



THE AMERICAN LEGION DEPARTMENT OF MONTANA

DEPARTMENT CONVENTION REPORTS

2021

DEPARTMENT OFFICERS

&

COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN

Preamble to the Constitution

**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 percent 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 goodwill 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.



DEPARTMENT EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

DEPARTMENT COMMANDER

Jeff Nelson

They say “where did the time fly this past year”, try two years in a row and now the time has really flown by. I can’t thank everyone enough for all the support and work that you have put into this great organization. We have not only had to endure the consequences of the Covid 19, but learning a whole new type of communication called ZOOM which was a monumental task in itself.

Last fall we had Vice Commander Robert Liebenow attend our fall conference as a special guest. Little did any of us know that he was bringing with him one of the biggest snowstorms of the century. Over 20” of snow fell in 2 days and kept many from attending the conference. It will be a story to tell for many years to come. Vice Commander Liebenow presented Montana with some outstanding awards for membership and it was all a result of everyone’s tremendous effort in attaining that honor.

There were no trips to Indianapolis, Canada, or across Montana. Everything was done via ZOOM! I don’t know what we would have done without several key people keeping us in touch with news and information that was being disseminated. The fall district meetings were held at some locations and on zoom in others. Either way, attendance was down and the virus was no doubt a contributing cause.

In the winter months are concentration was on the buddy check program. I know that many veterans felt a feeling of comfort in knowing some of us were checking in on them. As of this report there are still many out there that would appreciate a call or visit once in a while.

This spring brought another round of district meetings and a change in headquarters staff. I think this spring we saw more turn out for meetings than ever before. Whether it was the retiring

of Gary White or the meeting of our new adjutant Duane Cunningham, the attendance was really great in most districts. In district 9 meeting it was a very memorable event on Friday night. There was a dinner in honor of our National Commander Bill Oxford and a surprise retirement for Department Adjutant Gary White. Both received rounds of applause for outstanding service to our organization. Everyone had a great time and the biggest surprise was that we kept it a surprise from Gary all the way to almost the very end. But our adjutant had a surprise for everyone in attendance when he regaled a little secret about each one of us. That same weekend the Geraldine post hosted Sunday's meeting and had their honor guard escort the National Commander through town to the Legion hall. The escort consisted of horseback riders and the commander commented that this was one he will always remember.

I will be attending American Legion Boys State and wish them a successful week at opening remarks. I will also be attending the VFW convention in Lewistown and give remarks on behalf of the department.

In conclusion I just want to thank everyone that helped make my job so much easier the last two years. I couldn't have kept everything straight if it hadn't been for our adjutant Gary White and assistant adjutant Erin Carpenter. Finally I want to thank my wife Chris for putting up with my absent weekends, overnight trips, and keeping me in line. God Bless and Take Care, till we meet along the trail again.

DEPARTMENT VICE-COMMANDER

Glen Sharbono

Can you remember way back in 2020 when My Legion was easy and all we had to worry about was the Corona virus and toilet paper? Ah the good old days. It has been a hair pulling logistical nightmare to figure out what it is exactly that National is trying to do! It has set this Department and most likely all the others back to the Stone Age. This report is due by May 25th, so I am hoping by the time it is read that we the Department has made goal. Membership Recruiting and Retention does not stop once a Post has made target or even goal. It is a yearlong process, and every single member is a recruiter. We cannot support programs without a strong membership and their dues. I know that for the most part some of you have been doing your absolute best at this, and I thank you! However, it seems some have simply given up as evidenced by the struggle this Department has this year. If it is too much work for those in charge, then it's time to hand over the reins to someone else. And as I said at the Fall District meetings, It's your job to train your replacement! Not making targets and goals have cost this Department thousands of dollars, in incentives that perhaps could have been used to support a financially strapped program.

Everyone has a pet program they get into with all they have 100%. This is how it should be, and the enthusiasm is highly appreciated. But no matter how much conviction there is toward a program it cannot and should not be saved at all costs at the expense of the Department or other

Programs that are just as important to another group. Our Programs are an important part of who we are and especially in maintaining the Four Pillars of our founding, but our main mission should be to put the Veteran first!

On another note, it is not the job of the Department Adjutant or Office manager to do your Consolidated Post Reports or certify your Post Officers, it is the job of your Post Adjutant and it's not a difficult task. Posts need to Certify Officers each year regardless of someone's opinion of the election results. When in doubt consult your Post Constitution and By-Laws. If you don't have one, get one, I know a sample has been sent out to all the Posts so there should be no excuse anymore!

In my article for the most recent Montana Legionnaire, I forgot to mention something! Do you know what it is? If you do then let me know. I am sorry that I had to miss visiting all the District meetings this Spring, it was unavoidable, I would like to thank Commander Nelson for putting in the good word for me and all the well wishes from everyone. I thank you immensely, and humbly ask for your support in electing me as your Department Commander.

ZONE COMMANDER – SOUTH CENTRAL

Demorise Allen

Covid, Covid, Covid !!!!! Our Department Convention “2020“, the 26th and 27th of June turned into an Executive Board call in. It was good to see some Legion Family members and to enjoy dinner at the Montana Grill with some very fine Legion and Auxiliary members. The meetings, presentations, reports and resolutions were very interesting.

Congratulations to the three District Commanders in the South Central Zone who will be installed at the meeting. District Commanders are District 7 Bill Cummins of White Sulphur Springs Post 25, District 9 Bruce Lurhsen of Lewistown of Judith Gap Post 70 and District 11 Larry Tipton of Columbus Post 34. I have enjoyed working with these new Commanders.

I have checked in with the Commanders several times over the last few months. Due to the Covid Crisis I opted not to attend District 7 and 11's Fall District meetings. After checking with the two Commanders, they had very good and well attended meetings. Judith Gap Post and Auxiliary hosted District 9's Fall District Meeting. Due to social distancing all meetings and banquet were held in the Judith Gap School and gym.

I have visited with the three District commanders and we have discussed membership several times. I hope to be able to help with our numbers. Membership is progressing well for 2021--- MAYBE WE CAN STILL WIN A ZONE RACE!!!!!! ELMER, I DO HOPE YOU ENJOYED YOUR STEAK LAST JUNE!

To all of our Commanders and members of Districts 7, 9 and 11 THANK YOU For All Of Your Efforts!!! There is still a STEAK waiting for a District Commander with 100% !!!!

Winter came in pretty strong the end of October but the most of winter was quite mild.

The COVID continued to play havoc with everyone. Fran and I both got our first shots in February, then got Covid early March, clear on the 15 of March.

Earlier that year Commander Nelson asked me if District 9 could organize a banquet for our National Commander Bill Oxford and Gary White's Retirement Party on the 19th of March. We

were honored! I got together with our District Commander and Post 70 members Bruce Lurhsen and his wife Dixie and they arranged it all at the Lewistown Elks Club. A big hand for Bruce & Dixie!!! Attendance and meal were EXCELLENT!!!

The next day Roy Post# 96 hosted our District 9 Spring Meeting in style. Their membership is leading our District at close to 120 %. District Commander Bruce and Post Commander Dustin Schnieder did a great job. Several members, including our National Commander stopped afterwards at the Roy Legion Club. The Roy Post is to doing super!!

April and May has been scattered with several zoom meetings involving Legion Riders and The Montana American Legion Boys State. Very enlightening and educational!

ZONE COMMANDER – WESTERN

Elmer Palmer

Upon the completion of the Fall Conference, I returned to the zone and continued working on the membership by transferring the DMS members in the zone to posts through the Western Zone. I was sure to notify the receiving post that the transfer was completed. This process was wiped from possibility with the institution of the New and Approved MyLegion.org program (and at a bad time.)

Due to medical procedures for my wife, I was discouraged by her medical staff due to her state and the COVID 19 conditions, from attending the District 6 Spring Meeting. I did have a complete discussion with the leadership of the district and heard the meeting through a Zoom meeting.

I attended the meetings of both District 5 and District 4. I was able to congratulate both districts on their Membership Standing and the progress they were making. On that weekend the districts stood in 1st, 2nd and 3rd place in the membership standings. I encouraged the districts to work toward the 100% goal.

I was instrumental in finding a new District Commander for District 5, and the district voted him. I want to extend my thanks to the District Commanders and Vice District Commanders for their support for the second half of the year

I attended the Retirement Dinner for Department Adjutant Gary White. I owe a vote of thanks to Gary and a couple other Legion Members that helped me to get through all the adventures that I have had. Thanks, Honorary Department Commander Gary White.

ZONE COMMANDER – NORTH CENTRAL

Lowell Long

I want to thank all the posts in my Zone that achieved their goal this year. This has been a crazy year and we have had to learn new ways to connect with our members to get them to renew. I

have had the pleasure of working with the three District Commanders this year to ensure that we had a great year. Membership was going very well until the end when the bottom fell out on all districts. District 2 was in the top 4 for a good part of the year.

I have met with the new District 8 Commander to help him get a handle on his new position. I have worked with the other two to assist where they thought I could be of help.

I attended all of the district meetings this spring. I was talking about several programs that I work on while at these meetings. I attended my three districts and I congratulate the District Commanders on a good meeting. District 8 had the honor of hosting the National Commander in Geraldine. This was a very good meeting and gave the folks from National a look at rural Montana. All three districts were well attended.

With this year being crazy, I haven't traveled much but I am willing to assist any post in the Zone that needs assistance. Let me know and I will see what we can come up with to help.

Thank you for letting me serve you as your North Central Zone Commander. As I mentioned during my District meeting visits, please keep working your programs. A strong organization is one that is actively pursuing their program. If your community sees you out working and promoting yourselves, folks will want to join you. Also remember to carry the tools with you that you need when talking to a prospective new member. You should always have a membership application on you for The American Legion, The American Legion Auxiliary, and The Sons of the American Legion. I am ending my run as your Zone Commander and again Thank you for making my job rewarding as I tried to get out to see as many of you as possible over the last 3 years that I held the position. I know that you will give my replacement as much support as you gave me. Let's strive to make our Zone the top in the Department again.

ZONE COMMANDER – EASTERN

Clancee Collins

October- Attended resolution, finance committee by Zoom for Fall Conference. Also attended the Executive Committee meeting at the end of the conference by Zoom.

Attended Training Tuesday presented by American Legion National Headquarters on the 27th which covered “ MyLegion 2021” by Zoom.

Attended two Veteran's funerals as a member of VFW Post #1579 Honor Guard.

November- Attended two Veteran's funerals as a member of VFW Post #1579 Honor Guard.

Attended Training Tuesday presented by American Legion National Headquarters on the 24th which covered “Post Administration” by Zoom.

December- Participated in the Eastern Zone Social Hour via Zoom on the 16th.

Attended three Veteran's funerals as a member of VFW Post #1579 Honor Guard.

Attended Training Tuesday presented by American Legion National Headquarters on the 29th covering "Helping Veteran's-American Legion National Assistance Programs" by Zoom.

January - Informed a Custer County Commissioner, District Judge and the City Clerk about Montana Flag Code Annotated 1-1-541 concerning flying the POW/MIA flag over the county and city buildings. After e-mailing and leaving messages, both the county and city had POW/MIA flags flying from their prospective flag poles within ten days. I was impressed with their quick response.

Attended Training Tuesday presented by American Legion National Headquarters on the 26th covering "Membership Retention" by Zoom.

February – On the 2nd I attended a Department Zoom finance committee meeting concerning salary of the out-going Adjutant.

I also attended a Zoom meeting for the Department's resolution committee on the 3rd.

On two occasions I called Representative Kenneth Holmlund from Custer County to vote on House Bills relative to Veteran's. I also made two phone calls to Senator Kenneth Bogner's office to vote on bills concerning Veteran's.

Attended Training Tuesday presented by American Legion National Headquarters on the 23rd covering "myLegion.org Update: Membership Processing".

I attended a Montana Town Hall Meeting via Zoom on the 25th.

I also attended an Eastern Zone Social Hour on the 25th.

March- On the 6th I attended, via Zoom a National TFA Policy meeting for Children & Youth.

Attended Training Tuesday on the 30th presented by American Legion National Headquarters covering "myLegion Video Training Series", by Zoom.

April- On the 10th I attempted to attend a National Children & Youth meeting but had difficulty logging in and was only able to listen to the last twenty minutes of the presentation.

On the 17th I attended District #10 district meeting in Miles City.

On the 18th I attended District #1 district meeting in Opheim.

Attended Training Tuesday on the 27th presented by American Legion National Headquarters covering "Military Transition Centers Engagement Programs", by Zoom.

Since April I have attended four 4th of July Parade committee meetings here in Miles City. The American Legion, Marine Corp League and VFW Post #1579 and their Auxiliary's put on the parade, and this is our 18th year. We organize and set this event up at no cost to the community.

NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEEMAN (N.E.C.)

David Driver

The Department's fall conference was held in downtown Helena at the DoubleTree because of the COVID – 19 restrictions and there being not enough room to maintain social distance requirements at our normal locations. Our guest speaker this year was the National Vice Commander, Robert Liebenow, from the Department of Oregon. The Lord provided a great Montana welcome with about 12 inches of snow during the whole weekend. Despite the weather we had a great turn out and accomplished a great deal of work. I think that a good time was had by everyone. On Tuesday, 17 November, I was in attendance for a special virtual meeting of the National Executive Committee for the purpose of hearing and voting on one resolution: Resolution No. 1: #48 IndyCar Team Sponsorship. We heard reports from the Finance Commission Chairman Gaither Keener, Chief Marketing Officer, Dean Kessel and Marketing Commission Chairman James Rohan. After several questions, the resolution passed with 58 yeas and 2 no votes. On 6 March I attended the Department High School Oratory Contest in Helena. As usual we got to listen to some outstanding Montana students. The winner was from District 9. Sunday the 7th I was in Townsend for the District 6 Spring Meeting which was well attended. Then the 12th of March it was down to Helena to get a ride to Billings for the District 11 Spring Meeting on the 13th. The next day it was off to Big Timber for District 7's meeting. Both were well attended. Friday the 19th of March I picked up the National Commander, Bill Oxford, at the Great Falls airport and it was off to Lewistown. District 9 had set up a dinner for the National Commander on Friday night after our arrival. A special event that had been the planning for almost a year was about to happen in complete secrecy from the Department Adjutant until we were all dressed and waiting in the lobby and PNVC Paula Stevenson from Utah walked into the lobby. It was then that Adjutant White realized that something was up. The National Commander Oxford gave his remarks after dinner and then it was time for the Department legionnaires to show our appreciation to Gary White for his 19 years of service to the Department of Montana. I was honored to read a resolution passed by the Department Executive Committee making Gary White a Past Department Commander. The next day it was off to the big city of Roy, Montana for the District 9 Spring Meeting. What a great meeting with all the local legionnaires in attendance. Roy put on a great meeting. Then it was off to the District 8 meeting in Geraldine. The National Commander was escorted into the town by Post 102's Legion Family horse mounted color guard. The meeting was well attended and something that the National Commander said he would never forget. The rest of the Spring Meetings were turned over to the Alternate NEC. On 5 May and 6 May I attended the Spring National Executive Committee via Zoom. We had 13 Committee Reports and 30 resolutions to go through. Of the 30 resolutions I will go over the ones that may be effective to the Department as a whole. Resolution No. 4: Department Adjutant Appointment to the American Legion Riders Advisory Committee. Resolution No. 5: Guidelines for the American Legion Riders National

Program. Copies of these resolutions will be in a separate package when you check in with the Department Convention.

As a personal note: It has been a true honor to represent you and the Department of Montana as your National Executive Committeeman for the last three years. I was a proud grandson of a World War I legionnaire and son of a World War II, Korea and Vietnam legionnaire being in that great hall at the National Headquarters of The American Legion. A veteran still serving America.

ALTERNATE NATIONAL COMMITTEEMAN (N.E.C.)

Hal Rice

Listened to 2 NEC zoom meetings. I went to District 5 meeting in Florence on 9 April and District 4 at Polson on 10 April. On 17 April I went to Miles City for District 10 meeting, also toured around the closed VA hospital there, what a shame it is to be closed. On 18 April we went to Opheim for District 1 meeting, nice town, on 24 April I went to Havre for District 2 meeting and on April 25 I went to Conrad for District 3 meeting. I also attended District 8 meeting In Geraldine where we had Nat. Commander Bill Oxford visit, I was honored to present a beautiful cane that was made by post 102 member Dale Hankins to Commander Oxford. I also want to thank NEC David Driver for letting me be acting NEC. Was nice to be active again and see old friends and make new ones.

PAST DEPARTMENT COMMANDER

Richard Klose

Since the Dept Fall Conference, I had the honor of attending or being part of several ceremonies. Starting with Veterans Day also Pearl Harbor Day, Wreaths Across America, and the Four Chaplains ceremony in February. I also attended the district 11 spring meeting in Billings and the district 4 in Polson.

From 1 July until now myself along with many other Legion members have worked very hard at trying to meet our membership goals. My goal this year was to get the department to 100%, that would have given our department along with our Dept Commander two (2) years in a roll and three (3) out of the last four (4) at 100%. I don't believe that's going to happen because of the American Legion National is trying to install a new computer program and right now it's all screwed up.

For the last two (2) years I have had the honor of serving as the Montana Dept membership chairman. I want to take this time to thank all the legionnaires who have worked so hard on membership. THANKS. We may have a lot more work when it comes to membership for 2022 because of the national's new computer program.

See you at the Department Convention.

HISTORIAN

Ray Read

As the Department Historian, I have had the privilege and opportunity to travel to a many of the Fall and Spring District meetings of the current Montana Department year under a variety of COVID-19 Virus protocols. This forced the Department into hosting the events through remote telephone and zoom computer events as well as in person events. Special events such as the 2021 Montana Department National Oratorical Contest was able to be conducted in Helena even though the National event was cancelled. The Fall Conference was conducted with only the leaders of the Department Executive Committee in attendance Also elected Department Officers were asked by National to continue in their present positions for the period 2020-21.

I continue to find throughout Montana that the American Legion is doing what they have done best for 102 years. They are supporting the veterans and their families as best they can, utilizing the Four Pillars of the American Legion's National Program: That is Supporting the many facets of Veterans Affairs; Supporting a Strong National Defense; Supporting viable Americanism programs; and Supporting our Nation's most precious resource our Children and Youth.

I was able to travel the State, meeting with many seasoned, as well as newer, younger veterans who populate the 125 American Legion Posts, mostly in rural environments, with all the challenges that manifest themselves in the Frontier State of Montana. I thank all who made my visits so memorable. I want to thank all those helped me with Operation Ruptured Duck program. This program is still active and I am in the process of filling request by various posts.

As an American Legionnaire and an American Legion family member, I am tasked to provide the following guidance as a continuing commitment to the duties and responsibilities of the Department Historian. This is especially true as we complete The American Legion' first century of service to our Nation and its veterans and continue in the 2nd Century of service.

Comment: The years 2016-2019 have been a watershed of knowledge on the History of the American Legion at national, department and post level. This momentum is being carried on today.

Reference is made to:

- Letter, dated July 31, 2015, from the American Legion 100th Anniversary Observance Committee announcing the updated 5 year plan for the American Legion Centennial 1919-2019.
- The American legion's Centennial Celebration Workbook;
- The American Legion's Legacy Vision brochure;
- The American Legion's Post 9/11 Veterans Booklet
- Resolution No. 31, Spring 2011, National Executive Committee
- The American Legion 2015 Officer's guide and Manual of Ceremonies
- The World war One Centennial 100 Cities/100 Memorials Grant program
- NEC Resolution No. 10 The American Legion Memorial Project

Resolution No. 31, states,

“The American Legion wishes to call to the attention of the American People the record of achievements that have been accomplished by The American

Legion during the 100 years since its founding, to emphasize the impact the organization has had upon the American society, and the extent of its contributions in national security and the welfare of military veterans, their families and their communities...

---The American Legion wishes to set forth the objectives and the aims that Will motivate its programs and activities during the years ahead and to illustrate the contribution made to the future of country as intended by these programs.”

Some ideas for this important program for Montana Legionnaires to review and implement.

1. All documents referenced above is available on the National American Legion website. Go to www.legion.org/centennial and follow the prompts. If your Post/Auxiliary/Sons of the American Legion have access to the internet you can accomplish the American Legion Centennial Challenge. Remember look to your strengths and leverage them. Also look to your local community for ideas and support.

2. I am asking all Montana Department American Posts to continue to develop their Local Legacy-Your Post's History. National Headquarters has developed a webpage that will allow each participating post its own place online where photos, text and videos can be posted and shared. So whether your post was established in 1919 to just few years ago you have the opportunity to tell your story in your community and throughout the American Legion. I emphasize again that the all aspects of The American Legion Centennial Program are available on the National website www.legion.org/centennial. It is a goal of the Montana Department to update its historical record by incorporating the current written record of the past 101 years in creating a Centennial History. With your cooperation and participation that can happen.

Annual One Year Narrative and one year yearbook (pictorial) history Contests

By utilizing the National Program of Post one-year Narrative and Yearbooks (Pictorial) history the efforts to produce the Post Web based Legacy History will support the collection of Post history and the Centennial program. For your information, there are four (4) annual contests conducted on the National level. The contests involve the Post “First Place” winners in the Montana Department for a one-year narrative and yearbook contests. As well as entries for a one-year Department Narrative and Yearbook.

The following was received from the National Historian James “Jim” A. Mariner:
“The 2019-2020 National History Book Contest will be postponed until the Spring 2021 NEC Meeting and will be using the 2019 Officer's guide (hard copy or online copy) criteria for the 2019-2020 timeframe. The new deadline for National History book Certification Forms will be April 2, 2021. The New Historians Workshop has been cancelled as part of the 2020 October Meetings.”

Ultimately the program went virtual, and I can provide a certificate supplied by National to any Posts who conducted the Post History program.

Taking this new date into account the Department I was given the date of May 1, 2021 am requested that April 15, 2021, be the due date submission of post and district entries the Department of Montana.

The 2020-2021 Post History Program will accept entries up to the first day of the Department Convention in Helena, Montana. you have further questions please contact me at:

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DEPARTMENT ADJUTANT

Duane Cunningham

There is always a first for everything. This is my first crack at a Department Convention report; so here goes. As the Covid 19 pandemic stretched into the early months of 2021, the American Legion both Nationally and within Montana continued to adapt and overcome the obstacles facing its' membership. The pandemic has forced us to examine the ways we train, communicate, and even live; and while it is true that old dogs don't like new tricks; the technology world didn't standby and wait for the doors to shudder. Web-Ex and Zoom became household names and even the most grizzled Montana Legionnaire (looking at you here Bill White) found themselves begrudgingly learning how and when to mute themselves.

Despite the overwhelming excitement that Zoom meetings brought to the Executive Committee and those who travel for District Meetings; the Spring and a long awaited tamping down of new Covid cases statewide allowed for a resumption of in-person District Meetings; and quite honestly I enjoyed the long hours traveling across the state with a band of misfits, meeting many of you for the first time, and looking forward to the next time. By the way, the title of best District lunch could not be determined, so a 3-way runoff between Havre; Opheim and Big Timber may be needed in the fall. Seriously though, a fantastic job was done by each hosting District; the Auxiliary and SAL to make it happen and I hope that we can continue to increase attendance and participation moving forward.

One of the many highlights of the spring was the visit by the National Commander James "Bill" Oxford. Commander Oxford got to visit the heart and soul of small-town Montana with stops in Roy and Geraldine. Commander Oxford was in attendance for Past Adjutant Gary White's going away gala in Lewistown; enjoying a wonderful dinner and warm send-off for Gary; all while highlighting the many ways that the American Legion impacts the lives of Veterans.

In closing, I would like to thank Past Adjutant Gary White for the path he has placed the Montana American Legion on; big shoes to fill. I also want to thank Erin Carpenter for her willingness to teach this old dog new tricks, and to those who I continually reach out to for

guidance moving forward; Jeff, Glenn, Elmer, Richard; Ed; Jamie and Bill to name a few. But most of all, I would like to thank all of you for what you do to impact your community and nation. We have all previously received the call of duty, and we remain vigilant to this day in the single greatest Veteran organization, our American Legion.

CHAPLAIN

Chaya Semple

During this reporting period held a Memorial Service for God and Country at the conclusion of the 2020 Department Fall Conference held in Helena at the Doubletree by Hilton; served as Post No. 2 Chaplain, Tri-County Chapter 2 American Legion Riders Chaplain and Unit 2 Chaplain as well as Chaplain for Montana City VFD, Character Development Officer for Montana Civil Air Patrol and serve as an active member of the Lewis and Clark Critical Incident Stress Management Team.

Due to COVID restrictions, visitation activity was limited until recently. I was unable to visit most veterans in hospitals and nursing homes (except in a few cases of a serious nature where the veterans requested my visit); however, helped with the Post No. 2 Buddy Check by calling over 175 members of Post No. 2 to check in on them. Thankfully, Montana VA Hospital very recently opened the upstairs floors for limited visitation with restricted hours.

Served as chaplain at the Veterans Day Ceremony at the Lewis and Clark Veterans Memorial and participated in a donation of school flags to St. Andrews School on Veterans Day. Due to COVID restrictions in Lewis and Clark County, was unable to hold an in-person Four Chaplains Day Ceremony, so wrote an editorial about the Four Chaplains story that was published in many papers throughout Montana. In May attended Mental Health First Aid training to provide initial help to those experiencing depression, anxiety disorders, psychosis and substance abuse disorders. Participated in a virtual Statewide Suicide Survivor Event on November 28th; participated in a filmed Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day Ceremony on December 7th at Helena Civic TV.

Served at both Post No. 2, District 6 and Department of Montana Constitutional Oratory Competitions. Continued to facilitate character development instruction monthly with Civil Air Patrol. Continued to actively participate in the Helena Ministerial Association, Lewis and Clark County Suicide Prevention Coalition, and with Lewis and Clark Critical Incident Stress Management Team debriefings of first responders. Have continued to serve as chaplain with Lewis and Clark Veterans Council Honor Guard and Montana City VFD, conducting veteran, spouse and firefighter funerals.

Continued to pray for and send cards of condolence to bereaved Legion Family members and also to let those in hospital or nursing facilities know they are not forgotten. Continued to call the sick and bereaved. When requested by the family, have continued to visit those dying at home. In December began hosting a monthly Chaplain Zoom meeting the third Saturdays of each month at 7 PM. Unfortunately, was unable to in April or May due to technical/availability issues with the Department Zoom account. Participated in the Helena Indigent and Abandoned Persons Funeral on May 12th.

Have worked as registrar for the 2021 Department of Montana Convention in Helena, providing reports to leadership on the status of registration. Scheduled Suicide Prevention Training by MT DPHHS for Friday afternoon at Department Convention.

Have worked diligently preparing training materials for the Chaplains Conference to be held during Department Convention weekend.

SERVICE OFFICER

Kate Hahn

As the MT DSO, I attended the following events:

National Conference, Washington, DC – March 1 to 5, 2021

During the National Conference:

- ❖ I was able to attend the PTSD/TBI Committee meeting
 - Discussion RE: Use of Lethal Weapons for Suicide
 - Buddy Checks
- ❖ Attended the National Commander's address
- ❖ Attended VA&R Committee Meetings

Attended the VA&R Meetings

- ❖ Due to COVID there are approximately 88,000 Legacy Appeals Remaining
 - Want to do 50,000 virtually
- ❖ DBQs are back
- ❖ Increase in the Use of Acceptable Clinical Evidence (ACE) for Compensation & Pension Examinations
- ❖ Mission Act – no privatization of VA Healthcare; a hybrid of Gov't / Non-gov't care
- ❖ Helping Veterans Transition from Service life to Civilian life
- ❖ Legislative agenda includes:
 - Address Toxic Exposure & Burn Pits
 - Peer Support
 - Citizenship for Honorable Service
 - Military Awards for Minority Veterans
 - Improving Health Care for Women

- ❖ Senator Tuberville Talked about HBOT (Hyperbaric Oxygen Therapy) for Mental Health Treatment, limited empirical research

Department Service Officer School, Washington, DC – April 3, 2021 to April 23, 2021

- ❖ Over 19 million veterans in the US
- ❖ 4.8 million receive disability compensation
- ❖ 99% of BVAs are granted (B&M)
- ❖ Training included two new MVAD VSOs: A. Hernandez, Billings, and Z. Slay, Great Falls

District Meetings Spring 2021

- ❖ Attended meetings in Townsend, Roy, and Geraldine MT
- ❖ Met with the Auxiliary and talked about DIC/WP
- ❖ Briefed on BWN, NSC, Evidence to support disability claims
- ❖ Briefed Legionnaires about Montana State Veterans Cemeteries and eligibility requirements for burial
- ❖ Discussed the need for having an Advanced Directive and letting people know what your wishes are

PARLIAMENTARIAN

Ken Simon

I would like to say that I have been very Honored to serve as the Department Parliamentarian for the past year. Though COVID kept us from having face to face Conventions, I have learned much from serving in this capacity. I would like to Thank Commander Jeff Nelson for his faith in me to perform the duties.

Having only served for one year and being able to be a part of the workings of the Department Executive Committee, I did a lot of research in Roberts Rules of Order, from which I gained a better insight on how to conduct a meeting. There is however, more to just running a meeting than opening and closing it. It involves order when business is conducted, motions, resolutions, resignations, and disciplinary proceedings as well. I would like to suggest that every Post obtain a copy of Roberts Rules of Order and have a Post Parliamentarian appointed to assist the Commander in conducting the meetings.

With the passage of time and as I get the opportunity, I would like to have the chance to become the Department Parliamentarian once again. As I move forward, there are other positions that I would like to have the opportunity to serve in and learn from the experiences I am sure I would encounter. I have been both honored and humbled to have had the opportunity to both meet and serve with some wonderful people on my journey thus far.

I would like to say Thank You to all who supported me and gave me encouragement and advice this past year.

FINANCE OFFICER

John Joyce

Hello Fellow Legionnaires, with all of the events happening this year, I feel we have done pretty well with the finances of the Department of Montana American Legion. Overall assets are up 9.00%, the DA Davidson account is up 10.5%, and our Money Market is down 9.4%. Overall, our NET income is up 8.9% or \$52,776.12.

I do feel the finance committee should seriously look at where we have our money sitting, i.e. banks and investment firms, and see if there are ways we can improve our finance outlook. Plus, there will be some turnover on the Finance Committee and will take them a little time to get their hands wrapped around the budget. I am looking forward to meeting with the new members.

I would like to recommend that the Finance Committee relook at some of the budget items. There are a lot of programs the American Legion has done thru the years. Figuring out the budget should be fairly easy and really only have cost of living adjustments plus there are always a few things that “happen” that need to be addressed. For example, The Legion has been doing Boys State for a very long time and should be fairly automatic from year to year. I don’t know all the details, but I have heard a lot of consternation about the lack of budget for Boys State. I am going to recommend we put a fixed budget amount for Boys State and will need to work within the Budget. As with many things we need to work smarter not harder.

Each month, when the Adjutant and I go over all the accounts and budgets, the 120 day rule for cashing checks has been helping keep our budget a lot more accurate. Legionnaires have been cashing checks sooner but there are still a few who wait until the 119th day to cash the check.

As the Finance Officer, I do reconciliations each month with the Adjutant and have found zero discrepancies with the budget. I have also included a copy of the Report of the American Legion from Quick Books for you to look over. Let me know if you have any questions.

I have really enjoyed my time working with Adjutant Gary White and looking forward to working with the new Adjutant Duane Cunningham as well as the new commander and staff that is elected or appointed.

See addendums

JUDGE ADVOCATE

Tim Fox

Greetings Legionnaires! It’s been my pleasure to serve as the Department’s Judge Advocate for the past nine months. As with any new role, acting as your new Judge Advocate has been a learning experience. I want to begin this report by acknowledging the assistance of our former

Adjutant, Gary White, and the Adjutant's Assistant, Erin Carpenter, and thank them for helping me to transition into this new role. The following is a brief synopsis of some of the matters that I assisted with over the past nine months.

LIABILITY INSURANCE AND NAMED INSUREDS

Last November, National Executive Committeeman David Driver forwarded a memorandum to me dated 2 November 2020 with respect to National Resolution No. 35. Resolution No. 35 specifies the following:

“[I]f any organization would like to use the Tradenames of the American Legion and the Tradename-using organization has a situation whereby there is a need for liability insurance protection, the Tradename-using organization will specify that The American Legion (and, if needed, the respective Department of The American Legion) is held harmless and named as an additional insured on any and all insurance policies.”

I was informed at that time that the Posts and those other organizations typically obtain their own insurance and usually utilize local businesses. I suggest that the Department make sure that the Posts, and such other American Legion organizations (e.g., Boys State, Legion Baseball, etc.) in Montana that have need for liability insurance, are provided with a copy of Resolution No. 35, and that they understand that The American Legion and The American Legion Department of Montana must both be named as “additional insureds” on their liability insurance policies. The Department may also want to consider whether to have someone take an annual inventory of what American Legion organizations in Montana have (or should have) liability insurance, and confirm that National and the Department are both named as “additional insureds” on those liability policies.

UPDATE: On 1 June 2021, National forwarded a letter from the National Judge Advocate to the Department through me asking that we provide National with confirmation that the Department has listed National as an additional insured on the Department's general liability insurance policy, and asking that the Department provide National with a list of the names, addresses, employer identification numbers, and contact persons for every “intermediate body” within the Department. Our Adjutant's office will be taking care of responding to these requests.

ADJUTANT CONTRACT

One of my first projects as Judge Advocate was to draft an employment contract for our new Adjutant, Duane Cunningham. It had been some time since I had drafted a contract (thanks to eight years of serving as Montana's Attorney General), so I had fun working on this project. Gary White was a great resource in providing information about the job and I appreciated his accessibility and comments as I wrote a unique part-time employment contract from scratch. This project helped me to appreciate the work that Gary did for the Department for so many

years, and it made me thankful that Duane had agreed to be our new Adjutant. If any of you ever have need to better understand what our Adjutant does for us, I would be happy to visit with you, and I am sure Duane would too. Thank you to Gary for his years of service to us, and thank you to Duane for stepping up to assume your new role as Adjutant!

MOTOR VEHICLE DONATIONS

In January, Saco Post 79 requested that I provide them with guidance concerning a motor home that someone wished to donate to the Post. I do not know how often the donation of a motor vehicle will arise, but I thought that the guidance I provided to Post 79 was something that other Posts might find helpful in the future. In a nutshell, here's what I told Post 79:

“There are no Department policies applicable to the donation of a motor home. There may be National policies applicable to this donation, but only if the donation is to be made to National directly. If the motor home is to be donated to the local Post, I would recommend that the following be considered:

1. The Post should confirm that there are no liens on the motor home. The simplest way to do that is to examine the vehicle title. If there is a lien referenced on the title, that lien should be removed first by the donor and a new title issued by MVD before the Post should accept the motor home.
2. The Post should confirm the identity of the seller and confirm that the seller's name is the same as it appears on the vehicle title.
3. Seller and the Post should sign a Bill of Sale for the vehicle (sample attached).
4. The seller should sign over the vehicle title to the Post and include the mileage in the space provided. The seller's signature should be notarized by a Notary Public. The Post should take possession of the original vehicle title. If the seller doesn't have the original vehicle title, the seller should obtain a duplicate vehicle title from the Montana Department of Justice, Motor Vehicle Division, before donating the motor home to the Post.
5. If the Post is a valid IRS 501(c)(3) non-profit organization, and if the seller wishes to claim a charitable tax deduction on the seller's 2022 income tax filing, the seller should obtain (and pay for) an appraisal from a qualified appraiser to establish the value of the charitable contribution. Again, if the Post is a valid IRS 501(c)(3) non-profit organization, and if the seller has obtained an appraisal and wishes to claim a charitable deduction, the Post should give the seller a written confirmation of the charitable donation to the Post with a description of the motor home and the appraised value. Both

the Post and the seller should keep a copy of the appraisal for their records.

6. If the Post will have the possession of the motor home for any length of time, and if representatives of the Post or anyone else will be driving the motor home, the Post should consider obtaining appropriate vehicle insurance on the motor home as soon as possible.

If the motor home is to be donated to the Department or National rather than to the local Post, the appropriate Department or National officer should be consulted before accepting the donation of the motor home.”

KNUDSEN LAWSUIT

In February 2021, I assisted the Department Executive Committee as it considered whether to make Department funds available to Thomas Mann Post 81 for purposes of helping pay potential future legal costs in a lawsuit the Post filed against the Knudsen Family Limited Partnership over access to Legion Park on the Missouri River near Culbertson, Montana. The Department Executive Committee did vote in favor of assisting Post 81 with the costs if the case was appealed to the Montana Supreme Court. However, the district court subsequently ruled in favor of Post 81, and it appears that the Knudsen family elected not to appeal the court’s decision.

AMERICAN LEGION RIDERS

Many of you may recall that in 2019 the Department Executive Committee was approached about the establishment of an American Legion Riders (ALR) chapter in Montana. At that time, Commander Nelson created an Ad Hoc Committee of Gil Floyd, Demorise Allen, and Glen Sharbono to work on preparing an American Legion Riders constitution and bylaws that would be consistent with National guidance and resolutions, and with Department policies. In April of this year, Gil Floyd contacted me and requested assistance with drafting an ALR constitution and bylaws with a goal to have them completed 60 days prior to the Department Convention. I was provided with a draft constitution that had been prepared several years ago, as well as multiple comments and critiques of that draft. I also obtained and reviewed multiple National resolutions that had been promulgated over the years with respect to state ALR chapter requirements. In addition, I obtained copies of constitutions and bylaws from four other state ALR chapters and communicated with the ALR Regional Coordinator Roy Helms from Wisconsin. Mr. Helms was helpful in addressing several questions about the National resolutions, and he also provided copies of the constitution and bylaws for the Wisconsin ALR chapter. After several Zoom meetings with the Ad Hoc committee, and many e-mail and phone conversations with multiple people, I drafted a new proposed ALR constitution and bylaws, and revised those drafts multiple times after receiving comments from members of the Ad Hoc Committee. As the Department Convention neared, the organizers of the proposed ALR chapter decided to hold off on this project until next year to provide their prospective members with more time to review and

consider the draft documents. It may be necessary for the Department Commander to re-appoint an Ad Hoc Committee to work on this project over the coming year, and the organizers of the proposed ALR chapter are encouraged to get an early start on the project to provide ample time for review and approval before either the October 2021 or June 2022 Department conventions.

BOYS STATE

In late May 2021 I was contacted and was told that there were two applications to attend Boys State that were apparently submitted by students that describe themselves as being transgender. I was told that the two students attend the same school. I contacted National's Americanism office on the matter, and I also did some research to determine if this situation had come up in other states. Iowa Boys State encountered a similar issue in 2018, the Department of Iowa initially denied the application to attend Iowa Boys State of a girl transitioning to be a boy. After some adverse press, the Department of Iowa reversed its decision and admitted the transgender student to Iowa Boys State. In 2018, National Resolution No. 29 dated May 9-10, 2018, officially made it National's policy to admit "transgender and non-gender identifying students" to Boys Nation. Resolution No. 29 states that Boys Nation will "[m]ake all reasonable accommodations possible that do not put participants at risk and aid in insuring the inclusion of as many participants as practical . . ." However, my contact at National stressed that National does not dictate how Departments handle this type of situation at the state level, and he said that the Departments are to make their own decisions on how to approach this type of situation. I communicated National's stance and suggestions, and Iowa's experience, to Boys State through the Adjutant's office. I recommend that the Department discuss this issue at the Convention and begin thinking about how to handle this and similar issues that might arise in the future.

ODDS AND ENDS

I have appreciated receiving an occasional "heads up" from the Adjutant's office about potential "dust ups" at the Post level across the state. So far, none of those "dust ups" have escalated to needing my input (knock on wood). I believe that it is a testament to the Department and Post leadership across our great state that problems are few and far between, and that American Legion members are adept at following the rules, working as a team, and helping each other out when situations arise. I am truly grateful to be able to serve with you for the benefit of Montanans, our brother and sister Legionnaires, veterans, those who serve in the military, and for our great Country. I look forward to serving with you in the coming year. Thank you for what you do, and thank you for this opportunity!

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS

Jared Flammond

Greetings to everyone from post to nationals!! what a crazy year we have endured as veterans. Not only have we had to rethink and redevelop how we convene meetings to post functions but also cater to the needs of our nations veterans. I would like to congratulate everyone who has been fundamental in the continued efforts in ensuring those needs are met. You see as veterans we are always continually tasked with facing change and overcoming adversity. One subject i would like to touch on is mentorship. Even though we are always looking to redevelop and restructure for change of the positive we must also be vigilant in training those joining the body of the American legion. One story that comes to mind is the fateful events of the NASA shuttle challenger. Even though as a country we lost great leaders in pioneering the frontiers of space. It was a time that brought the country together to explore new sights of future. We as Legionnaires must grasp the fundamental ideas behind those who are willing to expand the legion to new fronts. We must continue to Listen, Learn, and develop our way of life as veterans. So lets set the record straight. We are going to face challenge. But what is it all for??? What is the purpose for us to continue?? The Answer is so very clear. Its for the peace and prosperity of our nation. The men and woman willing to fight for our nation's freedom has never been in question. But we must never appease those in the degradation of the American legion or our nation. Mentorship can be challenging but also easy. Membership is always a struggle that is typically hit on every meeting. As these younger legionnaires step into the meeting rooms, posts, district conventions and department conventions. Always remember you had a first to. Be there to welcome them and help develop there passion within the legion. Polished Valuable gems do not obtain there luster without abrasive refinement. Not only are you as a mentor polishing your skills but also developing and polishing the skills of that younger legionnaire. Just as a child learns to ride a bicycle without training wheels and may fall a time a two. They are swiftly picked up dusted off and encouraged to try again. The same principle applies to all legionnaires. even though one idea may not work or pan out KEEP TRYING. In my experience so far within the legion i have enjoyed every step of the way. I continually look forward to working with each and every single one of you!!!

EDUCATION & TRAINING

Jeff Holmes

Congratulations to all of the following winners within their respective divisions. I would also like to thank all of the posts for sponsoring these contests as part of their post objectives. It is a great way to promote the constitution and government to our youth. They were all great entries. My cap goes off to you for making the time to make the tough decisions. Thank You!

2021 Winners!

High School Essay – 4 submitted

1 st	Samantha Westman @ Stevensville HS	Fort Owen Post #94
2 nd	Trista Redfield @ Twin Bridges HS	Dan Brockman Post # 31
3 rd	Desaray Tipton @ Sheridan High School	Anderson-Simpson Post #89

Junior High School Essay – 5 submitted

1 st	Teagan Clement @ C.R. Anderson MS	Lewis & Clark Post #2
2 nd	Anna Kate Sawfer @ Clinton District #32	Clinton Post #83
3 rd	Faith Randolph @ Sheridan JH	Anderson-Simpson Post #89

Government Survey for Junior High 7th Grade – 2 submitted

1st	Ashley Carpenter @ East Valley Middle School	98%	Lewis & Clark Post #2
2nd	Kristen Nelson @ Twin Bridges Middle School	72%	Dan Brockman Post # 31
3rd	None		

Government Survey for Junior High 8th Grade – 4 submitted

1 st	Aiden Reeve @ Dutton-Brady	98%	Freeborn Post #64
2 nd	Sawyer Anson @ Sheridan Jr Hi	98%	Anderson-Simpson Post #89
3 rd	Ben Wayland @ Twin Bridges MS	82%	Dan Brockman Post # 31

Government Survey for High School Seniors – 4 submitted

1st	Kyle Salerno @ Twin Bridges High School	97%	Dan Brockman Post # 31
2nd	Hailey Carpenter @ Capital High School	97%	Lewis & Clark #2
3rd	William Ullery @ Fort Benton HS	82%	Henry W. Griesback Post #26

Obviously, our entries were a little light this year, and it is understandable given the unique experience our schools encountered. It just goes to show you that we need to make our connections early on in the school year and get them done long before the due date. The sooner the better. **Please push the programs early and get the money for the kids!** The Ad Hock Committee created at fall conference last year will again be active as we were not able to have the resolutions voted on at our cancelled department convention. We will modify our two resolutions and resubmit to department for their consideration next summer. The first is to “Re-organize & Rename Education & Training Chairman to Youth Constitutional Chairman”, and the second is to “Recognizing the Department Training Director.”

I work for you, so please let me know what I can do to make your job easier. Congrats to all the winners!

DISTRICT COMMANDERS

DISTRICT 1 - COMMANDER

Joe Yeoman

I have visited with an officer of all post in our district, I have made 6 Post meetings. The District presented a resolution to help Post 81 in Culbertson with The American Legion park. Our district had an oratorical contestant from Post 22 in Wolf Point she went on to place third at state. We will have some Boys Staters and Councilors from our District We will have a new District Commander after state meeting. I have forwarded E-mails to post commanders that came from state and national hoping they are sent on to post members.

DISTRICT 2 – COMMANDER

Vincent Schmoeckel

Due to the covid-19 virus, activities had been greatly curtailed.

1. I participated in many Veteran's funerals.
2. I went to Hinsdale to attend Post #45 fundraiser to help restore their historic monument. Donation for this cause was given.
3. Attended the American Legion conference in Helena October 23-25.
4. Helped the VFW Auxiliary set up, cook and serve Veteran's Day dinner. No on site meals were served, all was in "go" boxes.
5. I spent many hours volunteering at the VFW Club doing cleaning and purchasing of goods needed.
6. Attended Executive Committee meeting via Zoom on February 6, 2021.
7. I attended the surprise retirement party for Gary White in Lewistown, representing District 2.
8. The annual Legion yard sale was conducted April 17. Spent many hours setting up items, picking up items, selling items and cleanup. Funds collected are donated to area Youth organizations.
9. I conducted the spring district meeting in Havre on April 24, 2021.
10. Called all my posts to please complete the required CPR.

DISTRICT 3 - COMMANDER

Dusty Bailey

DISTRICT 4 - COMMANDER

Dorothy Goodwin

DISTRICT 5 - COMMANDER

Greg Marose

All Posts observed Memorial Day, Flag Day, Fourth of July, and plan to celebrate Veterans Day.

Phillipsburg Post merged with Post 125 Drummond.

Held our Fall Conference Oct 11, 2020 at Ravalli County Fairgrounds in Hamilton. Thirty-Eight members attended the District Legion and Auxiliary Meeting.

Spring Conference was held in Florence at Bread and Roses. It was hosted jointly by Post 134 and Post 94. Post 94 Auxiliary provided a great lunch spread with a meat course from Moose Creek BBQ out of Stevensville.

Spring Conference was attended by five officers and nine Posts. Membership met goals for April. Still pushing for 100%.

Suicide Prevention Training will be put on by a trainer from Whitefish and will be open to the public as soon as a location is found.

Post 135 has reserved the Hilton Garden Inn of Missoula for the 2022 Department Convention. The dates are 16-18 June 2022.

District donated \$300 to NEF and \$300 to Children and Youth.

Our new officers are:

Commander Charlie Coutts
First Vice Terry Wahl
Second Vice Alex Vogel
Finance Officer Ruthie Smith

With the loss of John Angwin from Post 27 we have been trying to find new officers to take his place.

DISTRICT 6 - COMMANDER

Linda Cousineau

As Vice Commander I visited 9 out of 12 Posts delivering Post membership packets prior to Fall conference. Sending e-mails to Posts keeping them informed with the information from Dept. Fall District meeting at Butte Post 1 went well considering Covid requirements cut down on the number of attendees. District 6 Oratorical was held in Helena as scheduled. Had three contestants but only Post 31 was able to attend the contest due to one no show and one with diagnosis of Covid the day prior. District 6 Spring meeting was scheduled to be at Helena but was changed to Broadwater Post 42 a few weeks prior to the meeting date because Covid rules in Lewis and Clark were only allowing 25 people to meet at once.

Spring meeting held March 7, 2021 with Vice Commander Linda Cousineau filling in for Commander Pat Sweeney. Meeting started on time with Dept Commander Jeff Nelson introducing Dept guest and presenting as guest speaker for the luncheon. 33 total in attendance with Department, District officers and Posts. No Shows from Post 20, 46, and 115. As per the constitution and by-laws, elections of officers are to be conducted at the Spring meeting. Elected District Commander from Broadwater Post 42 Linda Cousineau, Vice Commander from Whitehall Post 24 Kristian Richardson, Finance from Lewis and Clark Post 2 Bill White and Sgt At Arms from Silver Bow Post 1 George Giaomini. Motion made for Vice Commander Linda Cousineau to become Commander in three weeks automatically if resignation of present Commander is not turned in. Present Commander Pat Sweeney has been ill quite a bit this past year and unable to maintain required duties.

Spring Post reports received 8 of 12. Over 50% at 100% membership with the rest of the Posts not too far behind.

With Covid-19 this past year, all Posts struggled with membership, having meetings and trying to keep everyone's spirits up. With that being said, I feel we had a pretty good year with a better year coming up.

DISTRICT 7 - COMMANDER

Bill Cummins

This has been a different year for all of us. As my first year as a district commander, it has been a learning experience. I felt a lot more comfortable conducting the spring meeting than my first meeting last fall. I have tried to keep the posts informed of membership goals as well as any information from Department or National.

The spring meeting was held in Big Timber and was well attended by the post, Auxiliary and Sons. Those who did not attend missed out on a great Prime rib dinner. I would like to thank the Big Timber post for a great meeting, and the fabulous meal. I have done most of my post visits

but not all. So some posts may see me twice this coming year. In March my wife and I attended the National Commander's banquet in Lewistown which also included Gary's retirement party. It is always good to hear from the National Commander. Gary will be missed, but I am also looking forward to working with Duane. Next year I will continue to promote communication between the posts within the district. I will also work on membership as I have a few posts that seem to be good way behind on membership

DISTRICT 8 - COMMANDER

Larry Otis

We had our Fall District Conference by Zoom so I was not sure I could've done a District meeting. It went well with Lowell Long sitting next to me at my kitchen table. There was not any Committee meeting so all we had to do was find a time and place and Geraldine was up as that is where we would have been if not for Covid.

On Friday before my District meeting on Sunday in March I was at Gary Whites retirement party In Lewistown at the Elks and Gary went around to everyone there and said something about everyone there. When it was my turn Gary said at my first District meeting, I had the National Commander at his first District Meeting. That was right as there is a lot of difference with a Zoom Meeting. I did not think it was a lot of difference but there really is.

My District meeting had its ups and downs. I really want thing things to go perfect, so I guess I have room for improvement. Some of the things I can do better on I will. I was told it went well. I asked the National Commander how others do, and he said he goes to meetings that he wonders if he is in an American Legion meeting or is this something else. He seems like a nice guy but if he were not he wouldn't be where he is at. My Goal for next time is to do it perfect.

I have tried to work on membership without sounding like nagging. so about every other week I send out a report as to how the Post is doing. I have some good Adj. 2 of my Post got to 100% right away so that made that easy. Each Post new how they were doing and how many they needed to make the next Goal.

I do not know yet what I will do for Memorial Day. Last year I went to Fort Shaw and then to Sun River for A Flag Ceremony Kin Kay asked me to join her and I did. This year I should do something here in Great Falls. Last year everything was canceled.

We have a Post in Fort Benton that cannot find people to hold office so we may lose that Post. I have worked with their Adjutant Russ Panting and he is good and a good one. I don't want to lose him, but I don't know anyone else in Fort Benton. I have asked for help from above and hope that that will help.

DISTRICT 9 - COMMANDER

Bruce Luhrsen

Fall Conference was held in Helena, MT, October 23rd and 24th, 2020. I did not attend. My position was covered by District Vice Commander Rob Miller.

It was determined that the Department of Montana would be visited by National Commander James “Bill” Oxford and that he would attend the American Legion Department of Montana Central district #9 spring meeting to be held in Roy, Montana, hosted by Post #96 and Auxiliary Unit #70 of Judith Gap.

In the interim it was determined to have a retirement party for outgoing Department Adjutant Gary White. It was held at the F.O.E. dining facility in Lewistown, Friday evening before the Central District #9 meeting. This was kept low key and hush hush as Gary was known to have big ears and a deep memory. Both positive attributes as he clearly demonstrated during a special segment of the event held in his honor. In retrospect it was a very successful and memorable occasion honoring Gary for all the service he has delivered in all these past number of years.

I must say that the District meeting the following day was complementary success. Post #96 lead by their Commander Dustin Schneider showed themselves to be rising stars among small Posts within the Montana Department organization. It was unknown to him at the previous fall meeting that his meeting was to be a showcase to our National Commander, when he volunteered his Post to host the meeting.

Commander Schneider and his Post assisted by the Judith Gap Auxiliary Unit #70 insured that the facilities were available and met the COVID 19 distance standards that were in place at the time.

Membership in the local Posts is of some concern, although a number of Central District #9 Posts were stellar performer with Post #96 of Roy leading the way followed by Post #62 of Denton and Post #53 of Stanford as being our 100% goal achievers. They are followed close by Post #76 of Hobson whom at this writing is at 97%.

Department Convention is upon us as we look at our own strengths and shortfalls, always looking for improvement in performance and communication amid the continual changes of knowledge level and expectations.

DISTRICT 10 - COMMANDER

Dave Ofalt

I served as District Commander for another year. I attended the Special Executive meeting for Post 81 via Zoom. I attended the round table meeting for the Eastern Zone via Zoom but was unable to attend more because the night the meetings conflicted with the ALR Bingo night. I conducted the District 10 meeting in Miles City on April 24 with a fairly good turnout. I conducted Military Funeral honors for Post 39 in Forsyth. I presented the Boys State Program to the juniors and seniors in my school district, I felt we put on a good presentation although we did

not convince any to attend. I placed fatality markers up in my District that I had the time to do without driving too far, it is a big District. I made more fatality markers in my shop to be placed in the District. I have 3 more to place in the Sidney area which I plan to do when I deliver the new packets. I am organizing the Memorial Day Service at the veteran's section of the Forsyth cemetery. Along with the ALR we are organizing a poker fun for the 5th of June.

DISTRICT 11 - COMMANDER

Larry Tipton

The pandemic continues to cause opportunities lost for the district. Many of the Posts are meeting with various amounts of members attending. These past months are more geared to keeping Commanders informed on membership number provided by the Department as well as other information. I missed part of the last District meeting due to on onset of a medical condition and hopefully that is past now, and I can make it for a full meeting. We lost some great Legion members in the past year due to Corona and other medical issues and they will be missed at their Posts. Looking forward to organizing a "9-11" remembrance on the upcoming 20th anniversary.

DEPARTMENT COMMITTEE CHAIRS

AMERICANISM

Lonnie Johnson

Another trying year for the American Legion. As I recover from the dreaded virus, I think back on how we as Legionnaires were able to sill carry on our service to God and Country. Going through the CPR's for 2020-2021 it is evident that Posts were still actively giving Military Honors at funerals, conducting Patriotic Holiday ceremonies, and overall taking care of our Veterans. We worked to put Flags in our classrooms. As a Department we supported a Post in trying to regain access to a park. American Legion Baseball had a great season. American Legion Boys State is going on this week.

I again challenge every one of us to continue and adapt and overcome the obstacles to keep true Americanism in each of our communities.

BASEBALL

Ron Edwards

Our national baseball program is back in full swing again this spring. Last fall national announced that all of our regional and the world series tournament will be played in 2021. The national legion baseball team registrations and insurance purchases resumed after this had been shut down for the 2020 season.

As of June 1st, we have 57 teams that are registered and playing American Legion baseball in Montana. There are 8 Class AA teams, 28 Class A teams and 21 Class B teams.

2021 MONTANA/ALBERTA AMERICAN LEGION TEAMS

CLASS AA

Billings Royals
 Billings Scarlets
 Bozeman Bucks
 Great Falls Chargers
 Helena Senators
 Kalispell Lakers
 Missoula Mavericks
 Lethbridge Elks*

CLASS A

Anaconda's A's
 Belgrade Bandits
 Billings Blue Jays
 Billings Cardinals
 Bitterroot Bucs
 Bitterroot Red Sox
 Bozeman Bucks A
 Butte Miners
 Dillon Cubs

CLASS A

Froid Bulls
 Gallatin Valley Outlaws
 Glacier Twins
 Glasgow Reds
 Glendive Blue Devils
 Great Falls Chargers A
 Havre Northstars
 Helena Reps
 Kalispell Lakers A
 Laurel Dodgers
 Lethbridge Miners*
 Lewistown Redbirds
 Libby Loggers
 Livingston Braves
 Miles City Mavericks
 Mission Valley Mariners
 Missoula Mavericks
 Tri-County Cardinals
 Wolf Point Yellow Jackets

CLASS B

Anaconda's A's
 Belgrade Bandits
 Billings 4-B
 Bitterroot Bucs
 Bitterroot Red Sox
 Bozeman Bucks B
 Bozeman Bucks C
 Butte Muckers
 Clark Fork Valley Riverdogs
 Gallatin Valley Posse
 Glacier Twins B
 Glendive Bluedevils B
 Great Falls Chargers B
 Helena Independents
 Kalispell Lakers
 Kootenai Valley Rangers
 Lewistown Redbirds
 Libby Loggers
 Miles City Colts
 Mission Valley Mariners
 Missoula Mavericks

* Canadian teams that have registered but still not able to cross the border as of June, 2021. Other Canadian teams that have not registered yet are: Medicine Hat Monarchs (AA) and Knights (A), Cranbrook Bandits (A), Vauxhall Spurs (A)

We have 1

new team this year, the Clark Fork Valley Riverdogs from Plains MT playing as Class B. Plentywood has also contacted us to potentially play next season. The Canadian border remains closed but there is some recent news that it may be opening up on June 22nd. Until that happens our Canadian teams in Cranbrook, Lethbridge, Medicine Hat and Vauxhall cannot play in Montana. We remain optimistic that the border will open before our district and state tournaments so they can at least play in them. The District and State tournament schedules have been adjusted for the 2021 season as follows:

2021

TOURNAMENT	HOST TEAM	CITY	DATES
NORTHERN DISTRICT A	LEWISTOWN REDBIRDS	LEWISTOWN	JUL 22 - 25
SOUTHERN DISTRICT A	LIVINGSTON BRAVES	LIVINGSTON	JUL 22 - 25
EASTERN DISTRICT A	GLASGOW REDS	GLASGOW	JUL 22 - 25
WESTERN DISTRICT A	MISSOULA MAVERICKS A	MISSOULA	JUL 22 - 25
STATE A	HAVRE NORTHSTARS	HAVRE	JUL 29 - 02
STATE AA	GREAT FALLS CHARGERS AA	GREAT FALLS	JUL 28 - AUG 01
REGIONAL AA	GILLETTE ROUGHRIDERS	GILLETTE, WY	AUG 04 - 08
REGIONAL A (NWCART)		ANCHORAGE, AK	AUG 06 - 10
WORLD SERIES		SHELBY, NC	AUG 12 - 17

For more baseball information please visit us at www.montanalegionbaseball.org.

SCOUTS BSA

Roger Hancock

This year has been tough for Scouting with COVID-19 regulations preventing group events. The scouts have not stopped their educational advancement and fellowship. Scouting has utilized Zoom and other video interfacing to advance their programs and objectives. Kudos to the scouts for adapting and overcoming a difficult situation they had no control over.

We did have a very qualified Eagle Scout of the Year (ESoy) applicant who happens to be our very first female scout. She comes from a dedicated Legion family and is also a member of the Legion Family as a Junior Auxiliary member. She is Hailey Carpenter whose qualifications are impressive and set a high standard for those who are to follow. I hope you attend the C&Y luncheon to hear more information about her character and service to her community.

BOYS STATE

Lowell Long

Attendance 74th Session

We had 86 delegates registered for the Montana American Legion Boys State (ALBS). We had two no shows this year making our final count at 84 delegates. We has 12 counselors, three committee members, and the Head Counselor, the Director, and the Registrar present.

Due to Covid 19, we had a decrease from our last session due to troubles getting into schools to pitch the program. Also, not having the boys from last year to talk about the program also hurt us as well. We continue to have troubles connecting with the larger schools and have a very poor turnout from these schools. Missoula, Helena, and Butte each sent only 2 delegates. Belgrade has only 1 delegate and Bozeman only had three. Billings and Kalispell had 8 and 11 respectively. We have to figure out a way to increase our attendance in these larger communities for our program to be a success. Our response from the smaller communities has been much better.

I want to take a few minutes to recognize a few people that really stepped up to help us get going. First, my committee members contacted posts and schools in their area to try to get things moving when it looked like we might not be able to have a program. Jed Damson, Ken Simon, and Mark McKinley stepped up and assisted us in getting boys signed up. We were short a committee member from the South-Central area but several people stepped up to help us in that area. Demorise Allen, Richard Klose, Scott Miller, Greg Pohle, Duane Cunningham, and Erin Carpenter all assisted in this area. Finally, I want to thank each post that went out and found delegates, sponsored delegates, and worked to help us make this a successful session.

To let you know some of the struggles we had, 30 days prior to the session starting we down by more than half of what we needed to break even. While we came up short of what we wanted, the last 30 days was a culmination of lots of phone calls finding delegates.

Achievements.

This year's delegates came with the goal of trying for as much as they could. Their effort was rewarded as we had large numbers of delegates running for the various different offices. Marley Miller of Kalispell was elected as Governor and Hayden Sharpe of Kalispell was elected Lt. Governor. Brinson Wyche of Corvallis was Secretary of State. John Chadwell of Big Sky was the Attorney General. Cole Taylor of Larslan was the President of the Senate and Lewis Icopini of Butte was the Speaker of the House. Attached is the complete list of all winners of the races at ALBS this year.

The delegates selected as Senators to represent Montana at Boys Nation were Cole Taylor of Larslan and Dalton Sand of Glasgow. We will be well represented in Washington DC with these two delegates.

We had fifteen applicants for the Samsung Scholarship this year. The scoring was very close and I want to thank my committee for their assistance in scoring the applications. The 2021 winner from Montana is Cole Taylor from Larslan.

Comments.

Again, I want to thank everyone who helped us to locate delegates and help in any way possible to make our program a success. I also would like to send a special thank you to those posts that stepped up and sponsored a delegate from outside their area to ensure that every boy that applied was able to attend. This generosity was greatly appreciated by those who were able to attend because of it.

We wouldn't have achieved the success in numbers we did without several that helped us. First, I want to thank Commander Jeff Nelson for attending our Zoom meetings and coming to address the delegates the first day. Vice Commander Glen Sharbono also attended our Zoom meetings and both assisted in getting delegates for our program. Their contributions to our discussions were very valuable as we worked to bring this program together. I want to say a special thank you to Director Greg Pohle. He worked continuously to find delegates in the Billings area. He also put together an excellent program and many great speakers for the boys to listen to during the week. I also want to send a special thank you to Erin Carpenter and Duane Cunningham for all their work keeping us straight on the numbers, contacting delegates with the rest of their information, working the thousand and one details that need to be done behind the scenes to make the program work. We would not have been able to do this program without their help and

support. Also, thank you to Erin for setting up our Zoom meetings as we had to meet every other week to keep things moving.

I would like to thank the Zone Commanders and District Commanders for passing along the information that was being put out.

We had an excellent group of counselors this year. Head Counselor Fred Trafelet did an excellent job getting the counselors and getting them everything they needed to be successful. We had a good mix of new counselors and seasoned counselors this year.

Finally, I want to thank the delegates for this year's program. This was one of the most inquisitive and outgoing groups I have dealt with since joining the program. They asked very intelligent questions of the speakers that cause them to have to think to answer them. This group wanted to succeed, and they worked hard to do so.

For us to be successful in the future, we must continue to work hard in the local posts to promote this program. We must find new and creative ways to reach the students when we can't get into schools to pitch the program. One thing we are hoping to have for you is a video from our ALBS Governor highlighting his experiences that we can use as a recruiting tool. Posts do not forget to invite your delegates to a post meeting to share what they experienced with you. If you got assistance in sponsoring from other organizations, invite them as well. This way the delegates can thank everyone for making this possible for them. They all have a great story to tell.

CHILDREN & YOUTH

Sharon Doig

Last year was to be my last year as the Department Chair of Children and Youth. COVID-19 changed things. This is my final year and report.

The Department Coordinated Children and Youth committee helped one veteran who was having surgery out of state to help with lodging for \$300.00.

September, I did a zoom Children and Youth Conference due to COVID.

A veteran with three a boy and a girl needed a three bedroom apartment and received \$1000 for the deposit.

CONSTITUTION & INTERNAL AFFAIRS

Jim Grosset

The main order of business was the forming of the American Legion Riders of Montana. There was a couple of Zoom meetings and discussion about forming the Organization and writing a

Resolution and Constitution. I still as of this writing, have not received the final copy. I also have helped in forming the Resolution regarding The Canadian Friendship Award.

I have also received resolutions on from the Education and Training Committee re: RESOLUTION FOR YOUTH CONSTITUTIONAL CHAIRMAN, one for RESOLUTION FOR DEPARTMENT TRAINING DIRECTOR. The last one is in regard to ALL POST TO MAINTAIN THEIR CHARTER MEMBERSHIP AND HOLD ELECTIONS AND CARRY OUR PROGRAMS OF THE AMERICAN LEGION.

I hope to be at the convention in Helena if the Border is open by then.

CONVENTION 2021

Bill White

By the time this is being read the 2021 convention will be taking place and this convention has been one by many that will not be forgotten. For instance, we have gone from limited seating to full sitting but COVID-19 is always there. Lewis and Clark Health Department required that we have a backup plan and that was approved. We have a third plan Zoom.

40&8 put together a plan that involved American Legion Baseball and I hope all that attended had a good time.

The behind-the-scenes planning was the biggest problem with COVID-19 in mind and a great thanks to the Auxiliary, SAL, Riders Department (our new Adjutant) and Post 2 for all their help.

There is not enough room to thank each of the individuals that have stepped up to make this convention which I hope you all are enjoying.

Thank you one and all. This has been a great learning experience and if asked I will sit down and talk to the folks planning convention 2022 and 2023.

CONVENTION 2022

Roger Hancock

Missoula County has relaxed their COVID-19 restrictions but come next year we can only hope that all restrictions will be lifted. The Hilton Garden Inn is looking forward to our convention and is planning to have a warm welcome for us. The plan is for them to room us on the 5th and 6th floors unless you need a handicap room. Please let them know when you make your reservations.

If you find that your group needs a meeting room prior to convention starting, please let me know your requirements. Once the convention begins and you find that your group needs a meeting room, please let me or the registration desk know. Your request should include time, date/s, and capacity. We will have access to all the meeting rooms and will be the only group

with access to these rooms. There are a total of 4 meeting rooms and a courtyard. These exclude 1 room for Dept HQ and Post 135 registration. The rooms range in capacity from 12 to 32. If you need larger capacity, then the ballroom will be able to accommodate you.

CONVENTION 2023

Vacant

DISTINGUISHED GUESTS

Hal Rice

I went to Gt Falls to buy a gift for Nat. Commander Bill Oxford. I went into Dragon Fly dry goods and purchased a large variety of Huckleberry products, 12 in all, I presented it to Nat. Commander Oxford at District 8 meeting in Geraldine.

DEPARTMENT EMERGENCY RESPONSE COORDINATOR

Chaya Semple

There were 55 counties, 7 tribes, and 65 cities and towns that declared an emergency for COVID-19.

As of November 30, 2020, three Montana National Guard Rapid Reaction Forces (RRFs) were still providing support to the Montana Public Health Lab, warehouse, and epidemiologist; MSU Lab in Bozeman; DES warehouse; and non-medical assistance for various medical facilities across Montana.

On December 1, 2020, Governor Steve Bullock announced a new crisis counseling hotline funded by a \$1.6 million federal grant was available to aid Montanans struggling with their mental health due to the ongoing impacts of the COVID-19 public health emergency. The Montana Crisis Recovery hotline is funded and available for at least the next nine months. Montanans in need of crisis counseling can call 1-877-503-0833 to receive free and confidential counseling services from trained crisis counselors Monday through Friday from 10 a.m. to 10 p.m. The free service is meant to help people navigate feelings of isolation, loss, fear, uncertainty, depression, and anxiety they are experiencing during this time. The new service is available to all Montanans, with target populations identified as healthcare workers and first responders, school officials, veterans, elderly individuals, Native Americans, and farmers and ranchers.

On December 23, 2020, President Trump issued a Presidential Memorandum on the Extension of the Use of the National Guard to Respond to COVID-19 and to Facilitate Economic Recovery. The Memorandum provides 75 percent Federal cost through March 31, 2021, continuing the Federal government's historic support of the National Guard and Governors to effectively respond to COVID-19.

On February 10, 2021, Governor Gianforte announced the lifting (on February 12) of the statewide mask mandate when he signed legislation that would shield businesses, health care providers, houses of worship and nonprofit organizations from coronavirus-related lawsuits. Local jurisdictions are still able to enact or maintain their own mask mandates if they choose to, and the Governor said he will continue to wear a mask.

On March 16, 2021, Governor Gianforte announced that COVID-19 vaccines will be available to all Montanans beginning April 1, 2021.

- On March 30, 2021, Governor Gianforte issued a directive to further expand access to COVID-19 vaccines and assist in pharmacy staffing. See Directive-3-30-2021-EO, "Directive Implementing Executive Order 2-2021 by waiving strict compliance with Admin. R. Mont. 24.174.711" available online at: https://governor.mt.gov/docs/Directives/PHA-Ratio-Directive-under-2-2021_FINAL.pdf.

Note that the directive specifically waived the 1:4 pharmacist to pharmacy technician ratio in rule ARM 24.174.711(1), pursuant to the limitations listed in the directive, and addressed the issue rather than the Board having to review separate technician ratio variance requests. The directive was in response to multiple requests for help in pharmacy staffing, other licensees wanting to volunteer/assist pharmacists, and planning for COVID-19 vaccines being available to all Montanans beginning April 1, 2021.

On April 5, 2021, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) released the interim policy [fema.gov] Coronavirus (COVID-19) Pandemic: Safe Opening and Operation Work Eligible for Public Assistance. The *COVID-19 Pandemic: Safe Opening and Operation Work Eligible for Public Assistance (Interim)* policy defines the framework, policy details, and requirements for determining the eligibility of safe opening and operation work and costs under the Public Assistance Program. It applies to safe opening and operation work conducted from **January 21, 2021, through September 30, 2021**, notwithstanding Section C.3. of: FEMA Policy COVID-19 Pandemic: Work Eligible for Public Assistance (Interim) [fema.gov] effective September 15, 2020. Assistance for eligible costs will be provided at 100 percent federal funding.

On Monday, April 12, FEMA announced the COVID Funeral Assistance registration process opened, providing financial assistance for funeral expenses incurred after Jan. 20, 2020 for deaths related to coronavirus (COVID-19) to help ease some of the financial stress and burden caused by the pandemic. Eligible applicants must submit death certificates and funeral receipts (not exceeding \$9,000) for funeral expenses. Registrations will be taken by staff at a call center established specifically for this assistance. The call-center numbers and operating hours are as follows:

(844) 684-6333, (800) 462-7585 for TTY Available Monday-Friday, 7 am to 7 pm Mountain Time

The [FEMA.gov \[fema.gov\]](https://www.fema.gov) webpage for Funeral Assistance has been updated with this information at the link: <https://www.fema.gov/disasters/coronavirus/economic/funeral-assistance> [fema.gov]

As of May 12, 2021, there have been 754,228 COVID-19 vaccination doses administered and 358,177 Montanans fully immunized.

As of May 12, 2021, there have been 110,317 total confirmed cases of COVID-19 in Montana. 1,593 fatalities have now been attributed to COVID-19 (This includes all deaths attributed to COVID-19 prior to COVID-19 testing in 2020.) The Montana COVID-19 response map is still updated daily, between 10:00 and 11:30 AM. Testing numbers include those tested at the Montana Public Health Laboratory (MTPHL), private labs, or the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Private laboratories include reference laboratories and those in smaller hospital labs performing point-of-care testing.

As of May 28, 2021, local public health departments are still working closely with vaccination providers in each community to deliver COVID-19 vaccine. Currently, supplies of vaccine are limited.

To get the latest updates on the Novel Coronavirus in Montana refer to the links below:

Governor's Coronavirus Task Force: <https://covid19.mt.gov/>

Current Health Alert Network (HAN) Update Link: [HAN](#)

DPHHS: <https://dphhs.mt.gov/publichealth/cdepi/diseases/coronavirusmt>

FINANCE CHAIRMAN

Elmer Palmer

After the end of the Fall conference in Helena I returned to Lolo.

I continued to receive the Finance Statement from Adjutant White, finding no discrepancies in them.

Somehow the report of the Ways and Means Sub-committee filed to get entered the Conference report. In the discussion of recalling the information to enter the report. A Zoom meeting of the committee was called, and the content of the meeting were discussed. The discussion of the of the proposed raffle for first place was a flight for two to Washington D.C., with a spending of \$500.00. Second place was \$1000.00, and Third place was \$500.00.

Discussion suggested any city, amounts of money etc. On a vote of 5 to 1, the final awards were all cash, \$2500.00 for 1st, \$1000.00 for 2nd and \$500.00 for 3rd. This was the final decision of the Committee.

Member Randy Kemp stated that he needed to give up his position on the committee. Randy had been on the committee for several years and was a member that could be counted upon whenever and however he was asked. Thank you, Randy. Randy has been replaced by Scott Miller.

Another matter that came before the committee was a possible grant of funds to cover a possible need for a lawsuit by Post 81 Thomas Mann, Culbertson. Years ago, they were deeded a piece of land with an access right of way for a park for veteran and public use.

Several years ago, the land the access crossed was sold, and the new owner blocked that access, dealing the land useless. Several cases in courts supported the new owner, a powerful citizen in the area. The post's appeal to the Circuit Court before the Montana Supreme Court. It had spent all the available cash it had, and appealed to the Department for funds to cover the Montana Court if it was necessary for them to go there,

The committee worked with Adjutant White finding \$25,000 that we could use for that support, if necessary. This result was approved by the Executive Committee if necessary. The Circuit Court found for the Post. The funds were not needed.

The Committee was called to make some changes to some of our funds in our accounts. The committee was given information by our account managers to be considered, and after two Zoom conversations, the committee unanimously approved the changes.

It has been a pleasure being the chairman of this committee. Thank you for your confidence.

HIGHWAY FATALITY MARKER

Jim Kelly

Members of the Montana Highway Commission approved and established guideline for the American "White Cross" program in 1953, with the blessing of then Governor, J. Hugo Aronson.

Leaders applauded the program as “...**One of the finest projects I have ever seen undertaken by an Organization. . .**”

Today it is estimated there are 3,330 American Legion Fatality Markers located throughout the state, with a possibility of adding 200 each year.

FATALITY MARKER CHAIRPERSON

Chairperson serves at the pleasure of the District Commander and participates in and assists with the supervision, education, promotion, and administration of the American Legion Fatality Marker program on a statewide basis.

ACTIVITIES

Essential functions of the position include but are not limited to the following:

- ❖ Supports Department, District, and Post members through a variety of tasks related to organization and communication.
- ❖ Promote program primarily through education of membership, partners, and community.
- ❖ Review of Fatality Marker Specification and submit to Montana Department of Transportation for review.
- ❖ Montana Highway Patrol - Going through former Attorney General Tim Fox and former MHP Colonel Tom Butler, we began working with Montana Highway Patrol on gathering statewide information from Uniform Accident Reports.
- ❖ Working with Law Enforcement agencies to address information and training about the American Legion Fatality Marker Program.
- ❖ Prepare news releases, newspaper articles, Web-based material, and photographs for use in news media.
- ❖ Obtain information for members and community when requested, promptly return phone calls and answer emails.
- ❖ Twice-monthly news and Fatality Report
- ❖ Fulfill public inquiries as to location of fatal crashes.
- ❖ Ability to effectively communicate ensuring all duties are completed accurately and delivered with high quality and in a timely manner.
- ❖ Handle enquiries from Legion members and the public.
- ❖ Fulfill Requests for Fatality Markers.
- ❖ Provide for Ride-Along training, supervision, and motivation of membership.
- ❖ Encourage member and community involvement.
- ❖ Maintain a filing system of data on fatalities.
- ❖ Prepare regular reports and presentations.
- ❖ Organize, store and print documents.

GUIDE TO STANDARDIZED MARKER HARDWARE

With the election of a new state administration, departments within the administration are subject to change. Montana Department of Transportation is under new leadership and our former guidelines were subject to review. Malcolm “Mack” Long, is the new Director.

I first conducted a review to make sure our standards were in agreement with Federal and State Highway regulations. Use of crashproof, bendable, yielding support posts for our Fatality Markers was an area of concern since the standard was initiated back in 2012. We have not been in compliance since that time, however, under the previous administration we were able to “grandfather” existing support posts. **This is no longer the case.**

Supporting upright post shall be steel “U” delineator post rated at 1.12 ppf (minimum) to 2.0 ppf (maximum), six foot in length.

Even small signs can still be a threat. The Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD) states specifically, in Section 2A-19: "... Ground mounted sign supports shall be breakaway, yielding, or shielded with a longitudinal barrier or crash cushion if within the clear zone."

This stated requirement is applicable to all roads, public or private. Non-breakaway signs have to be replaced to adhere to the new rule.

DATABASE

With cooperation from the Montana Highway Patrol, we continue to add to our data base which contains information on vehicle crashes which result in fatalities. MHP purges their accident history after 10 years, at which point we begin examining newspaper archives. We continue to record motor vehicle fatalities as well as map and enter information into our database.

Currently the data contains information on 3031 fatalities between January 2006 and December 2020. Data includes the following information:

CaseID (If available)
Date of Accident
Age
Gender
City of Residence
Nearest Community
Highway & Location (Highway and mile marker)
Direction of Travel
Vehicle Type (Auto – Pickup – Truck - Motorcycle – ATV – etc.)
Person Type (Driver – Passenger - Pedestrian)
County

Latitude & Longitude
Marker (Locate – Memorial – American Legion)

American Legion Districts and/or individual American Legion Posts may request this information from my office by County if they wish to partake in the Fatality Marker Program.

PUBLIC RELATIONS:

Continues to provide manpower and resources to Posts within District #4, #5, and #6 as requested. To expand the program, we try to provide support posts and aluminum markers to other Districts when our supplies allow.

In addition to local news articles, we continue to seek ways to get information out to a larger audience regarding the American Legion Program. We continue to work with regional newspaper/news stations who inquire as to location of a fatal crash.

Reporters have been given an invitation to “Ride Along” as we enter our Maintenance and Installation season 2021. All in all, this publicity seems to have generated renewed interest in the program and focus on the American Legion.

Letter to incoming head of Montana Highway Patrol and Director of Montana Department of Transportation to inform them of history and goals of American Legion Highway Safety Program.

REQUESTS FOR FATALITY MARKERS

Requests for American Legion Fatality Markers continue to come in as information spreads. Request have been widespread and have come from the Sidney, Red Lodge, Billings, Browning, Lame Deer, Hamilton, Hardin, Jordan, Stanford, Harrison, Polson, Roundup, Harlowton, Big Timber, Belt, Deer Lodge, Fort Benton, Lavina, Warden, Crane, Great Falls, Valier, Phosphate, Avon, Simms, Wise River, Quake Lake, Thompson Falls, Missoula, Cooke City, Huntley, Shepherd, Absorkee, White Sulphur Springs, Stevensville, Bozeman, and on and on. Thank goodness, we have been able to contact a nearby Post, or neighboring Post, to fill many requests.

We are extremely grateful for some Posts which have gone “**Above and Beyond**” to fill requests outside of their area of responsibility. I will not mention them here as I will feel extremely bad if someone gets left out.

These requests often bring closure to a father or mother, a brother or sister, aunt, or uncle, or even a close friend. In one instance, a company in Minnesota requested a Fatality Marker be placed for one of their workers killed in crash near Roundup.

In the past year we received 69 Requests. We know of 19 request which have not been filled based on call-backs.

You might also note, the publicity that has been generated, has resulted in several offers from individuals, who support the program and are not veterans, to volunteer their service to maintain Fatality Markers in the area they live. We have referred veterans, who have called to offer support, to contact their closest Post and join. We now have a veteran, who joined the Cut Bank Post, placing markers in the Browning area.

HOMELESS VETERAN COORDINATOR

Ray Read

The Montana Department's participation in The American Legion's Homeless Veterans Program is now over 14 years old. Jeff Nelson, Montana Department Commander, re-appointed me as the Coordinator of the Program as the as the Homeless Veterans Coordinator in July 2019. Because of COVID-19 my appointment was extended for 2020-2021.

Montana Statistics Related to Homeless Veterans is as follows:

Of the 91,336 veterans recognized 2019 and recorded by the VA as being in Montana, 73,136 are indicated as wartime veterans. Breakdown by era is: Gulf War- 29,123; Vietnam-32,984; Korea-7,356; WW II-3,673. Peacetime veterans' number 18,200. The ratio of gender is Female veterans 6352 (%9.1) and Male veterans 84,984(%89.9). Comment: It is estimated that based on averaging 2.5 members per veteran's household that the total veteran's population including family members is at 228,000+- or nearly 1/4 of the total population of Montana. Re: VA Statistics 2020.

National Statistics indicate that up to 3.8% of Montana's population of veterans is considered to be at risk or homeless. The definition of homeless as defined by United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) is, "Without and abode or home, living with family or relative because they cannot afford or qualify for a home residence, or living in an institutional setting because they cannot qualify or are financially unable to rent or own a home."

Current raw data for the 2019 Montana Point in Time identified the following: Total Homeless Population 1,405; Total Family Households Experiencing Homeless 134; **Veterans Experiencing Homelessness 198**; Persons Experiencing Chronic Homelessness 200; Unaccompanied Young adults (ages 18-24) Experiencing Homelessness 119; Total Homeless Students 3,003; Total Number of unaccompanied Homeless students 700; Nighttime Residence:Unsheltered 249; Nighttime Residence: Shelters 256; Nighttime Residence: Hotel/motel 357; Nighttime Residence: Doubled up 2,141. (contact Info on Homeless for Montana USICHContact- Regional Coordinator: Katy Miller (202) 834-4203. Katy.miller@usich.gov. Interpretation of this data is ongoing and the 2020 Department Convention a more complete discussion should be available.

The information was provided from the January 2021 Point in Time (PIT) Survey by Housing & Urban Development. These reflect the collection effort based in cities and towns broken into Districts by Housing and Urban Development (HUD). These districts do not emulate Montana Department /American Legion Districts as currently configured. HUD District 1,2,3-Eastern Montana; District 4- Havre; District 5- Great Falls; District 6- Lewistown; District 7- Billings; District 8- Helena; District 9- Bozeman; District 10- Kalispell; District 11- Missoula; and District 12-Butte Survey areas did not totally encompass Montana rural areas. The thing to take away from this is that Homelessness is still present and is a problem we must address at Post level and above:

Recommendations for 2021-2022:

1. That the Montana Department of the American Legion continue to develop and conduct its Homeless Veterans strategy in coordination with the National Economics Division of The American Legion, the Veterans Administration of Montana, Federal Housing and Urban Development, the Montana Department of Health and Human Services and the many local service organizations who dedicate resources to reduce and ultimately eliminate homelessness in Montana.

2. That the Department of Montana of the American Legion strive to establish volunteer homeless Veteran's coordinators at Post, District and, Zone levels as necessary to interface with the Department on issues and offer solutions of Veterans homelessness. In lieu of dedicated resources the responsibility falls to the post, district, and zone commander by default.

3. That the Department of Montana of the American Legion supports the various Homeless Veterans Stand downs scheduled throughout Montana for the Remainder of 2019-20. Veteran related events previously identified as being conducted in Plains, Helena, Missoula, Dillon, Miles City, Montana, and Libby, Montana and on the High line of Montana with Havre, Montana as the hub.

4. That those American Legion Posts conducting a Stand down coordinate and apply utilizing Stand Down Notice of Proposed Event Form available online and complete the Stand Down After-Action Report available online at the National Coalition for Homeless Veterans. Email kmcevilly@nchv.org the website is www.nchv.org. Telephone number is 202-546-1969.

INSURANCE DIRECTOR

Gary White

As of April 20, 2021 - \$157138.00 in premiums were paid in the Department of Montana for Long Term Care, HIP, AUX HIP and Cancer, Cancer Disability, AD & D and Life Insurance; a decrease of \$26,660.00 since 2020. Allocations paid to the Department were \$9556.00 a decrease of \$4,965.00; this is after last year's decrease of \$24,521.00. We received a promotional bonus of \$956.00, a decrease of \$103.00, this after last year's decrease of \$1059.00.

This year our projection of income for 2020 was \$15,000.00, we fell short of that projection by \$4,4886.00 With the aging of our membership we continue to lose paying insured members at a higher rate than of new policies being written. We must rectify this by informing our members of the many insurance opportunities LIT offers. The LIT offers 13 different insurance products, but our most popular products are the cancer and EA+ insurance. There is a myriad of promotional information available for the Post to use, please contact me if you require any information. Our job is not to be insurance salesmen, but to inform our members of the insurance benefits. Please remind your members of the Accidental Death & Dismemberment benefit periodically so they can take advantage of this program. The information LIT gathers from these sign ups is the number one source of policies written. Of the 10,006 members on April 20, 2020 only 5200 were enrolled in the free Accidental Death & Dismemberment program, 51.96% of our membership. This is a decrease of 64 members, we are still a long way from 100%.. Signing up for the free AD & D is our best way of ensuring the LIT markets to the right age group. Remember when you transfer a member from DMS to provide them with the information on the free AD & D, they do not receive the info from National. If a member is in doubt about being registered, they can call LIT or go online to check their status, every year we have family members of deceased members attempt to file a claim only to find their loved was not registered. Once a member registers, they are now registered for as long as they are members. We have got to ensure our members are registered for this benefit, especially our new members, and remember any member acquired through DMS has never been given a registration opportunity for the free AD &D. Senior (18 or older)Auxiliary and senior Sons of the American Legion members can sign up for the free AD & D under the same conditions.

Over the years the insurance program has been a “cash cow” for the Department, however unless we get more members interested in the LIT programs it will continue to decrease in allocations paid. The LIT recognizes that they must continue to offer good reasonably priced products and introduce new products to interest our new younger members.

Our best-selling policies continue to be the Hospitalization, EA+ and Cancer policies. This year the Auxiliary participated in marketing the EA+ and Cancer programs to their members, as a result they received an allocation of \$249.00, a decrease of \$77.00.

In 2020 the LIT is instituted a new incentive program for those Departments with innovative membership programs, the best three will receive \$12,500, \$7500.00, and \$5000.00 respectively.

Since 1967, when our Department joined with the Legionnaire Insurance Trust the Department has received \$724,994.00.

Check out www.theLIT.com for further information on LIT products.

The Department has not yet received revenue from USAA products being sold to our members. Our budget was set for \$7,000.00.

LEGION RIDERS' COORDINATOR

Gil Floyd

The American Legion Riders in the Department of Montana have worked hard over the past year of Covid and have continued the Legion's Mission by staying present in front of our communities. This year, we have had one additional Legion Post / District start up a chapter. If you have a Legion Riders program at your Post / District, please share the Riders contact info with the Department on the Post Officer Report and Post Data Report.

The Legion Riders have not had a fast growth in Montana, but we look forward to each District and Post to see what they can do to start or support a Riders program. With over 10 Chapters and over 100 members in Montana, we will be out in your communities, riding through the state, and doing good for the Legion.

At the Department Fall Conference 2019, Department Commander Nelson had assigned an Ad Hoc committee to review the Riders Constitution and have prepared for the 2020 convention. I asked the committee to give feedback and bring up any issues with a proposed Department-level Constitution and with little to no input to schedule a meeting, we wanted to offer the Constitution as written to the 2020 Convention. With the 2020 Covid issues, the Department Convention was canceled so the proposed Constitution had to wait. After the new Department Adjutant took his position, meetings were finally scheduled with the committee and a marked-up copy of the proposed Constitution was offered and discussions took place that included the Department JAG, the Department Adjutant, Glen Sharbono, Demorise Allen and myself. The committee worked on the Constitution over a few weeks prior to the deadline but, with new info coming from National and the complete rewrite coming from the committee, I decided to take the document back to the Riders in the state for discussion. The Riders plan to have a completed Department Constitution and By-Laws for the Department Convention 2022 in Missoula, pending another Ad Hoc Committee being appointed.

Below are the rides and events I participated in during 2020, and I have scheduled more for 2021. This list does not include post meetings and countless conversations with Legion Riders around the country.

Armed Forced Day was the start of the annual Ride 4 Vets (R4V) fundraiser, MT Vet Meat Locker bike wash, and Memorial Day events (placing flags at Mountview Cemetery, an organized a ride to 3 local cemeteries that had canceled events for Covid, and collecting flags from the Memorial Day display), 6 monthly group rides / R4V mileage check-ins, MT Vet Meat Locker Poker Run, Billings Special Olympics 660-mile Ride, Bike night for APC vet gym, Lewistown ALR Poker Run, Patriot Guard Mission, POW Remembrance Ride Helena to West

Yellowstone, Veteran event at Big Timber Rodeo, State ALR ride at Helena Post 2, MT Vet Meat Locker Poker Run, R4V final event and Veterans Day Post Luminary event, X-Mas Toy Run in Billings, and Wreaths Across America.

LEGISLATIVE

Roger Hagan

The 67th Legislative Session adjourned sine die on April 29th, the 80th day of a 90-day session. This session has been an extraordinary session considering the restrictions and adjustments made due to the Covid pandemic. However, the Montana Department of the American Legion was successful in getting many policy issues addressed. Additionally, supplemental funding for the Montana Veterans Affairs Division (MVAD) was secured.

The legislators' support for military and veterans issues this session was fairly strong. The Senate had a decrease of 1 in the number of senators with military service since the 2019 Session, this session totaling only 7. Conversely, the House of Representatives had 20 members who had military service, a number up from the 2019 Session which had 12 members with military service. This is a significant increase, and it was helpful when I advocated for our issues. Having more legislators with prior service made my job easier.

Below is a list of many of the veteran/military related bills that your Department advocated for either in committee or in the halls, and the results of the legislators' actions.

- Legislative Successes/Losses -

HB 22, Representative Frank Garner, (R) Kalispell – Allow in-kind services for easement on state land used for military facilities. (*requested by DMA-passed*)

HB 29, Representative Jeremy Trebas, (R) Great Falls – Adopt most recent federal military codes and regulations. (*requested by DMA-passed*)

HB 31, Representative Edward Buttrey, (R) Great Falls – Clarify terminology on military titles and command authority. (*requested by DMA-passed*)

HB 68, Representative Marta Bertoglio, (R) Montana City – Provide early school enrollment for children of relocated military families. (*requested by Ed Int Cmte-passed*)

HB 111, Representative John Fuller, (R) Kalispell – Revise income tax law to exempt military pensions. (*died in Senate Taxation Cmte-failed*)

HB 160, Representative Scot Kerns, (R) Great Falls – Free hunting/fishing for service members/veterans with 50% disability rating. (*died in House Fish and Game Cmte-failed*)

HB 178, Representative David Bedey, (R) Hamilton – Revise grant dispersal procedures for county veterans’ service offices. (**passed**)

HB 270, Representative Edward Buttrey, (R) Great Falls – Revise laws related to military spouse drivers’ licenses. (**passed**)

HB 357, Representative Jim Hamilton, (D) Bozeman – Revise property tax assistance program inflation adjustment laws. (**passed**)

HB 362, Representative Ross Fitzgerald, (R) Fairfield – Clarify credit for military leave during employment. (**passed**)

HB 438, Representative Steven Galloway, (R) Great Falls – Revise commercial driver license laws to include military waiver. (*requested by Attorney General-***passed**)

HB 482, Representative Steven Gunderson, (R) Libby – Revise license plate laws. (**passed**)

HB 491, Representative Moffie Funk, (D) Helena – Revise access to military discharge records. (**passed**)

HB 522, Representative Edward Buttrey, (R) Great Falls – Create the Montana military strategic and economic task force. (**vetoed by Governor Gianforte**)

HB 543, Representative Bob Phalen, (R) Lindsey – Revise laws related to school instruction on the Constitution and the Pledge. (**passed**)

HB 549, Representative Scot Kerns, (R) Great Falls – Revise state suicide reduction plans to include specific military-related data. (**passed**)

HB 590, Representative Scot Kerns, (R) Great Falls – Clarify military access to federal leave of absence. (**passed**)

HB 600, Representative Mary Caferro, (D) Helena – Private sector hiring preference protection for spouses of military members. (**failed**)

HB 611, Representative Ross Fitzgerald, (R) Fairfield – Revise requirements for American flags at schools. (*requested by MT American Legion-***passed**)

HB 649, Representative Josh Kassmier, (R) Fort Benton – Revise construction laws. (*died in House State Administration Cmte-***failed**)

HB 667, Representative Ron Marshall, (R) Hamilton – Revise tobacco tax allocation for state veterans’ nursing homes. (*requested by MT American Legion-***passed**)

HJ 9, Representative Ron Marshall, (R) Hamilton – A joint resolution in endless foreign intervention. (**passed**)

HJ 21, Representative Laurie Bishop, (D) Livingston – Urge designation of state funeral for last WWII medal of honor recipient. (**passed**)

SB 243, Senator Bryce Bennett, (D) Missoula – Create presumption of domicile for students who join Montana National Guard. (**passed**)

SB 325, Senator Brian Hoven, (R) Great Falls – Ban construction of wind turbines near missile launch facilities. (**failed**)

SJ 19, Senator Mike Cuffe, (R) Eureka – Resolution to honor 75th anniversary of ending of WWII. (*requested by MT American Legion* -**passed**)

SR 13, Senator Doug Kary, (R) Billings – Confirm Governor’s appointees to the Board of Veterans’ Affairs. (**passed**)

SR 14, Senator Doug Kary, (R) Billings – Confirm Governor’s appointees to the Board of Veterans’ Affairs. (MT American Legion opposed some appointees-**failed**)

SR 74, Senator Doug Kary, (R) Billings – Confirm Governor’s appointee for Adjutant General of Dept. of Military Affairs. (**passed**)

SR 82, Senator Doug Kary, (R) Billings – Confirm Governor’s appointees to the Board of Veterans’ Affairs. (**passed**)

SR 85, Senator Doug Kary, (R) Billings – Confirm Governor’s appointees to the Board of Veterans’ Affairs. (**passed**)

If you are curious about the content of any of these bills, please go to this link to read further:
[LAWS Look Up Bill Information Page \(mt.gov\)](#)

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the MT Department of the American Legion for the opportunity to serve during the 67th Legislative Session. I look forward to working with you again in the future.

MEMBERSHIP

Richard Klose

Since the Dept Fall Conference, I had the honor of attending or being part of several ceremonies. Starting with Veterans Day also Pearl Harbor Day, Wreaths Across America, and the Four Chaplains ceremony in February. I also attended the district 11 spring meeting in Billings and the district 4 in Polson.

From 1 July until now myself along with many other Legion members have worked very hard at trying to meet our membership goals. My goal this year was to get the department to 100%, that would have given our department along with our Dept Commander two (2) years in a roll and three (3) out of the last four (4) at 100%. I don't believe that's going to happen because of the American Legion National is trying to install a new computer program and right now it's all screwed up.

For the last two (2) years I have had the honor of serving as the Montana Dept membership chairman. I want to take this time to thank all the legionnaires who have worked so hard on membership. THANKS. We may have a lot more work when it comes to membership for 2022 because of the national's new computer program.

See you at the Department Convention.

NATIONAL SECURITY

Ken Simon

Last year I wrote about COVID and how it impacted our Nations Military and Law Enforcement as well as the toll it took on our nation. While it had some affect and did force the military and law enforcement to change their tactics, they managed to overcome! Let's go backward and move forward, to see what else affected our nations military, law enforcement, and nation of people as a whole.

The upheaval caused by the election was still having an affect on people and government from the National level right down to the State level. Along with this upheaval was the distrust of and movement to completely defund and get rid of law enforcement!

Some of the news reported on by the media appeared to fan the flames of unrest by constantly repeating the same old story in some cases with few if any facts. There were elected officials who appeared in front of the press to push what appeared to be an agenda against law and order, fabrications of issues, and that only one group of people believed in the Constitution and America!

We had foreign service workers and military personnel who were being targeted by a foreign country with sound waves of some kind! This type of act was making them sick and they experienced unexplained health episodes. Was it an EMP incident conducted by Russia, China, or North Korea? If so, what was used and why was it done? Is it something new that is being tested to see how it will affect troops and or equipment on the battlefield? Is the US looking into it to devise a way to counteract this type of incident?

What was the purpose of the "Military Stand Down" that was ordered by the President and did it have an affect on our National Security? Was it necessary? I leave this question for you to

ponder as we enter another year of service to our country. I challenge all to think about this as it relates to our commitment as veterans.

How has the trillions of dollars appropriated and spent affected our National Security and the solvency of our currency and government? This again is one of those areas that I will leave with you to think about as we forge ahead into another year. These are questions that I believe are important for us to discuss amongst ourselves and ask of our representatives. Afterall, it is not a political situation, it is a National Security situation that I believe needs to be addressed.

Do we have a domestic terrorism issue in our country? If you look back at 2020 and recall the protests that were referred to as peaceful, remember the communities that suffered from businesses being vandalized, broken into, looted and burned. Remember the law enforcement officers who were assaulted time after time and some being killed, for “just doing their jobs!” These were not peaceful protests, instead they were organized assaults on our form of government and the communities where they took place. And finally, the citizens of our nation who were held hostage by a group of radical organized mobs. We even had cities in our nation where these mobs took control of the streets by force with whatever weapon or tool available to instill fear in citizens across our country. They were not peaceful protestors they were domestic terrorists. Mayors and Governors either did not, or would not, enforce or allow the enforcement of law and order for fear they would lose face to those causing the problems.

We also have a Border Crisis that has gotten out of hand on the Southern Border regarding the influx of illegal aliens. Many are from countries in Central and South America and nations around the globe! The crisis was created by a lax response in the way immigrants are allowed to enter our country and also by that border being unsecured. There is a right way to enter the United States and that is by applying for entry at any Border Crossing and abiding by the Laws pertaining to Immigration set forth by the government! While it is true the United States is a melting pot, it does not imply that we have open borders and nor can we allow everyone to enter who applies for entry. The drug trade and the use of minors to enter has created a hole in this entry process, allowing people to enter with no regard for our Nations Laws. This process is creating another issue in regard to housing, medical, and jobs which has and will create a further burden for the citizens of the US. There are also those who have entered illegally that may have criminal records or be trained terrorists from a foreign country which creates a National Security Issue.

One final issue is the subject of EMP, Electromagnetic Pulse which can strike the United States in the following ways: a result of a solar flare, a lightning strike, a non-nuclear, or nuclear generated one. A solar flare, called a CME or Coronal Mass Ejection from the sun. We have endured a few over the years and they cause little or no damage, however one of a large enough scale could create disruptions in the electric and magnetic fields of the earth similar to one caused by a nuclear explosion. A nuclear EMP is more energetic and has a shorter burst. A solar flare EMP may also be referred to as a Coronal Mass Ejection (CME) or a geomagnetic storm. Solar flares vary widely in intensity from simply causing bright “northern lights” to potentially destroying some or all of the power grid. Smaller EMPs may cause power grid blackouts. Solar flares can last much longer than nuclear EMPs.

What are the odds for a CME? According to scientists it is 100% probability that it will occur and that we would only have a few hours to prepare for such an event, even though it would be of short duration. The non-nuclear or nuclear EMP would occur with no warning and be far ranging in that it would likely be large enough to take out the majority of the power grid in the US, Canada, and Mexico. Our power grid and power plants are fairly old and have not been upgraded in years. The countries capable of or would try to do this, ranges from China, North Korea, Iran, to Russia. Depending on the size and height of the detonation would determine how much damage would be done to our power grid and how long it would be out! It would also determine the extent of destruction to the infrastructure as well. Anything not protected by a shield or cage that would absorb the EMP would be destroyed or rendered useless. If we survived this event, how long would it take to repair the damage and at what cost? If either of these events occur, do we have the capability to repair our power grid or are we going to rely on a foreign country for those repair parts?

Our nation's military has made plans and worked on protecting their system, but the civilian side has not! Our power grid is over fifty years old with some parts of it over one hundred years old. The time to prepare for an EMP is not next year or the year after, rather it is right now. The cost will be astronomical if we do not get to work on this as those countries who would do the United States harm have not stopped working on devices to take our country down. This goes for both sides of the power grid and working along- side our northern neighbor to prepare and strengthen both countries against an EMP.

Recent EMPs

In 1979 there was a small solar flare that caused Toronto to be without power for an entire day. In 1989 there was a smaller flare that knocked out power in the entire province of Quebec. The odds of these events are hard to predict, but the likelihood is as high as 1 in 8 for the next 10 years (varying with the solar cycle).

On 13 July 1977, two lightning strikes caused overloading in the electric power substations of the Con-Edison Power Company. It caused a power plant north of New York City to fail as well as the failure of the Long Island interconnection grid, which resulted in protective devices removing overloaded lines, transformers, and cables from service. The power failure spread through New York City and resulted in a blackout which only lasted one day, however it cost an estimated \$346 million.

When I worked as a CBP Officer on the Northern Border I was on duty one day when a rainstorm moved through the port area from west to east accompanied by lots of lightning. Several lightning strikes were observed west of the Port and also east of the Port before the system moved off to the east. We had a generator for backup power located next to the Port which would run every Monday for an hour in a test mode. During that time, it powers the Port of Entry and then returns power to the line power before shutting down. When we did

not hear the generator run on Monday a couple weeks later as scheduled, we decided to check the generator to ascertain why. Upon opening the doors on the generator and checking the interior we discovered the battery was damaged and in fact had been blown apart! The port maintenance man was called and after checking the generator, called the manufacturer and they sent a maintenance man to conduct a thorough check of the generator. Following that inspection, he informed us the battery was destroyed by an exterior force, likely a lightning strike in close proximity to the Port of Entry! Those lightning strikes were about a half mile or so away from the Port, but close enough to damage the battery but not the generator itself.

EMPs don't have to be right on top of us to cause damage or even overhead as I have indicated above. This is also a reminder that what happens in our country can affect us regardless of where we live or who we are. We should always be aware of what is happening around us at all times and be prepared, just like we trained and prepared in the military. Remember, an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure!

ORATORICAL

Jeff Holmes

First off, I would like to congratulate and thank Margaret "Emmy" Martin a senior at Harlowton High School and sponsored by Wheatland Post #15. You made us proud, and we are glad that you decided to further your leadership education through the American Legion Oratorical Program. Eva Bruce of Kalispell took second place followed by Angelic Sutton of Wolf Point for third followed by Ella Henslee of Big Sky in fourth. Fifth place was Trista Redfield of Twin Bridges, and Sixth place was awarded to Skylar Tibbs of Corvallis. I would like to thank all posts and participants for sponsoring the Oratorical Contest as part of their post objectives.

We tried a new format this year, and I believe it worked wonderful.

If we have six (6) district qualifiers or less:

We will skip the pool contests and hold the department finals in the morning. We will take the pool awards money and offer it as awards to all 6 places. Finals Awards will be divided based on placing as follows: 6th- \$100; 5th- \$125; 4th- \$150; 3rd- \$175; 2nd- \$200; and 1st- \$300.

If we have more than six (6) district qualifiers:

We will host two pool contestants in the morning by dividing contestants, and then the department finals will be in the afternoon. Pool Awards for the two Pools are \$285 for 1st Place and \$175 for 2nd Place each. The other places will not receive any awards and will be dismissed. This is currently how we handled zone and department contests.

This year's National Oratorical Finals were cancelled due to covid restrictions in Indiana, so our department winner received a \$5000.00 scholarship in lieu of a trip to Indianapolis.

Next year's Department Oratorical Contest will be held in Great Falls in early March. Date TBD.

I work for you and try to make your job easier. As always, let me know what I can do to help.

PUBLIC AFFAIRS & PUBLICATIONS

Vacant

SON OF THE AMERICAN LEGION (S.A.L.) ADVISOR

Dick Ellwein

I participated in the Fall conference and SAL Detachment zone meetings.

I attended the District 6 Fall meeting in Butte and the District 6 Spring meeting in Townsend.

I and several other SAL squadron members helped at the local, district and department oratory contests.

SHOOTING SPORTS

Larry Dobb

The Departments participation in the Junior Shooting Sports program continues to decline. In 2019 eight posts participated, in 2020 there were six and in 2021 we had four. Despite the number of posts that participated, Montana still did very well with two shooters qualifying to compete in the National Championships in Colorado Springs. The top fifteen shooters in the nation in each category Precision and Sporter are selected to compete in these matches. The two Montana youth qualifying to compete are Marcus Klemp of the Hellgate Gold Team (Hellgate Civilian Shooter Association) sponsored by American Legion Post 27 in Missoula. Marcus Klemp will compete in the Precision category and Bailey Milender of the MT 10X 4H (Mineral County) sponsored by Ray Welch Post 13 in St Regis. Bailey Milender will compete in the Sporter category. These matches are 20-25 July and both individuals have accepted the invitation to compete.

At the Department level, the Individual State Champion in the Sporter category is Bailey Milender, of Montana 10X, Mineral County. The Team State Champion for Montana is Montana 10X, Mineral County. (Ray Welch Post 13 – St Regis). The members of the State Championship Team are Bailey Milender (will be competing at National in July), Heath Edison, Madeline Drey and Mackenzie Chapman.

The Individual State Champion in the Precision category is Marcus Klemp of the Hellgate Gold Team. (Hellgate Post 27 – Missoula) The Team State Champion for Montana is the Gallatin Valley Sharpshooters. (Manhattan Post 87). The members of the State Championship Team are Eva Horgan, Lyndy Powers, Paige Hildebrandt and Alison Sutherlin. The alternate is Mariah McPhee.

The fourth post to participate was Malta Post 57 which sponsored the Phillips County 4-H Shooting Sports team.

There are a number of reasons for the reduction in the number of posts sponsoring teams in the 2020-2021 competition. First and foremost were the COVID restrictions in place limiting groups from gathering. Not just in Montana, but nationwide. The change, in recent years, to doing all registration online and only being able to pay for targets by credit card has affected some of our posts. And last year there were some posts that at the last minute were dealing with the issue of Risk Management requirements that have come about through some well publicized cases of other national youth groups being sued over abuse of youth in their programs. In February 2018, the Protecting Young Victims from Sexual Abuse and Safe Sport Authorization Act of 2017 (Public Law 115-126) was signed into law. As a result there are now new requirements. As for its effect on the Junior Shooting Sports program: **All coaches, managers and volunteer staff of American Legion Junior Shooting Sports teams or Junior Shooting must be screened each year prior to conducting any meetings, events, practices or games that involve youth participants. All coaches, managers and volunteer staff members must complete the abuse awareness course either through Protect Youth Sports or U.S. Center for Safesport annually prior to the Junior Shooting Sports season.** (Highlighted material taken from the American Legion Risk Management Guidebook, page 1 & 2).

I want to give a big thank you to the American Legion Posts that did participate in the 2020-2021 matches. It is a great experience for the youth and recognition for your post. And to the posts that did participate last year and those who have done so in recent years, now is the time to get the various paperwork completed for your team to compete. Please don't wait until the last few days, where a small glitch may keep a team from being able to participate.

VETERANS AFFAIRS & REHABILITATION

Kate Hahn

As the MT DSO, I attended the following events:

National Conference, Washington, DC – March 1 to 5, 2021

During the National Conference:

- ❖ I was able to attend the PTSD/TBI Committee meeting
 - Discussion RE: Use of Lethal Weapons for Suicide
 - Buddy Checks
- ❖ Attended the National Commander's address
- ❖ Attended VA&R Committee Meetings

Attended the VA&R Meetings

- ❖ Due to COVID there are approximately 88,000 Legacy Appeals Remaining
 - Want to do 50,000 virtually
- ❖ DBQs are back
- ❖ Increase in the Use of Acceptable Clinical Evidence (ACE) for Compensation & Pension Examinations
- ❖ Mission Act – no privatization of VA Healthcare; a hybrid of Gov't / Non-gov't care
- ❖ Helping Veterans Transition from Service life to Civilian life
- ❖ Legislative agenda includes:
 - Address Toxic Exposure & Burn Pits
 - Peer Support
 - Citizenship for Honorable Service
 - Military Awards for Minority Veterans
 - Improving Health Care for Women
- ❖ Senator Tuberville Talked about HBOT (Hyperbaric Oxygen Therapy) for Mental Health Treatment, limited empirical research

Department Service Officer School, Washington, DC – April 3, 2021 to April 23, 2021

- ❖ Over 19 million veterans in the US
- ❖ 4.8 million receive disability compensation
- ❖ 99% of BVAs are granted (B&M)
- ❖ Training included two new MVAD VSOs: A. Hernandez, Billings, and Z. Slay, Great Falls

District Meetings Spring 2021

- ❖ Attended meetings in Townsend, Roy, and Geraldine MT
- ❖ Met with the Auxiliary and talked about DIC/WP
- ❖ Briefed on BWN, NSC, Evidence to support disability claims
- ❖ Briefed Legionnaires about Montana State Veterans Cemeteries and eligibility requirements for burial
- ❖ Discussed the need for having an Advanced Directive and letting people know what your wishes are

VETERANS ECONOMICS

Clara Santopietro

The mission of The American Legion's National Veterans Employment & Education Commission is to take actions that affect the economic well-being of veterans, including issues relating to veterans' education, employment, home loans, vocational rehabilitation, homelessness, and small business.

Employment:

The National Veterans Employment and Education Division hosted their 4th Virtual Career Fair with the Department of Texas and Texas Veterans/Workforce Commission. The event was a huge success with 910 registered job seekers (Bahrain, Japan, Italy, Germany, Guam, Australia, Botswana, and two active-duty sailors out to sea aboard a U.S. Destroyer) and 260 employers.

SkillMil is a veteran-owned business geared at hiring and placing veterans with companies and organizations globally. Additionally, their focus is on the lower enlisted (E1-E5) and ensuring that they can obtain meaningful employment.

Rolls-Royce is in the process of obtaining a contract from the United States Air Force to redesign and rebuild their Rolls-Royce engines for all B-52's in the Air Forces Fleet. The plant would be based out of Indianapolis, Indiana. They would like to focus on attracting veterans that possess the soft skills they obtain while in the military.

The Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act of 1994 protect service members' civilian employment rights. Specifically, the Act protects service members from discrimination based on their service and allows them to be absent for five years for military service without retaliation. This Act is especially important for members of the National Guard and Reserve. Over the years, the American Legion has advocated for strengthening USERRA, ensuring full protection for those who are called up to serve this great nation of ours.

Resolution No. 85: Support Employment and Reemployment Rights of National Guard and Reservists Returning from Deployment

Housing & Homelessness:

Boston 25 News reported about a Vietnam War veteran who is being evicted from his apartment. About 24 hours later, an anonymous donor reached out to Boston 25 News reporter Malini Basu saying that they will help the veteran cover two months' worth of rent. "I'm being evicted," veteran Frank Sharpe said. At 71 years old, Sharpe said he is feeling scared, alone and with nowhere to go. "With this pandemic going on, it's going to be really rough on me. I'm just recovering from a stroke," Sharpe said. He said he's up to date on rent and has been paying the \$800 per month, but he can't afford the rent increase that's now double at \$1600 per month. Boston 25 News reached out to the landlord twice; both times that person hung up on our reporter. There are situations like this happening all around the nation. We have a nation need to ensure that our at-risk veterans who are on a fixed income are protected, especially our older veterans. The American Legion has always advocated for legislative or administrative solutions to help protect our aging veterans who are on a fixed or low income. The American Legion will continue to monitor.

Resolution No. 331: Support Housing Preference for Low-Income Veterans in the Department of Housing and Urban Development

The Department of Veterans Affairs Enhanced-Use Lease Program (EUL) is an important component of both VA's mission to end Veteran homelessness and the departments overall asset management program. Through this program, VA out-leases underutilized real estate under its jurisdiction or control to the private sector for up to 75 years for the purpose of developing supportive housing for homeless and at risk Veterans and their families. Our partners provide Veterans with housing on a priority placement basis, and in some cases, serve our Veterans exclusively. These EUL projects provide safe, affordable living arrangements near health care providers, which contribute to positive health care outcomes for Veterans. The American Legion is encouraged to see programs such as VA's EUL program being used for the purpose of developing supportive housing for homeless veterans.

Resolution No. 319: Expanding Veterans Employment and Homeless Services within the Department of Veterans Affairs

Small Business:

The Buy American Act requires the United States to contract with U.S. businesses whenever possible. Administrative officials have said that “when we use taxpayer money to rebuild America, we buy American and we support American jobs.” The economic implications of the Buy American Act are:

- A rise in domestic manufacturing as well as a possible reshoring effect within some industries.
- An increase in government spending due to higher acceptable preferential rates
- Shifting away from imports and the economic trade-off that accompanies this shift
- The nation gains in gainful employment and GDP

The American Legion supports the Buy American Act.

Resolution No. 13: Support “Buy American” Policy within the Federal Government to Create Opportunities for Veterans.

Education:

“Predatory for-profit colleges have taken advantage of the ‘90-10 loophole’ to cheat veterans and service members out of their education benefits while providing them with a low-quality education,

useless degrees, and burdening them with student loan debt,” House Committee on Veterans’ Affairs Chairman Mark Takano, D-Calif., said in a statement. “The 90-10 rule was put in place to prevent waste, fraud, and abuse of federal education dollars, but for-profits have exploited the loophole to earn millions in profits.” House Committee on Veterans’ Affairs are hoping to terminate a GI Bill loophole that veteran advocates for years have said sets for-profit schools up to scam veterans and service members and use predatory tactics to recruit beneficiaries,.

Right now, for-profit schools must collect at least 10 percent of their revenue from non-federal sources. The 90/10 rule doesn’t count the GI Bill as federal revenue, despite military scholarships coming from federal dollars. This gives for-profit colleges an incentive to recruit veterans to stay in business, veteran advocates have argued. Because of the loophole, the for-profit school industry has drawn intense scrutiny from some lawmakers for conducting questionable business practices to recruit veterans. One for-profit school, the University of Phoenix, was required to refund \$50 million and cancel another \$141 million in debt for its marketing practices toward GI Bill recipients.

Veterans will not lose access to their GI Bill benefits or other federal aid with the closure of the 90/10 loophole. Instead, closing the loophole will protect their benefits, and taxpayer dollars, from being wasted at low-quality, for-profit colleges. Further, closing the 90/10 loophole also wouldn’t immediately impact any schools; only schools that fail to improve their quality to attract revenue would be affected. Because there are no consequences under the Higher Education Act until a school fails the 90/10 measure for two consecutive fiscal years, schools have time to come into compliance.

The American Legion wants to ensure that student-veterans and their family members achieve educational success and a positive transition to the civilian workforce;

Consequently, we encourage legislation and federal agency action to ensure better quality and student outcomes for institutions approved for use of Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) education benefits.

Resolution No. 15: Support Greater GI Bill Outcomes By Closing 90-10 Loophole

Career Fairs:

Virtual Job Fair

June 10, 2021, 10am - 3pm

VIRTUAL CAREER FAIR 10-11am CDT: Honoring **women veterans** with a 1-hour early entry 11am-3pm CDT: Open to all transitioning service members, veterans, military spouses and their dependents *Presented by American Legion Department of Texas, Texas Veterans Commission, and Texas Workforce Commission*

Virtual Job Fair

June 17, 2021, 1pm - 5pm

RECRUITMENT FOCUS: VIRGINIA 1-3pm: Reserved for job seekers with active security clearances 3-5pm: Open to all job seekers *Presented by JobZone*

Virtual Job Fair

June 17, 2021, 1pm - 3pm

VIRTUAL HIRING EVENT: TELECOMMUNICATIONS 1-3pm: Military community job seekers from around the globe will meet, network, and interview with telecommunications industry employers at this interactive virtual hiring event. *Presented by Hiring Our Heroes*

Virtual Job Fair

June 24, 2021, 1pm - 3pm

VIRTUAL HIRING EVENT: RETAIL & HOSPITALITY 1-3pm: Military community job seekers from around the globe will meet, network, and interview with retail & hospitality industry employers at this interactive virtual hiring event. *Presented by Hiring Our Heroes*

VA HOSPITAL VOLUNTEER REPRESENTATIVE – BILLINGS

Joyce Babcock

In late summer (before the VA closed the Billings CBOC) I delivered the remainder of the Active Duty newspapers that I had on hand. Cleared the tables in waiting rooms and wiped up any “coffee rings”. Total of 4 hours with those “chores” and travel time. Was not able to make any further visits to the CBOC due to difficulty in attempting to walk. The knee that had been replaced 14 years earlier has slipped in the joint and as I will not agree to further surgery, looks as though my foot travels are discontinued. I will resign as a Volunteer at Billings CBOC and our Commander will need to find a replacement.

VA HOSPITAL VOLUNTEER REPRESENTATIVE – Fort Harrison

Bill White

Since the last report many things have changed and as a result some communications and activities have had to be done different this time around due to COVID-19.

1. Attended V.A.V.S. Meetings at VA Fort Harrison, MT by call in.
2. Continued as an appointed representative to the National VA and R committee
3. Continue working with Gary White and Duane Cunningham to ensure that All American Legion Volunteers are registered so that the American Legion gets proper credit, and to make sure that those who were returning to the VA to Volunteer had their COVID and FLU shots.
4. Attended all Spring District meeting invited to as VAVS representative, either by way of teleconference, zoom or in person
5. Worked with the Department of Montana in settling in a new families that had been accepted at Freedoms Village at VA Fort Harrison
6. Worked with Post 2 Helena members to do the buddy check with a 100% check
7. Helped with Post 2 and Department of Montana to give gifts for National Salute To Hospitalized Veterans at Fort Harrison VA Medical Center.

VA HOSPITAL VOLUNTEER REPRESENTATIVE – Miles City

Clancee Collins

The CBOC in Miles City was under quarantine restrictions and access was not allocated for volunteers to come in for any reason. I did talk to the Activities Director on several occasions to see if they needed anything and she informed me that they were doing as well as could be expected. What donations that were brought in from Custer Post #5 members and Auxiliary members was left at the front desk for the Activities Director to pick up.

Custer Post #5 made a monetary donation of \$500.00 to the Activities Director's account to help offset the costs of any essential items the residents might require. This is an annual donation budgeted by the post and is usually spent for various items throughout the year. Because of the restrictions the post decided to give the monies in a lump sum to be used by the Activities Director at her discretion.

I attended a VAVS meeting on December 3, 2020, and March 3, 2021. I will also participate in a meeting on June 2, 2021. We discuss a wide range of topics during these meetings, and they

usually last an hour. Participants engage in shared ideas and topics from all over the state from different Veteran's and Veteran's Support organizations by teleconferencing.

WOMEN'S VETERANS COORDINATOR

Kim Kay Carol McCarty Martin