



Up To Now!



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ENCLOSED FOR POST ADJUTANTS

Enclosed for Post Adjutants is a brochure from Department Children and Youth Vice Chairman Wolfgang Migge on Special Olympics. This Special Olympics program has been supported by the American Legion Department of South Dakota for several years and Posts are encouraged to make donations to Special Olympics at your Spring District Convention or through State Headquarters.

Enclosed for all recipients of this edition of the *Up To Now* is a copy of the official entry form to be used to register to participate in the 64th Annual South Dakota American Legion State Bowling Tournament. The 64th Annual Tournament will be held in Mitchell at the Village Bowl, on the weekends of March 21-22 and March 28-29, 2009 and in Sisseton at Hippen's Steqkhouse & Lanes & Lounge, on the weekends of March 28-29 and April 4-5, 2009. Additional details may be found on the official entry form that is enclosed with this mailing.

HATS IN THE RING

Beresford Post 72 has endorsed William P. Dolan of Beresford for the office of Alternate National Executive Committeeman for The American Legion Department of South Dakota.

Piedmont Valley Post 311 has endorsed Philip Anderson of Piedmont for the office of Alternate National Executive Committeeman for The American Legion Department of South Dakota.

Birch-Miller Post 9 of Milbank has endorsed Tim Jurgens of Milbank for the office of Area Vice Commander for the Area comprised of Districts 3, 4, and 14.

Bennett County American Legion Post 240 has endorsed Harold Koenig of Martin for the office of District 9 Vice Commander.

Bergstrom-Bodeen Post 128 of Hudson has endorsed Richard Ekle of Canton for the office of District 1 Commander.

MIDWINTER IS DECLARED SUCCESS

Members of The American Legion Family converged upon Cedar Shore Resort in Oacoma, February 13-15 for the 38th Annual MidWinter Conference.

State Commander Jim Huls has declared the conference a success. The dedicated members of The American Legion, American Legion Auxiliary and Sons of The American Legion came out in sufficient numbers to ensure the success of another MidWinter Conference.

The Department wishes to express its gratitude to Potter American Legion Post 3 of Chamberlain for hosting the event and extends a special Thank You to Post 3 Commander Kenneth Anderson and Unit 3 President Sharon Wajciechowski.

YANKTON YOUTH TAKES ORATORY CHAMPIONSHIP

Meg Henrickson of Yankton emerged victorious as the top orator in the final round of competition of the South Dakota American Legion High School Oratorical Scholarship Program "A Constitutional Speech Contest" in Chamberlain this past weekend. Meg is the daughter of Andy and Teresa Henrickson of Yankton.

Contestants were required to deliver a prepared oration of 8-10 minutes on the U. S. Constitution as their first oration. In turn, a constitutional topic was assigned to the contestants and a 3-5 minute extemporaneous oration was required on that topic. They were allowed five minutes of preparation time.

Each of the five contestants in the finals had previously won competition at the local, district and area levels of competition. Those eligible to compete at the finals this past weekend consisted of Henrickson, a senior at Yankton High School; Ryan Zobel, a senior at Arlington High School; Haley Hardie, a sophomore at Watertown High School; Candace

Shippy, a senior at Colome High School; and Jenae Logan, a senior at Gettysburg High School. Each contestant won a \$100 scholarship for winning their respective area competition.

Henrickson was awarded a championship trophy, a \$1,000 scholarship, and a plaque to be displayed in her high school's trophy case as the first place winner of the state contest. She now has the opportunity to represent The South Dakota American Legion in the National Contest which will be held April 17-19, 2009, at the Indiana University-Purdue University at Indianapolis Conference Center and Hotel in Indianapolis, Indiana. Henrickson will receive an additional \$1,500 scholarship for participating in the first round of competition at national and an additional \$1,500 if she advances to the second round of national competition but does not make it into the final round. Scholarship awards possible in the national level competition are \$18,000 for first place, \$16,000 for second place, and \$14,000 for third place.

Second place in the state finals contest was awarded to Haley Hardie of Watertown. Third place was awarded to Candace Shippy of Colome, Ryan Zobel was awarded the fourth place award, and Jenae Logan received the fifth place award. Second place received a \$500 scholarship; third place a \$300 scholarship and fourth and fifth place were each awarded an additional \$100 scholarship.

2009 EAGLE SCOUT OF THE YEAR

The American Legion annually honors The American Legion Eagle Scout of the Year at its National Convention. The winner of the competition receives a \$10,000 scholarship and the three runners-up are each awarded a \$2,500 scholarship.

Forms for nominating Boys Scouts for The American Legion 2009 Eagle Scout of the Year award are now available from State Headquarters.

Nomination forms may also be downloaded from the internet on The American Legion webpage at www.legion.org or the South Dakota American Legion webpage at www.sdlegion.org.

State Headquarters must receive nominations no later than March 1, 2009. A panel will then select the Department Eagle Scout of the Year.

LEGIIONNAIRE 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 2008-2009 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 recognized at the Spring District Conventions and at the Annual Department Convention in Huron in June 2009. 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 Huron in June.

FROM PIERRE

Wednesday, February 17, is the 24th Legislative Day in the 2009 SD State Legislative Session. Tuesday, February 3rd was the final day for the introduction of individual bills and joint resolutions and Wednesday, February 4th was the final day for the introduction of committee bills and joint resolutions.

Upcoming deadlines in this session are Monday, February 23rd

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which is the final day to move required delivery of bills or resolutions in the house of origin and Tuesday, February 24th which is the final day for bills or joint resolutions to be passed by the house of origin.

The following is a recap of the movement of legislation that is being followed by The American Legion.

HB 1001 - To allow certain disabled veterans free access to state parks and recreation areas and to include a 50% discount on camping fees or associated electrical service fees in those facilities. *The bill passed the House of Representatives (69-0) on 02/03/09 and passed the Senate (35-0) on 02/11/09.*

HB 1025 - To revise the basic salary schedule for county veterans service officers. *This bill received a DO PASS recommendation from the House Appropriations Committee (8-0) on 02/13/09 and is now in the House for final vote.*

HB 1031 - To increase the maximum allowable expense for erecting certain veterans grave markers and headstones from \$40 to \$100. *This bill received a DO PASS recommendation from the House Appropriations Committee (9-0) on 02/13/09 and is now in the House for final vote.*

HB 1270 - To change the purpose of the veterans affairs special revenue fund. This bill was originally introduced "to redirect monies in the veteran's affairs special revenue fund". The bill stated that all monies remaining in the fund as of the end of June 2009 would revert to the State General Fund. *Your Lobbyists spoke with the Chairman of the House Appropriations Committee and expressed the Legion's concern that we would prefer that the money remained in the fund, but if it must be redirected that we were very concerned that, at a minimum, it should be redirected for other uses by and for veterans. The bill was subsequently amended in the committee so that the funds remaining "will be used for the benefit of South Dakota Veterans" such as those need to fund HB 1025 and HB 1031 above. The bill received a DO PASS recommendation from the House Appropriations Committee (8-1) on 02/13/09.*

SB 9 - To authorize persons with Purple Heart License Plates and a disability to park in handicapped parking spots without the need to have a "Handicapped Parking Placard" hanging from the rearview mirror. *This bill received a DO PASS recommendation from the Senate Transportation Committee (4-3) on 02/28/09, but failed to pass (11-23) on the floor of the Senate on the following day.*

SB 43 - This bill would revoke the exemption from collecting state sales and use tax on the membership dues collected by membership organizations. *This bill has received a lot of testimony from opponents, including The American Legion. The last hearing for this bill was held in Senate Taxation Committee on 02/02/09 at which time, the Chairman deferred action until an undetermined future date. The last action of the committee prior to the deferring was a request from the committee to the Secretary of the Department of Revenue that requested an estimate from Revenue as to how much revenue passage of this bill would generate.*

SB 111 - This bill would extend unemployment benefits to the spouse of military personnel who were in receipt of change of station orders to another military installation outside of South Dakota. *This bill was TABLED by Senate Commerce Committee (5-2) on 02/03/09.*

SB 138 - This bill would have required the Director of the SD Division of Veterans Affairs, all employees of the Division of Veterans Affairs who were veterans, and all County Service Officers who were veterans to have nothing other than Honorable Discharges. *The American Legion, the VFW, the DAV, and Bob Hill - State Commander of the DAV testified as proponents of the bill. The SD Adjutant General - Major General Doohen, the SD Assistant Adjutant General for the National Guard - Brig General Corbett, the SD National Guard Command Sergeant Major - Michael Bekaert, the Lawrence County Veterans Service Officer - Bill Locken, Michael Biernbaum - retired SD National Guard Command Sergeant Major, Lynne Valenti of the SD Bureau of Personnel, and George Summerside, Acting Director of the SD Division of Veterans Affairs all testified as opponents of the bill. Following a motion to recommend a DO PASS on the bill by Senator Heidepriem, seconded by Senator Knudson; Senator Rhoden made a substitute motion to DEFER SB 138 to the 41st Legislative Day. This motion to DEFER was seconded by Senator Gray and carried by a vote of 5-4. Those voting to*

DEFER the bill to the 41st Legislative Day included Senators Abdallah, Gray, Olson (Russell), Rhoden and Dempster. Those voting in opposition to the motion to DEFER were Senators Hanson (Gary), Heidepriem, Knudson, and Turbak-Berry. The passage of the motion to DEFER to the 41st Legislative Day effectively killed the bill.

SB 151 - To provide a special license plate for parents of members of the US Armed Forces who died while in service to this country. *The American Legion testified as a proponent of this bill. The bill received a DO PASS recommendation (7-0) from the Senate Transportation Committee on 02/11/09 and is awaiting action on the Senate floor.*

SCR 3 - This Senate Concurrent Resolution supports a study of the potential creation of a Department of Veterans Affairs as a cabinet-level department within state government. *The resolution received a DO PASS recommendation (6-3) from the Senate State Affairs Committee on 02-11-09 and was ADOPTED by the Senate on a vote of 21-13 on 02-12-09. The resolution has now moved to the House of Representatives where it awaits a hearing in the House State Affairs Committee.*

ELEVEN TO TRAVEL TO WASHINGTON, D.C.

Eleven members of The American Legion Department of South Dakota will travel to Washington, D.C., in late February, early March, to participate in the Forty-Ninth Annual Washington Conference. This annual conference is the primary opportunity for members of The American Legion, from all 50 states to converge on Capitol Hill, all carrying the same message regarding the Legislative Priorities which The American Legion has compiled that will serve the best interests of our nation's veterans, along with the priorities we believe best serve those interests represented by the other three pillars of The American Legion; Americanism, Children and Youth, and National Security.

Those called into Washington, D.C. this year include NEC Paul Evenson of Garretson (Foreign Relations Commission Liaison), PDC Gerald Goetzinger of Martin (Vice Chairman Membership and Post Activities Committee), PDC Wayne Vetter of Cresbard (Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Committee), PDC Gene Schumacher of Aberdeen (Employment Committee), PDC Phil Anderson of Piedmont (National Security Commission), Ron Tolrud of White (Children & Youth) and Past National Chaplain Stan Gruneich of Flandreau (Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Committee). Also attending will be Department Commander Jim Huls of Salem, Department Adjutant Ron Boyd of Watertown, and Department Assistant Adjutant Denny Brenden of Watertown.

The Washington Conference is scheduled for March 1-4. Attendees will be staying at the Renaissance Washington, DC Hotel. March 1st, 2nd, and the 4th will be meeting days for the various committees and commissions. Tuesday, March 3 has been designated as Hill Day. Tuesday, March 3 will commence with an American Legion Legislative Rally at the hotel in the morning and shortly after lunch, all participants will journey to Capitol Hill to present The American Legion's Legislative Priorities list to their respective Congressional Delegations.

The eleventh South Dakota Legionnaire traveling to Washington, DC will be Department Service Officer Warren Aas of Watertown. DSO Aas will be participating in the Annual Department Service Officer's School which is also held at the Renaissance Washington DC Hotel. DSO Aas will be arriving in Washington on February 24 and will be departing on March 1, just shortly after the remaining Legionnaires from South Dakota arrive.

MEMBERSHIP UPDATE

2009 membership stands at 22,699 or 90.55% of the 2009 membership goal. Keep up the good work. Let's go out and renew the remaining members and sign up all the eligible veterans.

State Commander Jim Huls has pledged 92.75% of our 2009 membership goal by The American Legion Birthday Membership Target Date to National Commander David Rehbein. Making this pledge has the potential of bringing \$2,000 in prize money into the Department to be used for technology upgrades in our computer equipment. This prize money would be a shot in the arm for our 2009 Department budget. Help make sure that your local Post makes every attempt possible to contact all your members who have not yet submitted their 2009 membership dues to