Past Department Commander Kerwin "Pee Wee" Douthit Passes Away

It is with sincere sorrow that Headquarters reports Past Department Commander Kerwin “Pee Wee” Douthit has reported to Post Everlasting.

Kerwin “Pee Wee’ Phoenix Douthit, 80, of Hot Springs, SD, passed away March 13, 2020, at Monument Health Rapid City Hospital in Rapid City, SD.

Pee Wee was born June 23, 1939, in Vetal, SD, to Frank and Dortha (Peterson) Douthit. He married his wife, Sereta, on October 19, 1963.


Pee Wee joined the American Legion in 1963, and was a Paid Up For Life Member of Post #71 in Hot Springs, SD. He held several positions in his post before becoming District Commander in 1990-1992, followed by State Vice Commander in 1992-1993, and Department Commander in 1994-1995. Pee Wee’s slogan during his command year was “Aim High in ’95,” a tribute to his Air Force days and his Legion goals.

He was a vociferous opponent to flag desecration, and put adherence to the flag code and Americanism as top priority during his year. In a nod to what his future held, Pee Wee also encouraged Legionnaires to reach out to hospitalized vets: stop by and say, “Howdy.”

Ever the steadfast servant, Pee Wee stayed active in the American Legion after his term as Commander, serving on the National Cemetery Committee from 1996-2006, and the VAVS committee from 2003-2020. While on the VAVS committee, Pee Wee stepped up to be the Hot Springs Hospital Representative, a position he held from 2003 until his passing.

Known for his sense of humor and friendly demeanor, Pee Wee was often found in the halls of the Hot Springs VA facility. He truly cared about the well-being of the patients in Hot Springs. In 2017, when VAVS funds were accidentally deposited into a wrong account, Pee Wee was “suspected” of taking his own money and buying stamps for his veterans.

Dedication to the American Legion defined Pee Wee and his wife, Sereta, who served as Department President from 1999-2000. We are forever grateful for the countless hours spent serving his fellow veterans.

Pee Wee was born June 23, 1939, in Vetal, SD, to Frank and Dortha (Peterson) Douthit. He married his wife, Sereta, on October 19, 1963.

Pee Wee is survived by his wife, Sereta of Hot Springs; son, Jack of Fort Meade, South Dakota MidWinter Conference

National Commander James W. “Bill” Oxford Visits South Dakota

National Commander James W. “Bill” Oxford saw a nearly 40 degree temperature change coming from Minnesota to South Dakota in February. And while the relative warmth was welcomed, it was eclipsed by the outstanding work and camaraderie on display throughout the weekend. Commander Oxford, the featured speaker at the Joint Banquet, conveyed an entertaining and reliable message to Legionnaires, encouraging members to act in their communities and keep a buddy check in place.

COVID-19 Pandemic Delivers Discord in Department Calendar

With the uncertainties we all are experiencing, Department Headquarters is asking American Legion family members to remain flexible as the leadership makes decisions to mitigate risks to our members and those who participate in our programs.

The South Dakota American Legion Department Executive Committee has made the following decision: “That all District Spring Conventions are postponed and rescheduled before the beginning of the 2020 State Convention, with meeting times to be determined. District Commanders may opt to conduct a meeting within their District before the Department Convention with the Department Commander’s approval and if the current COVID-19 dangers have subsided. They must inform their Posts at least 15 days before such a meeting.”

Additionally, the DEC has provided guidance for Post Elections: “The DEC recommends to the Posts to postpone their elections initially and to recommend to them to find other means to hold election of officers. Depending on their Constitution and Bylaws or if environmentally safe to gather in groups.

Continued, pg 3...
This is a four-part article for me.

PART 1: I write this as we are in the middle of making decisions regarding spring meetings, state convention, Boys State and Legion Baseball. The COVID-19 Virus is of concern for our members and the youth who attend our programs. We do not want to add to the spread of this virus to our members/friends/ family who do have health concerns.

Spring meetings have all been postponed so we can better assess the “social isolation” needed to slow the spread of the virus. Patience is requested from members as we put together a plan to mitigate risks for our members and still conduct the business of our organization and bylaws. I want to speculate there will be more changes in the coming weeks/months that will impact us. Please watch the Up To Now, e-mails and our Facebook account for updates.

PART 2: We are adding an e-mail service to communicate with all of our members through MailChimp. Currently we have around 8,000 members with e-mail addresses in the MyLegion.org system. This is almost 50% of our members. We are requesting that Posts make an effort to enter e-mail addresses for members into the MyLegion website for the members who have e-mail addresses. We respect those members who do not use computers and also do not want to learn them, do not push your members to get an e-mail service, MailChimp simply to put into the website, we will not use it if you force them.

I need your help spreading the word to members so they know they can sign up for our Legion News and Up To Now. We have around 360 members signed up for the Legion News and 790 signed up for the Up To Now. Out of 18,500+ members in South Dakota, only 2% receive the Legion News and only ½ of them open it up and read it. Our membership is not receiving information of the activities and events for the District and State level. We know we have part of our membership who still depend on traditional methods of communication. The Up To Now and Legion News are still be produced and mailed out to Posts.

We are currently looking at alternative ways to fund these mailings and we have a goal of achieving this in the near future. Expect more info to come out in the Up To Now in the coming months.

For members to sign up for the Legion News or the Up To Now they can do so on the website for the South Dakota American Legion by going to this page: https://www.sdlegion.org/request-edmailed-newsletters/ or you can put your address into MailChimp and they will sign them up.

PART 3: The Dept of South Dakota is moving to a new fundraising company. Mailings from the Department will be reduced down to four events during the year. Sweepstakes for MidWinter and State Convention along with labels in the Spring and Holiday season. All fundraisers will have the new South Dakota American Legion emblem on them, and the return address will be to Watertown, South Dakota. Best assured that the monies donated to this will stay in South Dakota and go towards funding our programs.

PART 4: For those who have not heard, I have chosen to leave this position as State Adjutant. I want to ensure to you that I am not moving away from the South Dakota American Legion family; my decision is so I can focus on my family. I plan on staying active in our American Legion family. The service we provide to support our communities, veterans and youth is an asset that has far more reach than most of us realize. We impact the youth of our Nation through our Boys State and Baseball programs. Our programs teach them teamwork, government and give them a sense of pride in our Nation. The impact of our organization is why I am proud to be part of the American Legion family here in my home state of South Dakota. I’ll see you around!!

COVID-19 and the Impact on the American Legion

Indianapolis—The coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic continues to pose serious health risks, creating unprecedented responses from government and public health authorities and levels of uncertainty throughout the nation. The way in which it may spread, and its duration, cannot be accurately predicted. Because of these uncertainties, the 75th session of American Legion Boys Nation (scheduled for July 17-25 in Washington, D.C.) and the American Legion Junior Shooting 3-Position Air Rifle National Championship (scheduled for July 21-26 in Colorado Springs, Colo.) have been canceled. Already canceled was the National Oratory Competition.

American Legion National Commander James W. “Bill” Oxford said the decision to cancel the 2020 Boys Nation program and air rifle national tournament “was difficult. It was made with safety as the highest priority.”

Oxford hopes that this early cancelation notification will provide departments flexibility to make the best decisions possible for their respective Boys State programs, and provide shooting coaches flexibility for making the best decisions possible for the youth who are currently involved in the national postal tournament, “without feeling the pressure of their youth being excluded from the national capstone programs,” he said.

Assessment is underway regarding the awarding of 2020 Samsung American Legion Scholarships to Boys State and Girls State participants. More information will be announced.

“Times right now are tough, but we will get through them together,” Oxford said. “Thank you for your patience, resilience and continued service to our great organization and country.”
April 2020                                  SOUTH DAKOTA LEGION NEWS                            PAGE

Fred Nelson, Your Department Commander

For God and Country, we associate together!

service to our organization and the communities in which it thrives. Don

volunteerism. The annual consolidated post reports (CPR) tell the story of

Our success continues to depend on active membership, participation, and

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back to South Dakota.

attended the annual Washington Conference.

would

VA and attended a meeting with VA Secretary Wilkie on the status of the Hot

tion event.

American Legion hosted the annual legislative reception.

Lt. Governor Larry Rhoden. We spent the evening at Pierre Post 8, where the

State Governors.

In late January, I attended the induction ceremony of the new Sioux Falls VA

Getters Banquet was a hit. The members en-

were taken with

Kevin, and his team. Thank you,

Chaplain Patrick Lewellen for providing a memorable Four Chap-
lains Service and thank you to our Americanism Chair Doug Harris for organ-

izing the Department Oratorical Scholarship Contest. The young contestants
continue to amaze me. The Go-Getters Banquet was a hit. The members en-

joyed the social time, and the meal was outstanding. Thank you to the Cham-

berlain Post for hosting the conference, and thank you to the American Leg-

ion Family members that attended.

In early December, I attended the induction ceremony of the new Sioux Falls VA

Hospital Director, Lisa Simoneau. Several organizations were represented at the

event. February 10th was a day spent in Pierre with the Boys and Girls

State Governors. After lunch, the young governors were introduced on the

floor of the senate and the house of representatives. Pictures were taken with

Lt. Governor Larry Rhode. We spent the evening at Pierre Post 5, where the

American Legion hosted the annual legislative reception. On February 17th, I

was in Aberdeen for their annual Memorial and Past Commanders Recogni-
tion event. Always a moving event. March 2nd, I traveled to the Hot Springs

VA and attended a meeting with VA Secretary Wilkie on the status of the Hot

Springs VA. We were all pleased when Secretary Wilkie announced he wouldn’t
close the facility and that he would return to DC and review the previous
decision.

In early December, several of our members traveled to Washington D.C. and

attended the annual Washington Conference. The meetings were informative, and

I observed our members taking notes and collecting information to bring

back to South Dakota. The group gathered at Commanders Call and listened to

our National Commanders and other guests brief us on the priorities to be

shared when meeting with our legislators. We then made a trip to a Senate

office building and met with Senators Thune and Rounds and Representative

Johnston. We presented them with American Legion priorities and also discussed

the status of the Hot Springs VA.

Our success continues to depend on active membership, participation, and

volunteerism. The annual consolidated post reports (CPR) tell the story of
each post and carry on the legacy of The American Legion. Don’t forget to

submit your CPR. To my fellow legionnaires, thank you for your dedicated
service to our organization and the communities in which it thrives.

For God and Country, we associate together!

Fred Nelson, Your Department Commander

Department COVID-19: Continued

of more than ten it could be done the next time they physically can

meet, electronically or by mailed out ballot.”

CANCELLED: Youth Trooper Academy. Note, however, that any individ-

uals who have applied for this year’s academic year be considered again next year.

We have seniors that will miss an opportunity because the world is “locked
down”. They should be afforded a chance at the competitive process next year.

POSTPONED: District Spring Meetings, District Commanders Seminar. The

annual District Commanders Seminar has been scheduled for TBD. The

seminar is conducted annually to assist new District Commanders on his/her

responsibilities, budgets, public relations, communications, veteran’s rehabili-
tation, youth trooper academy, membership, Department Policy Manual,

District Commanders myelogen.org, legislative process and Constitution and

Bylaws. District Commanders and their locals are encouraged to share

rooms if possible to reduce Vice Commanders expense if they decide to

participate. All District Commanders are required to attend and District

Vice Commanders are encouraged to attend.

Americanism

Doug Harris

Department Americanism Chairman

Hello to all my fellow Legionnaires!

I hope this letter finds you all healthy, happy and Corona Virus free. We have weathered many hardships in the past

and we will weather this as well. If you are healthy, try to stay in touch with other members to find out if you can help
them in any way. If you need help, reach out and ask for it. Once this all passes, we will still have a lot of things

happening that will need your help. I am specifically referring to Boys State and Youth Trooper Academy 2020.

Hopefully these excellent programs will not be delayed or cancelled. I strongly suspect that the dates for registration

will be extended.

At the February 2020 Midwinter Conference I provided a “game plan” for recruiting for our “Big 3” programs –

Oratorical Scholarship, Boys State, and YTA. Following is a synopsis of that briefing:

Using the “Big 3” Handout (see the handout at https://www.sdle.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/Americanism-

Big-3-7-19-ADJ-COLORS.pdf) You should make b/w copies of this one page document and take them to the

school to hand out to those attending.

1. Where to use the “Big 3”:

Schools – Who to talk to about getting in to address the students

Principals

Counselors

Debate Coaches

History/Civics/English Teachers

Honor Society Counselors

Anyone who will let you in!!!

Parent Teacher Organizations – PTA

Gives you a opportunity to talk directly to parents.

Explain how our programs will help their children.

Community Groups

Scout Troops – Area councils (address the Scout Leader)

4-H Groups

Home School Associations/Groups

2. How to talk to Students/Parents

Schools – Make sure the students understand who we are and why we offer these programs.

Largest Veterans Organization in the world – All of us have spent time in the military and defended our

country. We believe in working within our communities to pass on our values – reference our 4 Pillars.

Explain what your Post does for your community – Baseball, support to youth programs, support local

veterans, etc.

Explain what exactly “Americanism” is and why we want them to learn it.

Oratorical Contest – Learn the constitution

Boys State – Learn about Local, County, and State Government – Their rights and obligations as a

citizen.

Youth Trooper Academy – Talk about how we support 1st responders and how we offer the oppor-

tunity to train directly with SD Troopers if they have an interest in Law Enforcement at any level.

Parent Teacher Organizations

Tell parents about the scholarships we offer. They understand that higher education will be very expen-
sive and will be interested in how the money we offer can help.

Explain the opportunities to take part in the leadership training/practice offered by BS and YTA

Explain the public speaking opportunities we offer to improve their son or daughters debate skills.

Community Groups

Scout Troops – Area councils (address the Scout Leaders): Explain to them how their Eagle Scout candidates can use the opportunities available at Boys State and Youth

Trooper Academy to earn their citizenship badges.

Boys State – The opportunity to interview their U.S. Senators, Congressman, Governor, State Reps, etc.

4-H Groups – Leadership opportunities

The opportunity to meet their political representatives and talk to them about impacts on Agriculture.

Home School Associations/Groups

All “Big 3” programs offer Home Schooled individuals the opportunity to get out into their communities.

Oratorical contest: Opportunity to speak publicly and compete with others for scholarships.

Boys State and Youth Trooper: Opportunity to interact with other students with similar interests.

3. How to “sell the deal”

Oratorical Scholarships: – Show them the numbers!!

Consider offering a small scholarship to the winner of your local Post (example: $100)

Find out if the District offers an additional amount at their level (example $100)

Tell them about the scholarships offered if they win at the state level: (1st place winner $1,000; 2nd place

winner $500; 3rd place winner $300; and $100 to the other contestants)

Scholarships offered if they make it to National contest: ($2,000 for first and second rounds, $20,000 for

1st place winner $17,000 for 2nd place; and $15,000 for 3rd place).

Total winnings for someone who makes it to national finals and wins – Over 22,000 total!!

Boys State:

Establish a Post level scholarship for your attendees to compete for. Base it on your own standards (e.g.

most outstanding performance at Boys State, etc.).

Explain the opportunities to take part in the leadership training/practice offered by BS and YTA

Explain the public speaking opportunities we offer to improve their son or daughters debate skills.

The opportunity to meet their political representatives and talk to them about impacts on Agriculture.

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Boys State and Youth Trooper: Opportunity to interact with other students with similar interests.

How to “sell the deal”

Oratorical Scholarships: – Show them the numbers!!

Consider offering a small scholarship to the winner of your local Post (example: $100)

Find out if the District offers an additional amount at their level (example $200)

Tell them about the scholarships offered if they win at the state level: (1st place winner $1,000; 2nd place

winner $500; 3rd place winner $300; and $100 to the other contestants)

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Boys State:

Establish a Post level scholarship for your attendees to compete for. Base it on your own standards (e.g.

most outstanding performance at Boys State, etc.).

Mention the Samsung scholarship they can apply for during the application process. A 2019 SD attendee

received a full $10,000 scholarship.

Attendance makes them competitive for University/Trade School acceptance and additional scholarships.

Gives them points toward application to Military Academies. At least one of the 2019 attendees received

an appointment to the U.S. Military Academy.

Youth Trooper Academy:

Offer a small scholarship to the candidate from your local Post.

Let them know that the Academy offers a $500 scholarship.

Department of SD offers another $500 scholarship.

Offering an opportunity to the candidate to enter the Trooper academy once they graduate

from school. This is an opportunity to get a “shoe in the door”.

I hope this information gives everyone the ideas/guidance they need to help their Post representatives get into

the community and push our wonderful programs. If you have any questions, or need additional guidance, please fee

to send me an email: doug61147@gmail.com.
National Commander James W. “Bill” Oxford, from North Carolina, addressed the Legionnaires during the 2020 MidWinter Conference in the Cedar Shore Resort, Oacoma, SD. Commander Oxford thanked all Legionnaires for their attendance and dedication to the American Legion and its mission.

Department Commander Fred Nelson receives his Honorary Admiral appointment in the Great Navy of Nebraska, bestowed by Nebraska Department Commander Gary Wooten.

National Commander James W. “Bill” Oxford signs the registry book of the travelling POW/MIA flag, which will have travelled to all 50 states before it is finally displayed at the POW/MIA Memorial in Virginia.

American Legion Auxiliary Juniors Addelynn Hickory of Chamberlain and Avery Stein of Aurora display items on the Military Children’s table, highlighting the sacrifices that military children and families make because of their parents service.

Sons of the American Legion Members from the Ruste-Wahl Squadron #154 in Montrose receive their charter, dated 100 years to the day from the formation of their American Legion post. Alexandria Squadron #41 also received their charter.

Department Chaplain Patrick Lewellen leads the Four Chaplains Service. Also participating in the service were Dept Commander Fred Nelson, Dept President Teresa Huntimer, SAL Commander Terry Hanson and Riders Liaison Buck DeWeese.

Children and Youth Chairman Miranda Krumm showing the 88 pairs of mittens and hats that were donated during Midwinter for distribution throughout the state.
Donors Make a Difference with SD American Legion Foundation

The South Dakota American Legion Foundation has made progress on their multi-year goal of $1 million, thanks in part to a number of individual donors, posts and businesses. Currently, there are 47 individual donors who have contributed over $500 to the foundation, along with 16 posts and 4 businesses. In recognition of these outstanding individuals, some long overdue pictures. Above L: Department Commander Fred Nelson receives a check from Garretson Post #23 Commander Brian Siemonsma. Post #23 donated $5,000 in 2019, with a pledge to match that in 2020. Above C: PDC Hugh and Linda Holmes in front of one of the many original John Green paintings they purchased at the annual Fun Auction. Currently, the Holmes are the top individual donors to the SDAL Foundation. Above R: Darold Diede, Anna Schwartz, Gary Maxwell, Kathy Gunderson and Larry Maxwell contributed $2,500 in honor of Ed and Florence Diede. Left: Past NEC Paul Evenson and wife Kathy donated $5,000 in honor of their fathers, WWII veterans Norman Evenson and Curtis Eggers. Right: NEC Jim and Pat Huls in front of their original John Green painting. The Huls have contributed over $5,700 to the Foundation. Visit https://www.sdlegion.org/foundation/ for more information on the Foundation and how to donate today!

Boys & Girls State Recognition in Pierre

On February 10th, 2020, Legionnaires and Auxiliary gathered in Pierre to honor our Boys State Governor, Jonathon Smith from Sioux Falls and the Girls State Governor, Success Suehne from Sioux Falls. Pictured, front row: Tiffany Newman, Girls State Director, Teresa Huntimer, SDALA President, Girls State Governor Success Suehne, Lieutenant Governor Larry Rhoden, Boys State Governor Jonathon Smith, SDAL Commander Fred Nelson and Boys State Director Chris VanDelist.

2020 Department Candidates

Ed Stringer
Post #15, Sioux Falls
State Commander Candidate

Doug Feltman
Post #3, Chamberlain
State Vice Commander Candidate

Eugene IronShell, Jr.
Post #125, Rosebud, SD
State Vice Commander Candidate

Greg Geiman
Post #11, Wagner, SD
Department Sgt-at-Arms
Greetings Legionnaires! What a crazy few weeks its been. I know it’s difficult to stay still, but hope that you’ve reignited a few hobbies to help keep your sanity during this self-induced social distancing. I’ve been taking walks at my local state park, learning how to homeschool (yikes—and we don’t pay teachers enough), and trying not to hug people when I see them. These are dark times for natural huggers...the struggle is real.

Today, I’d like to address my Guard and Reserve Veterans...for too many years, you’ve been told that you are not eligible for VA benefits. Like with everything VA, times change, policies change. For example, updates to the M-21-1, the VA’s Compensation and Pension Manual, are fairly constant. I’d like to highlight one important recent change right now:

M21-1. III.v.4.D.1.c Considering National Guard and Reserve Duty for Hearing Loss and/or Tinnitus Claims
Claims for Service Connection (SC) of hearing loss and/or tinnitus due to service in the National Guard or Reserves should be considered under the same criteria as any claim for SC of hearing loss and tinnitus. The condition must be casually related to service.

- First, consider SC on the basis of potential relationship to periods of Active Duty or Active Duty for Training (ADT)
- When SC for hearing loss and/or tinnitus may not be directly related to a period of active duty or extended ADT, entitlement for SC may still be established if there has been a decrease in auditory acuity due to military duties as a member of the National Guard or Reserves.
- SC for hearing loss and/or tinnitus can be established for inactive duty for training (IADT) if the condition can be linked to an injury during IADT as shown by the nature of service, MOS, lay evidence, or other competent evidence.

**NOTE:** For purposes of hearing loss or tinnitus during Inactive Duty for Training, the MOS or other evidence establishing noise exposure serves as the injury during IADT required for SC eligibility.

The note is important. While the VA has been conceding noise exposure for most, if not all, active duty fields, inactive duty training uses the MOS to serve as the injury. To view a list of MOS noise exposure, please visit [https://sdva.gov/media/12585/3m-noise-navigator.xlsx](https://sdva.gov/media/12585/3m-noise-navigator.xlsx) and search for the Duty MOS Noise Exposure link. This list isn’t the end-all/be-all, as I’ll note below with other common military noise exposures, but it does strengthen your argument that your National Guard or Reserve time lead to your hearing loss.

So, how can a job serve as an injury? I’m glad you asked. First, a glimpse into how hearing loss occurs: According to the CDC, hearing loss can result from a single loud sound (like firecrackers) near your ear. Or, more often, hearing loss can result over time from damage caused by repeated exposures to loud sounds. The louder the sound, the shorter the amount of time it takes for hearing loss to occur. The longer the exposure, the greater the risk for hearing loss (especially when hearing protection is not used or there is not enough time for the ears to rest between exposures).

Current guidance suggests loud noise starts at 85-90 decibels (hearing protection needed and time exposure limited). As a one term guard member, you likely spent 63 days a year, for six years, performing your duties. If you were a Jet Engine Mechanic, for example, that’s 378 cumulative days next to decibels that go into the 130s. The chances of experiencing hearing loss or tinnitus are high. A few examples of common military noise exposure:

- 85-95: Forklift operation
- 80-100: Generator running
- 96-110: Musicians rehearsing (looking at you, my Legion Band people)
- 118: Armored Personnel Carrier going 40mph
- 130: Jet takeoff
- 155: 5.56mm Rifle ([http://multimedia.3m.com/mws/media/1262312O/3m-noise-navigator.xlsx](http://multimedia.3m.com/mws/media/1262312O/3m-noise-navigator.xlsx))

As noted before, if your MOS is not in the high or moderate noise exposure categories, make sure to argue the “other duties as assigned” part of your job. We’ve all spent time in tents next to noisy generators, spent more than average time at a firing range, and have certainly spent significant time busting about in a HMMWV. Taking the numbers from above and applying the table below, you can see how many military members often exceed recommended noise limitations:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Duration per day (hour)</th>
<th>Sound level (dBA)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>90</td>
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<td>6</td>
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<td>105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>½ or less</td>
<td>110</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Quick blurb on tinnitus: I’ve found a lot of veterans that never truly understood the definition, so here’s a good explanation from OSHA: Tinnitus, or “ringing in the ears,” can occur after long-term exposure to high sound levels, or sometimes from short-term exposure to very high sound levels, such as gunfire. Many other physical and physiological conditions also cause tinnitus. Regardless of the cause, this condition is actually a disturbance produced by the inner ear and interpreted by the brain as sound. Individuals with tinnitus describe it as a hum, buzz, roar, ring, or whistle, which can be short term or permanent.

My advice, looking at this data? File a claim for hearing loss and tinnitus. The VA will review your Service Treatment Records and send you for an audiometry exam. I also highly encourage you (and your service officer) to write a 4138—a statement of what happened that lead to your hearing loss. If everything works out, you’ll have your foot in the door of the VA. Worst case scenario? You’re out the time of the audiometry exam, but in the same boat you’re in now. Feel free to email any questions you may have to dso@sdlegion.org.

Always here to help,
Courtney VanZanten
Department Service Officer

As I write this article for the American Legion News, everything is in turmoil due to the COVID-19 crisis. Only advise I have is to stay healthy and follow the guidelines provided to us by the Health Providers. Most Legion events scheduled for the next few months are postponed or cancelled. Remember to use “Buddy Check” to check on your older members well being during this time. The American Legion will move forward when the time is appropriate and safe for our programs and members well being.

For God and Country
Jim Huls
NEC

**Department Constitution and Bylaws Resolutions Deadline May 7, 2020**

The deadline for submission of resolutions calling for the amendment of the Constitution and Bylaws of The American Legion Department of South Dakota is rapidly approaching.

Proposals for amendment to the Constitution and Bylaws must be received in State Headquarters at least (6) six weeks prior to the annual state convention. This requirement is to allow sufficient time for the resolutions to be reviewed by the DepartmentInternal Affairs Commission and to allow sufficient time for the Department Adjutant to forward copies of all recommendations for amendment, along with the recommendation of the Department Internal Affairs Commission to all posts.

The deadline to submit a resolution to amend the Department Constitution and Bylaws to State Headquarters is May 7, 2020.

**South Dakota American Legion Band Seeking Musicians**

The South Dakota American Legion Band plays at the Western Heritage Center in Spearfish at the 2018 Department Convention.

This article is especially targeted to instrumental musicians who have been involved in the South Dakota American Legion Band at some point or would like to be. This year the state American Legion convention is scheduled for June 19-21 in Huron.

We hope to rally as much participation as possible from within our normal participants and especially those who have been able to join us at some point in the past. We will have our stalwart who never miss joined by those who are able to participate from time-to-time. As in the past, we will be heavily dependent on added musicians (usually from the convention location area) to augment the band. Many of the players who joined us for past Huron conventions have passed away, moved away or no longer play. For this year (and next as the convention will again be in Huron) we need to reach out to invite and encourage musicians we know to join our band.

If you know of any potential musicians who might be able to join our ranks, please invite them to join us and get their contact info to us so they can receive subsequent convention information. At the very least, pass on names of potential players to the contacts listed below.

We would love to see new instrumentalists join us to serve our veterans!

Contact Dwayne LaFave: dwayne.lafave@gmail.com, 605-690 1630 or Marla Mosiman: mmosiman@venturecomm.net, 605-222-3313.
**Membership**

"Membership is Strength, Let's Get Stronger!"

Ed Stringer

State Membership Chairman

Legionnaires, March 11th has now come and gone. What does this mean you may ask? It means we surpassed another Target date for membership. March 11th was the 90% cut off date. We are at 90.60% That is all of you doing what you have done to bring members back and recruit new members. This could have not been done without the Hard work that has been done by so many. I thank you and I am sure Commander Nelson thanks you. Here are the numbers for the Department as of Mar. 13. South Dakota has dropped to 12th place overall on our Goal. For the year is 18634, we are currently at 16945.453 behind last year at this time. That puts us at 1689 below where we need to be for our next target date in may. 100% It also puts us 175 ahead of the Mar.11 cutoff date 90%.

With all that being said, we need to look at the individual post numbers. Some posts do engaging great and some are struggling. If your post is struggling to get members to renew, try to find out what needs to be done to get results. Get two or three people together and call members on your unpaid list. This really works. Department numbers do not go up if Post numbers don't go up. Seeing them in person is more effective but not always possible. With this virus running around the country. We need to take all the precautions we can to stay healthy and safe.

I ask you all to dig a little deeper into your membership bag of ideas and see if we can make our goal. I have asked you to do this in the past for Commander Nelson, Now I am asking you to be greedy and do it for YOU. Let's get down and do it again for all you do. Keep it up for another cut off period and we will have 100% bragging rights.

**NEBRASKA,**

Ed Stringer

Department Membership

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<tr>
<th>POST</th>
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**Memberships in Tension**

A resolution is a written description of a problem or situation followed by a solution. An example may also be a statement or declaration pertaining to an issue of concern to The American Legion. A resolution consists of two parts: the preamble (description of the problem) and the Resolving clause (how the local post, department, or the national organization should solve the problem or support the issue.)

If your or your post are interested in writing a good resolution using the proper format, please refer to page 136 of the 2018 Officer’s Guide and Manual of Care. Every Post Commander and Post Adjutant has a copy of this manual. Remember to submit your resolution through your post. General resolutions are due to State Headquarters two weeks prior to Department Convention.

**General Resolutions**

*Good Ideas = Good Resolutions*

Legionnaires are afforded the opportunity to suggest changes in their local Post policies, or even to the manner in which The American Legion conducts business as an organization. Legionnaires interested in initiating such a process must file a resolution.

A resolution is a written description of a problem or situation followed by a suggestion as to how it may be corrected. A resolution may also be a statement or declaration pertaining to an issue of concern to The American Legion. A resolution consists of two parts: the preamble (description of the problem) and the Resolving clause (how the local post, department, or the national organization should solve the problem or support the issue.)

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Thank you to all my American Legion Family!!! We had an awesome Midwinter Conference in Ocicoma in February. God Blessed our American Legion Midwinter Conference in so many ways. Our prayers made a difference and God’s Blessing flowed over our Midwinter Conference. It started when we prayed for good weather for all our travelers and opened our Friday night supper with everyone joining hands and praying the Lords Prayer together. Yes indeed our Prayers made a difference and it showed. I would like to thank everyone who helped with the Four Chaplains Service, you made a difference and God Blessed our American Legion Family Sunday morning. The Bible is full of verses of God’s Blessings:

In 2 Corinthians 9:8 Paul writes. And God is able to bless you abundantly, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work. Philippians 4:7 And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. These verses are God’s promises and we are in the “New Covenant” and the Blessings of God are ours because of knowing Jesus and not by our performance.

The Blessings of God don’t automatically happen. We have to believe what God says and then pray or speak it out. In 2 Corinthians 4:13 We also believe and therefore we speak. There are many Blessings in the Bible and one of my life verses is Psalms 91. Psalms 91: WHOEVER dwells in the shelter of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty. 2 I will say of the Lord, “He is my refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust.” 3 Surely he will save you from the fowler’s snare and from the deadly pestilence. 4 He will cover you with his feathers, and under his wings you will find refuge; his faithfulness will be your shield and rampart. 5 You will not fear the terror of night, nor the arrow that flies by day, 6 nor the pestilence that stalks in the darkness, nor the destruction that assails the camp. 7 A thousand will fall beside you, ten thousand at your right hand, but it will not come near you. 8 You will only observe with your eyes and see the punishment of the wicked. 9 If you say, “The Lord is my refuge, and make the Most High your dwelling, 10 no harm will overtake you, or disaster will come near your tent. 11 For he will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways; 12 they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.(13 You will tread on the lion and the cobra; you will trample the great lion and the serpent. 14 “Because he loves me,” says the Lord, “I will rescue you; I will protect you, for he acknowledges your name. 15 He will call on me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble, I will deliver him and honor him. 16 With long life will I satisfy him and show him my salvation.”)

Yes indeed, Blessings of God’s Favor in Psalms 51:12 Surely, Lord, you bless the righteous; you surround them with your favor as with a shield. Please remember to “Make a difference in Prayer” and speak it out loud and the Lord will surely bless you and our American Legion Family and the inheritance of a great name.

With Love and Respect, Chaplain Patrick Lewellen