



Up To Now!

Dennis Brenden – Department Adjutant
www.sdlegion.org – Email: sdlegion@dailypost.com



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ENCLOSED TO ALL POST COMMANDERS

Enclosed to all Post Commanders is the 2010 bowling tournament application form. The dates for the tournament are April 10-11 and April 17-18 at the Lakeland Lanes, Sisseton, SD.

NATIONAL COMMANDER HILL PRAISES WHITE HOUSE FOR MILITARY FAMILY BUDGET HIKE

“A great start,” was how American Legion National Commander Clarence E. Hill characterized the president’s plan to increase funding for military families to a record \$8.8 billion in 2011.

“First Lady Michelle Obama said yesterday at Bolling Air Force Base that military families deserve this nation’s unending gratitude. The American Legion agrees with Mrs. Obama wholeheartedly,” said Hill. “We salute the proposed increases for counseling, support and military child care. We also recognize that in a time of war, demands on our warriors and their families will always be heavy. The White House and the Congress must continue their commitment to our military families well beyond 2011.”

In line with what the first lady said, The American Legion reaches out to active-duty, Guard and Reserve families through its Operation Military Family Outreach initiative. The OMFO is a fact-finding effort in which The American Legion meets with military families in forums and other settings, studies their quality of life issues and advocates for their needs. However, it is just one of several programs operated by the nation’s largest veterans organization.

The American Legion manages a Family Support Network, where thousands of military families received assistance last year with tasks such as lawn-mowing, grocery shopping, home repairs and other needs by calling 1-800-504-4098. The American Legion also offers Temporary Financial Assistance grants to military families with children who are in financial straits. The American Legion has raised an additional \$300,000 over the last year to purchase comfort items for wounded military members recovering in hospitals and warrior transition units around the world.

American Legion officials were pleased that President Obama’s budget also includes an additional \$439 million to build 10 Defense Department schools, which is part of a larger plan to replace or renovate 103 schools by 2015.

“The American Legion has been helping veterans since 1919,” said Hill. “But we have also been advocating for military spouses and their children since our founding. You cannot adequately support our warriors, if their family needs are unmet. That’s why we do what we do. We are delighted that the Obama administration seems genuinely interested in improving the quality of life for military families.”

MIDWINTER CONFERENCE

The 2010 South Dakota American Legion MidWinter Conference will be held Friday-Sunday, February 12-14, 2010, at the Cedar

Shore Resort in Oacoma. A brief summary of the schedule is as follows:

Friday, February 12

- 10:00 a.m. - Administrative Committee Meeting
- 12:00 noon - Registration Desk Opens
- 1:00 p.m. - Executive Committee Meeting
- 7:00 p.m.- Joint Legion/Auxiliary/SAL Banquet

Saturday, February 13

- 8:30 a.m. - Joint Opening Session
- 10:30 a.m. - Close Joint Session (Legion/Auxiliary/SAL to separate meetings)
- 10:45 a.m. – Break Out Sessions
- 12:00 noon – Lunch
- 1:00 p.m. – Break Out Sessions
- 2:15 p.m. – All American Legion Members Assemble
- 3:30 p.m. – Membership Awards
- 4:00 p.m. – Open Forum
- 6:00 p.m. – Go Getter Reception
- 8:00 p.m. - Hospitality Rooms for Candidates

Sunday, February 14

- 8:30 a.m. - Non-Denominational Service
- After Service - Department Finals American Legion High School Oratorical Contest

FROM PIERRE

Below are a list of the bills The American Legion is monitoring. We have many bills that could be very advantageous to the veterans of South Dakota. A handful of legislative lobbyists can do only so much. **If The American Legion Family would join in the fight to get these bills passed, the veterans of South Dakota would truly benefit.** Please email, call, or write your Senators and Representatives and let them hear the voice of The American Legion, The American Legion Auxiliary, and the Sons of The American Legion supporting these bills. The South Dakota Government website is www.sd.gov.

HB 1049 – This bill would require the Director of the Division of Veterans Affairs to have all honorable discharges from all periods of service in the Armed Forces of the United States. *This bill went to the House State Affairs Committee. The bill passed committee 12 Yeas, Nays 0 with a recommendation to DO PASS. This bill went to the House on January 19 and passed unanimously. Was heard by Senate State Affairs Committee January 27. The Committee passed the bill unanimously with a recommendation of due pass. The Senate passed the bill unanimously February 1. This was introduced at the request of the Department of Military and Veterans Affairs. This bill has been a priority of the Veterans Service Organizations for the last two sessions. Your American Legion Legislative Lobbyists testified in support of this bill at both the House and Senate Committee hearings.*

HB 1005 – This bill was introduced at the request of the Interim Bureau of Personnel Agency Review Committee. Under Section

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8, 3-3-1 be amended to include a veteran defined in 33-17-1, who is a citizen and resident of the state, shall receive preference for appointment, employment, and promotion. A veteran who has a service connected disability shall be given a preference over a nondisabled veteran. *This bill has been scheduled for hearing in the Senate State Affairs Committee. The American Legion is monitoring this bill.*

HB 1130 - This bill would include the spouses of certain members of the armed forces who died in military service as eligible for gold star special license plates. *This bill The American Legion is monitoring this bill.*

HB 1185 - This bill would provide property tax benefits to the surviving spouses of certain disabled veterans. *The American Legion is monitoring this bill.*

HB 1048 - This bill would revise certain provisions relating to a previous appropriation for National Guard armory construction. *The American Legion is monitoring this bill.*

SB 69 - This bill is to authorize certain exceptions to the nursing facility moratorium. This bill would allow a new 50 bed nursing home to be constructed, operated, and maintained in the eastern part of the State. *Referred to Senate Health and Human Services.*

SB 76 - This bill would revise the composition of the State Veterans' Commission. This bill changes the make up of the Commission to include: four members appointed by the Governor, one member appointed by The American Legion, one member appointed by the Veterans of Foreign Wars, and one member appointed by the Disabled American Veterans. *This bill is referred to the Senate State Affairs Committee. This bill The American Legion Lobbyists will testify on. It is imperative that we have a voice on the South Dakota Veterans Commission.*

SB 134 - This bill would provide for divestiture of state investment funds in certain companies liable to sanctions under the Iran Sanctions Act of 1996. *It pertains to monies invested by the State Investment Council in companies with business operations in Iran. Iran is on a list of countries at the United States Department of State that have been determined to repeatedly provide support for acts of international terrorism. The American Legion is monitoring this bill.*

SB 150 - This bill would provide for an interim study of the potential creation of a Department of Veterans Affairs as a cabinet-level position. *A resolution was introduced at last year's session asking for a study to be done on the feasibility of establishing a Department of Veterans Affairs. This resolution passed both the house and senate and went to the Legislative Research Council where no action was taken. This year a bill was submitted to require a study to be done. The American Legion Lobbyists will testify on this bill.*

MIDWINTER CONFERENCE BANQUET TICKETS

Tickets for the MidWinter Conference Joint Banquet will be by advanced sales only. The deadline date for requesting your tickets is February 8, 2010. No tickets will be available at the event. The Joint Banquet will be held Friday, February 12, 2010 at 7:00 p.m.

Tickets are \$30.00 each and can be obtained by sending \$30.00 per ticket requested to Potter American Legion Post 3, PO Box 348, Chamberlain, SD 57325.

STATE CHAMPIONSHIP ORATORY CONTEST

The state finals for the South Dakota American Legion Oratorical Scholarship High School Constitutional Speech Contest will be held in conjunction with the 2010 South Dakota American Legion MidWinter Conference on Sunday, February 14, 2010, at the Cedar Shore Resort in Oacoma, SD.

The winner of the State Contest will receive a \$1,000 scholarship. The second place winner will receive a \$500 scholarship, the third place winner will receive a \$300 scholarship, and the fourth and fifth place winners will each receive an additional \$100 scholarship.

The state champion will continue on into the national level competition which will be held in Indianapolis, IN in April. The prizes at the national level include an \$18,000 scholarship for first place, a \$16,000 scholarship for second place and a \$14,000 scholarship for third place. Contestants in the national competition also receive a \$1,500 scholarship for participating in each level of competition leading to the national finals.

The State Finals Contest will commence after the Non-denominational service on Sunday and will feature the following area contest winners who have advanced to the state finals:

Area 1 (District 1 and 7) - Joe Schartz of Humboldt, a sophomore at West Central High School

Area 2 (Districts 2,5 and 6) - No Contestant

Area 3 (Districts 3, 4 and 14) - Haley Hardie of Watertown, a junior at Watertown High School

Area 4 (Districts 8, 9 and 13) - Carrie Jean Hemeyer of Gregory, a senior at Gregory High School

Area 5 (Districts 10, 11 and 12) - Elizabeth Gunn of Lemmon, a junior at Lemmon High School

COMMANDER ANNOUNCES APPOINTMENT

Due to the resignation of Bob Kusser of Pierre as the Legion Rider's Liaison, Commander Martens has appointed Gary Henle of Sioux Falls to fill the position.

LEGIONNAIRE OF THE YEAR

All American Legion Posts are reminded that now is the time to select your Post Legionnaire of the Year. This is an excellent opportunity to recognize one Legionnaire from within your Post for his/her special efforts, initiative, and performance during the past year.

Forms for nominating your local Post Legionnaire of the Year for District Legionnaire of the Year competition are included in the 2009-2010 Post Adjutants' Administrative and Awards Manual. Rules require Posts to submit nominations to the District Commander at least 15 days prior to the Spring District Conventions.

District Legionnaires of the Year will be eligible for competition in the Department Legionnaire of the Year selection process. The Department Legionnaire of the Year will be announced at the Department Convention in Spearfish in June.

MEMBERSHIP UPDATE

2010 Department membership stands at 21,316 or 86.97% of the 2010 national goal.

All Posts are requested to make sure that all 2010 membership is turned in to Department Headquarters or at the membership session at the MidWinter Conference in Oacoma on Saturday, February 13, 2010.

