always a solemn honor to participate in the return of one of our nation's missing heroes.

National POW/MIA Memorial Designation Effort

On April 29, 2025, Representative Aaron Bean (R-FL, 4th District) introduced House Resolution 3057 (H.R. 3057) to the 119th Congress. This resolution seeks to designate the POW/MIA Memorial and Museum in Jacksonville, Florida, as the National POW/MIA Memorial and Museum. This is Representative Bean's second time sponsoring such a bill. The resolution has been referred to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs and the Committee on Natural Resources.

For reference, Rep. Bean previously introduced H.R. 3670 to the 118th Congress on May 25, 2023. That bill began with 13 cosponsors and ultimately gained 22 by August 2023.

Your support is crucial. We encourage everyone to visit the POW/MIA Memorial website and sign the petition to help build momentum for this national designation. Increasing the number of cosponsors is now a top

priority.

Commemorative Dates in June

• June 6 – D-Day

The anniversary of the Allied invasion of Normandy in World War II, D-Day is commemorated with ceremonies honoring all who served—especially prisoners of war and those still missing. There are currently 71,939 service members still unaccounted for from WWII.

• June 14 – Flag Day

This day marks the adoption of the United States flag. Many observances prominently display the POW/MIA flag to honor and remember those still missing. Local ceremonies often include tributes to POWs and MIAs.

Let us continue to honor the sacrifices of our service members and remain steadfast in our commitment to bringing every missing hero home.

Stay Connected with POW/MIA Efforts

- Follow the Department of Florida's POW/MIA Facebook Page:
<https://www.facebook.com/falpovmia/>
- National POW/MIA Memorial & Museum:
<https://powmiamemorial.org/>
- Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency (DPAA):
<https://www.dpaa.mil/>

Current POW/MIA Statistics (May 12, 2025)

World War II: 76 | Korean War: 31 | Cold War: 0 | Vietnam War: 2

Recently Accounted For (March–April 2025)

April 7, 2025

Marine Accounted For From WWII (Newstrom, J.)

April 8, 2025

Soldier Accounted For From WWII (Johnston, D.)

Soldier Accounted For From Korean War (Nordyke, E.)

Soldier Accounted For From Korean War (Brewster, R.)

April 14, 2025

Soldier Accounted For From WWII (Bordner, A.)

Soldier Accounted For From Korean War (Solomon, L.)

Airman Accounted For From WWII (Causey, T.)

Soldier Accounted For From Korean War (Hathaway, A.)

April 15, 2025

Soldier Accounted For From WWII (Hennessey, H.)

April 16, 2025

USS CA Sailor Accounted For From WWII (Bowden, E.)

April 17, 2025

Soldier Accounted For From WWII (Aikman, R.)

Soldier Accounted For From Korean War (Manring, G.)

Soldier Accounted For From WWII (Thornton, I.)

April 21, 2025

Soldier Accounted For From Korean War (Estrada, A.)

Airman Accounted For From WWII (Michener, B.)

April 22, 2025

Soldier Accounted For From Korean War (Mestas, O.)

Soldier Accounted For From Korean War (Curley, G.)

Soldier Accounted For From WWII (Merrill, W.)

April 23, 2025

Sailor Accounted For From WWII (Newton, P.)

April 24, 2025

Airman Accounted For From WWII (Burke, S.)

Airman Accounted For From WWII (Carlin, H.)

Pilot Accounted For From WWII (McCook, C.)

April 29, 2025

Soldier Accounted For From WWII (Crouse, D.)

Airman Accounted For From WWII (Buttala, J.)

Airman Accounted For From WWII (Bays, D.)

Soldier Accounted For From Korean War (Barbiere, G.)

Soldier Accounted For From Korean War (Bowser, R.)

Soldier Accounted For From Korean War (Andrews, S.)

Soldier Accounted For From Korean War (Chavez, C.)

April 30, 2025

Airman Accounted For From WWII (Berrier, W.)

Airman Accounted For From Korean War (O'Dell, H.)



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June 2025

PROJECT: VETRELIEF

AS MAY ENDS, SO DOES ANOTHER CHAPTER FOR PVR

As we close out the month, we're also closing out our 11th year as a program—and what a year it's been! Over the past few years, PROJECT: VetRelief has reached significant milestones, including record highs in the number of veterans served through our Emergency Assistance Program and forming the strongest Strategic Partnerships yet for our Suicide Prevention initiative.

This year brought some unexpected challenges. After Lenora's retirement, we experienced delays in filling our Case Worker position. It took longer than anticipated, but we're incredibly grateful to now have Shenicia on board. She stepped into a heavy backlog of cases and, in just a few short months, has helped us return to a healthy turnaround time for financial assistance applications. Her efforts have made a tremendous difference already!

A friendly reminder: PROJECT: VetRelief is entirely funded by the generosity of others, especially our Florida Legion Family. We simply couldn't serve the veteran community at this scale without your continued support.

Our growing program statistics are proof that veterans continue to need us now more than ever—and this year especially reminded us how critical that support infrastructure is. Your donations directly impact our ability to be there when our veterans need us most.

As you begin planning your fundraising events for the upcoming year, please continue to keep PROJECT: VetRelief in mind—and don't forget to let us know what you're planning! We'd love to coordinate and join in whenever we can.

Together, our impact is so much greater!



PROJECT: VetRelief Training

FRI - June 13th @ 3:00 PM - 4:00 PM

We're excited to see everyone at the Department Convention, happening June 12–15 at the Hilton Orlando, Lake Buena Vista.

Join us for an informational training session on Friday from 3:00–4:00 PM in Hibiscus/Iris (room subject to change). During this session, we'll dive into the PROJECT VetRelief program and how it supports Florida veterans through financial assistance and suicide prevention efforts. No registration is required—all are welcome!

While we won't have a table in the vendor area this year, our team will be around throughout the weekend. Please feel free to stop us and say hello! Convention is a perfect opportunity to ask questions, share feedback, or tell us about any fundraising events you're planning for the upcoming year.

We look forward to connecting with you. **See you all there!**

ANNUAL IMPACT REPORT July '24 - June '25

124
Veterans Received
Financial Support

\$148,103
Provided as
Emergency Assistance

14
Suicide Prevention
Strategic Partners

\$138,000
Given towards
Veteran Suicide Prevention



Voting Instructions on Resolutions: What Delegates Need to Know

Clarence Hill, Resolutions Chair

resolutions@legionmail.org



The Internal Affairs Committee will meet on **Thursday afternoon, June 13, at 1:00 PM** in the **International Ballroom**.

During the Resolutions Report portion of the meeting, only the **RESOLVED** clauses of each resolution will be read aloud prior to a motion being made to accept or reject the resolution. This will be followed by discussion and a vote on the motion.

It is essential that delegates review the full text of each resolution in advance of the meeting.

Each Post is permitted one delegate to vote on all

matters to be decided at this session. All voting members must be wearing the black ribbon received from the delegation chairman as part of the convention registration package.

- Voting delegates are asked to sit in the center section of the room.
- Attendees without a black ribbon have no voice and no vote, and are asked not to sit in the center section or participate in discussion.

The results of any vote taken during this meeting will serve as a recommendation to the General Assembly when the Internal Affairs Committee presents its report on Resolutions.

At the General Assembly:

- Only the **RESOLVED** clauses of each resolution will be read.

- The Resolutions Committee's recommendation will be announced.
- The Chair will then make a motion reflecting that recommendation.

At that time, every registered delegate to the Convention will have a vote on the final disposition of each resolution on the Convention floor.

Reminder:

Everything the American Legion does is based on a resolution. If there is no resolution on a topic, the American Legion has no official position on it.

Thank you for your attention and commitment to this important process.

Make a Difference: The Power of the School Medals Program

Eric Loyd, School Medals

schoolmedals@legionmail.org



As the year comes to a close, I want to say **THANK YOU** to everyone who worked so hard on the School Medals Program. Getting school medals into our schools is a vital part of what The American Legion stands

for.

Yes, the cost of the medals may seem high—but they are absolutely worth it. They represent recognition, encouragement, and a powerful connection between our Posts and the next generation of leaders.

"MAKE A DIFFERENCE" has been my motto all year, and as both the school year and my time as School Medals Chairman come to an end, I urge you: don't wait. Start now by promoting the School Medal

Program at your Post and in your local schools.

I've already purchased my Post's school medals and JROTC medals for next year. Let's continue growing this important program.

BE THE ONE—to inspire, to support, and to **make a difference**.

Honoring the Journey: Women Veterans and the Road Ahead

Joan Suelter, Women Veterans Chair

womenvets@legionmail.org

It's hard to believe we're already winding down the 2024–2025 Legion year. It's been challenging, fun, and heartwarming.

As members of the Women Veteran Task Force

Committee, we've had the privilege of visiting many of your Posts and Districts—sharing our mission, listening to your concerns, and, more importantly, hearing the success stories that continue to drive the American Legion forward.

As we look ahead to July 2025, we remain

committed to continuing what we've started. There's still much work to be done—and it begins at the upcoming Department Convention in Orlando.

Please mark your calendars:

Women Veterans Outreach Training

Women Veterans continued on page 15 >>



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Thursday, June 12, 2025

11:00 AM — 12:00 PM

Hibiscus/Iris Room

Inspiring Future Generations

The success of women veterans serves as a powerful inspiration to young girls and women considering

a career in the military. Their stories illuminate the possibilities and opportunities that come with service—encouraging future generations to pursue their ambitions with confidence and courage.

We proudly celebrate and honor the achievements of women veterans, recognizing their invaluable

contributions to both military and civilian life. Their strength, resilience, and determination are a beacon of hope—and a reminder of the extraordinary potential within us all.

Till we meet again.

2025 Department of Florida Eagle Scout of the Year: Nicholas Storm

Chris Ragusa, Scouting Chair

scouting@legionmail.org



I am honored to introduce the recipient of the 2025 Department of Florida Eagle Scout of the Year—Nicholas Storm of Ponte Vedra Beach, Florida.

Among the criteria for this award, Nicholas's eligibility stems from the honorable service of his grandfather, James Henry Storm. Nicholas is a senior at Ponte Vedra High School, where he maintains an impressive 4.54 GPA. He earned the rank of Eagle Scout in 2022 as a member of Scouts BSA Troop 277, chartered to Christ Episcopal Church.

In addition to the 21 merit badges required to earn the rank of Eagle Scout, Nicholas went above and beyond—earning three Bronze Palms, three Gold Palms, and three Silver Palms, each representing five additional merit badges beyond the Eagle

requirements.

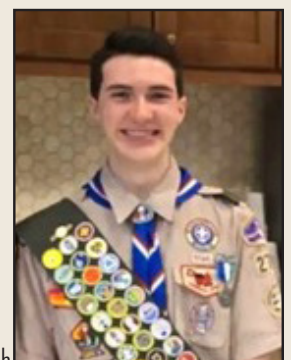
For his Eagle Scout Service Project, Nicholas designed and built a Conservation Prayer Garden that blended environmental stewardship with community education. He chose native, drought-resistant Florida plants to attract and support pollinators, birds, and butterflies. Each plant was labeled and accompanied by educational signage detailing its ecological benefits. Visitors to the garden gain a better understanding of how native species contribute to local biodiversity.

Nicholas led a team of 30 Scouts and volunteers, raised \$10,000 for materials and resources, and logged over 900 volunteer hours—240 of them personally—to bring his vision to life.

A high achiever (which is an understatement), Nicholas is a member of Scouting America's Order of the Arrow, Scouting's National Honor Society, and is a recipient of the William T. Hornaday Award (formerly known as the Distinguished Conservation

Service Award).

In 2024, he also attended Florida's American Legion Boys State, one of the most selective and respected educational programs on U.S. government for high school students.



Nicholas Storm

Nicholas plans to pursue a career in the medical field, where he hopes to combine his love for science, service, leadership, and empathy.

As part of this recognition, Nicholas received a \$2,500 scholarship, and his application has been submitted to the American Legion National Americanism Commission to compete at the national level. Good luck, Nicholas! I look forward to meeting him at the Department Convention later this month.

National Convention Planning: Volunteers Needed and Committees in Motion

Clarence Hill, 2025 National Con Corp President

resolutions@legionmail.org

The Chairpersons for the various committees have been appointed and are actively assembling their teams. They 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

The Chairpersons are contacting—or may have

already contacted—those who submitted volunteer forms. I have forwarded the forms received so far and will continue to pass them along as they come in. Please note: many of you volunteered for multiple committees, so you may be hearing from

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<< National Convention continued from page 15

more than one Chairperson.

As of this update, the State Legislature has not yet passed the budget, so we are still waiting on the status of our request for transportation funding and Boys State/Girls State support. In the meantime, donations and fundraisers from Posts, Auxiliaries, SAL, and Riders would be greatly appreciated.

We will be holding a planning meeting with all Chairpersons at the Department Convention in June

to finalize details. Additionally, the Chairpersons will meet with the national team just prior to the National Convention.

I have emphasized to everyone involved that this is an immense project for Florida. Your support—whether through volunteering, donations, or ideas—is absolutely critical to its success. We anticipate needing between 50 and 100 volunteers, and as we get closer to the event, deadlines will come fast.

Hosting a National Convention is no small task.

It requires significant funding, coordination, and effort, and with delegates from every department in attendance, every detail will be under scrutiny. That said, it's also a tremendous opportunity to showcase Florida and the strength of our Legion Family.

If you can help in any way, or have ideas to contribute, we want to hear from you. The volunteer form is available at: <https://www.floridalegion.org/volunteer> and on page 21.

Let's make Florida proud!

"The Whole Child" Bookazine Updated for 2025: Supporting Youth Across the Nation

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



The updated 2025 edition of "The Whole Child" bookazine is now available for download at legion.org/publications, under Youth & Family Support.

This publication reflects The American Legion's ongoing commitment to children and youth, highlighting the origins of the Whole Child concept, the many ways The American Legion supports young people through advocacy and assistance programs, and the widespread impact at the local, state, and national levels.

Programs featured include the Temporary Financial Assistance (TFA) program, the Child Welfare

Foundation (CWF), and other initiatives focused on health, safety, and family support.

Here are just a few powerful examples of that impact:

\$5,210,706 — Provided by local American Legion Posts in cash aid to benefit children in need within their communities in 2024.

8,701 — Local American Legion child health and safety programs conducted by Posts in 2024.

11,161 — Children whose homes were stabilized between 2013 and 2023 with help from Temporary Financial Assistance grants.

\$5,430,738 — Awarded in national TFA grants

over the last decade to support military and American Legion families with minor children facing financial emergencies.

\$21,536,485.50 — Granted by the American Legion Child Welfare Foundation since 1954 to nonprofits working to improve the physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual welfare of children and youth.

We encourage all members to download and read "The Whole Child" to better understand and promote the Legion's deep and lasting impact on America's future generations.

Access it today at: <https://www.legion.org/information-center/in-the-media/publications> under Youth & Family Support.

Celebrating 30 Years of Excellence – Thank You, Team!

Rocco Cirigliano, SAL Detachment Commander
commander@floridasons.org

Thank you, thank you, thank you!

Our Detachment has officially reached its 30th consecutive all-time high in membership—an incredible accomplishment made possible by your dedication and hard work. We're on track to receive the Triple Nickel Award, which includes:

- 105% membership
- 85% retention rate
- Five new squadrons

There's still time to make a final push! Please send in your membership cards—don't hold them. You've earned this award, and I want to make sure every

bit of your effort is recognized.

Congratulations to all newly elected and appointed officers!

A special welcome and heartfelt thanks to all the first-time officers—have fun and enjoy your term! For those continuing in office, please remember

Detachment Commander continued on page 17 >>



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to submit your Officer's Report and Year-End Reports. These documents are vital, as the National Organization uses them in its report to Congress.

Resources and Communications

Please take advantage of the many tools provided by the Detachment to assist with your daily operations. These resources can be found at: floridasons.org

Also, make sure you're signed up for the Florida SAL Email Group. This group helps us share important information quickly and clearly across the Detachment. Expect updates on events, membership, important notices from Detachment and Department leadership, National Headquarters news, and more.

Recent Travels and Events

My recent travels included:

- 12th District DCC at Post 394

- The Annual Wall Escort & All Veterans Reunion in Melbourne, FL
- The Children & Youth Golf Tournament at Post 347

Thank you to all the Posts and members who made these events memorable.

Charity Focus: Operation Comfort Warriors

My chosen charity this year is [Operation Comfort Warriors \(OCW\)](http://www.legion.org/ocw)—a program dedicated to providing comfort items to wounded, injured, or ill military personnel, especially those needs not met by the government.

Donations are vital. Most military medical centers can't store large quantities of care packages, so monetary donations make the greatest impact.

You can contribute by visiting www.legion.org/ocw or mailing a check to:

Operation Comfort Warriors

The American Legion
P.O. Box 1055
Indianapolis, IN 46206

No donation is too small. Every contribution makes a difference.

Looking Ahead

As we close out this successful year and prepare for 2025–2026, I want to say once again—thank you. Your dedication, commitment, and hospitality have made this past year something truly special. We've hit major milestones and had a lot of fun doing it.

Here's to an amazing 2024–2025—and to an even better year ahead.

Looking forward to seeing you at the Convention!

SAL Spring NEC Recap: Progress, Partnership, and Planning Ahead

William D. Kelly Jr., SAL NEC
nec@floridasons.org

The Sons of The American Legion held their semi-annual National Executive Committee Spring Meetings at the Sheraton Indianapolis City Center Hotel. Representing Florida were National Assistant Adjutant Ed Sheubrooks—making his final NEC appearance after nearly 30 years of service—Alternate NEC and Convention Committee Liaison Gerard Sambets, and myself.

I was honored to be appointed NEC Lead Liaison to the Internal Affairs Commission and the Subcommittee on Resolutions.

Committee Coordination & National Engagement

Ahead of the formal sessions, our delegation met to divide attendance among Commission and

Committee meetings. Rather than simply submit questions from our Detachment Leadership Team, John Jennings and I prepared a formal presentation. The National Adjutant, Liaison, and several Committee Chairs received printed copies.

Highlights from our five key questions:

- **Squadron Data Reports (SDRs):** No immediate plans for fillable, printable, or online portal-based SDRs
- **Online SAL Training:** Modules are in development but pending review by the American Legion's Internal Affairs Commission. No timeline available.
- **SAL Website:** Issues have been acknowledged; a new, improved site is in the works.
- **Missing Resolutions Online:** This was an

oversight and is now being addressed by HQ staff.

- **Communications Recognition:** National leaders were impressed with Florida's organized and professional approach to communicating Detachment concerns.

Saturday Session Highlights

National Commander Joseph Navarrete convened the official NEC session Saturday at 1 PM. Reports from Commissions and Committees followed. For the first time, the Commander's Advisory Committee provided a detailed handout including assessments, data, and conclusions.

Key updates:

- **SAL University** is on hold due to revisions at

SAL NEC continued on page 18 >>



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<< SAL NEC continued from page 17

the American Legion College.

- **New leadership training** is in development.
- **Monthly newsletter** (Millennium) is under review, and communications updates are being standardized.
- **Membership training videos** are in production.
- Efforts continue to establish a **SAL National Security Commission, Paid-Up-For-Life, and Multi-Year Membership** options.

Upcoming Highlights

- SAL National Convention in Tampa:
 - National C&Y Academy — Saturday, August 23, 2025
 - Detachment CDRs Training — Friday, August 22, 2025
 - Florida's Friday Night Social — JW Marriott Tampa

AZ Squadron 27 will present its "Membership Briefcase"

- Children & Youth Report Forms due July 23, 2025
- Veterans & Children Fund Goal for 2025: \$500,000
- Child Well-Being Foundation has raised \$231,000 as of April 5
- Scrapbook Judging Criteria to be updated next year

Resolutions Passed at Spring NEC

Pending final approval by The American Legion National Executive Committee:

- SAL Spring 1: Adjusted Snapshot of Service dates (July 1–June 30)
- SAL Spring 2: Adjusted Video of Service dates (June 1–July 30)
- SAL Spring 5: Established a National Regional Membership Award

- SAL Spring 7: Amended Triple Nickel Award to include a plaque
- SAL Spring 9: Updated Houghton Membership Award categories
- SAL Spring 10: Revised Scrapbook Contest rules

Final Thoughts

Our Detachment was recognized for its professionalism and proactive approach. Special thanks to Ed Sheubrooks, Gerard Sambets, Commander Rocky, and John Jennings for your leadership and contributions.

The 250th Anniversary of the United States is in 2026, and SAL Detachments are encouraged to plan celebrations. The 100th Anniversary of the Sons of The American Legion is on the horizon in 2032—start your planning now!

Let's continue to lead by example and shape a strong future for the Sons of The American Legion.

2025-2026 Endorsements On File (As of May 23, 2025)

- | | | |
|--|---|---|
| • Jessica Moore, Department Commander | • Doyle F. Combs, Jr., Western Area Commander | • Daniel Martin, District 12 Commander |
| • Bob Matheson, 1st Vice Commander | • Shelby Windham, Western Area Commander | • Laurene Allen-Flower, District 13 Commander |
| • Bruce Carl, 2nd Vice Commander | • Robert "Oz" Osmon, District 1 Commander | • Andrew Davis, District 15 Commander |
| • Barry Roberts, Chaplain | • Roxana "Roxann" Dressel, District 2 Commander | • Randy Holeyfield, District 15 Commander |
| • Edward Lewis, Historian | • Enrique "Rick" Cabrera, District 3 Commander | • Joseph Humet, District 15 Commander |
| • Troy Horsley, Sgt-at-Arms | • Darcy Bockman-Wright, District 4 Commander | • Michael G. Halrey, District 16 Commander |
| • Rick Orzechowski, Central Area Commander | • Miguel Garcia, District 5 Commander | • Jim Bowers, District 17 Commander |
| • Joan Suelter, Eastern Area Commander | • David M. Musser, District 6 Commander | |
| • Doug Hockenberry, Northern Area Commander | • Calvin Thompson, District 7 Commander | |
| • Stuart Scott, Northern Area Commander | • Charlie Magnus, District 8 Commander | |
| • George "Geo" Bograkas, Southern Area Commander | • James F. Tewes, District 9 Commander | |
| • Eric E. Loyd, Southwestern Area Commander | • Stanley R. Brown, Jr., District 11 Commander | |

For endorsement letters and updates, visit our website at <https://www.floridalegion.org/news-events/department-convention/endorsement-letters/>

DISASTER RELIEF

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MEMBERSHIP TARGET REPORT

May 29, 2025 (101%+1)

District 4	Doug Hockenberry	106.16%
District 14	Angela Glover	105.65%
District 5	Miguel Garcia	103.89%
District 17	Bryant Thorpe	100.44%
District 13	Keith Berres	98.38%
District 7	Kalvin Thompson	98.20%
District 1	Jason Skobel	97.31%
District 3	Stuart Scott	96.55%
District 12	Daniel Martin	96.37%
District 2	Doyle Combs, Jr.	95.73%
District 8	Charlie Magnus	95.31%
District 9	Jim Tewes	95.20%
District 16	Michael Harley	94.85%
District 6	Peter Gregory	94.73%
District 15	Andrew Davis	92.97%
District 11	Toni Sutherland	92.18%
Northern	Jim Bowers	102.71%
Western	Shelby Windham	97.09%
Southwestern	John Rauh	96.99%
Southern	Teddy Pomerantz	96.51%
Eastern	Bruce Thurber	95.46%
Central	Rick Orzechowski	94.80%
Post 400		85.04%
Post 208		71.52%



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★ ★ ★ FREQUENT WINNERS ★ ★ ★

The American Legion official license plate.



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THE AMERICAN LEGION

For God and Country

Greetings,

As Floridians, we are no strangers to devastating storms. Yet, the impact of Hurricanes Helene and Milton last season left lasting scars—many of our fellow Legionnaires and Posts are still working to rebuild their homes, communities, and lives. I have seen the hurricanes' destruction firsthand, and that experience solidified my commitment to making Disaster Relief one of my key charitable initiatives as your Department Commander.

In response to these emergencies, The American Legion, Department of Florida, established the Disaster Relief Fund—a vital resource that allows us to act swiftly and compassionately in the wake of natural disasters. Thanks to the incredible generosity of donors like you, this year we were able to support **76 families and 8 Posts, providing \$133,103.00 in aid** to help them recover and rebuild. *But our work is far from over.*

With the next hurricane season fast approaching—and experts predicting another active year with **17 named storms**—it's critical that we replenish our Disaster Relief Fund now. Timely preparation is the only way we can respond immediately and effectively when disaster strikes. We need your support to ensure that no veteran, Legionnaire, or Post is left behind when the next storm makes landfall.

I humbly ask that you or your Post consider donating to the Florida Disaster Relief Fund. Whether large or small, your contribution will help us remain ready to assist our Legion Family in their greatest time of need.

How to Donate:

- During General Session at **the upcoming Department Convention** in June
- **Online:** floridalegion.org/aid
- **By Mail:**
The American Legion, Department of Florida
Attn: Disaster Relief
1912A Lee Road
Orlando, FL 32810

Please make checks payable to The American Legion, Department of Florida, and include “*Disaster Relief*” in the memo line.

I've seen the heartbreak these storms leave behind—and I've also seen the power of our community to lift each other up. But we can only do that if the resources are there when the need arises.

Let's stand together once more to ensure we're prepared to serve those who served us.

For God and Country,

Stephen “Chris” Hamrick
Department Commander



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? (Select all that apply)

- | | | |
|---|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Badges and Packets Committee | <input type="checkbox"/> Information/Registration Committee | <input type="checkbox"/> National Commander's Driver |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Distinguished Guests Committee | <input type="checkbox"/> Special Events Committee | <input type="checkbox"/> National Adjutant's Driver |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Memorial Service Committee | <input type="checkbox"/> Tampa Liaison | <input type="checkbox"/> General Tasks |

Are you interested in serving as Chair for any of the committees you selected? ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Undecided

Are you a member of any of the following? (Select all that apply)

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> The American Legion | <input type="checkbox"/> American Legion Auxiliary |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sons of The American Legion | <input type="checkbox"/> The American Legion Riders |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Not a member | |

Do you have any special skills or experience that would be beneficial? (Please explain)

Are you able to attend the 2025 National Convention? ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not Sure

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

STAY GROOVY

COMMANDER'S ★ PRESIDENT'S BANQUET



HILTON ORLANDO LAKE BUENA VISTA ★ INTERNATIONAL SOUTH BALLROOM

FRIDAY ★ JUNE 13, 2025 ★ 7:30PM - 9:30PM

\$65 TICKETS

Cocktail hour starts at 6:30PM. Dinner is 7:30 PM - 9:30 PM. Dress-up is optional.
Visit floridalegion.org/banquet for additional information and online tickets.



AMERICAN
LEGION

Department
of Florida



COMMANDER'S ★ PRESIDENT'S BANQUET

STAY GROOVY



DINNER MENU



STARTER

Spinach and arugula salad



MAIN COURSE

Garlic herb roasted chicken breast served with, creamy orzo pasta with peas, carrots, and cremini mushrooms, and broccolini with tomatoes



DESSERT

Chocolate mousse cake with whipped cream and raspberry sauce



GET TICKETS ONLINE: www.floridalegion.org/banquet

Join us, June 13, 2025, 7:30 PM - 9:30 PM, Department Convention at Hilton Orlando Lake Buena Vista.

Yes, I would like to attend the Commander's & President's Banquet!

Name: _____ Phone: _____

of Tickets: _____ x \$65 each = Total Due \$ 0.00

Payment Type: ☐ Check ☐ Money Order ☐ Visa ☐ Mastercard ☐ Discover ☐ American Express

☐ Yes, I authorize my card to be charged for the total amount above.

Credit Card #: _____

Expiration: _____ Security Code: _____ Signature: _____

All tickets must be purchased in advance, quantities are limited. Tickets will be available for pickup during Convention located in the Headquarters Office.

Please mail to: The American Legion, Dept of Florida, Attention: Events, P.O. Box 547859; Orlando, FL 32854



CHEERS

BEERS

106TH ANNUAL DEPARTMENT CONVENTION, HILTON ORLANDO LAKE BUENA VISTA



DJ MJ JUNCTION88
PRODUCTIONS

06.12.2025
06:30 PM

POOL SIDE PARTY

FREE ADMISSION. FREE BEER AND REFRESHMENT, WHILE
SUPPLIES LAST. CASH BAR AVAILABLE. EVENT ENDS AT 8:30 PM.

BROUGHT TO YOU BY THE FLORIDA AMERICAN LEGION FAMILY



★ BEFORE YOU GO

More information at www.floridalegion.org

W Register ahead

Post Delegate/Alternate Registration
Register for Service Officer School
Food Handler's Class

W Special events

Legion Family Kick-Off Party
Commander's & President's Banquet

W Know before you go

DCC Meeting Schedule
Rules of Procedure
Voting Guidelines
Endorsements
Convention Deadlines
Post Paperwork
Accommodations
Parking

W Give support

Florida Spring Raffle
Vendor Exhibition
Sponsorships
Convention Book Advertising

W Show your Legion pride

Convention T-Shirts
R.E.D. Friday T-Shirts
2025-2026 Department Commanders' Polo
2025-2026 Detachment Commander's Polo

★ WHEN YOU'RE THERE

More information at www.floridalegion.org

01 Day 1: Thursday

On Arrival

Parking
Mobility Scooter Rentals
Accessibility Needs
Property Maps
Emblem Sales
Exhibitors
Nearby Attractions
Dining

Classes

Service Officer School Part I*
Membership Basic Training
Post Operations Training
Women Veterans Outreach Training
Food Handler's Course*
Membership Advanced Training
Fundraising Class
Buddy Check Training

Meetings & Business

Finance Committee Meeting
Internal Affairs
Executive Committee Meeting
Legion Riders District Chair Meeting

Special Events

Legion Family Kick-Off Party

02 Day 2: Friday

Classes

Service Officer School Part II*
PROJECT: VetRelief Class
Post Chaplain's Training
Post Sgt-at-Arms, Color & Honor Guard Training
Post Adjutant's Training
Post Judge Advocate Training
Post Historian/Social Media Class

Meetings & Business

Legion General Session Part I
Area Caucuses
20/4 Echelon 30 Meeting

Special Events

Cocktail Hour*
Commander's and President's Banquet*

03 Day 3: Saturday

Classes

Post Finance Officer Training
Legislative Training
Homeless Veterans Training
Post Commander's Training
Veterans Benefits

Meetings & Business

Legion General Session Part II
Electronic Voting*
Election Results
Legion Riders General Session

Special Events

Installation of Officers

04 Day 4: Sunday

Special Events

Religious Service

Meetings & Business

Executive Committee Meeting

Heading Home

Check-out
Drive Safely
Submit Feedback

Headquarters

Post Registration
Agendas
Membership & Program Materials
Florida Spring Raffle Tickets
Drop off Post History Books (Thurs)
General Inquiries

Emblem Sales

Shopping
Emblem Sales Orders Pickup
Banquet Tickets Pickup

*Check our website at floridalegion.org for deadlines, pre-registration requirements, tickets, and additional information.

All information is subject to change.



407.295.2631

mail@floridalegion.org

PO Box 547859
Orlando, FL 32810

www.floridalegion.org





Chapter 236

Saturday, October 11, 2025

ride for



SNOWBALL



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ALL PROCEEDS GO TO THE FLORIDA SNOWBALL EXPRESS

Registration: 8 AM at American Legion Post 236

KSU: 10 AM \$20 per rider \$10 per passenger

STOPS

Beverly Hills Post 237

Crystal River Post 155

Inglis Post 447

Williston Post 444

Legion Post 236



AMERICAN LEGION POST 236
9550 US HWY 27
Bronson, FL 32621
352-486-9128

Contact: Chris Sapp, 352-213-1035
e-mail: alrchapter236@gmail.com