

Welcome Home

VETERANS. ★ FAMILY. ★ FRIENDS.



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Submit Articles at

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

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A MESSAGE FROM THE DEPARTMENT COMMANDER



Bob Matheson
Department Commander
commander@floridalegion.org

As I begin my second month serving as Department Commander, I am grateful for the continued dedication, encouragement and hard work being shown across our Department of Florida. The first weeks have been filled with conversations, planning and renewed energy as we focus on the priorities that will carry us forward throughout the year.

One of the important highlights of this month was meeting with the Incoming National Commander to

review and finalize our membership goal. I am proud to share that the Department of Florida is working toward a goal of **100,001 members**. This is a goal we can reach by working together, staying focused and continuing the strong membership efforts already taking place across our Posts and Districts. More than just a number, this goal represents our shared commitment to strengthening our organization by reaching out, renewing, recruiting and reminding others why our mission matters.

I am also excited to begin making my visits to the Districts and Posts.



PROJECT: VetRelief

Emergency assistance, benefits support, and community engagement for veterans and their families across Florida.

floridalegion.org/donate

GOAL: \$50,000 **FUNDS RAISED: \$2,051** **4.1%**



DISASTER RELIEF

Providing immediate support when Florida communities are impacted by disasters.

floridalegion.org/donate

GOAL: \$50,000 **FUNDS RAISED: \$1,301** **2.6%**

UPCOMING EVENTS

SEPTEMBER
2026

- 28-30 National Convention - KY ★★
- 1-30 Disaster Preparedness Month
- 1-30 Suicide Prevention Month
- 1-30 Service Dog Month
- 1 Be The One Day
- 1 Post Program Chair Form Due ★
- 1 JSSP: 1st Round Target Sales/Reg ★
- 1 Start of Operation New Dawn (2010)
- 2 End of World War II (1945)
- 2 Dept Membership Goal (50%)★
- 6 District 13 Meeting
- 7 Labor Day (HQ Closed)
- 9 District 1: Dept Commander Visitation ★
- 11 Start of Global War on Terror (2001)
- 11 Patriot Day (Flags Half Mast Sunrise-Sunset)
- 12 District 6: Meeting
- 12 District 12: Meeting
- 13 District 5: Meeting
- 14 Boys State: Accepting Registration Fee ★
- 15 Legion Link Articles Due ★
- 16 American Legion Day ★
- 17 Constitution/Citizenship Day
- 17-23 Constitution Week
- 18 U.S. Air Force Birthday (1947)
- 18 Office of the Secretary of Defense (1947)
- 18 Air National Guard Birthday
- 18 POW/MIA Remembrance Day
- 18 POW/MIA Remembrance Vigil
- 19 ALR: POW/MIA Ceremony & 7 Bridges Run ★
- 19 District 14: Meeting
- 22 First Day of Fall
- 24 District 8: Dept Commander Visitation ★
- 25-27 National C&Y/Americanism Conference ★
- 27 Gold Star Mother's Day
- 29 VFW Day
- 30 Post Highest Percentage of Membership ★

★ Commander attendance tentative.

★ Department of Florida event.

★ National event.

Events are subject to change. More details at floridalegion.org.

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These visits are an opportunity to listen, learn and see firsthand the great work being done at the local level. In August, I will start with the 7th District and then continue on to the 17th District. I look forward to meeting with Legionnaires, Sons of The American Legion and Auxiliary members, hearing about their successes and challenges, and sharing our goals for the year ahead.

Finally, our Department of Florida is looking forward to heading to the

National Convention in Louisville, Kentucky. The American Legion's 107th National Convention will bring the Legion Family together from Aug. 28 through Sept. 3, providing an opportunity to conduct important business, celebrate service and look toward the future of our organization.

I am proud of the momentum we have built, and I am confident that, together, we will continue moving our Department of Florida forward with purpose and pride.

Membership Momentum Is Building



Bruce Carl
1st Vice Commander
1stvice@legionmail.org

Our new membership year is in full swing as we head into the third month of the 2026-2027 year. I am loving the enthusiasm that is showing throughout the Department! We need to continue building our membership and keep that momentum going!

Several of us attended the National Membership Workshop in August for training and camaraderie. The main focuses were retention, getting new members, working the DMS and renewals. There was also a major focus on "Buddy Checks" and "Be the One." We all went through the different tracks, and on the last day, we came together with the National Vice Commander to present our plan

for this year to reach our 100% goal.

This year's goal is 100,001, which is very attainable. We also need to have our retention rate above 90%. There is a very real possibility that we can surpass Pennsylvania as the largest Department in the world. With everyone working together as a team, and Pennsylvania continuing to lose members, **WE CAN** do this!

Your Department membership team is here to cheer you on and assist you with anything you need. This includes training or coming to your Post or District to help with phone calls. If you need assistance, please contact us, as we are here to work for you! We have the ability to meet each one of our membership goals and go beyond 100,000 members. Thank you, Team Florida, for all you do!

Membership Workshop Recap



Rick Orzechowski
2nd Vice Commander
2ndvice@legionmail.org

Last week, a membership workshop was held in Indianapolis, Indiana, with representatives from nearly every state. Florida was strongly represented, and each attendee was assigned to a different working group to learn practical strategies for strengthening membership across our departments.

Building a Welcoming Post

On the first day, we focused on what it truly means to create a welcoming post environment. A welcoming post does the following:

- Greets every visitor who walks through the door
- Introduces new members to the group
- Notices when regular members are absent
- Creates meaningful opportunities

for members to belong

These actions don't require complex programs — just **courtesy, kindness, and consistent buddy checks**. We were reminded to involve all members, both new and longtime Legionnaires. Never turn away a volunteer, and pair new members with seasoned ones so they can learn what your post has to offer.

Growing a Strong Team

Another group exercise centered on understanding what it means to grow a team. We explored how recruiting, retention, leadership, and reporting all work together. Growth is about **people, purpose, and community** — not just membership totals.

Growing the team means:

- Building stronger relationships
- Developing future leaders
- Engaging the entire Legion Family
- Creating community partnerships
- Ensuring **every veteran feels**

welcome

A healthy organization grows in people, ideas, and community trust. Every member can contribute to that growth.

Retention Through Engagement

We also discussed simple incentives that can encourage retention and participation. Offering items such as free polos, a meal before meetings, or a complimentary drink for members who renew, recruit, or attend monthly meetings can make a meaningful difference.

Florida's Strengths

We learned that **Florida already has a strong plan** for retaining and recruiting new members — and with your help, we can make it even stronger. Remember, we have people ready to assist you, and we offer free training to help us accomplish our goals.

A Commitment to Servant Leadership



Michael Raymond
ANEC (2025-2026)
anec@legionmail.org

As I approach a new chapter in my career in The American Legion, I completely realize that it all boils down to one thing: servant leadership. I have and always will work for you, the membership family

of The American Legion.

My duty for the next two years boils down to just a couple of things: represent you, the Legionnaire, to the best of my ability and keep you informed of whatever is important to you at the National level.

Yes, I am new to this job, but I have some very knowledgeable mentors who have promised to assist me when I need it. Also, I have a very capable ANEC who will have my back, as I have had hers all these years.

By the time you read this article, I

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will have assumed the duties of your NEC and will be hard at work to

earn your trust again, as I have in the past.

Thank you again for your support, and let's all work together for another banner year.

Standard Operating Procedures Keep Your Post Running



Shirley Douglas
Finance Officer
financeofficer@legionmail.org

Does your Post have Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) established for key positions, such as Adjutant, Finance Officer, Canteen Manager, etc.?

The key positions all have job tasks that must be performed on a regular basis and in extremely specific ways. For example, how to document the Post's accounting system for the various accounts receivable funds received and accounts payable when outstanding bills need to be paid. When and how to file the Post's IRS Form 990 to ensure the Post stays in compliance with the IRS. How to conduct a canteen inventory and supply order request.

Unless the Post has designated

backup individuals who routinely help those in key positions perform their job tasks, it is vital that SOPs be created for tasks that are required to be accomplished in a specific way.

A standard operating procedure, or SOP, is a step-by-step set of instructions to guide team members in performing tasks in a consistent manner. SOPs are particularly important for complex tasks that must conform to regulatory standards. SOPs are also critical to ensuring efficient effort with little variation and high-quality output.

The internet provides numerous examples of how to write an SOP. There are programs you can buy, get for free or may already have, such as Copilot in Microsoft Word. There are also videos that can provide a visual guide for how to create an SOP.

Once you have the SOPs, make sure to review them and update them if the process changes. Keep the SOPs in a location that is protected but known to Post Officers. If a system is password-protected, make sure a limited number of people also have passwords to access the system if required.

Taking the time to write SOPs for key job tasks will greatly increase the ability of people to quickly understand when and how to perform the required tasks and keep the Post operating within established requirements.

Not only do SOPs help when a key member is unexpectedly unable to perform the required tasks, but also during the annual changeover of people due to Post elections.

Serving With Faith, Prayer and Purpose



Eric Linthicum
Chaplain
chaplain@legionmail.org

I have hit the ground running as your Department Chaplain, visiting Posts, Districts and more. Would your Post like a visit from me? Let me know, and we will make that happen! Got

questions about a Religious Emphasis program? Let me help you out! I am here to serve you.

Contact me via email at chaplain@legionmail.org, call me at 301-213-8989 or send a message through our Facebook page, [The American Legion, Department of Florida](#)

Chaplain. I encourage everyone in the Department to like, share and follow the page!

Some areas that we can be mindful of and lift up in prayer this month are:

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- **The National Convention:** The delegates and all attendees, especially as the convention comes to a close Sept. 3 and attendees travel home.
- **Sept. 11, Patriot Day:** May we never forget! Is your Post doing a ceremony? Send me your photos

and a brief write-up, and I will put it on our Facebook page for all to see.

- **Sept. 18:** Lots to pray for. It is POW/MIA Remembrance Day. It is also the birthday of the U.S. Air Force (1947) and the U.S. Air National Guard.
- **Sept. 27, Gold Star Family Day:**

We remember these grieving families in our prayers. This is also a good opportunity for a community event to honor them and their loved ones.

Pro Deo et Patria, For God and Country!

Take Me Out to the Ball Game



Seven Beebe
Historian
historian@legionmail.org

What an honor it is to serve as your Department of Florida Historian and to have had the opportunity to capture some of the unforgettable moments of the 2026 Florida American Legion Baseball State Series in Clearwater, Florida.

It was also incredible that my mentor and iconic Past Department Historian Edward Lewis was there, capturing the tournament through his lens.

As always, Edward's jaw-dropping action photographs were a grand slam, freezing split-second moments that told the story of the games in a way few photographers can.

Thank you, Edward!

The tournament began as our Department Commander Bob Matheson threw out the ceremonial first pitch, kicking off an outstanding week of American Legion Baseball.

A heartfelt thank you to our Department Leadership, American Legion Family members, volunteers, coaches and supporters who came out to cheer on these outstanding young athletes.

Your presence, encouragement and commitment to the American Legion Baseball program help make this tradition so special.

Congratulations to our **2026 Florida American Legion Baseball State Champions, Post 316!**

And congratulations as well to every team that competed with heart, determination and sportsmanship throughout the tournament.

All of the teams represented your Posts and the Department of Florida with pride.

Thank you for allowing me the honor of preserving these moments in our Department's history. It was an absolute privilege to be there, camera in hand, capturing

memories of the Department of Florida American Legion 2026-2027 Baseball Series.



Communication and Programs Strengthen Our Posts



Calvin Thompson
Central Area Commander
central@legionmail.org

Installations are now in the books, schools are back in session, and another American Legion year is underway. Now is the time to turn our attention toward our programs and the communities we serve. Posts should begin working on their Oratorical Contests and identifying potential Boys State candidates. These are among our longest-standing programs and remain a cornerstone of our involvement with our schools, our young people and our communities. The earlier we begin building relationships with our schools, teachers, counselors and students, the greater the impact these programs can have.

As we move forward,

communication must also remain one of our priorities. Communication is a key factor in the success of our organization. If we do not communicate effectively with one another and with our members, we cannot grow. More importantly, members who do not know what is happening can quickly begin to feel disconnected from their Post and from The American Legion. Keeping our members informed, involved and invited is one of the simplest ways we can strengthen our organization.

I am asking every Post and District in the Central Area to keep the lines of communication open with your members, neighboring Posts, your District and the Area. Tell us about your meetings, training opportunities, fundraisers, community activities and special events. We cannot attend your events, promote what you

are doing or encourage others to support you if we do not know about them. Likewise, when another Post or District reaches out for support, I encourage us to show up whenever we can. We are stronger when we support one another.

There is a tremendous amount of experience, knowledge and enthusiasm throughout the Central Area. My goal this year is to help connect those resources and bring our Posts and Districts closer together. Share what you are doing, ask for help when you need it and take the opportunity to learn from one another. When we communicate, participate and work together, we do more than strengthen our individual Posts. We strengthen The American Legion and our ability to serve our veterans, their families and our communities.

Passing Knowledge to the Next Generation of Leaders



Miguel Garcia
Northern Area Commander
northern@legionmail.org

The past few weeks have been exciting and productive. As installations come to an end and we move into the full swing of the service year, I am confident that this will be another successful year for the Northern Area. As Posts and Districts begin building their schedules, many of you are already discussing training plans at the District and Post

levels.

Fortunately, the Northern Area is rich with members who have the experience, knowledge and commitment to provide training. From officer training to program training, we have competent Legionnaires who can help others grow. One important form of training deserves special attention: mentoring.

As the title states, mentoring is training. It is one of the most

effective forms of training because it develops people through personal connection, shared experience and practical guidance. A mentor is an experienced and trusted adviser who helps someone with less experience grow by sharing knowledge, offering encouragement and helping that person build both confidence and program understanding while simultaneously helping them grow as a leader.

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This is the same kind of training many of us experienced in the military. After graduating from our specialty schools, we went into the field, applied what we had learned and continued to develop our skills and professionalism through the guidance and mentoring of our leaders. If you are a new Post officer, program chair or member who wants to expand your knowledge of The American Legion or one of its programs, I encourage you to seek out a mentor. If you are unsure who to contact, reach out to a Post officer,

District officer or me to guide you in the right direction.

To our seasoned comrades, please make yourselves available to current leaders and members throughout the organization. We are a family, and we rise or fall together. Many of us remember what it felt like to be new, uncertain and unsure where to turn for guidance. Let us take the lead by engaging with our fellow comrades and ensuring that the knowledge we have gained continues for another 100-plus years. I again encourage each of us to either seek a mentor or

become one.

As I reflect on my American Legion journey, I am deeply grateful for the mentors who took the time to guide me, teach me and help me grow.

I stand on the shoulders of my first mentor, Richard Rowe, Past Commander of Post 250, who is no longer with us, and of the many dedicated mentors who continue to serve beside me today. Their examples remind me that mentoring is an investment in our members and the future of The American Legion.

Southern Area Starts the Year Strong



Geo Bograkos
Southern Area Commander
southern@legionmail.org

The 2026-2027 Legion year is off to a great start under the strong leadership of Department Commander Bob Matheson. By the time you read this, almost all Posts in the Southern Area should have been installed. On behalf of the District 14 Commander, I traveled to the Keys, where we installed Post 154 in Marathon, Florida. Just a few weeks later, we were at the complete opposite end of the Southern Area, where we attended the installation of the Southern Area's largest Post, Post 62 in Stuart, Florida. Attending these installations is very important to me, as it gives me a unique opportunity to visit and connect with the members in the Southern Area.

Our next **MEMBERSHIP** goal is 50% by Sept. 7. We should not have any issues achieving this 50% goal.

We want every Post in the Southern Area to make at least 100% **plus one** membership for 2026-2027. All three of our capable District Commanders have membership plans and people in place to assist Posts that might need a little help.

Department Post Development Chair Judith Richards and Southern Area Membership Chair Rick Molina are standing by to help as well! Please reach out to them to schedule assistance sooner rather than later.

As we did last year, we are setting up four separate Department-level **TRAINING** sessions in the Southern Area:

One each in Districts 9 and 11, and two in District 14. Department Convention trainers and others, TBA, will be joining us to help present these training sessions. Subject matter will include Membership, Conflict Resolution and Post Operations.

Emails and flyers will be going out soon, so watch your inboxes and save the dates.

Speaking of **TRAINING**: Would you be willing to invest just **TWO HOURS or LESS** online to learn about the Four Pillars of The American Legion? The American Legion's official training program for officers, members, Legion College applicants (required Legion College

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prerequisite) and those who simply want to expand their knowledge of the nation's largest veterans service organization is now available online for **FREE!**

ALL Post and District Officers should have completed this course. If not, take this opportunity to do so.

Have you taken the course previously? No worries. The **American Legion Extension Institute** (Basic Training) has been rewritten, updated, streamlined and enhanced with videos, digital photos, clickable links, a historical timeline and additional features. The program should take less than two hours to complete. Stop anywhere and come back to it later. It is divided into six sections, with a quiz at the end of each one, followed by a final exam. You will then receive a frame-worthy Certificate of Completion from The American Legion and a Graduate Pin for your Legion cap! The best part is all of this is **FREE**.

You will learn about:

- History & Organization
- Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation
- National Security
- Americanism
- Children & Youth
- Course Conclusion & Final Exam

Click here to visit the ALEI website:

<https://www.legion.org/alei>

District 9, 11 and 14 District Meetings

are underway. Please attend your District Meetings.

Make sure your Post is represented when the Roll Call of Posts is announced. You will not only learn valuable information, but you will also have a voice in what is going on within **YOUR** District!

Sept. 12, 9 a.m.

District 11 Meeting #1

Post 268, 1690 Avenue H W,
Riviera Beach, FL 33404

Sept. 19, 10 a.m.

District 14 Meeting #1

Post 31, 7710 SW 59th Ave., South
Miami, FL 33143

Sept. 26, 1 p.m.

District 9 Meeting #1

Post 304, 41 NE 1st Ct., Dania
Beach, FL 33004

Other noteworthy events coming up in the Southern Area:

The "Country Hoe Down" themed **SOUTHERN AREA BALL** will be held Saturday, Jan. 30, 2027, at 6 p.m. at Post 321, 9801 SW 51st St., Cooper City, FL 33328. Dress is "Farmhand Chic."

The award-winning District 9 **FOUR CHAPLAINS Ceremony** will be held the very next day, Jan. 31, 2027, at 2 p.m. at the I.T. Parker Center, 901 NE 3rd St., Dania Beach, FL 33004.

Immediately following the Four

Chaplains Ceremony, American Legion Post 304 Commander Kevin "Gunny" Savage invites you to join him at the **Official Four Chaplains After Party and Dinner** at American Legion Post 304, 41 NE 1st Ct., Dania Beach, FL 33004.

If you have not already done so, please visit and "LIKE" or "FOLLOW" the Southern Area Facebook page, where you may share your Facebook posts and events with everyone in Districts 9, 11, 14 and beyond: <https://www.facebook.com/SouthernAreaFL>. Or just use the QR code to go directly to the page.



Problems managing QR codes? Find the nearest teenager or Gen Z person (aka Zoomer) for tech support.

In conclusion, I wish all the Posts in the Southern Area the very best for a successful 2026-2027!

If you have any Post or District events that you wish me to attend, please reach out to me.

Remember, **WE are here to support YOU.**

Building Stronger Posts With a Business Mindset



Alan Adams
District 6 Commander
district6@legionmail.org

Installs are over, and now we can get down to business. At my local Post meeting, an officer said that we need to start focusing on building our Post like it's a business. This resonated with me. In my day job, I work with businesses that are scaling in different ways. I try to bring that mindset to my role in the Legion.

To build a strong foundation, we first have to ask every leadership team: **"What is your why?"** In business, you have to understand your core value proposition. For us, that means understanding exactly why veterans want to join and stay at your Post and ensuring that what you offer, whether it's volunteer opportunities or community support, directly matches their needs and expectations.

Once you know your "why," the focus naturally shifts to retention. In the business world, the best customer is the one you can retain rather than going out and spending resources to find a new one. This same principle applies to our Posts. One of our primary strategies in District 6 is to focus on retaining as many current members as possible before pushing for new recruits. That means helping Post leaders understand their retention numbers and using tools like the new weekly reports and MyLegion to identify where members might be slipping away.

As part of this retention-first strategy, we're also launching a campaign to re-engage members we've lost over the last couple of years. Why? They've already shown an interest in the Legion, and it's up to us to bring them back into the fold.

To help our Posts execute these

strategies, District 6 is stepping up as a support team. We've launched voluntary monthly "information sessions" to provide practical tools for Post operations. In our first session, we tackled membership strategies. In our second session, we covered proper meeting protocol and answered operational questions directly from Post officers.

Over the next few weeks, we're taking that support directly to the Post level. Our primary focus will be conducting visits across all Posts using the District Commander Post Visitation Report to ensure operations meet Department standards. More importantly, these visits give us a chance to sit down with the Post leadership team, identify their specific challenges and provide the leadership and guidance they need to thrive. Together, we can Make Today Awesome! Go D6!!

Ask What You Can Do for The American Legion



Karen Warren
District 7 Commander
district7@legionmail.org

One of the most memorable challenges ever issued to Americans came from President John F. Kennedy, who said,

"Ask not what your country can do for you, ask what you can do for your country"

Those words inspired a generation to serve with dedication and purpose.

That same principle applies to The American Legion today.

So, let me rephrase President Kennedy's famous challenge: **Ask not what The American Legion can do for you, but what can you do for The American Legion?**

Every one of us has been blessed by God with unique talents, skills and abilities. Those gifts can strengthen our Posts, Districts, Departments and The American Legion as a whole. No contribution is too small when it is offered with a willing heart and a spirit of service.

Some members have exceptional computer skills and can help maintain websites, social media

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pages or membership records. Others are gifted with numbers and can assist with budgeting, bookkeeping or financial planning. Some are natural leaders, some can do Buddy Checks, while others excel at organizing events, mentoring new members or supporting veterans and their families. Every talent has value, and every member has something meaningful to offer.

The key is finding your niche within the Legion. Once you discover where your abilities best fit, your contributions become

both rewarding and impactful. Sometimes those contributions may seem small, but together they create the foundation of a successful organization. Other times, your efforts may lead to major initiatives that positively influence your Post or even your Department.

The American Legion has never been built by a handful of individuals. It has always thrived because ordinary members chose to give their time, talents and dedication for a cause greater than themselves.

As we look toward the future, let us

remember that the strength of our organization depends not on what we receive, but on what we are willing to give. By sharing our God-given talents and working together, we ensure that The American Legion remains a vibrant advocate for veterans, their families, our communities and our nation.

The next time you attend a meeting or are asked to volunteer for an event, ask yourself one simple question: **"What can I do for The American Legion?"** The answer may be exactly what your Post, District or Department needs.

Buddy Checks: Taking Care of Our Own



Daniel Ciesielski
District 12 Commander
district12@legionmail.org

I am asking every Post Commander to put together a special membership committee to start 100% Buddy Checks. This should begin with members who did not renew for 2025, not to get the renewal, but to do a real Buddy Check and be sure our members are OK. Use this contact time to be sure we have the correct phone number and email address. Let them know they are missed and ask if they need assistance.

All of our World War II, Korean War and now Vietnam veterans are older, and many are on fixed incomes. Some need assistance, but

some are too proud to ask for help. Our younger veterans from newer conflicts and wars may also need help, and they may be too proud to ask as well. If we don't ask, we may never know.

So please make those phone calls, send texts, emails and letters, and finally, knock on doors for those who don't respond. Enlist the Riders to do door-knocking rides if no contact is made by other means. Teams of two are suggested. Unfortunately, an obituary search using the last known address should also be done before a door-knocking run if no contact is made. Whatever it takes, we need to know where our members are.

A second contact should be made later to inquire about renewing

dues. If the member does not need assistance, ask them to renew. If they decline, ask why, then evaluate what we can do better to keep them on board.

If we are not doing Buddy Checks, we are not taking care of our own veterans. If you need to know how to do this or generate the list with that information, please contact me.

I have made numerous calls to various expired members from 2025 and have found that, for the most part, Buddy Checks are not being done. I have encountered deceased members who passed away two years ago. The spouses I spoke with were happy that someone cared and called to check, even if it was late.

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Bottom line, we need to do a better job. Let's work together and take care of our own members. Leave no

one behind. This is a very basic part of keeping your Post healthy and taking care of veterans. We also

need to verify and update contact information whenever we contact someone.

Riding With Purpose and Remembrance This September



Jason Skobel
American Legion Riders Chair
legionriders@legionmail.org

As we roll into September, I want to extend a heartfelt thank you to everyone who supported, participated in or donated to this year's National Legacy Run and our campaign for the Veterans & Children Foundation. Your dedication on the road and in our local communities proves once again that the American Legion Riders are the heart and soul of the American Legion Family. We don't just ride; we make a tangible difference in the lives of veterans, children and military families in need.

Now that everyone is back from the Legacy Run and National Convention, our mission as Riders

does not pause. September brings solemn and high-profile events that require our continued presence, support and respect. Our premier riding event for this month is the POW/MIA Remembrance Ride, taking place Sept. 19 in Jacksonville. This police-escorted ride represents our unwavering vow to never forget our Prisoners of War and those missing in action. Whether you are participating in this ride or standing proud at your home Post, let us ensure that the black POW/MIA flag flies proudly alongside our nation's colors. It is a stark reminder of why we ride and why we all continue to serve.

Another important date approaching is the 25th anniversary of Sept. 11. Hopefully, most, if not all, of us will be commemorating this day as we

reflect on the impact of the attacks and how they changed the lives of Americans and people around the world forever. Many of you decided to answer your nation's calling because of the events that happened on this day, and you continue to serve those who have carried on the mission of protecting the freedoms we enjoy. Twenty-five years later, we still carry the light of those we lost, the courage of those who ran toward danger and the resilience that bound us together. We promised to **never forget**, and we never will.

As we transition into the fall riding season, let's keep our minds sharp, our bikes maintained and our spirits high. Thank you for your continued commitment to our veterans, their families and the communities we represent.

Every Post, Every Month: Give Blood, Save Lives

Corlene Ziegler
Blood Donor Chair
blooddonor@legionmail.org

Saving lives is commonplace in hospitals. It happens because of the many hands involved: doctors, nurses, researchers, blood donors, etc. Even the janitor plays a huge role in these events. There are no small roles.

Most of us aren't trained to do surgery, take vitals at 3 a.m. or find cures. The one thing most of us can do is donate blood, platelets, plasma, etc. If you can and you don't donate, can you explain why? Is it fear of needles? My donation won't matter? Someone else will do it? I don't have to tell you why none of

these are good reasons. You know! Let's roll up those sleeves! Of all the programs The American Legion has, blood donor is the easiest to fulfill. The impact can't be overstated! It's just a matter of setting the date with the collection agency, be it the Red Cross or OneBlood. Find the one nearest to you and set

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up monthly dates for the year. Then let members AND the community know the date and time for the next one.

I will do all I can to support your efforts. The phone number for the Red Cross is 1-800-733-2767. OneBlood is 1-888-936-6283.

Let's get real here. It will take time

to build the regulars. Remember, there are no too-small events. Five donations can help up to 15 people. If you get five every month, in a year you will have 180 people affected.

For those who, for physical reasons, are ineligible to donate, there's much you can do. Contact community businesses to partner with if your space is limited. Get the grill set up and offer hot dogs, burgers, chips,

etc., to the donors and the staff. Talk to people! Your members might be plentiful enough to support your drives, but don't count on them. Get the word out that the Post is the place to donate! Building relationships with the community will help your membership and the Post's reputation. Veterans are servers. Let's serve!

Florida First in all good things!

Finding the Next Generation of Boys State Leaders



Darcy Sisson
Boys State Chair
boysstate@legionmail.org

Do You Have a Boys Stater for Me?

Florida American Legion Boys State, 83rd Session

Maybe we've been asking the wrong question.

For years, we've heard, "What is Boys State?"

My goal is to change that.

I want parents, teachers, grandparents, coaches and community leaders to hear **Florida American Legion Boys State (FALBS)** and immediately say:

"Do I have a Boys Stater for you?"

As we prepare for the **83rd Session of FALBS**, we are reaching out to all Post, District and Area Boys

State Chairs for an upcoming Zoom meeting. We'll talk about important changes, fresh ideas, recruitment and, most importantly, how we can continue raising the bar for Florida's premier leadership program.

We Aren't Looking for Perfect.
We're Looking for Potential.

Let me be clear:

We are not simply looking for the young man with the highest GPA, the most impressive résumé or a bedroom wall covered in trophies.

Those accomplishments are great. But Boys State requires something different.

We want young men who are willing to **step up, step outside their comfort zone, work with others, lead, listen, adapt and trust the process.**

Maybe he's the football captain.

Maybe he's the track captain.

Maybe he leads the chess club.

Maybe he's the kid organizing everyone else when nobody asked him to.

Maybe he's already building a business before he even walks onto the campus of Florida State University.

That's leadership.

The best leader in the room isn't the one with the highest GPA. He's the one who knows how to **play well in the sandbox** with everyone else.

Boys State Has Changed, and That's a Good Thing

FALBS has evolved.

Today's young men are entrepreneurs, innovators, athletes, creators, thinkers and community leaders. They bring ideas and experiences to Boys State that

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<< Boys State continued from page 12

previous generations could never have imagined.

Our job is to find them.

Then we give them the opportunity to discover what happens when they are challenged, encouraged and surrounded by other young men who are ready to lead.

For one week, Boys State becomes more than a program.

It becomes an experience.

A challenge.

A proving ground.

And for many, a turning point.

Quality and Quantity

This year, our focus must be quality and quantity.

We are building leaders.

That little box marked “**Boys State**” on an application means something. It is recognized by institutions such as the U.S. Naval Academy, West Point, Harvard and countless other colleges and universities.

But the real value isn’t the box.

It’s what the box represents:

**Leadership. Citizenship.
Character. Teamwork. Resilience.**

And behind every Boys Stater is a legacy of American Legion Posts that believe investing in young people propels the future of our country.

At the end of the week, our young men will check that box.

But they will also walk away with something much bigger.

They will walk away as Boys Staters.

Chairs, This Is Where You Come In

To our Post, District and Area Chairs:
We need you at the table.

Watch for an email from Bekki Boarman and me with information about our upcoming Zoom meeting.

Bring your ideas.

Bring your successes.

Bring your challenges.

And if you aren’t a chair but want to learn more, reach out.

My email is available through the

Department of Florida website, and I would be happy to add you to the conversation.

Because I believe one thing very strongly: **Knowledge is meant to be shared, not contained.**

Let’s share what works. Let’s challenge what doesn’t. Let’s look beyond the traditional candidate and find the young man who may not realize yet that he has what it takes to lead.

Let’s raise the standard.

Let’s strengthen our legacy.

Let’s make the 83rd Session of Florida American Legion Boys State unforgettable.

Because the future isn’t waiting for us.

It’s sitting in a classroom, standing on a football field, solving a problem, building a business, leading a team and waiting for someone to say: **“I think I have a Boys Stater for you.”**

Let’s find him. Let’s challenge him. Let’s give him the opportunity to rise. I’m excited to see what delegates are chosen for **“the week that changes lives, forever.”**

Supporting Our Children, Strengthening Our Legion Family

Toni Sutherland
Children & Youth Chair
cy@legionmail.org

As the children of our vast U.S. military system can attest, “military brats” are a different breed unto themselves. Regardless of how loving

their family, how safe and protected their community, how great their school system or what opportunities are offered, they all have one thing in common. They are forced to grow up too fast in a world that does not

take their social and emotional well-being into account when it is time for mom or dad to head off to war.

Consider that your mother, your

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<< Children & Youth continued from page 13

father or both of your parents may be forced to leave you at home with no notice. You don't know where they are, and you don't know when, or if, they will come home. The fear and the overall emotional burden placed on these children are sometimes overwhelming.

I often think about how this experience affected the stepson I raised when his father and I were both active duty, stationed in Germany, and were alerted to pack up and move out on a mission in the middle of the night. Our son, starting at age 7, had to learn quickly to be self-sufficient and to accept that there was a backup plan in place that he had to meticulously follow, no matter where we were or how long we were gone. Regardless of his emotional upheaval, he, too, had a duty to fulfill so that we could do our jobs.

Did it affect him socially and emotionally? Did it make him angry? You bet it did. Did he have to mature quickly in order to survive? You betcha. Did my child suffer? Did yours? If your spouse was not military and you left them behind with your child or children, did they suffer? You already know the answer to those questions.

The founding fathers of The American Legion understood that the children of our military members and veterans would need help and support as long as we have a standing military force that places our troops in harm's

way. They also recognized that our future leaders come from the generations that follow us. This is why Children & Youth was designated as a pillar of The American Legion.

Without strong, healthy children in our communities, growing up in families that have the ways and means to keep them fed, clothed and housed, and who respect our nation and way of life, there is no America. This is the reason for the Temporary Financial Assistance Program, which provides one-time financial assistance to military and veteran families at risk of losing their homes due to unexpected financial hardships. Reach out to these families and offer them the help they need!

As the Department of Florida's 2026-2027 Children & Youth Commission Chair, I will be visiting as many of your District meetings as possible before the end of 2026. I will provide information about the Children & Youth Fund, the scholarships that fall under Children & Youth, and Special Olympics. Each of these programs has its own Chair, Eunice Butts, Michael "Gambler" Raymond and George DeAngelo, respectively. You should be hearing from them also, but I want to ensure that I have the opportunity to meet as many of you as possible and answer any questions that you might have about the Children & Youth programs this year.

There are representatives assigned to the Commission from each Area. They are: Central, Eunice Butts;

Eastern, Wayne Mulligan; Northern, Tom Johnson; Southern, Richard Smith; Southwestern, Dennis Boland; and Western, Robert "Oz" Osman. Penny Kanbara, the Auxiliary Children & Youth Chair, and Danny Roe, the Sons Children & Youth Chair, will also be participating with the Commission so we can work together as a team on Department-wide projects.

Dates to Mark on Your Calendar

- **Sept. 19, 2026:** Special Olympics Gala, Orlando (more information to follow)
- **Nov. 22-28, 2026:** National Family Week
- **March 1, 2027:** General Scholarship Applications Due
- **April 1-30, 2027:** Children & Youth Month
- **April 1, 2027:** Medical & Nursing School Scholarship Applications Due
- **April 10, 2027:** Children & Youth Picnic, Post 72, Mulberry
- **April 15, 2027:** Purple Up! For Military Kids Day
- **April 30, 2027:** Military Brats Day
- **May 1, 2027:** Children & Youth Fund Applications Due

There are various Children & Youth materials you can order and distribute to your members and throughout your community: Halloween Safety Coloring Books (order forms are due to Department by Oct. 15; ([f-2026HSForm.pdf](#));

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<< Children & Youth continued from page 14

brochures that discuss 20 reasons not to use Gateway Drugs; National Family Week; and Warning Signs of Youth Suicide.

And maybe the most important thing I can recommend to you is to remember that we are a FAMILY.

Do not forget that the Sons and the Auxiliary also have Children & Youth programs. WORK with them within your Post, District and Area to ensure that your local military and veteran families are receiving the services they need because THEY are part of your family also.

Thank you all for your service and willingness to continue to serve your fellow military and veteran brothers and sisters, and especially their children. Together, as a family, the promises we make to these children today will serve to make their futures the realities they want them to be.

Civil Air Patrol: Serving Communities and Shaping Futures



Rico Thomas
Civil Air Patrol Chair
civilairpatrol@legionmail.org

Civil Air Patrol's mission statement is: "Volunteers Serving America's Communities, Saving Lives, and Shaping Futures." This encompasses the organization's three major programs: emergency services, aerospace education and cadet programs.

Established in 1941, Civil Air Patrol (CAP) is a public service organization chartered by Congress that functions both as a nonprofit and the civilian auxiliary of the U.S. Air Force.

In its capacity as the auxiliary of the

Air Force, CAP operates the world's largest fleet of single-engine aircraft. The Air Force assigns missions to the auxiliary to facilitate 90% of the inland search and rescue missions in the United States, searching for missing or overdue aircraft, lost or injured hikers, stranded boaters, missing persons and more. Under its charter and public laws, CAP performs a variety of emergency and operational missions on demand for federal, state and local agencies, as requested through the National Operations Center (NOC) at Maxwell Air Force Base.

Civil Air Patrol's cadet program focuses on leadership training, aerospace, fitness and character development.

CAP provides an array of K-12 aerospace and STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) curricula and educational products for members and teachers; offers youth character, leadership and career development opportunities; and provides essential community service for federal, state and local agencies in the air and on the ground.

Learn more: flwg.cap.gov/about
Find a squadron and support:
flwg.cap.gov/locations

As we continue to grow this great youth program, always feel free to contact me with your thoughts and questions. Don't forget to share your Post's local squadron activities.

Supporting JROTC as a New School Year Begins



Loretta Young
JROTC/JSSP Chair
jrotc@legionmail.org

The summer vacation has quickly come to an end, and the JROTC programs have already started. Prior

to the official start of classes, several School Districts hold District-wide training or a "Welcome Back to School Workshop." This is something that we, as Legionnaires, should take an interest in attending when the opportunity presents itself.

It's usually held over several days, depending on the size of the District and number of JROTC units. This is when all the Senior and Junior Instructors come together, along with District and school officials and

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many of the participating supporters. There's usually a Presentation of Colors by a Cadet Color Guard Team, the Pledge of Allegiance and National Anthem, followed by a keynote speaker.

This year, I would like to share two District events. There was the Broward County event held at the end of July at NSU in Davie and another at the beginning of August at Post 273, Madeira Beach. I was in attendance as the American Legion Department JROTC Chairman representative, and Rico Thomas attended as the Department CAP Chairman.

The training event at Post 273 was honored to have three Department representatives as Distinguished

Guests: Department Commander Bob Matheson, Department First Vice Commander Bruce Carl and Second Vice Commander Rick Orzechowski.

Some of the partners in attendance in Broward were the Army National Guard, Joe DiMaggio Hospital, CANVAS, BIG CHEESE, Online Donations, JROTC Support Assoc. and BENCOR. Some partners attending at Post 273 were AMVETS, VFW, Elks Lodge, FBI Field Office Tampa, MOAA, USMC Reserve Tampa and others.

A very special thanks goes out to the 16th District JROTC Chairman and Department JROTC Committee Member Bill Brockman for all his efforts in assisting with the coordination of the workshop training at Post 273.

This is the time when all the new instructors are present, and by visiting this workshop training, you get a great opportunity to meet the schools and instructors that you will be supporting for the upcoming year.

The JSSP National Marksmanship Competition was held at Hillsdale College in July, and we would like to congratulate our State Winner, Elyssa Vazquez, from Mariner JROTC in Cape Coral, who was the fourth-place winner. She was featured at the Department Convention in Orlando as the Mariner Team Florida State Winner.

May you all have a very successful upcoming year for our Youth Programs.

"Fueled Up, Course Entered, Gaining Altitude"



Doug Hockenberry
Membership Chair
membership@legionmail.org

September is here, and the Department Commander and I want to thank every Post, District, Area and member who continues to support our Membership Program. Because of your commitment, energy and steady work, the Department of Florida is already gaining altitude and positioning itself for a strong 2026-2027 Legion Year.

Just two months into the new membership year, we are closing in

on our first Department goal of 50% by Sept. 2. As of this writing, one Post has already reached 125%, 53 Posts are at 50% or better, and 57 more Posts are closing in on the 50% goal. Congratulations to each of you for the outstanding work. Now is the time to keep the momentum, maintain the energy and continue climbing toward every goal ahead.

Department Membership Goals 2026-2027

September 2, 2026 Early Bird Kickoff	50%
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October 7, 2026 Fall Meetings	55%
November 4, 2026 Veterans Day	65%
December 2, 2026 Pearl Harbor Day	75%
January 6, 2027 Mid-Winter	80%
February 3, 2027 Presidents Day	85%
March 3, 2027 American Legion Birthday	90%
April 7, 2027 Children and Youth	95%

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May 5, 2027

Armed Forces Day

100%

May 31, 2027

100%+1%

A few weeks ago, I had the pleasure of attending the National Membership Workshop in Indianapolis with the Commander, Vice Commanders, Adjutant and incoming Adjutant. The workshop covered many membership topics designed to help our Posts grow, but one message stood out above all others: We must continue reaching out to our members and letting them know they matter. That message directly supports my motto, "Stronger Together," and reinforces the Commander's theme of Veterans – Family – Friends.

During the workshop, we also briefed Leading Candidate Jay Bowen, the incoming National Commander, on Florida's membership strategy for the 2026-2027 year. We presented a detailed plan supported by facts and figures, and it was well received by Mr. Bowen and his panel. As a result, the Department of Florida has been tasked with reaching a membership goal of 100,001. That number is ambitious, but it is achievable when every member, Post, District and Area works together.

Our course for the year is clear. We must renew members promptly, reach out personally, promote the three-year renewal program and use the tools available to strengthen membership across Florida. Every Post can help by holding membership drives, attending community events, advertising who we are and sharing what The American Legion has accomplished for veterans, their families and our communities. Our proud history gives us a strong foundation. Now it is our responsibility to keep building on that legacy.

Timely processing is also essential. There is no benefit in holding cards or delaying batch submissions. Please process renewals as quickly as possible, take care of your honorary members right away, work the 400 lists, and continue recruiting and welcoming new members into your Posts.

We are also looking ahead to the new MyLegion.org platform, expected in February or March 2027. The updated platform should be more user-friendly, offer improved reporting capabilities and make membership processing more efficient. We will share additional information as it becomes available.

If you are not already following [The American Legion Department of Florida Membership Team Facebook page](#), I encourage you to do so. It is a valuable forum for current information, sharing ideas and networking. You can also visit the Department website at www.floridalegion.org, click Resources, then Membership, to locate membership information, forms and pamphlets you can use at your Post.

As I close, please know that the entire Department Membership Team is here for you. We are ready to answer questions, provide assistance and offer on-site training. We have already conducted five training sessions and look forward to conducting more in the future. If you need assistance, please email me at membership@legionmail.org or call me at 727-514-3742.

Thank you for everything you are doing to help make this a successful membership year. We are fueled up, on course and gaining altitude.

#StrongerTogether



**FOLLOW US
ON
FACEBOOK!**



Dropping in to see if you're following our Facebook page yet....

A GREAT SOURCE OF INFORMATION!

AMERICAN LEGION, DEPT OF FL MEMBERSHIP TEAM

STAY CONNECTED: www.facebook.com/groups/falmembership



FIGHTING THE GOOD FIGHT

SEPTEMBER 2026 EDITION

YEAR 13 (July 2026 - June 2027)

Emergency Assistance



15

VETERANS RECEIVED FUNDS



\$24,777

PROVIDED IN
FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

Suicide Prevention



14

SPI PARTNERS



\$56,800

GIVEN TOWARDS
SUICIDE PREVENTION

Get in the Game: *Football with Purpose*

The countdown is on! Football with Purpose is bringing the Legion Family together on Sunday, November 1, for an unforgettable day with the Tampa Bay Buccaneers, all while raising awareness and support for veteran mental health.

There are plenty of ways to get in the game:

» **Game Day Tickets** – Score specially priced tickets to watch the Bucs take on the Atlanta Falcons at Raymond James Stadium. A portion of every ticket purchased through our special link supports PROJECT VetRelief's Suicide Prevention Initiative.

» **Ride In With Purpose** – Legion Riders, join our motorcycle ride-in staging at American Legion Post 138 before rolling together into our official tailgate. Registration is just \$5 per person and required for both riders and passengers.

» **Tailgate Experience** – Join us for a high-energy tailgate near the stadium. Expect plenty of Legion pride, food, drinks, giveaways, fellowship, and opportunities to learn more about the organizations working together to support Florida's veterans.

» **Gear Up** – Official Football with Purpose T-shirts and rally towels are available for presale. Order yours and help us fill Raymond James Stadium with Legion pride!

» **Sponsorships** – Businesses and organizations can get in the game, too! Sponsorship opportunities are available for the motorcycle ride-in, tailgate, game-day merchandise, veteran tickets, and more. Know a company that would be a great fit? Help us make the connection!

Whether you ride, tailgate, cheer, sponsor, or gear up, every part of this experience helps bring greater attention and support to veteran mental health.

Rally your Post. Bring the Legion Family. Let's show Tampa Bay how Florida's Legion Family shows up for our veterans!



For game day activities
and the latest details, visit:
www.projectvetrelief.org/fwp



September is Suicide Prevention & Awareness Month

For PROJECT: VetRelief, preventing veteran suicide is a mission we carry throughout the year, but September provides an important opportunity to bring greater awareness to the conversation.

Through our Suicide Prevention Initiative (SPI), we work alongside trusted Strategic Partners to connect veterans with programs that address PTSD, mental wellness, and the challenges that can accompany military service. Rather than taking a one-size-fits-all approach, our goal is to meet veterans where they are by expanding access to a variety of alternative, non-prescription treatment options.

Most importantly, we believe ending veteran suicide takes collaboration, not competition. By bringing organizations together, strengthening referral networks, raising awareness, and funding programs that directly serve veterans, we are building a stronger network of support across Florida.

This September, help us remind every veteran: You are not alone, and support is within reach.

Learn more and explore our Support Network at PROJECTVetRelief.org/support-network.



Planning for Successful Post Revitalization



Judith Richards
Post Development Chair
revitalization@legionmail.org

What does everyone need to know about Post Development and Revitalization?

The planning process takes time,

depending on the type of event the Post or District wants to have. Will it be combined with several Posts? Will it be held with all Legion Family groups? Will there be community involvement? What works for one Post may not work for another. Most importantly, it takes effort and follow-through from those who are

planning the revitalization.

My role is to guide, prepare, take the action items, keep us on track and advise wherever I can.

I look forward to working with every District to hold at least one revitalization throughout the year.

You Are Not Forgotten: Honoring America's POWs and MIAs



Denny Luke
POW/MIA Chair
powmia@legionmail.org

The Story Behind the POW/MIA Flag

Did you know National POW/MIA Recognition Day was established through the determined advocacy of military families during the Vietnam War? Those same determined efforts also led to the creation of the iconic POW/MIA flag, a lasting symbol of our nation's commitment to those who were prisoners of war and those who remain missing in action.

In 1970, **Mary Hellen Hoff**, a member of the **National League of Families** and the wife of a Naval aviator missing in action while stationed at NAS Cecil Field in Jacksonville, helped inspire the creation of a symbol that would become recognized around the world. Determined to keep the fate of America's missing service members in the public eye, the League sought a flag that would serve as a

constant reminder that those listed as prisoners of war or missing in action would never be forgotten.

Graphic artist **Newt Heisley of the Annin Flag Company** answered that call by designing the now-iconic black-and-white POW/MIA flag. After receiving official approval from the National League of Families of American Prisoners and Missing in Southeast Asia, the flag was first unveiled and flown in 1972.

Heisley based the silhouette on his 24-year-old son, Jeffrey, whose gaunt appearance after recovering from a serious illness following Marine Corps training reflected the physical hardship endured by many prisoners of war. The design features the silhouette of a captive set before a guard tower and strands of barbed wire. Beneath are the powerful words, **"YOU ARE NOT FORGOTTEN."** More than five decades later, the flag remains one of America's most enduring symbols of remembrance and the nation's

commitment to account for every missing service member.

The National League of Families intentionally left the design uncopyrighted so it could be freely reproduced and displayed across America.

The flag first flew over the White House on National POW/MIA Recognition Day in 1988. In 1990, Congress designated it as the nation's official symbol of concern for America's POWs and MIAs. The **National POW/MIA Flag Act of 2019** further strengthened its significance by requiring the flag to be flown every day at designated federal locations, including the White House, U.S. Capitol, major military installations, national cemeteries and post offices.

Displaying the POW/MIA Flag

Proper display of the POW/MIA flag is straightforward:

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- On a single flagpole, it flies directly beneath the United States flag.
- On separate poles, it is displayed to the left of the U.S. flag from the viewer's perspective.
- It should always be the same size as or smaller than the American flag, never larger.

The American Legion's Empty Chair Ceremony

The American Legion has long been one of the nation's strongest advocates for POW/MIA accountability.

On Aug. 27, 1985, during the 67th National Convention in New Orleans, delegates adopted Resolution 288, establishing the **POW/MIA Empty Chair Program** (often referred to as the "Table for One") at official American Legion meetings.

The Empty Chair serves three important purposes:

- **A Visible Reminder:** It honors the thousands of Americans still missing and unaccounted for from World War II, the Korean War, the Vietnam War and more recent conflicts.
- **A Call to Government Action:** It reminds our elected leaders that the search for the missing must remain a national priority.
- **A Commitment to Accountability:** It reaffirms The American Legion's

dedication to bringing home every possible captive, recovering the remains of the fallen and achieving the fullest possible accounting of those still missing.

Whenever you see the **Empty Chair** at a Legion meeting, **remember it represents someone who has not yet come home.**

Motorcycles for the Missing

Did you know that motorcycle rides supporting POW/MIA awareness are among the largest patriotic demonstrations in America?

The thunder of thousands of motorcycles has become a powerful reminder that America has not forgotten its missing heroes.

One of the earliest and most recognized events was **Rolling Thunder**, founded in 1987 by Vietnam veterans. Each Memorial Day weekend, hundreds of thousands of riders traveled to Washington, D.C., demanding continued accountability for America's missing service members.

Another nationally recognized event is **Run For The Wall**, an annual cross-country mission from California to Washington, D.C. Riders travel to the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in a structured mission that includes a symbolic **Missing Man Formation**, five motorcycles riding with an intentionally vacant position representing those who never returned.

Florida's Seven Bridges POW/MIA Remembrance Ride

Here in the great Free State of Florida, we proudly host our own tribute.

Each September, the **American Legion Riders Department of Florida** conducts the **Seven Bridges POW/MIA Remembrance Ride** in Jacksonville. This fully escorted ride crosses Jacksonville's seven major bridges spanning the St. Johns River before concluding at the **National POW/MIA Memorial & Museum** at the former NAS Cecil Field for a POW/MIA ceremony.

The ride brings together Legionnaires, Riders, veterans, families and supporters from across Florida in a visible demonstration that America's POWs and MIAs remain in our hearts and our mission.

Join Us for National POW/MIA Recognition Day 2026

The National POW/MIA Memorial & Museum invites everyone to participate in this year's observance of National POW/MIA Recognition Day.

Sept. 18-19, 2026
National POW/MIA Memorial & Museum
Jacksonville, Florida

This two-day event honors America's prisoners of war and those who remain missing in action through remembrance, education and

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fellowship. The Department of Florida encourages every Legion Family member who can attend to stand with us in reaffirming our promise: **You Are Not Forgotten.**

For event details and the complete schedule, visit the [National POW/MIA Memorial & Museum's upcoming events page](#).

Stay Connected

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

DPAA Update, FY 2026 as of Aug. 1, 2026

- World War II: 154 accounted for
- Korean War: 36 accounted for
- Cold War: 0
- Vietnam War: 1

During July, the DPAA accounted for numerous service members from World War II. These brave Americans are now being returned to their families with the honor and dignity they deserve.

July 1, 2026

- Franklin H. McKinney, World War II

July 16, 2026

- Henry L. Younge, World War II
- Jacob Cornsilk, World War II
- Harold T. Thompson, World War II

- Given C. Grooms, World War II
- Nick Gavalas, World War II
- Gerald W. Herrington
- William A. Jones, World War II

July 21, 2026

- Leonard J. McNeill, World War II. McNeill will be buried Nov. 11, 2026, in his hometown of Orlando, Florida.

July 29, 2026

- Joseph U. Conner, World War II
- Bernard F. Sweet, World War II
- July 30, 2026
- Kenneth L. Carpenter, World War II

Please join us for the 2026 POW/MIA Recognition and Remembrance Day activities in Jacksonville, Florida.

Writing a Strong Resolution: Start With the Resolving Section



Clarence Hill
Resolutions Chair
resolutions@legionmail.org

While the Preamble section (the WHEREAS clause(s) that describe the problem) precedes the Resolving section (the RESOLVED clause(s) that detail suggestions on how the problem should be dealt with and resolved), the Resolving section should be written first. Once the intent of the resolution is clearly stated, it is much easier to decide what statements need to be in the preamble to make it clear what the issue is and to support the reasons for the resolution. During committee discussions or floor debates, the

Resolving section is always amended first and the Preamble section last as changes in the Resolving section may require changes in the Preamble section.

The entire Resolving section text is in **bold** lettering. Each clause in the Resolving section begins with the word "**RESOLVED,**" printed in capital letters and followed by a comma. Between the opening word and the statement of the intent of the resolution, there should be the following information: the identification of the resolving authority, the circumstance and place of the action, and the date of

the action.

An example of a resolution initiated by a Post: "**RESOLVED, By Post No. ____, The American Legion, Department of _____, in regular (or special) meeting assembled in (place and date), That ...**"

The word "That" (with a capital "T") is the first word that immediately follows the resolving clause and introduces the clause, which is the object of the verb "**RESOLVED.**" It aids the reader to find the point at which the meat of the resolution begins and it aids the drafter of the

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resolution to launch a strong and unmistakable statement of intent. Some examples:

RESOLVED, ...That The American Legion shall sponsor and support legislation to ..."

RESOLVED, ...That The American Legion is opposed to repeal or weakening of..."

Although each resolution should deal with only one subject, it is often necessary to attach additional clauses to a resolution's Resolving

section to cover matters that are closely related to the main intent. This is especially useful for detailing how and by whom the intent of the resolution is to be accomplished.

Examples:

"RESOLVED, ... That ...; and, be it further

RESOLVED, (as many as are required) That ...; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That ..."

Note, the identifying information

is stated only once in the first RESOLVED clause and is not repeated in subsequent clauses.

A period is used only once—at the close of the last clause in the Resolving section. Remember, **the entire resolution is one continuous sentence.**

The resolving section clause(s) should be able to stand on its/their own, even without the Preamble section's WHEREAS clause(s) preceding it/them.

Programs Build Our Future



Michael Raymond
Scholarships Chair
scholarships@legionmail.org

Through my years of service with The American Legion, I have found time and time again how important our programs are to the growth of this organization. Our youth programs are designed not only to ensure positive character traits, but also to get the entire family involved in what we believe is a future of success. Programs like Boys State, Girls State, Oratorical and many others build

character and ensure a positive learning experience. And once the family is involved, membership grows!

Unfortunately, for some, it ends there. That is why we offer a scholarship program that is second to none. Our scholarships range from high school students to college and beyond. We must get the word out that we care very much about the youth of our nation and offer much-needed funds to attend college and help ensure completion.

Each District in the Department must have a Scholarship Chairman who is knowledgeable not only about what's available, but also about how to apply. I am available, if needed, to work with your chairman and assist with any questions or guidance you need.

Programs are vital to our success! We need to make sure our programs are working for the good of our organization. Programs and membership are our lifeblood, and they can't exist without each other!

Every Voice. Every Veteran

Lisa Leathers
Women Veterans Chair
womenvets@legionmail.org

Women veterans have proudly served our nation in every branch, every era, and every conflict. Today,

more than ever, it is important that we ensure women veterans are aware of the resources, benefits, opportunities, and support available to them. While women veterans

are one of the fastest-growing segments of the veteran population, many still do not know where to turn for assistance, camaraderie, or advocacy.

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<< Women Veterans continued from page 22

As your Department of Florida Women Veterans Chair, my mission is simple: to connect, support, and advocate for women veterans throughout Florida.

The Department of Florida Women Veterans Task Force exists to honor, empower, and unite female veterans. We are committed to fostering genuine camaraderie, providing education and resources, and creating a welcoming environment where women veterans can connect, share experiences, and support one another. Our mission is to ensure that every woman veteran is seen, heard, and valued.

This year, we have adopted a renewed focus:

Every Voice. Every Veteran.

That means reaching all women veterans, regardless of age, background, branch of service, or era served. It means creating opportunities for women veterans to share their experiences and helping ensure their concerns are heard at the local, state, and national levels. It means building partnerships, strengthening advocacy, and making sure no woman veteran feels alone in her journey.

Advocacy begins by listening. We need to know what women veterans need, what challenges they face, and where gaps still exist. Whether it is access to healthcare, mental

health resources, benefits assistance, employment opportunities, caregiver support, or simply finding a community of fellow veterans, your voice helps guide our efforts and shape our future initiatives.

One of the ways we are putting this mission into action is through the **Department of Florida Women Veterans Expo**, taking place on **Saturday, October 24, 2026, from 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. at American Legion Post 8 in Winter Haven.**

Proud of Her Past. Focused on Her Future.

Created by women veterans, for women veterans, the Expo will provide opportunities to connect with veteran service organizations, healthcare providers, community partners, advocates, and fellow women veterans. Attendees will have access to valuable information, resources, networking opportunities, and speakers focused on issues important to women veterans. Most importantly, it will give women veterans an opportunity to tell us what resources they need and what they want to see moving forward.

The Expo is free to attend, but registration is requested. I encourage every woman veteran, whether she is a Legion member or not, to reserve a free ticket and join us for a day dedicated to connection, resources, advocacy, and community. Bring someone with you!

Reserve your free ticket today: Women Veterans Expo Registration (<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/women-veterans-expo-tickets-1994885191308>)

The success of the Women Veterans Program depends on communication and collaboration across the Department of Florida. We encourage all Posts, Districts, Areas, Counties, and Legion families to become active partners in this effort. If your Post or District has a women veterans program, committee, event, or outreach initiative, we want to hear about it.

Please follow the [Department of Florida Women Veterans Facebook page](#) and help us share information throughout the state. Our Facebook page serves as a place to promote events, share resources, recognize women veterans, and celebrate the work being done at the Post, District, Area, and Department levels. A special thank you to Stephanie Bryant for her dedication in managing and maintaining the Department of Florida Women Veterans Facebook page. Her efforts help keep our members informed, connected, and engaged while promoting women veterans programs and events throughout Florida.

If your Post, District, or Area is hosting a women veterans event, please email us at womenvets@legionmail.org or send us a message

continued on page 24 >>

<< Women Veterans continued from page 23

through our Facebook page. We would be honored to help promote your event and share it with women veterans across Florida. The more we communicate and work together, the more women veterans we can reach.

The American Legion provides a powerful platform for advocacy, service, and connection. Together, we can ensure that more women veterans learn about available benefits, find supportive communities, and become active participants in

The American Legion family. But we cannot do it alone. It takes all of us working together to expand outreach, strengthen advocacy, and create opportunities for women veterans throughout our state.

As I shared during the Women Veterans Forum, your voice matters. We need your ideas, your experiences, and your leadership. Together, we can continue building a stronger future for women veterans throughout Florida.

Every Voice. Every Veteran. Proud of Her Past. Focused on Her Future.

For more information about the Women Veterans Program, the Women Veterans Expo, or to share an upcoming women veterans event, contact womenvets@legionmail.org, follow our Facebook page, and reserve your free Expo ticket today. We look forward to seeing you in Winter Haven on October 24.

Post 26 Serving Veterans and the Plant City Community

Jerry Harrold
Post 26

Norman McLeod Post 26, located in Plant City, "God's Country," has hit the ground running this first quarter of the 2026-2027 Legion year. We are casting a wide net with our community, civic and veteran involvement events and feel the need to share.

We opened our Post and parking grounds to Optum Serve Health Services, Inc. They partner with the VA to bring mobile medical units to communities where there is a need for veterans to complete compensation and pension exams. While their fixed clinic in our area was undergoing construction to enhance the environment and improve the experience for the veterans they serve, they set up shop in the parking lot of Post 26. Optum served 137 local veterans, completing their VA compensation

and pension examinations during the week of July 27.

We opened our doors with welcoming arms and hosted two Quilts of Valor Award Ceremonies, facilitating the recognition of nine local veterans and providing comfort and healing from their time of service to our country. The events were hosted by retired Air Force Master Sergeant and Florida State Quilts of Valor Foundation Coordinator Tammy Arnold.

The morning of Saturday, Aug. 15, is our annual citywide "SOS Breakfast," open to all veterans in the community. A good ol' Army-style SOS breakfast with ALL the trimmings at no cost, just a great morning of eating and talking up the days gone by.

On Aug. 18, the Post converts into

a polling location for the citizens of Plant City to cast their votes in the current elections.

Moving into September, on the 18th we will host our annual communitywide POW/MIA Remembrance ceremony, with a heavy focus on Florida POW/MIA service members.



Post 331 Supports Students and Families in the Orlando Community

George McZeal Jr.
Post 331

Doris "Dorie" Miller Memorial Post 331 of The American Legion, located at 4325 Fairmont St. in Orlando, held a Book Bag Drive and Back-to-School Book Bag Giveaway for the children of our community.

We thank our supporters and members of our Post for their donations to this drive.

The children were greeted by members of Post 331 and our Auxiliary and given snacks and book bags.

Post 331 also extends its congratulations to Makayla Peters as she enters her second year at the United States Air Force Academy. The Commander and members of Doris "Dorie" Miller Memorial Post

331 wish Makayla the very best in her studies at the Academy.

Makayla was Post 331's second-place Oratorical finalist in 2024. She also served as NJROTC Company Commander at her school and received her congressional nomination from Congressman Darren Soto. Ronald Beasley served as the Post Oratorical Officer in 2024.

Post 331 continues to be a bright star in our community through our support of veterans, family members and schools.

We encourage all veterans in our community to come and be a part of our Post. You can also join us for free breakfast on Wednesday mornings and sign up with Post 331.



Stay Engaged, Stay Prepared and Keep Growing



Michael Nigbor
Detachment Commander
commander@floridason.org

By now, we are closing in on the end of our installations. It has been a very busy time for many of us, and I would like to thank those officers who have used the excellent script provided by Detachment Adjutant Christian Rapp. It is a pleasure to hear our officers promoting and teaching about our G.O.A.L.S. and our important charity, C.O.T.A. Congratulations to the new officers coming on board, and thank

you to the returning officers. Stay motivated during this time of the 250th Anniversary of the Greatest Nation in the world. It's a perfect time to get your community involved and educate them about the work we do supporting our veterans, their families, our communities and The American Legion.

Challenge your members with the 3 R's of Membership: **R-Einstating Our Lost! R-Enewing Our Current! R-Cruit Our New!** We have G.O.A.L.S. to meet, and we will meet them with everyone getting on base

and getting in the game.

Our Aug. 27 goal of 25% is approaching soon, followed by 35% on Sept. 30. We need to keep in mind our goal of 32,000 members by delegate cutoff in June 2027. Keep your members engaged. Let's do this. We can, and we will.

Set up your membership tables at your Posts. Talk to the new people you see visiting. Introduce yourself. Make the connection so they will want to return. Invite them to your

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<< Detachment continued from page 25

meetings and events.

Obviously, by this time, there should be no zero Squadrons. We are a team and work stronger together. Challenge your members to recruit at least one new member. Continue working on your Buddy Checks. This is very important to the success and future of our organization, and even more important to the people you call. You have no idea how much a person will appreciate hearing from you and knowing they are more than just a number. Get organized and do whatever it takes to make the connection.

We are approaching September and the peak of the Atlantic hurricane season. Go through your preparedness checklist and get yourselves, your neighbors, family and friends ready for potential emergencies and challenges.

We are The American Legion Family. September is nationally recognized as Suicide Prevention Month. Every month should be about preventing suicide, especially for our military, first responders, teachers, doctors, nurses, etc. People face unimaginable trauma every day, and far too often, they do it alone. Our

mission is to help them find support, education and mental wellness and prevention information. Help them find the family resources they need to survive the job and life afterward.

We are all Americans and proud patriots. Nobody is better than someone else because you do not agree with them on politics, religion or their views on world affairs. Those who put on the uniform and deploy to foreign lands to defend what it stands for have protected our speech and point of view.

Display your flag year-round. Be proud that you are an American, and display that pride to your community. We say in our Preamble that we foster and perpetuate the true spirit of Americanism. So, let's live up to the words and carry on for God and Country. It's about honoring the sacrifices of those who wore our nation's uniform.

It's about supporting veterans and their families, mentoring our youth, strengthening our communities and ensuring that the legacy of The American Legion Family continues for generations to follow. Every reinstated, renewed and recruited member helps make this happen. Every call made, every letter,

every text, every email and every conversation started, they all count.

ENGAGE YOUR MEMBERS!

Thank you for all you do and for supporting our G.O.A.L.S. As always, if you are having a special event or meeting and would like me to attend, feel free to reach out. This is going to be an amazing year, and I am looking forward to being involved with your Squadrons and Legion Family.

Please use our hashtag **#SALGoals** in your social media and flyers. We have lots of events coming up in September and October. Try to support your neighboring Squadrons.



Child Well-Being Foundation Donations and Grant Update

Dennis Boland
Child Well-Being Foundation

As of Aug. 6, 2026, combined donations from the American Legion Family to the American Legion Child Well-Being Foundation totaled

\$102,303.36. June 1, 2026, marked the start of our new award year and tracking.

Donations for the 2026-2027 award

year end May 31, 2027.

The following are the current donation totals since June 1. Each organization with the highest

continued on page 27 >>

<< Child Well-Being Foundation continued from page 26
donation total on May 31, 2027, will
be awarded the Garland Murphy
Shadow Box Award.

Presently, the 40/8 Departmental de
Nebraska is leading in contributions
with \$1,227.45. The Department of
Kentucky Auxiliary is leading with
\$4,887.80. The Department of Ohio
is leading with \$11,871.65. The
Detachment of Ohio is leading with
\$12,371.

The following organizations are

currently in second and third place in
donations:

Second Place: 40/8 Departmental
de Arizona, \$635; South Dakota
Auxiliary, \$2,097.32; Department
of Massachusetts, \$2,550; and
Detachment of Florida, \$11,810.

Third Place: 40/8 Departmental de
California; Department of Kentucky
Auxiliary, \$1,978.50; Department of
Florida, \$1,677; and Detachment of
Pennsylvania, \$9,706.

The Child Well-Being Foundation
has awarded more than \$22 million
in grants for the physical, mental,
emotional and spiritual welfare of
children and youth.

The deadline for CWF grant
applications for 2027 was July
7, 2026. We received 373 grant
applications for 2027, which will be
reviewed by the Board of Directors
at the CWF meeting during the fall
meeting of the NEC in October
2026.

Your Post's Digital Front Door



Carrie Kolze
Creative Services Manager
ckolze@floridalegion.org

When we think about welcoming
someone to an American Legion
Post, we often think about what
happens when they walk through
the front door. Is someone there
to greet them? Do they feel
welcome? Can they easily find out
about membership, programs and
upcoming events?

But today, that may not be where
their first visit happens.

Before a veteran, family member,
potential donor, or community
member ever walks into your Post,
there is a good chance they will visit
your **digital front door** first.

They may search for your Post on
Google, visit your website, look at

your Facebook page, read online
reviews or send an email. What
they find can influence whether they
decide to visit, call, attend an event
or simply move on.

The good news is that creating a
positive digital first impression does
not require being a technology
expert.

Start With a Simple Google Search

Try searching for your own Post the
same way someone unfamiliar with it
might. Search for "American Legion"
followed by your city or Post number.

What comes up?

Look at the information displayed
in the search results. Is your address
correct? Is the phone number
current? Are the hours accurate?
Does the website link work?

Much of this information may come
from your **Google Business Profile**,
which is the listing that can appear in
Google Search and Google Maps.
Keeping this information accurate is
important, especially when people
are looking for directions, hours or a
telephone number.

Pay attention to the photos, too.
A prospective member who sees
recent photos of veterans, families,
community activities and Post events
receives a very different impression
than someone who finds only an old
exterior photo or no photos at all.

Take a Look at Your Website

A Post website does not have to be
elaborate. In fact, simple is often
better.

Someone visiting your website
should quickly be able to answer a

continued on page 28 >>

<< Creative Services continued from page 27

few basic questions:

- Where are you located?
- When are you open?
- When are your meetings?
- How can someone contact you?
- How can an eligible veteran join?
- What programs and activities does your Post offer?
- What events are coming up?

Check your website occasionally for outdated information and broken links. An announcement for an event that happened two years ago or contact information for an officer who is no longer serving can make a website appear abandoned.

Also remember that many people will visit your website using a phone. Pull out your own phone and take a look. Can you read everything without constantly zooming in? Are the buttons and links easy to use?

If not, your visitors are probably having the same problem.

Look at Your Facebook Page as a Visitor

Facebook is often one of the easiest ways for Posts to keep members and the community informed, but it may also be one of the first places someone goes to learn about you. Take a moment to look at your Post's Facebook page as though you aren't already a member.

What does it tell you?

A page filled with recent events, community service, veteran programs, membership activities and photos of people enjoying themselves tells visitors that the Post is active.

A page that has not been updated in months can unintentionally send the opposite message.

You don't have to post every day. Consistency is more important. Even a few meaningful posts each month can show that your Post is active and involved.

And don't forget the basics. Make sure your address, website, phone number and other contact information are current.

Don't Forget About Email

Your digital first impression doesn't end with websites and social media.

What happens when someone sends your Post an email?

If a potential member emails asking how to join and doesn't receive a response for several weeks, that experience says something about the organization, even if it wasn't intentional.

Try to monitor your Post's general email account regularly and respond to inquiries in a reasonable amount of time.

It is also a good idea to use an organizational email address

whenever possible instead of relying entirely on one officer's personal email account. As officers and volunteers change, the Post should maintain access to its important communications and accounts.

Pay Attention to Online Reviews

Online reviews can be uncomfortable because we cannot always control what people say. We can, however, control how we respond.

Check your Google and Facebook reviews occasionally.

Thank people who leave positive comments. If someone leaves a legitimate complaint, respond professionally and, when appropriate, invite them to contact the Post directly so the issue can be addressed.

Avoid getting into arguments online. Remember that your response isn't being seen only by the person who wrote the review. Future members, guests and community partners may read it too.

A calm, professional response can sometimes say more about your Post than the original complaint.

Make Sure Someone Else Has the Keys

There is one more part of your digital front door that visitors never see: **who controls it.**

continued on page 29 >>

<< Creative Services continued from page 28

Your website, domain name, Facebook page, Google Business Profile and email accounts should not depend entirely on one person.

Officers change. Volunteers move. People become unavailable.

Make sure the Post knows who has administrative access to its important accounts and that more than one trusted person can access them when necessary. Turn on multifactor authentication when it is available, keep recovery information current and make digital accounts part of your officer transition process.

Think of it just like the keys to the Post

building. You wouldn't want the only set of keys to disappear when an officer leaves.

Walk Through Your Own Digital Front Door

Every few months, take 10 or 15 minutes and look at your Post online from the perspective of someone who knows nothing about it.

Search for it on Google. Visit the website. Check Facebook. Look at the photos and reviews. Test the phone number, email address and important links.

Then ask yourself one simple question:

If I were a veteran looking for a Post today, would what I found online make me want to walk through the front door?

Technology has changed how people discover organizations, but the goal hasn't changed. We want veterans, their families and members of our communities to know who we are, what we do and that they are welcome.

Your Post's physical front door may be where relationships begin in person.

Your digital front door is often what gets them there.

Post Everlasting

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

In Memoriam: Alan B. Cohen



The American Legion, Department of Florida mourns the passing of Alan B. Cohen, Department

Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation Commission Chair, who passed away on August 22, 2026, at the

age of 78.

A proud U.S. Army veteran of the Vietnam era and 15-year member of Cooper City Post 321, Alan dedicated many years of service to veterans and The American Legion at both the Department and National levels. His leadership, commitment and advocacy on behalf of Florida's

veterans will be deeply missed.

Please keep Alan's family, friends and fellow Legionnaires in your thoughts and prayers.

Service information and full details are available at floridalegion.org/alan-b-cohen

**MEMBERSHIP
REPORT**

August 27, 2026
TARGET: **50%**

District 2	Roxana Dressel	52.57%
District 4	Darcy Sisson	51.18%
District 5	Ken White	50.36%
District 9	David Hurst	49.11%
District 17	Jim Bowers	49.04%
District 1	Donald Westfall	48.41%
District 15	Stephen Tyler	47.39%
District 6	Alan Adams	47.04%
District 7	Karen Warren	46.97%
District 8	Robert Patierno	45.33%
District 3	Shelley Jefferson	45.09%
District 14	Angela Glover	45.07%
District 12	Daniel Ciesielski	43.57%
District 13	Laurene Allen-Flower	43.25%
District 16	Michael Harley	42.94%
District 11	Stanley R. Brown, Jr.	42.70%
Northern	Miguel Garcia	49.57%
Western	Robert "Oz" Osmon	48.99%
Eastern	Dennis Mallon	45.44%
Southern	Geo Bograkovs	45.35%
Central	Kalvin Thompson	44.75%
Southwestern	Doug Deierlein	44.15%
Post 400	-	55.26%

CURRENT PERCENTAGE: 47.05%

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



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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.

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**Call now to learn about your
enrollment options.**

844-640-0095 (TTY: 711)
8 a.m.–8 p.m., 7 days a week

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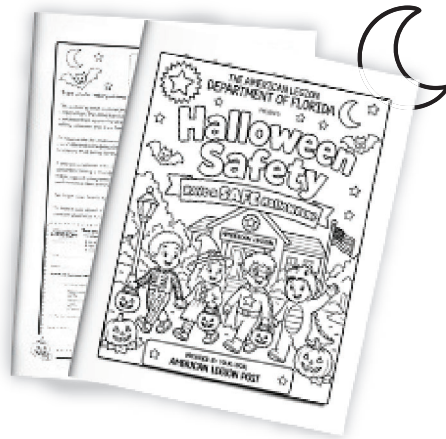
*Ohana Health Plan, a plan offered by WellCare Health Insurance of Arizona, Inc.



THE AMERICAN LEGION
DEPARTMENT OF FLORIDA

PRESENTS

Halloween Safety



HALLOWEEN SAFETY COLORING BOOKS FOR POSTS

These coloring books are great for kids of all ages.

The book offers essential Halloween safety tips for parents and children to consider during the season. It also features an informative message about The American Legion, highlighting our mission, values, and activities. On the back cover, you'll find a Legion membership application, along with a designated space for your post number and address. **Please make sure to fill in your post information so that parents know which post is prioritizing their children's safety.**

We highly encourage your post to reach out to local schools and daycare centers to get them involved. To ensure timely delivery, please submit your order to the Department Headquarters by **October 15th**. Orders will be shipped upon receipt, but please remember that payment must accompany your order. We also warmly invite your Auxiliary and Detachment to take part in this important program



YOU CAN ORDER ONLINE AT: floridalegion.org/merch

\$25
100 PACK

**plus shipping*

DELIVERY METHOD ☐ Ship to Address ☐ Pickup at Orlando Headquarters (FREE)



POST #

ATTENTION TO

SHIPPING ADDRESS (NO P.O. BOXES)

CITY

FL

STATE

ZIP

PAYMENT

☐

Check #

☐

Credit Card

☐

Tax exempt*

CARD TYPE

☐

Visa

☐

MasterCard

☐

Discover

☐

American Express



CARD HOLDER NAME

CREDIT CARD NUMBER

EXPIRATION

SECURITY CODE

SIGNATURE

DATE

SHIPPING FEES (Qty 1) \$14.95 (Qty 2-4) \$19.95 (Qty 5) \$29.95 (Qty 6+) Call for price. | **Pickup** at Headquarters is **FREE!** (Wait until notification that pickup is ready)

**If you are tax exempt, please ensure we have tax exempt form on file, or include one.*

Mail to: Florida Legion; Attn: Emblem Sales; P.O. Box 547859; Orlando, FL 32854-7859

You may also fax completed form with credit card information to 407-299-0901.

How many packs would you like? _____

Subtotal \$	0.00
Sales Tax (6.5%) \$	0.00
Shipping \$	0.00
Total \$	0.00

EXCITING NEWS **FOR FLORIDA VETERANS!**

Veterans who qualify for a Disabled Veteran (DV) plate can now get the DV designation on the **Florida American Legion specialty plate!**

That means you no longer have to choose — show your Legion pride **AND** keep your DV designation and applicable benefits.



Normal registration and license-tax fees are **WAIVED** for qualifying veterans, while applicable American Legion specialty plate fees still apply.



READY TO MAKE THE SWITCH?

Visit your local Tax Collector or license plate agency to confirm eligibility and required documentation.

THE AMERICAN LEGION

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More Winners.
More Cash!**

**ONE OF
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LARGEST
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**WIN
CASH**



**WIN
MORE CASH**



**WIN
LOTS OF CASH**



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LEGION**

Department
of Florida



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

DO YOU
HAVE WHAT
IT TAKES?

BECOME A
DEPARTMENT
CHAIR!

MAKE AN
2027



IMPACT
2028

You can complete online at floridalegion.org/becomeachair

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: Bruce Carl, P.O. Box 547859, Orlando, FL 32854



DEPARTMENT OF FLORIDA
LEGION AND AUXILIARY

★ VICES EVENT ★

Fundraiser for
PRESIDENT AND COMMANDERS PROJECTS

JANUARY 23, 2027

NOON - 4 PM
POST 8 WINTER HAVEN

RAFFLES



FOOD



**LIVE
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FUN

RSVP - to Bruce Carl



**brucel1955@
yahoo.com.**

or



352-942-7948

Women Veterans Expo

Proud of Her Past ★ Focused on Her Future

Hosted by American Legion Department of Florida
Women Veterans Advocacy

Saturday, October 24 ★ 10:00 AM – 3:00 PM



Jessica Moore
2025-2026
Department Commander



Eunice Butts
2022-2023
Past Department Commander



**Surprise Keynote
Speaker**

Created by women veterans, for women veterans.

Join us at American Legion Post 8
800 Avenue M Northwest, Winter Haven, FL 33881

Scan the QR Code

Help us ensure the right resources and advocates
are available to meet your current needs.

Contact:

Lisa Leathers • 509-294-3491 •
womenvets@legionmail.org



Help Us Ensure How we can support you



Scan for Event Tickets

You Served with Pride. Your Future Matters. ★ ★ ★



CITRUS COUNTY VETERAN'S STAND DOWN EVENT

★ AMERICAN LEGION POST 155 ★



JOIN US!
24 OCTOBER 2026



9:30AM – 3:30PM

★ SERVICES INCLUDE: ★



Rental Housing Assistance



VA Home Loan Information



Employment Assistance



Dental & Hearing
+ Basic Health Checks



VA Healthcare: Information & Referrals



Mental Health Services:
On site Counselors & resources



Legal Aid: Consultations
on Legal Issues



Benefit Enrollment Assistance



FREE Haircuts for ALL Veterans



Clothing & Hygiene Kits



Connections to multiple local (VSO's)
Veterans organizations and
support networks



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Crystal River, FL 34429



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CALL 352-527-7630
By October 9, 2026 to
arrange your pick up



**FOR ADDITIONAL
INFORMATION
PLEASE CONTACT
JAY OR JANET!**



Jay
352-287-1400



Janet
603-393-4167



**LUNCH SERVED ALL DAY
FOR ALL VETERANS AND FAMILIES!**



**Veterans
Crisis Line**
DIAL 988 then **PRESS 1**



SEPTEMBER 19, 2026

FLORIDA'S 6TH ANNUAL SEVEN BRIDGES POW/MIA REMEMBRANCE DAY RIDE & CEREMONY

Sponsored by: The American Legion Riders Department of Florida

Police Escorted Ride from Adamec HD Baymeadows, over the Seven Bridges, crossing the St. Johns River, and ending at the National POW/MIA Memorial (6112 POW-MIA Memorial Pkwy, Jacksonville FL 32221) for a POW/MIA Ceremony at 1:30 PM.

All Riders Welcome!

**Scan QR for:
Registration
Hotel Info
Event page...**



limit to 250 motorcycles or trikes (no autocycles)

- Meet & Greet on Friday Night September 18 at American Legion Post 316 (1127 Atlantic Blvd, Atlantic Bch, FL 32233) at 5:00PM**
- Registration 8:00AM-10:00AM at Adamec Harley-Davidson® 8909 Baymeadows Rd Jacksonville, FL 32256**
- After Event Social following ceremony**
- KSU 10:30AM**
- Cost: \$20 Per Bike/\$5 passenger**

POC: Denny Luke, POW/MIA Chair

904-403-0181

POWMIA@legionmail.org



YOU ARE NOT FORGOTTEN

2026 NATIONAL POW/MIA RECOGNITION DAY

★ 24-HOUR REMEMBRANCE VIGIL ★

SEPTEMBER 18-19, 2026

NATIONAL POW/MIA MEMORIAL & MUSEUM
CHAPEL OF THE HIGH-SPEED PASS

★ JACKSONVILLE, FLORIDA ★

For 24 continuous hours, Americans will stand watch in honor of those who were prisoners of war and those who remain missing in action. Join us as we carry the POW/MIA flag and ensure their sacrifice is never forgotten.

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 19 - COMMUNITY TRIBUTE & ACTIVITIES

★ **11 AM to 4:30 PM** ★

A FREE family-friendly event with activities for children; all are welcome!



**24-HOUR
POW/MIA VIGIL**
Noon Friday to
Noon Saturday

Continuous carrying of the
POW/MIA flag honoring
POWs and those
still missing in action



**DREAMLAND
FLYOVER**

A breathtaking
salute honoring our
missing and those
who served.



**RECOGNITION DAY
CEREMONY**

Special program to
honor all POWs and
MIAs and their
sacrifices for their
country.



**AMERICAN LEGION
RIDERS
7 BRIDGES RIDE**

A Ride to Remember.
Support the mission.
Honor their sacrifice.



**LIVE
ENTERTAINMENT**

Music and
performers
throughout the day
for all to enjoy.



**FOOD,
DRINKS &
ACTIVITIES**

BBQ, Food Trucks,
Beverages (beer
included), activities
and family fun.

REGISTER TO PARTICIPATE IN THE 24-HOUR VIGIL

Organizations, groups, and individuals are invited to reserve time slots and be part of this powerful symbol of remembrance and support the National POW/MIA Memorial & Museum mission.

- ★ ROTC / JROTC UNITS
- ★ SCOUT TROOPS
- ★ YOUNG MARINES / SEA
- ★ CADETS
- ★ ACTIVE DUTY UNITS
- ★ VETERAN ORGANIZATIONS
- ★ BUSINESSES & TEAMS
- ★ COMMUNITY GROUPS
- ★ INDIVIDUALS & FAMILIES



INDIVIDUAL REGISTRATION

\$50 **\$25**
Includes event T-shirt No T-shirt
Children under 13: **\$5 each**



**ORGANIZATION /
GROUP REGISTRATION**

\$150



ACTIVE DUTY MILITARY

FREE

Reserve a time slot for your group and be part of this meaningful tribute.

EXHIBITS & MUSEUM OPEN BOTH DAYS



★ **MILITARY EXHIBITS & DISPLAYS** ★
Explore history. Honor service. Educate future generations.

★ **SPONSORSHIP OPPORTUNITIES** ★

PARTNER WITH US TO HONOR AMERICA'S POWs AND MIAs

admin@powmiamemorial.org



NATIONAL
POW/MIA
MEMORIAL & MUSEUM
HONORING THEIR SACRIFICE.
EDUCATING THEIR LEGACY.



Scan for more event
info and to register
to stand watch in
the 24-Hour Vigil
POWMIAMEMORIAL.ORG

★ ★ ★
PROUDLY HONORING
AMERICA'S PRISONERS OF
WAR AND THOSE STILL
MISSING IN ACTION



DISTRICT 6

FAMILY PICNIC

SAVE THE DATE

**ALL POSTS, UNITS,
SQUADRONS AND CHAPTERS
FULL PARTICIPATION IS NEEDED**

MORE INFORMATION TO COME

**SUNDAY, MARCH 14, 2027
NOON – 5PM**

**HICKORY POINT PARK
27341 SR 19, TAVARES, FL**

**MORE INFO:
DISTRICT6PRESIDENT@ALAFL.ORG**



Sponsored by the
15th District



BOYS & GIRLS STATE PICNIC



SATURDAY ★ NOV. 7TH, 2026 ★

*Everyone
Welcome!*

**THE ANNUAL
PICNIC BENEFITS**

★
**THE 15TH DISTRICT
BOYS & GIRLS STATE
TRANSPORTATION**

 **AMERICAN
LEGION**
★ FAMILY ★



Please make checks payable to:
15th District American Legion
Department of Florida &
"Picnic" in memo.

Mail to:
Post 148
Attn: Kevin O'Donnell
7240 US 301
Riverview, FL 33578



WHERE:

**American Legion Post 138
5535 W Prescott St.
Tampa, FL 33616**



TIME:

2-5pm



COST:

**\$12 per ticket
(children 10 & under free)**



MENU:

hamburgers, hotdogs, sides

★ *Fun for Everyone!* ★



Dessert
Bake Sale



Basket Raffle
& 50/50 raffle



"Adult
Beverage"
raffles



Games for
young & old
& more!



Boat
Rides



DJ



**Please RSVP with your ENTIRE POST attendance
district15@legionmail.org**





POW/MIA REMEMBRANCE

National POW/MIA Remembrance Day

Friday, September 18, 2026

7:00 PM

We honor the more than 500,000 American warriors captured while protecting our way of life. We pay tribute to these patriots for their unwavering and unrelenting spirit.

**Norman McLeod
American legion Post 26
2207 W. Baker St.
Plant City, 33563**

www.alpost26fl.org

Email: Info@alpost26fl.org

Light refreshments will be provided

**AMERICAN
LEGION**



MORE THAN A GAME.
A MOVEMENT FOR VETERANS.



GAME DAY TICKETS
SPECIALLY PRICED TICKETS THAT GIVE BACK.



OFFICIAL MERCH
SHOW SUPPORT WITH EXCLUSIVE GAME DAY GEAR.



RIDE IN WITH PURPOSE
ROLL INTO TAILGATE AND MAKE NOISE TO BRING ATTENTION TO A CAUSE THAT MATTERS.



TAILGATE EXPERIENCE
GREAT FOOD, COLD DRINKS, MUSIC, AND CAMARADERIE.



MAKE AN IMPACT
BE PART OF THE WIN FOR FLORIDA VETERANS' MENTAL HEALTH.

GET IN THE GAME!

Scan to get involved



AMERICAN
LEGION

Department of Florida

PROJECT:
VETRELIEF





*Office of
Department Commander*

The American Legion

Department of Florida

Dear Legion Family,

Although it has been more than a year since Florida experienced a major storm, that does not mean we can afford to stop preparing for the next one. Hurricanes do not give us time to raise funds after they arrive; therefore, we must be ready before they make landfall.

As your Department Commander and a resident of the Tampa Bay area, I have seen firsthand what these storms can do to the livelihoods of our members, our Posts, and the communities we serve. That experience is one of the reasons I selected the Department of Florida's Disaster Relief Fund as one of my charities of choice for 2026-2027.

Since the Fund was established in 2017, it has allowed our Department to act quickly when disaster strikes. For example, following Hurricanes Helene and Milton, the Fund provided \$133,103 in emergency assistance to 76 Legion and SAL members, plus 8 Legion Posts. That immediate support was only possible because donations were already available when the need arose.

I believe we can only take immediate action if the funds are already in place. I never want to be in the position, as your Department Commander, to tell our membership that we cannot provide relief because we do not have the resources available.

Please help us replenish and strengthen the Disaster Relief Fund now. Donations that are made now ensure that, when the next storm hits, Florida's Legion Family can respond without delay to protect our members, support our Posts, and assist our communities.

Please make your donation today:

- Give online: www.floridalegion.org/aid
- Mail a check to:
The American Legion, Department of Florida
Attn: Disaster Relief
1912 Lee Road
Orlando, FL 32810

Checks should be made payable to The American Legion, Department of Florida and include "Disaster Relief" in the memo line.

Together, we can be prepared to act the moment our Legion Family needs us.

Thank you for your generosity, compassion, and commitment.

For God and Country,

Robert W. Matheson

Department Commander