



Up To Now!

C.P. Van Delist – Department Adjutant
www.sdlegion.org – Email: adjutant@sdlegion.org

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Phone (605) 886-3604

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February 2, 2024

- Feb 14 Membership Target Date– President’s Day 85%
- Feb 16-18 SDAL Mid-Winter Conference, the Lodge at Deadwood
- Feb 19 Presidents’ Day **HQ Closed**
- Feb 24-28 National Washington DC Conference
- Mar 1 Eagle Scout of the Year Award due to HQ
- Mar 2 District 5 Meeting Time TBD, Webster
- Mar 3 District 4 Meeting 1pm Social and District Executive Committee Meeting 2pm Meeting, Meal to follow, Groton Post 39
- Mar 13 Membership Target Date– Legion Birthday 90%
- Mar 15 Post 15 American Legion Birthday Party, at the Alliance Center in Sioux Falls 5pm Social, 6pm Dinner
- Mar 16 District 3 Meeting Time and Location TBD
- Mar 17 District 6 Meeting Plankinton Post 5 Breakfast 9am-1pm Meeting 1:30pm
- Mar 26 Yankton County What’s Brewing, VFW Post 791, 209 Cedar Street, Yankton, 10am
- Mar 29 Easter Holiday **HQ Closed**
- Apr 4 Brule County What’s Brewing, Chamberlain Center, 1pm
- Apr 6 District 8 Meeting Time TBD Irene
- Apr 7 District 7 Meeting Time and Location TBD
- Apr 10 Membership Target Date– Children and Youth 95%
- Apr 13 District 1 Meeting Time TBD, Post 66 Lemmon
- Apr 14 District 2 Meeting 11am Social, 12pm Lunch, 12:45pm Meeting, Martin Post 240
- Apr 16 McPherson County What’s Brewing, Eureka School Multi Purpose Room, 1pm
- Apr 27-28 SD American Legion College, Chamberlain
- May 1 SDAL Educator of the Year Award due to HQ
- May 1 SDAL Good Samaritan Award due to HQ
- May 1 William Lenker VA&R Award for Excellence due to HQ
- May 6-9 National Spring Meetings
- May 7 Corson County What’s Brewing, McIntosh Pavilion 10am
- May 7 Midwest Honor Flight Mission 18 Welcome Home Ceremony, Sioux Falls Convention Center 9:30 pm
- May 15 Membership Target Date– Armed Forces Day 100%
- May 17-19 National Oratorical Contest
- May 21 Midwest Honor Flight Mission 19 Welcome Home Ceremony, Sioux Falls Convention Center 9:30 pm
- May 27 Memorial Day **HQ Closed**
- May 27-31 Boys State, Northern State University, Aberdeen
- May 27 SDDVA Memorial Day Program, SD Vets Cemetery 12pm
- May 30 “Blue Cap Day” at Boys State, 8am

HAT IN THE RING

- Post 311 has endorsed Kevin Morello for Dept Commander
- Post 136 has endorsed Rod Smith for Dept Commander
- Post 136 has endorsed Kevin Hempel for Dept Vice CDR (Dist 3-8)
- Post 11 has endorsed Greg Geiman for Dept Sergeant at Arms
- Post 164 has endorsed Fred Nelson for Natl Exec Committee
- Post 18 has endorsed Hugh Holmes for National Vice Commander
- Post 3 has endorsed Doug Feltman for Alt Natl Exec Committee

MESSAGE FROM THE DEPARTMENT COMMANDER

Only a few weeks until I see you at Midwinter—I’m so excited! I know the District 1 Crew is ready for all of us, and the Training Committee is chomping at the bit. If you haven’t booked your rooms yet, there’s still time!



It’s wild the year is already half gone—boy, has it ever gone fast! We’ll start to hear campaign speeches for next year now, and knowing both Candidates, I can promise that the SD American Legion is going to be in good hands next year.

One of the tickets I had campaigned on was representation, and I want to touch on that briefly, now that I’ve been in the hot seat for a bit. I said it before, and I’ll say it again:

Representation matters. I’m not talking about my particular run as a younger Veteran, or as a woman, or as a working mom. Not today. Today, I want to touch base on a few of my insecurities:

- *I’m not a military retiree with gobs of experience.
- *I did not have wild combat experience (supported some crazy guys who did though).
- *I don’t have a high paying job, or a heavy nest egg.

In short, I’m not anyone who should matter. But I’m here. Representing, despite my résumé faults. How? *I care.*

I made up for a lack of experience with sincere passion for the people and places I served. And you? You care. Or you wouldn’t be pouring your heart and soul and time into this organization. You care about your fellow Veterans. You care about their families. You care about your community.

We live in a world where our résumés are constantly on display, and it is easy to feel like you’re less than what you should be. I’m here to tell you today that you are more than enough.

Volunteering is often both thankless and rewarding. A formal acknowledgment of your work is rarer than it should be, yet it feels great knowing you’ve helped others. Being from a small town, I promise, people are watching. They know everything you do for them, and they appreciate it (even if they don’t ever say so out loud). You are having rippling impacts on people that you don’t even realize, just by your small acts of service. You are an example for others to follow.

In closing, I want to thank you for volunteering your time, talents, and energy to our Legion. I see you as leaders in your communities. By being a volunteer—actively involved in your community—you are representing. You are representing the absolute best of this organization.

Pursue Purpose,

Courtney Steffen
Department Commander



2024 SDOUTH DAKOTA LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

The SDAL Legislative Committee met Jan 22, 2024 to discuss the SD Legislative Session and Bills in the que for this session. The Committee voted to Support, Monitor or be against the following bills.

Support:

HB 1008 modify the eligibility for admission to the state veterans' home and repeal the residency requirement.

HB 1067 designate Medal of Honor Recognition Day.

HB 1082 change the eligibility requirements, and the exempt value, of a property tax relief program for disabled veterans and surviving spouses.

HB 1101 provide a special motor vehicle license plate for recipients of the Legion of Merit award.

HCR 6007 Encouraging the United States Congress to allow veterans to receive long-term care services at facilities that do not otherwise meet the requirements set by the United States Department of Veterans Affairs.

SB 29 allow eligible members of the South Dakota National Guard attending an in-state private, nonprofit post-secondary institution to receive the state tuition benefit.

SB 30 prohibit discrimination based on military status.

SB 148 provide permissive authority to a governing body of a municipality or county to deny reissuance of an on-sale license not actively used.

SB 162 make an appropriation for the erection of the South Dakota Sioux Code Talker Memorial and to declare an emergency.

SB 180 modify provisions pertaining to unethical conduct and improper collection of fees relating to assistance or referrals in a veterans benefits matter.

SC 803 Honoring the outstanding military service of Major General Michael L. Place.

Monitor:

HB 1007 amend the requirement to employ a county veterans' service officer.

HB 1068 allow disabled veterans to obtain a standard issue county motor vehicle or motorcycle license plate.

HB 1121 make an appropriation to provide a grant for the construction of a veteran's skilled trade center.

HB 1138 establish a sales tax exemption for certain disabled veterans.

SB 105 provide for the employment of veterans' service officers by the Department of Veterans Affairs.

SOUTH DAKOTA AMERICAN LEGION COLLEGE

The second class of South Dakota American Legion College will be April 27-28, 2024 in Chamberlain, SD. Ten applicants will be selected for the program. The prerequisites are:

1. Minimum of three years continuous membership.
2. Completion of the American Legion Basic Training Course (include copy certificate of completion with application).
3. Post Commander or Adjutant endorsement.

Applications can be found on the SD Legion website under Training or by contacting HQ. Application deadline is March 15, 2024.

NATIONAL DUES INCREASE!

At the 2023 National Convention, a \$5 dues increase was passed that will take effect July 1, 2024. This increase will require all Posts to charge more for membership and makes submitting Post Data Reports critical this year. More information to follow.

DISTRICT ORATORICAL CONTEST WINNERS

Congratulations to the District Oratorical Winners! These young women will now advance on to the State Contest on Feb 18 at 10:30am at the Lodge at Deadwood.

DIST. 1- Annelise Carley of Rapid City

DIST. 2- Ashlynn Wellman of Rapid City

DIST. 3- Neva Mikkelsen of Gettysburg

DIST. 4- Aspen Kline of Aberdeen

DIST. 5- No participants

DIST. 6- No participants

DIST. 7- Elena Andrews of Beresford

DIST. 8- No participants

BOYS STATE NUMBERS ARE DOWN!!!

Last year was the smallest South Dakota Boys State since it's founding with less than 170 Boys in attendance. There is no limit to how many Boys a Post or school can send. If a Post can not afford to pay the tuition fee, please reach out to the Director or Registrar, there are others that can assist. Registration is open to all juniors and only seniors who have not attended in the past. This year Boys State will be May 27-31, 2024 at Northern State University in Aberdeen. Registration can be found on the South Dakota Boys State website, the address for applicants:

<http://www.southdakotaboysstate.com/boys-state-application/>

The registration fee for Boys State is \$250 per student and is payable to the Boys State Treasurer. Registration closes on May 1, 2024.

YOUTH TROOPER REGISTRATION IS OPEN

South Dakota Youth Trooper Academy (YTA) runs June 24 – 28, 2024. YTA is an intensive, one week, residential learning experience for young adults who are entering their senior year of high school or have just graduated high school in 2024. YTA is held at the South Dakota Law Enforcement Training Academy in Pierre. The program is mentally and physically demanding. Candidates should be highly motivated, of good moral and ethical character, and have an interest in a career in law enforcement. **Space in the program is limited to 24 students from across the state.**

Registration/Application forms can be found on the website here: www.sdlegion.org/sd-youth-trooper-academy

The deadline for applications is March 22, 2024.

2024 MID-WINTER UPDATES

Mid-winter Conference, hosted by District 1, will be at the Deadwood Lodge, in Deadwood, SD., 16-18 February 2024. Rooms have been blocked beginning with 20 rooms for Thursday, 15 February, and another 80 rooms for arrivals on Friday, 16 February. Anyone requiring a Hospitality Suite or room larger than the standard king or double queen, please contact David Booze at 605-484-5328 for arrangements. All who require just the Standard King or Double Queen room, reservations can be made by calling the Deadwood Lodge, phone number 605-584-4800. The rate for the Standard King or Double Queen room is \$95 plus applicable taxes. Be sure to mention you are attending the American Legion Mid-winter conference. The Deadwood Lodge allows dogs; however, they must be declared at the time of making the reservation or at check-in.

2024 MIDWINTER CONFERENCE SCHEDULE

Friday, February 16, 2024

10:00 a.m. Department Finance Commission Meeting

12:00 p.m. Registration Desk Opens

Boys State Board of Directors

1:00 p.m. Department Executive Committee Meeting

3:00 p.m. SAL Detachment Executive Committee Meeting

4:30 p.m. SDAL Foundation Meeting

5:30 p.m. No-Host Cocktails

6:30 p.m. Joint Legion / Auxiliary / SAL Banquet

Saturday, February 17, 2024

7:30 a.m. Registration Desk Opens Area

8:00 a.m. Joint Opening Session

8:15 a.m. Introduction of Auxiliary Secretary and President

8:25 a.m. Auxiliary VA&R Report

8:35 a.m. Auxiliary Children and Youth Report

8:45 a.m. Secretary of the Dept of Veterans Affairs Greg Whitlock

9:00 a.m. Boys State Planning Session

9:00 a.m. Capitol Grounds Memorial Improvements, Darin Seeley

9:15 a.m. National Executive Committeeman Brenden Remarks
 9:25 a.m. National Vice Commander Remarks
 9:40 a.m. 1st Leading Candidate Remarks
 9:50 a.m. Training Committee Report and 2023 NALC Graduate
 10:05 a.m. Recess Joint Session
 10:10 a.m. BREAKOUT 1: Legion Reports & Awards
 11:00 a.m. BREAKOUT 2: Be the One & S.A.V.E. Training
 12:00 a.m. LUNCH BREAK
 1:00 p.m. BREAKOUT 3: American 250 & SCAMS
 1:00 p.m. SAL Business meeting
 2:00 p.m. BREAKOUT 4: Legal Briefing
 2:50 p.m. Reconvene Joint Session
 2:55 p.m. Committee & Commission Reports and updates
 3:45 p.m. SAL Detachment Commander
 3:50 p.m. SAL National Vice Commander
 4:00 p.m. SAL National Leading Candidate for Commander
 4:10 p.m. SAL National Trailing Candidate for Commander
 4:20 p.m. Committee & Commission Reports and updates
 4:55 p.m. Sweepstakes Drawing
 5:00 p.m. Announcements and Adjourn Assembly
 6:00 p.m. Go-Getter Reception & Smorgasbord- Deadwood VFW
 Hosted by Post 31
 9:30 p.m. SDAL Foundation Beef Raffle drawing
Sunday, February 18, 2024
 8:30 a.m. Non-Denominational Service Four Chaplains
 10:30 a.m. SD American Legion – Oratorical Contest, State Finals

2028 DEPT CONVENTION & MIDWINTER

Bids for the 2028 MidWinter are being accepted, at this time only one bid has been submitted from Chamberlain Post 3. Posts and Convention Centers who desire to submit bids to host the Midwinter should send that information to the Dept Adjutant. Application forms are available from Dept HQ.
 Bids for the 2029 MidWinter and Department Convention are being accepted at this time as well.

FUTURE DEPARTMENT CONVENTION AND MIDWINTER DATES AND LOCATIONS

2024 MidWinter	Deadwood	Feb 16-18
2024 Convention	Pierre	June 20-23
2025 MidWinter	Oacoma	Feb 14-16
2025 Convention	Huron	June 19-22

SUPPORT FOR OPERATION HOMEFRONT

Happy New year! I would like to introduce myself and Operation Homefront (OH). My name is Harry Boner, and I am the Advisory Council Member representing South Dakota for Operation Homefront. I got involved with this organization when I served as the Children and Youth Chairman (C&Y) for the American Legion, Department of South Dakota.
 Over the past five years, the C&Y Committee has worked with OH to coordinate the collection and distribution of donated school supplies and toys gathered by the Dollar Tree. As well as to distribute over 400 backpacks full of school supplies at Ellsworth AFB during their back-to-school roundup, at a value of \$140 each. Just this past year, The American Legion, Department of South Dakota C&Y program, donated \$1000 to the OH Holiday Meal program. This program provided \$75 Commissary gift cards to E1-E6 Ellsworth AFB Service Members with young families.
 All OH programs are open to Air Force, Space Force and to South Dakota National Guard personnel. With the new bomber wing coming to Ellsworth Air Force Base and the continued deployments of our South Dakota National Guard, the need is only growing.
 Many Legion Family volunteers who have helped OH have asked how they can do more to contribute to the mission of OH. We have opportunities to volunteer your time coming up May-July, please contact me directly if you are interested. Additionally, if you or your Post is interested in offering monetary support to help our

young Service Members and their families through the programs of The American Legion and Operation Homefront, please send your contributions to either:
 The American Legion Children and Youth programs at Dept HQ. Please indicate on your check “C&Y Program”.
 If you wish to donate to OH, mail donations to:
 Operation Homefront

Attn Sarah Cheeseman, Area Manager
 16526 W. 78th
 Suite #184
 Eden Prairie, MN 55346

All donations will be used to support programs locally in South Dakota.

The American Legion Family feels strongly about assisting our Service Members, Veterans and Children in times of need, Operation Homefront feels the same way and offers assistance programs that can be used independently or in addition to programs of the American Legion. If you have any questions about Operation Homefront, please feel free to reach out to me or check out their website, operationhomefront.org.
 Kind regards,

Harry Boner
 Operation Homefront, Advisory Council Member
 hb.boner@yahoo.com
 605-691-4571

FOUNDATION UPDATE

The South Dakota American Legion Foundation is conducting a Beef Raffle to raise funds for our programs. Tickets are \$10 each and can be obtained from any of the board members, Paul Evenson, Jim Huls, Denny Brenden, Doug Feltman or Jim Kurtz. 1st Prize is \$500 in Beef Certificates, 2nd Prize is \$300 in Beef Certificates, and 3rd \$200 in Beef Certificates. Drawing will be at the Mid-Winter Conference, need not be present to win.

VETERANS, SEE WHAT’S BREWING!

The South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs will be hosting “Coffee and Conversation” programs in Yankton, Chamberlain, Eureka and Mc Intosch. These programs are in partnership with County Veterans Service Officers. The department welcomes the opportunity to visit one-on-one with veterans and see what’s brewing!
 Mar 26 Yankton County What’s Brewing, VFW Post 791, 209 Cedar Street, Yankton, 10am
 Apr 4 Brule County What’s Brewing, Chamberlain Center, 1pm
 Apr 16 Mc Pherson County What’s Brewing, Eureka School Multi Purpose Room, 1pm
 May 7 Corson County What’s Brewing, McIntosh Pavilion 10am

THE AMERICAN LEGION LEGACY SCHOLARSHIP

This needs-based scholarship is designed to fulfill a financial gap remaining after all federal and state educational grants/scholarships available to an eligible applicant have been utilized. Children of post-9/11 veterans having been assigned a combined disability rating of 50 percent or greater or who died while on active duty on or after Sept. 11, 2001 are eligible. All applications new or renewal must be submitted using the online scholarship submission system beginning January 1 and NO LATER THAN Wednesday, March 27, 2024.
Total amount of scholarship funds awarded in 2023: \$1,484,122

REMINDER TO ALL AMERICAN LEGION POSTS TO FILE IRS FORM 990

Federal tax regulations require every Post to file IRS form 990. This must be filled out by the 15th day of the fifth month after the end of your organizations accounting period. If the IRS does not receive this form, they will revoke the tax-exempt status of the Post. To get your Tax-exempt status back you have to apply and

pay a sizeable fee. This process takes time (months) and can challenge even the most patient of individuals. The form can be downloaded at <https://www.irs.gov/pub/irs-pdf/f990.pdf>.

POST DATA REPORT

PDR are being mailed directly to your Post early next week. They are critical this year with the dues increase. At a minimum member dues should be \$38.50 or the Post will have to make up the difference. Please return them to Dept HQ no later than April 15, 2024.

NATIONAL COMMANDER MEMBERSHIP INCENTIVE

National Commander Seehafer will award his "Be the One" pin to any Legionnaire who obtains two new members, one to replace you and one for growth.

A new member is any person joining for the 2024 year who was not a member in the 2023 year. Transfers do not count.

Only one pin will be awarded per individual. Upon receipt, national membership staff will confirm the names in the national database and mail the pin directly to the person who earned it.

https://www.legion.org/sites/legion.org/files/legion/documents/seehafer_twonewmembers.pdf

103 PERCENT MEMBERSHIP AWARD

National Commander Seehafer will award his "Be the One" pin to any post, district, county, and/or Dept commander and membership chair who achieves 103% of their membership goal for 2024.

https://www.legion.org/sites/legion.org/files/legion/documents/2024_103percentmembership.pdf

NATIONAL COMMANDER POST EXCELLENCE AWARD

To qualify, a post must achieve excellence in four areas: membership, submission of the Consolidated Post Report (CPR), attaining a 90% renewal rate, and community activity.

The standard is as follows:

Membership: Attain at least 103% of their membership goal. At least one post officer attends district meetings.

Consolidated Post Report: CPR submitted by July 1.

90% Renewal Rate: Renew at least 90% of their 2023 members.

Community Activity: The post must conduct an event that connects the local community with The American Legion. The objective is to open your doors, welcome the community in, and educate them on what The American Legion is all about and how the post is an asset to the community.

Certification for the award: The district commander responsible for the post will certify a post as having achieved the four specified criteria. The district commander will submit a list of posts meeting the criteria to Dept HQ. List should include the post name, phone number, address and commander's name. If possible, provide with copies of press releases submitted to the local media about the projects to show that the projects were to enhance the image of The American Legion through local media. Dept HQ will forward to National Headquarters.

100% AMERICAN LEGION FAMILY RIBBON

American Legion National Commander Seehafer will award his 100% American Legion Family Ribbon to any American Legion Family that achieves 100% membership by the 2024 100% membership target date. For this award, the Legion Family is defined as a post and/or any combination of an Auxiliary unit or Sons squadron. Each must achieve 100% membership to qualify for the award. The Dept HQ will forward to National Headquarters.

DEPARTMENT MEMBERSHIP CHAIRMAN MESSAGE

As we approach Mid-Winter Meeting in a couple of weeks, we are over halfway into the 23-24 year. For myself it has been an exciting year so far. I first must thank our Commander for having the confidence in myself to be her Membership Chairman. I accepted the job not knowing for sure what it was all about, but I knew it would take teamwork to get the job done. I felt that we needed

more communication. I need to thank the Department Leadership for supporting me in this effort. If we are going to finish the race it comes down to the Posts. It is Post Leadership and its members that make it all happen, thank you thank for all you have done. We at the Department and District level can only lead and encourage you all and help where we are asked to get the job done. Saying that the following posts have went over and above in my book and deserve an at-a-boy for their efforts. Congratulations and keep up the good work.

Pierpont 99-100.00%	Lily 156-109.09%
Lake Andes 10-100.00%	Carpenter 153-107.69%
Brentford 242-100.00%	Strandburg 171-100.00%
Nunda 105-100.00%	Midland 143-106.67%
Gann Valley 16-100.00%	Long Lake 276-106.25%
Artesian 47-100.00%	Ramona 216-100.00%
Edgemont 172-100.00%	Vivian 157-100.00%
Egan 97-104.76%	Doland 69-109.09%
Springfield 323-100.00%	Badger 260-104.17%
Kadoka 27-100.00%	Rockham 57-103.70%
Flandreau 70-103.70%	Grenville 267-103.45%
Murdo 75-103.33%	White River 94-103.23%
Canton 53-102.86%	Cresbard 213-100.00%
Plankinton 05-113.16%	Hosmer 189-100.00%
Clear Lake 49-101.39%	Volga 114-112.04%
North Sioux City 319-100.00%	Madison 25-103.53%

For those of you that are below 15 see if you can get there by Mid-Winter to qualify for the \$200 drawing at the State Convention.

As of July 1, 2024, National will be raising their portion of our dues \$5. There are 2 options that you as a member can take advantage of.

As of December 4, 2024, if you have not paid your 2024 dues you can now renew for 3 years 24, 25, 26 at your current post dues.

If you paid your 2024 dues prior to December 4, 2023, you are now able to renew for 3 more years 25, 26, and 27 for the current post dues.

You can do all of this at www.legion.org and select renew. You will need your member number and a credit card. If you do not have access to a computer or are not comfortable using it anyone that is can do it for you. If you do not know your member number you can contact your Adjutant, Judy, at the State Office or myself and we will help you.

If you have signed up for the free insurance from Legionnaire Insurance Trust better known as LIT and your dues have expired, you will have to sign up again after you pay your dues. You can do that at www.thelit.com.

Currently we are at 14,327 members paid for 2024 thank you all for your support. I ask your support to get us to 14,634 by Mid-Winter which is another 307 more. We can do it and you can do it. The big picture is we are 1934 short of the number I asked everyone to help with beginning July 1, 2023. Let's get after it and we can all celebrate at the State Convention in June.

Thank you again for all you do for the Legion, our Veterans and our youth until next time.

God Bless you and your families
God Bless the American Legion
God Bless the United States of America

See you at Mid-Winter

Bill Peters
2023-2024 Membership Chairman
bpeters0551@gmail.com
605.360.6547

