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## A Message from the Department Commander

### Jessica Moore, Commander

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



March is upon us, and with that comes our trip to Washington, DC, the Department Oratorical Competition, a visit from our National Vice Commander, and our District membership drive.

I am looking forward to traveling to our Nation's Capital alongside Legionnaires, Auxiliary members, and Sons. Our visit to Arlington National Cemetery will provide an opportunity to honor those who made the ultimate sacrifice. Then we will meet with members of Congress and legislative staff to speak on our priorities for our brothers and sisters in uniform, our veterans, and their families.

We are honored to welcome our National Vice Commander, JD Larson, to our department. He will be attending our Department Oratorical Competition and then traveling to District 17 to focus on membership

efforts and share in fellowship and camaraderie with our posts. His visit reminds us that membership remains at the heart of everything we do.

As we enter the final stretch of our membership year, it is time for us to come together for one last strong push to reach our renewal goals. The period of March 1 – 15 has been designated as our District-wide membership campaign, and this effort will be critical to ensuring that every Post, Unit, Squadron, and chapter finishes the year successfully.

Membership is the lifeblood of our organization. Each renewal represents more than a number—it represents a veteran supported, a family connected, and a community strengthened. Our collective strength depends on the commitment of every member who believes in our mission of service to veterans, our military, our youth, and our nation.

March is a month of remembering, unity, and action. Together, we

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

**#oneteamonedream**



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# UPCOMING EVENTS

## MARCH 2026

- 28-4 Washington Conference ★🇺🇸
- 1 BE THE ONE Day
- 1-31 Women's History Month
- 1 Scholarship Applications Due 🌟
- 1 Membership Department/District Drive 🌟
- 1 District 13: Meeting
- 2 Read Across America Day
- 3 Navy Reserve Birthday (1915)
- 4 Membership Department 90% Goal 🌟
- 4 Hug a GI Day
- 4 Chapter 136: ALR Monthly Meeting
- 5 Navy Seabee Birthday (1942)
- 5 Membership Department Zoom Meeting 🌟
- 6 Northern Area Ball
- 7 Central Area Ball
- 7 Chapter 316: ALR Monthly Meeting
- 7 District 6: Meeting
- 7 District 9: Picnic
- 7 District 8: Meeting
- 8 International Women's Day
- 8 Daylight Saving Time Begins
- 8 District 13: BBQ Rib Throwdown
- 8 Chapter 8: ALR Meeting
- 8 District 5: Meeting
- 9 Boys State District Orientation Dates Due 🌟
- 9 Baseball Rulebook Changes Due ★
- 11 Membership National 90% Goal ★
- 11 Chapter 10: ALR Meeting
- 13 K-9 Veterans Day
- 13 Oratorical Department Walk Thru 🌟🇺🇸
- 13-20 District 17: National Vice Commander Visit
- 14 Department Oratorical Competition 🌟🇺🇸
- 14 District 16: Meeting and Picnic
- 15 American Legion Birthday (1919) 🇺🇸🌟
- 15 Legion Link Articles Due for April 🌟

<< Commander continued from page 1  
will honor our fallen, advocate for the living, support our youth, and strengthen our organization for the future!

Thank you all for your continued dedication, leadership, and commitment to our mission!

**#OneTeamOneDream**

**COMMANDER'S CHARITY:** *Special Olympics*

**\$76,054.51 RAISED**

80K	90K	100K	110K	120K	130K	140K	150K
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Go to [www.floridalegion.org/donate](http://www.floridalegion.org/donate) and choose support Commander's Charity: Special Olympics **\$150,000 GOAL**

### Beyond the Form: The Power of the Consolidated Post Report

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



#### Why Every Florida Post Should Complete the Consolidated Post Report

Each year, American Legion posts across Florida are asked to complete one of the organization's most important documents: the Consolidated Post Report (CPR). Far more than routine paperwork, the CPR is the official record of a post's service to veterans, youth, and the community. For both the Department of Florida and American Legion National Headquarters, this report is essential for demonstrating the Legion's statewide and nationwide impact.

Covering the period from June 1 through May 31, the CPR captures a wide range of activities—volunteer hours, community events, youth programs, funeral honors, donations, and more. Established in 1975, the CPR provides National Headquarters with the data needed

for congressional testimony, public relations efforts, and fulfilling the organization's federally chartered responsibilities. Even posts with limited activity are required to submit a report, and reasonable estimates are acceptable when exact numbers are unavailable.

#### Submission Requirements

American Legion National requires every post to submit a CPR annually. The preferred method is through MyLegion.org, where post officers can log in, access the CPR under Post Administration, and enter information throughout the year. The online system allows posts to save drafts, update activities as they occur, and submit the final report electronically. Once submitted, the CPR is automatically transmitted to National Headquarters and simultaneously shared with the Department of Florida. National and Department leadership encourage posts to complete and submit their CPR by May 15, ensuring timely inclusion in national reporting and

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## UPCOMING EVENTS

**MARCH 2026** (Continued)

- 17 St. Patrick's Day
- 18 Boys State Online Del/Alt Reg Closes ✨
- 19 Post 255: Vietnam Wall
- 20 First Day of Spring
- 20 Start of Iraqi Freedom (2003)
- 19-22 Florida Legion College ✨🌟
- 21 Rosie the Riveter Day
- 21 Eastern Area Ball 🌟
- 21 Southwestern Area: Children & Youth Picnic
- 22 District 6: Picnic
- 25 Medal of Honor Day
- 27 Baseball Domicile Establishment Deadline 🌟
- 28 Department Commander's Homecoming 🌟
- 28 Post 137: Leather and Lace
- 29 Vietnam War Veterans Day
- 31 District Commanders "Race to the Top" 🌟

🌟 Commander attendance tentative.

🌟 Department of Florida event.

🌟 National event.

Events are subject to change. More details at [floridalegion.org](http://floridalegion.org).

# DO YOU HAVE WHAT IT TAKES?

## BECOME A DEPARTMENT CHAIR.

**SEE PAGE 28**

<< 1st Vice Commander continued from page 2

congressional testimony.

For posts that prefer a manual option, National also provides a fillable PDF version of the CPR on Legion.org. Completed forms may be printed, emailed, or mailed to the Department of Florida, which will ensure they are recorded and forwarded appropriately.

### Why It Matters

The Department of Florida relies on CPR data to measure statewide engagement, support advocacy efforts, and highlight the meaningful work being done by posts across

the state. National uses the data to demonstrate the Legion's collective impact—millions of volunteer hours, thousands of community events, and countless acts of service that would otherwise go unrecognized.

Completing the CPR isn't just a requirement; it's an opportunity. Each report tells the story of a post's dedication, compassion, and commitment to service. By submitting the CPR annually, every Florida post helps strengthen the Legion's voice and ensures its legacy of service continues to be recognized at every level.

### Stepping Up to Lead: Understanding Post Officer Responsibilities

**Bruce Carl, 2nd Vice Commander**

[2ndvice@legionmail.org](mailto:2ndvice@legionmail.org)



Welcome to March, as we hopefully have left all the cold weather behind us! This month brings us spring, Women's History Month, Department

Oratorical, Legion College, and many more events. Be sure to check out the Department calendar for all the events! Please also check the deadlines for submissions for our programs. Most of them are due between now and April 15th. Don't miss out on the opportunity to recognize the best people in your Posts, Districts, and Areas!

It also means the first round of officer nominations for many of our Posts. Do you have what it takes to become a Post Officer? First and foremost,

remember that any position comes with a responsibility to yourself, your Post, and its members. If you do not feel you are qualified, or just want a title, this is probably not for you. The duties and responsibilities for each position can be found in the Officers Guide and at <https://www.legion.org/training>. You can do a search in the box to locate training for most of the positions. Many of the positions also have a manual specifically for that position (Sgt-at-Arms, Chaplain, Adjutant). In addition to all these resources, always check your Post C&BL, as the duties and responsibilities vary from Post to Post. I would like to provide you with a brief synopsis of some of the duties and responsibilities, so you get a general idea of what should be expected.

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<< 2nd Vice Commander continued from page 3

**Executive Board members** – Assist the Commander and assume positions as program chairs. Assist with making recommendations to the membership.

**Service Officer** – Provide assistance and awareness to all veterans and their dependents of the rights and benefits granted them by law. Know and utilize the expert services that are available in your area. Provide timely submission of claims information to ensure veterans and dependents are adequately represented. You must be recertified yearly.

**Sergeant-at-Arms** – Welcome new members to the Post. Know proper flag etiquette. Check ID cards before meetings and make sure no members are in the canteen during a meeting. Notify the Commander of any guests present and guard the meeting room during meetings and ceremonies. Drape the charter for deceased members. Preserve order at the meetings.

**Historian** – Provide a history of the Post's year. Attend events and take photos along with written articles. Maintain social media such as Facebook, newsletters, etc. Do a yearbook and enter it into the Department contest.

**Judge Advocate** – Provide professional advice on the conduct of business. Be familiar with Post, Department, and National C&BLs.

Be able to interpret and make a ruling on the legality of Post actions and decisions. Assist with the annual Post audit. Preside over Post trials (if not recused) and make sure all the Department of Florida Rules Governing Trials are followed to the letter. If your Post has a canteen, make sure there are House Rules and they are being followed.

**Chaplain** – You are the spiritual leader of the Post and should be someone that members and their dependents can speak to in confidence. Attend meetings, patriotic events, ceremonies, funerals, etc., to provide prayers. Visit the sick and send get-well or sympathy cards when needed.

**Finance Officer** – Someone with an accounting background is recommended. Maintain accurate records and be honest, as your Post depends on fiduciary responsibility. You are responsible for receiving and disbursing all funds. Give a monthly report to your members at the general meeting. You should also do an audit of any groups using the Post EIN (SAL, ALR, Honor Guard) at least quarterly. Assist with the yearly audit prior to the new Post Officers taking over.

**Adjutant** – You are the primary administrative officer, and your duties are very varied and can be quite tasking if you are performing your duties properly. Publish official orders, announcements, and communications to your members.

Maintain accurate meeting minutes, as trials and legal cases can use these. Maintain all Post records (including reports, correspondence, and all meeting minutes) for a seven-year period. Submit end-of-year reports such as CPRs, year-end awards, etc. You are responsible for the signing of most documents associated with the Post. In conjunction with the Finance Officer, make sure all insurance and licensing documents are filed in a timely manner.

**2nd Vice Commander** – Assist the Commander with all duties. Build a fun atmosphere for your members. Develop Post activities (games, entertainment, dinners, patriotic ceremonies, etc.). Look for ways to get members involved in activities.

**1st Vice Commander** – Your primary duties are getting new members and retaining the ones you have. You should know how to use mylegion.org. It is recommended you get a team to assist you, as one person can't do this alone. Do "buddy checks," membership drives, set up a membership table at Post and community events, and work the Post 400 list. Fill in for the Post Commander during their absence (know how to run a meeting, the C&BL, how to make an agenda, and follow protocol). Participate in Post ceremonies and events.

**Commander** – Lead and help the Post prosper. Supervise all officers

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<< 2nd Vice Commander continued from page 4

and committee chairs, encouraging the development of new ideas. Work with all the family groups. Participate in ceremonies, funerals, Post events, etc. Preside over Post meetings guided by the C&BL, Officers Manual, and Post body decisions. Remember you are the figurehead of the Post. You have no vote except in the case of a tie. It is not your Post, and you do not run the Post. Your members run the Post, and they make all final decisions!

**Executive Committee –**

Comprised of the officers and Executive Board. Responsible for day-to-day management of the Post, from the canteen to paying bills, and all operational affairs. Make recommendations to the General Membership for approval or denial, including expenditures, improvements, and anything outside the normal running of the Post.

I hope this gives you some idea of what to expect if you are interested

in an officer position. If you have any questions or would like more information, please check the above-mentioned manuals and training guides. You can also contact me or one of your District or Area Officers, as well as the Department. Your current officers should also be able to discuss the positions with you, and hopefully they are mentoring someone for those particular positions.

**A Great Florida Visit and 107 Years of Service**

**Jim Ramos, NEC**

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



Our National Commander, Dan Wiley, has now departed for another Department following a successful and memorable visit to Florida. Commander Dan shared his appreciation, saying, "Thank you all for a great visit. Florida was something great, and to the 12th District and the 6th District—thank you. Everyone was wonderful to see in the Legion Family."

A special thank you goes to the ALR "Riders" who came out on those cold mornings, ready to roll. Your dedication and support truly made a difference.

The visit began in the 12th District under the leadership of District Commander Daniel Martin. Post 1 welcomed the Commander with

a light breakfast and fellowship, followed by visits to Posts 359, 348 (lunch), 344 (including a Veterans Museum tour), and Post 22 for dinner—all in one full day.

Tuesday included visits to Posts 126, 358, 318 (lunch), 40, 189, and 117 for dinner before returning to the hotel. On Wednesday, the Commander visited Post 81 for breakfast, followed by Posts 394 (lunch), 200, and 332 before continuing on to the 6th District. To all the Posts in the 12th District—thank you for a great visit and outstanding hospitality.

In the 6th District, led by District Commander Dave Musser, the schedule remained just as full. Thursday began at Post 10 for breakfast, followed by Posts 80 and 286 (lunch). After checking into the hotel, the Commander toured Post 331 and later attended dinner at Department Headquarters,

generously sponsored by Post 331.

Friday's visits included Post 53 (breakfast), Post 112 (car show), Post 243 (lunch), Post 357, and Post 55 for dinner. Saturday included visits to Post 63 (breakfast), Post 101, Post 18 (light lunch), and Post 347 for dinner. Sunday wrapped up the tour with visits to Post 219 (breakfast), Post 239, and Post 35 (lunch), before heading to a hotel near the airport. On Monday morning, the Commander departed Florida. I returned to Department Headquarters to deliver the boxes of gifts presented during his visit. Commander Dan said, "NEC Jim, it was a great visit and everything was great. Thank you, Florida Legionnaires."

March also marks a very special time for The American Legion as we celebrate 107 years of service, March 15–17, 2026. We are 107

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<< NEC continued from page 5

years young. Please take time at your Post to recognize what our members have accomplished for our country and our communities. It is important that we continue to keep our members engaged, interested, and always welcome.

A strong Post begins with simple actions. Always greet every member and guest. Take a moment with new members and ask how they

are doing. Show them around the Post and explain what we do. Share your newsletter if you have one. Ask if it is their first visit. Let them know about the Legion Family, including the Auxiliary, Sons, and Riders. If you do not know the answer to a question, ask someone who does. Engagement begins with conversation.

Above all, remember our number one mission: "Be the One." Veteran suicide prevention remains a top

priority. Encourage veterans to speak up and say, "No, stop—let's talk." Encourage seeking help from a trusted friend. Know how to access emergency support, whether by calling 911, going to the VA, or visiting a hospital. Learn more at [betheone.org](http://betheone.org). Ask questions. Start conversations. Be present.

Thank you. I am here at your service. If you have questions, please first go through your Chain of Command.



### A Memorable Visit and a Reminder on Protocol

**Michael Raymond, ANEC**

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



It was an amazing visit by our National Commander, Daniel Wiley, last month, and he was quite impressed with the Department of Florida. The Riders showed up in sub-freezing temperatures every morning to escort us from Post to Post. My hat is definitely off to them. Each Post put

on a wonderful display of Family and Teamwork.

Although our Commander is very friendly and outgoing, we must remember he is our National Commander and must be given the respect he deserves. One very important thing to remember is always to address him by his title, never by his first name. In Florida, we have certain local protocols that

I'm sure most of us have been taught. Not all Departments follow the same rules. Be very careful if you decide to correct someone for eating with their cap on—it might come back to bite you.

We are now getting ready for our National Vice Commander on March 14th. Let's be ready for him. Keep up the great work—it's showing.

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## Building a Strong Foundation: Preparing Your Annual Post Budget

Shirley Douglas, Finance Officer

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



It's that time of year to start thinking about preparing your Annual Post Budget. A well-planned nonprofit budget is your roadmap for making mission-driven financial decisions. It helps you allocate resources strategically, demonstrate stewardship to donors, and navigate through both planned growth and unexpected challenges.

Unlike for-profit budgets that focus on profit maximization, nonprofit budgets balance mission impact with financial sustainability. The budget must account for restricted funding, program-specific expenses, and the unique reporting requirements that come with accepting donor contributions and grant awards.

Beyond internal planning, your budget is a critical communication tool. Foundations review your budget before awarding grants. Post Officers rely on budget-to-actual reports to fulfill their fiduciary oversight responsibilities.

*Below are four key points to remember when preparing the Annual Post Budget:*

- **Program-first budgeting:** Structure your budget around programs and mission delivery, not just expense categories, to demonstrate impact.

- **Align with IRS Form 990 categories:** Build your budget using functional expense categories (program services, management & general, fundraising) to simplify year-end reporting.
- **Plan for restricted funds:** Track restricted and unrestricted revenue separately to ensure you spend donor-designated funds appropriately.
- **Budget vs. actual tracking:** Monthly variance (actual amount minus budgeted amount = variance) analysis helps you spot problems early and make data-driven adjustments throughout the year.

*Nonprofit budgeting has six unique characteristics:*

- **Mission over profit:** Your budget prioritizes program impact and community benefit rather than profit margins or shareholder returns.
- **Revenue restrictions:** Much of your income may be restricted to specific purposes (program-designated grants, donor-restricted gifts, capital campaign funds). Your budget must track these restrictions and ensure compliant spending.
- **Functional expense allocation:** You must categorize expenses by function (program services, management & general, fundraising) to comply with accounting standards and provide

transparency to donors. When budgeting expenses, make sure you include all costs. For example, if you have employees, budget not only salaries but also payroll taxes, pension/401(k), and insurance that the Post is required to pay for all employees.

- **Uncertain revenue:** Unlike businesses with predictable sales, nonprofits often face volatile income streams dependent on donor behavior, economic conditions, and successful grant applications.
- **Multiple funding sources:** Your budget may combine individual donations, foundation grants, government contracts, earned revenue, and event income.
- **Calculate the Post's reserve target:** Your budget should include a line item for reserve building or reserve allocation. Financial best practices recommend nonprofits maintain three to six months of operating expenses in unrestricted reserves.

The internet offers numerous websites that provide free nonprofit budget templates. Here is one website that I used to prepare this article: <https://www.aplos.com/free-nonprofit-downloads-guide>





## Seeking Qualified Legionnaires: Assistant Judge Advocate Appointment (2026–2027)

**R. Curtis McNeil, Asst. Judge Advocate**  
[assistantja@legionmail.org](mailto:assistantja@legionmail.org)



The American Legion Department of Florida is now accepting interest from qualified Legionnaires for appointment as

Department Assistant Judge Advocate for the 2026–2027 term.

Attorneys (active or retired) are preferred.

If you are interested, please submit the following information:

- Name
- Post number
- Brief summary of qualifications

Send responses to the current Department Assistant Judge Advocate, R. Curtis McNeil (incoming Department Judge Advocate), at: [assistantja@legionmail.org](mailto:assistantja@legionmail.org)

Thank you for your continued dedication and support of Florida’s veterans!

## Preparing for the Inevitable: A Guide to VA Survivor Benefits

**Rick Orzechowski, Central Area Cmdr**  
[central@legionmail.org](mailto:central@legionmail.org)



I know this is not something we like to discuss, but it is very important to know this information because, as we all know, we will eventually have to deal with it. I had a friend who recently had to face this situation and asked for assistance. Thank goodness for The American Legion’s website, because I was able to help them.

I am writing this article to try to simplify one of the more difficult tasks a survivor faces after the death of a veteran: completing the numerous claims forms for VA survivors’ benefits. The anxiety and fear of the unknown—who to call, what to do, or where to go for help—can make this an unpleasant and exhausting experience. To help ease the burden on loved ones,

veterans can also make preparations in advance.

### Here are some basic quick tips:

Ensure you have access to the veteran’s discharge certificate or DD-214. You can obtain a copy by submitting a request online through the National Archives “eVetRecs” website or by completing the Standard Form 180 (SF-180), which is available at [VA.gov](http://VA.gov).

Have the veteran’s VA claim number or Social Security number available, along with the veteran’s death certificate. You will also need copies of all marriage certificates and divorce decrees (if any), a copy of each child’s birth certificate (or adoption order), and the veteran’s birth certificate to determine parents’ benefits.

The VA will also provide eligible

veterans, spouses, and dependents with a no-cost headstone or marker, a burial flag, and military funeral honors at any VA national cemetery. There are three ways to apply for assistance:

1. At time of need – Funeral directors usually assist with securing these benefits.
2. Pre-need – Veterans can apply for a “pre-need determination of eligibility” to plan in advance.
3. Information – Visit the VA Burial and Memorials website or call the National Cemetery Scheduling Office at 800-535-1117.

I also found out while researching this information that spouses and minor children are eligible to be buried in a national cemetery, even if they predecease the veteran. I hope this was helpful.



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## The Politics of Inclusion: Strengthening Our Legion Family

Geo Bograkos, Southern Area Cmdr

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



An American Legion, or any organization, can only be as successful as the people who belong allow it to be.

“Treat everyone the way you would want to be treated.” It’s a phrase we’ve no doubt heard many times as we grew up and throughout the years as part of “The Golden Rule,” and it still rings true today. Common courtesy and kindness are practices that just can’t go wrong. And at its core, it is that very hospitality which defines inclusion. After all, everyone wants to feel as if they are welcomed, accepted, and wanted.

That’s why inclusion matters — because when we lean into inclusive practices, we are really working toward infusing our American Legion Families at the Post, Unit, District, Area, and Department levels with active members who can bring a wealth of ideas to help us in our mission of service. In our Legion Family, we talk about ways to recruit, retain, and rejoin members so that we can ensure our mission of service to our veterans continues. And today’s veterans, military, their families, and our communities are made up of so many different individuals with so many needs. By bringing as many active participants and different ideas to the table as possible, we are ensuring we are better equipped to serve and meet them.

This sentiment is certainly true when we look at how to be inclusive of individuals with special abilities or needs. Disability awareness is crucial, but true inclusion moves beyond accepting their presence to supporting their active participation in our programs. So, what are some key features of inclusion that we can use as tips and tricks to support individuals of ALL abilities to participate in every aspect of our Legion Family, from meetings to leadership roles?

### **Create intentional interactions.**

It’s really important that we not only give a wave or a smile, but that we actively and intentionally take the time to engage with individuals, especially those who might have special abilities. By spending time getting to know our members, we make them feel welcomed and supported, AND we get the chance to identify their passions and skills that can be utilized in our service work! Maybe they are really proficient with technology and would be a great fit to support efforts related to website buildouts and public relations/marketing efforts! Perhaps they are super organized and would make a great fit as secretary! Intentional interactions pave the way for powerful participation.

### **Provide individualized supports.**

Have you ever been in a meeting and not been able to hear the speaker clearly because they just wouldn’t use the microphone? Imagine being a person who is deaf or hard of hearing! It wouldn’t be very welcoming to come to meetings but never know what’s going on or being said. You could try offering reserved seating up front for members who need to be closer, or even provide written copies of remarks ahead of time so that members could read and follow along as reports are given. What a great way to ensure all members can participate!

### **Don’t forget your sociology.**

Always remember that at the heart of inclusion is the desire for a sense of belonging! Sometimes, individuals with special abilities get left out unintentionally. We fear saying the wrong thing, or we simply don’t know how to approach them, or worse, we assume that because they have special needs, they won’t be able to complete the duties and responsibilities of some of our roles and positions within the organization. Here’s the tip: Never presume; instead, seek to understand and support. Maybe with some extra directions ahead of time or pre-written prayers, that once-shy individual shines bright as your chaplain. Who knew! When we seek to expand opportunities for everyone, relying on understanding

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<< *Southern Area Cmdr continued from page 9*  
instead of limiting based on our perceptions, we get far greater outcomes!

Thank you to everyone who supported and attended the 2026 Southern Area Ball: We sold out the room and raised thousands of dollars for Special Olympics Florida, which we will be

presenting to Commander Jessica Moore at her Homecoming on March 28th.

Finally, if you have not already done so, please visit and 'FOLLOW' the first-ever Southern Area Facebook page, where you may share all your Facebook posts of your events with everyone in Districts 9, 11, 14, and beyond: <https://www.facebook.com/SouthernAreaFL>

[com/SouthernAreaFL](https://www.facebook.com/SouthernAreaFL)

Or just use this QR code to take you right to the page:



Wishing you and yours a very Happy St. Patrick's Day.

### Step Up and Lead: Preparing for Post Elections

**Eric Loyd, Southwestern Area Cmdr**  
[southwestern@legionmail.org](mailto:southwestern@legionmail.org)



I AW National and Department Constitution and By-Laws, ANY member in good standing can run for any position. As the Post elections approach, it's time to start thinking about who is being nominated or signing up for the positions at your post. EVERYONE

who is running MUST be VERIFIED eligible, so get your DD-214 ready to show the appointed person IAW your Post's Constitution and By-Laws.

If you are ready to make a difference, then please step up and run for a position. It's a year of dedication to the Post and your fellow veterans. Also, my recommendation is to go to the Post and see how to do that position by observing who is doing

it now. Read your Constitution and By-Laws as well to see what the job description is. **ONE OF THE MOST IMPORTANT PARTS OF ANY POSITION IS TO KNOW YOUR POST, DEPARTMENT, AND NATIONAL CONSTITUTION AND BY-LAWS.**

**BE THE ONE TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE, BE THE ONE TO SAVE A LIFE.**

### Finishing Strong: Membership, Training, and What's Ahead

**Kalvin Thompson, District 7 Cmdr**  
[district7@legionmail.org](mailto:district7@legionmail.org)



I would like to extend my sincere appreciation to the Mulberry Post 72 American Legion Family for hosting the 7th District meeting and picnic.

It was a tremendous event, well organized and well attended by our District membership. The fellowship, participation, and hospitality demonstrated the strength and unity of our District.

Now, we turn our focus to the work

ahead.

March 5th marks our next membership benchmark of 90%. We are officially in crunch time. I encourage every Post to continue reaching out to non-renewed members and to actively engage our Post 400 members. Personal contact remains our most effective tool—phone calls, emails, and direct conversations make a difference.

Every Post in the 7th District is close enough and capable enough to achieve 100% by March 31st. This

goal is within reach. Together, we can secure Race to the Top and demonstrate to the Department that the 7th District stands as strong as any District in Florida.

In addition, I strongly encourage all Post officers and members to complete the American Legion Extension Institute (A.L.E.I.) Basic Training course. This online training provides essential knowledge of Legion programs, structure, and leadership responsibilities. It

*continued on page 11 >>*



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<< District 7 Cmdr continued from page 10

strengthens individual leadership capacity and enhances overall Post performance. Members can register for and complete the course at: <https://register.legion.org/alei/basic-training>

Finally, we will be scheduling an Adjutant/Report Training session in April. This training will ensure that all Posts have the necessary tools, knowledge, and resources to properly complete and submit their Consolidated Post Reports and all other required submissions in a timely

and accurate manner. Further details will be forthcoming.

Thank you for your continued leadership, dedication, and commitment to our veterans and our communities. Let's finish this membership year strong.

### Summit Success and Looking Ahead to 2026

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



The 2026 Summit is now behind us. Changing locations required significant coordination, and I would like to thank Jason Skobel for

his efforts in making the transition successful. Your feedback is essential as we plan for next year, so please take a moment to complete the survey.

This year marked our first event at Seminole Harley-Davidson, where I purchased my motorcycle in 2023. I have been consistently pleased with their service and support. During a service visit, discussions about American Legion Riders activities led them to enthusiastically offer their location for our annual Rally.

We value your perspective on Seminole Harley-Davidson and ask that you share your feedback through the survey. Their support included food, live music, and a share of merchandise and motorcycle sales during the event, making the decision to change locations an easy one.

#### Safety

We are available to support your upcoming events and promote motorcycle safety throughout the year. To schedule participation or request safety materials, please contact us so we can add your event to the calendar and prepare the necessary resources. If you have ideas or suggestions, we welcome your input.

#### 2025–2026 Schedule

- **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, Post 117**  
April 11, 2026
- **State Unity Ride**  
April 20–24, 2026
- **Rally**  
April 25, 2026

Thank you for your continued dedication. Bev and I are proud to be part of such an outstanding leadership team.

### March in Action: Honoring Service, History, and Community

Joe Marcheggiani, Americanism  
[americanism@legionmail.org](mailto:americanism@legionmail.org)



March is a busy month for The American Legion. Posts across the country mark a series of significant observances that reflect the enduring

mission of The American Legion—veterans advocacy, patriotism, and community service.

Legionnaires commemorate the organization's founding in 1919 by members of the American Expeditionary Forces returning

from World War I on March 15. Chartered by Congress later that year, The American Legion has since grown into one of the nation's largest veterans service organizations.

Local posts traditionally celebrate

*continued on page 12 >>*





<< *Americanism continued from page 11*

the birthday with community dinners, recognition ceremonies, and keynote speeches honoring the organization's history and ongoing service. These gatherings often reflect on more than a century of advocacy for veterans' benefits, youth programs, and national security.

Coinciding with birthday celebrations, many posts conduct "Buddy Checks," a signature initiative encouraging members to reach out to fellow veterans. During the designated week, Legionnaires call, visit, or message other veterans to offer support, camaraderie, and assistance if needed.

The program underscores the Legion's commitment to combating veteran isolation and promoting mental health awareness. In many communities, Buddy Checks have connected veterans with critical resources, including VA services, employment assistance, and peer support networks.

On March 29, we honor our Vietnam veterans. We pay tribute to the approximately nine million Americans who served during the Vietnam

War era on National Vietnam War Veterans Day. Ceremonies often include wreath-laying, guest speakers, and recognition of local Vietnam veterans.

The day serves as a solemn reminder of the sacrifices made during a complex chapter in American history and reinforces the Legion's ongoing advocacy for Vietnam-era veterans and their families.

Another significant March observance is National Medal of Honor Day on March 25. The Legion joins communities nationwide in fostering public appreciation for recipients of the nation's highest military decoration, the Medal of Honor.

Through educational programs and commemorative events, posts help ensure that the valor and selflessness demonstrated by recipients are remembered and honored by future generations.

Throughout March, recognized nationally as Women's History Month, The American Legion highlights the service and achievements of women veterans.

Posts host educational programs, recognition ceremonies, and outreach initiatives that acknowledge the growing role of women in the U.S. Armed Forces and within the Legion itself.

These observances align with the organization's broader commitment to inclusivity and support for all who have served.

In keeping with its Americanism pillar, The American Legion presents Americanism awards at the national, department (state), and post levels. These honors recognize individuals and organizations demonstrating exceptional patriotism, community service, and dedication to youth development.

Recipients often include educators, law enforcement officers, civic leaders, and young citizens whose actions reflect the values the Legion has upheld since 1919.

As you read this, it is time to nominate your members and others in the community for their due diligence in keeping with the spirit of Americanism.

### **Busy March: Elections, CPRs, and the Gift of Life**

**Jamie Grinis, Blood Donor**

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

March is a beehive of activity for all of the Posts this month. So many things to do and so little time to get it done. Sound familiar? Every Post is hard at work completing all the

things we need for our election needs and making sure we fill out our CPRs properly. As you are aware, each Post needs a program to keep their Post Charter active.

This month is the perfect time to help

one another by hosting a Blood Drive starting this month. Florida is growing each month, with many people relocating from all over America. Our blood banks are in great need of replenishing their

*continued on page 13 >>*



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<< *Blood Donor continued from page 12*

stock. Let's face it, Florida is a pint or two off. So let's get busy and lend an arm and give a pint or two this month. January was a great month nationwide for donations. February fell behind a little. That is greatly due to weather and the fear of needles. Both excuses, not reasons. So let's rise to the top once again as we

seek the gift of the Elixir of Life.

As you fill out your CPRs, don't forget to fill out the Blood Donor easy fill-in form to record the pints that you show on your reports.

This is my last year as Blood Donor Chair. Please notify our 1st Vice Commander, Robert Matheson,

should you wish to be considered for the position.

I look forward to seeing all of your activity reports. Do not forget to put yourselves in for the awards mentioned on the Department's Program site.

## A Marine's Fight for Citizenship: An Uncertain Future

**Gene Smith, Immigration**

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



For more than five years, I have been working with a Marine Corps veteran to become a naturalized citizen. You know the story and the events

which took place in his life through previous articles. I want to let you know the court has finally ruled, and it is not good news for Paul Canton. If you remember, Paul came to the United States from Australia on a student visa in the early nineties. He liked the people and the way of life here in our country. Someone told him that if he joined the U.S. military, he would become a citizen upon receiving an honorable discharge. Paul joined the United States Marine Corps, and the rest is history.

In an email dated February 6, 2026, from Elizabeth Ricci, Esq., of Rambana and Ricci, PLLC, Immigration Attorney, Tallahassee, the undesirable news was transmitted to me. It reads in part:

"Today the judge issued an

order granting the Government/ Defendants' Cross Motion for Summary Judgment and denying my Motion for Summary Judgment. He directed the Clerk to enter judgment in favor of Defendants and against us and to thereafter terminate any pending motions and deadlines and close the case."

According to Ms. Ricci, "...the judge will not have an evidentiary or any kind of hearing and is not reviewing the case de novo as we requested." Further, Ms. Ricci indicated that since Paul claimed citizenship following his discharge from the Marine Corps, this makes him ineligible for a waiver in obtaining a "Green Card" through his adult son.

Ms. Ricci suggested the only thing which could help now would be a request to Senators Moody and Scott for a Special Bill granting Paul citizenship. Unfortunately, the political climate is such that I am not confident a request would be acted upon by the United States Senate at this time. I yield to our Legislative Chair for any input he may have on

requesting a "Special Bill" for Paul Canton, a Marine who served four years of active duty and three years of Reserve time back in the early 1990s and received an Honorable Discharge. I solicit anyone's help in saving Paul from deportation. At this juncture, he has no state citizenship status. Paul's future is in the hands of the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS).

In closing, I am despondent. I have known Paul Canton now for over five years. I have lived through his ordeal every day as Chairperson of this committee. It affected his family's unity. His wife passed away, and stress from the ordeal may have played a key role in her passing. He went from living the American Dream to looking over his shoulder as to who may be approaching him to take away the dream and country he so much loves.

Finally, it appears "voting in national elections" is the culprit for Paul's demise. How did he get his voter registration card? Is it not a shared

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<< Immigration continued from page 13

responsibility with an Elections Office clerk? Someone authorized Paul to obtain a voter registration card by showing a DD-214. As you and I know, a DD-214 is not a certificate of naturalization. Further, why did the Marine Corps not advise him to go directly to USCIS when he was honorably discharged from the Corps?

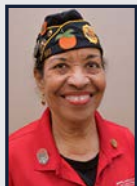
I do not know what the future holds for Paul. For me personally, there are too many unanswered questions as to how this young man, who came to the States legally and desired to stay here, served seven years in the United States military, married an American citizen, lawfully worked and supported his family, paid his obligatory federal taxes, and participated in and supported

community activities, is now hanging on by a thread from being deported to who knows where. Paul needs his fellow veterans' support and his adopted country's forgiveness. I pray that somehow someone will step forward and help bring a deserved citizenship closure to this nightmare for Paul Canton and his family.

### **Excellence on Display: JROTC Reviews and State Marksmanship Results**

**Loretta Young, JROTC/JSSP**

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



The JROTC Performance Accreditation (JPA) Reviews were held during the first and second weeks of February. I was

fortunate enough to attend four JPA Reviews, including Monarch HS, Blanche Ely HS, Plantation HS, and South Broward HS. Although the activity/event is similar, each is individually conducted by the Cadet Battalion Staff with the oversight and support of the Senior and Assistant Instructors.

The Inspection Team is either made up of the 6th Brigade (Army for Florida) or the local DAI Team of the individual military branch. After the Inspection Team's initial meeting with the school principal and staff, breakfast, beverages, and snacks are served prior to the Battalion Staff Formal Briefing. The four schools that I attended held this in the school Media Center with

guests, parents, and other officials. Attendance varied from a few invited individuals to programs that had many parents, city officials, and guests filling the room.

The Continuous Improvement Plan Brief is a detailed account of the JROTC Mission Statement: to motivate young people to be better citizens by developing citizenship, character, and leadership while fostering meaningful partnerships with communities and schools. The Cadet Battalion Staff gives a detailed overview of the data by identifying a problem and presenting the final solutions to that problem. There are SMART Goals which must be achieved: Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic, and Timely. All of these levels are achieved through the Battalion Cadet Team working together under the leadership of the Cadet Battalion Commander, Cadet Command Sergeant Major, and Cadet Executive Officer. Each Cadet Staff Member also gives personal details of their service to the Unit and future after-school plans for further

education, military service, or other careers.

The Formal Briefing is followed by the Service-Learning Project, which is a topic that each JROTC Cadet Unit chooses to support teamwork, planning, leadership, community involvement, and a deeper sense of civic responsibility. Topics chosen at these programs included "One Blood Drive," Feeding South Florida, and two beach cleanups.

Following the Service-Learning Project is the Color Guard Inspection and the Platoon Drill Evaluation. Cadets are evaluated on performance, uniform, and drill and ceremony as a Unit. These inspections were performed either in the gym or outside at a field location. The last observation for the day is an individual Cadet interview conducted by the Review Inspection Team. This gives the Inspectors an overview of each Cadet's understanding and progress.

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<< JROTC/JSSP continued from page 14

The final portion of the day is the Out Brief by the Inspection Team, when the Battalion is judged on the overall JPA. This is when each Cadet Unit learns whether they have reached the goal of "Honor Unit with Distinction." These inspections are events that our Legionnaires are able to attend, and I would encourage commanders and chairmen of the Posts to check next year so they can see some of our greatest JROTC Cadets at their best.

One last reminder: ensure the JROTC Program you sponsor submits the Cadet of the Year Application, which is due March 1st. So far, the response has been very limited. You must reach out to the school instructors, as many do not know we have this scholarship available

for an Outstanding Cadet. Thanks in advance for your help.

The 2026 Army State Marksmanship Meet was held last month at Island Coast HS in Cape Coral. This event has been sponsored by the Department of Florida for several years, and we are grateful that the Army continues to hold this event in the 13th District. There is also the Area Meet, which has been sponsored by Post 90 for many years during the same weekend.

*The results of the Army State Competition for the Team Event were as follows:*

- 1st Place: Mariner HS
- 2nd Place: Mulberry HS
- 3rd Place: Forest Hill HS
- 4th Place: Summerlin HS

- 5th Place: Parrish Community HS

*Individual results were:*

- 1st Place: Peyton Ullery, Mulberry HS
- 2nd Place: Elyssa Vazquez, Mariner HS
- 3rd Place: Zoe Enslin, Mariner HS
- 4th Place: Jordyn Stapleton, Mulberry HS
- 5th Place: Jakobe Changasie, Mariner HS

Congratulations to all the winners, and many thanks to Post 90 and the staff who contributed to this event and ensure it happens each and every year. May everyone have a very successful year end.





## Rescue in Nasiriyah: Remembering Sacrifice and Accountability

**Denny Luke, POW/MIA**

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



March 23, 2003—three days into the Iraq War.

You and your unit members of the 507th Maintenance Company become separated from your convoy. Now deep in enemy territory, your unit comes under intense enemy fire. Eleven soldiers are killed in the ambush, and six are taken as prisoners.

Nine days later, U.S. forces rescue Private First Class Jessica Lynch from a hospital in Nasiriyah, where she was being held as a POW and treated for injuries sustained when her Humvee was hit by a rocket-propelled grenade during the attack. The Humvee's driver—and Lynch's best friend—Private First Class Lori Piestewa suffered a severe head injury and was taken to the same hospital, where she later died. PFC Piestewa is the first Native American woman to be killed in combat action.

An Iraqi lawyer, Mohammed Odeh al-Rehaief, reportedly discovered that two American soldiers were being held at the hospital. He walked nearly six miles to a U.S. Marine checkpoint to report the location of PFC Lynch and PFC Piestewa. After providing follow-on intelligence, U.S. Special Forces conducted the first successful targeted rescue of a live American prisoner of war since World War II. PFC Lynch

was rescued, and the remains of fallen American service members—including PFC Piestewa—were recovered. The remaining five captured soldiers were rescued 21 days later.

During the period surrounding Lynch's rescue, eleven bodies were recovered, nine from a shallow gravesite and two from the hospital morgue. After forensic identification, eight were confirmed as members of the 507th, including PFC Lori Piestewa. All were posthumously awarded the Purple Heart. The exact circumstances of their deaths remain unclear.

Because of his assistance, Mohammed Odeh al-Rehaief, his wife, and their five-year-old daughter were granted humanitarian asylum in the United States and now reside in West Virginia.

During Operation Desert Shield/Desert Storm, it is believed 33 American service members were captured and held as prisoners of war during the Gulf War, Iraq War, and Afghanistan. All were released, rescued, or had their remains recovered following the end of hostilities. PFC Lynch was not the first female POW. In February 1991, Major Rhonda Cornum was shot down while flying a UH-60 helicopter on a rescue mission. She was released on March 6, 1991, along with 23 other American POWs.

Today, five American service members remain Missing in Action from Operations Desert Storm and Iraqi Freedom.

### Stay Connected

- Florida POW/MIA Facebook Page: [facebook.com/falpowmia](https://facebook.com/falpowmia)
- Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency (DPAA): [dpaa.mil](https://dpaa.mil)
- National POW/MIA Memorial & Museum: [powmiamemorial.org](https://powmiamemorial.org)

### DPAA Missing Personnel Identified in FY 2026 as of February 10, 2026

- World War II: 53
- Korean War: 12
- Cold War: 0
- Vietnam War: 0

### Accounted For During December 2025

#### January 29, 2026

- Eason, C. — Korean War

#### January 22, 2026

- Underwood, W. — World War II
- Beard, Jr., B. — World War II

#### January 15, 2026

- Warren, I. — World War II
- Gregg, P. — World War II

#### January 14, 2026

- Roemer, L. — World War II

#### January 13, 2026

- Governale, N. — World War II

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<< POW/MIA continued from page 16

- Johnson, Jr., C. — World War II
- Lynch, C. — World War II
- Polvado, D. — World War II
- Harper, W. — Korean War

- Richer, J. — World War II
- Hodges, O. — Korean War
- Frutiger, T. — World War II
- Stewart, O. — Korean War

**January 12, 2026**

- Linsenhardt, W. — World War II

**December 29, 2025**

- Calfee, J. — Vietnam War

**Resolution Clarity and Convention Deadlines: What You Need to Know**

**Clarence Hill, Resolutions**

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



From the National Adjutant: Increasingly, the NEC is asked to approve resolutions that “support” an organization, a program, or some other endeavor. The word “support” by itself gives no guidance as to what type of affiliation The American Legion is to have with the organization, program, or activity it is asked to “support.” In some cases, the interested party infers from the resolution wording that “support” means any of, but not limited to: editorial support in The American Legion Magazine, other publications, or on the website; assistance in raising funds for the objective of the support; staff support; public endorsement; expenditure of funds; etc. To allay this ambiguity, spell out in plain English the limits to The American Legion’s obligation in this regard. Any support that entails expending funds or human resources must

be recommended for approval by the Finance and/or Marketing Commissions. If attempting to recognize the good works of another organization, a more appropriate word might be “commends.”

The deadline is fast approaching for submitting resolutions to be considered at this year’s Department Convention. All resolutions must be received by the Department in time to be compiled, reproduced, and distributed to every Post 40 days prior to Convention. The Department should have them by the end of April. Those members who will represent their Post’s resolutions at the Internal Affairs Committee meeting should read and review the resolutions prior to the meeting.

I haven’t seen the agenda yet, but the Internal Affairs Committee is usually scheduled to meet on Thursday afternoon around 2 PM. The meeting will receive reports from Constitution and By-Laws, Credentials, Disaster Preparedness, POW-MIA, Resolutions, Time & Place, and

Special Rules. When it comes to the Resolutions portion of the meeting, only the RESOLVED clauses will be read, so it is important that the entire resolution be reviewed by the delegates prior to the meeting. Each Post can have one delegate at this meeting to speak and to vote on all matters to be decided. All voting members must have the appropriate black ribbon received with the registration package. Attendees without the ribbon cannot speak or vote. The results of the vote taken at this meeting become a recommendation to the General Assembly when the Internal Affairs Committee report is presented. Every delegate to the Convention has a vote on the final disposition of the resolution at the General Assembly.

I have thus far reviewed three (3) resolutions. Resolutions that do not meet the 40-day deadline will not be considered until the Fall Conference.

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# FIGHTING THE GOOD FIGHT

MARCH 2026 EDITION

## CURRENT YEAR FIGURES : SINCE JULY 2025

 **125** VETS RECEIVED FUNDS

 **\$205,819** PROVIDED AS EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE

 **14** SPI PARTNERS

 **\$103,500** GIVEN TOWARDS SUICIDE PREVENTION

## DRIVING CHANGE - \$1 MILLION AND COUNTING

Jennifer Cooper, known as “Coop” to our Florida Legion Riders, recently had the honor of attending the Florida American Legion Riders Summit, an inspiring and impactful gathering of dedicated supporters of our Suicide Prevention Initiative (SPI).

During the summit, Jennifer shared an important update on SPI and offered attendees an exclusive preview of our new website, which will be launching this month! She also proudly announced a remarkable milestone: the Riders’ all time contributions have now surpassed an extraordinary \$1,000,000 in support of our veterans.

**Yes, that’s one million dollars raised to serve those who have served.**

In addition, Jennifer provided details about the upcoming Unity Ride, generating excitement for the months ahead. The official registration link will be distributed very soon, so be on the lookout for your opportunity to sign up, make your impact, and be part of this crucial, life-saving event. Attendees also cast votes on the fundraising incentives they will be working toward in April. If history is any indication, this incredible group won’t just meet their goal — *they’ll exceed it.*

We are deeply grateful for the dedication, generosity, and unwavering commitment of the Florida American Legion Riders. The impact you continue to make in the lives of our veterans is truly life-changing.

## UPCOMING EVENTS:

 **Rockin’ for Vets**  
MAR 7 @ Winter Haven Post 8 (ALR)

 **Benefits Fair**  
MAR 7 @ Bartow Post 3

 **Suicide Prevention Event**  
MAR 21 @ Jacksonville Beach Pavilion

 **Central Area Ride-In**  
MAR 29 @ Mulberry Post 72 (ALR)

 **ALR Round Robin**  
APRIL - Month-long event, entire state

 **ALR Unity Ride**  
APR 20-24 - Statewide Ride on 3 routes

## BOB JAMES HONORED WITH VETERAN SERVICE MEDAL

Our Board President, Bob James, was recently recognized by the Florida Veterans Foundation (FVF) and presented with a Veteran Service Medal in honor of his dedication to freedom, devotion to duty, and enduring example of courage.

While Bob did not serve in the military, his unwavering commitment to those who did has made a profound impact in the veteran community. His leadership, advocacy, and passion for ensuring veterans receive the support and resources they deserve reflect the

very values this award represents.

The medal was presented by FVF Board Member Damon Friedman, who acknowledged Bob’s steadfast service and meaningful contributions to improving the lives of Florida’s veterans.

PVR is incredibly proud to acknowledge Bob’s well-deserved award and the extraordinary leadership he continues to demonstrate. The heart and dedication he brings to our organization strengthens our mission each and every day.





## Advocacy in Action and a Call to Be Heard

Alan Cohen, VA&R

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



At the date of the publication of this article, I will once again be enjoying the privilege of being part of the team from the Department of Florida calling on our elected representatives in Washington, D.C. Each year we as a group travel there to spend time emphasizing the importance of veteran-oriented legislation and that the American Legion's priorities reflect the importance of bettering the lives of the men and women who sacrificed for our great country. I'm proud to tell you that you are well represented.

In connection to the above, we learned recently that the Secretary of the VA has (relatively quietly, I might add) requested \$1 trillion from Congress to further fund Community Care. While we understand and

respect the need for this extension of VA healthcare, a recent survey conducted by the VA itself revealed that system-wide there is a shortage of over 4,000 providers. Maybe it's just me, but it seems that \$1 trillion would go a long way toward hiring and retaining providers, therefore improving the delivery of healthcare. Sounds like an issue that we all should question our elected representatives about.

Moving along, and on a very positive note, I will be moderating a first-of-its-kind Veterans Town Hall on March 30, 2026. This will take place at Post 240 in Pensacola, and many thanks to Post Commander Cathy Butler for her enthusiastic offer of hospitality and to Renee Figueroa, Post Service Officer, for her energies in getting the word out. I'm attaching a flyer with more information and strongly encourage veterans in the 1st District, Escambia

County, and surrounding areas to attend. We want to hear what you have to say about the healthcare, etc., you're receiving, and this will be an opportunity to voice concerns to elected and VA representatives. There will also be Accredited Service Officers on-site to address claims- and benefits-related questions. Don't hesitate to contact me if you have any questions or suggestions.

Those of you who know me may be surprised to hear that I'm keeping my article relatively brief this month. The reason being that I wanted to keep the focus on just a few things.

That said, in closing I'll leave you with an open-ended question: why is it that people will, in some cases, spend a small fortune to go camping just so they can live like a homeless person?

## American Legion Child Well-Being Foundation (CWF) Overview

Dennis Boland, Child Well Being Fdn Pres

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



Founded in 1954, the American Legion Child Well-Being Foundation (formerly Child Welfare Foundation) is a separate 501(c)(3)

dedicated to funding youth-serving programs, research, and initiatives. Since 1955, it has awarded more than **\$22 million** to organizations supporting children nationwide.

### 2026 Grant Awards

In October 2025, the Foundation awarded **\$851,542 to nine nonprofit organizations** for 2026 projects benefiting youth.

Major grants include:

- **\$550,000** – American Legion National Headquarters (National youth programs: Oratorical Contest, Boys Nation, Junior Shooting Sports, American Legion Baseball)
- **\$125,000** – American Legion

World Series youth activities

- Additional grants support:
- Medical transportation for critically ill children
- Pediatric cancer financial assistance
- Military family resiliency toolkits
- Therapeutic riding scholarships for veterans' children
- Braille literacy materials

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<< Child Well Being Fdn Pres continued from page 19

- American history education programs
- Flights to specialized medical care

### Children’s Action Team (CAT)

CAT members serve as ambassadors for CWF within their departments and detachments. Their responsibilities include:

- Promoting awareness of CWF programs
- Encouraging annual donations across the Legion Family
- Recruiting new CAT members

Certification requires:

- Application and exam
- \$25 donation
- Members receive a certificate,

card, and lapel pin

The Board emphasized revitalizing CAT membership to strengthen outreach and impact.

### Contributions & Recognition

- \$289,924 raised (as of Jan. 29, 2026, for the current program year)
- Top contributors:
  - Ohio – \$44,284
  - Florida – \$29,553
  - New York – \$25,566

### 100% Per Capita Banner Program

Posts/units donating **\$1 per member** (June 1, 2025–May 31, 2026) receive recognition banners

### Gift Clubs

Recognition tiers exist for:

- Departments/Detachments (Heritage Circle)
- Posts/Units/Squadrons/Chapters/Salons (Children First)
- Individual donors (Cornerstone levels ranging from \$250–\$1,500+)

### Closing Message

The Foundation thanks CAT members and Legion Family supporters for their dedication to improving the lives of children. Members are encouraged to share fundraising ideas, success stories, and recruit new CAT participants to expand the mission’s reach.

**Download complete newsletter:** <https://www.floridalegion.org/wp-content/uploads/2026/02/CATTales.pdf>

## Honoring Our Heritage and Building Our Future

**Michael Nigbor, Detachment Cmdr**  
[commander@floridasons.org](mailto:commander@floridasons.org)



I am looking forward to seeing all the articles our members will be sharing this month in this newsletter. The “Source” is our fantastic outlet for letting our organization know about our events, programs, achievements, community involvement, and all the good we do in promoting Americanism.

One of our greatest missions is passing on the knowledge of flag respect, American history, and citizenship.

With America’s 250th birthday approaching, educational outreach is more important than ever. It is exciting to see all the groups that are getting ready to promote their events. S.A.L. members play a vital role in teaching young Americans the proper protocols of flag etiquette and our country’s heritage. When you do your “Buddy Checks,” get your members engaged and ask them if they can help with some of these programs and events. Reach out to your schools, city government, and community residents to get involved with your Post.

On January 17th, I traveled to

Winter Haven Post 8 for Department Commander Moore and Auxiliary President Burks’ charity event. A good time was had by all, with several donations being made as well for their designated charities. January 18th was a fantastic celebration for American Legion Post 103 in Punta Gorda for their 100th Anniversary. January 24th was Auxiliary President Burks’ Ball at Post 40 in Fort Pierce. There was great attendance, generous donations, and creative costumes for the WWII USO-inspired event.

Next up, January 31st, was the

*continued on page 21 >>*



PLEASE SUPPORT  
**Special Olympics**

**HONOR SERVICE** **INSPIRE FUTURE**

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



<< Detachment Commander continued from page 20 Southern Area Ball, Sock Hop theme, at Post 321 in Cooper City. There were great costumes, food, and fantastic music—a good way to catch up with other Sons of The American Legion members. The following day, February 1st, was the annual Four Chaplains Ceremony at the I.T. Parker Community Center in Dania Beach, hosted by District 9 leadership. There were wonderful speakers and dignified memorials. On February 8th, I attended the Super Bowl event at Post 323 in Lehigh Acres. This was another fantastic evening, with proceeds going to our Detachment Charity, C.O.T.A. Thanks go out to Detachment Adjutant Christen Rapp, the District 13 Commander, as well as the 323 Riders for their generous donations.

Oh, and there's more. February 12th through the 15th was the District 4 tour. Department Commander Moore, Auxiliary President Burk, and I traveled together and met some very thoughtful, dedicated members and leaders from the area. Detachment Vice Commander Shay Woods and I shared lots of information about the Sons with a couple of Posts that would like to start a program. I visited Posts 153 Lake Butler, 236 Bronson, 237 Beverly Hills, the Vets Helping Vets organization in Ocala, 284 Belleview, 58 Dunnellon, 77 Inverness, 230

Hawthorne, 56 Starke, 16 Gainesville, 153 Crystal River, and finally 166 Homosassa. For those who aren't familiar with this organization, they are very significant in helping homeless veterans in the area, caring for their needs with love and dignity.

Remember to work on our mission, C.A.R.E.—Caring about our mission with our own actions in helping veterans; helping veterans throughout our community by communicating who we are and what we do; taking action in ways that will help them; recruiting them and educating them in what The American Legion stands for. #SALCares

As we enter the month of March, we are officially halfway through the current American Legion Family administrative year. If you have not yet submitted one, each Squadron must complete a Squadron Data Report, which will allow for online renewals and better communication.

Now is also the time to begin filling out the Squadron Consolidated Report Form. It is your opportunity to list and show off your accomplishments since Detachment Convention.

Don't forget to continue to work on membership. Keep reaching out to those who have yet to renew, and

we will attain our goals. As Proud Possessors of a Priceless Heritage, we continue to honor our forebearers' legacy by serving veterans, supporting youth programs, and promoting patriotism across the nation. Our dedication ensures that the values and sacrifices of America's veterans are remembered and respected for generations. Our membership will affect our future service to these ideals.

Success is the result of hard work and dedication. Our job is to bring in those last few members to reach all of our targets. We can and will set new membership records again this year. This is a great way to show The American Legion Family that we believe in their mission and that we will continue to "Honor Our Heritage" by supporting our veterans and communities.

This year, let us continue to celebrate our past, but also move forward and commit to shaping a brighter future for our organization. Engage with your communities and inspire others to join us in honoring our nation's legacy. Thank you all for what you do to make us successful and for your unwavering love for our organization and our country.

Together, we can and we will achieve our goals.



## Olympia High Junior Advances to Department Oratorical Competition

**Darrell Gray, Post 331, PR**

Samantha Gonzalez, a junior at Olympia High School in Orlando, Florida, will compete in The American Legion Department of Florida Oratorical Contest.

She will proudly represent The Doris "Dorie" Miller Memorial Post 331

Inc., District 6, and the Eastern Area of the Department of Florida.

The winner of the Department of Florida Contest will advance to the National Oratorical Contest, held at Hillsdale College in Michigan, to compete for the national title and the grand prize \$25,000.00 scholarship.



## Key Dates and Requirements for the Close of the Legion Year

**Bruce E. Comer, Department Adjutant**  
[bcomer@floridalegion.org](mailto:bcomer@floridalegion.org)



As we enter the month of March and move into the final months of this Legion year, I want to take a moment to highlight several important deadlines, upcoming events, and key reminders for our Posts.

### End-of-Year Awards

End-of-Year Packets were mailed to Posts on March 1. Posts submitting End-of-Year Award nominations must ensure all materials are received at Department Headquarters by May 4, 2026.

To be eligible, the Consolidated Post Report (CPR) and Department Addendum must be on file.

Award information and nomination forms are available at: [End-of-Year Award Information and Forms](#)

### 2026 Department Convention

The 2026 Department Convention will be held June 11 – 14, 2026, at the Hilton Orlando in Lake Buena Vista. Additional convention details are available at: [Department Convention Information](#)

Pre-registration opens April 8, 2026, and closes June 7, 2026. Posts must have all required documents on file with Department Headquarters prior to registering.

Resolutions and proposed Constitutional Amendments are due no later than May 3, 2026. Submissions received after this deadline may not be considered for the 2026 Department Convention. Resolution forms, Amendment forms, and Resolution Guidelines are available under Forms and Documents in the Resources tab on the Department's website.

Posts are encouraged to complete and submit the 2025–2026 Consolidated Post Report and Department Addendum as soon as possible to ensure eligibility for awards and Convention registration.

Forms are available at: [Consolidated Post Report \(CPR\) | Florida American Legion](#)

### 2026 National Convention

Applications for the 2026 National Convention Color Guard and Band Contests are now available online. Units planning to participate should review the information and submit applications in accordance with National guidelines. Band Contest Applications are due April 24. Color Guard Contest Applications are due June 26. Forms and information can be found on National's website at: [Contest Information | The American Legion](#)

Delegate and Alternate packets will be sent out following the District Constitutional Conferences.

National Convention updates are available at: [National "Info for Attendees" Page](#)

### American Legion Birthday

The annual American Legion

*continued on page 23 >>*



<< Adjutant continued from page 22

Birthday speech is now available for Posts to use as they prepare for their celebrations. Posts are encouraged to incorporate the speech into their programs as we honor the legacy and continued impact of The American Legion. To download the speech, click here: <http://bit.ly/4rNLUCK>

**America 250 – 250th Anniversary of the United States**

National’s Media & Communications team has developed a USA 250

Youth Program poster highlighting American Legion and American Legion Auxiliary youth programs. An 18x24 poster will be provided to each Post at the 2026 Department Convention. To view or download the poster, click here: <https://bit.ly/46ykF6x>

The American Legion Auxiliary (ALA) is hosting an essay contest for students in grades 3–12. This year’s theme, “Celebrating America’s 250th Birthday and the Veterans Who Fought for Our Freedom,” invites young voices to honor our nation’s history and those who served to

protect it. For more information, visit: [Americanism Essay Contest](#)

As many of you know, I will also be retiring the day after the National Convention, on September 4, 2026. It has been an honor to serve the Department of Florida, and I am grateful for the support and friendship extended to me throughout my tenure.

Thank you for your continued dedication to your Posts and to The American Legion, Department of Florida.



PLEASE SUPPORT  
**Special Olympics**

**HONOR SERVICE**  **INSPIRE FUTURE**

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



# MEMBERSHIP TARGET REPORT

February 26, 2026 (90% Target)

District 3	Rick Cabrera	96.50%
District 5	Miguel Garcia	94.08%
District 4	Darcy Bockman-Wright	93.96%
District 13	Laurene Allen-Flower	93.78%
District 2	Roxann Dressel	93.60%
District 16	Michael Harley	92.55%
District 1	Robert Osmon	92.23%
District 12	Daniel Martin	91.62%
District 6	David Musser	90.39%
District 9	Jim Tewes	90.36%
District 17	Jim Bowers	89.93%
District 11	Stanley Brown, Jr.	89.90%
District 15	Drew Davis	89.68%
District 8	Charlie Magnus	89.32%
District 7	Kalvin Thompson	87.75%
District 14	Thomas Frank	84.28%
Northern	Doug Hockenberry	93.47%
Western	Shelby Windham	92.42%
Southwestern	Eric Loyd	91.80%
Central	Rick Orzechowski	91.04%
Eastern	Joan Suelter	90.94%
Southern	Geo Bograkos	88.51%
Post 400		82.41%

**DEPARTMENT TRUSTED. LEGIONNAIRE APPROVED.**

The Legionnaire Insurance Trust has been protecting Legionnaires and their families for over 50 years.

LEGIONNAIRE INSURANCE TRUST

[www.thelit.com](http://www.thelit.com)

**"JUST BECAUSE I LIVE DANGEROUSLY DOESN'T MEAN SHE HAS TO."**

Service often takes you away from family. USAA is always there for them when you can't be. We deliver the financial peace of mind and support you deserve. Checking. Savings. Credit cards. Loans. Auto & life insurance. Mutual funds. Even free financial advice. Get all you've earned. [Visit usaa.com today.](http://www.usaa.com)

**50/50 RAFFLE 4 VETERANS**

[www.florida5050.org](http://www.florida5050.org)

WIN CASH      WIN MORE CASH      WIN LOTS OF CASH

**More Chances. More Winners. More Cash!**

Questions: 1-800-393-3378. Florida participants only.

**AMERICAN LEGION** Department of Florida

ONE OF DEPARTMENT'S LARGEST FUNDRAISERS!

**FLORIDA SAMPL**

SHOW YOUR SUPPORT

The American Legion official license plate.



PLEASE SUPPORT  
**Special Olympics**

**HONOR SERVICE** **INSPIRE FUTURE**

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



Department  
of Florida

The American Legion  
High School Oratorical  
Scholarship Program

Support Your Area's Competitor  
at State Finals

March 14, 2026  
Competition begins at 9:00 am

Dept. of Florida HQ  
Orlando, FL



### 107<sup>th</sup> Annual Department Convention, June 11-14, 2026

Hilton Orlando Lake Buena Vista – Disney Springs Area, 1751 Hotel Plaza Blvd; Lake Buena Vista, FL 32830

#### CONTACT INFORMATION

Name of Business or Organization

Contact Person

Job Title

Email

Phone

Website

#### PREMIER SPONSORSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

Choose one or more (optional):

- Delegate Bags \$3,000
- Delegate Badges \$3,000
- Kick-Off Party \$2,000
- Commander's and President's Banquet \$1,000
- Service Officer School \$1,000

#### EXHIBITOR PACKAGES

Choose one (optional):

- General's Exhibitor \$800
- Colonel's Exhibitor \$550
- Lieutenant's Exhibitor \$300
- None

Banquet Door Prize / Raffle Item and Approximate Value - **\*Required for all levels.**

#### EXHIBITOR PROGRAM ADVERTISEMENT UPGRADE

Advertisements are included with sponsorship; upgrades available for Lieutenant's and Colonel's levels.

**Colonel's:**    Upgrade to Full Page \$150    No Upgrade

**Lieutenant's:**    Upgrade to Full Page \$250    Upgrade to Half Page \$100    No Upgrade

**Program advertisements MUST be submitted no later than May 8, 2026.** Please submit your advertisement artwork via email in one of the following image file types: .ai, .eps, .psd, .pdf, .tif, .jpeg, .jpg, .png. **All artwork must be digital:** no scanned or printed artwork. Advertisements are printed in grayscale. All imagery must be legally licensed. Please email artwork to: [events@floridalegion.org](mailto:events@floridalegion.org).



Department of Florida

SPONSOR AND EXHIBITOR APPLICATION

\*\*\* Deadline May 8, 2026 \*\*\*

Register online at [floridalegion.org/flcon](http://floridalegion.org/flcon)

PAYMENT METHOD

Credit Card  Check # \_\_\_\_\_ Make checks payable to *The American Legion, Dept of FL*

CREDIT CARD INFORMATION

Visa  Mastercard  American Express  Discover Total to Charge: \$ 0.00

Credit Card # \_\_\_\_\_

Cardholder Name \_\_\_\_\_

Expiration Date \_\_\_\_\_

Security Code \_\_\_\_\_

I authorize The American Legion, Department of Florida to charge the amount listed above to the credit card provided herein. I agree to pay for this purchase in accordance with the issuing bank cardholder agreement.

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

See our website at [floridalegion.org/flcon](http://floridalegion.org/flcon) for detailed benefits and deadlines.

Submit completed application, with full payment to:

The American Legion  
Department of Florida  
Attention: Event Coordinator  
PO Box 547859  
Orlando, FL 32854-7859

**DEADLINE REMINDER:** To ensure inclusion of your advertisement in the convention book, all final artwork must be submitted no later than **May 8, 2026**. Discounts or credits will not be issued for missed deadlines or applications received after this date.

Exhibitor registration will close once available space is filled or shortly before the Convention, whichever occurs first. Exhibitor placement is assigned and determined by the exhibit level selected.

**We reserve the right to deny sponsor/exhibitor participation at our sole discretion if a sponsor/exhibitor does not align with our mission, values, or event relevance.**

P.O. BOX 547859  
ORLANDO, FL 32854-7859

[www.floridalegion.org](http://www.floridalegion.org)

TOLL FREE 800-393-3378  
FAX 407-295-2631



Department of Florida

PROGRAM ADVERTISING

LEGION FAMILY

\*\*\* Deadline May 8, 2026 \*\*\*

107th Annual Department Convention, June 11-14, 2026

Hilton Orlando Lake Buena Vista – Disney Springs Area, 1751 Hotel Plaza Blvd; Lake Buena Vista, FL 32830

CONTACT INFORMATION

Post, Unit, or Squadron Name

Name of Member

Member ID #

Email

Phone

PROGRAM ADVERTISEMENT OPTIONS FOR LEGION FAMILY MEMBERS, POSTS, UNITS, AND SQUADRONS ONLY

**FULL PAGE**  
\$175  
  
7.5" X 10"

**HALF PAGE**  
\$100  
  
7.5" X 5"

---

**HALF PAGE**  
\$100  
  
7.5" X 5"

<b>QUARTER PAGE</b> \$50  3.75" X 5"	<b>QUARTER PAGE</b> \$50  3.75" X 5"
<b>QUARTER PAGE</b> \$50  3.75" X 5"	<b>QUARTER PAGE</b> \$50  3.75" X 5"

- Full Page (7.5" x 10") \$175    Half Page (7.5" x 5") \$100    Quarter Page (3.75" x 5") \$50    Custom Design Fee \$25

Program advertisements must be submitted no later than May 8, 2026 to be included in the program. Please submit your advertisement artwork via email in one of the following image file types: .ai, .eps, .psd, .pdf, .tif, .jpeg, .jpg, .png. All artwork must be digital: no scanned or printed artwork will be accepted. All advertisements are printed in grayscale. All imagery must be legally licensed. For an additional \$25 Custom Design Fee, we will design your advertisement for you. You'll be contacted for details at the email provided. Please email artwork to: [events@floridalegion.org](mailto:events@floridalegion.org).

PAYMENT METHOD

- Credit Card    Check # \_\_\_\_\_ Make checks payable to *The American Legion, Dept of FL*

CREDIT CARD INFORMATION

- Visa    Mastercard    American Express    Discover

Total to Charge: \$ 0.00

Credit Card #

Cardholder Name

Expiration Date

Security Code

I authorize The American Legion, Department of Florida to charge the amount listed above to the credit card provided herein. I agree to pay for this purchase in accordance with the issuing bank cardholder agreement.

Signature

Date

Submit to: The American Legion, Department of Florida, Attention: Event Coordinator; PO Box 547859, Orlando, FL 32854-7859.

**DO YOU  
HAVE WHAT  
IT TAKES?**

**BECOME A  
DEPARTMENT  
CHAIR!**

**MAKE AN  
2026**



**IMPACT  
2027**

\_\_\_\_\_  
YEARS IN LEGION



Department  
of Florida

\_\_\_\_\_  
DISTRICT

\_\_\_\_\_  
POST

\_\_\_\_\_  
AREA

\_\_\_\_\_  
NAME

\_\_\_\_\_  
POSITION INTERESTED IN

EXPLAIN YOUR QUALIFICATIONS FOR DEPARTMENT CHAIR \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

LEGION SCHOOLS ATTENDED:  ALEI     Florida Legion College     National Legion College     Sgt-at-Arms     Chaplain  
 National LEAD Classes     \_\_\_\_\_     \_\_\_\_\_

POSITIONS HELD	YEARS AT POST LEVEL	YEARS AT DISTRICT LEVEL	YEARS AT AREA LEVEL	YEARS AT DEPT LEVEL
Commander				
Vice Commander				
Adjutant				
Sgt-at-Arms				
Historian				
Chaplain				
Membership				
Americanism				
Baseball				
Blood Donor				
Boy Scouts				

POSITIONS HELD	YEARS AT POST LEVEL	YEARS AT DISTRICT LEVEL	YEARS AT AREA LEVEL	YEARS AT DEPT LEVEL
Boys State				
Children & Youth				
JROTC				
Shooting Sports				
Law & Order				
Oratorical				
POW/MIA				
School Medals				
Women Veterans Advocate				
Youth Law Cadet				
Other				

PLEASE RETURN TO: The American Legion, Dept of Florida, Attention: Bob Matheson, P.O. Box 547859, Orlando, FL 32854

American Legion  
Department of FL  
Presents

## CHILDREN & YOUTH PICNIC

Music by  
Doc Holiday

Raffle Baskets  
50/50  
Carnival Games  
+ More!



Poker Run

Registration  
10am  
KSU 11am

Location:  
American Legion Post 117  
189 Veterans Drive  
Palm Bay, Fl. 32909

# Saturday April 11th 2026 12-5PM

1/3 Pound Burger or, 1/4 Hot Dog \$10

Kids Under 12 1/4 Burger or Hot Dog \$5

All Meals Served with Sides

Questions: Contact

AL Dept C&Y Chaiman Chris Hamerick 321-313-3469

MaryAnn Spellman 917-834-5763

All Proceeds go to

Commander Charites



Questions: Contact

AL Dept C&Y Chaiman Chris Hamerick 321-313-3489

MaryAnn Spellman 917-834-5763

# FLORIDA AMERICAN LEGION BOYS STATE DINNER



This dinner is for **ALL** supporters of the **FALBS** program.

Auction and raffles tickets will be available for purchase.

Casual business attire suggested

**Guest speaker: Senator Danny Burgess**  
(Delegate from 2009 session).

**May 9, 2026 Time: 5:00 pm**

1912 Lee RD Orlando, FL. 32810 (Department HQ)

Tickets are \$35 single and \$65 per couple  
<https://givebutter.com/c/adv5nW>

**Hotels available for \$109.00 per night Marriott  
Courtyard Orlando Altamonte Springs/Maitland**



**FLORIDA AMERICAN LEGION BOYS STATE**

Facebook: Florida American Legion Boys State

Instagram: Floridaboysstate

TikTok: @falbssocialmedia

To Donate Auction items contact Bekki at [bboarman@floridalegion.org](mailto:bboarman@floridalegion.org) or Darcy at [Darcyb\\_Wright.al@yahoo.com](mailto:Darcyb_Wright.al@yahoo.com)

AMERICAN  
**LEGION**  
AUXILIARY

AMERICAN  
**LEGION**

SONS OF THE  
AMERICAN  
**LEGION**

THE CENTRAL AREA LEADERSHIP PRESENTS:

**2026**  
**CENTRAL AREA**  
*Mangaritaville*  
*Casino Party!*

**MARCH 7, 2026**

**AT CLEARWATER AMERICAN LEGION POST 7**

**5 PM - COCKTAILS/GAMES**

**6 PM - JIMMY BUFFETT INSPIRED BUFFET**

**LIVE DJ - CASINO GAMES - RAFFLES - BASKETS**

**PUT ON YOUR BEST JIMMY BUFFETT OUTFIT  
AND ENJOY A FUN NIGHT IN PARADISE!**

**PROCEEDS BENEFIT: SPECIAL OLYMPICS,  
C.O.T.A., & ALA DISASTER RELIEF**

**\$45 PER PERSON  
\$80 PER COUPLE**

**RSVP/MAKE CHECKS PAYABLE TO: MICHAEL SHERMAN  
(813) 541-3452 | VCCENTRAL@FLORIDASONS.ORG  
MAIL TO: 7519 WINGING WAY DR, TAMPA, FL 33615**



# Cabana Boy's Island Bash

Homecoming Celebration & BBQ



***The Beach Is Coming Indoors!***

CELEBRATE OUR DETACHMENT COMMANDER **MICHAEL 'CABANA BOY' NIGBOR** AT CABANA BOY'S ISLAND BASH, A TROPICAL HOMECOMING FILLED WITH BBQ, ISLAND VIBES, AND AMERICAN LEGION FAMILY FELLOWSHIP.

TROPICAL ATTIRE ENCOURAGED.  
FLIP-FLOPS OPTIONAL. **FUN REQUIRED.**

***Saturday April 25, 2026 12pm - 4pm***

AMERICAN LEGION POST 323 | 1124 ASHLAR AVENUE | LEHIGH ACRES, FL 33936



## ***Event Highlights***

Entertainment by A Lil' Mixed Up  
Raffles / Games  
BBQ & More  
Dress: Tropical / Casual

*Proceeds Benefit*  
 **Children's Organ Transplant Association.**

## ***Payment Info***

**Cost: \$25 Per Person**  
Checks Payable to Squadron 323  
(mailed to the above address)  
Venmo: @Christian-Rapp-3  
**Contact:**  
Christian Rapp  
adjutant@floridasons.org  
(239) 243-2205



## ***Hotel Information***

**Quality Inn & Suites**  
1320 Business Way  
Lehigh Acres, FL 33936  
(239) 491-0049



# CELEBRATE & EDUCATE

American Legion Family Youth Programs advance civics and responsible citizenship for our nation's 250th anniversary and beyond.



## ORATORICAL CONTEST

The American Legion Oratorical Contest challenges high school students to explore and understand the U.S. Constitution while developing confidence, leadership and communication skills. National contestants compete for more than \$200,000 in scholarships each year.



## BOYS STATE/BOYS NATION

American Legion Boys State and Boys Nation are government-education programs that have shaped thousands of careers in public service and leadership since 1935. Boys State offers students entering their senior year a glimpse into how government functions in a democracy. Two delegates from each Boys State program are selected to attend Boys Nation, where they form and operate a mock federal government, visit congressional delegations, military leaders and The White House to enrich their understanding of U.S. leadership.



## GIRLS STATE/GIRLS NATION

American Legion Auxiliary Girls State and Girls Nation closely mirror American Legion Boys State/Boys Nation, for students entering their senior years of high school seeking understanding about participation in government. Two delegates from each ALA Girls State program are chosen each year to participate in Girls Nation in Washington, D.C. Participants leave with "leadership lessons for life" and an understanding of the fundamentals of U.S. government, rights, privileges, and responsibilities of citizens.



## AMERICAN LEGION BASEBALL

More than 10 million young athletes have since 1925 learned the principles of sportsmanship, teamwork, discipline, fitness and responsible citizenship through the American Legion Baseball program.

## JUNIOR SHOOTING SPORTS

The American Legion Junior Shooting Sports Program is a gun-safety education and marksmanship program that encompasses the basic elements of safety, education, enjoyment, competition and citizenship.



## AMERICAN LEGION AUXILIARY EDUCATIONAL CONTESTS

**AMERICANISM ESSAY CONTEST:** The Americanism Essay Contest of the American Legion Auxiliary teaches students the value of patriotism and what it means to be Americans. Students (grades 3 to 12) explore the fundamental rights and freedoms, following a theme.

**Current Theme:** "Celebrating America's 250th Birthday and the Veterans who Fought for Our Freedom."

**POPPY POSTER CONTEST:** American Legion Auxiliary units sponsor poppy poster contests in local schools across the country for schools and youth groups. Seven classes of contestants are available.



## FUN WAYS TO LEARN ABOUT OUR FLAG

The American Legion publishes comic and activity books about the U.S. flag, veterans and the founding values of our nation. Many items can be ordered in bulk at discounted prices for classrooms or youth groups.

**I PLEDGE ALLEGIANCE:** Early readers will learn the meaning behind the Pledge and the freedoms it symbolizes.

**LIGHT OF LIBERTY:** Advanced elementary-age readers meet a Revolutionary War minuteman who tells how and why America achieved independence and the rights and responsibilities of all U.S. citizens.

**OUR COUNTRY'S FLAG:** Set on the 4th of July, preteens learn the story of our nation's colors and how to properly display the flag.

**OUR COUNTRY'S VETERANS:** As a veterans memorial is dedicated, young people learn from one who served the importance of protecting our freedoms.

**RISE OF OUR FLAG:** The epic story of our nation's flag is illustrated in a "graphic novel" format for teen and adult readers who discover the reason behind The American Legion's sacred ceremonies to retire U.S. flags when their useful days are over.

**INDIVISIBLE: THE STORY OF OUR FLAG:** A 116-page, photo-filled bookazine shows the complete story of our nation's flag. Also available are flag decals, pins, stick flags, copies of U.S. Flag Code and pocket-sized U.S. Constitutions and Declarations of Independence.

Order online at [emblem.legion.org](http://emblem.legion.org)  
Or call (888) 453-4466



For more information and how to participate visit [legion.org/usa250](http://legion.org/usa250) or scan the QR code



# Celebrate America

with the

## USA250 CHALLENGE!



**What:** The American Legion's USA 250 Challenge is a yearlong celebration of the nation's 250th birthday. It offers participants three challenge categories — community service, physical activities and mental health awareness — to pursue goals such as 250 hours, miles, Buddy Checks or other measurables.

**When:** Through July 4, 2026.

**Who:** American Legion Family members and anyone else. Participants may pursue their goals individually or as part of a team.

**Why:** In addition to celebrating America, proceeds from the \$30 registration fee and all donations go to the Legion's Veterans & Children Foundation, which supports disabled veterans and military families in need.

**How:** Scan the QR code to learn more and register. Or visit [legion.org/usa250/challenge](https://legion.org/usa250/challenge)

Scan to  
register





Americanism, Children & Youth

## BY THE NUMBERS for 2025

### American Legion Baseball

- For the 2025 season, **52,308** youth from **2906** teams played American Legion Baseball (**1,697** senior teams and 1,209 junior teams), representing **50** American Legion departments and Canada and Puerto Rico.
- **1,152** players participated in the eight national regional tournaments, of which **144** went on to play in the American Legion World Series.
- **67,848** subscribers to the American Legion Baseball e-newsletter “The Dugout”.
- There are **89** American Legion Baseball program alumni enshrined in the National Baseball Hall of Fame.

### Junior Shooting Sports

- **886** individual athletes entered the postal round competition.
- **133** shooting clubs entered the national postal round competition.

### Boys State

- **14,047** participants in **50** Boys State programs.

### Boys Nation

- **100** participants from **50** Boys State programs.

### Scouting and The American Legion

- A total of **2,547** Scouting units were chartered by Legion Family across the nation, involving **49,553** young people and **29,039** adult leaders.
- The American Legion recognized **1087 youth** with a certificate issued from the national level for achievements in Scouting programs (**1,006** Boy Scouts of America Eagle Scout awards; **36** Boy Scouts of America Venturing Summit awards; **9** Boy Scouts of America Sea Scouts Quartermaster awards; **36** Girl Scouts USA Gold Awards).
- The American Legion awarded **9** Square Knot awards.

### Youth Cadet Law Enforcement

- **22** American Legion departments have an established American Legion Youth Cadet Law Enforcement program.

### Oratorical

- The 2024-2025 Consolidated Post Report indicates **996** oratorical contests conducted nationwide involving **9,370** youth contestants from **50** departments.

### Youth Education

- **760** students were awarded a total of **\$2,300,415** in academic scholarships from the national level.
- The 2024-2025 Consolidated Post Report states that **29,161** students from throughout the nation were presented an American Legion School Award Medal.
- The 2024-2025 Consolidated Post Report states that **600** American Legion posts participated in the annual American Education Week.

### Flag

- The 2024-2025 Consolidated Post Report indicates there were **4,394** Flag Day activities in local communities.
- There are **43,361** subscribers to the American Legion Flag Half-Staff Notification Alert service.

### **Get Out the Vote**

- The 2024-2025 Consolidated Post Report reflects **1,350** Get Out the Vote activities conducted in communities throughout the nation.

### **Citizenship**

- The 2024-2025 Consolidated Post Report reflects that **380** citizenship and naturalization activities were conducted in local communities throughout the nation.

### **God and Country**

- The Consolidated Post Report reflects **964** posts participating in the annual National Day of Prayer.

### **Four Chaplains Sunday**

- The Consolidated Post Report reflects that **1,612** activities were conducted in observance of Four Chaplains Sunday.

### **Legion Conferences**

- **221** Legion family members attended the annual national Combined Americanism Conferences which included conference segments for the following programs: American Legion Baseball, Boys State, Oratorical, Junior Shooting Sport, Children & Youth, and department chaplains.

### **Youth Welfare and Safety**

- The 2024-2025 Consolidated Post Report reflects **739** activities promoting health and safety took place, while **1,521** activities were conducted for Halloween safety by Legion Posts nationwide.

### **American Legion Child Well-being Foundation (CWF)**

- **\$536,829\*** was received in total CWF donations; of that, the Sons of The American Legion contributed **\$325,384\***.
- In 2025, the CWF Board of Directors awarded **\$851,542\*** in grants to **9** non-profit organizations that contribute to the physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual needs of children and youth.

### **American Legion Veterans & Children Foundation (VCF)**

- **\$1,390,277\*** was received in donations to the American Legion Veterans & Children Foundation.

### **Temporary Financial Assistance (TFA)**

- **69** minor children of **34** veterans throughout **19** departments received **\$64,476\*** in non-repayable cash grant assistance from the national Temporary Financial Assistance program to help support those children's basic needs of shelter, utilities, food, and clothing.

(\* Subject to final audit)



**1. INVITATION TO ALL MILITARY PERSONNEL**  
(FOR THE ARRIVAL OF THE VIETNAM MOVING WALL - DELTONA, FLORIDA)  
MARCH 19, 2026

**2. GREETING**  
TO ALL ACTIVE-DUTY SERVICE MEMBERS, VETERANS, AND MILITARY FAMILIES,

**3. PURPOSE OF THE EVENT**  
THE CITY OF DELTONA AND OUR LOCAL VETERANS' COMMUNITY  
EXTEND A HEARTFELT INVITATION TO YOU TO JOIN US AS WE WELCOME  
THE VIETNAM MOVING WALL TO DELTONA, FLORIDA, BEGINNING MARCH 19, 2026.  
THIS SOLEMN AND POWERFUL MEMORIAL PROVIDES AN OPPORTUNITY FOR REFLECTION,  
REMEMBRANCE, AND UNITY AS WE HONOR THE MEN AND WOMEN WHO SERVED -AND  
ESPECIALLY THOSE WHO MADE THE ULTIMATE SACRIFICE - DURING THE VIETNAM WAR.

**4. IMPORTANCE OF YOUR PRESENCE**  
YOUR ATTENDANCE HELPS ENSURE THAT THE LEGACY OF OUR VIETNAM VETERANS  
IS REMEMBERED WITH DIGNITY AND RESPECT.  
WE ENCOURAGE ALL BRANCHES OF THE ARMED FORCES, PAST AND PRESENT, TO  
STAND TOGETHER IN RECOGNITION OF OUR SHARED COMMITMENT TO  
SERVICE, DUTY, AND COUNTRY.

**5. ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**  
FURTHER DETAILS REGARDING CEREMONIES, VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES,  
AND VISITING HOURS WILL BE SHARED AS THE DATE APPROACHES.

**6. CLOSING**  
WITH RESPECT AND GRATITUDE; THE DELTONA VETERANS COMMUNITY



