

## FINAL REPORT OF DEPARTMENT COMMANDER FRED NELSON

Legionnaires,

This will be my final article submitted while serving as your Department Commander. As my term winds down I thought my schedule would open up, however, my calendar is still busy to the end of the State Convention.

Two Years! It has been an “AWESOME” two years and it was an “HONOR” to serve as the Department Commander of the best Department in The American Legion. The Department of South Dakota works hard at its mission of promoting the Four Pillars. There is no doubt that our American Legion members are “Veterans Strengthening America”.

Our headquarters staff are efficient and dedicated. Department Adjutant Kevin Hempel, DSO/Assistant Adjutant Courtney VanZanten, Judy Greenfield and MaryJo Boner are knowledgeable and very helpful. Each of them play a key role in the success of our Department. I would like to thank each of them for their continued dedication.

I am writing this last report from the grounds of Northern State University in Aberdeen, where I am spending the week at Boys State 2021. The Boys Staters are energized and the counselors are succeeding at directing the energy in a productive direction. Witnessing the dedication of the Boys State staff is eye opening. They have long days and thrive on the upbeat, high-energy of the Boys. It is early but I can see that Boys State 2021 will be a huge success. Thank you to the dedicated staff.

I spent Memorial Day here at Boys State and spoke at their Memorial Service. They honored thirty-six Boys Staters who lost their lives in service to our country. I see on Facebook that members and Posts across the state were out in force this Memorial Day helping to honor those that lost their lives while serving to protect our country.

After the cancelation of the Mid-Winter Convention, the 2021 Spring District Meetings were well attended and American Legion business was shared throughout the Department. It was nice to meet in person and connect with Legionnaires across the state. I encourage everyone to continue to be involved.

This year will be remembered as one that took us from a virtual world to a renewed excitement of coming together to promote the mission of The American Legion. The Department of South Dakota carried on the legacy with celebrations, parades, fundraisers, in-person meetings, oratorical scholarship programs, Boys State, Legion Baseball, shooting sports, and flag etiquette programs. Membership and Marketing Committee and the Media and Communications Committee were reorganized and are meeting their assigned missions. We are still using Zoom for some meetings and I believe this will continue when needed.

It took the effort of all our members, our Posts, and Districts to embrace the membership challenge this year. Membership Chairman Travise Flisrand worked with the leadership team to emphasize recruitment and retention. Throughout the year, we have been back and forth between first and second place with other departments. Currently, we are in second place with a 96.7% of the national goal. The new “MyLegion” seems to be working for more Posts and I am hoping with memberships being processed again that we may regain the lead. Congratulations to Districts One, Two, Four, and Seven for exceeding 100% of their membership goal. Congratulations to District Commander Eugene Ironshell Jr. for being a Race-to-the-Top Award winner. The latest reports have some accuracy issues, so I apologize if I am missing any Districts.

Looking back, some special moments are etched in my memory. I felt humbled and honored to receive two star quilts at district meetings, one by the commander and posts members in Eagle Butte and the second one by Eugene Iron Shell Jr., District Two Commander, in Martin. Posts centennial celebrations in Garretson, Custer, Milbank, as well as parades in Wagner, Arlington and a Valentines Social in Tabor are only a very few of these moments. I had the honor to participate in the ground breaking of the State Veterans Cemetery in Sioux Falls, and help at the first annual Northern Hills Veterans Appreciation Fair – “We’ve Got your Six.”

I would like to thank the Vice Commanders, District Commanders, all committee and commission chairs, NEC Jim Huls and alternate NEC Denny Brenden, Past Department Commanders for their advice and support. I also would like to thank the South Dakota American Legion Family and I am grateful for the support of my local American Legion Family #164 during my campaign and two years as Department Commander. You are all appreciated! To my wife Micheline, also known as the Commander's Aide, thank you for sharing the many long drives and the events over the two years.

Being your Department Commander gave me the honor to meet Legionnaires in every district, enjoy local events, help promote the four Pillars of The American Legion but most of all to carry on the legacy into a new centennial. I look forward to seeing many of you at the Department Convention in Huron.

There is little doubt in my mind that 2019-2021 will not be forgotten, as I am sure many of you will also remember these challenging times for our communities, state, and nation. We are blessed to live in South Dakota, and I am thankful for our American Legion Family.

For God and Country!

Fred Nelson, Your Department Commander

## **ANNUAL REPORT OF THE DEPARTMENT ADJUTANT**

Department Commander Nelson:

This report is being written and read to satisfy the requirement in the Constitution and By Laws which requires the Department Adjutant to write and present to each annual convention, a report covering all activities not covered in the annual reports of the Committee Chairs and other State American Legion officials. As this was my first year as the Department Adjutant, it has been quite a learning curve. Adding all the challenges the pandemic it has been a very interesting year.

The American Legion Department of South Dakota is a member of the South Dakota Veterans Council (SDVC) along with five other Veterans Service Organizations. The council meets approximately four times per year. The main goal of SDVC is to address and support issues involving veterans of South Dakota. The Council continues to raise money for the South Dakota Veterans Cemetery endowment fund through the South Dakota Community Foundation. Additionally, great progress is being made in completing the State Veterans Cemetery, giving a place on the east side of South Dakota for Veterans to honored as they are laid to rest. There is ongoing discussion on what to do with the building the SDCF owns on the South Dakota State Fair property. No decision has been made to date.

Due to the ongoing COVID-19 issues, many committee meetings as well as the Midwinter Convention were cancelled for 2021. District Spring meetings for 2020 were cancelled, so elections of District Commander for the even years was held during District Fall meetings. Even though many committees did not meet in person, a number of meetings were held via Zoom to meet deadlines and to ensure business was accomplished. I am happy to report District Spring meetings for 2021 were held as scheduled.

The Department Executive Committee (DEC) received a request from the Department Assistant Adjutant and news paper editor, Courtney Van Zanten, to allow the South Dakota Legion News to be sent to all South Dakota Legion members. Courtney felt Legion information was not making it to the Legionnaires due to the cancellation of many meetings as well as many Post refraining from holding meetings due to the pandemic. Courtney proposed off setting the cost of the paper by allowing advertisement by businesses. The DEC approved the request for a one-year test, and they would reconsider it again after the test period.

The Department usually purchases a new vehicle every three years. However, due to the increase in the price of vehicles, the amount that had previously set aside for the purchase was determined to not cover the cost of a vehicle. The decision was made to delay the purchase for one year to save additional money for the vehicle purchase.

The transition to the new MyLegion and the Personify Pgo system by national headquarters has not gone as well as expected. It has impacted the staff's ability to process memberships as well as view reports and limited the assistance we could give to Posts. I certainly hope national headquarters can correct the issues and the systems allow us to conduct business in a timely manner.

Judy Greenfield and Mary Jo Boner continue to make the headquarters office successful. They have been instrumental in ensuring our department functions and programs succeed. I certainly could not have made it through my first year as Adjutant without their help and dedication.

Since most of the Committee Chairs and State Officers have filed their reports which will be available on the Department website for review, most of the activities have been covered and reported on.

Respectfully submitted,  
Kevin Hempel, Department Adjutant

### **ANNUAL REPORT OF THE DEPARTMENT SERVICE OFFICER**

Mr. Commander,

I would like to thank Commander Fred Nelson for appointing me to serve as Department Service Officer for 2020-2021.

As Department Service Officer, I have the unique privilege of directly serving Veterans and their families in helping them obtain and utilize the benefits they have earned through service to our country. The VA is undoubtedly its own mountain to climb, and I am happy to be a guide of sorts.

I started the year with big hopes for more outreach. My travels took me to Isabel, with a fantastic meeting with Veterans from several posts out there. Unfortunately, COVID hit shortly thereafter, and my outreach slowed to a stop. Since the world has slowly opened back up this spring, I have gone to Gregory, and am back in the saddle for anyone open to hear me preach the good word of the VA. It is a great reason to get Vets together.

I am thrilled to report that State, County and Tribal Veterans Service Officers around South Dakota utilizing the American Legion Power of Attorney have secured \$36,290,041 in VA benefits for South Dakota Veterans and their families in Fiscal Year 2020. These Service Officers worked hard through the pandemic, finding ways to help Veterans when "in person" was not possible, and they should be recognized for their hard work and dedication. If you have not thanked your local Veterans Service Officer lately, please do so!

Respectfully Submitted,  
Courtney VanZanten  
Department Service Officer

### **AMERICANISM COMMISSION ANNUAL REPORT FOR 2021**

As of May 24<sup>th</sup>, 2021

Disclaimer: This report was due prior to Boys State, and the State Convention, so some of the verbiage will be "future tense" and some "past tense". I know that's confusing but imagine trying to write it under those circumstances. The report you are given at the convention will most likely change, to reflect the latest situation. Thank you, Commander Nelson for the opportunity to serve as your Americanism Chairman for the last two years.

Greetings to my fellow Legionnaires! On behalf of the Americanism Commission, I welcome you to the 2021 convention and encourage you to have a great time telling the other members how much fun you had

presenting the Americanism programs in your community. As someone who grew up taking part in these programs, I can tell you that the impact they have on our youth is truly amazing. I know it has been much harder to get into the schools, community events were canceled, and other youth programs such as 4-H and Scouting were limited, but you persevered. Thank you!

Since this is an annual report, I will take a few minutes to cover the different programs in a little detail. First, the Oratorical Program. This is the only program that managed to make it through the pandemic without being canceled. We had six competitors this year (up from five last year) and the quality of the presentations was impressive. For the second year in a row, National canceled their competition, but this year, they announced slightly ahead of time that they would be presenting a \$5,000 scholarship to those individuals who won at the Department level. That was a huge improvement over the \$2,000 they awarded last year. It also helps make marketing a little easier. Fiala Herceg, from Aberdeen, took first place this year (her second year of competing) and walked away with \$6,000 in scholarship monies. Thank you to all the volunteers and “voluntolds” who helped with the last two years competitions! Now for a bit of a “side note”: As my Post interviewed the candidates for Boys State this year, I found that several of them were members of the debate team. If you have boys and girls like this, you should actively recruit them to take part in this program next year.

Boys State 2021 moved forward after being canceled in 2020 and was held “in-person” with both Juniors and Seniors being eligible. The dates for this year were May 31<sup>st</sup> – June 4<sup>th</sup> and approximately 275 boys are expected to attend, up from about 240 in 2019. Legion Day will be held on Thursday the 3<sup>rd</sup> of June, so come on up and observe Boys State in action. Spend the day in Aberdeen and hang around to watch your boys compete in the annual Boys State Olympics that evening. Despite missing a year and losing the recruiting help of the 2019 Boys Staters to graduation, you still managed to recruit a large number of participants. There will also be an increased number of new counselors at Boys State this year as our Director attempts to build “depth” into the staff. A huge thank you to all those legionnaires and SD Army Guard members who believe in this program and volunteer their time to make it the success it is. Finally, thanks again to SDAL Foundation for the \$2,000 grant to this program!

Youth Trooper Academy is also moving forward for an in-person session this year after being canceled in 2020. The date was changed from the normal June timeframe to July 12 – 16<sup>th</sup> due to scheduling conflicts. The 24 statewide participants have been selected and notified. If you are sponsoring a participant, remember to get your tuition check (\$200) sent to Department ASAP. One of the great measures of success with this program is that there are now four past participants who wear a South Dakota Trooper uniform. Legion Day for YTA will be Thursday July 15<sup>th</sup>. It’s always exciting to watch our youth in action as they dress up in padded gear to “meet” the police dog, check out the SWAT vehicles and fire police weapons. A special thank you to the South Dakota Troopers who helped recruit, plan and administer this program, and to Larry Price who works closely with them.

Many of you have already started the American Legion Baseball season and will be busy coaching, travelling with, and supporting your players this summer. Thank you to all those Posts out there who make this possible. While the 2020 season wasn’t canceled, there were still many challenges caused by the pandemic. Things promise to be mostly “back to normal” this year with a state competition, National Regional competition and a national competition. Of special note, Post 22 Baseball in Rapid City was awarded the 2022 and 2023 National Regional tournaments; come and check out their brand-new stadium. Finally, a huge thank you to the members of the SDAL Athletic Commission who work tirelessly to bring it all together. Support your local teams by attending their games!

South Dakota Scouting continues to march on. Thank you to those Posts’ and individual Legionnaires who work year after year to help mentor our youth through their sponsorship/support of Scout Troops. If your post does not have a troop, but would like to help, remember that you can co-sponsor a troop in your area. Existing troops can always use financial support and volunteers. If you do sponsor or co-sponsor a troop, remember to submit your Eagle Scouts for the annual “Eagle Scout of the Year” competition. Thank you to Rick MacDonald who continues to lead by example as the SD Americanism representative to Scouting.

South Dakota's Junior Shooting Sports teams continue to be competitive. At least one of our shooters has been invited to take place in the national competition in Colorado Springs in 2021. 2020 was a successful year for the Pierre Post 8 shooters and their coach Sean Kruger, as they were awarded 3<sup>rd</sup> place in team competition at the national level. Thank you to the coaches and mentors of our teams who teach our youth gun safety and the joy of competition!

Finally, I would like to again mention the changes the Commission has made over the last two years. We've worked hard to provide the Posts with tools they can use to market our programs. The "Big 3" was created to provide posts with a simple, all-in-one information sheet that could easily be updated, posted, printed off and distributed to schools and students. We also built a "roadmap" for how, and to whom you should promote the "Big 3". We hope this helps the Post train their Americanism Officers and other members. We attempted to help the Post Americanism Officers by updating the Post Americanism Report to include explanations for the many different categories and providing them with an example of a winning report. We worked closely with the Boys State staff and Northern State University to create other attractive marketing materials. A very special thank you goes out to Mary Jo Boner at Department Headquarters. She was our biggest supporter and hardest worker in bringing this all together.

It has been a pleasure serving as your Department Americanism Chairman for the last two years. I hope I, and the members of the Americanism Commission have helped bring our programs into the 21<sup>st</sup> century and provided you with helpful tools to make your jobs easier. Please take advantage of those tools and feel free to offer suggestions on how we can continue to improve them. I hope to see you all at the Department Convention in Huron.

Douglas D. Harris  
Americanism Commission Chairman

## **ATHLETIC COMMISSION CHAIRMAN REPORT**

Mr. Commander:

Well, here we are again to start another season and we just can't wait to get it started after a rough year in 2020. Not just for baseball but for every program that the American Legion offered. Technically we were put on hold for 1 year and we all got a break from the real world and are now ready to put all our programs on fire again.

My report begins with the start of baseball registration. Registration for the 2021 season started January 1<sup>st</sup> and is going strong. The majority of our A school are already registered and are anxious to get their season rolling. Most B schools are registered also but they usually are not quite as quick. I have had many inquiries in new team formations in the state and with any luck we might be up anywhere from 2 to 5 teams this year which would be great.

As far as tournament sites go: Since the 2020 season was postponed, all 2020 sites were pushed back to 2021 and the 2021 selected sites will be pushed to 2022. So, we are good for this season and next. The next time application for State Tournament sites will need to be submitted will be by Dec 31<sup>st</sup>, 2021 for the 2023 season. Sites selected for this year are as follows: St B Jr Tournament-Redfield, Aug 6th thru 8th; St B Sr Tournament-Groton, July 30<sup>th</sup> thru Aug 3<sup>rd</sup>; St A Jr Tournament-Pierre, July 23<sup>rd</sup> thru July -27<sup>th</sup>; and St A Sr Tournament-Brandon, July 23<sup>rd</sup> thru July 27. Also, Sioux Falls will be hosting this year's National Regional Tournament. Tournament sites for 2022 are as follows: St B Jr Tournament will be hosted by Clark; St B Sr Tournament will be hosted by Gregory; St A Jr Tournament will be hosted by S.F. Post 15 and the St A Sr Tournament will be hosted by R.C. Post 22. Also R.C. Post 22 will be hosting the 2022 and 2023 National Regional Tournament.

This year’s American Legion golf tournament will be hosted by Wakonda on Saturday Sept 11<sup>th</sup> at Glenridge Golf Course in Irene and Sept 12<sup>th</sup> at The Bluffs Golf Course in Vermillion. The people to contact to reserve a spot are John Peterson at 605-660-5821 and Jim Logue at 605-359-1247. Please keep this weekend open, it will be a great time to meet some new and old friends. This is truly a fun weekend and I would like you to recruit as many teams as possible.

On a matter of sending our St B champion to Wisconsin for a season ending tournament with teams from 4 or 5 other states we have decided not to do so. The reason for the decision is because the start of the high school football season is around the corner and players starting college. It is just too difficult to get teams to commit to going to this tournament. Instead, we will consider making a donation to a program within the American Legion organization.

Commander Nelson, that concludes my report and on behalf of the Athletic Commission I would like to thank you for all your help and support and letting us serve on the Commission.

Sincerely,  
Dan Sudbeck, Chairman

<b>ATHLETIC FUND</b>			
Balance, 5-1-20			\$ 18,616.60
<b>RECEIPTS:</b>			
Entry Fees	\$	-	
Interest	\$	1.16	
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$</b>	<b>1.16</b>	<b>\$ 1.16</b>
			\$ 18,617.76
<b>DISBURSEMENTS:</b>			
To Humboldt, golf tournament	\$	200.00	
Commission Expense, Tournament Fees	\$	1,026.20	
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$</b>	<b>1,226.20</b>	<b>\$ 1,226.20</b>
			\$ 17,391.56

### ANNUAL REPORT OF THE BOYS STATE DIRECTOR

Commander,

It is with great pleasure I can report we are a GO for the 78<sup>th</sup> Session of South Dakota American Legion Boys State, May 31 – June 4, 2021 at Northern State University.

We currently have 270 boys signed up. This year we decided to include seniors in the session to allow them an opportunity that they were robbed of due to the COVID-19 Pandemic. With the strong showing from Boys this year we will be taking into consideration continuing to allow Juniors and Seniors in future Sessions. This decision will be left to the Board to decide.

We will hold our annual meeting for the corporation on Sunday May 30<sup>th</sup> at Northern State University. Some agenda items are future incorporation of Seniors, Changes to the Bylaws to better reflect the corporation organizational structure, 2022 Session Dates, Annual Meeting date changes, and election of officer.

I thank every Legionnaire for their continued support of this great program. Additionally, I thank all the volunteers who come together to put on such an important event. Without all their dedication we could not fulfill our mission to help America’s youth understand and appreciate the American system of government and way of

life including the rights and responsibilities of citizenship, and to give young men a better knowledge of the fundamental principles of South Dakota State government.

Respectfully submitted,  
C.P Van Delist  
Director, South Dakota American Legion Boys State

## **CHILDREN AND YOUTH CHAIRMAN REPORT**

Zero TFA Claims!

First of all, I want to thank the SD American Legion Foundation for the \$1,500.00 of Grant Funds to the Children and Youth Committee. The funds were used to procure backpacks filled with school supplies for children of all ages going into the 2020-2021 school year.

Before the Backpack Program started Operation Homefront reached out. Operation Homefront's mission is to build strong, stable, and secure military families so they can thrive — not simply struggle to get by — in the communities they have worked so hard to protect. The representative from Operation Homefront informed the Children & Youth Committee of their annual 2020 School Supply drive through Dollar Tree stores. The drive is based on donations at checkout with miscellaneous school supplies from glue sticks to paper. Children & Youth volunteers signed up at several Dollar Tree store locations to include: (3) Sioux Falls, (2) Mitchell, (1) Watertown, and (1) Aberdeen. Once a week the volunteers did a pick up at each of their designated locations of school supplies for four weeks in July during the drive. The representative of Operation Homefront encouraged us to give them to veteran children in need first and if those needs were met in the area to broaden the scope to the surrounding community children that would also benefit. Their goal was to help in any way!

In the beginning of August, all school supply donations and purchased backpacks through the South Dakota American Legion Foundation were centralized to the Chester American Legion Auxiliary, where volunteers sorted supplies, stuffed backpacks for distribution.

In total, with the Grant Funds 335 backpacks, and 24 teacher bags carrying 3,902 school supplies from the above mentioned Dollar Tree stores from the Operation Homefront 2020 drive made their way out the door to 335 deserving children from veteran children, to the reservation children, Department of Social Services children, and to school representatives handing them to their most needy within their grasp. Each and every representative could not have been more thankful especially this year!

The Backpack Program involved the following recipients from the Sioux Falls Army National Guard, and the following communities: Watertown, Mt. Vernon, Aberdeen, Rosebud, Faith, Mitchell, Brandon, Garretson, Chester, Eagle Butte, White Lake, Chamberlain, Alexandria, Wessington Springs, Huron, and Stickney/Corsica.

The next drive was the Toy Drive! We teamed up with Dollar tree, Operation Home Front and the SD AL Foundation for another great experience I was able to be apart of! Handing these bags out before Christmas filled with toys to children was a complete joy! The veteran families that received them were very thankful this season.

Total of donated items from dollar trees: 5,647. The SD AL Foundation donated \$750 for 750 gift bags for the toys to be put in. These gift bags went out to the deployed South Dakota units and the units currently going through medical in Sioux Falls during the holidays.

Thank you again SD AL Foundation, this Backpack Program and holiday toy drive was a great success!

Respectfully,  
Miranda Krumm  
Children and Youth Chairman

<b>CHILDREN AND YOUTH</b>			
Balance, 5-1-20			\$ 17,659.97
<b>RECEIPTS:</b>			
Memorials and donations	\$	950.00	
Interest	\$	1.64	
	\$	951.64	\$ 951.64
TOTAL			\$ 18,611.61
<b>DISBURSEMENTS:</b>			
Temporary Financial Assistance	\$	1,555.27	
TOTAL	\$	1,555.27	
			\$ 1,555.27
Balance, 5-1-2021			\$ 17,056.34

## **EDUCATIONAL SCHOLARSHIP CHAIRMAN REPORT**

Two thousand twenty/twenty-one was another exciting period for the Educational Scholarship Committee. In 2019, we changed from a loan concept to a scholarship format. We invested \$120,000.00 with the South Dakota Community Foundation. Since our fund had been established for more than a year, we reaped the benefits of having just over \$5600.00 to award our first scholarships using the fund in March 2021.

The committee voted to award four scholarships. The winners are Allison Gross, Brookings, \$2000.00; Carter Jahnig, Hurley, \$1500.00; Megan Linke, Woonsocket, \$1000.00; and Aaron Linke, Woonsocket, \$1000.00. Carter is attending Dakota State University and Allison, Megan and Aaron are attending SDSU.

We received one donation of \$100.00 in 2020 and another donation from the South Dakota Sons of The American Legion for \$1000.00 in March 2021. Thank you, Sons!

Applications and brochures are online at [www.SDlegion.org](http://www.SDlegion.org). We are currently revising the application for 2021/2022 scholarship year.

The 2021 Educator of the Year is Audra West, nominated by Post 22. She is a 4th Grade teacher at Blackhawk. She will be honored in the fall when her school is back in session.

The education scholarships offered by the Department of South Dakota are for post-secondary education, college, or technical schools, for children of veterans, grandchildren of veterans, and veterans, who meet the requirements as set forth in the Education Scholarship brochure. Please read the brochure for all the current changes. In all cases, the veteran listed on the application must be a member of the South Dakota The American Legion. The student must attend a higher education school in the state of South Dakota unless their plan of study is not taught in any South Dakota school. The fund is self-sustaining through donations.

Annually, the brochure and application processes are reviewed. No monies were added to the fund from the Department's outside income programs. More specific details can be obtained from State Headquarters, your District Education Loan Chairperson, or a member of the state Education Scholarship Committee. The state committee consists of Jerry Mencke, Huron, Paul Weidenbach, Lesterville, Michael Pauling, Piedmont, Philip Egeberg, Brookings, Ed Hruska Jr., Sioux Falls, and Hugh Holmes, Mitchell.

The Education Scholarship Committee expresses our appreciation for the various memorials and donations received this past year, totaling \$1100.00. We also thank the Department Executive Committee, State Headquarters, American Legion Posts, Auxiliary Units, and individuals throughout our great state.

Mr. Commander, thank you for selecting me to be the chairman of the prestigious Education Scholarship Committee. It is a great honor. Up, up, and away!

Respectfully Submitted,  
 Hugh W. Holmes  
 Chairman, Education Scholarship Committee

<b>ED LOAN REPORT</b>			
BALANCE - 5-1-20			\$ 11,722.19
<b>RECEIPTS:</b>			
Loan Repayments		\$ 7,008.75	
Donations & Memorials		\$ 1,025.00	
Interest		\$ 1.51	
TOTAL		\$ 8,035.26	\$ 8,035.26
<b>DISBURSEMENTS:</b>			
SCHOLARSHIPS		\$ 1,500.00	
TOTAL		\$ 1,500.00	\$ 1,500.00
Balance, 5-1-2021			\$ 18,257.45

### **ANNUAL EMPLOYMENT COMMITTEE REPORT**

Commander,

It is my sincere pleasure to submit this year’s report on behalf of the Employment Committee. Among the many great things the American Legion does for veterans, promoting the employment and retention of veterans is one of them. Veterans bring unique skills to any organization. In addition to excellent technical education and training, veterans have a wealth of experience in a broad range of areas, not the least of which is leadership. These skills, along with a work ethic second to none, are hallmarks of veterans, and they bring tremendous value-added wherever they serve. The annual Employment Awards showcase some of the great organizations that support veterans and enable us to recognize them for their contributions.

For 2020-2021, we received a total of 4 nominations, in 3 categories: Olson-Reid Post #250 nominated Kones Korner of Castlewood for one award: Employer of Veterans - Small; Spearfish Post #164 nominated Prairie Hills Transit of Spearfish for three awards: Employer of Veterans - Small, Employer of Older Workers, and the Award to Enhance the Lives of Disabled Persons.

The committee had hoped to receive more nominations this go-around. Nonetheless, the submissions we did receive were superb. In the end, Prairie Hills Transit performed a full sweep of the awards for which it was nominated. They have demonstrated an outstanding commitment to veterans, be they members of the public or those whom they employ. We are very proud to have such a fine organization within South Dakota, and they set a great example for others to follow.

This year’s Employment Committee was composed of the following members: Oz Enderby of Lead-Deadwood, Rick Gully of Watertown, Doug Henwood of Spearfish, and Patrick Steele of Aberdeen. This is the

2nd consecutive year each committee member volunteered to serve, and I would like to thank each of the members for their dedication.

For 2021, I would like to ask for the assistance of all posts to look closely at deserving organizations in their area and take some time to submit a nomination. It is very important that we call attention to the great work these institutions do for our fellow veterans, and by formally recognizing them it can encourage others to take notice and follow in their footsteps.

Respectfully submitted,  
Gregory K. Dias  
Employment Committee Chair

### **DEPARTMENT HISTORIAN REPORT**

Commander Nelson,

It has been a privilege and an honor to serve and continue to serve as your Department Historian. I am working on the Department History for the year so you will have a remembrance of your year as Department Commander. It has been a difficult past year and a challenge for historians to complete some sort of history for their posts. I will also assist those who are working to put their histories together or online for the State Convention in June.

Post Historians should be working on their Post Histories right now for the History contest at our State Convention. Winners in each category (scrapbook and narrative) can be entered into the National contest. These entries should cover the past years' term of your Post Commanders election to the end of his or her term. If you intend to participate in the History book contest, get it to me in early June or hand it in at the information desk at the convention by 3 pm Friday afternoon. I will need to judge them that evening in order to present plaques on Saturday.

Guidelines, including the point system for judging, is found in the Post Officers guide. Plaques will be presented to the first, second and third place winners at the State Convention in Huron. I encourage all post historians to put together a post history, either in book form or online. There could be a category for online versions soon. I thank all historians and Post members for their hard work and commitment in preparing these reports. Your Post members will appreciate your hard work in the years to come.

Respectfully submitted,  
Fred Lee  
Department Historian

### **REPORT ON INTERNAL AFFAIRS COMMISSION**

Fellow Legionnaires,

I would like to thank Commander Nelson for appointing me to serve as the Chairman for the Internal Affairs Commission for 2021.

The Internal Affairs Commission met 3 times by ZOOM conference to accomplish its mission. On 26 April 2021, 11 May 2021, and 20 May 2021. A quorum was present at all three of the zoom conferences.

The Constitution of the American Legion, Department of South Dakota, provides in Article XV, Section 1, that "Any amendment to this constitution may be proposed by any Post, or by the Department Standing

Committee on Constitution and Bylaws. Any amendment proposed by a Post shall be submitted in writing to Department Headquarters at least six weeks prior to the annual Department Convention.”

“The Department Adjutant shall present it immediately to the Department Commission on Internal Affairs. At least 30 days prior to said convention, the Department Commission on Internal Affairs shall transmit to all Posts, through Department Headquarters, a full copy of all amendments submitted by Posts, together with the favorable or unfavorable recommendation of the committee thereon, with a brief statement of reasons for such recommendation, and at the time the committee shall in like manner, distribute to all Posts, full copy of any proposed amendment originating with the committee itself.”

Any resolution pertaining to changes of the constitution and bylaws of the Department of South Dakota American Legion must be submitted to State Headquarters no later than six weeks prior to the state convention, for consideration by the Internal Affairs Commission.

The only way the American Legion is able to change, and grow is with resolutions submitted by the local Posts within the Department.

There are several resolutions that have been submitted this year to the Internal Affairs Commission for consideration.

The resolution SDAL 21-1 was submitted by Post 250 of Castlewood was to develop an Operational Readiness Era Classification and a Cold war era classification for veterans who do not fall into previously defined war eras.

THE COMMISSION VOTED TO SEND THIS RESOLUTION TO THE CONVENTION RESOLUTIONS COMMITTEE WITH A DO NOT PASS RECOMMENDATION.

Resolution SDAL 21-2 was submitted by Post 92 of Redfield. This resolution would make the Youth Trooper Academy an official program of the South Dakota American Legion in cooperation of the South Dakota Highway Patrol, however we would request a line item in the annual budget to fund the program. THE COMMISSION RECOMMENDED REMOVE THE 2<sup>ND</sup> RESOLVE CLAUSE AND A DO PASS FOR THIS RESOLUTION.

Resolution SDAL 21-3 was submitted by the Internal Affairs commission that would change the name of Shannon County in the State Constitution in District 2, to read Oglala Lakota county in District 2 Department of South Dakota American Legion.

THE COMMISSION RECOMMENDED A DO PASS FOR THIS RESOLUTION.

Resolution SDAL 21-4 was submitted by the Internal Affairs Commission that would amend the constitution of the Department of South Dakota Legion to read as: For God and Country we associate ourselves together for the following purposes: To uphold and defend the Constitution of the United States of America; to maintain law and order; .to foster and perpetuate a one hundred Americanism’ to preserve the memories and incidents of our associations in ALL WARS; to inculcate a sense of individual obligation to the community, state and nation; to combat the autocracy of both the classes and the masses; to make right the master of might; to promote peace and good will on earth; to safeguard and transmit to posterity the principles of justice, freedom and democracy; to consecrate and sanctify our comradeship by our devotion to mutual helpfulness. THE COMMISSION VOTED A DO PASS FOR THIS RESOLUTION.

Resolution SDAL 21-5 was submitted by Post 88 in White would remove the financial limit set forth in the Constitution for the Children and Youth committee and have the Finance Commission create a line item in the annual budget for an amount not to exceed \$300.00 for the Children and Youth Committee.

THE COMMISSION MOVED TO AMEND THE RESOLVED CLAUSE TO READ, “THAT LINE ITEMS BE CREATED IN THE DEPARTMENT BUDGET, PROPOSED BY THE DEPARTMENT FINANCE COMMISSION AND APPROVED BY THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE” AND VOTED FOR A DO PASS FOR THIS RESOLUTION.

Resolution SDAL 21-6 was submitted by Post 88 in White to allow for changes in voting procedures during the time of National pandemics or other emergencies when regular attendance at the Annual State convention is impossible due to the better interest of public health.

THE COMMISSION RECOMMENDED A DO NOT PASS FOR THIS RESOLUTION AND ALSO RECOMMENDED FURTHER STUDY ON THE CONCEPT.

Resolution SDAL 21-7 submitted by post 88 in White would set the installation date of newly elected District Commanders to coincide with the election and installation of the newly elected Department Commander at the annual State Convention.

THE COMMISSION VOTED TO RECOMMEND DO PASS OF THIS RESOLUTION.

Resolution SDAL 21-8 was submitted by Post 250 of Castlewood to establish the Training Committee as a Standing committee with a supporting budget for Five members with Three-year rotating terms. THE COMMITTEE RECOMMENDED TO SEND THIS TO THE CONVENTION RESOLUTIONS COMMITTEE AS IT DID NOT REQUIRE A CONSTITUTIONAL CHANGE.

Resolution SDAL 21-9 was submitted by Post 250 in Castlewood ensure that minutes from each committee meeting are disseminate to every chartered post within 30 days of the committee meeting. THE COMMISSION VOTED A DO NOT PASS OF THIS RESOLUTION.

Resolution SDAL 21-10 was submitted by post 250 in Castlewood and would require that membership of the Membership and Marketing committee will be made up of the Committee chairman for a 1-year term, and a representative from each Department Vice Commanders areas and from each District to serve staggered three-year terms. The membership and marketing committee shall be established as a Standing Committee. Appropriate funding shall be in place to support the committee. THE COMMITTEE VOTED TO SEND THIS RESOLUTION TO THE CONVENTION RESOLUTIONS COMMITTEE.

Resolution SDAL 21-11 was submitted by the Internal Affairs Commission to accurately reflect in the Constitution and By-Laws the Committees, Commissions, Convention Committees, and Temporary Committees that currently exist in the American Legion, Department of South Dakota. THE COMMISSION VOTED A DO-PASS RECOMMENDATION TO THIS RESOLUTION.

Resolution SDAL-21-12 was submitted by Post 250 of Castlewood proposes that Department Vice-Commanders have the ability to direct and make official visits to Districts, Posts and events on the behalf of the Department for the good of the American Legion without restriction or the need for an official call from the Department Commander and the allotted amount under the budget to assist with their expenses. THE COMMISSION VOTED A DO NOT PASS RECOMMENDATION TO THIS RESOLUTION.

Resolution SDAL 21-13 submitted Post 250 of Castlewood requires replacing the eligibility dates in the constitution that read from 7 Dec 1941 to 31 December 1946, 25 June 1950 to 31 January 1955, 28 February 1961 to 7 May 1975, 20 December 1989 to 31 January 1990, and August 1990 to a date determined by the US Government to the phrase of “any time after 7 December 1941”. THE COMMISSION RECOMMENDS A DO PASS FOR THIS RESOLUTION.

Annual reports are welcome from the Sons of the American Legion and The Legion Riders. Sons of the American Legion Commander Terry Hanson informed us that there are six new SAL Squadrons in South Dakota this year, however, there are a few Squadrons still having membership issues. Even so, South Dakota is extremely close to reaching an all-time high in membership. The Sons of the American Legion are a vital part of the American Legion Family and we are very fortunate to have the Sons a big part of our organization. Well done Commander Terry.

Respectfully submitted,  
Mark Weinmann  
Chairman  
Internal Affairs Commission

## LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE REPORT

Commander,

Here is the annual report of the South Dakota American Legion Legislative Committee. The members of the committee are Chairman Doug Feltman of Chamberlain, PDC Rod Martens of Piedmont, PDC Gary Watts of White, PDC Rick MacDonald of Hermosa and Chris "Van" Van DeList of Rapid City. The lobbyists for this year were Doug Feltman, Adjutant Kevin Hemple, PDC Byron Callies and Chris "Van" Van DeList.

Because of Covid, the Legislative Round tables were cancelled this year. In light of that The SD Veterans Council met on the 13th of January 2021 at Post # 8 in Pierre. I attended the meeting as a guest. The Council discussed the bills that were likely to be of a concern to Veterans and set the Council's priorities. That evening the Veterans Council hosted a Legislative reception with all Legislators invited and it was well attended by the Veterans Council and Legislators.

On the 10th of February 2021 the Legislative Committee met in Pierre at Post # 8. Roll called showed the following committee members present: Chairman Doug Feltman, PDC Gary Watts, Chris "Van" Van DeList. Committee men Rick MacDonald and Rod Martens attended by Zoom. Also in attendance were State Commander Fred Nelson, Adjutant Kevin Hemple, NEC Jim Huls and Lobbyist Byron Callies,

Adjutant Hemple summarized the Veterans Council meeting. The Legislative Committee then reviewed and discussed 27 bills, and a decision was made on each on how we were going to proceed.

There were 13 House bills that were discussed and we were going to: watch 4, support 7, do not support 1, and no action on 1 as it was defeated in the House committee.

There were also 14 Senate bills that were discussed and we were going to: watch 6, support 2, lobby in support of 2 and remove 4 from the list.

There was one Senate Resolution that was placed on the watch list also.

The evening reception was hosted by Post # 8. All Legislators received a written invitation and it was well attended. This reception gave the Legislative Committee, the Legion Lobbyist, and Legionnaires an opportunity to meet the Legislators, get to know them and give them our recommendations and thoughts on particular bills that had an impact on Veterans. At both receptions while talking to the Legislators, it is very obvious that The South Dakota American Legion has a good and respected relationship with the Legislators in the State.

Post # 8 again did an excellent job in hosting the reception and served a delicious supper to all in attendance. Thank you. If anyone wants more information on a particular bill, please contact me at (605) 234-4143. Here is the results of the bills on the Legislative Committee's list:

HB 1017 - revise the appropriation to construct cold storage building in Sioux Falls - [Signed by the Governor](#)

HB 1018 - authorize the construction of a National Guard Readiness Center in Sioux Falls - [Signed by the Governor](#)

HB 1019 - appropriation to the South Dakota Ellsworth Development - [Deferred to the 41st. day](#)

HB 1020 - appropriation to continue the veteran's bonus program - [Signed by the Governor](#)

HB 1033 - update certain provisions relating to the SD retirement system - [Signed by the Governor](#)

HB 1055 - authorize certain children eligible for registration with a state-approved distance learning - [Signed by the Governor](#)

HB 1057 - establish resident tuition requirements for veterans and armed forced personnel and family members - [Signed by the Governor](#)

HB 10-65 - adopt the emergency medical personnel licensure interstate compact - [Signed by the Governor](#)

HB 1122- require official declaration of war before the National Guard may be deployed overseas - [Deferred to the 41st. day](#)

HB 1206 - increase the allowable reimbursement for certain headstones for military personnel - [Tabled](#)

HB 1276 - appropriation for capital improvements to the State Veterans Home - [Tabled](#)  
HB 1277 - appropriation for the installation of a sprinkler system at the State Veterans Cemetery - [Tabled](#)  
SB 27 - revise off-campus tuition rates at institutions governed by the Board of Regents - [Signed by the Governor](#)  
SB 33 - appropriation for certain costs related to the commissioning of the USS Pierre - [Signed by the Governor](#)  
SB 65 - create an exception to the dual compensation prohibition for state employees for military service - [Signed by the Governor](#)  
SB 81 - authorize certain flags and flagpoles to be located on residential property within a community improvement district - [Signed by the Governor](#)  
SB 84 - appropriate finds to support Veterans Memorial Centers in South Dakota - [Tabled](#)  
SB 151 - appropriation to provide for infrastructure to support Ellsworth Air Force Base - [Tabled](#)  
SB 180 - revise certain provisions regarding revenues generated by and donations to the South Dakota State Veterans Cemetery - [Signed by the Governor](#)  
SB 181 - make an appropriation for road improvements leading to the State Veterans Cemetery - [Signed by the Governor](#)  
SB 188 - appropriation to the Department of Veterans Affairs for the South Dakota State Veterans Cemetery - [Tabled](#)  
SR 701 - resolution in support of rescinding the Medals of Honor given to United States soldier for the involvement and participation of the soldiers in the Wounded Knee Massacre of 1890 - [Adopt as amended](#)

Commander Nelson I want to thank you for having faith in me and allowing me to serve as chairman of the Legislative Committee. I also want to thank the members of the Legislative Committee and the Lobbyists for the South Dakota American Legion. We had a very good year and it would not have been possible without your support, dedication and willingness to travel for the good of The American Legion.  
Thank You!!

Respectfully submitted,  
Doug Feltman, Chairman  
Department Legislative Committee

## **MEDIA AND COMMUNICATIONS COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN REPORT**

Mr. Commander,

I would like to thank Commander Fred Nelson for appointing me to serve as the Chairman of the newly formed Media and Communications Committee for 2020-2021.

Our new committee set out with the purpose of opening communications with our membership through both traditional and social media avenues. To accomplish this task, I have had the assistance of my team: Samantha Broshard of Eureka, Michelle Eosso of Rapid City, Patrick Merrill of Box Elder, Brian Siemonsma of Garretson, and liaison from the Membership and Marketing Committee, Travis Flisrand of Castlewood.

Through several meetings held over Zoom, the committee decided upon social media strategy, to include campaigns celebrating African American Military History and Women's Military History. Efforts to expand reach over other platforms, such as Twitter, LinkedIn and Instagram are also underway, with various levels of success. The committee looks forward to addressing the ever-evolving world of communication in today's social media realms—a challenge necessary to thriving in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

In traditional media, the South Dakota American Legion News was brought back to print for all membership—first as a special edition in August 2020, and fully starting in February 2021. The overall reception has been positive, and blue hats enjoy having the direct communication delivered to their door. We

are working with Leader Printing of Madison, SD to run advertisements in the paper to defray costs. While it started off slower than anticipated, the advertising base is steadily growing.

I will wrap up my report with some excellent news: South Dakota performed very well at the national contest for The American Legion Media Alliance. Commander Fred Nelson won Department Social Media Campaign for his Legion on the Road Series, the South Dakota American Legion News won best Department publication, and the South Dakota American Legion Foundation Donor Guide won the Innovation Award for the 2020-2021 year.

Respectfully Submitted,  
Courtney VanZanten, Chairman  
Media & Communications Committee

## **MEMBERSHIP AND MARKETING COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN REPORT**

Department Commander Nelson,

The 2020-2021 year in the South Dakota American Legion had a few challenges that were unprecedented. The “Pandemic” of COVID-19 started our year off with our hands tied, most of our Legion Posts were restricted in their activities to include membership recruiting. My slogan for this year’s membership was “Retain, Recruit and Educate”. The goal with the slogan was to support National Commander Oxford’s mission of retention of American Legion members within Posts.

We started off the new year with a goaling model that focused Posts on retaining the members they had at the end of the 2019-2020 year. Overall, this goaling model was more successful than previous years goals. Districts 1, 2, 4 and 7 met their goals by the May 12<sup>th</sup> target date for 100%. 133 of 241 Posts reached their goal by this same date. Our Department has led the Nation for most of this year in membership numbers bringing your team many accolades from the National leadership team.

Commander, your request to restructure the Department membership council into the Membership and Marketing (M&M) Committee is starting to blossom into an asset for the Department. The committee is made up of the following members: Dist.1 Bridget Keller, Dist. 2 Troy Falardeau, Dist. 3 Jacob Schaefer, Dist. 4 Chris Reder, Dist. 5 Phil Keller, Dist. 6 Keith Larsen, Dist. 7 Abby Bartosh, Dist. 8 Joseph Knoer, Area 1-2 Larry Zimmerman and Area 3-8 Dave Gutzmer. The committee has decided to focus on service-related projects to highlight the South Dakota American Legion utilizing our National motto of “Veterans serving American”. The focus is to get Posts to work together on community service projects in either funding or volunteer hours with organizations. During these projects we will leverage the media coverage events to educate the public on what the South Dakota American Legion accomplishments are utilizing numbers reported in the Consolidated Post reports.

Thank you for this opportunity to continue serving in the South Dakota American Legion.

Travise Flisrand  
Committee Chairman

<b>MEMBERSHP FUND</b>			
Budget Amount 2020-2021			\$ 8,000.00
Membership Award from National			\$ 2,000.00
			\$ 10,000.00
<b>DISBURSEMENTS:</b>			
Committee, travel & awards			\$ 6,150.50
Balance, 5-1-2021			\$ 3,849.50

## **NATIONAL CEMETERY COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN REPORT**

Commander,

I am pleased to serve as the chairman of the National Cemetery Committee, and I am honored to submit this annual report. The Black Hills National Cemetery is located just outside of Sturgis in the beautiful Black Hills. The Cemetery has over 30,000 interned and conducts over 900 funerals a year. The Bureau of Land Management recently donated an additional 180 acres. This extra space will take the facility well into the next century.

The committee I chair is small as there are only two of us; myself and Brian Dean. We make up in enthusiasm with what we lack in numbers. Our committee sits on the Black Hills National Cemetery Advisory Board, which provides the Department with a voice on the Cemetery's operations. We serve as a liaison to the Cemetery's Director. The Board conducts numerous fund-raising events throughout the year, with the monies raised going directly to the Cemetery for projects that exceed the Cemetery's funding from the VA. We are currently working on moving several trees to block the view of some newly constructed private buildings. We are also finalizing plans to upgrade the flag poles located throughout the Cemetery, including the Avenue of Flags. The upgrading of the flag poles is a long-term endeavor, with 18 planned for this year. These two projects alone will be funded by some of the \$17,000 contributed by the Advisory Board.

The South Dakota American Legion is responsible for the Memorial Day Ceremony at Black Hills National Cemetery on an every other year basis. The Department of South Dakota's National Cemetery Committee is responsible for the planning and organizing the Memorial Day Ceremony. This year we planned for a complete Memorial Day Ceremony on-site, but due to COVID and the VA restrictions, no more than 20 people will be allowed. Given these restrictions, it will be a small and relatively private ceremony with the posting of colors, the National Anthem, a volley of three, and the playing of taps. We will place a limited number of wreaths and will have a chaplain's prayer. God willing, we can get back to normal next year.

That is the long and short of what our committee has done for the National Cemetery Committee this past year. I hope we have provided you with helpful information.

Respectfully,  
John M. Kain, Chairman

## **PUBLIC SAFETY COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN REPORT**

I'd like to thank Commander Nelson for having the vision to create the South Dakota American Legion Public Safety Committee. The purpose of the committee is to provide supervision of the South Dakota Youth Trooper Program, select the recipient of the YTA Outstanding Graduate Scholarship, the Law Enforcement Officer of the Year, and the Firefighter/EMT of the Year Awards. Also, like in the Military, other duties as assigned.

I'd also like to thank those who have volunteered to serve on this committee. Doug Feltman from Chamberlain is a retired Law Enforcement Officer who brings a lot of experience. Doug has excellent communications skills with Law Enforcement as well as the youth who attend our Youth Trooper Program. Next, we have Diane Johnson from Humboldt. Diane serves as the Post Adjutant for the Hartford post and is a retired Air National Guard member where she served in security. Diane is employed by the University of Augustana in Sioux Falls. West river we have Mark Sharn. Mark is retired from the Army National Guard and teaches at Western VoTech. Marks's father was the Minnehaha County Sheriff and his son is a Deputy Sheriff in Pennington County as well as an officer in the South Dakota Army National Guard. Next, we have Retired Army National Guard member Tom Forbes from Mobridge. Tom was a member of the Mobridge Police Department and worked in Administration, Recruiting and training recruits for the Army Guard. Tom works part time for the Corps of Engineers.

I have had the pleasure of serving as Department Commander, currently a member of the National Americanism Commission and serve as the Chairman of the National Youth Cadet Law Enforcement Program Committee. I served for 30 years in the South Dakota Army National Guard, the last 20 as a Recruiter.

Our committee will be meeting to establish short, mid and long-range goals and we will be working in our geographical areas to assist wherever we can to help improve participation in our programs.

The first duty we had as a committee was to Select the 2021 Law Enforcement Officer of the Year and the Firefighter/EMT of the Year. Unfortunately, we only had four applications each. These are National programs that need and deserve better participation from the Posts in our State, our committee will be working to improve the numbers of applicants. It is our obligation to recognize these first responders who put their lives on the line every day for you and me and to select the most outstanding applicants to represent our Department at the National level.

As I am writing this, the District Commanders or their representatives are conducting interviews for the South Dakota Youth Program. We had 62 applications this year. I am very confident that we will have 24 very good applicants accepted and several alternates as well.

A huge "THANK YOU" to all the posts and members for supporting this fantastic program. I know it's a lot of work but the rewards are priceless.

This year the YTA will be held the week of July 12-16. Because of training requirements, the SDHP asked us to move our dates for convenience of both the SDHP and The American Legion.

We would like to invite any and all Legion members to come to Pierre and visit the academy on Thursday "Blue Cap Day" at the firing range located on Range Road about two miles north of Hi 14 on HI 1804 N. It's a fun day with several demonstrations and an American Legion cookout in the evening. Of course, you are welcome to stay for Graduation on Friday near the reflection pool by the Capitol building at 1P.M.

Finally, I would like to thank the South Dakota Highway Patrol for their continued support of the Youth Trooper Program. It takes a lot of work, volunteerism and financial commitment to conduct such a program. By the way, this week the SDHP will graduate our third State Trooper who graduated from our Youth Trooper Program.

Again, thank you for your support!!

Larry Price

Chairman, Public Safety Committee

## **TRAINING COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT**

Commander,

It has been a privilege to serve as the Training Committee Chair this past year along with the following members: PDC Byron Callies, Vice Commander Kevin Morello, Department Assistant Adjutant Courtney VanZanten, and Don Fuller. The Commander's vision and mission statements for the Committee have provided excellent direction for this newly formed committee. As directed by the Department Commander, the Training Committee has worked on developing training for all levels within the department from member to Department Officers.

Since the formation of the Training Committee in 2019, it has accomplished the following tasks. Classes were prepared and offered at MidWinter 2019; classes were prepared for MidWinter 2020 but were not conducted due to the cancellation of that meeting. The committee is currently developing a Training Plan for the Department which will address not only the purpose, mission, and tasks of this committee, but will also outline a plan to develop a Department Legion College, exportable training for all levels within the Department, and criteria for course development and evaluation. The committee is also looking for skilled instructors to conduct face-to-face or video training. Another initiative that the committee is considering include establishing a once-a-month video training opportunity for members similar to the National Training Tuesday events.

The Training Committee continues to encourage all Legionnaires to provide input, suggestion, and ideas for courses, delivery, methods, and instructors. Our mission is to reach all Legionnaires and we appreciate input that is helpful in doing just that.

Respectfully submitted,  
Krisma DeWitt, Training Committee Chair

## **TRUST FUND COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN REPORT**

Mr. Commander,

What a year 2020 has been. What started out to be a projected bad year ended up quite the opposite. The committee met once this past year and agree that the fund keep the present account objective of mid-conservative. The fund has averaged 26.61% annual yield. The year-end market value as of April 28, 2020 was \$551,906, compared to a year end market value on April 30, 2021 of \$704,856.

The current asset allocation for the trust is as follows:

Cash Alternatives is 2.1% which currently yields 0.02%;

Fixed Income 33.8% with an average yield of 2.92%;

Equities is 59.2% with an average yield of 1.06%;

Real Assets is 2.1% with an average yield of .01%,

Alternative investments 2.9% with an average yield of 5.89%.

The committee met with the investment manager and agreed to monitor the fund as needed in the coming year. We hope the fund will continue to perform in the coming year.

Respectfully submitted,  
Randy Rakness, Chairman, Trust Committee

**VAVS CHAIRMAN REPORT**  
(Financial portion only)

<b>VAVS FUND</b>			
Balance, 5-1-20			\$ 3,948.93
<b>RECEIPTS:</b>			
Interest		\$ 0.45	
Donations and Memorials		<u>\$ 3,323.00</u>	
TOTAL		\$ 3,323.45	
			<u>\$ 3,323.45</u>
TOTAL			\$ 7,272.38
<b>DISBURSEMENTS:</b>			
VA Facilities		<u>\$ 2,400.00</u>	
		\$ 2,400.00	
			<u>\$ 2,400.00</u>
Balance, 5-1-2021			\$ 4,872.38

## VA&R COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN REPORT

Commander,

On behalf of the Department Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation (VA&R) Commission, which consists of Chairman Warren Aas of Watertown, Vice Chairman PDC Tim Jurgens of Milbank, Noel Cummins of Milbank, Jim Childers of Spearfish, Jerry Lolley of Sturgis, Carole Gregg of Mission, Gary Schumacher of De Smet, and Rebecca Trygstad of Volga, it gives me great pleasure to present the following Department VA&R Commission report.

The Department VA&R Commission is scheduled to meet twice per year. We try to meet once in person and the other by teleconference. However, due to the COVID pandemic and safety reasons, our commission meets by teleconference or Zoom meetings. We hope to meet in person in the near future.

Our meeting agendas are full and we discuss and act on several issues brought up by our commission members. Every commission member brings something to the meeting table whether it be a resolution, a unit homecoming, an award, a legislative bill, and the list goes on. We listen and act on all issues brought to our meetings.

There are numerous awards every post in our department can win throughout the year and be recognized for their achievement either at our MidWinter Conference or on stage at our annual department convention. There are Americanism awards, Membership awards, and several individual awards Legionnaires can win, but no award to recognize a post for the good work they do for VA&R. Well, that is now changed. We now have a VA&R Award for Excellence. This award is open to every post in our department and we will recognize one post for their outstanding work and accomplishments in VA&R. All posts can apply for the award and we encourage all posts to submit for the award. The criteria for the award is on our department website under Forms or you may also contact our State Headquarters for assistance. The deadline for all applications for this award is May 1 of each year. The winning post will be recognized on stage at our next state convention.

Another award your VA&R Commission is working on is submitting our department for the national award called the William F. Lenker National Service Trophy. The VA&R Commission is working toward a goal of possibly submitting our department for this award in the future. The winner of this award is recognized on stage at each National Convention. This is one the most prestigious awards presented at our national convention. We can only do this with your help, so we ask each post to submit their Post Consolidated Report to state headquarters. This report will reflect the information needed so our department can extract and consolidate the VA&R data from the report and submit for the award.

As a member of the National VA&R Commission, I've had the privilege the past years to attend the Washington Conference to listen and participate in the national VA&R agenda. We make a point to bring back all the information we can get our hands on from our meetings and make it available to all VA&R Commission members in our department.

Temporary Financial Assistance (TFA) is available for any veteran in your community that may have fallen on hard times and needs some financial assistance to get back on their feet. TFA is generally one time grant money and other requirements apply. Your post commander has more details about TFA.

If you are a veteran and would like to check into getting enrolled in the VA for healthcare, we encourage you to stop in and see your local Tribal or County Veterans Service Officer in your county or contact our Department Service Officer for assistance.

Thank you, Commander Nelson for allowing me the privilege to serve as the Chairman of the Department Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation Commission during your year. We encourage all Legionnaires to attend their post meetings and ask your fellow members if they need a ride to the meeting. You'll be glad you did.

Respectfully submitted,

Warren L. Aas

Chairman, Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation (VA&R) Commission