



**THE AMERICAN LEGION DEPARTMENT OF
MONTANA**

DEPARTMENT CONVENTION REPORTS

2023

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

Lowell Long

I am now nearing the end of my year as your Department of Montana Commander. This has been an interesting year as we had a lot of things happen both good and bad this year. First, we had our district meetings. As I stated in my last report, I was able to make all the fall meetings except for Districts 1 and 6. This spring, I attended all the district meetings. Thank you to all the members of each district that made me feel welcome in your district. Getting out and meeting Legionnaires from across the state is truly the most enjoyable part of this job. Your District Commanders have done an excellent job this year not only with the meetings but with our membership challenges and getting the word out to everyone as to what was going on in the Department of Montana.

From the Fall Conference to now, I have been able to travel across the State of Montana several times. I have been invited to many post events and have tried to make as many as I could with the weather and other commitments. I was able to be in several communities this year that I had never been in before so that was great. A few communities that I had never been in but hope to return were Fromberg, Baker, Manhattan, Denton, and Corvallis. Many I had been by but has never stopped there before. Thank you all for making me feel welcome and a part of your community while I was there.

A lot of my time this year was taken up traveling to Helena for the Legislature. I had never participated at that level with working to give the American Legion's position on many bills that affected veterans. I encourage you to come and participate next time. It will be an eye-opening experience as you see our government in action. I testified on several bills in committee this year. I was able to attend the signing ceremony for two of those bills as well. I want to take a moment to commend Roger Hagen on his fine work as our Legislative expert that helped us to understand the bills and their impact on the American Legion and veterans. He was a great help in introducing me to many of our elected officials in both the House of Representatives and the Senate. His knowledge of the working of the Legislature helped us move through a bill we had been trying to get passed for 14 years. Thank you for all you did during this Legislative season. Also, thank you to everyone

who testified on a bill or sent in your comments to our Senators and Representatives. They helped us to get things through the Legislative process.

I was able to attend several events this year for the American Legion Birthday. Thank you to Post 2 in Helena, Post 102 in Geraldine, and Post 48 in Chinook. I had several more invitations but were not able to make it as I had already accepted another one.

I attended the Women Veterans Symposium in East Helena. I was very impressed with the turnout of vendors and veterans at this event. Those that worked to put it on and run it did an exceptional job.

I attended the Oratorical Contest in Bozeman. While we only had five contestants, they did an amazing job with their orations. Their level of research and understanding of the Constitution was amazing. We have eleven districts and should have eleven contestants at this event. Please work in your communities to try to get a contestant for next year.

It has been a trying year with two of our Past Department Commanders passing away. We lost Art Ellison and Jack Mitchell. These two gentlemen were great commanders and worked to make our department better during their year as Commander. They will be missed by all who know them. I was able to attend their funerals. We also lost two sitting District Commanders this year as well, District 10 Commander, Dale Hewett and District 4 Commander Dave Bennett. They both did an excellent job serving their districts. With their passing, we welcomed two new commanders representing those districts.

I was able to attend the 4 Chaplains Service in Great Falls on February 5th. It was very well attended.

I also was in Helena for the Montana Youth Challenge students touring the Capitol building. The Department of Montana assisted with providing and serving pizza to the students, many of whom had never been to the Capitol before. Bill White and Roger Hagen assisted in serving these students.

Memorial Day came with invitations to participate in programs. I was the guest speaker for the ceremony at the cemetery in Chinook on May 29th. I was in Helena on May 30th for one at the State Cemetery at Fort Harrison and later for one in Helena.

June winds down my tour as your Department Commander. I will be traveling with our National Vice Commander during his visit on June 8-11. I will be attending the graduation for the Montana Youth Challenge class on June 17th. I will also be at the VFW Convention in Whitefish on June 15th and give a few remarks during their opening session. That will bring us up to our convention.

Finally, I would be remiss if I didn't give a shout out to my counterparts this year. It has been a pleasure serving alongside of Department Auxiliary President Yvonne Kostecky and Sons of the American Legion Commander John Meacham. It was truly an honor to work with these two great leaders of their organizations.

Lastly, I want to thank Duane Cunningham and Erin Carpenter for all their support this year. They have kept me out of trouble and their expertise and passion for the American Legion and veterans is second to none. I have enjoyed their input and ideas as we worked to try to make our department better. Thank you for all you do for the American Legion of Montana.

I have really enjoyed being your Department of Montana Commander this past year. You have been very welcoming to me as I traveled around. I am looking forward to continuing to come and see anyone that would like me to come to their area. Reach out to me at crazymarinevet@outlook.com or (406) 945-4209 and I will get your event on my calendar.

DEPARTMENT VICE-COMMANDER

Scott Miller

This past year has been the busiest for me since joining the American Legion, and I have enjoyed every minute of it. The year started out with me being the District 11 Commander and a Fall Conference with me being asked to step up and take the Department Vice Commander position. I would like to thank Hal Rice for nominating me and the rest of the Executive Committee for voting me in as the Department of Montana Vice Commander at Fall Conference. Commander Long has been very enjoyable to get to know and spend time with at many events across the state and spending time with other legionnaires.

I attended the National American Legion College in Indianapolis at the National HQ on 10 Dec for a weeklong course. This course was well worth the time, and I learned a lot about the American Legion and met many new friends from across the nation. I was honored to represent Montana as the 2023 selection to attend this course and graduate, so I look forward to welcoming more alumni back next year from this course.

I attended the 80th Anniversary commemorative event of Four Chaplains Day Ceremony open to the public on 5 February in Great Falls at the Catholic Church downtown. We were joined by Past Department Commanders Larry Dobb and Hal Rice. Rick Brown, The American Legion of Montana Chaplain put on a great ceremony, and we all enjoyed a wonderful lunch after the ceremony.

In February I met with our Department Adjutant Duane Cunningham and Molly Kruckenberg, the Director of the Montana Historical Society about the Trophy Hall Museum located across the street from the State Capital on the 3rd floor of the Veterans Building. The floor is being remodeled and the museum needed some help with financial issues so we were able to have a good conversation about how this remodel came to be and how all the Veterans organizations might pay to keep it alive. Duane, Roger Hagen, and John Joyce were able to find the money through the legislative budget office, great job guys.

I attended the American Legion's Washington/Legislative Conference on February 25 – March 1, 2023. The conference provides our organization's leadership an opportunity to meet with elected officials discussing legislative initiatives and priorities important to Legion members and their families. It also provides a forum that allows Legionnaires to hear from senators, representatives, and officials from the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). Our National Commander's presentation to Joint House & Senate Veterans Affairs Committee was done on March 1st and I was able to attend this event along with legionnaires from across the nation. I was able to meet and speak to several Past National Commanders during this conference and talk about what our department is doing.

I attended the 2023 Spring District meetings for seven out of eleven districts and the experiences have been good, and I can tell you the efforts of the posts in each district have been nothing short of fantastic. Keep up the great work!! I applaud the outgoing and current District Commanders for

all their hard work to provide a quality meeting in their district. Congratulations to all the new District Commanders that have been elected during the Spring meetings.

One of the highlights for this year has been the careful planning of joint American Legion Boys State and American Legion Auxiliary Girls State programs. I have been part of many Zoom meetings coordinating between the Legion and the Auxiliary to ensure we have a successful course at Fort Harrison with Josh Clement, the Director of the two courses. We are hoping to get 100 students for each course this year and with all the new instructors Josh has built something our department can be proud of and continue to grow.

I attended the Memorial Day programs at three separate cemeteries on May 29th across Carbon County with Veterans from multiple generations. It was a great day to see all the generations come together and remember those who we have lost.

To all the posts that have made 100% membership, Congratulations on all the hard work your members did this year to help our department get over 90%.

I am running to be your Department Commander for 2024 and it would be an honor to continue to serve all 9,274 members as your next Department Commander.

I look forward to seeing more of you over the next year and enjoying the Department Convention.

ZONE COMMANDER – SOUTH CENTRAL

Bill Cummins

Since last fall it has been quiet for me. I have helped on a couple of small issues with the District Commanders. I attended all three Spring District meetings. I would like to see better attendance at these meetings by the posts, other than that the meetings went well. I do like the District's business first, I feel this makes good sense and the meetings seem to flow better.

I have also been helping with a small portion of the upcoming State Convention. That being the Golf Tournament and have enjoyed helping set it up. It is my hope that the golf is well received, and we all have a good time and the ones who don't play well enjoy the afternoon and won't have to attend any meetings.

The Zone Commanders position is kind of an awkward Position as the District Commanders receive all the information that the Zone Commanders get and the same encouragement from the Department. I felt more satisfaction as a District Commander than I do as a Zone Commander. I do feel honored to have this position but at times it does not feel right.

ZONE COMMANDER – WESTERN

Dorothy Goodwin

Since the October Fall Conference in Helena, I was busy with zoom meetings, calls on membership and March Spring Conference.

From the beginning of November to February I attended Zoom meetings along with the rest of the Executive Board members on membership where we would call individuals on the buddy check system.

Beginning in March the year got busy. I was at Butte Post 1 on March 4th for a Resource Fair for Veterans. There were approximately 15 resource vendors there and veterans came and went all day long. It was also a beautiful day in Butte for this event to take place. I left Butte the next morning during a snowstorm.

Also in March I made a trip to Helena for two events. The first being the Women's Veteran Symposium. This was a first for all women veterans. There were approximately 20/25 resource vendors and the information that came out of the resources was worth the day to go to the event. Hoping there will be another next year.

The second event the same weekend was District 6 Spring Meeting. I would like to congratulate District 6 Commander Linda Cousineau for the well organized and run meeting. Also, congratulations to the new District 6 Officers.

I had most of April off until the District Spring meeting for District 4 and 5.

District 4 was held at Big Sky Post 426 in Lakeside. This is a brand-new post in District 4 and we all welcome them to the family. Being a new post, they were very enthusiastic about hosting the District 4 Spring meeting. I met with post officers/members on how to set up for the meeting and which rooms we would be using. I had put out an email to all posts in District 4 to be sure to come to this spring meeting to help support and welcome new post. Thank you to all the District 4 posts that came to the District meeting. It was a great way to welcome our new post. A BIG THANK YOU and WELCOME to Big Sky Post 426 for receiving their Charter on April 29, 2023, from Department Commander Lowell Long. Also, congratulations to the new officers for District 4.

The next day I was in Corvallis for District 6. This was a new adventure for me. I had never been to Corvallis before. I would like to congratulate the new officers for District 6.

I have been to Thompson Falls to help the new Adjutant with how to process dues. Also update them with what information came from District meeting.

I look forward to visiting more posts this next year. I have several set up for the month of July and am looking to schedule more. Should any posts in District 4, 5, and 6 would like me as Zone Commander to visit their post please contact me and we will schedule a date and time.

See everyone at the Department Convention in Lewistown in June.

ZONE COMMANDER – NORTH CENTRAL

Kim Kay McCarty Martin

As North Central Zone CDR, I kept lines of communication open with District 2 CDR Jed Damson, District 3 CDR Dusty Bailey, and District 8 CDR Andy Rice. I mostly communicated with them via email but occasionally called them. It was great to see District 3 leading at the halfway mark in membership, they have done a great job. It is also great to see District 2 vie with District 1 for the

top spot in membership. Jeb, Dusty, Keith Stark, and Andy Rice have done a great job and I was glad for the opportunity to work with each one.

On Veterans Day, I was a speaker when I attended Power Post 103's Veterans Day Celebration. It was a great opportunity to meet their officers and members present. I had a great time.

On 12 November I attended the District 8 Standdown put together by District 8 CDR Andy Rice. I set up a table there for women veterans, talked with veterans who attended and was able to talk to various representatives of organizations that help veterans.

On the 5th of January, I attended the Four Chaplains Memorial Service held by Department Chaplain Rick Brown in Great Falls. It was well attended.

During the year I have traveled to Fort Benton Post 26, for their meetings and have been glad to see their enthusiasm in doing their programs in the local community, especially with the youths. Diane Jones headed up an informational meeting for all local veterans on the 10th of May. I was able to attend and learn more about the PACT Act, and resources for homeless vets with a new program in the area.

I traveled to Bozeman for the Department Oratory Contest on the 11th of March. As they were short a judge, I had the opportunity to be a judge. The 5 contestants spoke with enthusiasm and knew the US constitution very well. I didn't realize until that day how hard it is to do the judging. My hats off to Jeff Holmes, Oratorical Chair as he makes the contest go smoothly with his expertise.

In March 2023, I went to a meeting in Power with District 8 CDR Rice to help with conflict resolution between the American Legion Post and the American Legion Auxiliary Unit. We listened to both sides and gave some advice on resolving the conflict. Both parties worked together on putting on a very good District 8 Meeting on the 16th of April.

I attended the Women Veterans Seminar in Helena on the 25th of March put together by Department Women Veterans Coordinator and the Department of MT. I helped Karen Simple with the 20 & 4 booth we had set up for the event.

I attended the Spring District Meetings for District 3 in Conrad, District 8 in Power, and District 2 in Chinook. All the meetings went smoothly from my opinion, with District 3 Vice-CDR Keith Stark stepping up graciously to lead District 3 meeting in CDR Bailys absence.

For Memorial Day on the 29th of May, I participated in Vaughn Post 130's Color Guard firing the M1 Grand at their ceremony they held at 9 am in Fort Shaw and at their ceremony they held at 11am in Sun River. I also attended their 1000 Memorial Day Service at the Sun River Mormon Church.

Now on to Browning Post 127. They were up and running by August of 2022 albite slowly due to having new officers trying to pull everything together. I went to a couple of their meetings before winter set in and I thought things were looking up. I did not know that they stopped having meetings due to conflict in time and lack of attendance until late February when I talked with District 3 Vice-CDR Keith Stark. He impressed upon me to give him time and let him work with the Browning Post. He would try and get ahold of Post 127's CDR Leo Pollock and see about getting the post up and running again. At District 3's Spring Meeting it became very apparent that it is not easy working with Browning. CDR Leo has many activities he is involved in within his job and the

community in Browning, making it hard to bring up the post. Also, Mr. Flammond resigned as adjutant at the district meeting, which after all his hard work going by the wayside, I can't blame him. I have called Leo numerous times and he has not called back as of today. Vice-CDR Stark has been trying to get ahold of Leo also. I had asked for Department Officers at the Spring Meeting in Conrad to give me until Department Convention to see if Browning Post 127 could be a viable Post.

This is my report as of 1 June 2023

ZONE COMMANDER – EASTERN

Ken Simon

I was appointed the Eastern Zone Commander in July 2022 after the Department of Montana American Legion Convention in Missoula.

July 29 – 30 - Attended the Membership & Post Activities Seminar in Indianapolis, IN.

August 10 - Stopped in Glendive on my way through to meet District Commander Dale Hewitt at the Legion Club. Gave him his new District Commanders cap and a computer for the Post.

August 11 - Drove to Ekalaka to retrieve the Books and other items from Post 60 that needed to take to Baker Post 35 as a result of the merger of Ekalaka Post 60.

August 19 – Drove to Glasgow to attend Post 41 Meeting.

August 25 – Sept 1 – Drove to Milwaukee, WI to attend the National American Legion Convention – Attended National Security Council Meetings – Received a National Award for Race to the Top in District 1 Posts the same size as Montana District 1.

September 11 – Drove to Sidney and met with Post 14 Adjutant Jim Sundheim and gave him the Post Packet and discussed the status of the Post with him.

September 25 – Received phone call from Doug Byron in Glendive of Post 28 that Dale Hewitt, Commander of Post 28 and District 10 Commander had passed away at his home on the evening of the 24th! I passed this information on to Dept Adjutant Duane Cunningham.

October 1 – Drove to Glendive to attend the Funeral of District 10 and Post 28 Commander Dale Hewitt.

October 2 – I was invited to ride the Homecoming float in the parade in Glasgow by District Commander Joe Yeoman. Drove to Glasgow and asked to carry the American flag leading the Homecoming Parade.

October 14 – 16 – Attended an American Legion Meeting in Billings

October 26 – 30 – Drove to Helena and attended the Fall Conference at Fort Harrison

November 3 – Drove to Miles City and attended Post 5 Meeting with District Commander Irene Dickerson.

November 8 – Drove to Sidney to meet with District Commander Irene Dickerson and Post 12 Adjutant Alan Seigfried.

November 11 – Drove to Scobey to attend their Veterans Day Service at the school. Scobey Post 56 was going to Present a 60-year Certificate to one of their members. However, due to unforeseen circumstances the individual could not attend.

November 14 – Began notifying the DEC that I had decided on being a candidate for the Dept Vice Commanders position in the Spring of 2023 for the 2023 – 2024 year.

November 18 – I participated in a Zoom meeting with District 10 Post Commanders at the Request of District 10 Commander Irene Dickerson.

2023 - January 14 – Completed notifying DEC of my intention to be a Candidate for Dept Vice Commander for the 2023 – 2024 year.

February 8 – Participated in Dept Call-In of Expired Members and made nineteen calls. Of those calls: I had No answers on 4 / Left voice messages on 4 / Had 7 commit to Renew / 1 Auto Renew and 2 members who had moved out of State.

March 13 – I participated in a Dept Zoom Meeting conducted by Dept Adjutant Duane Cunningham which consisted of the four Zone Commanders and the Post Commanders of the four Zones. The reason for the meeting was Membership goals for the 2023 – 2024 year. I was asked to sit in on all four Zone Meetings by Adjutant Cunningham.

March 25 – I drove to Helena to attend the District 6 Meeting scheduled for the next day. There was a Women' Veterans Event scheduled in East Helena that I had been invited to help with.

March 26 – Attended the District 6 meeting held at the conference room on Fort Harrison.

April 1 – 30 - Attended the District 3, 9, 8,11, 4 and 5 Meetings as the Candidate for Dept Vice Commander for the 2023 – 2024 year. I was unable to Attend the District 7 meeting in Manhattan due to road and weather conditions. (NOTE: The District Meetings were held in the following locations: Conrad, Denton, Power, Billings, Lakeside, and Corvallis.)

April 17 – I was requested to be at the Pre-Convention Planning Meeting in Lewistown at the Yogo Inn.

May 6 – 7 - Attended the District 10 Meeting in Baker and the District 1 Meeting in Poplar as the Candidate for Dept Vice Commander for the 2023 – 2024 year.

May 25 – I drove to Sidney at the invitation of Alan Seigfreid, Adjutant for Sidney Post 12 and gave a presentation on the beginning of Memorial Day as well as Flag etiquette.

June 21 – 25 I will attend the Dept of Montana American Legion Spring Convention in Lewistown at the Yogo Inn!

NOTE: While attending the American Legion National Convention I signed up a New Member for the American Legion. The young man was James Dubreil from Michigan who was attending a job seminar in the same hotel the Montana contingent was staying in. He got on the elevator to ride down to the lobby and asked what I was doing in Milwaukee. When I told him why, he asked what the American Legion was, and I briefly told him. When I finished, he asked if he could join, so when we reached the lobby, I obtained a Legion Membership and signed him up in our Montana Post. I told him that he would need to provide a copy of his DD 214 before I could complete the process. Upon returning home to Montana, I contacted James Dubreil and gave him the fax address for the Department, and he provided a copy of his discharge.

NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEEMAN (N.E.C.)

Hal Rice

Greetings everyone. This will be my last report as your National Executive Committeeman, as I am looking forward to a little more fishing and family time while remaining active in Post 102. It has been a privilege to serve Montana's Legionnaires. During the last year, I have completed the following activities.

On Feb.5th I went to Great Falls to attend the 4 Chaplains Service. This was the first time for me at this church. The program was very good, the best one in Great Falls that I have attended. On March 6th I went with District 8 commander Andy Rice to the Power post where we celebrated the American Legion Birthday. Then on the 16th we celebrated at my home post 102. The TAL bid was at the Vet's Hall. On March 25th I participated in military honors for one of our WWII veterans. I have also sent names of Legionnaires to attend the Washington conference., working on rounding up people to attend. I was also able to attend a variety of District meetings.

I attended Spring meetings in Indianapolis, the biggest issue that was discussed was the removal of charters from two Departments and the continuing investigations of 3 other Departments. In the 100 plus years of the American Legion there had only been 4 such occurrences until the last 2 years where there have been significant issues with Departments and how business is conducted. Both Colorado and Washington have had their Charters pulled within the last few months because of out-of-control leadership by the Department Commander or the DEC. Both Departments were investigated and found guilty of a hostile work environment created by an un-checked leadership group. Department personnel resigned positions and lawsuits were filed. It is imperative that we ensure that this does not happen in Montana and that we treat each other with respect and dignity, that we work together to accomplish the goals and tasks of what our American Legion is based on: The Four Pillars.

There were 25 resolutions approved by the American Legion National Executive Committee at the 2023 Spring Meetings in May and are available on the [Digital Archive](#). They cover Veterans health care, national security, children, and youth, and more. See the full list [here](#). Probably the most interesting one was Resolution 1: The Purchase of Multiple Years of Membership. It is a 5-year pilot program where a Legionnaire may purchase three consecutive 12-month member terms at the

current dues rate. At the end of the pilot program, it will be decided if the American Legion wants to continue with multiple year membership. I urge you to review the resolutions.

ALTERNATE NATIONAL COMMITTEEMAN (N.E.C.)

Larry Dobb

Since my report to the Department Fall Conference at Fort Harrison in Helena in October, I have been fairly busy with American Legion activities. In November (10-12), I went to Alberta, Canada as part of the Montana delegation to participate in The Remembrance Day Ceremonies in the Crowsnest Pass area. There were ten members of the Department of Montana that attended (Gary White, David Driver, Jeff Nelson, Jennifer Dalrymple, Linda Cousineau, Jim and Val Grosset, Ray Stolp, and Jan Dobb and myself). The primary ceremonies at the Crowsnest Pass Consolidated High School were well attended with between 450-500 people in the audience. I was the primary speaker from Montana. We then participated in the wreath laying ceremony at the Coleman Legion Cenotaph and again later in the day at Bellevue Legion where over forty wreaths were laid. Later back at Coleman, I was contacted by a reporter from the Crowsnest Pass Herald who, asked if I could get him a copy of my speech, as he wanted to try and get it in the paper along with some pictures of the American participation. I emailed it to him when I got home and they printed the entire thing along with several photos. He also sent me some copies of the paper.

On January 4, I attended the Four Chaplains Service here in Great Falls. It was fairly well attended. I've attended for several years and the attendance varies greatly from one year to another. One change this year was the local high school Air Force Junior ROTC did the color guard portions, whereas in past years it was always the Marine Corp League. It was nice to see some youth involved in the service.

I was unable to attend the Department Oratory on 11 March due to the weather. I did attend six of the eleven District Meetings, and hoped to make more, but missed four while getting ready to attend and travel to and from the National Executive Committee Meeting in Indianapolis. I did attend District 6 (Helena), District 3 (Conrad), District 9 (Denton), District 8 (Power), District 7 (Manhattan) and District 11 (Billings). Attendance overall was quite good especially D-6 and even my District 9 had 8 of 9 posts represented. Some weren't so good especially D-11, in Billings, where only 6 out of 11 posts had anyone there. Billings Post 119, was not represented although they have over 150 members. Also at the time D-11 had five posts that had reached or exceeded 100% yet 3 of the five were not represented! Another first for me was at D-3 where CN20 Calgary attended via zoom with several people on the screen on their end. And Browning Post 127 did have representation which I had never personally seen before. And a big hand and appreciation to all the host posts that did a great job making us welcome and providing a nice lunch/banquet, with support of the Auxiliary or in one case it was provided by the Marine Corps League.

In May (8-12) myself and NEC Hal Rice attended the National Executive Committee Meeting in Indianapolis. While there, in addition to the actual NEC meeting, we represented Montana at the Western Caucus, the LIT dinner, visited the National candidate's hospitality rooms and the National Commanders Banquet. I also had time to look up Kim Shriver who is the Youth Shooting Sports Chairman and sit down in her office and get a lot of my questions answered and get her phone numbers/email addresses to make it easier to contact her.

Since my return, on May 13, I represented the American Legion at a special program at the History Museum on a 1962 crash of a B-47 bomber in the Absaroka Mtns and the death of the entire crew. They showed a new film on the incident and had several speakers, a great program and I got to talk to some interesting people in the audience before and after. Examples a man whose father was on the battleship Pennsylvania at Pearl Harbor and his wife who lost an older brother on the Bataan Death March. Whenever I get invited to such events, I notify the various veteran organizations here in Great Falls, not just the two American Legion posts, but usually can't get anyone to show up. There was one time when both Post 3 and 341 and the DAV had tables. On the B-47 program, Post 341 was going to be there, but had to cancel at the last moment in order to man Poppy Tables. Since neither post in Great Falls have their own brick and mortar post there are still many in Great Falls who don't know there are American Legion posts here. We should never turn down an opportunity for visibility. I read somewhere where "Visibility is our best recruiter". I believe it.

Also in May, on the 15th I attended a Post 3 Meeting to swear in their new officers. On the 17th I attended the Funeral for PDC Art Ellison in Anaconda. There was a good turnout of PDC's, and the Anaconda Post 21 provided a Honor Guard, Color Guard and PDC, and Past National Vice Commander John Pellegrini was bugler. On May 22, I attended the regular meeting of my Post 15 in Harlowton, where I talked about the upcoming three year membership option and spoke about ANAVICUS and FODPAL, why there are 55 Departments and a couple other things I've gotten questions about. On Memorial Day I was the primary speaker at the joint VFW and American Legion services at the Cemetery in Harlowton. It was a beautiful, sunny day with a good crowd at the ceremony followed by a reception at the Vet's Club.

PAST DEPARTMENT COMMANDER

Glen Sharbono

Toward the end of the Department Convention in Missoula, I Was asked by the NEC/PDC Hall Rice, PDC Richard Klose and PDC Jeff Nelson to run for Alternate NEC. I accepted, although it didn't go over too well with the wife at the time and a little teasing by Hall about how good I would look in a red hat, she finally decided it would be a good thing, and I hope to be elected at the Convention in Lewistown.

I was invited to go to Melfort, Canada with PDC Jeff Nelson, Commander Lowell Long and his wife Kathy. Commander Long did a good job of speaking at their meeting. It was their version of our Department Convention. We must have seen about a million geese of different kinds.

It Was nice to see Ken Box again and seemed to hit it off with their National Vice Commander Brian Weaver, he really wants to come to Montana sometime. It was too bad that we didn't have some small friendship token to present them in appreciation for the hospitality and inviting the three of us at the same time.

Prior to the banquet half the lights went out. It didn't seem to bother anyone. After the lights were back on, we had a good banquet and it started to snow and was quite snowy by morning as we headed back. On the way home we stopped for lunch at a little place called Last Chance Bar and Grill. Not too impressive other than the men's room wall was covered with Old Milwaukee beer girl's posters. We noticed Kathy was missing from the table for quite some time and later found out the lady's room walls were plastered with posters of Firefighters! No photos will be made available!

I was asked to fill in at the last minute as Dean of Montana legion college. MTLC 2022 had 15 graduates. The Department has decided to have future classes held at Fort Harrison National Guard building Prior to Fall Conference to save money on room rentals and facilitate cost effective lodging for attendees. I was then appointed to another 3-year term as Dean of MTLC by Commander Long. I am now working on improving the curriculum.

With the growing number of attendees and trying to make it mandatory for incoming District Commanders we need to ask that we have no more repeat students. It makes no sense to give multiple certificates and pins to the same individuals.

As the District #4 American Legion High School Oratorical Moderator, I was able to have our contest winner Ella Pheifer go on to win the Department level and participate on the National stage in Indianapolis, IN.

I attended The 102nd Birthday party for Libby Post #97 as Covid cancelled their centennial celebration plans, along with Department Vice Commander Scott Miller and our Editor for the Legionnaire paper Christine Miller. We had a lot of fun late into the night. Thanks to Commander Larry King and Adjutant Joe Johnson for inviting us. After being treated to a great breakfast, we were given a tour of their Veterans monument before heading home.

Lost my Post #138 and District #4 Commander as well as a good friend J. David Bennett. Conducted Post Everlasting Ceremony and draped the charter. Held a benefit bingo night at the Post and donated \$1605.00 to Donna Bennett and family for funeral expenses.

I have conducted numerous Veterans funeral honors with PDC Jeff Nelson.

I and my Honor Guard were invited by the VVA to present Honors during the reading of the Montana Vietnam Veterans lost in the Vietnam war at the Depot Park in Kalispell.

HISTORIAN

Ray Read

This is my 20th Year as the Department Historian for a great organization that has serving the veterans, their families and the many communities that the posts serve. I had the privilege and opportunity to travel the 103th American Legion National Convention in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. It was refreshing, impressive and educational in all aspects of my position and appointments. I recommend that all Montana Legionnaires to attend. To be sure travelling by AMTRAK was a good experience and if the opportunity repeats itself, I will attend the 104th TAL in Charlotte, North Carolina.

I have been able to attend most all the 2022 Fall District meetings and about half of the 2023 Spring District meetings. It good to meet with American Legion leaders who strive to make the Four Pillars work better. The unique locations of our District meetings shows the continued Statewide Department communication efforts and travel challenges necessary but emphasizes the continued strength of our community involvement. Outreach allowed Department leadership to emphasize the various programs available in Montana my programs surrounding the importance of history to

American Legion posts attending leadership. I appreciate the interest shown by the various attendees to these events. I was also able to look at local veteran monuments and attend commemorations in various communities.

I found throughout Montana that the American Legion is continuing to do what they have done best for 103 plus 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. The Montana Department district meeting have allowed me to travel the State, work with many seasoned, as well as newer, younger veterans who populate the 117 plus 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. The program will continue if World War II veterans are living in our communities and still serving their fellow veterans are able to participate.

The eight annual commemoration of Welcome Home Vietnam celebration was successful due to the attendance of Lowell Long and other Legionnaires at the Capitol Rotunda event. See you next year. The Vietnam 50 Commemoration will sunset in the year 2025. If you have not signed up for this program do so. All materials and assistance is FREE.

I am asking all Montana Department American Posts to continue establish their Local Legacy. Your Post's History is important to defining your Post accomplishments. To facilitate 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 all repost continue with the attributes of The American Legion Centennial Program. The now historical program remains 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 years in possibly creating a Centennial History. With your cooperation and participation that can happen.

I encourage all Legionnaires to participate in the annual or special Veteran related events. Ongoing Veterans and Memorial Day and up-coming events. Including Law Enforcement officer the year, Firefighter of the year, all veteran related employment awards, the Children and Youth /Americanism programs such as the Government Survey the Constitutional essays, The American Legion Oratorical program, and the 76th annual American Legion Boys State and American Legion Auxiliary Girls State. Get out there, get involved and make it 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, I will forward a first-place winner in each Post category to the National Historian by September 2022. The Judging will be accomplished in October 2023. Post entries are due at the beginning of Montana Department Convention, Lewistown, Montana.

The American Legion Officer’s guide and Manual of Ceremonies contain much information about the history contest. Also, in that section of the *Guide* are “Capsule History of the American legion” and “Helpful Hints for District/County Historians.” Please notify your Posts in your District of this readily available material. This information will also be sent out through electronic means via the Montana American Legion website www.mtleion.org or by mail, as necessary. All entries will be judged and the first-place winners in either category (narrative or yearbook) will be certified, and I will forward them to National Historian for entry in the announced contest for that category. Keep in mind the requirements that must be met for the National Contest. And I refer you to the most current edition of the Officers Guide for the official rules of the 2022-2023 Legion year, or at the legion website www.legion.org.

DEPARTMENT ADJUTANT

Duane Cunningham

The 2022-2023 year brought many challenges and quite a few success stories for the Department of Montana. Department finally got moved back into our regular home in the HAFRAC on Fort Harrison after an extensive remodel. We added a small conference room that comes in handy during Fall Conference. The Fall District meetings were a success with the Host Posts doing a magnificent job of meeting everyone’s needs and expectations. Department visited Dutton, Big Timber, Cut Bank, Hinsdale, Glendive, Butte, Missoula, Fromberg and Rocky Boy. The Spring Meetings took us to Helena, Conrad, Denton, Power, Manhattan, Billings Lakeside, Corvallis, Baker, Poplar and Chinook. The visit to Lakeside was exciting as Post 426 is the newest Post in Montana, chartered at the onset of 2023. Post 426 has hit the ground running with membership and resolutions and I believe they will impact every Veteran in Montana with some of the ideas they are putting forth by means of resolutions that highlight the VA and treatment alternatives to PTSD and its connection to Veteran suicide. Very exciting.

National Commander Vincent J. Troiola visited Montana in September and it was a highly successful event. The Commander and his Aide arrived in Helena attended a POW/MIA Remembrance Event in Helena the first day; giving a poignant speech about the day and its true meaning. Upon completion of the reading of the names of Montana’s remaining POW/MIA brethren; the visit continued with a stop at the State Capital and a visit with Governor Gianforte’s Policy Director Glenn Oppel to discuss Montana Veteran specific issues. After a quick trip through the Montana Historical Society and the Nutter/Shore Trophy Room, it was off to the Veterans Hospital at Fort Harrison for a tour of the facility and a quick lunch with Veterans in the VA canteen.

That evening the National Commander was in Three Forks, Montana, where Post 93 and Commander Don Carlson hosted a tailgating event prior to Friday nights Class B football game against Whitehall. With around 35 Legion Caps in attendance the National Commander acted as the Honorary Captain for the game conducting captain introductions and the coin toss. The officiating crew for the game were all Veteran's and Legionnaires. Both the Whitehall and Three Forks fans, school administrators and players thought it was a big deal to have a distinguished guest in attendance; and made the event very memorable. The National Commander had a good laugh when one of the captains asked him as he departed the field if he was a General; I of course responded with a simple "No son, he had bigger dreams than that, he is an Admiral".

Saturday morning found us in Dutton, Montana at the Fall District 8 meeting. The District held a great meeting and the Commander enjoyed meeting the Legionnaires from that area. We had dinner in Craig at Izzac's and the next morning the Commander departed for Kansas. Since the convention, the Commander has been on the road and still had an additional 53 days of travels before he returns to Maine for a well-deserved break. I would like to thank everyone who made the Commanders visit a success. He truly enjoyed the stop.

American Legion Boys State made the move to Fort Harrison with a new Director and a new home. With around 63 Delegates the new curriculum, counselors and staff set out to reinstitute the importance of American Legion sponsorship of the program. Needless to say, the program went off with minimal issue and the Adjutant General of the Montana National Guard at Fort Harrison was so pleased with both the program, what it stands for and the exemplary kids attending it was setting the stage to make Fort Harrison the permanent home of American Legion Boys State.

Probably the biggest issue Department faced this year was with the Donald G. Nutter – Chester Shore Memorial Trophy Hall. The American Legion was asked to take the lead on behalf of all Veteran Organizations during a expansion and remodel of the building. The Montana Historical Society (MHS) is also located in the Montana Veterans and Pioneers Memorial building. There are three floors and a basement in the Memorial Building. The first two floors are occupied by the Montana Historical Society. The top floor is dedicated entirely to Veteran's offices, meeting rooms and the Donald G. Nutter – Chester Shore Memorial Trophy Hall. This floor was

The Historical Society Director informed the Veteran Service Organizations that removal and storage of all military artifacts within the Trophy Hall would need to be at allocated and paid for by the Veteran Service Organizations themselves. The American Legion was tasked with the removal of all artifacts no later than 1 May, 2023 and store them for a three-year period while renovation is completed. These artifacts trace back through American history, beginning with the Spanish American War. The artifacts will require storage in a climate- controlled setting at a cost of around \$10,000 per year.

The sudden decision to require the Veteran Service Organizations to store these artifacts was made in November of 2022 despite the renovation project being started in 2003 and funding for the project being approved during the 2019 legislative session. Unfortunately, a 3-year, \$30,000 project to store a part of Montana's military has not been considered or appropriated in any of the Veteran Service Organizations. The American Legion also had concerns regarding the re-appropriation of the Trophy Hall into a MHS conference room. We found this unacceptable.

Per Montana Code Annotated (22-3-302), (encl 3); “The Veterans’ and pioneers’ memorial building shall constitute a perpetual memorial to the war Veterans and the pioneers of Montana, and said building shall be devoted to the use of the united Spanish war Veterans of Montana the Veterans of the Foreign Wars of Montana, the American Legion of Montana, the Disabled Veterans of Montana, the World War I veterans of Montana, the Montana historical society, the society of Montana pioneers, and the sons and daughters of Montana pioneers and for the housing of books, records, documents, and other property of such veterans and organizations; and there shall be provided in such building appropriate office quarters for the state headquarters and officers and employees of such Veterans and organizations and for the librarian and other employees of the Montana historical society.”

Governor Gianforte was contacted, and Department worked behind the scenes trying to figure out what to do with the artifacts with no funding or assurance we were getting back in there once the remodel was completed. The Governor’s Office and our Finance Officer/Legislative Sergeant at Arms, John Joyce, put me in contact with Representative David Bedey from Hamilton. Representative Bedey was able to secure funding for the storage and moving costs, adding it to the MHS budget. Representative Bedey also ensured that the 3rd floor of the MHS will remain as it was intended upon renovation. A Veterans Hall. I cannot stress the gratitude that Montana Veteran’s owe Representative Bedey.

Lastly, Department was visited by the Western Region Vice Commander Douglas Uhrig from 8-11 June. Vice Commander Uhrig is from Wyoming and requested that we visit some of the more isolated and smaller Posts in Montana. We visited the Eastern part of the state, with stops at Post 32 in Terry, Post 28 in Glendive, the Eastern Montana Veterans home in Glendive, and Post 12 in Sidney where we were joined by Post 114 Fairview and a final stop in Miles City for a meet and greet with Post 5. The trip was well received, and the Vice Commander had a wonderful time meeting Montana Veterans. I would like to thank Commander Lowell Long, NEC Hal Rice, Past PDC Richard Klose (who’s birthday we celebrated during the trip), Zone Commander Ken Simon, District Commander Irene Dickerson, the Posts we visited and Legionnaire Clancee Collins for their contributions to making the visit a rousing success.

That is my report. God’s Speed to all.

CHAPLAIN

Rick Brown

This will be my first report to the Department Conference by me. At December of last year, I was asked to fulfilled the term left open Chaya Semple who had to step down for medical and personal reason. Therefore, my report only is for the last six month of the year.

January was a month of getting to know key people and set in motion the Four Chaplains Service for February. The service was a great and much-admired in part to the hard work of my secretary (who is a member of Post 3) and the willingness of the members of Post 3; 130 and 341. Without their willingness to help, the service could had not been as great as it was. The total for this event was 60 people in attendance and another 60 watching by Facebook. The highlight came from Senator Daines in a video, saying that his uncle was on that ship.

I was able to attend District 3 meeting this resulted in getting to know Department Historian, Ray Read on a personal level. We discuss the future of the American Legion. Because of my own medical issues, I was unable to attend the others District meetings.

During my six months as appointed Chaplain, having made three hospital visitations, mailed out six cards to different Legionnaires. Plus, been on the phone with three other Legionnaires for different reasons.

A surprise came to me when asked if I could be a backup for a possible wedding, because a minister was unable to do the wedding at the last minute. But they were able to find a local minister that could do it.

On Memorial Day, Post 3 held their 3 annual services that day which I gave the prayer for each one of them.

I served as chaplain for Post 130 for the past 4 years.

I also performed the Memorial Service for God and Country at the conclusion of the 2023 Department Fall Conference.

SERVICE OFFICER

Candice Hering

PARLIAMENTARIAN

Josh Clement

Our organization is in need of continuous training on how to conduct meetings, elections and write resolutions.

I start my report with a purpose that we need to focus on.

Needs Assessment:

Who should be the trainer?

When should we train?

To what level should we train these?

How do we conduct this training?

Notice I did not ask why. We all have all been in meetings, observed elections and talked to our peers with great ideas for our organization. Meetings should be organization with an agenda for a purpose. Respect and decorum must be maintained while engaging all our members. Some of you may disagree with my assumption that all leaders at district and above should be able conduct a meeting with almost no prompting. Presiding officers need to demonstrate confidence and knowledge in basic Robert's rules.

I attended three district meetings in the spring with the intention to only discuss American Legion Boys State. During all three meetings opportunities presented that allowed me to mentor the various presiding officers.

These meetings lead to the potential illumination of a couple of lanes to focus on.

First, is mentorship. This is in no way a new concept for our organization or state. Who are we mentoring and for how long? New district commanders should reach out to previous leaders for guidance and know you are not alone. The lack of operational support for district meeting is another reason for one zone meeting per year to have "experienced" zone commanders show new district commanders how to conduct a meeting. Too many times we have shoved a novice district commanders into the role of a presiding officer with no training. How many of you were trained that way in your initial military training. (see me if you attended Coast Guard initial training - monetary reward)

We need to be mentors. We should not need to write out one but if a structure plan would help, lets build one.

Second was training. No one knows everything but we have some serious talent in our department. These meetings in the spring remaindered me action is needed not just problem admiring. I asked permission to conduct a zoom training on parliamentary procedures. It was scheduled two weeks prior to convention to provide an opportunity for all leaders to attend to support our commander at convention. We had eight attend. Three members from the DEC. I am not sure if it was of any value.

I am always happy to sharing any knowledge I have. I do challenge every member of the DEC to assess the training needs, develop a plan and gather the resources needed to make our organization better.

I will close with a few recommendations.

- 1) District Commanders require you posts commanders send you agendas for August through October this year. Review it and provide feedback. No agendas is a critical failure of a presiding officer.
- 2) Direct (yes be a leader and direct) 6 to 8 TAL Basic Training subjects for post commanders to cover at the end of 6-8 meetings.
- 3) Have each post draft a resolution to be submitted at your Spring District meeting. There are 100s of ideas on how to improve our organization while focusing on our four pillars.

Let 2024 be a year to of action and let's lead.

FINANCE OFFICER

John Joyce

We have completed another good year with our finances; with all 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 around 15.00%. Our account was transferred from DA Davidson to

Stockman Wealth late last year and we have seen steady improvement of our assets as we moved from investing in a small cap/start-up higher risk portfolio to large cap low risk portfolio. Overall, based upon current performance, we should continue to see solid growth even in times of a less than an ideal market. It is recommended that we have Stockman Wealth provide an investment overview to the Finance Committee every year at Fall Conference and that the Finance Committee review the overall health of the investment portfolio every 5 years to include requesting investment briefings from potential new investment firms to ensure that we are staying competitive. This process should have been considered years ago.

We have also completed the move of all the Department accounts to Stockman Bank and Stockman Wealth Management; we can now start to focus on planning for the long term of our reserves. By shifting all accounts to one banking and investment organization, we have also seen a major decrease in banking fees resulting in additional capital. We have a few new members coming on to the Finance Committee and I am looking forward to meeting with them.

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 easy and really only having 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 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. We are working on keeping this process going and looking at adding in the rule of no check will be issues under \$10.00.

In the future, we are going to work on Travel Lines in the budget. In many areas, we are spending program money on travel instead of the program and that is causing a lot of problems with the people who do our accounting review. The accountant is having a hard time explaining to the IRS, how we are spending our money properly. There is a chance we may have to shut down the office to transactions for a couple of weeks so we can address the travel issues, get the rules in place, and the information out to the legionnaires.

As the Finance Officer, I make 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 Duane Cunningham and Office Manager Erin Carpenter as well as all my fellow legionnaires.

JUDGE ADVOCATE

Tim Fox

Greetings to all my Legionnaire friends and colleagues. I am writing this report just ahead of the Memorial Day weekend. I look forward to seeing some of my veteran friends on Memorial Day as we remember and honor all those who have paid the ultimate sacrifice in service to America. Last summer my wife Karen and I traveled to Normandy France to pay our respects to my Uncle Jack who is buried at the American Cemetery near Omaha Beach. It was a very moving experience, and the French cemetery staff treated us like royalty. I highly recommend a trip to Normandy to see the museums, the American Cemetery, and the various D-Day attractions. I recently commissioned a painting of my Uncle Jack's B-17 bomber airplane over Abbeville, France on the day, June 22, 1944, that the B-17 was shot down. Uncle Jack and all but one crew member were KIA that fateful day. Here's a photo of the commissioned painting of my uncle's aircraft called "Spare Charlie."



LEGIONNAIRE ARTICLE

In January I submitted an article to the Montana Legionnaire magazine about charity scams that target veterans. As many of you know, veterans are a preferred target of scammers because we have worked hard all our lives and have assets and savings to show for that hard work. In the article I encouraged The American Legion members to educate themselves and their veteran friends about how these scams work so that we can all protect ourselves from being scammed.

MEMBER ADVOCACY FOR STATE LEGISLATION

During the last session of the Montana legislature, some members advocated for specific bills while identifying themselves as members of The American Legion. Some members were concerned about the confusion that might arise as to whether the Department or The American Legion supported or opposed certain bills that came before the Legislature. In addition, it appeared that some members may have used Department e-mail lists to send e-mail messages to members to advocate for pending legislation. Also, many of us received an e-mail from an outside organization that was advocating for a particular bill, and it was clear that someone provided that organization with a Department e-mail list.

I recommended to Department staff and officers that it might be appropriate to discuss policies and protocols that could be implemented in the future to avoid confusion as to whether the Department or National is supporting or opposing state legislation, and as to whether individual members are speaking on their own behalf, or on behalf of the Department. For example, it may be advisable for members to specify in their written or oral statements about pending legislation that their opinions are not those of the Department or of The American Legion as a whole. In addition, I have recommended that the Department clarify that Post and Department e-mail lists are not to be used by individual members or outside groups for advocating for or against pending legislation, or for any other political purpose, unless sanctioned and approved by the Department. It is very important that Legion members do not provide non-members or outside groups with Department e-mail or address lists without Department approval.

SCAM E-MAILS

I have received dozens of scam e-mails on my Department e-mail address, and I am advised that many of you also receive scam e-mails. Many of the scam e-mails that I receive are disguised to appear to come from past and present Department Commanders. I have alerted Duane and Erin about these scam e-mails and have suggested that we remove Department officers' e-mail addresses from the Department's web page. Duane has suggested that we only list a generic e-mail address and a phone number on the Department's web page, and I agree that this would be an appropriate action to take.

ODDS AND ENDS

In early December and again in February I reviewed a proposed resolution about nominations for Department officers that would be intended to avoid situations where officer candidates delay on announcing their candidacy.

In early January I helped a Post resolve some issues with a bank that would not open a bank account for the Post.

In February I worked with a Post on a rental agreement for a building owned by the Post.

In April I assisted Erin with issues relating to the liability insurance policy for The American Legion Montana Boys State.

In May I assisted a Post with issues relating to the use of Post social media accounts by non-members who have a for-profit business affiliation with the Post.

Also, in May I assisted a Post with questions relating to a state gaming license.

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS

Dave Haulman

I have no activities to report for this year. I was sick and not able to attend the fall convention.

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 all that you do. Thank You!

2023 Winners!

High School Essay – 4 submitted

1 st	Janessa Chaplin @ Hamilton HS	Ravalli Post #47, Hamilton
2 nd	Donovan Houser @ Corvallis HS	Corvallis Post #91
3 rd	Marleah Carter @ Twin Bridges HS	Dan Brockmans Post #31

Junior High School Essay – 5 submitted

1 st	Laurel DeGroot @ Hamilton Home School	Ravalli Post #47, Hamilton
2 nd	Bella Rich @ Sheridan Middle/High School	Anderson-Simpson Post #89
3 rd	Averi Maddox @ Twin Bridges Middle School	Dan Brockman Post #31

Government Survey for Junior High 7th Grade – 2 submitted

1st	Chase Hutchinson @ Twin Bridges Middle School	72% Dan Brockman Post #31
2nd	Kayla Peck @ Judith Gap School	70% Judith Gap Post #70
3rd	None submitted	

Government Survey for Junior High 8th Grade – 7 submitted

1 st	Cooper Vermillion @ East Valley Middle School	100%	Lewis & Clark
2 nd	Trent Fullbright @ Chester-Joplin-Inverness High School	98%	Chester Post
3 rd	Kirsten Miller @ Dutton Brady High School	96%	Dutton Post #64

Government Survey for High School Seniors – 5 submitted

1st	Ian Frederick @ Twin Bridges High School	83%	Dan Brockman
2nd	David Lenk @ Corvallis High School	81%	Corvallis Post

#88

3rd Gracie Cochell @ Chester-Joplin-Inverness High School

80% Chester Post

Keep up the work with our students and schools. What you do matters!

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

District 1 Membership is progressing. We are striving to have better communication. I have traveled over 1500 Miles since getting home from Department convention. Our District meeting was hosted by Post 55 in Poplar. We had 9 of our 13 Posts present. Ken Simon gave out our Membership ribbons from National. We are still look for American Legion Boys Staters. We are trying for more younger veteran vet involvement. Culbertson won their case and has paid back our State Department .

DISTRICT 2 - COMMANDER

Jed Damson

Boy was this a year!! After the fall conference, it was jump in time. Post package delivered. I want it. Then the challenge came our fearless state adjutant wasted no time in putting out top district number in the state Boy district number two posts jumped at it. I renewals coming in fast and furious. Sure, proud of these veterans on the Highline. Programs in the American Legion. American Legion Boys State dear to my heart started out fine, even with a set back update. We tried hard for the American Legion Oratorical contest delegate, but it just wasn't in the book for this year in our District 2. We had American Legion seniors' essay for the first time a good start. The post helped the American Legion exhilarate sponsoring. American is an essay contest which they ran, and we helped was a success, even had a state winner which will move on to national. Spring district 2 meeting turned out very successful. Even with a cancellation of one post in a hurry up meeting change. Thanks a bunch Chinook Post 88 for the hosting. All in all, this year has been a challenge, but I feel it was successful.

DISTRICT 3 - COMMANDER

Dusty Bailey

DISTRICT 4 - COMMANDER

Bob Lehman

As the newly elected District 4 Department of Montana at the District 4 Spring Meeting April 29, 2023, I have completed filling out and sent documents to American Legion Department of Montana Headquarter as required to fill position of a District Commander. I have officially relocated District 4 Headquarters to Kalispell Montana using available space at Kalispell Post 137. This location is my home post as I am the current Post Commander.

District 4 at the American Legion Department of Montana 2023 Oratorical Contest had 1 contestant, which won first place and when to American Legion National Oratorical Contest.

District 4 expanded from thirteen (13) to fourteen (14) active posts since the 2022 Department of Montana Convention. District 4 Restructure for 2024 Membership Year is 1160.

I will start Post Visitations on June 26, 2023, with Kalispell Post 137 and continue working with remaining posts setting visitation schedules. District 4 Commander Message will be Move forward, Add new members, Train existing members (**MAT**). During post visitations will enable me to understand each post and where additional assistance is needed by District 4 key personnel to promote **MAT**.

Learning from other District Commanders by rereading past District Commanders Reports gives me a better understanding to open communications between District and Post to working side-by-side.

DISTRICT 5 - COMMANDER

Terry Wahl

Since the Department Fall Conference in October 2022, I have visited 2 out of 12 Posts and will visit 2 more by the end of June. I attended the District 5 Spring meeting in Corvallis with Post 91. In addition, I attended several meeting with Post 91 to help establish and Emergency Assistance Support Program with the Ravalli County Sheriff's Department as needed during disasters when the Sheriff is shorthanded. Individuals from Posts in the Bitterroot Valley would be available to supplement staff in the communications center for example. I also attended District 4 Commander David Bennett's celebration of life ceremony in Ronan on April 6, 2023.

Several Posts are involved with highway cleanup in their areas, Memorial Day Ceremonies to include placing wreaths at the local cemeteries, Flag Day ceremonies, Veteran Assistance, Veteran Career Fairs, Sponsorship of American Legion Baseball, Post 135 Lolo recently sponsored a Little League Team, American Legion Birthday, Four Chaplains Memorials, donations to Veterans and Childrens Foundation, Operation Comfort Warrior, Oratorical and Essay Programs and our Suicide Prevention training is ongoing and will be a priority this year and beyond.

I have enjoyed my time as a District Commander and want to personally thank Erin and Duane for all the assistance our District has received from Department.

DISTRICT 6 - COMMANDER

Linda Cousineau

After attending the American Legion National Convention, my District Challenge was sent to the all the Posts: A \$100.00 donation for 100% Post membership by January 1st and \$50.00 for 100% membership by April Fool's Day. There are two \$100.00 winners (Twin Bridges and Sheridan) and four \$50.00 winners (Lincoln, Deer Lodge, Whitehall and Townsend). The money will be given in the Posts' name to a Post chosen nonprofit charity that helps veterans. Checks and certificates will be given during Department Convention. Thank you to those Posts that gave 100% effort to gain 100% in membership.

As a District Commander and an NALC graduate, during the American Legion Fall Conference I conducted/taught throughout the Department ALC training on how to do a 30-second elevator speech. Everyone was able to do an impromptu speech randomly throughout the course.

November first I started visiting Posts and completed all 11 within 2.5 months despite a blinding blizzard in Lincoln. During Post visits, I spoke on working the American Legion Four Pillars, the importance of training within Posts, working together as a family (SAL, Aux, Riders), creating a family if you're missing one of the organizations, respect for each other and ARE YOU HAVING FUN!

Attended Canada Remembrance Day ceremonies with other MT Legionnaires/family at both Coleman and Bellevue, Alberta, CA.

Broadwater High School Veterans Day Ceremony; assisted in folding the flag with Jen Dalrymple as Janet Wagner read the meaning of the 13 folds for the k-5th graders.

Attended and participated in Post 42's Four Chaplains Ceremony.

Conducted District 6 Oratorical Competition as well as attended Department Oratorical in support of the District 6 winner.

Attended Veteran's organizations open house at Butte Post 1.

Attended the Helena Women Veteran's Symposium and brought three other women Legionnaires with me.

Conducted the District 6 meeting: Nine of eleven Posts represented with 28 members attending. Post 2 Resolution recommending Richard Klose as National Vice Commander (Amended to add his membership on the Governor's MT Veterans Affairs Board) passed without additional comments or amendments.

Voted on new Post membership goals: passed. New District 6 officers were voted in: Commander Dave Haulman, Post 1 Butte and Vice Commander Tony Wagner, Post 42 Townsend all other members remain the same.

Attended the Welcome Home Vietnam Veterans parade and activities in the rotunda of the Capitol.

Assisted in one of Department's membership phone calling efforts.

And of course, kept communications open keeping Department and District 6 information flowing via in-person, phone, texts and emails.

DISTRICT 7 - COMMANDER

Dan Smart

District 7 has a pretty good winter and spring. As of this report the District is sitting at 93% of goal on membership. We currently have two Posts that have exceeded the 100% mark for the year, Post 25 (White Sulphur Springs) at 113% and Post 65 (Ennis) at 130%. Congrats to Commanders Cummins and Sargent for working hard on retaining and recruiting members.

The spring meeting was held at Post 87 Manhattan and was attended by 8 of the 11 Posts. Attending Posts were Post 14, Post 19, Post 23, Post 25, Post 30, Post 65, Post 87, and Post 93. Absent were Posts 78, Post 99 and Post 118. Lots of good information was passed on to the Post's from State representation, guest speakers and from Posts themselves. Reports given by each Post Commander showed activity and different ways to stay engaged with their respective communities, schools, and Veterans.

I have attended 6 of the 11 Posts monthly meetings since the State convention last year and hope to be at several more before State Convention this year. Posts are currently getting ready for big summer plans, parades, and celebrations. A majority of the Districts posts are very active with membership and recruiting. I always look forward to our Fall meeting and the reports from Commanders about their summer activities.

DISTRICT 8 - COMMANDER

Andy Rice

There were plenty of good things that transpired within district 8 this year although we were unable to attain the goal of one hundred percent on membership. We held a district hosted stand down which Geraldine post 102 volunteered and provided the location and food for the first one. The event took place on Veterans Day with many of the local businesses donating to the cause or providing services to the veterans who attended including a VA representative, mental health counseling, smoking cessation help, and free haircuts. Post 102 gained 4 new Legion members and 3 SAL members. Altogether the event was a resounding success and I can say the goal is to continue the event with the district and with a new post within district 8 hosting the event each year. During the spring district meeting Fort Benton post 26 stepped up to not only host the stand down event but to also host the fall district meeting.

All in all, the membership in the district fell short of the goal this year with the two Great Falls post still an anomaly to me. Out of the district those are two posts that should never fail to make their membership goals and should be expanding every year although the lack of a post building for either organization may have an impact on the visibility of the posts and the functions they hold. The Cascade post I believe is in need of new leadership to be able to bring them back into the fold. The current commander is serving as the post adjutant as well and also works full time and has very little time to fulfill the responsibilities of both offices.

The remainder of the posts within the district with some like Augusta and Dutton exceeding their goals and others just falling short of I will say there is always room for improvement and expansion and I firmly believe that for the district to grow there needs to be an appeal to the younger veterans and an effort to draw them in and make it something they want to be involved with. In short it is my belief that the Legion needs an infusion of youth to be able to grow.

DISTRICT 9 - COMMANDER

Robert Miller

My first year as the District 9 Commander has been a challenge. The weather has not cooperated with being able to get around to the Posts in the District. But we overcame it and adapted and were able to stay in touch via the phone and computer to be able to handle any problems that may have arisen. Still working on getting the Posts to use MyLegion as way to do business and reports, but like the adage "it's hard to teach an old dog new tricks" but we will continue to work on it. Also been trying to get them to use Zoom so we can do a get together and discuss things that come up during the year. The Department Fall Conference was at the end of October, but I was unable to attend due to a family prior commitment, but my position was covered by the District 9 Vice Commander Paul Mayberry, it was a great experience for him as he will become the new District Commander when by term is up. The biggest challenge the District is having to deal with is membership, the smaller Posts are having trouble finding younger members to replace older members who have gone to Post Everlasting.

DISTRICT 10 - COMMANDER

Irene Dickerson

My tenure as the District 10 Commander started in October 2022. In September 2022, I attended the Fall District meeting, hosted by post 28 Glendive Montana. The district had lost their commander. Commander Long, the Department Commander and Zone 1 Commander, Ken Simon asked if I would be interested in applying for the vacant position. I interviewed the two commanders. In October, Commander Long notified me I was the new district 10 commander.

I completed the required training and returned the certifications to the Department Adjutant's office October 15, 2022. I contacted the post commanders and adjutants and introduced myself and my intent to visit all the posts during my tenure.

Before the winter storms made travel impossible, I visited with Post 17's adjutant, Allen Seigfried in October 2022. The Zone Commander, Ken Simon was at the meeting as well. We discussed membership and Post meetings. Adjutant Seigfried noted membership was declining due to the aging population of the area. He was not able to host any post meetings due to no shows.

On October 12, 2022, I visited with Post 39's commander and adjutant. The post meeting in Forsyth, MT had minimal attendance. I presented my goals at this meeting.

October 28-29, 2022, I attended the Department's Fall Conference in Helena, Montana.

November 3, 2022, I attended Post 5, Miles City, meeting. At the meeting, I presented my goals and interests.

November 8, 2022, I attended Post 28, Glendive meeting, introducing myself and presenting my goals. We discussed the By-Laws and I met the District 10 Adjutant, Doug Byron.

November 18th, 2022, I hosted a Zoom with the post commanders in my district. We had a productive meeting. The Zone 1 commander was in attendance.

I also participated in several Department Zooms, calling Legionnaires, and doing Buddy Checks.

DISTRICT 11 - COMMANDER

Christine Miller

The year started off with Scott Miller as the District 11 commander and things looked to be starting out in good shape. Scott was nominated at the Department fall conference to serve out the remaining term as the Department Vice Commander and therefore had to step down as the District 11 commander, and find a replacement.

Chuck Miller of Post 71 agreed as the Vice Commander to step up and take on the responsibility without hesitation, asking for any other individuals interested there were none the job was then passed onto Chuck Miller.

In January Chucks health continued to fail and by spring he was required to have open heart surgery and a double bypass.

At the Spring district 11 meeting I was nominated by Richard Klose and seconded by Jim Brown to be the next District 11 commander. I had to make some hard decisions on this position as I was in line to take the District 11 Presidency of the Auxiliary. I am excited to get to work within district 11 and see what direction we can take what should be one of the largest districts as Billings falls within our area. I have hoped we can foster at least a solid footing for a post in Billings to be able to concentrate on a recruiting base. I have a desire to see Billings build back better than before and have intentions of combining forces with Scott to help mentor and assist in establishing an active solid base in Billings.

Outlying I have plans on my calendar to visit all posts within the district prior to Fall conference in person and continue to relay information via phone and email.

DEPARTMENT COMMITTEE CHAIRS

AMERICANISM

Vacant

BASEBALL

Ron Edwards

As of June 1st, we have 68 teams that are registered and playing American Legion baseball in Montana and Canada. This is up 3 teams from the 2022 season. Teams are finally free to play in the US and Canada without any restrictions. There are 9 Class AA teams, 31 Class A teams and 28 Class B teams, and 1 Class B/C team.

2023 MONTANA/ALBERTA AMERICAN LEGION TEAMS

CLASS AA

Billings Royals
 Billings Scarlets
 Bozeman Bucks
 Great Falls Chargers
 Helena Senators
 Kalispell Lakers
 Lethbridge Elks
 Medicine Hat Moose Monarchs
 Missoula Mavericks

CLASS A

Anaconda A's
 Belgrade Bandits
 Billings Blue Jays
 Billings Cardinals
 Bitterroot Bucs
 Bitterroot Red Sox
 Bozeman Bucks A
 Butte Miners A
 Cranbrook Bandits
 Dillon Cubs
Fort MacLeod Royals (SR)
 Gallatin Valley Outlaws
 Glacier Twins A
 Glasgow Reds

CLASS A

Glendive Blue Devils
 Great Falls Chargers A
 Havre Northstars
 Helena Reps
 Kalispell Lakers A
 Laurel Dodgers
 Lethbridge Miners
 Lewistown Redbirds
 Libby Loggers
Lockwood Razerbacks
 Medicine Hat Knights
 Miles City Mavericks
 Mission Valley Mariners A
 Missoula Mavericks A
 Richland County Patriots
 Tri-County Cardinals
 Vauxhall Spurs

CLASS B

Anaconda A's B
 Belgrade Bandits B
 Billings Post 4 Blue
 Billings Post 4 Red
 Bitterroot Red Sox B
 Bozeman Bucks B

CLASS B

Butte Muckers B
 Dillon Cubs B
 Gallatin Valley Posse
 Glacier Twins B
 Glasgow Reds B
 Great Falls Chargers B
 Havre Northstars B
 Helena Independents
 Kalispell Lakers Gold B
 Kalispell Lakers Red B
 Kootenai Valley Rangers
 Lewistown Redbirds B
 Libby Loggers B
 Livingston Braves B
 Miles City Colts
 Mission Valley Mariners B
 Missoula Mavericks B
Richland County B
 Tri-County Cardinals B
 Vauxhall Spurs B
 Wolf Point Yellow Jackets

CLASS B/C

Bozeman Bucks C

We have 2 new Class A teams this year. The Fort MacLeod Royals and Lockwood Razorbacks. Vauxhall and Richland County (Sidney) added a second class B teams this season. Teams not registering: Clark Valley Rangers and Calgary Strive.

The tournament schedule for the 2023 season are as follows:

2023 TOURNAMENTS

TOURNAMENT	HOST TEAM	CITY	DATES	DAYS
NORTHERN DISTRICT A	VAUXHALL SPURS	VAUXHALL, AB	JUL 20 - 23	THU - SUN
SOUTHERN DISTRICT A	GALLATIN VALLEY OUTLAWS	THREE FORKS	JUL 20 - 23	THU - SUN
EASTERN DISTRICT A	MILES CITY MAVERICKS	MILES CITY	JUL 20 - 23	THU - SUN
WESTERN DISTRICT A	MISSION VALLEY MARINERS	POLSON	JUL 20 - 23	THU - SUN
STATE A	LAUREL DODGERS	LAUREL	JUL 26 - JUL 30	WED - SUN
STATE AA	MISSOULA MAVERICKS	MISSOULA	JUL 22 - JUL 26	SAT - WED
REGIONAL AA	GILLETTE ROUGHRIDERS	GILLETTE, WY	AUG 02 - 06	WED - SUN
REGIONAL A (NWCART)	HAVRE NORTHSTARS	HAVRE, MT	AUG 04 - 08	FRI - TUE
WORLD SERIES		SHELBY, NC	AUG 10 - 15	THU - TUE

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

SCOUTS BSA

Roger Hancock

Legionnaires, the Eagle Scout Of the Year (ESoy) for 2023 is Keatin Hertz from Billings. Please remember that to be eligible for the ESoy award the scout must be a registered member of either an The American Legion (TAL)/American Legion Auxiliary (ALA)/Sons of The American Legion (SAL) sponsored Troop or a registered member of any chartered BSA troop and have a parent who is a member of TAL/ALA/SAL.

This year not a single Scouting Post award application was submitted. We have 3 award categories: small, medium, and large posts. Please review what your post and members are doing with and for scouting. It is not a requirement for a Post to be a scouting charter sponsor to qualify for the award, it only adds points to the total. All you need is for the Post to donate to a Scouting function either monetary or timewise. Posts with members who are active in scouting will also add to the point total.

This is my last year as the Department Scouting Chair and I wish the new Chair all the best and know that they will do great things.

BOYS STATE

Josh Clement

CHILDREN & YOUTH

Jed Damson

Good year scholarship program is set up no applicants currently. We had four applicants for assistance, two in post level, one in Committee, and one in National. Hoping for any suggestions how the committee can broaden this program.

CONSTITUTION & INTERNAL AFFAIRS

Jared Flammond

I have been diligently combing through our current constitution and by-laws to find any errors and to bring them up to date. After my time at national headquarters for the legion college I have the tools and resources to ensure all documents that we follow for our guidelines are accurate and up to date. A few things I would like to point out when it comes to resolution writing is ensured the subject is forward and to the point. I've noticed a few that are sometimes Germaine and kind of long winded, but the focal point tends to be lost in the length of the resolution. Also, I would like to point out if you have supporting information to help along a resolution submit it with the resolution. Also a few pointers. Resolution writing is a learned trait that takes time to perfect. Think of it like riding a bicycle. At first, we all weren't the greatest. But over time with adequate practice, they tend to become a lot easier almost second nature. I would like to also include if you're finding yourself at a standstill and need help writing a resolution always seek help!! I am more than willing

to help assist with any issues you may encounter. I continue to look forward to working all legionnaires in the future!

CONVENTION 2023

Duane Cunningham

The 2023 Department Convention will be 22-25 June in Lewistown. The Convention will take place at the Yogo Inn; 211 East Main Street, Lewistown, 59457. (406) 535-8721. Registration ends 15 June 2023. Walk up registration will be charged an additional \$5.00. Prices have increased unfortunately. Banquet tickets are \$45.00 and subject to change. There is NO HOST POST this year; it will be conducted by a two-person Department; things will be consolidated and condensed, all attempts at maintaining tradition will be don, but cost and manpower prohibits some events from happening. We are changing some things and hoping to make Convention fun by adding family orientated and outdoor activities as a Golf Scramble and a Legion Baseball Fair are being planned.

CONVENTION 2024

Joe Yeoman

We have an agreement with the Cottonwood Inn for lodging with camping sites. We have possibilities of Free meals. We are looking at ways of getting American Legion business done and Educating our American Legion families on Northeast Montana. We need knowledge from our upcoming state officers to make things work.

CONVENTION 2025

Jim Grosset

Calgary Post CN20 is excited to host the Department of Montana once again in bringing you to Calgary for the 2025 Department Convention. For those who were around in 2005, you remember a great Convention that we hosted. This time we plan on topping that.

The hotel for the Convention will be the WESTIN CALGARY DOWNTOWN, a four-star hotel, with outstanding dining facilities and many more restaurants in the area. I, myself ate there several years ago with the Governor of Montana and the Lt Governor of Alberta.

We are planning to hold the Convention from Monday June 30th to Thursday July the 3rd and are hoping that some of you will stay one extra day to be in the Calgary Stampede Parade, (the parade is viewed all over the world) For those who cannot march, we plan on being on a Chuck wagon or some vintage cars. We are sure that this will be an event to remember, for all time.

We are in talks with the City of Calgary, the Province of Alberta, the Military Museum of Calgary, District 3, and the Royal Canadian Legion. Things are really looking good for this event and hoping that as the date gets closer you get excited to attend.

DISTINGUISHED GUESTS

Jeff Nelson

Since last falls' report I have attended the Remembrance Day activities in Blairmore and Coleman, Alberta. There were a number of distinguished members from The Montana Department representing our communities. It was truly an honor being part of a contingent partaking in their Commemoration of those that gave all for their country. The community surrounding these towns supports their veterans with the upmost reverence and remembrance. We have so much in common between our countries that the saying a veteran is a veteran no matter where, goes a long way.

After the holidays there wasn't much going on until this Spring when we lost two of our past commanders. Art Ellison and Jack Mitchell, they both gave so much to the American legion in their own style. They will have left some stories behind that will be retold at many a convention.

An unexpected event took place in April with my wife, Chris Nelson, traveled to New Zealand for a three week hunting trip and vacation. We participated in the Anzac Days in a town called Te Anau. ANZAC stands for Australian New Zealand Army Corps and is remembered for the battle in Gallipoli, Turkey during the first world war. The battle lasted many days and in the end almost 30,000 men died from New Zealand and Australia. This special event is held every year and is equal to our Memorial Day. The majority of the town marches behind the colors and the veterans and ends up at the town square. Once there, speeches are given and wreaths are placed at the base of the cenotaph. And of course everyone is welcomed back at the club as it is called, for some refreshments and fellowship. We met some wonderful people and exchanged some gifts. They now have a plastic license in their showcase from the Montana American legion and I received a very nice pin to wear on my cap.

I wish everyone a blessed year and look forward to meeting many of you.

DEPARTMENT EMERGENCY RESPONSE COORDINATOR

Chaya Semple

Winter arrived early in Montana with widespread snowfall across the state in late October.

For the second time in a year, on 26 December, the small town of Fishtail was hit with serious flooding due to ice jams. (Ice jams occur when temperatures drastically change.)

The cold snap just before Christmas sent temperatures plunging. Bozeman posted 45 degrees below zero — just one degree warmer than its all-time low in 1983. Winter Storm Elliott brought record-low temperatures to Montana on 27 December as the once-in-a-generation storm barreled through, causing flights to be canceled and creating dangerous driving conditions, Bozeman broke a daily record low that morning, with temperatures plummeting to -43 degrees, while Helena tied its daily record, at -35 degrees. The temperature in Lincoln also set a daily low at -49 degrees.

The coldest recorded wind chill (how cold it feels outside when considering wind speed) was in the town of Malta where it dropped to -72 degrees on that day.

Things then remained somewhat calm until April 10, 2023, when a combination of rainfall and high temperatures caused snowmelt that led to major flooding along the Milk River and its tributaries in northeast Montana.

Western and south-central Montana also saw between 1-4 inches of rainfall, as well as rapid snowmelt with warm weather in the first two weeks of April.

Meagher, Valley, Hill, Liberty, Blaine, Daniels, and Park Counties, the Fort Belknap Indian Community, the Fort Peck Indian Reservation, and the towns of Glasgow and Nashua enacted emergency or disaster declarations in response to the conditions, with several of them reporting extensive damage to infrastructure.

On 1 May, the residents of Hysham were informed they are not to consume their water after a filter failed on the water processing plant. As of 9 June, they are still waiting on parts and drinking bottled water. They had previously been on a boil order for the water before the filter failure.

On 16 May, Governor Greg Gianforte issued an executive order declaring a statewide disaster in response to flooding in northeast, western, and south-central Montana.

“Runoff from recent rainfall and snowmelt has compromised critical infrastructure and roads in Montana,” Gianforte said in a news release. “This order will help impacted communities rebuild and get back on their feet.”

On 17 May a weather front coming down from Canada brought thick wildfire smoke with it, prompting the issuance of hazardous and unhealthy air quality alerts across the state.

On 22 May Montana sent wildland firefighters to Alberta to help more than 2000 firefighters from around the world with the more than 100 active wildfires.

On 1 June Musselshell County was hit with major flooding after 5.5” of rain fell in only two hours. Roads were washed out and residents were stranded.

On 2 June County commissioners signed an emergency declaration for a declared emergency for flash flood and flooding events in Musselshell County. Blaine, Daniels, Fergus, Garfield, Hill, Liberty, Meagher, Park, Petroleum, Sheridan, Stillwater, and Valley Counties, in addition to the City of Laurel also signed emergency declarations due to flooding in addition to the Fort Belknap and Fort Peck Reservations.

Also, as of 2 June there have been 394 wildfires so far in 2023 with only 761 acres total burned. There have been no large fires yet this year.

As of 6 June, drought was persisting in 30.2 percent of the state. Go to <https://www.drought.gov/states/montana#outlooks> to see current and forecasted drought conditions.

As of 9 June Executive Order 2-2023 Flooding Disaster for Flooding and Flash Flooding Events Due to Heavy Rainfall with Hail Coupled with Rapidly Melting Snowpack was signed.

The threat of flooding continues for counties north and east of Billings as thunderstorms with heavy rainfall are expected.

Please be aware of the following weather alerts:

1. Flood warning - Take Action! A flood warning is issued when the hazardous weather event is imminent or already happening. A flood warning is issued when flooding is imminent or occurring.
2. Flood advisory - Be Aware. A flood advisory is issued when a specific weather event that is forecast to occur may become a nuisance. A flood advisory is issued when flooding is not expected to be bad enough to issue a warning. However, it may cause significant inconvenience, and if caution is not exercised, it could lead to situations that may threaten life and/or property.
3. Flood watch - Be Prepared: A flood watch is issued when conditions are favorable for a specific hazardous weather event to occur. A flood watch is issued when conditions are favorable for flooding. It does not mean flooding will occur, but it is possible.

The heavy rains are hastening snow melt in the mountains – please check weather forecasts before venturing into wild places and be prepared for conditions!

Due to the prolonged heavy rains, wildfire season has not yet ramped up in Montana; however, that doesn't mean it won't this summer. All this rain is allowing grasses to flourish. Those grasses will dry and cure to become the fine flashy fuels that wildfire can travel through much faster than any person can run. Please be situationally aware. Please be prepared!

Go to <https://des.mt.gov/> to view current disaster situation reports.

To date, since Fall Convention there have been no applications from Montana for National Emergency Fund (NEF) assistance. The NEF is funded by members to assist members of The American Legion and Sons of The American Legion displaced by natural disaster. Please support the fund and donate today!

May you be well.

FINANCE CHAIRMAN

Demorise Allen

Since Fall Conference the Finance Committee has met a few times over Zoom to stay up to date on the budget. We have discussed a number of options for upcoming fundraisers and income options for the Department. We look forward to presenting our plans to the incoming EBoard.

HIGHWAY FATALITY MARKER

Michael Emmett

I had every intention of making this conference but have family commitments that are keeping me out of state during much of May and all of June. I apologize for this.

This last period of report has been a challenge due to the expanded winter that has spanned the past six months, or so it would appear. The grounds have only recently thawed sufficiently for placement of new markers in many areas.

CORRESPONDENCE

Since my last report, I have reached out to posts across the state and have increased the number of positive contacts to 33 posts. There still remain a number of areas where the posts do not appear to have a representative or a program in place. In particular, I have no feedback from regions 1, 3, and 10. All other regions have at least one active post with a program. I continue to reach out to expand the program to as many posts as possible.

I continue to appreciate the number of posts willing to share resources with me and with other posts. I have received favorable feedback from several posts who keep in contact with me on a fairly regular basis.

Jim Kelly continues to act as a mentor as is ever willing to share his knowledge and insights, as well as suggestions with me. For this I am very grateful.

I have attempted to stay on top of all the calls coming into the Adjutant's office. If possible, I have been able to resolve issues with a single phone call; some issues do take longer, and a couple of issues aren't resolved due to the nature of the call itself. Nonetheless, I feel this issue is being addressed satisfactorily. It also gives me an opportunity to educate the caller on the nature of a "fatality marker" versus a "memorial" and it has been received with some surprise, but greater understanding and appreciation.

Newspaper and other media communications is improving; I have had two articles published in the local county newspaper; one a letter to the editor and the other an interview with the local reporter. Two other posts have sent me articles posted in their local areas, one with photos. I think that I, along with the rest of the program, need more outreach to community media.

Finally, I publish a bi-monthly report of all fatal accidents in Montana to all posts that have acknowledged their existence to me. Unfortunately, some of the data is limited by the data within the incident report. I look up information further in local newspapers, but that is usually limited to my local area. Fortunately, posts will contact me with corrections and updated fatality numbers.

HELP (STILL) WANTED!

Even though my outreach has increased the number of posts that I have access to, I am still tormented by the simple fact that three Areas have no known representation in the program. I urge the members of the Conference to ask all posts to reach out to me with their post number, name of fatality marker representative, a good email address and a good phone number. Many traffic deaths are not being represented with a marker.

OTHER GOALS

1. I still need to reach out to various organizations for assistance
2. We need more media coverage, but it has improved
3. We have a better coordination of resources and willingness to assist other posts. We can improve still.
4. Clean up the markers. I have seen a marked, though imperfect, improvement in the status of markers. I often drive through Area 7 when I travel for family visits and am impressed

by the quality of the markers. I see the same in many parts of the state when I am about and I commend those posts who do such a fantastic job.

5. Communicate. We are doing better and my hat goes off to those who have become personal internet or phone friends by their contacts. Keep it up.
6. I still need to make a better report in the future, but you can only report what you know.

STATS (15 of 33 posts reporting)

New crosses erected: 7

Crosses replaced: 11

Crosses cleaned/painted 537

Crosses removed: 4

General cleaning is going on throughout the state right now

THE FOLLOWING POSTS ARE IN CONTACT

Post 2*	Post 3*	Post 4	Post 13	Post 14	Post 15
Post 16*	Post 17*	Post 18*	Post 19*	Post 20	Post 23
Post 24*	Post 25*	Post 30*	Post 47*	Post 52	Post 62
Post 63	Post 65*	Post 67*	Post 78*	Post 89*	Post 91
Post 93*	Post 94*	Post 97*	Post 108	Post 112	Post 119
Post 123	Post 134*	Post 137			

I wish to thank all those who are making this program possible and helping it function!

HOMELESS VETERAN COORDINATOR

Ray Read

The Montana Department's participation in The American Legion's Homeless Veterans Program is now moving into its sixteenth year. Lowell Long, 2022-23 Montana Department Commander, re-appointed me as the Coordinator of Homeless Veterans initiative at the 2022 Department Convention. I respectfully submit the following report of the record to date.

Montana Statistics Related to Homeless Veterans is as follows:

Last reported 2022 --Of the 89,275 veterans recognized and recorded by the VA as being in Montana, 70,333 are indicated as wartime veterans. Breakdown by era is Gulf War- 35,651; Vietnam-29815; Korea-5,485; WW II-1,559. Peacetime veterans' number 18,943. The ratio of gender is Female veterans 8,906 and Male veterans 80,367. Comment: It is estimated that based on averaging 2.5 members per veteran's household that the total veterans' population including family members is at 223,190+- or nearly 1/4 of the total population of Montana.

National Statistics indicate that up to 3.8% of Montana's population of veterans is 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."

In the latest Montana Homeless Survey conducted in January 2022 of the total Homeless population in Montana was surveyed at 1,545 Total Household experiencing homelessness is 167 person respondents of which 165 Veterans were identified as to the as to being homeless³. This indicates that homelessness among Montana veterans was up 10.7% of the total homeless of Montana based on the Survey similar to the results from the previous year, this includes incomplete information on rural veterans' homelessness. The 2023 PIT is being processed at will be available later this year.

The following information was provided for the January 2022 Point in Time Survey by Housing & Urban Development conducted in January 2022. 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 present and is a growing problem that we all must address at Post/Community level and above:

Recommendations for 2022-2023:

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 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 2022-2023. Several have been conducted according to the VA in Great Fall and other locations starting in Early October. One and two day stand downs are classified as a veterans' resource programs rather than a full stand down. Veteran related events previously identified as being in Plains, Helena, Missoula, Dillon, Miles City, and Libby, and on the High line of Montana with Havre, Montana as the hub. If you hear of such events please notify the Homeless Veterans Coordinator to have them recorded in the Annual Report.
4. That those American Legion Posts conducting a Stand down coordinate and apply utilizing VA Stand Down Notice of Proposed Event Form available online and complete the VA 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

Duane Cunningham

In the last 12 months we have received two disbursements totaling \$8686.95 in premiums paid to the Department of Montana for Long Term Care, HIP, AUX HIP and Cancer, Cancer Disability, AD & D and Life Insurance. The promotional bonus is based on membership; to increase the bonus we obviously need to increase membership.

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 benefit periodically so they can take advantage of this program and remind them they must register.

The information LIT gathers from these sign ups is the number one source of policies written. Signing up for the free AD 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, they do not receive the info from National. If a member is in doubt about being registered, they can call LIT or go online at www.theLIT.com/LegionCare2 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. **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.**

Every Legion member in Montana should register for the benefit. The LIT offers both free and cost based products and recognizes that they must continue to offer good reasonably priced products.

In 2020 the LIT 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 over \$725,000.00.

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

Registration for LIT has never been easier! I will assist Legionnaires with registration at Convention and in my travels to District meetings.

The Department no longer receives insurance revenue from USAA, however we do receive a disbursement from USAA based on membership.

LEGION RIDERS' COORDINATOR

Gil Floyd

LEGISLATIVE

Roger Hagan

Your Legislative Committee has been extremely busy since I last reported to you at our Fall Conference in October of last year. The major focus of the past several months understandably was the 68th Legislative Session of our state government. I believe this session involved more 'Caps in the Capitol' than ever before. My thanks to all who took the time to come to the Capitol to testify in hearings, went on-line to make their voices heard, and dialed in to the hearings via Zoom to have their say. Your work has paid big dividends!

And during that session your department was also represented at the Washington Conference in February. Vice Commander Scott Miller, Department Service Officer Candice Hering, Legion Auxiliary Legislative Chair Christine Nelson, and I were honored to attend the Conference. Over the several days in D.C. we received training in our respective positions, and all were briefed on legislative issues that we were to discuss when visiting our congressional members. We were fortunate to have visits with all four of our members; Senator Tester, Senator Daines, Representative Zinke, and Representative Rosendale. I can assure you, the presence of the Montana Department of the American Legion on The Hill was noted.

The Montana State Legislative Session of 2023 came to an abrupt close on Tuesday, May 2nd, following an unexpected early motion to 'sine die' (adjourn) made in the Senate. While your Department experienced one of the most productive and beneficial lawmaking sessions that I have seen in my many years of representing you, the early adjournment did leave us with a few loose ends and unanswered questions.

Entering the legislative session, we had several priorities. We worked in unison with the Montana Veteran's Affairs Division (MVAD), making it one of the best sessions ever. Additionally, over the course of the session, several legislators brought forth other bills that were of importance to our membership. All told, we discussed or testified for or against 48 bills and monitored an additional 100+ bills or bill draft requests. We worked closely with the Montana National Guard Officer and Enlisted Associations, and various other groups, on many legislative pieces, recognizing the common benefit for both the American Legion members and all veterans of Montana.

By far the most significant legislation that we were successful in passing was a state income tax exemption of military retirement. While HB 219, one of the two income tax exemption bills, was tabled in the House, SB 104 made it to the Governor's desk. This bill was signed by Governor Gianforte on May 16th.

Our organizations have been working on the tax exemption effort since 2008 and we were finally able to convince our legislators of the economic and workforce value of encouraging military retirees to relocate to or remain in Montana after they retire. While the legislation only provides an exemption for up to 50% of military retirement, based upon the retiree's Montana Wage Source Income, it certainly is a great step forward. This bill had 4 committee hearings, 18 votes, was left for dead once, revived thanks to a good effort by a legislator, and in total was moved from the Senate to the House and back to the Senate for votes over the period of 4+ months.

While the passage of SB 104 was the most long sought after legislation of our efforts, our Department promoted several other bills successfully. HB 264, that established a decennial (every 10 years following the U.S. Census) requirement for the Department of Public Health and Human Services (DPHHS) to conduct a Veteran Long Term Health Care and Veteran Cemetery Needs Study. The last time this study was done was in 2006 and it became very beneficial when validating a need for a 3rd Veterans Home.

The American Legion was the lead on this effort starting during the 2021-2022 Interim. We can be proud to claim our ownership of this successful effort. Of course, this is just the beginning of the effort. In order to have a meaningful study, it will include a survey of Montana Veterans. That is where you come in. As soon as the DPHHS has formulated the procedures for conducting that survey, **each and every post, district, and zone must step up** and insure that as many veterans (regardless of their membership in our Legion) are given the opportunity to submit their survey. More information on that will be available at this Convention.

Other successful efforts by your Department include an increase from \$4 million to \$5 million the minimum amount annually set aside from the cigarette tax for operation and maintenance of the three veterans' homes, \$5+ million for the SW Montana Veteran's Home cottage connectors, \$6 million for Cottage 6 at the SW Montana Veterans Home (UPDATE: *recently line-item vetoed by Governor Gianforte*). These allocations and appropriations are, by far, the most we have ever seen other than the original construction of the SW Montana Veterans Home. Additionally, we secured approval to pursue a fourth Veterans Cemetery, planned to be located in Columbia Falls.

Our Department also opposed a couple of bills that we considered to be detractors from our veteran and military members. We opposed and defeated HB 527 and SB 560. Both of these efforts were named the Defend the Guard Act. Had either of these bills passed, the law would have prevented our Governor from allowing Montana National Guard members to deploy for overseas contingent operations unless there was a formal declaration of war by Congress. While the intent of forcing Congress to do their constitutional duty of declaring war was genuine, keeping the Montana National Guard home would not accomplish this effort. The 'Defend the Guard' effort was promoted by a national organization in over 31 states, and we fully expect the bill to come back in two years.

Additionally, we opposed a bill that would have mandated the Board of Veteran's Affairs members to hold town hall meetings each year across the state. While this sounds like a good way to reach out to our veterans, the Veteran Service Officers of the MVAD are already doing outreach and the Board members would not have the tools to resolve any issues brought up at those town hall meetings.

Again, my thanks to all American Legion members who responded to our "Legislative Alerts", your involvement in the process is very important and has been valuable. Below is a comprehensive list of bills that your Department played a key part in being passed or defeated. Bills with an asterisk (*) are bills the American Legion prioritized, and those MVAD bills we supported. The bills without an (*) although not on our priority list are 'pop up' bills brought by legislators during the session that our Department either supported or opposed.

* **HB 2, Representative Llew Jones, (R) Conrad** – General Appropriations Act – 2025 Biennium Budget for the Department of Military Affairs and Montana Veterans Affairs Division, budget included funding for MVAD and other DMA requirements – (**passed**)

* **HB 5, Representative Mike Hopkins, (R) Missoula** – Long-range building appropriations – includes funding for multiple Veteran Homes facility upgrades and several million \$ for the SW Montana Veterans Home (**passed**)

HB 63, Representative Scot Kerns, (R) Great Falls – Generally revise liability laws related to armed forces and national guard (DMA initiative - **passed**)

HB 80, Representative George Nikolakakos, (R) Great Falls – Adopt most recent federal military codes and regulations (DMA initiative - **passed**)

* **HB 81, Representative Braxton Mitchell, (R) Columbia Falls** – Create new state veterans' cemetery, next to Columbia Falls Veterans Home (DMA initiative - **passed**)

HB 82, Representative George Nikolakakos, (R) Great Falls – Create Montana national guard enlistment incentive program (DMA initiative, tabled in Senate Finance & Claims Cmte - **failed**)

HB 89, Representative Paul Green, (R) Hardin – Revise laws related to Montana national guard life insurance and court martials (DMA initiative - **passed**)

HB 107, Representative Brad Barker, (R) Roberts – Generally revise the duties of SERC (DMA initiative - **passed**)

HB 134, Representative Katie Zolnikov, (R) Billings – Revise laws related to the armory account (DMA initiative - **passed**)

* **HB 219, Representative Scot Kerns, (R) Great Falls** – Exempt certain military pensions and survivor benefits from income taxes (American Legion priority - tabled in House Appropriations Cmte - **failed**)

HB 223, Representative Scot Kerns, (R) Great Falls – Expanding the disabled veteran property tax assistance program (tabled in Senate Finance and Claims Cmte - **failed**)

HB 224, Representative Derek J. Harvey, (D) Butte – Revise vehicle registration law regarding military personnel (**passed**)

* **HB 264, Representative Marta Bertoglio, (R) Montana City** – Establish decennial veterans' long term care needs study (American Legion priority - **passed**)

HB 274, Representative Scot Kerns, (R) Great Falls – Revise civil air patrol funding (**passed**)

HB 275, Representative Scot Kerns, (R) Great Falls – Provide for board of veteran affairs townhall meetings (American Legion opposed - tabled in House State Administration Cmte - **failed**)

* **HB 298, Representative Marta Bertoglio, (R) Montana City** – Revise board of veterans' affairs laws (DMA initiative - **passed**)

HB 325, Representative Lyn Hellegaard, (R) Missoula – Revise eligibility for disabled veteran property tax assistance program (**passed**)

HB 336, Representative Edward Buttrey, (R) Great Falls – Provide licensure exemptions for military family child care providers (**passed**)

HB 377, Representative Linda Reksten, (R) Polson – Create a 250th commission for Montana, preparing for 250th Anniversary of the Declaration of Independence in 1776 (**passed**)

HB 427, Representative Scot Kerns, (R) Great Falls – Revise military affairs laws regarding worker's compensation (DMA initiative - **passed**)

* **HB 462, Representative Marta Bertoglio, (R) Montana City** – Revise distribution of marijuana revenues, funding for MVAD (American Legion priority - tabled in House Appropriations Cmte - **failed**)

HB 494, Representative Jim Hamilton, (D) Bozeman – Revise property tax assistance program and disabled veteran program (tabled in House Taxation Cmte - **failed**)

* **HB 527, Representative Lee Deming, (R) Laurel** – Require official action to release Montana national guard to active duty combat, aka DEFEND THE GUARD ACT (American Legion opposition priority – defeated on the House Floor 40-60 - **failed**)

HB 545, Representative Edward Buttrey, (R) Great Falls – Revise state laws to recognize creation of US Space Force (**passed**)

HB 583, Representative Brad Barker, (R) Roberts – Revise occupations and education laws for military license reciprocity (**passed**)

HB 663, Representative Scot Kerns, (R) Great Falls – Establish a Montana veterans hall of fame (**passed**)

HB 669, Representative Bill Mercer, (R) Billings – Revise laws related to allocation of marijuana tax revenues, funding for MVAD (American Legion priority - tabled in Senate Finance and Claims Cmte - **failed**)

HB 752, Representative Braxton Mitchell, (R) Columbia Falls – Require the national anthem to be performed at sporting events (tabled in House State Administration Cmte - **failed**)

* **HB 840, Representative Ron Marshall, (R) Hamilton** – Revise tobacco tax allocation for state veterans' nursing homes, increase minimum transfer from \$4m to \$5m – (American Legion priority - **passed**)

HB 843, Representative Scot Kerns, (R) Great Falls – Free hunting/fishing for service members/veterans with 50% disability rating (tabled in House Appropriations Cmte - **failed**)

HB 852, Representative Jill Cohenour, (D) East Helena – Provide for recognition of family members of deceased veterans (**passed**)

HB 878, Representative Tony Brockman, (R) Kalispell – Revise medical marijuana laws for veterans (tabled in House State Administration Cmte - **failed**)

HJ 14, Representative Lola Sheldon Galloway, (R) Great Falls – Acknowledge service of Korean War veterans (**passed**)

HR 3, Representative Lola Sheldon Galloway, (R) Great Falls – Resolution to acknowledge service of Vietnam veterans (**passed**)

SB 40, Senator Mike Cuffe, (R) Eureka – Generally revise laws related to Montana national guard duty status (DMA initiative (**passed**))

SB 66, Senator Mike Fox, (D) Hays – Generally revise laws related to Montana national guard benefits and rights (DMA initiative - **passed**)

* **SB 104, Senator John Fuller, (R) Kalispell** – Exempt retired military pensions from state income tax (American Legion priority - **passed**)

SB 221, Senator Barry Usher, (R) Laurel – Allow USS Montana crew to apply for license plates (**passed**)

SB 298, Senator Brad Molnar, (R) Laurel – Revise laws related to hunting by disabled persons (tabled in House Fish, Wildlife, and Parks Cmte - **failed**)

SB 309, Senator Dan Bartel, (R) Lewistown – Establish the Ensign James A Shelton Memorial Highway (**passed**)

SB 389, Senator Daniel Emrich, (R) Great Falls – Revising education laws to add a definition of "civics" (tabled in Senate Education and Cultural Resources Cmte - **failed**)

SB 423, Senator Kenneth Bogner, (R) Miles City – Generally revise liability related to firearm hold agreements (**passed**)

* **SB 442, Senator Mike Lang, (R) Malta** – Allow marijuana tax revenue to be used for county road maintenance, including funding for MT Veterans Affairs Division (Associations' and American Legion priority – vetoed by the Governor - **failed**)

SB 514, Senator Brad Molnar, (R) Laurel – Provide for individual income tax refunds of surplus revenue, includes military retirement (tabled in Senate Taxation Cmte - **failed**)

* **SB 560, Senator John Fuller, (R) Kalispell** – Establish the Defend the Montana Guard Act (American Legion opposition priority – defeated in the Senate State Administration Cmte 4-6 - **failed**)

SJ 17, Senator Mike Fox, (D) Hays – Joint resolution recognizing veterans and military service “A JOINT RESOLUTION OF THE SENATE AND THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE STATE OF MONTANA RECOGNIZING MONTANANS WHO HAVE SERVED AND CONTINUE TO SERVE IN THE MILITARY AND DECLARING 2023-2025 AS THE ERA OF RECOGNITION AND COMMEMORATION OF THE MONTANA NATIONAL GUARD, MONTANA ARMY NATIONAL GUARD, MONTANA AIR NATIONAL GUARD, U.S. ARMY RESERVE, MARINE CORPS RESERVE, U.S. NAVY RESERVE, AND ALL ACTIVE DUTY MILITARY PERSONNEL” (American Legions priority - **passed**)

SJ 18, Senator John Fuller, (R) Kalispell – Joint resolution recognizing veterans and military service “A JOINT RESOLUTION OF THE SENATE AND THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE STATE OF MONTANA HONORING THE MONTANA 163RD INFANTRY REGIMENT; AND DECLARING MARCH 5, 2023, AS THE OFFICIAL DATE OF THE RECOGNITION OF THE 80TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE MONTANA 163RD INFANTRY REGIMENT'S VICTORY IN THE BATTLE OF SANANANDA, PAPUA, NEW GUINEA” (American Legion priority - **passed**)

SJ 19, Senator Kenneth Bogner, (R) Miles City – Joint resolution for Honor and Remember Medallion (**passed**)

MEMBERSHIP

Scott Miller

I was asked to become the membership chair by the department Commander at the Fall Conference, and it was an honor to be able to step up and accept this position.

The first thing I did was talk to the Department Adjutant on what I needed to do as far as meetings and what emails I needed to send out to the members in Montana. After talking to Erin, the Adjutants Assistant, we began an email campaign to Post, District and Department officers across the state to get their help putting a voice into the communities in Montana about the American Legion.

I also began to email legion members that had not yet renewed from 2022 and then emailing members from 2021 and 2020 renewal list. Remember, we are a team and family that works together so if someone is standing on stage receiving an award it is usually because of the efforts of many so we should all try to attend the conventions and conferences to see what happens.

As your chairman I travelled throughout the state this past spring during spring meetings discussing membership across our department, we talked to post and district leaders.

The Department Commander, Department Adjutant and I were on multiple Western Region membership meeting Zoom Calls to update the National Vice Commander and listen to other departments on things they are doing to raise membership. During these Zoom calls we also were able to talk about why membership seemed to be an issue across the nation.

We have been 9th in the Nation this year with membership and now we are 15th, showing we have room for improvement if we work together. In the past we have been in the top 5 so it would be great if we could achieve that level of membership again. Our state is under some extreme transformations with population growth, and we have an ageing veterans' group so we need to get everybody to come to the table with all the ideas.

National American Legion has a conference in Indianapolis every year the help train and update the department on membership. We need to continue to train and mentor our members about membership and the process of growing it while continuing to maintain current members as well.

We do a lot of work recruiting members but then we seem to forget about them or never follow through on our promises and we need to remember that without our members we have no Legion. Hold our Organization Values up and insure you have a good character as a legionnaire when representing us all.

NATIONAL SECURITY

Ken Simon

National Security in the past year has suffered some really serious setbacks over a cross section of articles related to certain areas of our government. It ranges from the ongoing fiasco at the Southern Border to a Leak of Secret documents that may or may not have contained relevant, pertinent, and true information. The Southern Border folly has only gotten worse as a result of the lackadaisical attitude shown by the administration towards keeping our country secure and free from unchecked aliens from entering. Then add to this the appearance of nonchalant attitudes about the nation's budget/debt ceiling mess.

Let's first look at the Southern Border and the continued influx of illegal and unchecked aliens from several countries. One thing that occurred was the naming of someone who was born outside the U.S. and immigrated here as a child with his parents. That was Alejandro Mayorkas who was an American lawyer and politician who had served during the Obama administration from 2009 to 2016. He was named as the Secretary of the Department of Homeland Security, however Mayorkas was not new to the government or the Department of Justice and the Department of Homeland Security as a result of his being the director of the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Service (USCIS) under President Obama for eight years. He had a working knowledge with how the system worked and was more sympathetic in regards to how Illegal Immigrants should be treated.

What has occurred under the Biden administration is that because of COVID, President Trump had announced an emergency order and related Regulation based on Title 42 of the Public Health Service Act. That order and regulation gave the director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CD) the authority to prohibit entry of anyone the director believed posed a "serious threat of the introduction of a communicable disease into the United States." When Biden was elected, he attempted to remove the ban on immigration by signing an Executive Order that lifted immigrant visa ban in February 2021. That allowed illegal immigrants to reunite with family in the US who were citizens. Due to this attempt, President Bidens order did not remove the ban to those non-immigrant work visas for exchange visitors and temporary worker visas.

In conjunction with this, Senate Democrats proposed a new \$3.5 trillion budget that spelled out a dramatic increase in the number of available green cards and also included amnesty for illegal immigrants. It not only provided this, but also a pathway to citizenship to just under 1.1 million

annually! By preventing those who have applied legally to enter and work in the past, this reckless unfounded move will deprive the US of those people who are trained and or experienced in trades they have previously worked in here before. It will also take jobs away from US citizens who work the many jobs that do not require a degree or specialized training and hereby prevent them from earning a living wage. Does our government then plan to put them on Welfare, Unemployment, or the so-called favored SNAP plan? Who pays for their insurance or medical needs if jobs are given to illegal immigrants from countries that in many cases are anti US? My experience says that if they do not enter the US legally then they should NOT be allowed into the United States. And when they do, they should be required to learn English and assimilate into our country to become productive and loyal citizens not a drag on our economy or become a ward of the state! Let's take care of our own people before we cave in and allow illegal immigrants to move in and be provided with homes, jobs, and everything else Free! Spending some of that \$3.5 trillion on our own people will be better spent and bring our own people's standard of living up.

The next idea that came up was brought forth by a Democratic Congresswoman from Washington who teamed up with a Democratic Congressman and re-introduce a bill to "decriminalize crossing the US Border illegally!" Her reasoning was to deliver on a real, humane reform of the immigration system and fix the American racist, xenophobic immigration system that has been broken for decades! Under federal law it would prohibit police from apprehending illegal immigrants and mandatory deportation of those who have committed certain crimes in the US would be abolished. Further it would require immigration judges to impose the least restrictive detention conditions necessary! So, open the border up and just allow illegal immigrants to pour in because the former President had instituted a hateful policy against all illegal immigrants!

Another problem with the porous Southern border is it opens the possibility for terrorists to enter our country unimpeded and free to go wherever they please. That is a dangerous situation that unfortunately may already have occurred based on the fact that there have already been some illegal aliens of unknown country of origin who have been caught by the Border Patrol. Some of these individuals have been caught wearing ghillie suits which are camouflage wear that are used to make the individual harder to spot in the open terrain! Anyone not entering our country through a controlled Border Crossing where they can be vetted, have an ulterior motive for entering. Criminals or terrorists do not want to cross at a controlled Border Crossing for fear of being caught and returned to the country they are departing. Regardless of the reason that elected officials believe that our Customs and Border Protection officers have for enforcing the Immigration Law, it is being done to protect our country from being overrun with undesirable people. Why did I bring this up? Because the Biden administration made a decision to change federal law giving terrorists easier access to the United States. The rule change was allegedly changed to make it easier for Afghan Special Immigration visa holders to make entry as a result of their support given to the US forces. However, the wording was so vague that it would allow terrorists from Afghanistan and Iran to enter without being properly vetted. This would then be a National Security problem if these countries sent trained terrorists to South America and directed them to proceed to the Southern Border to cross undetected into the US.

The other problem is the sending plane and bus loads of immigrants to large cities around the United States in the dark of night. Who are these people, where did they come from, and were they properly vetted before being shuffled all across the country? Why is it that the government contractors provided to accompany these illegal immigrants across the country are told to ensure

there is no press, no interviews, and no pictures allowed. What is our own government and moreover the Department of Homeland Security hiding or withholding from the citizens of this country? Illegal encounters at the southern border numbers in the millions and we have no idea who these people are or possibly even where they ended up! Are there other entities involved and if so, why? Who really is in control of the influx of the illegal immigrants and how can the citizens of this country continue to allow or even to put up with the idea of no enforcement of the Immigration Law!

Wondering about the above I googled: Reports of illegal immigration being funded by World organizations. I found several references but one in particular which I will provide here for you the reader to check out and inform yourself and others. It is: United Nations Grantees Use U.S. Tax Dollars to FUND ILLEGAL IMMIGRATION! Monthly cash for food, lodging, and movement assistance amounts to material support for illegal immigration. It influences decisions to cross the border. Here is another from Amnesty International that I found that might interest you:

Laws for Migrants, Refugees and Asylum seekers!

The rights of migrants, refugees and asylum seekers are protected by international law, regardless of how and why they arrive in a country. They have the same rights as everyone else, plus special or specific protections including:

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Article 14), which states that everyone has the right to seek and enjoy asylum from persecution in other countries

The 1951 UN Refugee Convention (and its 1967 Protocol), which protects refugees from being returned to countries where they risk being persecuted

The 1990 Migrant Workers Convention, which protects migrants and their families

Regional Refugee law instruments (including 1969 OAU Convention, 1984 Cartagena Declaration, Common European Asylum System and Dublin Regulation)

Another interesting find was this one:

Nonprofits and NGOs assisting migrants who cross the border: humanitarian support or abetting a crime?

'I have been watching the United Nations, UNHCR distribute cash debit cards to migrants.'

The United Nations is assisting illegal immigrants to get to and or cross the southern border of the United States! No wonder we have so many illegals attempting to or making illegal entry into the United States.

Inform yourself on this issue if for nothing else than the Security or our nation!

The last item I will discuss in my National Security Report is that of several documents that were posted on line containing Secret or Top-Secret information recently. In March or April several documents detailing classified war documents were leaked on social media. The majority of the plans were regarding the U.S. assistance to Ukraine in its war with Russia. Information regarding the use of military weapons and munitions as well as how intelligence was being gathered and disseminated to the Ukrainian military was part of the information. Some of the information released mentioned the scope of the intelligence gathering and it was done on both allies and adversaries. Many of the documents were prepared over the winter for the Chairman of the Joints

Chiefs and other senior military officials. According to the report this information was available to other US personnel and contract employee who had the proper clearance to access it. Not all of the documents were allowed to be shared with our allies and was so marked and was not supposed to be put out in the open. This leak was not isolated to just one of our Intelligence agencies tasked with gathering intelligence, rather five of our agencies. A leak of this nature gives cause for concern into whether it was done by someone in one of the several agencies responsible to gather, analyze, and decide how it should be shared across the spectrum of those countries involved in any one situation or conflict. The documents demonstrated how the U.S. intelligence community had been able to garner intelligence on Russia and how that had been done. The leaks regarding the Ukrainian military caused concern for the Ukrainian President and his military commanders as well. After the information had been located and assessed it was determined that much of it was outdated intelligence and or had been altered so as to be only minimally valuable to any country who was able to access and read it. As a result of the leak a statement was issued by the Air Force that the intelligence unit responsible for the leak had been ordered to stand down. And on April 18th, 2023 the FBI made an arrest on an individual identified as Jack Teixeira who was serving with an intelligence unit of the Massachusetts Air National Guard. He was charged with two counts of retaining and distributing classified and national defense information online in recent months. Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin ordered a comprehensive analysis of security protocols as a result of the large leak of classified information. What harm has this leak of intelligence data and how will it affect the co-operation between the U.S. and its Allies in the coming months and or years? Will the intelligence community as a whole lose the ability in some cases to conduct intelligence gathering worldwide without suffering the loss of people who were providing it? Can we convince our allies that this was a careless breach of security by someone who was doing it to show off to some of his friends on line and will likely not occur again in the near future? The old saying that goes: "Loose lips sink ships" could never be true than what occurred with this incident. People who are given the trust to handle our nations secrets should be vetted carefully so this never happens again and it should also be stressed that this could be considered treason. The matter has been referred to the Justice Department do a formal criminal probe.

Lastly, the budget and debt ceiling of the United States and what affect it could have on our National Security. Part of the problem is the tax and spend rut our elected officials have been in for so long that they have dug a pretty deep hole for us to this point. Our government cannot continue to spend more than it takes in and continue to raise the debt ceiling so they do not default on what is owed. One of the ways they mentioned was to print more money but that is not the answer because then we would end up with run-away inflation. The people negotiators would be to be more reasonable with a mixture of spending cuts and tax increases. Cutting Social Security and Medicare was brought up however those are not popular because of the support it gives those who have worked and count on that money when they retired. It also provides support for those who cannot work due to a medical condition or disability. There has been talk of cutting defense spending but that only accounts for 15 per cent of the budget and is used in various aspects of our nation's economy. To be sure, it also ensures our Nations military is properly equipped and provided the tools to do the job as well as medical care when it's needed. Provided in the bill before the House is continued Health Care Coverage for Veterans and the PACT Act and that Veterans health care would be fully funded. We can't just keep throwing money at countries who really do not support us or to a cause that really has no value to the United States. By continuing to raise the Nations Debt we are just digging a bigger hole than if our elected officials would sit down and honestly do the job they are sent to do. Quit spending the publics money like you're a drunken idiot and begin to run the government like a business where what's brought in is enough to pay for

what needs to be done! If we as a business which we are spent our veteran's money the way our government spends the tax-payers money, we would not last very long. There comes a time when we have to take a long hard look at what we can afford to do with the cost of doing business. The price of everything has gone up and so it just makes sense to ask ourselves as a nation and or a business if we can Continue the Way It's Always Been! We as a Nation have to live within the budget that will cover what needs to be done at home with the money taken in from the citizens. If we default on our debt, the bank, countries, or places that loan us money or support our loan will either reduce the rating used when money is loaned or we as a Nation Default. Then what happens? The U.S. debt ceiling and what happens if it is not raised according to the reports, could cause major issues world wide because the dollar is used as the mainstay. Biden and House Republicans have agreed in principle to address the debt limit and cap spending. So now it is up to the House and Senate to pass the bill.

What I have covered in this National Security report does not minimize what I have written about in my past reports. Some of the things that were relevant in the last three are still relevant today. North Korea, Iran, the Taliban, Russia, and Cuba and other countries like them are still not our allies and would do anything to do us harm. Damage could still happen to our infrastructure with a storm here on earth or in space. Crime in our country is not just something that happens in the large cities or municipalities, but anywhere at anytime due to the ability of people to travel great distances. Drugs are becoming more prevalent and continue to plague our country with the abuse of several types by people of any gender, race, or color! Remember that National Security is everyone's job. If you see something, say something. While it may not seem important to you, the smallest thing can turn out to be a much larger issue once it is analyzed. If we are aware of our surroundings, we will keep not only ourselves Safe but those around us.

ORATORICAL

Jeff Holmes

First off, I would like to congratulate Ella Pheifer a senior from Kalispell and sponsored by District #4 for winning the Department Oratorical Contest on Saturday March 13th in Bozeman. We wish you all the success at the National Contest on 21-23 April 2023. Miles Meinders a freshman from Gallatin placed second; Carmen Katzenberger a freshman from Harlowton placed third; Melaina Kloberdanz a senior from Helena placed fourth; and Fiona Fay a junior from Corvallis placed fifth. I would like to thank all posts, districts, and participants for continuing the education of our constitution.

Secondly, a huge shout out to Randy Kemp and the members of Gallatin Post #14 for all their work as the local liaison in Bozeman and for lining up most of the workers and the location. Thanks also to Duane for acting as the moderator, and as always to Erin for being the rock star behind the scenes. Thanks also to the New Beginnings Church for the use of their facilities. The continued success of the Department Oratorical Contest is truly a team effort.

We used the new format again this year, and again it worked great. Obviously, we only had four contestants, so we split the cash awards as follows: 1st - \$320; 2nd - \$220; 3rd - \$195; 4th - \$170; and 5th - \$145. We were also done by noon and able to save the money budgeted for meals. I am so thankful you approved this change to our oratorical format.

Next year's Department Oratorical Contest is scheduled to be held in Butte and Nationals is talking about changing the date for the national contest so be flexible.

I work for you and try to make your job easier. As always, let me know what I can do to help. We are all in this together.

PUBLIC AFFAIRS & PUBLICATIONS

Christine Miller

This year the PR and Publications Committee has met some challenges, in that there needs to be more scope for us to not just promote within but to be able to run articles in and on other avenues.

We have made great strides in getting more Posts involved and submitting articles therefore getting a wider view of what is going on across the state. To the point several times we have either had to choose articles or combine them to get it all in the paper.

We continue to work with the layout designer who makes our paper one of the best throughout the Legion. Recently at the National Spring Convention extra copies were taken and distributed in the TALMA meeting as well as through other states whom were impressed with our paper distribution and print quality. Both of those things set us apart and make it what it is for our state, self-publicity. Each copy that can potentially be picked up on a VA table or out in public is the opportunity for a veteran to see what it is that the Legion does.

We continue to use Department Facebook posts as a way of keeping our self on feeds and the number of "real time posts" as activities are happening adding administrators to assist in posting has been a big positive and taken the whole load off a single person. We cannot encourage Posts enough to get a Publications person to start making Posts at the local level.

I was able to travel with the National Commander in the Fall and get around numerous district meetings, fall department meeting and then the rounds at Spring district meetings. I feel like this travel puts a face to the paper and encourages many other posts to submit who may have not participated in the past.

Another year moving forward; getting out to more activities and to visit at encourage others to submit articles and participate, the paper and historian competitions are tangible items that leave a trail for future legionnaire to read and realize all we did for them today so that they could have the tomorrows.

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

Eddy White

The Detachment of Montana met last fall and addressed some outstanding issues that could not be resolved at the 2022 Detachment convention meeting. The items that were not resolved was recognizing the Belgrade Squadron No 30 (small) and Glasgow Squadron No 41 (medium) with a plaque. All plaques with American Legion Emblem sales were on back order. We still recognized those Squadrons and will work on getting a better resource to obtain plaques in the future.

The Detachment was again briefed about the lack of submissions for the three individual awards for the year: Top Recruiter, SQL American Legion Family Recruiter.

American Legion Boys State Chair, Josh Clement provided another brief update to the Detachment of Montana about the program and asked for continued support of the program.

As NEC, I reported to the Detachment of Montana body that elections held in 2022 had an error. The NEC and Alt NEC were elected in 2021 and then elected again in 2022. The problem is that the Bylaws specifically state that NEC and Alt NEC are to hold the position for two years. By vote, it was affirmed to consider the election in 2022 for NEC and Alt NEC to be starting their first year at that election, therefore, the next election which will include NEC and Alt NEC will be in 2024 Convention.

Current Detachment Membership as reported by National, as of the 100% Target date of May 17, 2023 is 93.50%. We are 6% better than we were last year. However, Department of Montana fell short of 100% by 72 as of May 18th. It is STILL Possible to make 100%. The 105% goal is still reachable by July 26th, 2023. This has been communicated with the SAL Leadership team.

The Detachment of Montana is in a great position for 2023-2024 Membership year and I have full expectations that they will continue to support not only the Department of Montana, but their respective Posts and Post Auxiliaries as well

SHOOTING SPORTS

Larry Dobb

Since my last report, Department has received the results of the 2022-2023 competition. And like the 2021-2022 competition the almost unbelievable has repeated itself. For the second year in a row, the Gallatin Valley Sharpshooters (Manhattan Post 87) swept the entire 33rd Annual Competition. They were Montana Team Champions in both the "Sporter" and "Precision" disciplines and a member of each disciplines team won the title of Individual State Champion. Last year was the first time I've heard of such a complete sweep of the awards.

The Individual Montana Precision Champion was Alison Sutherlin. The Individual Montana Sporter Champion was Nicole Berger.

The Montana Team Precision Champion was the Gallatin Valley Sharp Shooters. The team members were Alison Sutherlin, Paige Hildebrandt, Ethan Bates and Hannah Todd.

The Montana Team Sporter Champion was the Gallatin Valley Sharp Shooters. The team members were Nicole Berger, Naya Talarico, Natalie Samson, and Marlie Sampson.

Because of the clean sweep by an individual team, I at first wondered how many teams had competed. In a conversation with Kim Shriver, Youth Shooting Sports Chairman at National in May 2023, I learned that Montana had five teams that competed. The competing teams were the Gallatin Valley Sharpshooters (Post 87 Manhattan), who entered three teams, two in the precision and one in Sporter, The Yellowstone Rifle Club (Post 4 Billings) and Phillips County 4H Shooters (Malta

Post 57). There should have been six, but one (Hellgate Post 27) did not complete the registration/get it in on time.

The second round of completion selects the top fifteen shooters in the nation in each discipline to compete at Colorado Springs in the National Championships. Based on scores, Montana had three individuals qualify. (Alison Sutherlin from Gallatin Valley Sharp Shooters and Ainsley McFarland from American Legion Montana (Billings Post 4) in the Precision Discipline. In the Sporter discipline Nicole Berger from Gallatin Valley Sharpshooters. The rules do not allow an individual to compete two years in a row in the same discipline and Alison Sutherlin competed last year and will not be able to do so this year. As of 1 June 2023, National tells me that Ainsley McFarland has completed her registration to attend. Nicole Berger is unable to attend.

VETERANS AFFAIRS & REHABILITATION

Candice Hering

VETERANS ECONOMICS

Ray Read

Purpose

- To supervise and coordinate all activities of committees assigned to the Veterans Employment & Education Commission at the Department level;
- When necessary, to initiate action concerning all matters affecting the economic well-being of veterans and/or the re-establishment of all war veterans returning to civilian life after a period of active service in the Armed Forces of the United States located in Montana
- To keep Department Commander and the Department Executive Committee informed concerning all developments affecting the economic welfare of veterans in all areas under the jurisdiction of the Veterans Employment & Education Commission;
- Such other purposes as may be assigned to it by the Department Executive Committee
- Two Sub-committee areas:

(1) Veterans Employment & Education

Purpose

- To survey, study and recommend solutions on problems relating to employment, unemployment, underemployment, re-employment, and workers compensation of all war veterans who seek, or have, attachment to the labor force, public or private;
- To study all questions involved in the protection of preferential rights of veterans in civil service;
- Such matters as may concern the obtaining of veterans' preference by legislation, with special attention to securing a more rigid enforcement and broad extension of federal, state and municipal civil service, with adequate

preference for veterans by legislation, and assisting veterans in the enforcement of the veterans' preference provisions of the law in cases which may be referred to it that show a violation of the spirit or letter of said provisions contained in the federal statutes, federal civil service regulations, executive orders or otherwise in all federal governmental employment;

- Such other purposes as may be assigned to it by the National Executive Committee.

(2) Veteran Education, Other Benefits and Homelessness

- To ensure that veterans educational benefits provided by the United States government to veterans are sufficient to pay all of the cost of a college education at state-supported colleges, all of the costs of trade school education, and a substantial portion of education provided by privately-owned colleges;
- To ensure that every generation of veterans has substantially the same as, or better benefits than, the previous generation;
- To ensure that the federal and local governments are allocating sufficient resources to alleviate and end the challenge of homelessness among America's veterans;
- To ensure that all veterans receive the benefits to which they are entitled as recompense for their military service on behalf of a grateful nation;
- Such other purposes as may be assigned to it by the National Executive Committee.

National Veterans Employment & Education Awards

The National Veterans Employment & Education Commission annually presents several awards at The American Legion's national convention to honor employers who hire veterans, disabled veterans, and older workers. Those who help veterans find employment are also recognized.

The awards include:

- Employer of the Year - Small Business, Mid-Sized Business and Large Business
- Employer of the Disabled Award
- Employer of Older Workers Award
- Local Veterans Employment Representative of the Year
- Outstanding Disabled Veteran Outreach Program Specialist of the Year
- Outstanding Employment Service Office of the Year
- Michael Guty Homeless Veterans Outreach Award
-

Nomination forms for each award are available through the Montana Department. The American Legion

The following Information Paper from the National Veterans and Education Commission is provided as a summary of American Veterans status.

Those Who Served: America's Veterans from World War II to the War on Terror American Community Survey Report

INTRODUCTION The first veterans of the United States served during the American Revolution in the Continental Army, created in 1775 when colonial militias formed a common army under command of George Washington. Since then, the United States has declared war 11 times and fought in conflicts around the world. More than 41 million Americans have served over the course of the nation's history. More than 16 million did so in World War II alone.

Who are America's veterans? Throughout history, they have included the Green Mountain Boys, Buffalo Soldiers, Tuskegee Airmen, Women Airforce Service Pilots, Screaming Eagles, and Green Berets. They are the men and women who served their country at home and abroad, on land, sea, and air—and since 1973, have served as an all-volunteer force.

This report looks at the roughly 18 million Americans, or about 7 percent of the adult population, who were veterans of the U.S. Armed Forces in 2018.¹ Ranging from 18 to over 100 years old, they served in conflicts as diverse as the Korean War and the Global War on Terrorism.

This report provides an overview of these men and women, such as how many veterans alive today served in World War II, the characteristics of Vietnam veterans, and how many Gulf War veterans are disabled. The report primarily uses data from ¹

The U.S. Census Bureau reviewed this data product for unauthorized disclosure of confidential information and has approved the disclosure avoidance practices applied to this release. CBDRB-FY20-POP001-0048. the 2018 American Community Survey to describe the demographic, socioeconomic, and health characteristics of veterans by their period of service in the armed forces. Importantly, the report focuses on veterans who were alive in 2018. It does not describe all veterans who served during a specific period in the military or the characteristics of veterans at the time that they left service.

HIGHLIGHTS

- The number of veterans in the United States declined by a third, from 26.4 million to 18.0 million between 2000 and 2018.
- There are fewer than 500,000 World War II veterans alive today, down from 5.7 million in 2000.
- Women make up a growing share of veterans. Today, about 9 percent of veterans—or 1.7 million—are women. By 2040, that number is projected to rise to 17 percent.
- The largest cohort of veterans alive today served during the Vietnam Era (6.4 million), which lasted from 1964 to 1975. The second largest cohort of veterans served during peacetime only (4.0 million).
- The median age of veterans today is 65 years. By service period, post-9/11 veterans are the youngest with a median age of about 37, Vietnam Era veterans have a median age of about 71, and World War II veterans are the oldest with a median age of about 93.

VA HOSPITAL VOLUNTEER REPRESENTATIVE – BILLINGS

Sue Davidson

I visit the Billings CBOC every month to check on everything. I decorated the bulletin boards in both buildings for Christmas and Valentines Day. I also had cards decorated for the veterans by elementary school children.

I also worked on the Y2K VA Run, doing registration, collecting donations, and talking to all the veterans all day. I really enjoyed it.

I still need to get some book boxes made for both buildings, which is my bad. Sorry Bill. I still need to do that.

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 differently this time around due to COVID-19 and it remains the same today. Changes are coming as a result of new guidance from VA that will be coming out on or about 1 Oct 2022 has been delayed with no new date yet that will affect volunteering at VA facilities. Other changes are job descriptions for coordinators at VA facilities. By doing this it will bring us in line with national and help this department in planning and supporting the VAVS programs throughout the state.

Right now, without the guidance that comes from the job description and guidance that comes from the Legion VAVS manual (that is now outdated) we who are filling these positions throughout the state are not doing our job effectively.

The Legion participated in the giving tree for our Veterans throughout the state at Christmas Time. The next big thing will be National Salute to Hospitalized Veterans throughout the state and there again the Legion will be supporting that program.

The Department VAVS account was used with my permission to help the Geraldine Post make a gift to a deserving Veteran who followed that adage there is someone worse than me. That word went out to the community that the American Legion cares.

Because of the changes being made and new personal coming on in volunteer services what is happening in Billings and Miles City have not changed from the last report but with the new personal coming on in mid-May changes will be forth coming.

VA HOSPITAL VOLUNTEER REPRESENTATIVE – Miles City

Clancee Collins

I talked to the Activities Director at the Miles City CLC in February and informed her that the American Legion Post #5 had allocated funds of \$250 for their use for the residents. I gave her my contact information and as of this date she has not notified me of the use of said funds.

There are currently nine residents in the CLC and there was only one case of restrictive access due to a COVID incident. We have two members of Post #5 who visit with the nurses every Thursday. There has been no request for assistance from myself or from Post #5.

WOMEN'S VETERANS COORDINATOR

Kara Blom

The first ever American Legion of Montana Women's Veterans Symposium was held in April at the Kleffner Ranch in East Helena, Montana, with over 100 attendees, vendors, Legionnaires and Auxiliary members mingling, sharing stories, ideas and initiatives to advance both the needs of Montana's vibrant female Veteran population, but also to recognize their service and sacrifice. We would like to thank the Kleffner Ranch and Stockman Bank for sponsoring and supporting a great event. The hope is to make this an annual event throughout Montana.