



**THE AMERICAN LEGION DEPARTMENT OF
MONTANA**

DEPARTMENT CONVENTION REPORTS

2024

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

First of all, I want to thank everyone in the Department of Montana for a great year. It has been my honor to serve you as your Department Commander this year. I have gained many new friends as I made my way around our great state promoting our programs.

This has been a very busy year. We have worked hard as a department to achieve our membership goals and I thank each of you for your hard work and dedication to the American Legion of Montana and your respective posts. We have done well, and I am so proud of our team. With that, I want to say thank you to our District and Zone Commanders. They have done a great job for us this year.

In November, we were honored to have our National Vice Commander for the Western Region, Randy Edwards come to visit Montana. We visited several places in Helena that helped veterans and got a tour of the gym set up for veterans to work out. We attended a hockey game between Helena and Great Falls which led to the signing up several new members. We attended the Veteran's Day Breakfast hosted by Post 2 in Helena on the 11th. We went to a tailgate party at Carroll College before departing for Fort Benton. We toured the Old Fort and then proceeded to Geraldine for their Veteran's Day Dinner. The next day we attended a Veteran Standdown in Fort Benton which also netted us several new members. We returned to Helena and had a meeting and breakfast with several VA employees before he departed for home. It was a great visit and a time share what Montana is all about.

Later in November, I attended the funeral for our American Legion Auxiliary Department President, Yvonne Kostelecky's husband Marvin along with many other Legionnaires.

Again, I was invited to attend the Christmas Dinner in Geraldine. They put on a fantastic meal, and we had a great time visiting.

I was honored to assist in the program for the Four Chaplains Service in Helena at the Fort Harrison Chapel on February 3rd. There was a very large gathering of people in attendance at this event. The service honored the Four Chaplains from WW2 who gave their lives saving many others on board the Dorchester, a troop transport vessel. The next day, I was at the first Four Chaplains Service hosted by Post 48 in Chinook. It was not as well attended as we had a bad snowstorm that day that kept many away.

I attended all the district meetings this spring. It is always a pleasure to be able to get out and visit the posts and districts in Montana to learn what is happening within your communities. I enjoyed your hospitality while attending your meetings.

I attended the Department Oratorical Competition that was conducted at East Helena High School. We didn't have as many contestants as we were hoping but we heard from some outstanding speakers that day. I hope to hear many more good things from these students as they move forward. All our contestants were Freshman or Sophomores, so they have a promising future with our contest.

I traveled to Laurel to attend the Women Veterans Symposium. Irene Dickerson did a fantastic job putting this event together and they had many excellent speakers. Again, this event got us a couple more new members to the American Legion.

I was able to head to Glasgow for the pre-convention meeting to see what the post in Glasgow was planning for us and they have been doing a good job putting together events for us while we are in Eastern Montana.

I participated in the Memorial Day Program at the cemetery in Chinook on May 27th helping read names of those buried there. Altogether, we read 649 names. I then headed to Helena where I participated in the Memorial Day Ceremony at the Veteran's Cemetery at Fort Harrison. I then was the guest speaker at the ceremony hosted by Post 2. Honoring our departed brothers and sisters is truly an honor.

I participated in American Legion Boys State and American Legion Auxiliary Girls State.

I was also honored to be able to provide a few remarks to the VFW State Convention highlighting a few things that is happening in the American Legion.

I have attended and participated in several funerals this year for departed veterans within Montana. It is an honor to be able to provide honors to these veterans.

DEPARTMENT VICE-COMMANDER

Ken Simon

Following my election as Department Vice Commander I returned home and prepared to head to Helena for the start of American Legion Boys and American Legion Auxiliary Girls State. Last year in 2023 the two were combined and held at Fort Harrison in Helena. With the program on schedule and the plans put in place, the delegates embarked on an experience that allowed them to form towns and communities, run for office, write laws for their communities, write bills to present at their legislative day at the Capitol. What is always an amazing transformation is how quickly the boys begin to come together and work closely as a team in whatever they are tasked to do. This normally happens within the first hours of the first day and lasts throughout their week at American Legion Boys State. They were able to go to the Capitol and put in place what they had learned regarding the workings of the State government. It was my privilege to once again take the Chief Justice group to the Supreme Court and let them sit in the chairs and listen to a presentation about the workings of the Court. The Chief Justices were busy however we were able to have Justice Jim Rice take time out to come out and speak with the boys, answer a few questions, and then have pictures taken with them. This is and has been an honor for those boys selected as Chief Justices to go see the court room and sit in the chairs as well as visit for a few moments with one of the Chief Justices. This year the two programs came together to Honor the Nations birth by assisting with carrying the large flag and helping to secure it to the flagpole just east of Carroll College. You all know where that flagpole is and just how big that flag is and those young girls and boys did a really Great Job!

On July 20th I travelled to Miles City for the start of the American Legion Eastern District Baseball game, where I met up with Past Department Commander Richard Klose and Clancee Collins of Post 5 Miles City. We were able to visit with some of the folks in the stands before the presentation of the colors and the National Anthem.

July 23rd, I travelled back to Miles City for the Eastern American Legion Baseball playoff and Championship Game. Following the Championship Game I congratulated and presented the Runners Up and the Winners with their trophies.

On July 27th I traveled from Williston N.D to Indianapolis, IN to attend the M&PA meetings with Montana M&PA Chairman Richard Klose. Various subjects were covered from Membership Recruitment to Retention & Buddy Checks, Post / District Revitalization and Public Relations. I returned home on 30 July.

On August 20th, my wife and I departed Plentywood to drive to the American Legion National Convention in Charlotte, NC arriving at the Hyatt Place Hotel where the Montana American Legion group was staying on the 24th. I attended the National Security Council and Committee Meetings, two seminars on a new type of treatment for PTSD. Both were very informative and interesting in the material presented and what the results of the testing had shown. People from our Lakeside Post 426 were involved in both of these seminars. Following the completion

of the American Legion National Convention, we took a few days coming back to Montana via Jacksonville, FL and Bowling Green, KY, arriving back home on the 17th of September.

Fall District Meeting began in September and due to visiting family in both Florida and Kentucky, I did not make any of those meetings. District 11 in Laurel was the first Fall District Meeting I attended. I then attended the Fall District Meetings in Forsyth on October 8th, then District 3 in Ft Benton on the 14th before finishing up with District 3 meeting in Conrad on the 15th of October.

October 18th, I travelled to Glasgow for a Pre '24 Convention Meeting and walk through with Erin, Bill, Lowell, Joe, and a representative of the Glasgow Post 41 Auxiliary at the Cottonwood Hotel, the Glasgow Event Center, and the Elks Club.

November 10th the Western Regional National Vice Commander Randy Edwards flew into Helena to visit three Posts in the Department. He was first taken for a tour of the Adaptive Sports Center in Helena, then a hockey game in Helena which he thoroughly enjoyed. The next day he was in Ft Benton, then down to the Denton Post where he was led to their Post by two mounted riders carrying the American and Legion Flags. The third day the Ft Benton Post held a Stand Down at the Fair Grounds. Following the Stand Down we returned to Helena where he was given a tour of the Museum before returning home.

I traveled to Billings on November 17th to attend the Celebration of Life for Past Department Commander Herman Jensen formerly of Culbertson, who passed away on November 3rd in Billings. I met Herman Jensen in 1977 when I moved to Culbertson to work for Roosevelt County. His service was at St Bernards Catholic Church in the morning with the Internment at the Yellowstone National Cemetery in Laurel in the afternoon.

On November 29th my wife and I drove to White Sulphur Springs to attend the funeral of Marvin Kostelecky, husband of Department Auxiliary President Yvonne Kostelecky.

With the start of Spring District Meetings, I traveled to District 2 in Chinook on March 9th, then to Glasgow for the District 1 Meeting, then District 9 in Lewistown, and District 6 in Lincoln. I missed the District 7 Meeting in Bozeman due to roads and weather.

On March 14th, I was invited to accompany PDC Richard Klose, Commander Lowell Long, and District 10 Commander Irene Dickerson and her husband Steve to Crow Agency for the presentation of the Charter to a New Legion Post. We met with five members of Post 315 and presented them with their temporary Charter, Officers, and Legion Pins. This was originally Clark Stops Post 135 at Crow Agency.

I travelled to Helena for the Department Oratory, which was held on March 30th, where four young ladies showed up to compete out of the eight students who originally signed up.

Starting again on April 6th I missed both the District 3 and 8 Spring Meetings due to weather and road conditions. On April 13th I was in Miles City for their District 10 Meeting then on to Billings

for the District 11 Meeting and District 4 Meeting the 20th of April and the final District Meeting in Missoula for District 5.

I attended the Women's Veterans Symposium in Laurel on May 3rd as a guest along with Richard Klose, Bill White, and Duane Cunningham. It was a good meeting with several vendors and several other Department people as well as female veterans. While there I signed up two female veterans and one Auxiliary member.

I would like to say Thank You to all of you who attend your District and Department Meetings that I get to visit with and know a little better every time. We had a good year in spite of our membership numbers and if we work just a little harder, your hard work and dedication will make Team Montana stronger this next year and for years to come. Your support and trust is Greatly Appreciated, and I look forward to seeing as many of you as possible at the Convention in Glasgow the 26th through the 30th of June.

ZONE COMMANDER – SOUTH CENTRAL

Bill Cummins

Since last fall, I've been in touch with the District Commanders when needed. The present District Commanders seem to be well in touch with their districts. I did attend the Spring District Meetings for Districts 7, 9 and 11. I am still somewhat disappointed at the attendance at the District Meetings. This may be an area for the incoming Zone Commander to work on. As the Zone Commander, I attended the District 7 Oratorical Contest and the Department Oratorical Contest in East Helena. The more of these contests that I attend, the better appreciation I have for our young people. I also attended Post 19's steak and lobster feed in Big Timber. In May I attended a fundraiser for Post 99's commander, Robert Alley, at Big Sky. Robert is awaiting a liver transplant. The fundraiser was to help him with housing costs for 6 months in Salt Lake City. As the new member of the Department's Finance Committee there have been some challenges, and it has been a learning experience. This has given me a greater appreciation for the Department Adjutant, Duane Cunningham, and his assistant, Erin Carpenter. My hat is off to them for all they do for us. In my own Post, I did have the honor of having Governor Gianforte present the Governor's Veteran Commendation Award to Gordon Doig for his outstanding service to our community

ZONE COMMANDER – WESTERN

Dorothy Goodwin

This is the last of my Western Zone Commander (District 4, 5, and 6) term, I have enjoyed meeting the American Legion members in Districts 5 and 6 along with meeting up with District 4 members that I have known for several years

District 5 I drove to Lincoln for the District 6 Spring meeting to be held on Sunday, March 17, 2024. District 6 Commander, Dave Haulman had 8 posts to show for the meeting. It was announced that the traveling Veterans Wall will be in Butte, August 27 and 28, should anyone want to visit

the wall. The district has built its own web page. Everyone got to have a St. Patrick Day lunch of corned beef and cabbage. The fall meeting will be held in Deer Lodge for 2024.

On April 20, 2024, District 4 held their spring district meeting in Polson at Post 112 Legion Hall with co-hosts of St Ignatius 106. Ten posts were represented at the meeting. A lunch of spaghetti with salad was provided. District 4 has a Facebook page what is viewed by many to keep up to date about events. The fall meeting will be held in Columbia Falls for 2024.

On April 21, 2024, I attended District 5 in Missoula. District 6 Commander Alex Vogel had a meeting in the morning that was fast moving. During lunch there was a presentation of the MT Law Enforcement Office of the Year was presented to Chris Lueck by Department Commander Lowell Long. Fall meeting will be held in Corvallis for 2024.

I have enjoyed my last two years as Zone Commander and am honored to pass on the title to the next zone commander.

ZONE COMMANDER – NORTH CENTRAL

Andy Rice

So far, my time as the North Central Zone Commander has been a busy but enjoyable time. My mission of pushing more visibility in the community has produced many positives for the organization. First, I attended the Choteau Rodeo and helped with the local post there with beer sales as well as promoting the Legion raffles and cash calendars which resulted in nearly \$1,000 dollars in sales for the raffles and during such events, I highly advise the local posts to set up a table for education and membership for the American Legion.

The next event I attended was the state fair in Great Falls. Working with Post 341 and Post 102 as well as the Department Commander manning the table for a day, I can sincerely say this event was a massive success. Not only did we manage to do about \$4,000 dollars in raffle and cash calendar sales, Post 341 was able to recruit around 12 members into their post and generated a lot of interest from out of state veterans as well as the local veterans in the community. The district 8 Commander Michael Allison also attended the event to help, and I asked him to reach out to all the posts within the district and see if they would have interest in helping with the fair as it was clear from the beginning how well things were going. Unfortunately, his attempts to reach out must have fallen on deaf ears because no other posts volunteered for the opportunity to not only raise money for the department and their post but to also help recruit members to their respective posts. There was also a member that requested a transfer into the Vaughn post and a member that requested information on when Conrad meets so he could become more involved with the Legion. The time we spent at the state fair has simply reinforced the idea that being out in the community and being visible to the public can help the Legion with its membership goals and fundraising efforts. And I truly believe for us to grow and excel with the ideals and pillars of the American Legion a more active approach should be considered. This is not to say that posts are not active but to simply say trying new ideas and a different approach can be a boon to this organization.

The next event I attended was the Chouteau County fair in Fort Benton which took place in August. Although this fair is a small-time event it still produced around \$1,000 in raffle and cash calendar sales bringing the total fundraising efforts to approximately \$6,000 dollars. Now just think for a moment if this was being done all over the state with the local posts and members from the Department. I was pleased that during this event, albeit a small one, the Department Adjutant Duane Cunningham and the Department Chaplain Bill White attended the event with me for a day and got to see firsthand how well the efforts were doing with fundraising as well as membership as many local veterans to the area accepted information about the American Legion as well as membership applications. I have thoroughly enjoyed attending all these events and I strongly feel that my efforts are within the purview of the Zone Commander position and should be a part of the Zone Commanders responsibilities within the Department.

During the Veterans Day weekend in November Post 102 hosted the National western Vice Commander Randy Edwards with a dinner of smoked brisket and sides. The next day I attended the veterans stand down that was hosted by the Fort Benton post 26 which was a

well-received event that resulted in new members being recruited and beneficial information and services being provided to the local veterans and everyone who chose to attend. Things were pretty quiet during the winter months and then kicked off again in the spring with district meetings. I attended all the district meetings within my zone and enjoyed attending all of them. I would also like to express my congratulations to district 2 commander Jed Damson for his efforts on being the first district to hit 100%.

ZONE COMMANDER – EASTERN

Dave Ofalt

After being appointed Eastern Zone Commander, I was unable to attend Fall Conference in Helena due to a scheduling conflict. I did attend the business session via zoom. I attended the Executive Board meetings via Zoom. I had intentions of attending the District 1 Spring Meetings and again work came up at the last minute. I did speak with the District Commander Joe Yeoman about the situation. I attended the District 10 Spring Meeting in Miles City. I have started working in Colstrip and am trying to get those veterans involved in the American Legion. It may take some time to get them to understand everything we do, but I am working on it. District 10 Commander Irene Dickerson and I went to the high school and pushed for boys and girls to attend Boys and Girls State as Delegates. Post 39 presented a Veterans Day program at Forsyth High School for the students. I conducted more military honors and organized the Memorial Day Service at the Veterans section of the cemetery.

NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEEMAN (N.E.C.)

Larry Dobb

Report combined with the Alternate NEC report while Larry continues his recovery.

ALTERNATE NATIONAL COMMITTEEMAN (N.E.C.)

Glen Sharbono

First, I would like to wish our National Executive Committeeman Larry Dobb good health.

At the Department Oratory Contes in East Helena I was asked to be the Moderator it was an honor to do so. Kaci Phiefer, a Homeschooler from Kalispell won as did her sister the year before. We had four great contestants. It would be nice someday to see one from all 11 Districts in the Department.

I attended District #4 and District #5 Spring Meetings. A hat was passed at both Districts for donations to the Veterans and Children's Fund. A combined total of \$384.00 from those in attendance, and the Districts both donated \$400.00 to the same cause. District #4 and #5 also donated \$300.00 to the Women Veteran Symposium. I believe the winner of the 50/50 raffle donated \$75.00 he won to the WVS as well. So, a pretty good haul just from those two Districts!

I went to Indy from the 5th – 10th of May for the Spring NEC meeting and to also attend the Americanism Commission meetings.

I attended the reception for James A. "Jim" LaCoursiere Jr. of Connecticut, leading candidate for National Commander 2024-2025. And the reception for Dank K. Wiley of Kansas, leading candidate for National Commander 2025-2026. I also attended the National President Candidates Reception for Pam Ray and Carol May Grout at the Panorama Ballroom at the Sheraton Indianapolis City Center. On Tuesday I attended the Legionnaire Insurance Trust dinner at the Omni Severin Hotel. The Department of Montana received \$18,000.00 from LIT.

I was able to witness history as our National Adjutant Daniel S. Wheeler retired after 45 years of service and Rodney K Roland a former Marine from Columbus, Geogia was unanimously appointed by the NEC to be our new National Adjutant. A resolution by the NEC also named Daniel S. Wheeler as a Past National Commander.

At the NEC dinner National Adjutant Wheeler actioned some oil paintings he had done over the years and raised \$12,000 dollars which he donated to the Veterans and Children's Fund.

The Department of Montana received \$18,000.00 in dividends from Legion Insurance Trust.

You can watch The American Legion 2024 Spring NEC meeting at www.legion.org/legiontv And a very powerful speech by National Commander Daniel Seehafer at www.legion.org/legiontv

Because of the #10 Be The One Indy Car, indirect advertising has surpassed \$82 Million the car and driver will appear on airport walkways and escalators, generating more free advertising.

Some of the Resolutions voted on by the NEC at the Spring meeting in Indianapolis.

Our National Adjutant Daniel S. Wheeler retired after 45 years of service.

Resolution #1 named him as “Past National Commander” with rights and privileges.

Resolution #2 named room 301 at Nation HQ as the “Daniel S. Wheller Conference Room.

Resolution #3 Increasing Military Tuition Assistance.

Resolution #4 Appropriation of Funding for Credentialing Assistance Programs.

Resolution #5 Rescinding of 24, various obsolete and outdated resolutions.

Resolution #6 Amend the Rule of the National Executive Committee Pertaining to Legislative Resolutions.

Resolution #7 Amend the Uniform Code of Procedure for the Organization of National Conventions.

Resolution #8 Definition of Gold Star Family.

Resolution #9 Artificial Intelligence. Call upon Congress to study security, ethics, law and potential risks.

Resolution #10 Improve security at Department of Veterans Affairs Health-Care Facilities. This came about because of a couple of shooting incident where Georgia security guard was forced to shoot and kill a Veteran experiencing a mental health crisis when the Veteran came at him with a knife.

Resolution #11 Creation of Adjutants Advisory Board to the Americanism Commission American Legion Baseball Committee.

Resolution #12 Authorize Issuance of a Temporary Charter to a Foreign Post. Guadalajara, Mexico.

Resolution #13 Four Rules of an American Legion Program. That the purposes of the resolution, the “parent organization” denotes The American Legion organizational levels as it relates to the sponsored program by a post, district, department and/or national organization.

The Four Rules of a Program shall be as follows:

Rule #1 “Leadership” all elected leaders must be confirmed by the parent organization.

Rule #2 “Rules” all bylaws, amendments and/or rules must be presented to the parent organization.

Rule #3 “Reports” monthly activities report, quarterly financial reports, annual financial reports.

Rule #4 “Controls” parent organization may provide EIN #. 2 parental signatories.

Resolution #14 Support of the Presidential Medal of Freedom Award. To Dian Carlson Evens of Post #2 Helena Montana for her service as a nurse in Vietnam and The Vietnam Women’s Memorial.

Resolution #15 Identifying Ideal Candidate for the National American Legion College. Asking graduates to commit for the next eight to ten years in leadership positions at all levels.

Resolution #16 Restricted Fund Allocation to the Reserve Fund.

Resolution #17 Department Retention Award. \$2000.00 to the Department with the highest retention rate.

Resolution #18 National Convention Contract. Holding The American Legion National Convention in Kansas City, Missouri, August 27-September 2, 2027.

California tried to put forth a resolution allowing girls to be in AL Boys Nation because of a diversity law in California.

I attended the Americanism Commission Spring Meeting in Indianapolis May 6th & 7th 2024.

PNC Jake Comer let of with “Our job is the appointments and the disappointments. We don’t do enough in American Legion Boys State or the Oratorical contest!” (A lack of participation and enthusiasm by the Post seems to be Nationwide, while some Departments are having tremendous success with their programs.

The following is a brief synopsis of what was discussed short of doing a copy/paste of all the reports.

The Department of California presented a resolution to allow girls to be accepted into Boys Nation because of diversity laws in California. This was sent back for further study and its possible effect on The American Legion Auxiliary and Girls Nation.

American Legion & Scouting

Lauren Tyree, of Pennsylvania was named the 2024 American Legion Eagle Scout of the Year and will receive a \$10,000 scholarship. Runners-up recipients of the \$2,500.00 are Hayden Shaffer, (CO), Robert McPhie (CA), and Jackson Kramer (MN).

American Legion Junior Shooting Sports Program

The 33rd American Legion Junior Shooting National Championship will be held July 17-20, 2024, at Hillsdale College in Hillsdale, Michigan; 824 athletes entered the individual National Postal Match Competition from 123 clubs.

American Legion High School National Oratorical Contest

The 85th National Finals Contests will be conducted on May 17-19 at Hillsdale College. There will be 52 Department winners who will be competing for scholarship money.

The pairing bracket for the 2025 national finals, Quarter-Final Contest 8 will be New Hampshire, New York, Maryland, Delaware, Mississippi, Montana.

Assigned topics for the 2025 National Oratorical Contest are:

Amendment I – Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion or prohibiting the free exercise thereof....

Amendment VII – In Suits at common law, where the value in controversy shall exceed twenty dollars, the right of trial by jury shall be preserved.

Amendment XVIII, Sections, 1, 2, & 3 – After one year from the ratification of this article the manufacture, sale, or transportation of intoxicating liquors within....

Amendment XXVI – The right of the citizens of the United States, who are eighteen years of age or older, to vote shall not be denied.

American Legion Boys State and Boys Nation

Will again be held at Marymount University in Virginia.

The Legion Riders were responsible for accumulating over \$17 Million in donations for scholarships.

In accordance with resolution #6 of the NEC October 2011, the COYE named Chad Johnson of South Dakota for 2024 National Education Award.

\$1,747,000 awarded to 48 states in scholarships including the Samsung Scholarships. Apparently, the Federal Government got involved in the disbursement of funds and some of the previously qualified kids may now be dropped.

Departments are being asked to consider a Department level “Law Cadet Program” this may be tough to implement as for whatever reason we are struggling to maintain the programs we currently have now.

An idea for prepping grade school kids for Oratory and Essay contests was to buy from Emblem Sales and placed into school’s comic books. There are \$1.00 each and are,

“Our Country’s Flag”, “Our Country’s Veterans”, “Light of Liberty”, and “I Pledge of Allegiance”.

The 2025 American Legion Membership Card will feature The American Legion Baseball Centennial.

PAST DEPARTMENT COMMANDER

Glen Sharbono

The report was combined with above report from Alternate NEC.

HISTORIAN

Ray Read

This is my 21st Year as the Department Historian for a premier 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 104th American Legion National Convention in Charotte, North Carolina. It was a refreshing experience, an impressive educational opportunity in all aspects of my position and appointments. I recommend that all Montana Legionnaires attend. To be sure travelling public transportation is expensive but if the opportunity repeats itself, I will attend the 105th TAL in Charlotte, North Carolina.

I have been able to attend some of the 2023 Fall District meetings and about half of the 2024 Spring District meetings. It is always good to meet with American Legion leaders who are striving to make the

TAL's four Pillars work for them. The unique locations of our District meetings show 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 program surrounding the importance of history to American Legion posts attending leadership. I appreciate the interest shown by the various attendees at these events. I was also able to continue my 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 105 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; and supporting our Nation's most precious resource our Children and Youth. The Montana Department district meeting systems has 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 a rural 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 who helped me with Operation Ruptured Duck program. This program is still active, and I am in the process of filling requests by various posts. The program will continue if World War II veterans living in our communities and still serving their fellow veterans are able to participate.

The tenth 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 final year of the Vietnam 50 Commemoration sunsetting in the year 2025. If you have not signed up for this program do so. All materials and assistance are FREE. Many of the handouts are starting to be in short supply.

I am asking all Montana Department American Posts to continue establish their history and 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

or 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 posts 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 creating Montana American 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 upcoming 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 2024. The Judging will be accomplished in October 2024. Post entries are due at the beginning of the Montana Department Convention, Glasgow, Montana June 26-30,2024.

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.mtlegion.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 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

Overall, it has been a good year for the American Legion of Montana, after last convention we set to work on many projects, some that have been completed and some that still needs addressed. Western Vice Commander Randy Edwards from Utah was out in the fall and his visit was highly successful. National Commander Daniel Seehafer visits Montana at our convention this year in Glasgow and we anticipate it being another successful endeavor.

Financially we face some future challenges with our programs, there are obvious reasons for this, as we failed to reach our target with membership, which is what fuels the engine. We will finish 2024 around the same 94-95% that we seem to have fallen into the last few years. That isn't because of a lack of effort. We currently have an outstanding group of Zone and District Commanders who have taken on the challenge, and I can only thank them for their ideas and efforts. We as a Department saw a large number of our comrades pass away the last few years and we simply are not replacing them fast enough. We need to really look at ways to reach the younger Veteran and educate them on what the American Legion is and what we offer within the community and its importance.

I attended the Spring Washington Conference and our Montana delegation had very good and to the point dialogue with our Legislative Representatives in both the House and the Senate. The American Legions voice was heard, and I also want each and every Legionnaire in Montana to start or continue to monitor and respond to Nationals Grassroots Action Center where you can easily reach out to our congressional representatives and support Veteran initiatives.

As I begin my second term as your Department Adjutant, I am really seeing a few things that we as a Department need to address. The Department Constitution and By-Laws needs to be reviewed and or updated. It has been longer than it should be since they have been reviewed. Other issues that have popped up that I think need to be at the very least placed in this report follow since there is some confusion with each.

American Legion Riders

The American Legion has a program, program being the key word, called American Legion Riders, it is a program much like AL Boys State or Oratory that is sponsored by an American Legion Post

within the Department. The Riders are not separate, nor are they their own entity within the American Legion. The Riders chapter, if a Post sponsors them, falls under the Constitution and By-laws of the host Post. AL Riders do not have their own separate Constitution and By-laws. Any chapter that operates under the belief or claims to have a separate Constitution and By-law other than the Post's that is sponsoring them is in violation of National Constitution and By-laws and faces termination as a chapter.

Below is National Resolution No. 5 Guidelines for the ALR National Program. The Whereas clauses have been left out to limit the size but can be easily searched on-line. Resolution 5 dated 5/6 May 2021 combines and rescinds Resolutions 19, 35 and 32. In short, it is the rule.

RESOLVED, By the National Executive Committee of The American Legion in regular meeting assembled virtually on May 5-6, 2021, That all American Legion Riders (ALR) groups be organized as programs supported by a post, department or other duly constituted department governing body of The American Legion and shall uphold the declared principles of The American Legion as well as conform to, and abide by, the lawful regulations and decisions of their department, post and/or other duly constituted department governing body; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That because The American Legion owns, controls, protects and defends The American Legion's intellectual property, composed of trademarks, emblems and copyrights (Emblem or Emblems), the following guidelines are required to fulfill protective standards:

- 1. All members of the ALR shall be current members of The American Legion, Sons of The American Legion or American Legion Auxiliary.**
- 2. Each ALR member shall establish and maintain ALR membership by owning, individually or through marriage, a common-law marriage, a life partnership or a long-term relationship, a motorcycle licensed and insured as required by the ALR member's state laws.**
- 3. ALR programs may allow for continued ALR membership for those ALR members who have given up motorcycle ownership because of age, illness, injury or other reasons outside the ALR member's control.**
- 4. ALR programs may allow current members of The American Legion family to join ALR chapters as supporting members.**
- 5. The only approved titles for ALR officers shall be chairman and vice-chairman or director and assistant director.**
- 6. All ALR members shall maintain the image of The American Legion, protect The American Legion's Emblems, which symbolizes the integrity and principles of The American**

Legion and if wearing Emblem items then the Emblem items will be American Legion authorized Emblems.

7. ALR members' vests should display the integrity, principles and values of The American Legion and the ALR by avoiding patches or pins with (1) explicit or offensive language and/or images and (2) political or partisan language and/or images since The American Legion is a non-partisan organization.

8. The ALR chapter should strive to represent the virtues, values, ethics and morals of The American Legion in support of freedom, democracy and the safety of our citizens.

9. Per NEC Resolution No. 37, May 4-5, 1988, ALR chapters do not have the authority to enter into any formal association or club/council membership with any outside organization that may act or vote in any manner outside the control of The American Legion.

10. All ALR members shall obey the laws of their respective state and/or the state(s) in which they ride.

11. The ALR chapter's sponsoring organization (post, district and/or department) are strongly urged to review liability insurance coverage to ensure that adequate insurance coverage is available to insure/cover the sponsoring organization, including insurance coverage for any specific special riding event; and be it further

RESOLVED, That American Legion Riders programs shall abide by the American Legion National Constitution and National By-laws as well as their established post, district and department directives; and be it further

RESOLVED, That American Legion National Headquarters and the respective departments shall maintain general oversight of the American Legion Riders program in regard to proper use of the Emblems of The American Legion, the American Legion Riders and the American Legion Legacy Run and to ensure compliance with the American Legion National Constitution and National By-Laws; and be it finally

RESOLVED, That Resolution No. 19 (NEC, Oct. 2020), Subject: "Updated Program Guidelines for the American Legion Riders (ALR) National Program" is hereby superseded and rescinded.

The Department American Legion Riders Director and I recognize the need for some form of document that can organize and give direction to the Riders Chapters. A Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) has been put together and will be reviewed and voted on by the Department Executive Committee, hopefully at Convention. This SOP was written with the intent of not being restrictive but still following the National guidelines and requirements. I want to thank Montana ALR Director Brian Carpenter for both his input, passion, drive and vision in assisting putting the

SOP together, it will be a working document moving forward, so changes and updates can be made. We all agree that the AL Riders program does great things, opens the door for new Legionnaires and provides visibility to the American Legion, but we also agree that a standard operating procedure is needed to get us all on the same page.

Funeral Honors

I received a call from a large funeral home in Montana recently asking for clarification on a so called “policy” of the American Legion for third party solicitation of “donations” to Posts that provide funeral honors. After speaking at length with the funeral home it came to light that the funeral home was directed by the Post to solicit on their behalf a \$75.00 donation for providing funeral honors to Veterans in their community. My first thought was that there had to be a mistake, sure, donations from the family of Veterans who pass are accepted on behalf of the Veteran, but no way was the American Legion charging for the honor of providing services to a fallen comrade. Unfortunately, I was incorrect.

After conferring with my counterpart with the VFW of Montana we issued a joint statement that at no time should a Post or Post member providing funeral honors to a fallen comrade solicit in any way donations for the honor of providing the service. This includes having a third party, such as the funeral home solicit the request on the Posts behalf. Both the American Legion and the VFW believe that providing funeral honors for Veterans is a solemn duty, honor and privilege. We honor the service and sacrifice of our Veterans with dignity and respect and certainly do not place a potential financial burden on the grieving family. Unsolicited donations for honors are certainly acceptable and welcome.

There has been a lot of confusion or instances of disagreement while providing honors at funerals as well, I understand many of our honors teams have a traditional way of honoring our comrades, however, if a family requests a certain agenda or way, they would like the service to go, we should always try to accommodate that if possible. I have gotten calls regarding the refusal of honor teams to adjust how they do the service, this should never happen as it is the family’s decision on the protocol, assuming it’s within reason.

It is also important to remember that the US Army is in charge, if present at any funeral and we are to follow their direction. The US Army funeral honors regulation, 10 U.S. Code § 1491, mandates that military units provide funeral honors for eligible veterans if requested by the family. The regulation states that the funeral honors detail must consist of at least two people, with at least two of those people being armed forces members who are not retired. The remaining members of the detail can be armed forces members, Veterans’ organizations, or other organizations approved by the Secretary of Defense. One member of the detail must also be a representative of the deceased Veteran's parent service.

The minimum funeral honors ceremony includes the folding and presentation of the US flag and the playing of Taps. Other traditions, such as a three-volley salute, are optional. The number of shots fired in the salute depends on the veteran's rank or status, but it will always be an odd number.

The US Army in Montana works closely with the various Veteran Service Organizations in Montana, and if funding allows, they provide a stipend to the Post for the funeral honor service. We must work with them and not try to sell them on the “traditional” way that the Post has always done it. Regulations change, and we have to adapt as well.

CHAPLAIN

Bill White

In the past, as I have read the book of reports published by the Department the Chaplain’s report is short or not at all. A Chaplain is an integral part of the American Legion and is a post that should not be taken lightly.

There are a couple of points that I feel should be taken seriously.

1. Give respect to the office.
2. Work with other chaplains within your district
3. Work with your post officers
4. BE A NETURAL VOICE in any and all meetings.

All chaplains should be familiar with Chaplain’s manual and handbook, not saying have it memorized but be familiar and above all else ask questions to those who have held the position in the past they have a great wealth of knowledge. Another point is checking the legion web site for any type of training for chaplains.

There is a requirement that each post or district have a Four Chaplains Ceremony each year and a lot of posts did do one. Thank you.

The Department ceremony was held at the post chapel on 3 February 2024 at Fort Harrison at 2:00 PM. It was one of the largest in recent times according to the comments that I received.

I want to thank all the help I have received this year to do this job; it has been a rewarding experience Thank you.

SERVICE OFFICER

Candice Hering

No Report Submitted.

PARLIAMENTARIAN

Josh Clement

No Report Submitted.

FINANCE OFFICER

Lonnie Cook

I officially took over the Department Finance Officer position in February this spring when Mr. John Joyce deployed overseas. Our first order of business was to conduct a complete Internal financial review of the American Legion Department of Montana finances the week of 31 Jan 2024. Present for this review were the American Legion Department Adjutant, the American Legion Department Office Manager, and me.

During our review, we noticed that we had numerous checks that were over a year old. Stockman bank checks are only good for 120 days, after 120 days Stockman returns all checks. The bank will return the checks to your post with a \$30.00 service charge. So please ensure all checks are cashed promptly. Any checks beyond 120 days that the holder would like reimbursed for would need finance committee approval for reissue.

Our Stockman Wealth Management account grew by 9.6% from \$445,694.62 on 1 Jul 23, to \$492,978.33 on 1 Jun 24, a gain of \$47,283.71. Assets are broken down by \$306,755.03 in Equities, \$175,136.72 in Fixed Income, and \$11,086.58 Cash & Equivalents.

Our American Legion Department accounts as of 1 July 2023 to 1 June 2024.

Accounts	1 Jul 23 Balance	1 Jun 24 Balance
AML Stockman Main Checking (OPS)	\$38,875.31	\$9,224.19
Boys State Checking	\$18,504.79	\$15,233.20
SAL Checking	\$7,606.53	\$4,618.31
SAL MM	\$27,539.92	\$29,113.20
Stockman MM	\$98,585.27	\$10,413.92
Boys State Savings	\$13,985.75	\$9,052.00
Wealth Management	\$445,694.62	\$492,978.33
AML Baseball Checking	\$42,081.28	\$32,319.35
Class A Baseball MM	\$27,812.18	\$29,042.28
Endowment fund	\$30,889.72	\$31,578.96

Convention Fund	\$17,081.54	\$7,636.52
Children & Youth Fund Checking	\$4,955.04	\$3,305.04
Children & Youth Fund MM	\$23,985.00	\$24,488.18
Total Funds Available	\$797,596.95	\$699,003.48

As of 1 Jun 24, our current funds available is \$699,003.48 across all accounts.

Our biggest expenditures for this year were the purchase of a new department truck for \$85,000 and department sold the old truck for \$23000, and the proceeds went into the American Legion Operations account,

The gross income for American Legion Boy State was \$27,415.50 and a total expense of \$36,171.17. A checking account shortfall of \$8,755.67. The largest program expense items were \$20,322 for contract meals, \$6,136 for lodging, \$4,093 shirts, and \$2,588 in transportation costs for its 2023 program, of which was all paid out in FY 2024. The shortfall was moved over from the AML BS savings account.

The Executive Committee executed two new Employee contracts (Dept Adjutant and Officer Manager) on or about 1 April 2024. Currently payroll expenses have been averaging \$8600 a month. A more accurate amount will be provided after a couple monthly payrolls are processed and averaged out.

The publication and mailing of the Legionnaire newspaper cost us \$3 per members which comes out of the membership. We pay \$39,600 per year for layout and distribution of the Legionnaire Paper. This is down from \$44,000 in 2020.

National has changed our business practices regarding how membership dues are collected and paid. Currently, the Department only gets \$11.50 per membership, out of the \$36.00 dues, the Post gets \$6.00, and National gets \$18.50. Membership goal for 2024 was 9844 x \$11.50 = \$113,206. As of 1 June, our membership number was 9252, a shortfall of 592 memberships or -\$6,808 short of our goal of \$113,206.00.

Our department fundraising raffle campaign came in short by ~\$18,679.00 of the \$27,000 originally budgeted. In March to help offset this shortfall, both Ken Simon and Bill White each donated a rifle to the raffle. I would like to recognize and thank both Ken and Bill for their donations. So please get your rifle raffle tickets before they are gone.

This spring we got a notice from QuickBooks stating they will no longer provide support for our current Department finance “legacy QuickBooks” system. **Starting 1-20 July 2024, we will be**

moving to a new online version of QuickBooks that will allow us to correct some legacy accounting codes listed below and potentially allow members of the finance committee read-only rights to the system. Allowing for better financial transparency and reporting. The auditor and tax accountant will be sitting with us during this period to ensure we correct all the items listed above. **Department staff will not be able to cut checks or answer financial status questions during this conversion process window.**

External Audit findings:

1. Too many accounts in QuickBooks. (example: Should only show balance sheet of typical Assets, Liabilities, and funds balance.) Will be corrected during roll over to new QuickBooks program.
2. QuickBooks needs a complete hard reboot to correct years of data fields that cannot be deleted or changed. (example: accounts closed in 2011 are still rolling up in current liabilities account).
3. Ten-(10) Legacy closed accounts still showing up in reports. (will be fixed in hard reboot and rebuild of the new online cloud version of QuickBooks)
4. Cross payments being made across different American Legion EIN programs. (example: American legion paying for Auxiliary legionnaire paper mailings).
5. Scholarships not being paid out. (SAL and AML). (develop proper bylaws on how scholarships are paid out and how much).
6. Fixed Assets not properly accounted for due to hard coding numbers set in Legacy QuickBooks program. (example: American Legion vehicle value at \$120k). This will be fixed in the new program.
7. Other current assets are not properly accounted for due to hardcoding numbers set in the legacy QuickBooks program. (Example: Office inventory supplies not able to adjust numbers. This will be corrected during the reboot)
8. Too much money on hand for a non-profit organization. (Need to develop a spending plan to satisfy the IRS).
9. Old closed credit cards showing up in the report because of hard coding in legacy QuickBooks not allowing change. (example: line 2214 USAA MasterCard shows \$375 still owed). This has been paid and closed! This will be corrected when we move to the new online program.
10. Endowment fund needs reworked on how funds will be invested and how interest will be spent as we move forward.

Each Committee needs to look at its programmed budget and look at how that committee could raise funds to meet its yearly program requirements. Due to inflation and higher costs, we had a couple of programs go over their allotted budget and we had to move funds around to cover the expenses.

The official FY 2024 year-end closeout financial report will be published NLT first week of August 2024 and presented during the fall convention.

Thank you for the opportunity to serve as your finance officer. Have a great department convention.

JUDGE ADVOCATE

Tim Fox

Greetings to all my Legionnaire friends and colleagues. Once again, I will be unable to join you at the summer convention. I will be in France to attend the dedication of a memorial to my Uncle Jack and his fellow B-17 bomber air crew members who were KIA (and one POW) on June 22, 1944. The memorial will be dedicated in Epagne-Epanette France on the 80th anniversary on June 22, 2024. We are expecting there to be 40 or 50 family members of the air crew at the dedication ceremony.

ELECTION QUESTIONS

In November and December 2023, I conducted an investigation and wrote a report to the Department Commander with respect to the 2023 officer elections at the 2023 Summer Convention. My report included recommendations for steps that might be taken to strengthen the election process.

ADJUTANT'S EMPLOYMENT CONTRACT

Also in October, November, and December 2023, I assisted the Finance Committee with making final revisions to the Adjutant's employment contract. I participated on a Zoom call on December 6, 2023, with the Finance Committee to discuss the Adjutant's contract, the Department's endowment account, and questions about the Adjutant Assistant's lack of overtime pay over the years. The final contract was approved by the DEC on April 3, 2024.

ADJUTANT ASSISTANT'S OVERTIME PAY

On May 2, 2024, I attended a meeting at Fort Harrison with members of the Finance Committee to discuss how to handle issues with overtime pay.

IRS FORM 990 AND SECRETARY OF STATE ANNUAL REPORTS

On April 8, 2024, I wrote an e-mail to the Posts to explain how IRS Form 990's and Annual Report's filed with the Montana Secretary of State are handled. That message is worth repeating here:

“Hello everyone -

Erin's e-Mail message refers to two types of filings required of all non-profit organizations who wish to maintain their tax-exempt status and their corporate existence.

Form 990 is an Internal Revenue form that must be filed with the IRS every year. An organization that fails to file the required information return (Form 990, Form 990-EZ, or Form 990-PF) or e-Postcard (Form 990-N) for three consecutive tax years will automatically lose its tax-exempt status.

Once the IRS has revoked an organization's tax-exempt status, there are forms and fees that must be filed to obtain a reinstatement. You can learn more about that process here:

<https://www.irs.gov/charities-non-profits/charitable-organizations/automatic-revocation-how-to-have-your-tax-exempt-status-reinstated#:~:text=Complete%20and%20submit%20Form%201023,List%20on%20the%20IRS%20website.>

The Montana Secretary of State requires that all companies (for profit and not for profit) must file an Annual Report each year between January 1st and April 15th. A failure to file a report each year subjects the organization to being involuntarily dissolved. An organization can request reinstatement by filing the required forms and by paying a fee. You can learn more about the Annual Report and the reinstatement process here:

[https://sosmt.gov/business/help-center/#:~:text=Montana%20\(domestic\)%20corporations%20and%20LLCs,Department%20of%20Revenue%20to%20reinstate.](https://sosmt.gov/business/help-center/#:~:text=Montana%20(domestic)%20corporations%20and%20LLCs,Department%20of%20Revenue%20to%20reinstate.)

If you scroll down the page on the above link, you will find an explanation on how to seek reinstatement of an involuntarily dissolved organization. You will note that the request for reinstatement must be made within five years of dissolution. After that you will have to start over and file as a new entity.

If a Post fails to file the required 990 with the IRS, and/or the Annual Report with the Montana Secretary of State, there are legal and financial consequences. A failure to maintain a Post's non-profit status prohibits that Post from claiming tax-exempt status and the Post cannot solicit or accept charitable donations. In addition, a failure to maintain a Post's non-profit status and a failure to adhere to the corporate formalities of operating a Post may subject individual members of that Post to liability if someone claims that they or their property were injured or damaged at a Post event or on Post premises. Other problems can arise with your bank accounts, your insurance policies, or with contracts/leases/agreements that the Post has with other parties, if the Post's non-profit status and corporate existence lapse.

Posts that are set up as non-profit corporations should also hold at least one corporate meeting each year and keep minutes of those meetings. If the Post is sued, the plaintiff's attorney might try to ignore the liability protections of the non-profit corporation and instead try to recover damages

from individual Post members. Keeping the Post's non-profit corporate status up to date, and adhering to all corporate formalities, can help protect individual Post members from getting sued.

So, the long and the short of it is that these forms are very important, and they must be filed every year.

If your Post's tax-exempt status has been revoked by the IRS, or if the Secretary of State has dissolved your non-profit company, you should consult an attorney about how to get reinstated or, if it's too late to get reinstated, about how to recreate the non-profit company from scratch.

I hope the above information is helpful. While I am prohibited from giving legal advice to Legion members, Posts, or the Department in my role as Judge Advocate, I might be able to steer you in the right direction if you have questions.

ODDS AND ENDS

On February 21, 2024, I attended a meeting at Fort Harrison to discuss possible revisions to the Department Constitution and By-Laws.

On March 8-10, 2024, I accompanied the Department Adjutant to Chinook and Glasgow for District meetings.

On March 27, 2024, I had a Zoom meeting with National Judge Advocate Mark Seavey to discuss various Department matters including procedures for how a Post might reprimand a member.

In April 2024, I spoke with a Post Commander about possible ways to handle a situation involving a Post member and a Post employee.

Also in April, I assisted the Adjutant's Assistant with answering a District officer's question about how to complete a District IRS Inclusion letter.

On May 14, 2024, I contacted a friend at Town Pump Corporation to lend my support for the grant request that the Department made to the Town Pump Foundation for funds to assist with Boys State and Girls State. On May 15, 2024, I met with the CEO of the Town Pump Foundation, Bill McGladdery, who notified me that the Foundation had approved a \$10,000 grant for Boys State and Girls State.

On May 21, 2024, I did some research about the propriety of a Post being paid by the families of Veteran decedents for honor guard services. I determined that it is improper for Posts to make arrangements with funeral homes (mortuaries) to have them collect money from families to pay a Post for honor guard services. To be clear, a family may voluntarily give a gift for an honor guard, but that gift should not be solicited by a Post.

On May 16, 2024, the Adjutant's Assistant notified me that a TAL member had called the Department office seeking some assistance with his estate plan. I called the member and learned

that he wishes to leave a generous cash gift to the Department in his last will and testament. He asked me to help him find an estate planning attorney. I am presently speaking with potential attorneys who might assist this member.

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS

Linda Cousineau

For the past year as SSA, there is little to report. First, I was appointed late in the job and second, the department conference was via Zoom. No fines were collected and everyone did very well. One suggestion I have is that during official American Legion Zoom meetings, the meeting host should remind members to still wear their cover and follow proper protocols during the POW/MIA draping, prayer and Pledge of Allegiance.

I attended the Department Oratorical Competition and the Remembrance Day ceremonies in Coleman and Bellevue, Canada as a Department representative.

American Legion Cap protocols - The cap is part of the official uniform so there are some rules to follow: only service pins and authorized AL membership insignia, membership stars and/or decorations can be worn on the right side of the cap. The left side is reserved for the AL emblem and lettering as set forth by resolution for post, county, department or national caps. You may also display the offices you held, as embroidered or pin, but on the right side only. Rank, names or nicknames cannot be displayed on the cap. American Legion has no rank in the organization.

Standard of Conduct

- The cap is to be placed two fingers above the eyebrows and not tilted left or right.
- The cap should be worn at all times when attending official American Legion meetings and ceremonies or when representing The American Legion on public occasions. DO NOT wear the cap to any political functions, demonstrations or rallies.
- When removing the cap for Pledge of Allegiance, POW/MIA flag placement and prayer place the right hand in the cap and the cap over your heart with the emblem facing out. For cap belt clips, again the emblem faces out. When placing it down on a surface, the emblem always faces up.
- And, please remove your cap during meals.
- Females have the option of removing the cap or following the prescribed rules of the armed services.

It's your badge of **DISTINCTION, HONOR, and SERVICE**. It stands for **GOD and COUNTRY**.

LET'S SHOW THE RESPECT THAT IT (AMERICAN LEGION CAP) DESERVES

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!

2024 Winners!

High School Essay – 6 submitted

1 st	Ashley Carpenter @ East Helena HS	Helena Post #2
2 nd	James Stuart @ Hamilton HS	Ravalli Post #47, Hamilton
3 rd	Zane Muhlenberg @ Lockwood HS	Andrew Pearson Post #117

Junior High School Essay – 7 submitted

1 st	Brooklyn Cary @ Home School	Ravalli Post #47, Hamilton
2 nd	Matthew McFarland @ Clinton Elementary	Clinton Post #83
3 rd	Bricklin McDonald @ Twin Bridges JH	Dan Brockman Post #31

Government Survey for Junior High 7th Grade – 1 submitted

1st	Ryder Reynolds @ Twin Bridges MS	70%	Dan Brockman Post #31
2nd	None Submitted		
3rd	None Submitted		

Government Survey for Junior High 8th Grade – 5 submitted

1 st	Brooks Voldseth @ WSS JH	90%	WSS Post #25
2 nd	Hannah Braaten @ Sheridan JH	86%	Anderson-Simpson Post #89
3 rd	Daniel Quigley @ North Star JH	68%	Liberty County Post #88

Government Survey for High School Seniors – 4 submitted

1st	Martin Fulbright @ CJI HS	71%	Chester Post #88
2nd	Allie Dale @ Twin Bridges HS	70%	Dan Brockman Post #31
3rd	Nathan Rusk @ Corvallis HS	67%	Corvallis Post # 91

On the senior survey, Questions #4 & #6 were bad, so I credited all contestants with both correct.

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

This year I have traveled to all but two of my District Posts, however I have made it to the rest of them a couple of times, either attending Post meetings or visiting with Post officers. I try to use E-mails, but that is not something I am good at, but I try. I have been working on The American Legion State Convention in Glasgow. This was not the smartest move I have ever made; it is a lot more work than I had anticipated, and with multiple jobs and a ranch, the one-armed paper hanger comes to mind. District 1 has provided five students for American Legion Boys State and American Legion Auxiliary Girls State and have roped a Culbertson American Legion member to drive our group to Helena.

DISTRICT 2 – COMMANDER

Jed Damson

Following Fall Conference, I jumped into the duties and had a good start to the second half of my year. At the start of the holidays, I put out a thank you to the Posts in District 2, they already were moving in membership as soon as all the packets were delivered. I guess they call it pedal to the metal nonstop. Sure, am proud of all the veterans in District 2, got them the information and then just had to look out because there they went! Stepped through Christmas, spent 3 weeks in Texas with my youngest son of course he is also an SAL member and met some fantastic veterans while there. Sure, is great to have these cell phones, I was able to keep in touch with all of the Posts in Montana.

Moving into our problems in District 2 we need to work a little harder on our Oratorical program; we got to get out and get a response, but I know with the work we will get where we want to be. American Legion Boys State is another challenge up here, and something special this year we have our State Superintendent of schools giving her support in keeping our program going.

I issued challenges to my Posts and most stepped and did their best to meet the goal. District 2 Spring meeting in Chinook was successful, good turnout. Well I can see the next year is going to be real exciting with all of the great changes coming and the group that has stepped up to fill the roles.

DISTRICT 3 - COMMANDER

Keith Stark

I am halfway through my two-year term as District Commander. It has been an interesting learning experience. As I am writing this report, Memorial Day is less than a week away. Our Post will be having parades, speaker, and cemetery honors. As District commander I have tried to reinforce the importance of being visible in our communities. There are many examples, and each demonstrates how active Posts contribute so much.

We did well with membership this year, leading much of the way, but were unable to reach the finish line with goal. Congratulations to Jed and District 2 for their membership achievements.

We did some administrative upkeep this term. We established a finance committee with three officers being those listed on our nonprofit corporation. In the past we had issues when a finance officer suddenly passed and records were lost. It was a reminder of the importance of having a backup plan in place, should an unexpected transition be needed.

It seems I spent quite a bit of time keeping Posts current with reports. I really want to get more Posts using mylegion. It would be way more efficient for Posts to access their individual reports directly.

I try to keep Posts informed and offer encouragement whenever I can. I will do my best in my final year to assist Posts where I can.

DISTRICT 4 - COMMANDER

Bob Lehman

Many adjustments have been made throughout District 4 to help post leadership forces on their mission. Overall each post within District 4 has worked out internal post issues. Keeping on track with District and Department guidelines, still is work in progress. Improvements have been seen in the day-to-day working levels of posts. All posts within District 4 are in good standing. No requests have been received by District from Posts for outside assistance to deal with changes that are taking place with their posts.

District 4 at the American Legion Department of Montana 2024 Oratorical Contest had 1 contestant, which won first place and when to American Legion National Oratorical Contest.

District 4 Restructure for 2025 Membership Year is 1095.

I will start Post Visitations In July and continue working with Posts setting visitation schedules. District 4 Commander Message will be No one person can do everything, it takes the sum of everyone to complete task at hand.

DISTRICT 5 - COMMANDER

Alex Vogel

The District 5 Executive Committee meets monthly with Post Officers in Missoula. This enables me to keep in contact with the outlying Posts. These District meetings provide a forum where we learn of the various Post activities, share ideas, support each other and discuss issues at hand. Since the Fall Conference I've visited four Posts and intend to visit more in the near future.

District 5 monthly meetings include a spokesperson from the Auxiliary, Legion Riders, our VSO, our Resolutions Chair, SAL, Chaplain's report, Raffle Committee, District Finances and a current Membership status report.

Posts in District 5 are maintaining the Highway Fatality marker program; school and classroom flags program; essay and oratorical contests; American Legion and Little League baseball; participate in Memorial Day, Flag Day and Veteran's Day ceremonies; support Veteran's Assistance with contributions to Women Veterans; and the National Emergency Fund.

I'm happy to report that our Posts have joint ventures with the VFW; Volunteers of America; Veteran's Transport Services and now with Habitat for Humanity as they've expanded their services to assist veterans with home repairs.

As District Commander I wish to extend my sincere gratitude to my District Officers, Past Commanders, Post Leadership and the Department Officers for their continued support.

DISTRICT 6 - COMMANDER

Dave Haulman

It has been a busy and interesting year for the district. I completed visiting all of the posts in the district and have learned and gotten a lot information about each of the individual posts in the district. I have already started to visit the posts early this year.

All of the posts in district 6 are an asset to the communities that they are located in. The posts support the communities with an honor guard during holidays and community events, they reach out and help veterans and citizens in the community.

Youth events in the district are well supported. American Legion Baseball, Scouting, 4-H and other youth programs are supported by the posts.

Post 1, 10 and 21 are working on trying to get a youth shooting program going.

The Four Chaplain's Ceremony was held by posts 1, 2, 10 and 42. Thanks to these posts for conducting this solemn ceremony honoring these selfless chaplains.

The District 6 Oratorical was held at Post 1 in Butte.

Post revitalization is being planned for Posts 20 and 21 to try and get former members back as well as recruit younger vets to become legion members.

DISTRICT 7 – COMMANDER

Dan Smart

This winter and Spring have been busy for most of the Posts in District 7. As of this report the District is sitting at 95.43% of goal, with Post 23 Livingston, Post 30 Belgrade, Post 93 Three Forks and Post 118 Gardiner all sitting at 100%. The District only has one Post that is below 90%, Post 78 West Yellowstone.

Spring meeting was held at Post 14 Bozeman and was attended by 8 of the 11 Posts. All Post Commanders that were present gave a very brief recap of what their Post had been doing since Fall meeting. Lots of good info and insight was offered to other Posts during that time. Many came away with ideas that they have taken back to their Post. Elections were held, Commander Smart was elected to another two-year term as District Commander, Vice Commander is Don Carlson from Manhattan Post 87. It was decided that Fall 2024 District meeting would take place at Post 19 Big Timber.

Many of the Posts have started to gear up for Memorial Day ceremonies and summer activities. I look forward to visiting with every Post this summer and participating in some of their many activities.

DISTRICT 8 – COMMANDER

Michael Allison

Since my last report as District 8 Commander, I have worked to establish communication via email within my District and have found it difficult; many Post Commanders are not sharing the emails with their members causing breaks in communication. We hoped to have a District 8 Oratory contestant and jumped through some hoops to rearrange our District contest and had nobody show up from the Post that said they had contestants. At the Spring District 8 meeting I was elected for another term and look forward to working with the incoming leadership on continuing to grow our Department and get our programs back up and running.

DISTRICT 9 - COMMANDER

Robert Miller

Fall conference was held in Helena, MT on October 21-24, 2023. I did attend even though it had been cancelled due to the weather and had to be done by Zoom. I was able to help Erin and Duane around the office and see the daily office going on. I was also able to attend the Department Legion College while in Helena. Veterans Day was celebrated in many ways by the various Posts in time honored traditions. Each is significant to the evolution of programs that have developed within each individual community. Thank you to each of those communities for supporting and honoring your many service members who have given so much. One thing we started to do in the District was to start realigning the posts membership numbers based on what they ended up with the end of June this way they might be able to achieve 100% membership goal, some of the smaller post seem to struggle to attract new members because the communities are made up of older veterans

and the younger veterans don't want to join because of other commitments. I feel that our own District #9 Spring meeting was a success that incorporated a new format for meeting presentation, I put together a PowerPoint presentation with all the information that needed to be talked about and everyone was able to see what was being presented. Post 16 hosted our Spring District meeting in a new venue this year and it worked out great. Memorial Day was celebrated by the various Posts in the District by traveling to the various cemeteries and performing Honor Guard rifle salute with Taps, Speeches as to why it is important to remember our departed veterans and the sacrifices they made, also some posts read the names of the veterans and ring a bell for each. Post in our District had a tuff year as to the loss of many of our older veterans. As this is my last report as District Commander for District #9, I want to wish my successor, Paul Maberry of Roy Post # 96 the absolute best in his "Tour of Duty"

DISTRICT 10 - COMMANDER

Irene Dickerson

I was elected to continue as the District Commander at the Spring Conference held in Baker, MT, on May 6, 2023

The following posts hosted the Western Regional Commanders' visit from June 8 to 11, 2023: Terry, Glendive, Sidney, and Miles City. The Commander, Doug Uhrig concluded his visit at the Miles City Veterans Cemetery.

I attended the Department Convention held in Lewistown June 21-25.

Recognizing the importance of our collective strength, I prioritized attending the Miles City Post 5 and Forsyth Post 39 post-meetings in the Fall. I also ensured to maintain regular communication with other posts through phone calls, texts, and emails. This active engagement is crucial in fostering a sense of unity and shared purpose among us.

The District Fall conference was held at Post 39, Forsyth, MT. Additionally, I attended the Department's Fall conference via Zoom, October 27-28, 2023.

In November 2023, I was selected to attend the National American Legion College in Indianapolis, Indiana. It was a great experience, meeting other Legionnaires and learning about The American Legion's operations.

Once the weather was better in the Eastern side of the State, I attended post-meetings:

Miles City Post 5 March 6, 2024

Terry Post 32 March 12, 2024

Glendive Post 28 April 9, 2024

Forsyth Post 39 May

On March 26th, 2024, Post/Zone commander Dave Ofalt and I went to the High school to provide information on The American Legion Boys State and the American Legion Auxiliary Girls State.

As The American Legion Women veteran coordinator, I led the Veterans Women symposium held on May 4, 2024, in Laurel, Montana.

DISTRICT 11 - COMMANDER

Richard Klose

Shortly before our 2024 spring district meeting our district commander resigned. Our Department Commander asked if I would assume that position until our Department Convention.

At the district meeting we had to elect a new District Commander and I was elected.

Earlier this year I helped the Department and veterans at Crow Agency start a new post.

DEPARTMENT COMMITTEE CHAIRS

AMERICANISM

Linda Cousineau

Americanism is the American Legion's third pillar standing for building national pride - my county right or wrong. Patriotism: Love the flag, the constitution, the pledge of allegiance, the national anthem and other symbols of our Nation's freedom. Promote U.S. Citizenship: join the U.S. forces, vote and educate our young people by sharing our American values.

An Americanism Luncheon Script has been written for the upcoming and future luncheons. Having this script will assist future Americanism Chairpersons in organizing their luncheons.

I have contacted each chair member of the Americanism programs, discussing what each chairperson does throughout the year in their particular program and asking if they have an award to give at the up-and-coming luncheon.

BASEBALL

Ron Edwards

As of June 1st, we have 67 teams that are registered and playing American Legion baseball in Montana and Canada. There are 9 Class AA teams, 31 Class A teams and 26 Class B teams, and 1 Class B/C team.

2024 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

Billings Post 4 Blue (JR)
 Billings Post 4 Red (JR)
 Bitterroot Red Sox Post 47 B (JR)
 Bozeman Bucks B (JR)
 Butte Post 1 Muckers (JR)
 Cranbrook Bandits B Post 24 (JR)

CLASS B

Dillon Post 20 Cubs B (JR)
 Eureka Post 74 Kootenai Valley Rangers (SR)
 Gallatin Valley Posse (JR)
 Glasgow Reds B (JR)
 Glendive Blue Devils B (JR)
 Great Falls Post 341 Chargers B (JR)
 Havre Northstars B (JR)
 Helena Post 2 Independents (JR)
 Kalispell Lakers Gold (JR)
 Kalispell Lakers Red (JR)
 Lewistown Redbirds "B" (JR)
 Libby Loggers B (JR)
 Livingston Braves B Legion post 23 (SR)
Lone Peak Baseball Post 99 (JR)
Lone Peak Post #99 (SR)
 Miles City Colts (JR)
 Missoula Post 27 Mavericks B (JR)
 Mission Valley Mariners B (JR)
Ronan South Valley Screwballs (JR)
 Vauxhall Jr Spurs (JR)

CLASS B/C

Bozeman Bucks C

We have 2 new Class B teams this year. The Ronan South Valley team and Lone Peak Post 99 in Big Sky. Anaconda registered as a class A team but dropped to a class B schedule due to player numbers this season. They expect to be back to playing an “A” schedule next season. The tournament schedule for Districts, State, Regional and World Series for the 2024 season are as follows:

2024 TOURNAMENTS

TOURNAMENT	HOST TEAM	CITY	DATES	DAYS
NORTHERN DISTRICT A	LETHBRIDGE MINERS	LETHBRIDGE, AB	JUL 25 - 28	THU - SUN
SOUTHERN DISTRICT A	BELGRADE BANDITS	BELGRADE	JUL 25 - 28	THU - SUN
EASTERN DISTRICT A	GLENDIVE BLUEDEVILS	GLENDIVE	JUL 25 - 28	THU - SUN
WESTERN DISTRICT A	BITTERROOT BUCS	FLORENCE	JUL 25 - 28	THU - SUN
STATE A	MISSION VALLEY MARINERS	POLSON	JUL 31 - AUG 04	WED - SUN
STATE AA	HELENA SENATORS	HELENA	JUL 31 - AUG 04	WED - SUN
REGIONAL AA	BILLINGS MT	BILLINGS	AUG 07 - 11	WED - SUN
REGIONAL A (NWCART)	ROSEBURG, OR	ROSEBURG, OR	AUG 07 - 11	WED - SAT
WORLD SERIES		SHELBY, NC	AUG 15 - 20	THU - TUE

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



SCOUTS BSA

Bill Rich

On the 26-28 of April I attended the annual convention in Missoula of the Montana Council 315 Boy Scouts of America. The Montana Council is listed as one of the top councils in the country and membership is increasing. The American Legion, Department of Montana presently has fifteen Posts that sponsor twelve Cub Scout Packs and eleven Scout Troops.

On the 10th of May I talked to the American Legion National Scouting Chairman Jeff Bennett. Jeff told me that there are no new National Scout resolutions pending at this time and the next Department Scout Chairman virtual meeting will be scheduled later this year. The last meeting was on 16 September 2023.

As of the 13th of May, I have received only 5 Scouting Award Post Evaluation sheets back from Posts: 1 Butte, 2 Helena, 25 White Sulphur, 27 Missoula and 137 Kalispell. I emailed and called all fifteen Posts. The submittal of these forms is important as it gives the Post Adjutant and the Department the number of youth we sponsor each year.

Eagle Scout of the Year: I did not receive on American Legion Eagle Scout of the Year application for 2024. Applications were due to the Department by the 15th of March and forwarded to National by the 1st of April.

BOYS STATE

Duane Cunningham

I was asked by the American Legion Boys State Committee to step in as the temporary Boys State Chairman until a replacement could be identified to assist the American Legion Boys State Director with putting together the 2024 American Legion Boys and American Legion Auxiliary Girls State Program. I have no intent of remaining in this position after the conclusion of the 2024 program as it should be filled by a Legionnaire dedicated to the amount of time and work that the position requires.

The last few years we have seen a reduction in attendees for the Boys Program. I did a little research, and it was only 20 years ago where we were averaging 400 plus Boys attending the program. What has caused the reduction? Many things, beginning with competition from other camps and programs. High school sports are no longer a seasonal program, coaches expect kids to attend summer camps if they plan on playing the following season. While this is unfortunate, it is a reality. The other elephant in the room is our ability as Legionnaires to connect with both the local schools to promote the program and our ability to “sell” the importance and opportunity that attendance at Boy’s State represents.

The traditional and historical way of doing business with the local school districts is failing for the most part and we need to change tactics, or our program is slowly going to fade away. Times have changed and we simply cannot just walk into a local high school and be heard. From Covid to school shootings, schools are now much more inaccessible to just anyone. We have started working with the Montana Office of Public Instruction to help educate and advertise our programs, there is opportunity to work with OPI to establish actual school credit for attending ALBS as part of the newly mandated Government/Civics credit requirement. We need to get in front of this opportunity.

This year we had at last count around 45 boys and 65 girls attending the two programs, this is a far cry from the days of 400 kids. The cost of the program will also need to be something that the future committee addresses as it currently takes around \$40,000 to run the program. At the current rate of attendance, the program is continually in the red. Sponsorship, grants and advertising are the real future of paying for the programs. If we had not gotten a \$10,000 grant from the Town Pump Foundation, we probably would have had to cancel the 2024 program. We have to get better at finding funding and that includes Posts that don't provide delegates to ALBS. All Post's should be budgeting for at least one delegate and if they cannot find a delegate, why not still forward that \$300 to the ALBS Program to keep the program alive?

All is not doom and gloom, there are many Legionnaire and Auxiliary members out there working hard to make the program a success, we just need more assistance, and we have to lose the mentality of we are two separate programs, and we cannot help each other. The last two years of a combined boys' and girls' programs have shown that it can be done, but we still have some of the old mentality of mine versus yours. That mentality leads to failure and needs to be left at home.

Let's get back to remembering what opportunities and doors the American Legion Boys State and Auxiliary Girls State programs offer to the kids that attend them. Children and Youth and Americanism are Pillars of who the American Legion is. The delegate you convince to attend, assist during the week, or sponsor the opportunity for, could be the next Governor of Montana or Legislative Representative in the House or Senate. That really is the opportunity we are providing, we seem to have forgotten that unfortunately.

CHILDREN & YOUTH

Jed Damson

We still are working to get applicants to apply for our scholarships. We had two applications for help in the committee and two sent on to National. I want to thank Kim Kay for all of her help in getting those applications done and turned in. I would like to see more help in this area getting the word out to more veterans on how we can help them and their families.

CONSTITUTION & INTERNAL AFFAIRS

Richard Klose

We are taking a look at the ByLaws and will be making recommendations for update in the coming year once it is looked over and compared to the National updates.

CONVENTION 2024

Joe Yeoman

Our State convention is a challenging experience as this is a first for small towns, as many things big towns have small towns simply don't so you have to improvise. Communication has been the biggest challenge, much like in our home life, assumption is something that will get us in trouble at all levels. We assumed some things only to find out later that it wasn't the case at all. Better communication on all levels is key. Our goal this year is that everyone learns something new about our great state, the Glasgow community, and maybe makes a new friend in Eastern Montana. I encourage you to share your ideas on improving conventions in smaller communities, as the cost of these events are changing the places we have them.

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, (They have a new permanent First Special Forces exhibit), 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.

CONVENTION 2026

Dave Haulman

Convention 2026 is still in the planning state. The Finlen Hotel and the Copper King Hotel have been contacted for proposals for 2026.

Convention 2026 in Butte should be a great time. There is a lot of history and events that occur in Butte and the surrounding area. Everyone should have a great and enjoyable time at Convention 2026.

DISTINGUISHED GUESTS

Larry Dobb

We are looking forward to hosting the National Commander during his visit to Eastern Montana; he will be traveling in prior to our Department Convention and addressing our Executive Board during the Thursday meeting.

DEPARTMENT EMERGENCY RESPONSE COORDINATOR

Lonnie Johnson

No report submitted.

FINANCE CHAIRMAN

Ken Simon

On May 29th and 30th, the Finance Committee met via Zoom at 19:00 hours to discuss the Department Budget for 2024 – 2025. Those in attendance were the Department Finance Officer Lonnie Cook, Finance Chair Ken Simon, Committee Members Bill Cummins, Andy Rice, Clancee Collins, Mike Allison, Joe Yeoman, Jed Damson, Department Adjutant Duane Cunningham and Office Manager Erin Carpenter.

The first zoom meeting covered the Income portion of the Budget with emphasis on Fund Raising, Big K Raffle Sales, and the Cash Calendar Sakes. We discussed what could be done to jump start our Fund Raising in regard to the Raffles such as Big K, tickets, and Cash Calendars as the past two years we have not been able to fully support the Programs that the Department of Montana - American Legion operates. This is due possibly to the increase in the cost of living and what Posts are doing to support their own programs and running those at the same time as the American Legion Raffles and Fund Raisers. It was suggested that the Big K raffle tickets be sent to the Posts and have them placed in the members Renewal envelope as it has been done by some Posts around the State with success. Another comment was that we as leaders need to educate our members that the BIG K raffle is a way to raise money for their Posts and the programs around the American

Legion of Montana. It should also be noted that when the Posts sell the BIG K they retain \$8.50 from each one goes into the Post account. BIG K is the Top Fund Raiser for the American Legion of Montana and if every Post sold from seven to ten, then we could make it possible for the programs to be funded along with the ticket and cash calendar sales. The BIG K is not the only way to raise money for your Post without having to pay for raffle tickets or cash calendars. With the sale of every ticket or calendar your post gets to keep \$2.00 from each individual sale, plus you are supporting the various programs such as Oratory, American Legion Boys and Auxiliary Girls State, as well as Children and Youth.

There are minor changes to the budget line items in that some are no longer needed and will be going away and the History Book line item 6131 will now be Publication Fees.

The meeting ended at approximately 20:30.

The second Zoom meeting was conducted on May 30th and began at 19:00. The Finance Committee discussed the Expenses for the Department. Some of the items discussed was the cost of the three storage rooms for the Montana Historical Building that we pay for, the cost to have the Auditor conduct an audit on the Department Books once a year, Adjusting travel to the Fall Meetings as well as the Fall Conference in Helena and the pending travel to Calgary for the 2025 Spring Convention. The adjustments to travel to District Meetings and Fall Conference was discussed as a way to trim the budget due to the higher cost of fuel, food, and lodging for those Department Officers who have to travel. Other possible savings discussed was by changing the Legionnaire from paper to Digital due to rising cost of printing the paper and the fact that many newspapers are going digital and so having one close by to print the paper may soon not be a possibility! The plus side of being done digitally is that it could be put out more than twice a year, thereby providing the Members of current and constant news if it was produced digitally with less cost. All articles would then be current and not old news and it is a very real possibility that all news will be digitally produced within the next five years! It is common knowledge there are members who do not have computers or do not desire to use advance technology to read the paper. A copy printed can be printed at the Post level and provided to those members. The cost of the digital Legionnaire was discussed in regard to how that will be borne by the various organizations desiring to have articles placed in it. Those costs will be researched and announced before production online is started. Other savings will be made by dropping the Go Getters Breakfast as attendance has dropped off and it is not cost effective to pay for meals that are paid for and not consumed. The Americanism Committee will discuss this and decide if there is no increased interest shown, then the breakfast will disappear. In regard to American Legion Boys State, it will be the responsibility of the Committee to conduct fund raisers to provide the needed support to fully fund the program. This can be accomplished through fund raisers, donations, and/or grants.

Regarding the Oratory Program, only five per cent of the Post Participate! Like the Law Enforcement Officer and Fire Fighter of the year, and the American Legion Boys State and

Auxiliary Girls State Programs there should be more participation from the Posts around the state! It would make not only the fund raising worth-while and also recognize the caliber of people that surround us every day! We have eleven Districts and one hundred and twenty Posts in our Great State, and there should be more than a handful of participants for these programs. Costs for plaques and certificates have added to the expense of the programs as well as the cost of bringing those people selected to our Annual Department Convention. This year, it was decided to present the Law Enforcement Officer and Fire Fighter of the Year awards at the home District Meeting to save the Department money in travel and/or lodging if needed due to distance!

What we as Legionnaires need to begin to look at is that the cost of doing business is increasing and we have to look at ways to conduct our business to make it less costly for all who may need, or want to attend those meetings. Like you at your home or business, the Department Finance Committee is constantly looking at cost cutting moves but with the members in mind. Our Finance Committee has conducted the majority of our Meetings via Zoom this past year to save on travel pay for the committee members. While everything is not covered in this brief report, the Finance Officer will give a more detailed report at the 2024 Spring Convention in Glasgow June 27th to the 30th.

The Department Finance Committee adjourned at approximately 22:40.

HIGHWAY FATALITY MARKER

Michael Emmett

MEA CULPA (revisited)

Similar to last year, I have been out of town for my son's "Hooding" ceremony at the University of South Carolina as well as two funerals in my wife's family. I only returned today.

Also similar to last year, this reporting period has been a challenge due to the unpredictability of the weather...yeah, it snowed last night in the west and rained copiously in Yellowstone County. Due to that, many markers are still waiting for Mother Nature to give an "OK" to the program.

CORRESPONDENCE

I reach out to posts every two weeks with any updates to fatalities in their districts. I do this on a post-by-post basis. The number of posts that I am in communication with is 54, up from 33 last year on this date. I have NO communication with District 3 which has incurred a number of fatalities that I am unable to support. If anyone at this meeting is from District 3, I encourage them to contact their posts to find out if there is any availability for doing the job.

We still enjoy a number of posts that share resources. I have found someone who is willing to manufacture crosses for me; I am reliant

on others for posts. I have not succeeded in finding a resource. A big thank you to all those posts who help each other out.

I have done my best to stay on top of calls that are passed on down the line from the Adjutant's Office. My goal is to resolve to some degree of satisfaction the problem; educate the callers concerning the nature of the Fatality Marker Program; and, finally, contact a district or a post that may have the ability to resolve the problem in finality. Nearly all the feedback I have received has been favorable. It may be an indication of satisfaction that a number of people have made donations to the program via the Adjutant's Office. I have reached out to thank these generous folks with a personal letter.

We have had a good rapport with the news this period. Greg Harbac from Post 14 wrote a terrific article for the Montana Legionnaire, while I was interviewed for the Distinctly Montana magazine which ran a nice article (with photos) earlier this year.

THE BOTTOM LINE

I had reports from 24 of 54 posts. 8 new posts have been set; all other reports indicate cleaning and maintenance is on-going. I believe that as the weather improves, so will the placement of posts.

HOMELESS VETERAN/VETERAN ECONOMICS COORDINATOR

Dan Smart

In Montana, there was a 56.4% increase in Veterans who were homeless from 2021 (110) to 2022 (172) based upon the Point-in-Time count done in January 2023. I could not find PIT count data for 2024. In 2022 the Montana VA was able to help 211 Veterans secure housing. Unfortunately, it was anticipated that more Veterans in Montana will experience homelessness during 2023-2024 due to the housing shortages and rising housing costs throughout the State.

One of the many programs out there for our Veterans is the HUD-Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing (VASH). HUD-VASH is a program that provides landlords with an opportunity to rent to Veterans. The VA Supportive Housing Program (VASH) pairs HUD's Housing Choice Voucher program with VA case management and supportive services for homeless Veterans, it also helps homeless Veterans, and their families find and sustain permanent housing.

I am trying to learn as much as I can.

INSURANCE DIRECTOR

Duane Cunningham

In the last 12 months we have received two disbursements totaling \$18,773.88 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 and get folks registered for the AD&D benefit.

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 \$745,000.00. 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.

WellCare announces partnership with The American Legion WellCare, the Medicare brand of Centene Corporation (NYSE: CNC), announced today a new strategic partnership with The American Legion, America's largest veterans service organization, during The American Legion's 104th National Convention. Through the multi-year partnership, WellCare will serve as the exclusive Medicare partner, connecting aged 65+ veterans, their spouses and the greater military community with innovative products and solutions that complement the benefits eligible veterans receive through their Veterans Affairs (VA) healthcare, as well as host joint events at Legion posts nationwide and virtually to connect and educate about opportunities for Medicare Advantage Plans. WellCare will also support The American Legion's Be the One initiative, a long-term priority to destigmatize asking for mental health support, provide resources to save veterans, and ultimately, eliminate veteran suicide. WellCare and The American Legion are committed to driving awareness of this critical work through leadership and event activations.

"The American Legion is proud to partner with WellCare to connect Legionnaires and veterans across the country with meaningful medical and supplemental benefits," said American Legion Chief Marketing Officer Dean Kessel. "We also look forward to working with WellCare on our Be the One platform as, collectively, we have a shared mission to end veteran suicide."

Legionnaires will receive additional information about current products, events and offerings at The American Legion's 105th National Convention, through Be the One outreach effort and at local community events. For more information on specific WellCare products, Legionnaires are invited to call 844-599-0128 (TTY:711). Additional product details will be available after Oct.1, 2023, at Wellcare.com

LEGION RIDERS' DIRECTOR

Brian Carpenter

- I. Call to Order** at 10:00 AM by Meeting facilitator Derek Manseau who introduced MT Dept ALR Director Brian Carpenter
 - a. Attendees: Sign-In Sheet was passed around. Copies of NEC Resolution 5, an example of unofficial Department Bylaws, and chapter start up guidelines were made available.
- II. Introductions & Orientation**
- III. Post Reports**
 - a. **Post 1** – Butte – No Report.
 - b. **Post 2** – Tri-County (Helena) – Will Leitzke summarized 2023 & briefly went over upcoming 2024 events. Stated they offer \$100 for gas to members who need to get back-and-forth to drill weekends. They have the 3 Lincoln Ride & other poker runs coming up. They do a coat drive every winter & a hat/sock/glove drive for the YWCA. On May 18, 2023, their poker run raised \$2040 for the National Guard. Their Poker Run this year will be on June 15th.
 - c. **Post 4** – Yellowstone (Billings) – Trevor Barnhart started by gifting "Carp" a bottle of whiskey & said he's doing a great job as our director! Trevor stated chapter

membership has more than tripled since last year. They've presented flags for Fusion Fights & were told they've become the "Gold Standard" for flag presentations. Also presented flags at the 3-day PBR event. They have a Poker Run set for Sept 27, which has a wide-open invite to everyone. They're helping with the Indian Rally August 11-18. They'll be hosting 2 events at Post 4 in Billings, as well as leading the ride over Beartooth & Chief Joseph passes. Asked for help from other Legion Riders since they'll be responsible for keeping over 150 riders safe. In 2023, they did flags at fights in Cody, the Iron Horse Rodeo during Beartooth Rally, supported a Dog-Tag Buddies benefit dinner, supported a Young Marines auction & dinner. They currently have 18 active members & are growing.

- d. **Post 10** – Deer Lodge – No Report. They just began a chapter last week!
- e. **Post 11** – Havre – Bob Brewer summarized 2023 activities... they had several flag ceremonies. Les is Commander of Vet. Honor Guard – they do funerals, rodeos, etc. Their Wounded Warrior Run raised \$14,000 last year (\$10,700 the year before). They do a Memorial Day event with the Boy Scouts. Businesses in town donate money to a scholarship they manage for H.S. graduates; criteria is they have to have a military affiliation. They sponsor Havre youth girls' softball so they can purchase uniforms, helmets, etc. they do a "pass the hat" under the ALR title. They donate gift bags to veterans at the retirement home during Christmas time.
- f. **Post 16** – Lewistown – Derek Manseau stated their Veterans Meat Pantry distributed 140 packages of wild game meat last year, in addition to 3 whole beef donated by local meat growers. They also give out hams at Easter. They had a walk through downtown & a BBW at Veterans' Park. Rally in the Valley is coming up (same weekend as Havre's Wounded Warrior Run – Memorial weekend). They present flags for Memorial Day & funerals. They do highway memorial marker maintenance every June; they replace both the post & the cross. In September, they have a booth at the Chokecherry Festival to conduct outreach. They have 2-gun raffles per year to support their expenses & meat processing costs. In December, they co-sponsored a tree at the Boys & Girls Club Festival of Trees (had a bear hunt theme). They currently have ±25 members.
- g. **Post 23** – Livingston – No Report.
- h. **Post 30** – Belgrade – No Report.
- i. **Post 39** – Forsyth – No Report.
- j. **Post 91** – Corvallis – Don Goodnight reported they had elections in March. They currently have 28 members. They do a HUGE Memorial Day parade that's been hosted by the Post for 102 years – it's the largest parade in MT. They are challenged to get as many bikes as possible; last year, they had 96 bikes! They host a river ceremony for Navy personnel lost at sea. In June, they hold the Post 91 Poker Run to support Hamilton Project Healing Waters. Last year, they raised over \$4,000. In August, they do security at the annual Creamery Picnic in Stevensville. They do a gun raffle to take 2 vets on a week-long bear hunt in Idaho. October, they participated in a Trunk-or-Treat in Hamilton; they gave out ±15 LARGE bags of candy. In November, they help the Post host a Veterans' Day parade. In December, they donate a full Christmas dinner plus gifts to TWO veteran families. They do funeral escorts.

- k. **Post 112** – Polson – No Report. This Chapter has disbanded.
- l. **Post 135** – Lolo – No Report. Don Goodnight will be going to meet with them next month to help facilitate their growth.

IV. Miscellaneous Discussion

- a. Discussion was held about forming a District/Zone committee that is Riders specific so Brian won't have to drive the entire state for necessary outreach. If formed, Don G., Gil F. & Trevor B. volunteer to serve on the committee.
- b. Trevor B. made a motion at the District 11 Spring Meeting to post Rider Info on the bulletin boards at the different Posts. They have 20 posts in their district & Post 4 has the only Riders' Chapter. They'll start holding Riders' meetings at different posts in their district to start letting others know they're out there.
- c. Brian C. stated Havre has a member who lives in Kalispell. Great Falls is having 1 Riders Chapter for both of their posts until they get enough growth to justify splitting.

V. State Convention – June 26-30 in Glasgow at the Cottonwood Inn

- a. The Riders' have been asked to facilitate a ride. The Dept said he'd make sure the time slot wouldn't interfere with meetings. Brian said he'd only facilitate a ride if the Riders could organize it & choose how the poker run money is used. Derek said last year's ride was a mess; they tried to dictate everything & had the Riders just act as "grunts." Because the convention is in their district this year, Brian has asked Havre to have an appearance there ... but attending the meetings isn't necessarily allowed if you aren't a delegate. They're planning to do a ride around the lake but that's it.
- b. Convention always falls during Corvallis' annual poker run. They'll ask for one volunteer to make a showing at convention for representation.
- c. Next year, convention is in Calgary, Canada.

Adjourn for Break @ 10:55 AM; Re-Convene @ 11:10 AM.

VI. Calendar of Events

- a. Post 4 – Yellowstone (Billings)
 - i. 4/27 – Knock Off the Frost Ride
 - ii. 5/11 – Flag Presentation at Fusion Fights
 - iii. 5/27 – Memorial Day Three Cemetery Ride
 - iv. 8/11 – 8/18 – Indian Bike Rally
 - v. 9/28 – Poker Run
- b. Post 11 – Havre
 - i. 6/1 – Wounded Warrior Run
 - ii. 8/16 – End of Season ride over the Beartooth (Brian & Amy are getting married!)
 - iii. FYI – They have a new FB page: Am Leg Riders Post 11
- c. Post 2 – Tri-County (Helena)

- i. 8/27 – VietNam Wall Travel Exhibition escort to Butte; The wall will be there 8/28 – 9/1.
- d. Post 16 – Lewistown
 - i. 5/25-26 – 3rd Annual Rally in the Valley Bike & Car Show & Poker Run
- e. Post 91 – Corvallis
 - i. 6/22 – Poker Run
 - ii. 9/6-8 – End of Season Ride
- f. Events can be added to and viewed on MT Biker Buzz and MT Biker Events on Facebook. Tina B. does an excellent job of putting events on Biker Buzz into a single document; every director should download it & share it with your riders.
- g. Creating a MT Dept Facebook page was discussed. Duane has one man managing the Dept Legion page; maybe we can just have him follow our Chapter Rider pages to reduce admin/mgmt. issues. Carp states: IF we do this, it needs to be understood that every chapter director will become a page administrator. Carp will do more research & talk with Erin at the Dept level before we proceed. Don G. volunteers to set a page up if approved.

VII. Recap/Unfinished Business

- a. There is no unfinished business.
- b. Trevor discussed presenting flags at Fusion Fights. They do host fights in other cities so if other chapters would be willing to do flags in their areas, talk with Trevor.

Adjourn for Lunch @ 11:55 AM; Reconvene @ 12:45 PM.

VIII. New Business

- a. Bob B (Havre) suggests having a “Directors Forum” to be run via text messaging, email, Zoom, Microsoft Teams, etc. It would be nice to stay in touch, at least quarterly to discuss ideas, problems, etc. It would assist in cohesion between chapters. Decision made to meet once a month during riding season and quarterly during the off-season. Carp will start an email thread.
- b. Trevor B (Yellowstone/Billings) asked other chapters about how they deal with membership – voting? Dues? They vote theirs in by majority – it helps to see if Riders will be active rather than someone who just wants a patch. They also require a ride with an officer before joining to judge their riding level. Don G. says they have requirements: they must attend at least 6 meetings/year & 2 events/year. They use an incentive program: Riders get a ticket for every meeting they attend & every year, those tickets go in a drawing for a \$250 gift certificate to a gun store. They have probation if you don’t meet the requirements. Gil states Yellowstone/Billings requires \$20/year in dues & 1 ride/year. They do have laxity for some members who are literally unable to make meetings/rides. Brian (Havre) states they take dues & have no expulsions, even if no one ever shows or volunteers. Question about voting rights – do only Riders get to vote? What about Passengers? Don G states they’re in the process of changing their Constitution & ByLaws – they’ve made some provisions for disability. They’ve started a “support group” to allow disabled

or non-riders to still participate by driving a chase vehicle, etc. Helena allows supporters; Some don't like having a supporter provision due to those who don't understand the motorcycle world. Don states they give voting rights to supporters on everything except officers. Everyone agrees Passengers should have voting rights but Carp states the Director of the Chapter should probably be a Veteran. He does remind everyone that each post/chapter has their own Constitution & ByLaws; there are none at the Dept level, so each chapter can put whatever voting rights and/or rider requirements in their ByLaws. Sara F (Yellowstone/Billings) asked how "answerable" to the Host Post is the Riders Chapter? You still have to bring causality/issue to the general post membership & get a vote. Discussion about account holders, signatories, etc. REMINDER: The State Director is appointed by the Dept Commander, so it's important to have ByLaws at every chapter level so the Dept can't come in & "appoint" things carte blanche.

- c. Questions were brought up about next year's meeting location, maybe have it somewhere easier for the western MT folks to make it. We should wait until after the convention to see if the new commander appoints a different director, maybe leave it for the Directors' meeting. Trevor B (Yellowstone/Billings) makes a motion that the 2025 Annual Meeting be held in August in Helena to coincide with the POW/MIA run (3rd weekend); Jerry seconded. All agree – Passed.

IX. Pass the Hat

- a. A hat was passed to take up a collection for a new member in Lewistown who couldn't afford the dues.

Meeting Adjourned @ 13:50 PM.

Minutes taken by Sara Floyd, Yellowstone Chapter and Derek Manseau, Lewistown Chapter. Proof read and corrected by Brian Carpenter, MT Dept ALR Director

LEGISLATIVE

Roger Hagan

Your Legislative Committee has continued to represent the Department in a variety of venues since the Fall Conference. During that time, we have coordinated on the Veterans Long Term Care and Veteran Cemetery Study, met with the State Administration and Veterans Affairs Interim Committee (SAVA), and attended the Washington Conference in February.

The major focus continues to be Veterans Long Term Care and Veteran Cemetery Study. The Department of Public Health and Human Services (DPHHS) has made some progress in marketing the program to many entities in the state, however, there remains to be further efforts on their part to get the message out to as many veterans as possible. We were able to convince the DPHHS to extend the study cut-off date from April 8th to July 15th. The online site will remain active until then. As of this report we have had over 3,000 surveys completed, with a few hundred completed

in hard copy. While that sounds like a lot, there are over 90,000 veterans in Montana, so we have only touched just over 3% of our veteran population. We need our Legion Posts to aggressively work to get their members to complete the survey, either online or by hard copy. As I said in my last report, each and every post, district, and zone must step up, to ensure that we reach as many veterans as possible.

Since the Fall Conference, your American Liaison to the Governor, Bill White, and I have attended two SAVA Interim Committee meetings. We continue to have a positive, beneficial relationship with the members of that committee. I was pleasantly surprised that three American Legion members from Lewistown attended the May SAVA meeting and expressed their concern about the workload of our current Veteran Service Officers (VSO's), the time it takes to get a claim filed due to the shortage of VSOs, and the propensity of some veterans to turn to lawyers to process their claims, at a fee that never ends.

Members of the SAVA committee queried one of the Lewistown veterans about the proposed fix and the committee was on the record of seeking further efforts to provide up to 10 additional VSO's and 3 additional Administrative Assistants (completing the effort to have an Administrative Assistant in each of the 10 VSO offices). Please understand, this discussion was very preliminary and may or may not result in legislation supporting the increase in VSO's and Administrative Assistants. But both Bill and I were pleased that our members were willing to travel to Helena to express their concerns about the care our veterans deserve. I encourage all Montana Legionnaires to do the same. You don't need to travel to Helena, you can just meet with your state Senator and Representative in your community.

The National American Legion Washington Conference, held in D.C. in February, was attended by Larry Dobbs, Duane Cunningham, Bill White, Christine Nelson, Karen Susag, and me. We met with Senator Daines, the staff of Senator Tester, and the staff of Representative's Zinke and

Rosendale. We shared the American Legion Legislative Agenda and our views on Montana veteran issues with each group. We were joined by the President of the MT Enlisted Association of the National Guard, Teresa Parker, who was attending the National Enlisted Association Legislative Forum during the same week. I serve as the Vice Chairman of the National Legislative Commission, representing the Montana Department, and participated in the Commission meetings during my stay. I believe that our visits with our Congressional members or staff, and our Committee/Commission meetings were very productive.

One thing I will repeat in this report, and will continue to harp on in the future, is the need for more members of the Montana Department to participate in our Congressional Outreach program. It is important that all our members subscribe to the national program called VoterVOICE. You can click on the link (votervoices.net/AmericanLegion/home) and "Sign up for Alerts". While we have improved some, Montana is still near the bottom of the list of states contacting their congressional members concerning our national issues. As of the February report, for the year of 2023, we had only 196 responses, which was 2.689% of our membership, and we are 12th lowest in the nation.

Again, I ask you to become/remain engaged in the political process. Get to know who your state legislators are and contact them early and often. With our elections coming up this fall, you should be contacting all the candidates that will be on your ballot. Let them know your (our) needs, interests, and preferences. Talk with them about military and veteran issues and find out where they stand on those issues. Then, let your Montana Department know of the results of your engagement. Grassroots is the lifeblood of legislative efforts, both on the state and national level.

MEMBERSHIP

Ken Simon

See Vice Commander Report.

NATIONAL SECURITY

Ken Simon

My National Security Report will not be as lengthy as those in the past due to the fact that the biggest threat we as a Nation suffer right now, is the influx of illegal immigrants coming across the Southern Border as well as being flown into our country by our own government.

The vast number of those crossing on our Southern Border that have NOT been apprehended or crossed at a secure border crossing have NOT been vetted or screened! As a result, we as a nation have no idea who these people are, where they came from, or what their intent or purpose was when they came here. To put this into perspective, there have been individuals who were apprehended wearing ghillie suits at the southern border and the only reason to be wearing one is to escape detection by our Border Patrol Agents! In regard to all of those thousands who have come across illegally, why did they not cross at the Border Stations? Along with this was the untold number which could be in excess of 400,000 which were flown from foreign nations and allowed to enter without being screened by Transportation Security Agency (TSA), Customs and Border Protection (CBP), or Border Patrol! The question is, why was our Border NOT secure, when this scourge first started? Who authorized the influx of illegals at our Border and who authorized illegal aliens being flown into our country without going through a vetting process?

We know that there have been many Chinese Nationals spotted crossing the Mexican / U.S. southern border into California and in the Northern Border in Maine. Who are these people, were they properly vetted, and what happened to them? Why did they come here in the first place and how old are they?

The reasons for people coming here from foreign countries can be put into many blocks, but why are they not being processed through the border crossings and on Ellis Island? I heard the White House Press Secretary answer a question about all of the illegal aliens crossing and her answer to that question did not even begin to satisfy the person that asked it. Her comment was just this, we are a Nation of immigrants, and we need to let these people come into our country to make it a better place because we need them! Oh really! But if you recall, the people who came here before this mass movement of illegal aliens, went through Ellis Island or through a controlled Border

Crossing and declared themselves. The many millions that have crossed the Rio Grande River on the southern border, came by private boats, or crossed the northern border did NOT enter at any of the aforementioned locations. Rather, they chose instead to cross wherever they felt like it because they were invited in by the government.

There is a Right way to enter our country, and those in our government need to see that those procedures are followed and not circumvented to serve another purpose. By not following the law, they, nor anyone else, knows who entered, where they are, and if they mean to do us harm.

With the war going on between Russia and Ukraine, the Chinese threatening to take Taiwan, the North Korean dictator threatening both South Korea and the United States along with the problems in South America, we could have our hands full as a result of the lackadaisical attitude in Washington, D.C.! Instead of America First it seems to be America Last! This attitude is shown by Americans being removed from established hotels, schools, and even shelters being occupied by Americans who are living on the edge! Many were even kept in a couple of our nation's airports in curtained off areas controlled by supporters of the illegals. The other problem is our rising National Debt, sending millions and billions

overseas, using our military stockpiles of weapons to resupply countries embroiled in a battle with their neighbors! Using the Reserve of oil to supposedly lower the price of fuel and then saying it is too expensive to replenish the oil! There is a reason we had that stockpile.

Along with all of this, our government seems more preoccupied with making sure the illegals are housed, employed, and comfortable than trying to ease the burden of higher prices on all Americans. The cost of living has gone through the roof and our neighbors are struggling to make ends meet. Along with all of this our Armed Forces struggle to maintain the active-duty forces with new recruits and those who are serving are forced to do second and third rotations to overseas bases. This manpower shortage hampers our combat readiness in every branch of the service. National Security is about every aspect of life for us, and it is being overlooked and abused at every turn by the very people we have elected to ensure our Nation is Safe and Secure.

As I stated at the beginning, my report will not be lengthy, and I have chosen to highlight some of the areas that could cause us not to be prepared. The Russians are bombing and sending missiles into urban areas where no soldiers or combat troops are at. The Chinese are continuing to try to take an island because they believe it is theirs to take and they have threatened our Naval ships and planes who are not violating Chinese airspace or sea lanes! Both of these countries are attempting or have already begun to build relations and bases with countries in Africa, Southeast Asia, and South America. All the while this is going on, our borders are as porous as a dish strainer!

The State of our Nation regarding National Security is Shambles! Why do I say that this year? After reading this I challenge anyone who reads what little I have written to do some digging and learn more about the dangers our Nation faces from possible forces within who have streamed unheeded and unchecked across our borders! One of our forefathers made a statement that this country would not be destroyed from without, but from within! We who have served need to reaffirm our support of a Free Nation by becoming people who will learn all we can do to keep

our country Safe and Secure for our children and grandchildren. If we don't, then who will? Our country is so divided right now politically and socially that we are not the same country that many of us knew ten or fifteen years ago. If you think that is not so, look at what happened when Israel was invaded by Hamas, who murdered hundreds of innocent people and took several hundred hostages. What happened when Israel went into Palestine to remove Hamas as a fighting force and attempt to gain the release of their people? That spilled over into this country and created havoc on college campuses across our country and even into Washington, D.C. with our elected officials. Our own people were in complete disagreement causing strife and unrest that saw violence erupt.

One last item I want to mention is the government's mention of wanting to take our Right to Bear arms away from us! Now maybe that will never happen, however this too shows how splintered our nation is when it comes to being able to defend ourselves in our homes. With several million illegal aliens in our country who we have no idea what their intentions are or where many of them are located. Judges have released illegals who have rushed out Border Patrol and National Guard soldiers on the southern border and also criminals accused of crimes against innocent citizens. That goes to National Security!

What do we do to prepare ourselves and help maintain National Security? I say we need to become more informed about the State of our Nation and aware of what is going on not only around the world but right in our own towns, cities, counties, and states!

ORATORICAL

Jeff Holmes

The results of the department oratorical held at the East Helena High School on Saturday March 30th as follows:

1st Jaci Pheifer a sophomore from Kalispell and District #4

2nd Cate Leydig a sophomore from Big Sky and District #7

3rd Carmen Katzenberg a sophomore from Harlowton and District #9

4th Madison Clement a freshman from Helena and District #6

I would like to thank all posts, districts, and participants for continuing the education of our constitution. Obviously, I would also like to encourage more posts to push the oratorical contest in their area. We are amazed to hear the orations but would love to hear more and give away more money to kids.

Secondly, a huge shout out to Erin, East Helena High School, Lowell, Glen, Dick and Lea, and the rest of the members who helped out behind the scenes. The continued success of the Department Oratorical Contest is truly a team effort.

Next year's Department Oratorical Contest is scheduled to also be held in Helena. Erin has got us the use of East Helena High School at no cost and has started to create quite the list of available judges due to the legislature being in town next year and also with it being an election year. Everyone in Helena is in full on politician mode.

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

Fred Ferrer

Having served as the Chairman of the Public Relations and Publications Committee since last Summer, I respectfully submit the following report for the Belgrade Annual Convention at the end of June.

While Public Relations was part of my position title, my efforts in this last year were entirely focused on helping to prepare various editions of the Legionnaire for publication. While I stated in last year's report that I wanted to better help the organization and restructure, my contributions have entailed producing articles of interest for the quarterly newsletter and offering editorial reviews and modifications of various editions.

As I noted in last year's report, I thought we should thoroughly review past editions to determine the layout and composition of our quarterly communications. I began that process last year but did not completely finish it in order to draw up any solid conclusions. The main issue I noticed was not enough focus on the specific posts.

During this review and my assistance in reviewing and editing three editions, a couple other issues became more obvious, as follows:

- putting together these 20+ page quarterlies required quite a bit of time.
- it was difficult to get timely reports and articles from across the department.
- since there was no single particular guide for people to use, standardizing writing styles, grammar use and punctuation took much time and effort; and
- with the timed compilation of these quarterlies (every three months), a latency occurred in which, by the time a quarterly was published everything in it was old news.

When I agreed to come on to help produce the Quarterly Legionnaire, we had some conversations about increasing our digital presence. My understanding is that Department-level analyses and discussions have taken place, resulting in a decision to move from a quarterly hardcopy periodical to a monthly virtual publication.

I believe that conceptual change in format has merit for a couple reasons. First, it should save printing costs and the labor involved in soliciting, receiving, editing and in designing a hardcopy product. Second, it would help us get news and information to our Legionnaires across the state in a more-timely manner.

I understand that analyses done to validate the move to a fully digital format have driven this decision and concluded it would be more beneficial to the Department and the Legionnaires. I was told that the Veterans of Foreign Wars have already made that digital move but are still producing quarterlies. I believe our transitional effort will require some time, effort and further discussion. I suggest that we inform the Districts and Posts of this anticipated format and timing change as soon as possible.

I think digital IS the way of the future for Legion communications, however, I would like to ensure we're best capturing the rhythm and attributes of what our posts, districts, committees and department are contributing across the state for veterans, their families and our communities. To that end, I still believe our communications outreach moving forward should entail the following:

- a pro-active program of reaching out and maintaining contact with elements across the state to ensure enhanced coverage.
- create a standardized reporting template to be used to collect stories, articles of interest and supporting digital photographs for publications; and
- a compilation and dissemination of some sort of style guide or primer to ensure everyone is writing to the same standards and format.

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

Eddy White

At the 2023 Convention, the Detachment of Montana officers were retained for a 2nd year with John Meacham as Commander. Since there was no Fall Conference, the Detachment pushed all business to this year's convention. Therefore, below is a brief synopsis of Detachment business discussed at the 2023 Convention:

- Reports by each Zone, Squadron (as in attendance), Detachment officers and NEC were made. In particular, coordination for attendance of the Fall Meetings throughout the state.
- The budget was accepted and approved a proposal to include Detachment Executive Committee members to insurance program that the Legion Department Executive Committee is covered.
- Adding more Squadrons to the Detachment discussed and brought to light that awareness needs to be coordinated between the organization team for the Squadron and their Legion Post Leadership.

- The Detachment ended up short for the year (95.76%) and for the second year in a row. We were short of the goal by 107 members on the 100% Target date. Just to point out, the overall percentage has improved after the target dates. So, the detachment is getting our membership, but the target dates are not being met.

The most concerning part of the discussion is that Post leadership needs to not only accept the establishing of a SAL Squadron, but also ensure that they have a Liaison/Advisor assigned to their Squadron. This is key to ensure their SAL program is a success and to do that, implement and maintain good communication between the SAL Squadron and Post Leadership.

The Detachment identified three SAL National Convention representatives for the 2023 National Convention as: Commander John Meacham, NEC Eddy White and SAL Member Lonny Johnson.

A few items brought forward from the SAL National Spring Meeting will be presented at the Detachment meeting at this convention. They are:

- SAL PUFL Program - This was proposed in the late 70's and was revived at the 2023 Fall SAL NEC meeting. The resolution is pending The American Legion Finance Committee review for fiscal impact

- Flags for Heros - Squadrons and Detachments can sign up there for their activities. I encourage Squadrons to sign up!

- Centennial Committee is still looking for ideas from the Detachments and a contact to work with.

- SAL National Newsletter is offered monthly now just need to register with Mylegion.org

- Snapshots Of Service - Due end of June (at this time). They added a video option this year. There are Squadrons that do this already, they just need to submit it.

- Nationally, SAL membership is pushing closer and closer to 400,000 members. SAL is projected to surpass both the Legion and Aux combined in the next year, year and a half.

- VE&E - Brochure is being updated with current information and coordinated with the American Legion

- Four Pillars program for Squadrons – To qualify, the Squadron needs to raise one dollar per member each for Operation Comfort Warriors (VA&R), the Child Welfare Foundation (Children & Youth) and your department's American Legion Boys State program (Americanism) and hold a blood drive (National Security).

Current Detachment Membership as reported by National, as of the 100% Target date and last report date of May 27th is 90.28%. We are just under where we were last year.

The 105% goal is still reachable by July 24th, 2024. We will need to renew/sign up 135 new members to make this target. It is well within reach.

The Detachment of Montana is in a great position for 2024-2025 Membership year and I know the leadership has great confidence that the Detachment will continue to strongly support the Department of Montana, but their respective Posts and Post Auxiliaries.

SHOOTING SPORTS

Larry Dobb

The 2024 Shooting Season was once again a highly successful American Legion Program that saw 9 teams from Montana qualify for the National competition. 10 Ring Junior Shooting Team, Precision, Missoula, Gallatin Valley Sharp Shooters, Sporter, Bozeman, Phillips County Shooting Sports 4H, Sporter, Malta, Lake County 4H Shooting Sports, Sporter, Ronan, 10 Ring Junior Shooting Team, Sporter, Missoula, Gallatin Valley Sharp Shooters, Precision, Bozeman, Yellowstone Rifle Club, Precision, Billings, and the Yellowstone Rifle Club, Sporter, Billings all were in competition at the National event and as of this report, results were still pending.

The second round of competition 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. In the individual competition Alison Sutherlin, Marcus Klemp and Kamdyn McFarland are hoping to bring home the gold. At last check, overall results had not yet been posted. You can follow the competition at:

Round 1: <https://ct.thecmp.org/app/v1/index.php?do=match&task=edit&match=25597>

Round 2: <https://ct.thecmp.org/app/v1/index.php?do=match&task=edit&match=26734>

Overall, the Montana American Legion shooting sports program remains strong and growing. I recommend that Posts that are looking to add programs to their Post activities that they consider sponsoring a Shooting Program, it is a great community outreach and visibility opportunity that is also highly rewarding.

VETERANS AFFAIRS & REHABILITATION

Candice Hering

No report submitted.

VA HOSPITAL VOLUNTEER REPRESENTATIVE

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 VAVS appointments were done at the end of the Department Conventions.

Changes are coming because 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. An effective date will happen as soon as new leadership is in place at Volunteer Services. Some of these changes are being hammered out in meetings with National at winter conferences, and more will follow National Convention. 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.

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

More will be coming as there is new leadership at the VA hospital in Helena. As of this writing the new Director for Volunteer Services has not been released. Hopefully by the convention in Glasgow a new director will have been named.

WOMEN'S VETERANS COORDINATOR

Irene Dickerson

Building: Lions building. Not enough room, the speaker room was very cold. Location was hard to find on google maps. If we are to do breakout sessions, we will need 4-5 rooms. Although I think just having 3=4 breakouts would be better, and the ladies go from one to the next instead of allowing them to choose how many they wanted to do.

Lunch: The lunch trailer served good food but took too much time. Like the variety available which we wouldn't get with a catered meal.

Date: Nice weather in May

Speakers: All were interesting, although one was repetitive.

Only 5 ladies participated in Yoga, but that's ok as the room could not accommodate more.

Donations:

Scheels card (\$50 traded for Walmart gifts as I had forgotten the cards at home)

Albertson's: 3 carafes of coffee, 3 boxes of long john donuts, quart ½ & 1/2, cups, sugar/sweetener, stirrers, 2 packs of water

Prizes Value \$95

Travel kit with accessories

Writing pads/notebook, pens

Mini Waffle Maker

Small blanket

Walmart Gift Card \$25

Dairy Queen Gift Card \$15

Requirements for next time:

Projector/screen. I have a new projector. Worked fine. Bre from Moral Injury loaned her screen.

Sign in sheet: created one but an official looking sign in sheet would be better.

Name badges: I had bought some from Walmart.

Swag: I made up 25 bags with candy, ChapStick, pens, notebook, lotion. Veterans seemed to like that. Recommend purchasing official swag next time to include bags.

Photographer: Juliana was the one who suggested a group photo. Maybe next time we could have an official photographer (not paid, but someone who can take pictures)

More oversight on building: So I don't have to jump through hoops, to change agenda and contact speakers about changes.

Surveys to end the program so we would know what they liked and what they didn't like.

Outside sign: created with neon posterboard and stakes at the front of the park and on the building.

Committees' suggestion:

1. Set up
2. Clean Up
3. Door Prize