



**Department of Montana
Department Fall Conference
Helena, Montana
October 23-25, 2020
Reports of The
Department Executive Committee
&
Department Committee Chairs
“For God and Country”**

Preamble to the Constitution

**FOR GOD AND COUNTRY, WE ASSOCIATE OURSELVES TOGETHER
FOR THE FOLLOWING PURPOSES:**

To uphold and defend the Constitution of the United States of America;

To maintain law and order;

To foster and perpetuate a one hundred percent Americanism;

To preserve the memories and incidents of our associations in All Wars;

To inculcate a sense of individual obligation to the community, state and nation;

To combat the autocracy of both the classes and the masses;

To make right the master of might;

To promote peace and goodwill on earth;

To safeguard and transmit to Posterity the principles of justice, freedom and democracy;

To consecrate and sanctify our comradeship by our devotion to mutual helpfulness.



DEPARTMENT EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

DEPARTMENT COMMANDER

Jeff Nelson

Due to the corona virus I was asked by our National Commander to stay on for another year as Montana Department Commander. So, at our June Department Executive Meeting I accepted the position as Department Commander. Since then it has been non-stop around the state.

After our June meeting it was off to Manhattan Post 87 along with Larry Dobb to congratulate the Shooting Sports Team for placing second in the nation. It was an honor to meet an all-female team representing our Department.

With a shortened baseball season, the tournaments were slated to begin a week later than normal. I travelled to Billings and watched the championship AA game between Bozeman and Helena. It was a very well-played game with Bozeman coming out on top to make it 2 years in a row. Montana was 1 of 6 Departments to have Legion baseball this past year.

September is the start of District meetings and right off after Labor Day weekend it was on the road to Butte and White Sulphur Springs. That weekend news came of my fathers' passing away, so we travelled back to Wisconsin for a week for the funeral and missed the next weekends' trip to Malta. After getting back we travelled to Shelby and Judith Gap for meetings. Then to Park City the following weekend and finally the last weekend was Kalispell and Hamilton.

At this point I want to express my sincere thanks to all the members, Posts' and Auxiliary Units that sent sympathy cards to me and Chris on the passing of my father. You may never know how much they were appreciated.

I talked this fall about the roles we play in our communities and the leadership that the American Legion provides. These are troubling times in our country and we as legionnaires need to support

our law enforcement and give them the moral assistance needed. With groups like Antifa, BLM, and KKK creating terrorism around the country, we need to set an example of true Americanism. Fly the flag, write to the editor of your local paper supporting law enforcement, promote patriotism in our schools. Many of you have already or are doing some of these and I want to say God Bless you.

I also want to congratulate our Department on membership at this time. It has been a long time since we had all our Districts in the green at this point during the year. Do not forget those buddy checks before the holidays, it may be the only visits that some veterans receive.

Finally, take pride in being a Legionnaire, wherever the road takes you, let people know what a great organization we belong to. I want to wish you a Happy Thanksgiving, A Merry Christmas, and a Happy New Year.

DEPARTMENT VICE-COMMANDER

Glen Sharbono

My first official duty as the Department Vice Commander was to deliver a cash calendar to Michelle Sharbono of Charlo, whose photograph was selected as the cover for the 2021 calendar. Michelle was extremely excited to be chosen, so much she Posted it to Facebook notifying all her friends. I later sold several calendars in a matter of minutes.

On Friday July 3rd I was to accompany Commander Nelson as part of the Color Guard for the dedication of The flagpole erected by an Eagle Scout at the Polson American Legion Mariners Baseball field in honor of Kane Funk a Marine killed in action. The event was cancelled as one of the Missoula Mavericks contracted Covid-19. We later did the ceremony on July 25th.

Monday August 3rd Past Commander Larry Dobb, Junior Shooting Sports Department Chairman, and I went to St. Regis Post #13 and presented medals and a plaque to the second-place National Champions. They were Howie Edison, Bailey Milender, Heath Edison, and Decker Milender. Congratulations to a nice bunch of shooters.

August 8th and 9th. I attended the Class A American Legion Baseball Championships in Lewistown. The Championship was won by the Billings Blue Jays against the Lewistown Redbirds 11-1. Congratulations to both teams; they played some good ball.

I was able to attend all District meetings that started on September 9th with District #6 in Butte and finished with District #5 in Hamilton. I hope my message was well received and everyone found it interesting. With 3 of the Districts opting for a virtual meeting due to concerns of Covid-19, and a lot of regular attendees just not showing up, it made it rather difficult to interact with fellow Legionnaires and look them in the eye in hopes of possibly finding the right Legionnaire to assume the upcoming vacant positions within the Department. Montana is a huge state, and no one really likes to travel great distances just for a meeting, but it is very vital to the function and wellbeing of Department operations. I certainly hope these virtual meetings have not caused complacency

and District Commanders try to make this the new norm. We must preserve the current standard of human interaction. Not only with meetings but with American Legion Boys State and High School Oratory as well.

This year we have 7 new District Commanders out of 11, none of the eleven are graduates of the Montana Legion College or the National American Legion College. The required Basic Training Course for District Commanders (this should be required of all officers at Post level as well) is of little or no help at the District level. I hope that all eleven District Commanders will make a collaborative effort to attend the next MLC in unison setting the example for everyone else in the Department that may wish to attend. The NALC has been rescheduled to March 20-26 of 2021, applications were due October 1st, 2020 with new eligibility requirements. Do not forget “Tuesday Training” by National on the last Tuesday of the Month.

Now on to membership, All the Districts are doing quite well so far, granted some have a ways to go for the 65% target but I am confident that with a little effort and a little push to the struggling Posts they can make it on time. Once again Districts 4, 5, & 6 are carrying the Department as they run a back and forth heat of 1, 2, & 3. The Last year, District #4 of which I was the Commander of at the time finished the year above 109%, 101 over goal. Although that was not the highest percentage a District has ever finished it is the first time in an exceptionally long time that a District in the Department of Montana has had all 13 Posts make 100% or more. The Western Zone also achieved nearly 105% with all 3 Districts finishing 1st, 2nd, and 3rd, another first in a while I believe. I would like to see all the Districts strive to make this their goal as well. It is not impossible nor unreasonable with just a little effort from all Commanders at the Zone, District and Post levels, working in tandem and keeping in constant contact with each other.

ZONE COMMANDER – SOUTH CENTRAL

Demorise Allen

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

Congratulations to the three new District Commanders in the South-Central Zone who were installed at the meeting. New District Commanders are District 7 Bill Cummins of White Sulphur Springs Post 25, District 9 Bruce Luhrsen of Lewistown of Judith Gap Post 70, and District 11 Larry Tipton of Columbus Post 34. I have enjoyed working with these new Commanders. Thank you to former District Commanders Jim Howe, Gil Floyd, and Rip Hackett for their service to the Legion.

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

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

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

ZONE COMMANDER – WESTERN

Elmer Palmer

It has been a busy time for the Western Zone Commander. After the Department Executive Committee meeting that replaced the Department Convention, I returned to the Zone and introduced myself to the three District Commanders that I was to work with for the next year. This was not a hard job as I had repeats in two of the District Commander positions, leaving only one District Commander to meet. I introduced myself across the phone, with the intent to meet her in a visit to one of her Posts, but that visit had to be canceled. I anticipated meeting that Commander at the District Meeting, but she was unable to attend due to a medical problem in the family. I will meet her at the next District meeting or in a trip to that District.

I worked with District 6 Vice Commander Linda Cousineau and District 5 Post 135 Finance officer to accomplish the merger of District 6, Post 33, Philipsburg with District 5, Post 125, Drummond. The final paperwork for this is being considered by the National Executive Committee in Indianapolis this week. Most of the members are already transferred to the Drummond Post or another Post.

I attended the District 6 Fall Meeting in Butte. It was a very productive. I was attending that meeting while District 6 was the Number One District in membership that weekend. The meeting was conducted in the new Post 1 home. I very much enjoyed the meeting held in the new home. Having been in the old Post 1 building for meetings in the past, I was surprised by the quality of work that was done in that Post home. If you have not visited it, I highly recommend you make the trip.

With a fair period between the first (District 6) and last (District 5) meetings, I worked with District Commanders to work the DMS listings. We have been able to transfer a fair number of these members into active Posts, giving them real membership in The American Legion instead of in the Department Adjutant's desk.

I attended the District 4 Fall Meeting. arriving at the last possible minute due to getting lost in Kalispell. Again, the meeting was productive. This Post was the Number One District for last year (third currently.)

The last visit of the year was my own District, District 5. It was the Number One District in Membership for that week, again, it was a productive meeting, but to me, a strange meeting for that District. That was first meeting that I attended in the 17 years I have been attending these, that District 5 did not have at least one resolution to be voted on.

I thank the Posts in the Western Zone for their support and working so hard on the membership of the Western Zone.

ZONE COMMANDER – NORTH CENTRAL

Lowell Long

Congratulations to all three Districts in the North Central Zone for making the 55% target date. District 2 is at 61.08%, District 3 is at 60.21% and District 8 is at 56.98%. The Zone is at 58.69%. District 2 has 4 Posts above the target and one of those is at goal. and two that are close. District 3 has 4 Posts above the target and 4 that are close. District 8 has 8 Posts that are above the target and 3 that are close.

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

I attended all three District meetings. District 2 and 3 held in person meetings and were well attended. District 2 was in Malta and District 3 was in Shelby. District 8 held a Zoom meeting, and I went to Great Falls to be with the District 8 Commander to assist him with running his first meeting. He did a great job and had a good turnout.

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

Thank you for letting me serve you as your North Central Zone Commander. As I mentioned during my District meeting visits, please keep working your programs. A strong organization is one that is actively pursuing their program. If your community sees you out working and promoting yourselves, folks will want to join you. Also remember to carry the tools with you that you need when talking to a prospective new member. You should always have a membership application on you for The American Legion, The American Legion Auxiliary, and The Sons of the American Legion.

ZONE COMMANDER – EASTERN

Clancee Collins

Attended the summer meeting of the Department of Montana June 23rd thru 25th in Helena. I participated in the membership meeting with the other three Zone Commanders prior to the state meeting. I volunteered to represent District 10 on the Department's Finance Committee for future meetings.

The second week of July, I traveled with the District 10 Commander to Glendive, Sidney, Fairfield, Circle, and Terry to pass out Post packets. We were met by officers in Glendive, Terry, and Circle only. I also presented an American Legion Baseball Scholarship check to the mother of Jess Bellows. He was already gone for college so Custer Post #5 could not present it to him in person.

In August I attended the 57th Annual National Membership Workshop virtually through Microsoft Teams. I attended all meetings except the Mission and Vision portion.

In September I attended the National Children & Youth Meeting online. I also submitted reduced membership members to Commander Nelson for District 1 and District 10. I also attended District 1's Fall meeting on Zoom.

In October I attended District 10's meeting virtually. We had a poor turnout, but I know the District Commander had notified officers in his District at least twice the week prior to the meeting. I guess members in eastern Montana are technically challenged when it comes to online participation.

I have been staying close to home and have only been going to the grocery store and attending funerals for Veteran's. As of this writing I have participated in nine Veteran's funerals as a member of the Honor Guard for VFW Post #1579 since June.

NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEEMAN (N.E.C.)

David Driver

After the 2020 Department Executive Committee meeting in June, which was held instead of the Department Convention because of the Covid-19, I attended the Grand Opening of the new VA Clinic in Great Falls. This event was very well attended by the Governor, both US Senators, a representative for the US Congressman, representatives of the VA the staff of the Great Falls VA Clinic and the Department of Montana by the Department Adjutant, the Department's Women Veterans Coordinator and several other Legionnaires. The change in location for this clinic is night and day from the older location. More space, newer equipment and a more welcoming atmosphere makes this a place veteran will welcome. I attended District 6 Fall Meeting in Butte on September 12th and District 7's Fall Meeting in White Sulphur Springs on the 13th. Both were well attended despite the Corona Virus. On Friday the 18th of September I attended the National Security Commission meeting via Zoom. Saturday the 19th was the District 1 Fall Meeting via Zoom. That afternoon I hitched a ride with the Department Adjutant to Malta to attend the District 2 Fall Meeting on Sunday the 20th which was well attended. Friday morning, the 25th found me once again in front of my computer on Zoom with a practice session of the National Executive Committee meeting. There were over 65 members present on this session and I think all went well. I left Great Falls that afternoon for Shelby for District 3 Fall Meeting that night. Up the next morning and back to Great Falls to attend District 8's Fall Meeting via Zoom. Sunday was down to Judith Gap for the District 9 Fall Meeting. Friday the 2nd of October it was a drive down to Columbus for an overnight to attend the District 11 Fall Meeting Saturday morning in Park City. Then a short drive (228 miles) back to Great Falls where it was District 10 Fall Meeting Sunday morning via Zoom. District 10 was the only District that did not have a quorum, which made this meeting noticeably short with only the Department personnel briefing. This was very disappointing that Posts in District 10 could not even get on their computers for a District meeting. The next weekend found us in Kalispell for the District 4 meeting which was well attended. Then it was down to Hamilton for the District 5 meeting. This was held in a building on the county fairgrounds. The building was not heated nor were there any restrooms inside. It was well attended and the meeting scheduled hours were shortened, by vote of those present, from taking a lunch break to find someplace to eat and return to the meeting, to proceed without a break and was

finished by 12:30. I want to thank all the Districts who donated to the NEF and the Veterans and Children's Foundation. The National Executive Committee was held via Zoom on 14 and 15 October. We had 38 Resolutions and National Committee Reports. All Post mergers were approved. We also had a couple Resolutions you might hear about soon. Resolution 19, Updated Programs Guidelines for The American Legion Riders National Program. For the complete resolution you can go to Legion.org.

Another resolution I need to address:

When I visited each of the Districts, I read Resolution No. 5, Vision, Mission, Values and Motto of The American Legion. Resolution No. 38 of The American Legion National Executive Committee, modified the vision statement to: "The American Legion: Veterans Strengthening America" and the mission statement was modified to: "To enhance the well-being of America's veterans, their families, our military, and our communities by our devotion to mutual helpfulness."

ALTERNATE NATIONAL COMMITTEEMAN (N.E.C.)

Hal Rice

I attended District 8 via Zoom. Also attended Adjutant's selection committee meeting in Helena where we interviewed one candidate. At the end of meeting the 4 members voted unanimously to hire Duane Cunningham.

PAST DEPARTMENT COMMANDER

Richard Klose

With the COVID many meetings changed.

I attended the Executive Meeting June 25/27 in Helena, this meeting took the place of our Department Convention, because of COVID.

I took part in a scaled down July 4th parade in Laurel.

I did the Western Region Conference call in on July 8th.

I did the National American Legion Virtual Membership Workshop August 3rd-6th.

I attended the State American Legion AA Baseball Tournament in Billings August 6th-9th.

I was part of a 9/11 Ceremony in Laurel

I attended a Zoom M&PA meeting September 17th.

I was part of a POW/MIA Ceremony in Laurel on September 18th.

I attended the District 11 Fall Meeting in Park City on October 3rd.

I attended a selection committee meeting in Helena on October 12th to interview our only candidate for American Legion Department of Montana Adjutant Position.

HISTORIAN

Ray Read

As the Department Historian, I have had the privilege and opportunity to travel to a few of the Spring District meetings until the COVID-19 Virus took hold which forced the Montana Department into hosting the majority through remote telephone and zoom computer events. Special events such as the 2020 Montana Department National Oratorical Contest was modified at the last minute and other annual events were curtailed, modified, or outright cancelled, specifically the 2020 American Legion Boys State and the 2020 National Convention. Also elected Department Officers were asked by National to continue in their present positions for the period 2020-21.

I find throughout Montana that the American Legion is doing what they have done best for 100+ years. They are supporting the veterans and their families as best they can, utilizing the Four Pillars of the American Legion's National Program: That is Supporting the many facets of Veterans Affairs; Supporting a Strong National Defense; Supporting viable Americanism programs; and Supporting our Nation's most precious resource our Children and Youth.

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

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

The years 2016-2019 have been a watershed of knowledge on the History of the American Legion at National, Department and Post level. This momentum needs to carry on!

Reference is made to:

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

I encourage all American Legion Posts to follow through with implementation of The American Legion's Legacy Vision for the American Legion Centennial 1919-2019. Resolution No. 31, states,

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

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

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

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

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

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

It is a goal of the Montana Department to update its historical record by incorporating the current written record of the past 101 years in creating a Centennial History. With your cooperation and participation that can happen.

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

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

The following was received from the National Historian James “Jim” A. Mariner:

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

Taking this new date into account I am requesting that March 15, 2021, be the due date submission of Post and District entries in the Department of Montana. If you have further questions please

contact me at: Raymond K. Read, Department Historian, 470 Ronda Road, Helena, Montana 59602, Myfun51@msn.com, 406-458-9847/406-235-0290

DEPARTMENT ADJUTANT

Gary White

Covid 19 what has it wrought? Well, from the standpoint of the American Legion it has forced us to do a lot of things different, especially in communication. We cancelled our Department Convention but were still able to conduct our business with an Executive Committee meeting. We have learned how to teleconference and zoom. District meetings were forced to change, some became zoom only, some were both in person and zoom, and some were normal meetings, and we also had in person meetings without banquets. What I learned from all these variations is the absolute need for face to face communication. Although I believe banquets are not necessary, they should be continued as they afford us more time to be together with the American Legion Auxiliary and serves to give the District Commanders an opportunity to hone their skills in a more formal setting. Our youth programs in some cases were cancelled and in other we had to adapt to conduct and complete. The American Legion has survived and thrived for over 100 years through many challenges and will continue to do so until the threat of Covid has disappeared.

We were able to conduct American Legion Baseball this year, although at times it was touch and go and we were presented with many challenges throughout the season. Our Baseball Chairman Ron Edwards worked tirelessly to make the season a success. I attended the Class A Tournament in Lewistown and the Class AA Tournament in Billings; both were successful, well-run tournaments. Once again, the lack of Legionnaire attendance was very noticeable to me, however I did recognize some members from Lewistown Post #16, Billings Post #4, Billings Post #117, Helena Post #2 and Laurel Post #123; other than the Department Commander, Vice Commander and Immediate Past Department Commander and the District 9 and 11 Commanders I did not see any Department Officers.

With the introduction of online transmittals of membership, the Post participation in MyLegion has increased, however our Department is below the National average of 83%.

It is unfortunate but necessary that just as we have learned to accept and utilize MyLegion that National is changing its platform. At some of the District meetings I briefed that the change would take place on November 16 that has since changed to December 16. On that date all passwords will have to be changed to log in. On October 27th the new Personify System will be introduced in the new Tuesday Training session. I believe the change will take some time to adapt to, but the new system will be much improved in access, data available and in reports. If you do not attend the online training session will be available on Legion.org.

The annual Commanders and Adjutants Conference in Indianapolis was change to a virtual meeting via zoom. The major topics of discussion were the new Personify system and the new rules requiring not only background checks but starting in 2021 sexual abuse training will also be required for all adults involved in any of our youth programs. This training will be available online

with the same company (Protect Youth Sports) that does our background checks at no additional cost.

This is my last Fall Conference report so I would like to thank the countless members I have met and worked with. Without so many different people to observe and learn from I would not have been able to carry out the duties required of the Department Adjutant. I am extremely proud of all the American Legion of Montana has accomplished over the last 18 years and look forward to observing all that it will accomplish in the future.

To the Zone and District Commanders and to the Post Adjutants that work so hard, I thank you for your dedication and cooperation. I would especially like to thank Erin Carpenter for the excellent work she has done as the Department Office Manager and her willingness to go above and beyond in her position.

Addendum: Many of you over the last week receive copies of Resolutions from the National Executive Committee meeting held in Indianapolis. There were several Resolutions that are important to us as a Department, as a District and as a Post. I sent them out and I am going to give you a synopsis of why you need to be paying attention. Resolution #19: Updated Program Guidelines for the American Legion Riders National Program; its origin was the Internal Affairs Commission. It is going to make a difference in our Department, one is the titles, it specifically says what they will be named; I am not going to go through these that is why I sent the Resolutions out. The other change is it specifically says that you must own or have owned a motorcycle some people have had support riders, and this specifically takes that option away. Resolution #34: Direct Membership Solicitation Program Update; its origin is the Membership and Post Activities Committee. This talks about the DMS Program and who can be counted for credit in your Post and how the money is distributed. These Resolutions are things that we need to be looking for. Resolution #36: Mission Blue Post Assistance Program; origin the National Finance Commission. This is a Post assistance program; it has been sent out to all the Posts and what this is financial assistance from National Headquarters. Each Post could receive \$1,000 in assistance from National Headquarters. There are some requirements and none of those say anything about how it is supposed to be used. There is a list of 7 items that your Post must do to be eligible 1. A Post must have a consolidated post report on file 2. A post must have filed an IRS 990 within the prescribed due date 3. A post must have filed all other required forms and reports as prescribed by the department 4. A post must have actively participated in one or more American Legion program within the last 18 months 5. A post must have a financial need 6. A post must provide a certificated of insurance naming The American Legion dba American Legion National Headquarters as an additional insured 7. A post must provide documentation indicating that the post is properly incorporated. Most of our Posts should already have this done, so next month if your Post files and has a financial need you could be qualified for a check. This expires December 31, 2021 or until five-million dollars has been spent by National. We have 122 Posts in our Department and I can tell you of our 122 Posts not all are going to qualify because not all have a CPR on file. If somebody wants money how else are we going to find out what the Posts have been doing. Again, that is Resolution #36. We have one Post that has already approached this, the form that National is going

to use is the NEF form; and oh, by the way where does this money come from? You know when the NEC goes around asking for donations to the NEF; it is coming out of that, so it is your money coming back to you. All the money you graciously donated to those programs. Resolution #32: Risk Management Mandates for National Youth Programs; its origin is the Americanism Commission. So all youth programs effective 2021; January 1st, anyone involved with a youth program must have a background check. Most of our programs like baseball and American Legion Boys State have already been doing that; but the new thing is that they all must also have sexual abuse training. Like Boy Scouts they have a very good training. The training is about an hour and a half to two hours with a 25 question test. If you pass that test you have a certificate and it must be on file. I have not yet determined, and I don't know why they wouldn't accept another organization's youth training. Now Resolution #35: Insurance Requirements; origin Finance Commission. This is the last one that I am going to talk about; when I was talking about Resolution #36 where it says that you have your hold harmless clause for National Headquarters in your insurance that is where this all comes about. There is a Department Resolution that is going to come up later from our Finance Committee. Basically this says that your insurance must state that you hold The American Legion Department Headquarters and the National organization harmless. It has got to be in your insurance policies, it is free, there may be some that are going to ask you to pay but it would be very few. I have already talked to the Department insurance agent, one of our two, I haven't talked to the second one yet, but one of our two said "yeah not a problem, I will have it for you next week." He says it is real simple and not going to be a problem. All of those Resolutions are on the National website or we have them available. We can scan and send them to you; all of these are important and you should know about them and be talking about them. I am sure that some of these requirements will need to be explained.

CHAPLAIN

Chaya Semple

Due to cancellation of the God and Country Memorial Service in June, I created a Memorial Brochure listing all American Legion, American Legion Auxiliary, and Sons of The American Legion deceased since 2019 Fall Conference with memorial prayers.

Despite Gubernatorial and local health Department COVID-19 restrictions, opportunities for service have continued through serving as Post No. 2 Chaplain as well as on the Lewis and Clark Veterans Council Honor Guard. Since the Executive Board Meeting in June, I have served in Honor Guard capacity for 12 veteran burials and conducted 26 veterans, plus two veteran spouse burial ceremonies as Honor Guard Chaplain. Have had the privilege to support three families through the death, dying and burial arrangement experience. Due to isolation from CDC COVID recommendations for the elderly, am continuing follow-up bereavement contact with six local veteran widows and three distant adult children of deceased veterans.

I continue to make personal contact via phone, send condolence cards and get-well cards to known affected Department personnel and/or their families.

I have continued taking twice-monthly distance training via Zoom – focusing on mental and spiritual health – with the Partnership Center for Faith, US Department of Health and Human Services, which brings in speakers with successful pertinent programs addressing the need for continuing education in these areas.

In September, I completed Congressional Medal of Honor Society Character Development training via Zoom in support of work with Civil Air Patrol cadets. Also, in September, I was honored to serve as Chaplain for the POW/MIA Remembrance Ceremony held in at Memorial Park in Helena. In late September I was privileged to participate in the National American Legion Chaplain Conference in Indianapolis via Zoom. The National Chaplain focused on military honor etiquette at American Legion Funeral Ceremonies in addition to encouraging Departments and Posts to hold public Purple Heart recognition ceremonies on August 7 of each year as well as public Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day ceremonies on December 7th. (Montana held a Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day ceremony in Helena in 2019.)

I submitted two articles to the Legionnaire for publication. (In June and again in September)

I continued participating monthly in the Lewis and Clark Suicide Prevention Task Force Zoom meetings.

I have facilitated four monthly Character Development forums in person for Civil Air Patrol cadets since the Department Executive Board Meeting in June – including a spiritual wellness training and a suicide prevention training.

SERVICE OFFICER

Kate Hahn

As the MT DSO, I attended the following events:

Attended the groundbreaking ceremony for the new David J Thatcher VA Clinic in Missoula, July 10, 2020.

National Conference, Washington, DC – March 8 to 10, 2020

During the National Conference:

- ❖ I was able to attend the PTSD/TBI Committee meeting March 8, 2020. Topics of discussion were the Stellate Ganglion Block for treatment of PTSI (Post Traumatic Stress Injury), Sean Mulvaney, MD
- ❖ VA introduced work with TRUGENOMIX – a biomedical company that uses state of the art techniques to map genetics for PTSD Biomarker patented testing and risk assessment
- ❖ Executive Order – National Roadmap to Empower Veterans and End Veteran Suicide
- ❖ Attended the National Commander's address where many awards and recognition were given to groups that support our veterans
- ❖ Attended VA&R Committee Meetings

Attended the VA&R meeting where Assistant Secretary of the VA discussed

- ❖ The expectation of completing Legacy Appeals by July 4, 2020

- ❖ New target for a Certificate of Eligibility for Home loans to be 1 day
- ❖ GI Bill – STEM Scholarships are available
- ❖ VET TEC certificates of eligibility to veterans for IT
- ❖ Solid Start – a new program to help military transition to civilian life
- ❖ Veterans Benefits Banking Program (VBBP)
- ❖ Blue Water Navy claims
- ❖ National Cemetery Administration spoke as well
- ❖ Suicide Prevention
- ❖ COVID-19 and VA beginning January 2019

Department Service Officer School, Washington, DC – March 11 to 13, 2020

- ❖ Over 19 million veterans in the US
- ❖ 4.8 million receive disability compensation
- ❖ Introduced new CAV-C precedent setting cases: Nieves-Rodriguez v Peake, Buchanan v Nicholson, Clemons v Shinseki, Rice v Shinseki, and Procopio v Wilkie

District Meetings Fall 2020

- ❖ Attended Zoom Meetings for 4 Districts in Montana
- ❖ Briefed on BWN, DIC, NSC/WP, Evidence to support disability claims
- ❖ Announced an open invitation to contact Linda White in Lolo, her dad is a WWII Veteran turning 100, looking for other WWII Veterans to celebrate with him this winter Mar/Apr please call 406-671-7877 and speak with Linda

PARLIAMENTARIAN

Ken Simon

Nothing to report.

FINANCE OFFICER

John Joyce

Hello Fellow Legionnaires, with all of the events happening this year, I feel we have done pretty well with the finances of the Department of Montana American Legion. Overall assets are up 4.56%, the DA Davidson account is up 3.03%, and our Money Market is up 11.33%. As you know, with the up and down in the stock market, I feel very confident in how the finance committee and Adjutant are keeping everything within budget and are actually making a positive NET Income.

The Department overall has increased our NET Income by \$45,453.69. That is down 28.99% from this time last year, but considering the COVID-19 Pandemic, cancelled events, slower than normal fundraising, I feel we have done very well.

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

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

I would like to apologize to the Commander and the rest of the Legion for my being slow on getting the finance report in. I will do better next time. Don't forget to VOTE by November 3, 2020.

JUDGE ADVOCATE

Joe Leavengood

Thanks for the opportunity to serve with you. In January I departed Montana back down to Texas for ministry and family reasons, but stayed on as electronic JAG until a new one could step in. Then 2020 went haywire, and this is thus a second farewell report. A twofer bonus. I hear that the Executive Committee is about to select a new JAG, outgoing Montana Attorney General Tim Fox, so I hope you'll treat him as well as you have treated me, and I hope the best for all.

I will skip comments on ongoing legal issues in the Department. Thankfully, we do not have much in limbo at the moment, and where we have had issues lately, people seem to have stuck with the rules. In my past reports I have emphasized "preventive law." We might need voices saying, "clean up in the Food Court," but we also could use voices saying, "lets buy some better trays and bigger wastebaskets, and get rid of that slippery floor cleaner." So, one last time, Please Think Prevention, I Beseech Thee.

A few observations as I depart: Lawyers are bookish folks, with cast iron backsides that let us sit still and read small print words written long ago by people now dead. Like other people, lawyers would rather work with people, or new ideas, or objects, and in sunshine instead of musty offices, but when you have a skill, then you have a living and the kids have shoes.... Last I checked, all the Legion folks spent time in the service, and most of them are especially uninterested in working with old words at desks. They want to solve problems by applying common sense in the field. But the law is where we should be putting all our common sense together, and we thus all have the duty to be part of that greater solution. Otherwise only people who have more money than common sense will hire the lawyers, and they will just make more senseless laws.

We Legionnaires gather to focus on four pillars of interest: Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation, National Security, Americanism and Children and Youth. The nation very much needs our experience and insights in such areas, but we must have our own house in order first if we are to have credibility. So, review those contracts, file that paperwork, clean up those accounts and rosters, and candidly audit your Unit's effectiveness as well as your checkbook. We seek out the Boys and Girls State students, the orators and shooters, the riders, the advocates for the disabled, and so on, but what can we do to make them seek out us and our insights? Imagine if it were a great honor to be allowed to have one's wedding reception at the Legion Hall!

Finally, let me put my pastor's hat on and say that God has blessed Montana in many ways, especially in its strong, wry, and open people. Such people have made the Montana Department a

great place to serve. Most lawyers do not make lists of names of those to thank, remembering the legal theory that once you start a list, we must assume that the things left off it were intentionally left off. So, no names [Except Gary and Erin, who totally rock and are on everyone's list already]. Speaking of names, some of the veterans down here call me "Joe Montana" because Montana is the word they see on my white Legion cap, which I have not traded in yet until I can join a local Post, Post pandemic. I never thought much one way or the other about the football player by that name, but I am proud to be associated, for little while more at least, with the state. Thank you for putting me on your list of Montanans for a while!

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS

Jared Flammond

No report submitted.

EDUCATION & TRAINING

Jeff Holmes

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

2020 Winners!

High School Essay – 5 submitted

1 st	Kenidee Wolery @ North Star HS	American Legion Post #88
2 nd	Hailey Carpenter @ Capital HS	Lewis & Clark Post #2
1 st	Eva Bruce @ Flathead High School	Kalispell Post #137

Junior High School Essay – 4 submitted

1 st	Kylie Hart @ Lolo Middle School	Chief Joseph Post # 135
2 nd	Ayla Janzen @ Twin Bridges Jr Hi	Dan Brockman Post # 31
3 rd	Kailey Carlson @ Clinton Elementary	Clinton Post #83

Government Survey for High School Seniors – 1 submitted

1st	Robinson Dale – Twin Bridges High School	Dan Brockman Post # 31
2nd	None	
3rd	None	

Government Survey for Junior High 7th Grade – 2 submitted

1st	Jenna Smith – East Valley Middle School	Lewis & Clark Post #2
2nd	Ben Wayland – Twin Bridges Jr Hi	Dan Brockman Post # 31
3rd	None	

Government Survey for Junior High 8th Grade – 2 submitted

1 st	Charles Jones – Manhattan Jr Hi	Manhattan Post # 87
2 nd	George Dawson – Twin Bridges Jr Hi	Dan Brockman Post # 31

3rd None

Obviously, our entries were a little light this year, and it is understandable given the unique experience our schools encountered. It just goes to show you that we need to make our connections early in the school year and get them done long before the due date. The sooner the better. **Please push the programs early and get the money for the kids!**

The Ad Hoc Committee created at fall conference last year will again be active as we were not able to have the resolutions voted on at our cancelled Department Convention. We will modify our two resolutions and resubmit to Department for their consideration next summer. The first is to “Re-organize & Rename Education & Training Chairman to Youth Constitutional Chairman”, and the second is to “Recognizing the Department Training Director.”

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

DISTRICT COMMANDERS

DISTRICT 1 - COMMANDER

Joe Yeoman

I have made in person contact with all Posts except 140 since the summer meeting. Our fall meeting was with ZOOM, 4 Posts were on, this a learning process and I hope to see better attendance in the spring. I think the big things we as American Legion members need to do is to work with Veterans in educating our communities on WHY and HOW the United States is a free country!

DISTRICT 2 – COMMANDER

Vincent Schmoeckel

With the arrival of the Covid-19 virus things have changed dramatically in Montana and with the American Legion organization.

The annual Memorial Day parade and BBQ was not held this year due to the virus. The Legion and I did however put the flags out on the Veterans graves on May 23, 2020. Approximately 800 flags were placed. The Memorial Day ceremony was held at Veteran's Memorial Park with social distancing practiced. I gave a speech and welcomed all.

I attended the Executive Board meeting in Helena June 26-28. I received the packets for the Posts within my District. The packets were mailed to the Posts the following week.

Several military funerals were attended by me during this time.

I placed all flags at the monuments in Veteran's Memorial Park for the 4th of July.

With Havre not being able to obtain a large enough meeting place, I volunteered to hold the District 2 fall meeting in Malta. I conducted the meeting with a marginal attendance.

September 5th, I represented the District by marching in the Saco Fun Days parade.

I went to Saco and delivered their papers and ribbons that were presented at fall meeting.

I represented the District and marched in the Malta High School homecoming parade.

Daily work at the local Veterans club is completed by me.

DISTRICT 3 - COMMANDER

Dusty Bailey

Started the fall off my helping Sweet Grass and Shelby posts my updating and installing 6 white cross markers along I-15 and U S 2. Hosted a Friday night fall district meeting in Shelby and was glad for the turn out with everything going on. Instructed posts to start collecting names and dates for town hall meeting in towns and go to meetings to get legions into town actives. If possible, encourage legion members to help with upcoming elections if polling places need help on election day. Cleaning and sanitizing. With winter coming on and spread of virus, do buddy checks.

DISTRICT 4 - COMMANDER

Dorothy Goodwin

Due to the COVID-19 situation that started in March this year. There was no State Convention held as in previous years. A Special Executive Committee meeting was held in Helena over a weekend with just the required personal in attendance and there were six people sworn into new officer positions of which I was one. I am finishing out Glen Sharbono's District 4 Commander position as he was sworn in as Department Vice Commander.

It was an honor to receive the Merv Gunderson Award for Top District for best membership in the Department of Montana as well as the Eagle ribbon and 100% ribbon for the District flag for former District Commander Glenn Sharbono. It could not have been done without the help of all the Post Commanders, Adjutants, Membership Chairs, and everyone who got out and recruited, and made the calls for retention. Continue the good work and we will keep our toes crossed! Now comes the Retention phase along with continued Recruitment! Remember the Legion Act!

I started Post visits on July 8th with Paradise Post #129. This was my first visit to Paradise and Vice Commander Glen Sharbono, and Lori Nolan went with me. I got to see the new building and we had a wonderful dinner while there of homemade pizza. I recommend going to visit just for the pizza. On the 13th of July I visited Columbia Falls Post #72 and performed the initiation of Officers and I had a volunteer from #72 to be the District Adjutant. I visited Kalispell Post #137 and Auxiliary Unit #137 on August 24th. With this visit I was able to visit with many friends that I knew while a member of #137. I have had to reschedule my visits to Ronan Post #138, Bigfork Post #86, Libby Post #97, Arlee Post #113, Charlo Post #126, Whitefish Post #108, and Eureka Post #74. Eureka will be visited in November along with hopefully visiting Ronan, Arlee, and Charlo then with Whitefish and Bigfork after the New Year. Visiting has been difficult due to the COVID-19.

The Fall District #4 Meeting will be held in Kalispell and I was not be able to attend as I was in

North Carolina visiting my daughter and her family due to a cancer medical condition which was diagnosed in the midst of the COVID-19.

I would like to thank everyone for their support for my position as District 4 Commander to finish out Glenn Sharbono's term.

DISTRICT 5 - COMMANDER

Greg Marose

Delivered all the Post Packets after Department Spring Executive Conference.

Post #27 coordinated with Post #135 & #91 for Representative Gianforte to present two veterans, one from Lolo and another from Victor the Congressional Award.

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

Post #135 has reserved the Hilton Garden Inn of Missoula for the 2022 Department Convention.

Conducted District Executive meeting telephonically instead of a Spring Conference due to the Covid-19 Virus epidemic.

Post #101 has started bankruptcy proceeding and plans to shut down.

Phillipsburg Post #33 is merging with Post #125 Drummond.

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

Spring Conference will be in Florence hosted jointly by Post #134 and Post #94.

DISTRICT 6 - COMMANDER

Pat Sweeney

No report submitted.

DISTRICT 7 - COMMANDER

Bill Cummins

After being sworn in as the District 7 Commander, I received nine of the Post Packets for my District. Within the next week, I delivered these packets to the various Posts in the District. This gave me a great opportunity to introduce myself to the Post Commanders or Adjutants.

The biggest challenge faced after that was trying to set up the District Fall Meeting as the District Commander and Post Commander of Post 25. After securing a location and receiving a blessing from the local County Health Department, we were able to have the District Meeting in White Sulphur Springs which was well attended by about 27 Legionnaires and about 27 Auxiliary Members.

As the District Commander, I am trying to promote more communication between Posts within the District and the exchange of ideas between Posts.

I am going to start on my visits to the various Posts in the District beginning in October.

DISTRICT 8 - COMMANDER

Larry Otis

I am new so just getting started. I picked up my large box of packets at the conference at Jorgensons in Helena the last weekend in June. I started passing them out there at the conference. It seemed I had a lot of Posts but as I looked, I found I was about the same as anyone else. The state just has a lot of Post. I guess every Commander feels the same as I do. I gave some to the Great Falls Post and then some Post came to Great Falls to get there. That helped. Kim Kay said to get a schedule and we would just go and do the rest. I had asked Kim Kay for help as I had helped her last year, so I was not completely in the dark as to where to go. A lot of places had changed but now I will have an idea where to go next year. The last was Augusta. We had done a training last year because he was new. This year he was new again, so Kim Kay did another training. I did not understand what she was doing but she did a good job as that Post is the best, I have with membership so far. I have never seen anyone from the Augusta Post but for the trainings. We went back to Power and finished that Saturday. I thanked Kim Kay for the help.

I had some questions, so I got in touch with Lowell Long. Lowell was coming to town for a Doctor's appointment, so he and his wife came to my home and we had a long talk. As with all talks like this I had things I forgot to ask, but Lowell is just a phone call away.

I thought the biggest job would be the District meeting but as I read about my job, I find that membership is the main job. I was most worried about doing the District meeting. How was I going to do the membership without sounding like I was nagging to get the Adjutant to get their membership done. I so far find the Posts to be pretty understanding about my job. I hope they are this understanding in March when they are at 90%. So far, its close with some of the Posts I thought would be at the top sitting at the bottom.

Our District meeting went ZOOM. I decided to do this this way because Legionnaires Disease was in the back of my mind. What if someone got the corona and died. It would be my fault and I would feel terrible. The biggest part of this meeting to me would be assigning people to the groups with a head. We did not have to do this as we did not have a way to know who was there ahead of time. I also had Glen kind of know who was to talk and when. That helped a lot. We did decide to have the next Spring District meeting in Geraldine. We are close there so I hope we can do this 6ft apart. Maybe in ZOOM again. Lowell brought me a notebook with how to do the meeting and as I followed this it went very well.

I have found there are a lot of nice people in the Posts in District 8 and in the Department American Legion. I do not belong to any group I am not proud to be a part of.

DISTRICT 9 - COMMANDER

Bruce Luhrsen

So, the adventure begins. It is said if you want something done, find a busy person and it will get taken care of. I thought I was busy when I retired but now, I wonder when I had time to work.

With 45 years attached to our local Post, I have built in a comfort Zone of 40 miles that has kept me out of the local activities for the most part. However, while in the United States Navy, I was involved in many shipboard "burial at sea" ceremonies, so I joined the Lewistown Honor Guard Post #16 because of the final respects given to the deceased vets and their families. This put me in a leadership position that morphed into further involvement with my home Post #70 of Judith Gap.

Our Post Commander eventually steered me into becoming the District #9 Vice Commander just to learn the duties and responsibilities and to maybe someday fill the Commander position. I drug my feet as long as possible. I attended the Department of Montana Legion State meeting of 2019 held in Polson, Montana as Vice Commander of District #9, as the Commander was unable to attend.

District #9 held its fall meeting in Denton, Montana September 15, 2019 with me being the Vice Commander. Our Commander ran the meeting.

The Department Fall Conference was held in Helena, Montana, I was unable to attend.

COVID-19 came upon us and our District #9 meeting was held via telephone, April 3, 2020. I ran the meeting as our Commander was not available.

June 2020 found some of our social restrictions lifted and our State Executive Committee meeting was held in Helena, Montana June 27,2020. I attended and was elected Commander of Central District #9.

Post packets became the central focus of my new position. I had never seen one or what it contained, but it became apparent that I get them distributed to my Post Commanders or adjutant's as soon as possible.

June 29th found me on the phone making contact with my various Commanders, most of whom I had never met before. Mailed packet to Roundup. Harlowton, and Judith Gap had already picked theirs up at the convention. Delivered Lewistown Post #16 to their Commander that evening. Paul Maberry, the Adjutant of Post #96 Roy picked his packet up at my house as he was in Lewistown doing business. Tom Philp, Commander of Post # 120 Winifred came to my home several days later to pick up his packet.

The next morning found me on the road making the loop through Hobson Post #76, Stanford Post #53, and on to Denton Post #62.

Discussed the Vice Commander position with Rob Miller while at Denton and he seemed very receptive.

Received signature card from Post #18 Roundup and mailed report on to Department Adjutant in Helena, MT.

The State American Legion Class A Baseball tournament was held in Lewistown August 6th-9th. My wife and I took tickets for the games the first 2 days, courtesy of our involvement through our local Kiwanis Club. The Lewistown Post #16 Honor Guard did the Posting of Colors for the opening ceremonies. Gary White, Department Adjutant, honored us with his presence at the games and was involved in many discussions concerning Legion Baseball. Some of those topics will be further expounded on in the near future with involvement of our committee chair and local Post #16,

COVID-19 once again raised its ugly head as decisions and preparation for the Central District #9 meeting began to organize and plan. Back to the phone tree involving all the central District #9 Posts to determine who would be attending, ascertaining numbers so the Judith Gap Auxiliary could begin putting together admin and food arrangements. The Judith Gap School graciously accommodated our Post in arranging space to hold our function. Options for the assembly included telephone conference, Zoom, and face to face with the later holding sway as visual contact with the ensuing comradery seemed to benefit our organization to the best degree.

This was a total new effort for me personally and would have been impossible without the beneficial helpfulness of my spouse Dixie, the guidance of my Zone Commander Demorise Allen and his spouse Fran, Auxiliary President Unit #70.

The meeting was deemed successful and well conducted. Our Guest speaker, Department Vice Commander, Glen Sharbono brought forth a good message. Departmental Officer inputs were well received. The Auxiliary supported by the Judith Gap FFA chapter provided an excellent meal.

Being a new Commander, I appreciate the vocal encouragement and advice given by all my areas of leadership. I greatly appreciate the thoroughness of my District Adjutant, Jeff Holmes.

DISTRICT 10 - COMMANDER

Dave Ofalt

I attended the Executive Board meeting in Helena. I delivered the Post packets to my Posts along with Zone Commander Collins. Visited with most of the Post Commanders, still trying to fill the Commander position in Colstrip Post 44. Placed fatality marker within 80 miles of Forsyth. Conducted a few Honor Guard ceremonies after we were allowed to do so. Conducted the Fall District meeting in a Zoom call, participation was not as well as expected. Maybe we will be able to have a Spring meeting in person. Had a picture on the front page of the local paper presenting the rifle won at the Convention, trying to get a little publicity for the Legion. Have a nice day.

DISTRICT 11 - COMMANDER

Larry Tipton

I am sure that everyone is tired of the restrictions put on us because of Covid-19. It has curtailed many plans, goals, and objectives for this year. Many Legion members are hesitant to attend meetings because, quite frankly, most of us are in that age group that is most susceptible to the virus.

After returning from Helena on Saturday the 27th of June I began the year with travels to the Posts completing all the first week ending on July 3rd. The recruiting Poster was well accepted by the Post Commanders and I will print some and distribute them when ready.

The American Legion Baseball tournament returned to Billings this Summer, and I had the honor of throwing out the first pitch at one of the games. Apologies to the catcher for getting dirt on him from the some-what short pitch. It was good to see the crowds back watching the games, and I hope that next year we will have a showing of more Legion caps in the stands.

I attended the 9/11 ceremony in Billings along with George Blackard, Post #117 Adjutant. The attendance was small, and I hope that in 2021, when this important day happens on a Saturday, we can fill the park with Legion members. At the conclusion of the ceremony honoring 9/11, Americanism Chairman for Post #117 George Blackard along with Montana Superintendent of Public Instruction Elsie Arntzen unveiled the 'Stars and Stripes in Every Classroom' initiative. The initiative is a partnership between the Office of Public Instruction and Post #117 to raise funds for American flags in schools. Hopefully, this will expand to all the Districts in Montana with Post #117 coordinating the effort.

On October 3rd, I conducted the District 11 meeting in Park City. It was attended by 6 of the 11 Posts in the District and there were 5 Department members with us. There was a total of 36 members in attendance that included the American Legion Auxiliary and some of their State and District Officers. Topics on the agenda included the Fatality Marker program, membership, Flags in the Classroom, and several other pertinent matters. Department Vice Commander Glen Sharbono introduced the Department members in attendance, and they gave their reports during the morning part of the meeting. Jeff Nelson, Commander of the Department of Montana, gave his comments during this same time.

A time and place committee met and the selection for the Spring meeting was motioned on and voted positive. The meeting will be held at Post #4 in Billings and hosted by Post #117 in March of 2021. It is refreshing to see Posts working together. During this time of a pandemic covering our Nation, it was great to see those attending. I surely understand the concerns of those who opted out of the meeting due to health reasons. We need to find humor in these times and relax.

Hopefully, we will get back to life as we once knew, and meetings and events will return to normal. Until then, I will do the best I am able to do to help District 11 and the Department of Montana.

DEPARTMENT COMMITTEE CHAIRS

AMERICANISM

Lonnie Johnson

As the year has progressed with the new “normal” we have learned to live with the effects of a pandemic. Following the true values of Americanism, we have been able to come up with new ways of continuing programs and communicating. September 26th, I participated in The American Legion combined Americanism Conference. It was an entire day filled with Zoom type meetings covering several different programs within Americanism. As with the National Commander’s motto “A Foundation for the Future” , some profoundly serious issues were discussed concerning the future and moving ahead with programs. Probably the most discussed issue was that of liability with the pandemic and having events like Boy’s State and Baseball, etc. and what effects the cost for insurance will have moving forward. I believe as we move forward in this ever-changing world that if we keep believing in our programs and the importance of them to this country and our veterans that we will strive and succeed.

BASEBALL

Ron Edwards

The 2020 season will be remembered as one of the most challenging ones that we will ever have. Montana was one of only 6 Departments that played an American Legion baseball season. In the spring we received notice from the National Executive Director of Baseball, Steve Cloud that they had decided to cancel the regionals and World Series. They did however give permission to the Departments to play as independent American Legion leagues as long as we had the approval of our Departments Executive Committee. On May 18th we did a Zoom meeting with the EC and we received a unanimous vote to play on. Governor Bullock opened Montana to larger events on June 1st. So, we moved our District and State tournament sites and moved the dates back in to August and played on.

On March 20th Canada’s Prime Minister Trudeau closed the border to “nonessential” travel and it is still in effect. We lost the ability to play our Canadian teams from Cranbrook, Lethbridge, Medicine Hat and Vauxhall. Playing as “Montana” we had a total of 54 teams playing class AA (7 teams), A (27 teams) and B (20 teams) baseball. New teams in 2020 included Froid in the east, Kootenai Valley in the west, and 3 teams in Great Falls (1 class A and 2 class B).

2020 TEAMS

Cities	Teams & Classes								
Anaconda	2 A & B	Eureka	1 B	Have	2 A & B	Miles City	2 A & B		
Belgrade	2 A & B	Florence	2 A & B	Helena	3 AA, A & B	Missoula	3 AA, A & B		
Billings	5 AA, A & B	Froid	1 A	Kalispell	3 AA, A & B	Polson	2 A & B		
Bozeman	3 AA, A & B	Glasgow	1 A	Laurel	1 A	Three Forks	2 A & B		
Butte	2 A & B	Glendive	1 A	Lewistown	2 A & B	Whitefish	2 A & B		
Conrad	1 A	Great Falls	4 AA, A & B	Libby	2 A & B	Wolf Point	1		
Dillon	1 A	Hamilton	2 A & B	Livingston	1 A & B				

2020 CLASS A & AA TOURNAMENTS

At the beginning of the season the Great Falls Chargers and the Havre Northstars were the hosts for the AA and A state tournaments. Due to Covid-19 concerns the host sites were changed to Helena and Lewistown in April. Four days before the AA tournament we had to move the tournament to Billings because the Lewis and Clark County Health Department denied Helena's event plan. The Class A State Tournament was hosted by the Lewistown Redbirds. For only the second time in our history a class A feeder team, the **Billings Blue Jays** defeated the host Lewistown Redbirds 11-1.



The Class AA Tournament was co-hosted by the Billings Royals and Scarlets at Dehler Park. In the championship game the **Bozeman Bucks** defeated the Helena Senators 5-0 to win its second consecutive state AA championship.



2020 District & State Tournament Results

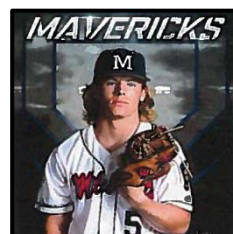
Tournament	Host	Champion	Runner-up
North A District	Great Falls	Lewistown Redbirds [7]	Havre Northstars [6]
South A District	Three Forks	Belgrade Bandits [2]	Gallatin Valley Outlaws [1]
East A District	Billings	Billings Blue Jays [13]	Miles City Mavericks [2]
West A District	Florence	Glacier Twins [6]	Bitterroot Bucs [5]
State A	Lewistown Redbirds	Billings Blue Jays [11]	Lewistown Redbirds [1]
State AA	Billings Scarlets & Royals	Bozeman Bucks [5]	Helena Senators [0]

2020 Scholarship and Coach of the Year Winners

Congrats to our Class A our scholarship winner **Jess Bellows** from the Miles City Mavericks, and to our coach of the year **Calvin Bjorgum** from the Billings Blue Jays. From AA our scholarship winner is **Ethan Keintz** from the Helena Senators, and our coach of the year is **Jon Burnett** from the Helena Senators.

2021 Season: Girls Fastpitch Softball & New Boys Teams

The Department of North Carolina became the first in the nation to sanction a statewide American Legion fastpitch softball league in 2018: Idaho announced that they will sanction a lady fastpitch softball league in 2021. I plan to begin working on forming an American Legion girls fastpitch league for Montana in 2021. Plains and Plentywood have also contacted us to start boy's baseball programs in 2021.



CLASS A
JESS BELLOWS



CLASS AA
ETHAN KEINTZ



CLASS A
CALVIN BJORGUM



CLASS AA
JON BURNETT

Thanks to Carl Hennell our AA Chairman and District Chairmen Todd Knouse, and Pete Moe. I also want to thank **Commander Jeff Nelson** and **Vice Commander Glen Sharbono** who took time from their busy schedules to attend our state tournaments. And a special thanks to Department Adjutant **Gary White**. Gary has been a great supporter of American Legion baseball for a long time. I wish him and his family well in his retirement.

For more baseball news and information please visit www.montanalegionbaseball.org.

Addendum: We are looking into the idea of starting up a girls' softball league within the American Legion. We have had four communities that are showing interest, as of yet there is no National program and if we have interest within our Department please contact with me with information on who would be interested in joining so we could move forward within our Department.

SCOUTS BSA

Roger Hancock

Scouting has adapted to continue its mission to physically, mentally, and spiritually build youth even through COVID-19. This year saw the addition of females to the Boy and Cub Scout ranks. For years they have been part of the Venturing and Sea Scout part of Scouting BSA.

I had the honor to attend the presentation of the Eagle Scout of the Year (ESoy) to Eagle Scout Anthony Higuera of Troop 1911. Eagle Scout Higuera received his ESoy plaque and scholarship check of \$500.00. Department Commander Jeff Nelson, Western Zone Commander Elmer Palmer, District 5 Commander Greg Marose, Post 27 Commander Jack Reneau, and numerous American Legion members in uniform were all in attendance. The presentation was an accumulation of a scouting awards ceremony for Merit Badges and Advancements for Troop 1911 in Missoula, Montana. My thanks to all attendees who came to celebrate and make the day more memorable for Eagle Scout Higuera. He is also an SAL member of Squadron 27.

Addendum- A lot has changed in a week. The National Executive Committee (NEC) at their October 14-15 meeting passed resolution #31: American Legion Eagle Scout of the Year (ESoy) Eligibility; which changes some Eagle Scout of the Year eligibility requirements. 1. Since young ladies are now Scouts they changed the wording from son and grandson to parent and grandparent. 2. The ESoy can now use their parent/grandparent Sons of The American Legion (SAL) membership that is up to date as well as The American Legion (TAL) and American Legion Auxiliary (ALA) membership. 3. If the parent/grandparent is recently deceased then the Scout can use their membership for the year immediately prior to the current year. 4. The Scout can apply with the Scout BSA or Venturer Religious Emblem. 5. And finally for National ESoy, the Scout has to apply through the TAL Department of the state in which their Scout unit is chartered.

The NEC also passed Resolution #32: Risk Management Mandates for National Youth Programs; which strongly encourages Departments to have background checks and sexual awareness training initiated for Department personnel who Chair Youth Programs and have contact with youth. I highly recommend the Department moves forward to protect TAL and Department. I would also like to encourage Districts and Posts to get onboard the program.

BOYS STATE

Lowell Long

The American Legion Boys State Program is slated for June 6-11, 2021 at Carroll College in Helena. It is time to start pushing this program with your schools, clubs, Home Schoolers, and any place youth gather. We need a great showing for our program which has declined in recent years. We need your help to promote this as it is not a program that schools spend a lot of time promoting.

We had several boys that had registered to attend our program last year. Those that had completed the registration process will be invited to join our group for this year. Information will be sent to those boys with instructions on registering for this year's program. Only the boys that completed the registration process will be allowed to participate.

We need to get your chairman cards returned to us as soon as possible. So far, we have less than a dozen that have been returned. Having these cards helps us to know where to send information about The American Legion Boys State in Montana. If we do not know the name of the chairman, we will send information to the Post Commanders.

We have committee members in all four Zones. These Legionnaires have committed to working the program and they are able to assist you and answer questions if you have them. The committee members are Ray Southworth from Laurel, Jed Damson from Havre, Mark McGinley from East Helena, and Ken Simon from Plentywood. Their contact information is in the directory. Our Director is Greg Pohle.

Thank you for helping us to make our program a huge success this year. Without you, we will not have an American Legion Boys State program in Montana.

CHILDREN & YOUTH

Sharon Doig

Due to COVID19, I have not retired from this position.

I have two TFA's pending from two different investigators. National is aware of it. One is for a veteran who is on a waiting list for a larger apartment Unit. The other is for a veteran whose youngest daughter has medical issues and I am waiting for the investigator to get back to me with further documentation.

Coordinated Children and Youth Committee did help the veteran with the daughter being treated in Seattle.

If you want to donate to an American Legion National charity, I will highly recommend Temporary Financial Assistance. Also remind you, expenses only cover housing, utilities, food, and clothing for the children. Need documentation and veteran must be a Legion member. Email with attachments is faster and easier than snail mail.

It is a pleasure to serve another year.

Clancee Collins participated in a virtual meeting of the Committee on Children & Youth for the National Americanism Committee on September 15, 2020. We reviewed the temporary financial assistance statement of policy and discussed adding items as necessary for families and children during the Covid -19 crisis.

It was discussed to add beds for children as a necessity under the maintenance portion of the assistance form. We also concluded that laptops and internet service were also needed to ensure children could participate in virtual learning. These changes will be added and considered on future applications for assistance.

We also passed ten legislative policy resolutions and forwarded them for consideration to the Americanism Commission:

- Resolution 279. Support Funding Comprehensive Health Care for Children and Youth.
- Resolution 281. Prevention of Child Sexual Exploitation.

- Resolution 282. Oppose Any Attempt to Weaken Present Laws Governing Penalties for the Production, Sale and Distribution of Pornographic or Obscene Materials to Minors.
- Resolution 285. National School Lunch Program.
- Resolution 286. Prevent Child Maltreatment.
- Resolution 287. Programs and Organizations that Promote Child Safety.
- Resolution 288. Preventing Teenage Pregnancy.
- Resolution 112. Funding for Drug Trafficking Prevention Programs.
- Resolution 113. Locate Missing Children and Prevent Child Victimization.
- Resolution 114. Support for the U. S. Department of Justice's Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention.

Addendum- I attended the virtual Children and Youth Conference. On Tuesday October 20th I received word that National approved our TFA to help a family afford the deposit for a 3-bedroom apartment.

CONSTITUTION & INTERNAL AFFAIRS

Jim Grosset

Due to the current situation, I am unable to be with you this year. The borders are closed, and the only communication is virtual. Since the Convention, I have had no action with my committee and no resolutions sent to me. I am praying that things will get better next year, and we can get back to normal.

Addendum- Since the writing of this report I received a couple of Resolutions. Draft resolution recognizing the Department Training Director and Re-organizing and Renaming Education and Training Chairman to Youth Constitution Chairman. From the National Executive Committee Resolution #19: Updated Program Guidelines for the American Legion Riders (ALR) National Program. I also received a Resolution from National regarding the Canadian Friendship Award to only be awarded to the ANAVICUS member. This would make the Royal Canadian Legion ineligible to receive this award. Post CN20 will draft a Resolution to have the old Resolution reinstated.

CONVENTION 2021

Bill White

Convention work is under way, the contract with The Delta (Marriott) is in place. Committees have been formed and work has started to take registration starting in January 2021.

40&8 is at work putting together their program with SAL and the Auxiliary on board as well. Convention advertisements can be purchased through the SAL if you or your Post would like to buy a space see one of our SAL members. The Club at the Post is putting together a program and there will be more to follow once details are put together.

This is your Department Convention since we did not have one last year and that has made for a long time not seeing old friends so put the dates on your calendar June 23-27; 2021; come and have a good time

Remember this virus will still impact how this Convention will be organized and run. This is a learning experience not only for the organization committee but for you that will be attending.

Addendum- Booking for the 2021 Convention can start any time at the Delta Marriott in Helena (Colonial)

Rate is \$129.00 per night there is a drawing of \$250.00 for those wishing to stay at the Delta that register prior to April 15th.

You can make your reservation online by going to marriott.com/event-reservations/reservation-link.mi?id=1603234687975&key=GRP&app=resvlink by May 26, 2021.

More information will be coming after the first of the year

CONVENTION 2022

Roger Hancock

The Hilton Garden Inn on North Reserve is reserving the 5th and 6th floors for the American Legion Family. If you need a special need room, make sure to notify them when you make reservations and you will get a first-floor room. All the conference rooms are available for our use. If you need a room for projects, committee meetings, or special use please let me know day, time, and number of people. The Blue Canyon restaurant/lounge attached to the hotel opens at 5pm. The hotel serves a cooked to order breakfast in the lobby. We are also within a 2-minute walk of IHOP. For lunch you can walk to various establishments for pizza, burgers, Mexican, steak, and oriental. We are within a 10-minute walk of the Highlander Brewery (includes bar food) and 5-minute drive to Big Sky Brewery. We are also within 1 block of 2 automotive repair and 3 oil change facilities.

CONVENTION 2023

Vacant

DEPARTMENT EMERGENCY RESPONSE COORDINATOR

Chaya Semple

On June 25th, the Governor Posted an updated directive to Permit Safe Visitation in Nursing Homes and Assisted Living Facilities. Due to the stringent requirements of the directive, nursing homes

and assisted living facilities are not yet allowing visitation in person, unless a resident is on hospice.

The Montana National Guard Support to Civil Authorities Airport and Amtrak Passenger Screening Mission is ongoing in screening passengers entering the State. They are screening the temperatures of arriving passengers, working with TSA agents, local health officials, and medical providers throughout the mission. The Montana National Guard has also been supporting the Logistics Section in the State Emergency Coordination Center (SECC), working in the Joint Information Center, assisting with the logistics of increased COVID-19 testing statewide, assisting with testing planning efforts, and assisting with COVID-19 mapping efforts.

On July 1st, the state crossed over the 1,000-case mark for COVID-19. Less than two weeks later, due to steadily increasing free testing efforts, the state crossed the 2,000-case mark. On July 15th, the Governor released a directive requiring face coverings in certain indoor spaces and outdoor gatherings to prevent the spread of COVID-19. On July 24th, the state crossed over the 3,000-case mark for COVID-19, mainly due to the expansion of surveillance testing across the state. The state crossed the 4,000-case mark by the beginning of August as testing continued to expand.

On August 10th, the state crossed over the 5,000-case mark for COVID-19. The Governor also issued a directive that day, permitting counties to expand voting by mail and early voting. Whether or not they provide mail ballots, all counties will be required to offer in person voting opportunities and take precautions to ensure Montanans have the option to register or vote safely. On August 12th, the Governor issued a directive providing for the mandatory use of face coverings in all public and private K-12 schools in counties with four or more active cases. On August 20th, the state crossed over the 6,000-case mark for COVID-19; on August 28th, the state crossed the 7,000-case mark.

On September 7th, the state crossed the 8,000-case mark for COVID-19. By September 14th, 9,000 cases had been identified and just two weeks later, on September 28th, the 12,000-case threshold had been crossed. By October 14th, over 20,000 cases had been identified. Approximately 40% of these are for individuals who tested positive for COVID-19 yet presented with no symptoms. Several American Legion Family members have tested positive for COVID and are still feeling the effects as they struggle to recover.

There have been and still are 55 counties, 7 tribes, and 65 cities and towns that have declared an emergency for COVID-19.

Drought and Wildfires

By the middle of July elevated fire weather conditions began to appear – conditions that increase the chances of the start and spread of wildland fires. On July 30th, lingering smoke from wildfires in California and the Pacific Northwest began to impact communities in Montana. As fires there increased, so did the smoke in Montana, causing air quality issues. Fires in Montana contributed to compromised air quality in their local areas. By early August named wildfires in Montana began to increase in number sporadically, depending upon the fire weather conditions. By August 19th,

portions of Montana were seeing an increase in dry conditions that caused injury to agricultural crops, water shortages, hardships on farmers and ranchers, and exacerbation of wildland fire conditions and incidents.

On August 21st, Missoula County issued an emergency proclamation due to wildfires. On August 24th, under an emergency assistance compact, **Montana deployed 31 firefighters and two Task Forces of eight engines** to Northern California to fight wildfires. As wildfire smoke continued to drift into Montana an AIR QUALITY ALERT was issued for the following counties: Beaverhead, Deer Lodge, Gallatin, Granite, Jefferson, Madison, Missoula, Park, Ravalli, and Silver Bow counties, in effect for many weeks. Air quality in Bozeman, Butte, Dillon, Hamilton, Missoula, Seeley Lake, and West Yellowstone was UNHEALTHY.

Smoke from wildfires in California, Oregon, Washington, and Idaho continued to affect air quality in Montana through the end of August and into September.

Due to lightning strikes, there were 17 new fire starts across the state on September 2nd with over 120,000 acres burning. On September 3rd, Musselshell County declared an emergency proclamation due to wildfires. Governor Bullock also declared an emergency proclamation due to extremely hazardous wildland fire conditions existing throughout the State of Montana as 14 large wildfires were then burning. By September 9th, 20 large wildfires were burning in Montana with the newest being the Bridger Mountain fire. Many homes were lost. The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) announced a primary agricultural disaster designation for several counties in Montana due to drought or grasshopper infestations: Powder River, Big Horn, Carter, Custer, and Rosebud.

By September 14th, Air Quality Alerts were again in place for many cities in Montana and continued until showers arrived with a frontal passage on September 19th. By September 25th, a westerly flow of winds brought smoke back into the state.

On October 5, 2020, Carter, Daniels, Powder River, Roosevelt, and Sheridan counties were reported to be severely dry. Winter weather advisories began to appear by October 12th, giving hope for some moisture to many parts of the state.

By October 14th, air quality throughout the state was finally rated GOOD. **To date, no National Emergency Fund Requests have been made.**

If you are not already prepared for winter weather, please do not delay, and get your winter preparedness completed. An El Nino weather pattern is forecast this year, which can mean a very cold, snowy winter is on its way.

May you be safe and well.

DISTINGUISHED GUESTS

Hal Rice

Nothing to report due to Covid-19.

FLAG ALLIANCE

Linda Cousineau

1. H.J. Res. 65 - 116th Congress (2019-2020) Introduced in House (06/13/2017) [previously introduced as H.J. Res. 9 - 114th Congress (2015-2016) and many other titles in 7 previous sessions]

02/08/2017. Within this session was reintroduced in House 06/13/2019. Latest action: House as of 06/28/2019. Referred to the Subcommittee on the Constitution, Civil Rights and Civil Liberties.

Action By: House Judiciary

Proposing an amendment to the Constitution of the United States giving Congress power to prohibit the physical desecration of the flag of the United States

Currently has partisan support of 19 Republicans. Last supporter joined 03/12/2020. Montana represented by Greg Gianforte joined the supporters as of 06/13/2019. No other changes have been made.

2. S.J. Res. 49 – 116th Congress (2019-2020) Introduced in Senate - Judiciary (06/13/2019)

A joint resolution proposing an amendment to the Constitution of the United States authorizing the Congress to prohibit the physical desecration of the flag of the United States.

Sponsor: Sen. Daines, Steve [R-MT]

Currently has partisan support of 9 Republicans. Only change was partisan support increased by 2.

Since 1942, the United States has been following the U.S. Flag Code; a long list of rules and guidelines for displaying and respecting the American flag. Before you display your American flag, make sure you are familiar with flag etiquette. There is a right way and a wrong way.

How to Display the American Flag Correctly on Your Vehicle or Motorcycle.

A single flag should fly from the right (passenger) side of the vehicle. If two flags are displayed, it is okay to put one on each side, but they should be mounted at the same height and be hung in the same way. The flag should be displayed with the stars in the upper left-hand corner, with an important exception. A flag displayed on the passenger side of a vehicle should show the stars at the upper *right-hand* corner. Isn't that backward? It is, but the reason is that the field of stars should always be in the highest position of honor. On a vehicle that moves, that would be closest to the front.

On motorcycles, the flag must be mounted at the center on the rear of the bike or to the right from the rider's perspective when driving forward, which is referred to as the "marching right."

When flown adjacent to a state flag or another type of flag, the American flag should take the marching right position.

REMINDER, as a community effort, consider giving a new flag and 'Thank You for Being a Patriot' certificate to low income senior citizens, veterans and other individuals in the community who have faithfully displayed the American flag but may need financial assistance to continue to

do so. The certificate should also include directions on where to take their old flag for proper disposal.

I am honored to continue to be your Flag Alliance Chairman and will keep you updated on status as it develops.

FINANCE CHAIRMAN

Elmer Palmer

With the Annual Budget approved in the Department Executive Committee meeting in lieu of a Department Convention due to the COVID-19 Pandemic, there was little action for the Department Finance Committee to do during the period of Executive Committee meeting and Fall conference. With two subcommittees involved, there was some action.

The Ways and Means subcommittee had set a raffle as part of the fundraising for The American Legion of Montana for the 2021 year. The call was for a raffle of a Rifle, a laptop computer, and a cash prize. Upon a search for these items, the Department Adjutant found that a computer was hard to come by due to the use of them in the Virtual Learning classes forced upon the families by the COVID 19 Pandemic.

The final prizes determined by the committee was a hunting rifle, a cash prize of \$1000.00 and a cash prize of \$500.00. The first ticket drawn will have first pick of the prizes, the second drawn ticket the second and the remaining prize goes to the third ticket holder. Tickets will be sold for \$10.00 each with the selling Post retaining \$2.00 for each ticket sold. Drawing will be at the 2021 Department Convention.

The prize changes were approved by the Ways and Means subcommittee and the expenditure was approved by the Finance Committee. The flyer for the raffle was approved by the Finance Committee.

The Department Adjutant sends a copy of the Department finance transactions to the Finance Officer monthly, no errors have been identified.

HIGHWAY FATALITY MARKER

Jim Kelly

Members of the Montana Highway Commission approved and established guideline for the American “White Cross” program in 1953, with the blessing of then Governor, J. Hugo Aronson. Leaders applauded the program as “...One of the finest projects I have ever seen undertaken by an Organization. . .”

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

FATALITY MARKER CHAIRPERSON

Chairperson participates in and assists with the supervision, education, promotion, and administration of the American Legion Fatality Marker program.

ACTIVITIES

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

- Supports Department, District, and Post members through a variety of tasks related to organization and communication.
- Promote program primarily through education of membership, partners, and community. Working with Law Enforcement agencies to address training about the American Legion Fatality Marker Program. We are finding some, possibly younger, officers are not aware of the Fatality Marker Program. When asked about it, they do not know who to refer a family to. They are also not aware this is a “No Cost” program for the family. We will continue to work on this potential problem.

Montana Highway Patrol - Going through the Attorney General Tim Fox and Colonel Tom Butler, we began working with Curt Rissman, as he was willing to send data to one collection point for distribution. Early on it was clear MHP did not want to provide information to 130+ Posts.

We have reiterated several times, “Without assistance from the Montana Highway Patrol, the American Legion Fatality Marker program might die.”

- Prepare news releases, newspaper articles, Web-based material, and photographs for use in news media.
 - Montana PBS Television
 - Montana Electric Cooperative Association
 - Association of Montana Troopers
 - Montana Legionnaire
- Obtain information for members and community when requested, promptly return phone calls and answer emails.
 - Bi-monthly news and Fatality Report
 - Public inquiries as to location of fatal crashes
- Ability to effectively communicate ensuring all duties are completed accurately and delivered with high quality and in a timely manner.
- Update program guidelines and ensure compliance with them.
 - Review of Fatality Marker Specification
 - Prepare for review by Montana Department of Transportation (MDT)
- Handle enquiries from Legion members and the public.
 - Received 54 calls and emails questions about the program, as well as 33 Requests for Fatality Markers.
- Training, supervising, and motivating membership.
 - Keep American Legion Fatality Marker Program in front of Post via bi-monthly news and Fatality Report. On the 15th and last day of each month an email goes out with a list of fatal crashes during the preceding 15-day period, together with other items of interest. This list of fatalities is considered unofficial as it is taken from a computer assisted dispatch log and is only intended to alert Posts of possible incidents within their jurisdiction.
- Encourage member and community involvement.

Rural Montana Magazine resulted in 6 inquiries regarding membership and referrals to closest Post.

Raised \$6,414.26 as of Sept 15th in cash and/in-kind services, or equipment.

- Maintain a filing system of data on fatalities.
- Prepare regular reports and presentations.
- Organize, store and print documents.
- Maintaining internal databases.

Currently the data includes the following information:

CaseID
Date of Accident
Age
Gender
City of Residence
Nearest Community
Highway & Location
Direction of Travel
Vehicle Type
Person Type
County
Latitude & Longitude
Marker
There are:

2927 entries in Statewide (2006 – 2020)

204 entries in District #4

1273 entries in District #5

- Continues to fulfill District #5 responsibilities and provides manpower and resources to Posts within District #4 as needed.

PUBLIC RELATIONS:

In addition to local news articles, we contacted Montana PBS, Trooper Magazine (MHP), and Rural Montana Magazine earlier this year. Purpose is to get information out to a larger audience regarding the American Legion Fatality Marker Program.

No response from Montana Public Broadcast System about possible inclusion of American Legion Fatality Markers across the state of Montana in their weekly travelogue. Since 1991, the Backroads crew has traveled across Montana visiting its unique people and places. The series airs regularly on Montana PBS.

Why the Montana Trooper Magazine? It is noted, even our younger law enforcement officers, do not know what organization is responsible; who to contact; or if there is a cost associated with placement of a Marker. This remains a “NO COST” SERVICE for the victims’ family.

Rural Montana picked up the article sometime in March, sent a reporter/writer for an interview in June, and published the article in August. Rural Montana Magazine is sent to over 200,000 businesses and homes throughout the state.

Various Posts, most notably Bozeman Post #14, continues to lead with newspaper articles, and television coverage to keep their community informed of the program. Greg Harbac, one of my “Go to People” has helped neighboring Posts within District 7.

We continue to work with regional newspaper/news stations who inquire as to location of a fatal crash.

STATEWIDE REQUESTS FOR FATALITY MARKERS

Pending Requests 10 (Pending are sent to Post closest to crash)
Requests Installed 9

STILL LOOKING FOR ASSISTANCE:

We are looking for committed and enthusiastic individuals to join our team.

District Coordinator:

- Coordinate Fatality Marker Program at District level
- Facilitate Communications between Posts
- Determine area of jurisdiction/responsibility
- Public Relations – Newspapers / Television / community Presentations
- Ensure compliance and maintenance

Fatality Marker Designee (Post):

- Highly motivated individual who takes pride in their accomplishments
- Responsible for management of locating, installing and annual maintenance
- Public Relations – Local newspapers / community Awareness
- Work with District Coordinator

SUCCESS OF ANY PROGRAM DEPENDS ENTIRELY ON ACTIVE PARTICIPATION

HOMELESS VETERAN COORDINATOR

Ray Read

The Montana Department's participation in The American Legion's Homeless Veterans Program is now over 14 years old, 2019-21 Jeff Nelson Montana Department Commander, re-appointed me as the Coordinator of the Program as the as the Homeless Veterans Coordinator in July 2019. I respectfully submit the following report of the record to date.

Montana Statistics Related to Homeless Veterans is as follows:

Facts (variety of sources). Of the 92,244 veterans recognized and recorded by the VA as being in Montana, 72,449 are indicated as wartime veterans 19,796 are peacetime veterans. Breakdown by era is: Gulf War- 32,416; Vietnam- 33872; Korea-7,118; WW II-1,684. Peacetime veterans' number 19,796. The ratio of gender is Female veterans 8,225 and Male veterans 84,019. Comment: It is my estimation that based on averaging 2.5 members per veteran's household that

the total veterans' population including family members is at 230,000+- or nearly 1/4 of the total population of Montana. Re: VA Statistics 2019

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

The following information was provided for the January 2019 Point in Time Survey by Housing & Urban Development conducted in January 2019. These reflect the collection effort based in cities and towns broken into Districts by Housing and Urban Development (HUD). These Districts do not emulate Montana Department /American Legion Districts as currently configured. HUD District 1,2,3-Eastern Montana; District 4- Havre; District 5- Great Falls; District 6- Lewistown; District 7- Billings; District 8- Helena; District 9- Bozeman; District 10- Kalispell; District 11- Missoula; and District 12-Butte Survey areas did not totally encompass Montana rural areas. The thing to take away from this is that Homelessness is still present and is a problem we must address at Post level and above:

Montana Homelessness Statistics

As of January 2019, Montana had an estimated **1,357** experiencing homelessness on any given day, as reported by Continuums of Care to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). Of that Total, **136** were family households, **205** were Veterans, **82** were unaccompanied young adults (aged 18-24), and **228** were individuals experiencing chronic homelessness.

Public school data reported to the U.S. Department of Education during the 2017-2018 school year shows that an estimated **3,977** public school students experienced homelessness over the course of the year. Of that total, **346** students were unsheltered, **320** were in shelters, **317** were in hotels/motels, and **2,994** were doubled up.

With the rise of the COVID-19 (Chinese virus or Wuhan Virus), The American Legion is aware of the effect it has on our State veterans. Nearly 1200 veterans from Montana have been identified as being vulnerable to homelessness. Rural veterans (60% of Montana are especially vulnerable. Our larger communities seem to be addressing the issue of Veterans Homelessness but I implore all Posts to consider reviewing your local situation and be proactive to identify and work with those veterans and their families who may be homeless or prone to homelessness.

There were 205 veterans identified as homeless in the last available statistics. This number is in my estimation is under-reported as the Point in Time survey does not reach into the rural areas of Montana that encompasses about half percent of State's veterans' population.

There is help available in various communities. Look for them. Freedom's Path is such a program. See the following update:

*Freedom's Path located on historic Fort William Henry Fort Harrison Veterans Administration Center

*Current occupancy rate is estimated to be approximately 95% of their capacity of 96 billets.

*One- and two-bedroom Family Units are available. A maximum of 4 persons in the two-bedroom apartments. Freedom Path is actively seeking families for these Units. Remember no pets but certified Service dogs are allowed.

*Veterans must apply through the Veterans Administration's Homeless Veterans Program. Call 442-6410 and ask for the Homeless Veterans Office.

FREEDOM'S PATH
3720 Liberty Lane
Fort Harrison, MT 59636
Telephone: (406) 422-4303
www.freedomspath.com

Recommendations for 2020-2021: These remain the same as previous years!

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

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

3. That the Department of Montana of the American Legion supports the various Homeless Veterans Stand downs scheduled throughout Montana for remainder of 2020. Veteran related events previously identified as being in Plains, Helena, Missoula, Dillon, Miles City, Montana, and Libby, Montana and on the High line of Montana with Havre, Montana as the hub.

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

INSURANCE DIRECTOR

Gary White

We have received no new disbursements since the last report in June; our next anticipated disbursements will be in April 2021. We continue to show a decline in policy holders; therefore,

we will see a decline in revenue from the insurance programs. The free AD & D now called Legion Care; all Legionnaires, senior (over 18 years of age) SAL and Auxiliary members are eligible for the \$1000.00 AD & D free insurance. However, everyone needs to be registered for the benefit. Register by going to thelit.com/legioncare2. or you can call 800-235-6943. The Legion Care program will pay you \$1000.00 for a covered accident or, if the accidental loss occurs when on official Legion Family business, Legion Care will cover you for \$5000.00 of AD & D coverage.

In the last 3 months we have only had 5 new registrations for the free AD & D Insurance, Posts need to provide the information on registering and aid those members who are intimidated by the process. Since the last report I have been notified of 1 accidental deaths and payment was not paid due to not being registered.

Our most successful programs are the EA+ Travel Insurance and the Cancer insurance; however, with the COVID 19 pandemic we are seeing an increase in interest in the Hospitalization program.

We must continue to encourage our members to look at the Legionnaire Insurance Trust programs for their insurance needs. The Trust is constantly updating their programs looking for new and better insurance products for our members. It is not our intent to be selling insurance, but we should be making our members aware of the products available to them.

LEGISLATIVE

Roger Hagan

Your Legislative Committee continues to engage with both state and federal legislators to promote the issues most important to our American Legion membership. The COVID 19 situation continues to limit our interaction with the State Administration and Veterans' Affairs (SAVA) Interim Committee however, we continue to present testimony or monitor 'virtually' the proceedings. The study bill, HJ 23 (Study Structure and Funding of Montana Veterans' Affairs Division) has served well to educate our legislators and reinforce the need for enhanced support to the Montana Veterans Affairs Division (MVAD) in their efforts to reach even more veterans throughout Montana.

With the national and state elections season limiting the access to our duly elected representatives we have not seen a lot of movement on either the national or state scene. Now is the time for you to become engaged in the elections process, know who your state legislative members will be, following the November 3rd election, and contact them as soon after the election as possible. Let them know your 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.

Your legislative efforts continue to take a front seat with our Congressional Liaisons. We have filled the vacancy as the Congressional Liaison to Senator Daines. I would like to welcome Joe Foster as the new Congressional Liaison to Senator Daines. I am sure Joe will be a fantastic addition to our team. Your other 2 Liaisons are Cliff Larsen as Liaison to Senator Tester and Bill

White as Liaison to Representative Gianforte. These 3 gentlemen are doing great work on your behalf. If you see them, thank them for their contributions to our efforts.

If you have any questions or input, please be sure to share it with your Post or the Department so we can include your thoughts in our deliberations.

MEMBERSHIP

Richard Klose

With the COVID many meetings changed.

I attended the Executive Meeting June 25/27 in Helena, this meeting took the place of our Department Convention, because of COVID.

I took part in a scaled down July 4th parade in Laurel.

I did the Western Region Conference call in on July 8th.

I did the National American Legion Virtual Membership Workshop August 3rd-6th.

I attended the State American Legion AA Baseball Tournament in Billings August 6th-9th.

I was part of a 9/11 Ceremony in Laurel

I attended a Zoom M&PA meeting September 17th.

I was part of a POW/MIA Ceremony in Laurel on September 18th.

I attended the District 11 Fall Meeting in Park City on October 3rd.

I attended a selection committee meeting in Helena on October 12th to interview our only candidate for American Legion Department of Montana Adjutant Position.

Addendum- Most people don't like changes, but over the last 5 years or so we in the American Legion have seen many, most coming from American Legion National Headquarters. Mostly in the use of our computers, filling out reports, and how we report on membership. A lot of people, me included have been saying for some time that we need to do a better job of training or mentoring our membership. To me this needs to start at the Post level. The average member needs to know what they don't know. The more informed our membership the better our Posts, Districts and Department can function. In the recent past we have tried doing some of this by hold a Department Legion College training program at our Department Convention. I don't believe that it has met all that was expected of it. That is why I think that we should utilize our National American Legion College graduates and ask them, our Department Commander, Vice Commander, Adjutant, and maybe our Department Membership Chairman to put together a training program that the college grads could take to the Posts. I believe only one District is without a college grad. The college graduated could divide the Posts so that they would only have a few to go to. I believe that once this was started that it would not only inform the local membership but also increase the curiosity of the members that don't usually attend meetings to come and see for themselves what they are

missing. Part of this training is to actually demonstrate the importance of holding monthly meetings and the meeting conducted as laid out in the Officers Guide. This would also help the Post Officers with using the mylegion.org website. I believe that in the near future all membership transactions will be done on our computers, so the Posts need to understand and practice using the system now. To me it is easier for a few members to travel to the Posts to train the membership then to ask 11,000 members to travel to a Department Convention for training. Today on the report from National Headquarters we have dropped from number 11 to number 13 and we are only 30 members ahead of where we were at this time last year making us 64.28% meaning we need an additional 77 members to get to the 65% target.

NATIONAL SECURITY

Ken Simon

The major issue at the beginning of this year was the Coronavirus impacting our country and more so our nation's Military. While it did have some impact on their readiness, they were able to overcome and maintain.

The next issue that arose was the two factions: Black Lives Matter and Antifa. They organized and began to protest and riot in several cities. They not only targeted certain communities but also began to target law enforcement, their vehicles, and buildings as well as burn and loot businesses.

COVID: The US has 7,752,640 cases, 3,062,983 Recovered, 114,480,836 tested, and 214,690 deaths.

Montana has 18,702 Total confirmed cases, 585 New cases, 11,361 have recovered, 7,131 Active cases, 286 Active hospitalizations, 390,258 Total Tested, and 210 deaths as of the 10th of October.

Total Cases in the United States as of Oct 10th is 6,609,427 and 195,724 deaths! California leads the nation with 768,534 cases and 14,616 deaths; Vermont at the bottom of the list has 1,702 cases and 58 deaths! Montana is 43rd on that list!

According to DOD COVID-19 Cumulative Totals: There are 48,513 cases, 630 hospitalized, 33,217 recovered, and 8 deaths! The Total number per agencies is: Army 18,213; Marine Corps 6,027; Navy 10,668; Air Force 7,585; National Guard 5,663 and DOD Agencies 357. Dependent: 10,941 cases, 135 Hospitalized, 4,678 Recovered, and 7 deaths! The Total which includes Military, Dependent, Civilian, and Contractor is: 70,527 cases, 1,408 Hospitalized, 48,249 Recovered, and 99 Deaths! These figures are as of Oct 9th. So, you can see the effect of the virus on our military worldwide! NOTE: These presumptive figures will be updated M-W-F and are refined as the Joint Staff Crisis Management Team receives updated/corrected reporting on case numbers!

DOD's COVID-19 Response Illustrates Commitment to families and people. There have been many changes regarding movement of troops and families over the past eight months relating to change of station, response to the family situations with dependents who have jobs and children. Teleworking where possible, dependent schooling, licensing for dependents to make it easier when

moving from state to state, and health care as a result of permanent change of duty station. Secretary of Defense Esper said and I quote “The Department also gave installation Commanders the authority to deal with COVID-19 restrictions as they saw fit, to ensure the best balance between health protection and mission readiness, he said.” Unquote.

Across the force, and to ensure the needs of families were met, he said, commissaries and other support facilities were deemed "mission essential" to ensure they could stay open. Military pharmacies also offered curbside prescription pickup to ensure service members and families could continue to get important medications. The secretary and the entire Department of Defense have an unwavering commitment to taking care of our service members and their families," Donovan said. "In personnel and readiness, we work tirelessly to lead the way in this effort and meet with the secretary weekly to update him on our progress. We understand how much our service members and their families rely on the resources we provide. So, this is a no-fail mission for us." Unquote.

In regard to the civil unrest in our country, the cost is astronomical! It is expected that the losses from the unrest will exceed the \$25 million “catastrophe” threshold and could persuade some carriers to exclude coverage for damages caused by riots going forward!

According to the Council’s 2020 Market Intelligence and Insight, civil unrest and looting occurring since the death of George Floyd has been reported in over 25 US cities and has spread into many foreign countries! Damage in Minneapolis could exceed \$25 million. In fact, adding up the estimated insurance losses for unexpected catastrophic events this year, the insurance industry may be set to incur over \$230 billion in losses, making 2020 one of the most expensive and catastrophic years in history.

More than 700 Federal, State, and Local Law Enforcement Officers have been injured nationwide since the protests began. While there have been so many injured less than five officers have been killed as a direct result of the riots and protests! There have also been 150 Federal Buildings damaged across the country from the violent protests and riots, and that is not counting the number of commercial businesses damaged, looted, and burned during this time.

These two issues statistics alone are only scratching the surface of the end result or damages that has been done to our Nation’s economy and security! While we are focused on what this has done to our nation, let us not forget that we still have much work to be done to right the ship. We as an organization have to keep an eye on the health and wellbeing of our families, communities, state, nation. Weather is still another force we have to reckon with and that alone can compound our mission twofold. Hurricanes and tornadoes devastate our communities creating hardships for the military, civilian, and federal folks who are responsible to respond when called upon. Our nation’s security relies on all of us to lend a hand, keep our eyes, and ears open to keep our nation and its people Safe. Security is a Team Effort!

ORATORICAL

Jeff Holmes

First off, I would like to congratulate and thank Scott O'Donnell a senior at Flathead High School and sponsored by Kalispell Post #137. You made us proud, and we are glad that you decided to further your leadership education through the American Legion Oratorical Program. Emmy Martin of Two Dot/Harlowton placed second, Nick Cichon of Bozeman placed third, and Tim Cuddy of Helena placed fourth. I would like to thank all Posts and participants for sponsoring the Oratorical Contest as part of their Post objectives.

To say that this contest was unique is a huge understatement, but I am thankful we at least did not have to cancel like most of the rest of the world's activities. Our goal is to help the kids, and we did that. I owe a huge thankyou to a lot of people. I would first like to apologize and thank Dick Ellwein and Bill White for going to all the work setting up the entire Department contest in Helena that never took place. I neglected to mention them in the awards video, and for that I sincerely apologize. I would especially like to thank Erin Carpenter for doing most of the legwork and for setting up the online contest and to Gary White for the help as well. I would also like to thank Dick Ellwein for referring some of the judges; the judges for making the tough decisions in a timely matter; to the moderators who hosted and interacted with the contestants, and to Lowell Long who helped keep me honest and the contest fair. Our Department Oratorical Contest is truly a team effort and would not happen without the dedication of all. Thanks again to everyone. Your students and I really appreciate it.

Thanks to Bill White, Helena will host the 2021 Department Oratorical Contest at Helena College on March 6th. This is of course depending on the whole corona thing. If National holds an in-person contest, we must also hold an in-person contest for our winner to be eligible to compete.

I work for you, so please let me know what I can do to make your job easier.

PUBLIC AFFAIRS & PUBLICATIONS

Kathleen Gilluly

I took over as editor of the Montana Legionnaire at the end of what was a very turbulent September for me. After getting off to a late start, and with the help of Becky, Erin and Gary, the paper got out. I expect it will go smoother from here on out and I am happy to be on board.

In addition to being the Vice Commander of Laurel's Post #123, I am the editor/publisher of The Laurel Outlook, a weekly newspaper covering three counties and the communities of Laurel, Park City and Joliet. I make an effort to get veteran and Legion news and photos in the Outlook, as most everyone knows our Legionnaires. I was a member of the American Legion in both Billings and Anaconda before I moved to Laurel. I am a proud Army veteran and served almost all of my enlistment in Germany.

I am looking forward to meeting more of you from the different posts and hope you enjoy reading The Montana Legionnaire!

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

Dick Ellwein

Congratulations to the SAL Detachment for another great year reaching goal plus at 102% for the 2019-2020 year. They also reached an all-time high.

I participated in a virtual meeting of the Sons of The American Legion National Executive Committee on September 26, 2020. A Resolution of interest from the meeting was the revision of the SAL Constitution to agree with the eligibility dates of The American Legion Constitution. The Resolution past at the meeting.

SHOOTING SPORTS

Larry Dobb

No report submitted.

VETERANS AFFAIRS & REHABILITATION

Kate Hahn

As the MT DSO, I attended the following events:

Attended the groundbreaking ceremony for the new David J Thatcher VA Clinic in Missoula, July 10, 2020.

National Conference, Washington, DC – March 8 to 10, 2020

During the National Conference:

- ❖ I was able to attend the PTSD/TBI Committee meeting March 8, 2020. Topics of discussion were the Stellate Ganglion Block for treatment of PTSI (Post Traumatic Stress Injury), Sean Mulvaney, MD
- ❖ VA introduced work with TRUGENOMIX – a biomedical company that uses state of the art techniques to map genetics for PTSD Biomarker patented testing and risk assessment
- ❖ Executive Order – National Roadmap to Empower Veterans and End Veteran Suicide
- ❖ Attended the National Commander's address where many awards and recognition were given to groups that support our veterans
- ❖ Attended VA&R Committee Meetings

Attended the VA&R meeting where Assistant Secretary of the VA discussed

- ❖ The expectation of completing Legacy Appeals by July 4, 2020
- ❖ New target for a Certificate of Eligibility for Home loans to be 1 day
- ❖ GI Bill – STEM Scholarships are available
- ❖ VET TEC certificates of eligibility to veterans for IT
- ❖ Solid Start – a new program to help military transition to civilian life
- ❖ Veterans Benefits Banking Program (VBBP)

- ❖ Blue Water Navy claims
- ❖ National Cemetery Administration spoke as well
- ❖ Suicide Prevention
- ❖ COVID-19 and VA beginning January 2019

Department Service Officer School, Washington, DC – March 11 to 13, 2020

- ❖ Over 19 million veterans in the US
- ❖ 4.8 million receive disability compensation
- ❖ Introduced new CAV-C precedent setting cases: Nieves-Rodriguez v Peake, Buchanan v Nicholson, Clemons v Shinseki, Rice v Shinseki, and Procopio v Wilkie

District Meetings Fall 2020

- ❖ Attended Zoom Meetings for 4 Districts in Montana
- ❖ Briefed on BWN, DIC, NSC/WP, Evidence to support disability claims
- ❖ Announced an open invitation to contact Linda White in Lolo, her dad is a WWII Veteran turning 100, looking for other WWII Veterans to celebrate with him this winter Mar/Apr please call 406-671-7877 and speak with Linda

VETERANS ECONOMICS

Clara Santopietro

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

The National Veterans Employment & Education Commission was formed to ensure veterans receive the opportunity to succeed in civilian life. It works closely with the Legion's Legislative Division to advance legislation supported by Legion resolutions. The commission focuses on 9 topics that impact veterans. They are economy, conference calls, tracking legislation, employment, housing/homelessness, career fairs, small business, education, & credentialing. The following will be excerpts from the commission's 16 Oct 2020 weekly update:

ECONOMY:

Amid all the uncertainty brought on by COVID-19 over the past six months, one thing is assured: the pandemic has re-ordered real estate markets across the board on an unprecedented scale. Against this backdrop, real estate's new standard is also creating huge swathes of opportunity. Dozens of cities and counties that were once considered too small, too southern, too hot, too flat, or lacking in amenities, culture, or sophistication are now finding themselves being swooned to the top of the real estate desirability lists as Americans seek warmer, healthier, less dense, better educated, and more mobile places to live that offer closer access to the outdoors, better hospitals, smaller schools, and more open space with no clear end to the pandemic insight.

The repercussions of America's great COVID migration has the potential to re-shuffle the essential demographic and economic balance of America for the next generation. The American Legion will

continue to advocate and push for improving laws currently in place to assist veterans in home buying.

CONFERENCE CALLS:

These are the calls that are made between the commission and various organizations and government agencies with regard to the well-being of veterans.

TRACKING LEGISLATION:

The commission is continuously monitoring Bills and Resolutions that concern veterans.

EMPLOYMENT:

With an estimated 200,000 service members transitioning out of the military yearly, The American Legion understands that a considerable percentage of them will return to their hometowns in rural areas. The USDA-NIFA's Enhancing Agricultural Opportunities for Military Veterans Program Grant will equip military veterans with skills, training, and experience for careers in agriculture and food production and increase the number of military veterans pursuing careers in agriculture through comprehensive, hands-on, and immersive learning. The American Legion will continue to monitor this program.

VETERAN HOUSING AND HOMELESSNESS:

Because of COVID-19, The American Legion Department of New Jersey is conducting Mobile Stand Downs for homeless veterans. When all other Homeless Stand Downs in the state were canceled, The American Legion refused to shutter their services to homeless veterans. Instead of gathering homeless veterans for services via a large event, Legion volunteers brought services to them.

Local law enforcement and National Guard units have committed to assisting Legion volunteers at these Mobile Stand Downs with traffic control and convoy escort at each event.

CAREER FAIRS:

ALL IN-PERSON CAREER FAIRS SCHEDULED THROUGH NOVEMBER HAVE BEEN CANCELLED, SUSPENDED, OR POSTPONED.

The American Legion is working on future virtual workshops and career fairs.

SMALL BUSINESS:

The American Legion continues to track negotiations for a second COVID-19 stimulus package. The Economic Injury Disaster Loan (EIDL) and Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) was vital to veteran small businesses and their employees. The American Legion's advocacy efforts made it possible for National Guardsman who own businesses and have been activated amid the pandemic to be eligible for the EIDL assistance.

EDUCATION:

The Department of Veterans Affairs has lost the domain rights to GIBill.com, which some advocates fear could open the potential for scammers to target veterans. VA lost ownership of it in 2015 because the person maintaining the domain left the VA and the VA, at the time, had no continuity plan in place.

The VA, the federal government's second-largest agency, is tasked with managing and protecting hundreds of thousands of federal scholarships, and some argue the GIBill.com issue signals the VA is not ready for the modern age.

The American Legion has an educational commitment to protect veterans and minority veterans and will continue to monitor this as it aligns with our Resolution No. 327: Support Further Assessment and Evaluation of Institutions of Higher Learning to Enable Veterans to Make Informed Education Choices.

CREDENTIALING:

To assist veterans with turning their military training and skills into civilian credentials to meet job requirements, Lone Star College (LSC), Utility Workers Union of America, Indiana Wesleyan University and the Kansas Board of Regents were announced as pilot sites for the Military Credentialing Advancement Initiative (MCAI). Each pilot site will receive \$150,000 and \$200,000 in one-year grants from Rockefeller and Philanthropy Advisors, the Ascendum Education Group, Lumina Foundation, and Greater Texas Foundation.

The efforts of this Initiative have been spring boarded by The American Legion's advocacy on credentialing, and specifically the work of our Credentialing Ambassadors over the course of four separate meetings in 2019-2020. This is supported by Resolution No. 318: Ensuring the Quality of Service member and Veteran Student's Education at Institutions of Higher Learning.

VA HOSPITAL VOLUNTEER REPRESENTATIVE – BILLINGS

Joyce Babcock

In January and February, I visited the facility once each week and distributed the Active Duty newspapers for Marines, Navy, Air Force and Army which I received in mail. Both months I also received extra copies of The American Legion magazine and I put those out in various waiting rooms.

My visit included the waiting rooms at Spring Creek and over to Majestic's large waiting room. The newspapers were divided between the two buildings, however, I left more in Majestic as they always had a greater number of Veterans in the chairs there.

I took a large container of coffee, and a sheet of cookies once each month through first 3 months of 2020 and left those items with staff at Majestic also. After mid-March I made no volunteer visits to the CBOC due to illness which restricted my activities through the middle of August. In mid-August I met with the Volunteer supervisor for the Billings CBOC and we set up a schedule for my volunteering which placed me primarily in waiting area at the Spring Creek facility. However, we are still not totally settled as we are waiting for a desk and chair to be approved for the waiting area where I will spend a part of my volunteer time and then the remainder of the afternoon I will be circulating between Spring Creek and Majestic visiting with the patients who are in the waiting rooms and assisting with those who are having difficulty in locating where it is they are to wait for their appointments.

I also pass out masks provided by the facility to those persons who enter without a mask. Most of the Veterans entering receive masks from the persons manning the entrance they go through to reach either of the buildings before they even enter the parking lots.

VA HOSPITAL VOLUNTEER REPRESENTATIVE – Fort Harrison

Bill White

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

1. Attended third and fourth quarter V.A.V.S. Meetings at VA Fort Harrison, MT.
2. Continued as an appointed representative to the National VA and R committee
3. Continue working with Gary White to ensure that all American Legion volunteers are registered so that the American Legion gets proper credit
4. Attended District meeting invited to as VAVS representative, either by way of teleconference, zoom or in person
5. Continue to be reappointed as the Legion Representative to Congressman Greg Gianforte
6. Worked with Congressional Delegation from Montana in getting the Atlas system back up and running in Eureka MT
7. Worked with the Department of Montana in settling in a new family that had been accepted at Freedoms Path at VA Fort Harrison

VA HOSPITAL VOLUNTEER REPRESENTATIVE – Miles City

Clancee Collins

Due to Covid-19 restrictions I unable to visit the Miles City Veteran's Community Living Center. After talking to the activities' director, she informed me if she required any assistance from myself or Custer Post #5, she would notify me. As of this writing she has not reached out to me for any assistance.

I have completed another set of fingerprints and photographs for my VAVS identification card and received my card in August. There is still no word on a date that the nursing home will be moving out of the Veteran's Affairs facility.

For now, the only thing planned for the CBOC is a coordinating the Christmas store in December with Custer Post #5 Auxiliary. As of right now we will set up on the 11th of December and ship gifts for the Veteran's on the afternoon of Saturday the 12th of December. This way we will have no contact with the Veteran's or the staff.

WOMEN'S VETERANS COORDINATOR

Kim Kay Carol McCarty Martin

This has been a totally different year than ever before, and it is one that has put a halt on many programs and activities. This has included plans for women veterans across MT to come together

for camaraderie and support. The only planned event that took place this year was our guided hike near Cave Mountain campground in the Lewis and Clark Forest on the 25th of June. The float down the Yellowstone River was cancelled due to Covid and so I did not put together further plans.

The questionnaire I distributed to all District Commanders to give to their respective Posts was not as successful as I had hoped. The subject of the questioner was brought up on the Legionnaire in August with no response from women veterans except one. With only 12 responses, I will try and connect to women vets who I have not heard from by Christmas. With Covid on the rise again in MT, I am currently reluctant to try and put together any type of activity or project.

I could not travel to the 2020 Fall District Meetings not only due to Covid concerns while traveling but also health issues. I was able to Zoom in to District 1, 3, and 8 meetings but did not have the password for District 10. I truly missed seeing fellow comrades this fall, and hope things change to the point where we all can gather in future meetings without worry.