



THE AMERICAN LEGION DEPARTMENT OF MONTANA

DEPARTMENT CONVENTION REPORTS

2020

DEPARTMENT OFFICERS

&

COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN

Preamble to the Constitution

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

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

To maintain law and order;

To foster and perpetuate a one hundred percent Americanism;

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

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

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

To make right the master of might;

To promote peace and goodwill on earth;

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

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



DEPARTMENT EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

DEPARTMENT COMMANDER

Jeff Nelson

I would like to start off by thanking everyone for the great year we have had in making our Department one of the top in the nation. Without your hard work and dedication the programs, the membership, and activities would never have come to fruition. The Covid-19 has certainly changed the way we have done things and no doubt will have lasting consequences for years to come. Per Resolution #1 I have consented to extend my time as your Commander for another year due to the cancellation of the Convention and voting of new officers. It has truly been a privilege to work with so many of you and share this past year together. I hope this next year brings as many accomplishments and successes as last year, if not more.

I have travelled from Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan to Indianapolis, Indiana and a 100 other places along the way. After Fall Conference we attended Remembrance Days in Crows' Nest, Alberta. The Remembrance Day in Canada is equivalent to our Memorial Day in the states. The community of Crows' Nest goes all out in honoring their veterans as in our communities. The gatherings afterwards are a little more than just social greetings, they know how to make Montanans' feel like we are all family no matter what the border crossing restrictions are.

In December I joined the Stevensville high school volunteers on a trip to Fort Harrison. It was real pleasure to see so many young students giving of their time to reach out to patients at Fort Harrison delivering Christmas wishes and gifts. Bill White was extremely helpful in coordinating this whole trip and making the event a memorable one.

A combination Ronan and Polson American Legion Post travelled to the Columbia Falls Veterans' home and visited residents and staff for Christmas. While there we presented them with gifts from the Post and our local SAL Squadron.

The week before Christmas the Polson American Legion led off the Festival of Lights Parade in Polson with our jeep carrying the Colors. Post Commander Dorothy Goodwin and myself represented Hardwick Post 112 in the parade.

Chinook Post 48 invited my wife and I to a veterans' recognition get-together at the Senior Citizens Center in February. It was an opportunity to meet many of the veterans in the Chinook area and visit their veterans' memorial park just outside the center. I was able to address the group and deliver a thank you for their service and all they do for their community.

In March it was time start District meetings once again. We made it to District 8 meeting in a nasty blizzard and were greeted by host Post 133 Cascade. This was to be the only live meeting to take place this past spring due to the closure caused by the pandemic. The decision was made by our Department Adjutant and myself to still hold meetings but try and proceed with a different course of action. The first in Montana Legion history we would conduct our meetings via teleconferencing. In retrospect everything went smoothly, and business was conducted accordingly as a normal meeting. The huge drawback was the participation in the Districts with limited attendance from a lot of the Post.

With resolutions coming from many Districts a meeting was going to have to be held even with the shutdown due to the virus. A plan was put together to hold an executive board meeting in place of the canceled Department Convention in Billings. The meeting will be held in Helena on June 26 and 27.

With that I want to thank everyone again for your support this past year and look forward to meeting as many as I can this next year.

DEPARTMENT VICE-COMMANDER

George Blackard

Resigned.

ZONE COMMANDER – SOUTH CENTRAL

Demorise Allen

Our Department Convention in Polson this year was great. Then Vice Commander Jeff Nelson and his wife Chris did a great job of organizing and planning. A big THANK YOU to them and their Posts and Units for stepping up to the plate!!!! Attendance was super and our cruise on Flathead was great. That is the great thing about Department Conventions, you get to vacation all around Montana! The travel is interesting and not a prettier year than this year in Montana.

Meeting new people and traveling to different Posts in our area is one of the rewarding things of being a Zone Commander. Talking with the new District Commanders and many other members is also great. Thank you for letting me step in once again.

After Convention, it took Fran and I two weeks to get all packets delivered to Posts. Harlowton and Winifred took their own home. Fran and I dropped off Lewistown's to Don Bost. Bruce and I took an interesting drive to Winifred to deliver Roy's to Paul Mayberry. Met Roxanne Miller at the VA in Lewistown and delivered Denton's to her. At that time, we did a great amount of visiting about the upcoming District Meeting with a National Commanders visit. Fran and I dropped off Hobson's with Irene Welch on our way to Great Falls. We Delivered Stanford's on the 11th and Roundup's to Jay Cota at a swim meet in Lewistown on the 13th. I finished by taking Post 70's to our Meeting.

Zone goals were handed down shortly by Commander Nelson. We had a reduction of **48** members for our Zone. I used last year's % of goal of each District to figure allocations. **District 7 was 99%** so they only received a **3-member reduction**. **District 9 was at 95%** so they received a **reduction of 12** and **District 11 made 87%** of goal last year so they received a **reduction in their goal of 33 members**. The purpose, to give each District a better shot of making 100% this year! I made several contacts with District Commanders, phone, or email, to let them know of their new District Goals and ideas and reasoning as how to allocate their reduction numbers to their Posts. District goals were then discussed and voted on at their District Meetings.

District Meetings all went great. Congratulations to Commander JIM HOWE, #7; RIP HACKETT, #9; AND GIL FLOYD, #11. Legion attendance was about the same everywhere, the Auxiliary attendance in Livingston was super. I would be remiss if I did not compliment Livingstons Legion Commander Ed Gilbert of Post #23, Commander Roy David of the SAL Squadron # 23, and all their members for the excellent meal at our Banquet. The meal was great, desert was great, and the registration was great. I am sure Commander Nelson was pleased.

I must also commend all who participated in the morning sessions of the three District Meetings I attended. As interesting and informative as any.

Fran and I also attended the National Convention in Indianapolis late August. We enjoyed it immensely and recommend to anyone who may be thinking about attending. 'Just Do It'

BACK TO MEMBERSHIP---Membership is coming good---MAYBE WE CAN STILL WIN THIS ZONE RACE!!!!!!

After District Meetings, Fall Conference (24 -27, Oct.) was upon us. Many presentations enlightened us with much interesting and informative material to educate us. Great as usual!

We did have a very good Finance Committee meeting, we have two sub committees, Ways and Means and Endowment. I am on the Endowment. Mainly decided to write and control our own endowment fund within the American Legion.

I kept in close phone contact with my three District Commanders over the winter. Email with Rip only. Was starting to prepare for Spring Meetings, then Coronavirus changed the world. All meetings were canceled so we started to work on teleConferences to complete our meetings. District 9 Commander Rip Hackett could not take part because of job conflicts. I Started working with Bruce Luhrsen, our Vice Commander in District 9. He did a great job, and subsequently was elected Commander, he since has appointed Rob Miller of Denton Vice Commander. Gil Floyd stepped down as District 11 Commander and his Vice Commander Larry Tipton of Columbus stepped in to run their meeting. I was asked to step in during their meeting later and ran their election of a Commander and Vice Commander. Larry Tipton was elected Commander and Jim Bossen of Park City Vice Commander. District 7 Commander Jim Howe ran the last meeting in our Zone. All went great and Bill Cummins of White Sulphur Springs was elected Commander and he appointed Dan Smart of Big Timber Vice Commander. All phone Conferences went quite well, considering. I would like to THANK all our outgoing District Commanders for all their hard work and time spent. We need many Legionnaires like you. Jim did an outstanding job despite the health issues he was dealing with. THANKS JIM!

Now congratulations to our three newly elected District Commanders! District 7, Bill Cummins of White Sulphur Springs, Meagher Post # 25; Central District 9, Bruce Luhrsen of Judith Gap Post #70; District 11, Larry Tipton of Stillwater Post # 34 of Columbus.

Membership has been in interesting in our “ZONE RACE”. Hats off to Elmer, I think he has it won but quite a race with Clancee, Lowell and myself. I have heard some meat counters have been bare at times! Elmer, I may have to kill a cow to get your steak. **Great job to all.** Hope to see you all the 27th of June!!!

Thank You again for All of Your Efforts!!!

ZONE COMMANDER – WESTERN

Elmer Palmer

After the Department Fall Conference, I returned to my Zone and continued business as always.

I made frequent communication with each of the District Commanders, encouraging them to work membership and do buddy checks and visits with the Posts of their District. Working with Commander Nelson, our Zone agreed to accept part of the membership goal from one of the other Zones. We have a better chance of increasing our membership than the other Zone.

I attended all three of the Virtual District Meetings. While this allowed us to conduct the business required in the District but did not allow for the comradery and interaction of an actual face to face meeting where one can see the person, he/she is talking to. These virtual meetings serve their purpose, but I, for one, look forward to a real, face to face, meeting. I will be attending the end of year Executive Committee meeting.

Eleven years the Department started a process to either revitalize Post 33, Philipsburg or merge the Post with Post 21. Anaconda or Post 125, Drummond. Several discussions as to how it should be done, and several attempts were tried to revitalize it. This Fall with the help of Drummond Commander Richard Clute and Post 135 Finance Officer Deborah Hancock, I was able to get a vote of the current Post 33 members to merge with Post 125. Drummond. The paperwork with proper signatures and adjoining documents has been sent to National Headquarters. Approval of this will occur at the Fall NEC meeting.

I want to thank the officers and especially the members of the Zone for making us the Number One Zone in The Department of Montana.

I am also very pleased that the South-Central Zone Commander will be providing a steak dinner for the bet he made on membership position at the end of the 100% Target Date.

I thank the Department for the opportunity to serve in this position.

ZONE COMMANDER – NORTH CENTRAL

Lowell Long

Membership in our Zone started off slow and then quickly moved up. As of this writing, District 2 is at 92.93%, District 3 is at 82.23% and District 8 is at 92.33%. The Zone is at 90.10%. This is as of March 27, 2020. Thank you to each Post that worked their renewals and talked to new members. Your efforts were noticed as several of our Districts were in the top half of the Department this year. District 2 had a brief stay in the number one position earlier this year and has hovered no lower than 4th place since then.

I also attended the National Convention of the American Legion and the Sons of the American Legion in Indianapolis, IN. These meetings are great as we can network with other Posts and Departments around the country and learn what is working and not working in their areas. The sharing of ideas and information is great, and I learned a lot that will help me in my Post, District, and Zone. I encourage anyone interested in learning more about our organization to consider attending a National Convention sometime. It is truly worth your time.

On February 15, 2020, I attended an appreciation for Veterans hosted by the American Lutheran Church in Chinook and the Chinook Senior Citizens Center. Our guest speaker was our Department Commander, Jeff Nelson. These groups did a great job recognizing our veterans and allowed us the opportunity to reminisce about our service. Commander Nelson's remarks helped get us into thinking about our service in the military and our service now in the American Legion. Thank you to Commander Nelson and his wife, Kris for attending. We had about 25 veterans in attendance along with their families. SAL Squadron 48 Commander, Stanley Spangelo and Adjutant Lowell Long presented the colors for the event.

I attended the Sons of the American Legion Fall NEC meeting in Indianapolis on October 12 and 13, 2019. I was able to assist with the Detachment Commander training that was held that weekend as well. With this, I was unable to attend the District meetings in my Zone. Thank you to District 8 Commander, Kim Kay C. McCarty-Martin for filling in for me at the District 3 and 8 meeting and the District 2 Commander, Vince Schmoeckel for delivering my remarks to District 2. I attended the District 8 meeting in Cascade on March 14, 2020 and the District 3 meeting in Sweet Grass on March 21, 2020 just ahead of the shutting down the meetings in person. I attended the District 2 meeting via teleConference on March 28, 2020. I attended the remaining District meetings via phone Conference as the American Legion Boys State Chairman.

Other events I participated in this year as your Zone Commander were the Saco Fun Days along with many members of the American Legion from District 2 and District 1. We had District Commander, Vince Schmoeckel from District 2, and District Commander Joe Yeoman from District 1 there for the parade. Vice Commander George Blackard attended along with Cristina Bochy, Post Commander from Post 117 in Billings. There were Legionnaires from across the two Districts represented at this event and made a large contribution to their parade. Their parade honored the American Legion on their 100th Anniversary.

I attended many phone Conferences representing the Sons of the American Legion this year as well. These are educational for the SAL as well as the American Legion. Since the Sons of the American Legion is a program of the American Legion, what we do impacts what we do as the American Legion.

I tried to encourage your District Commanders to work with each of their Posts to ensure that all the programs we do in the American Legion was being done. This does not mean that every Post must do every program but that each Post

participates in at least one of the programs of the American Legion. I encouraged all our youth programs, the Fatality Marker Program, funeral honors, and Veterans Day and Memorial Day programs in your communities. I encouraged them to assist you in any way they could to promote the activities you were doing in your communities.

Thank you for your support as we work toward making the American Legion better in North Central Montana. Thank you for supporting me as I work for you as your Zone Commander. It has been an honor to serve this Zone as your Zone Commander for the past two years. We will continue to serve our area for “God and Country.” We need to remember that we “Are Still Serving America” and that is what we are all about. I know it has been a pleasure to serve all the Posts of the North Central Zone and will continue to work to assist our Zone in the future.

ZONE COMMANDER – EASTERN

Clancee Collins

November- Participated in Veteran’s Day ceremonies putting flags out at the Eastern Montana State Veteran’s Cemetery. Also participated in the Wreaths across America ceremony as a member of VFW Post #1579 honor guard.

December- Helped organize and implement the Miles City CBOC Christmas Store with members of Custer Post #5 and their Auxiliary.

January- Called District 1 and District 10 Commanders to see if they needed any assistance with calling members to meet the midwinter target date of 80%. Made 28 phone calls to members of Custer Post #5 to remind them to renew their memberships.

Participated in two Veteran’s funerals as a member of VFW Post #1579 honor guard.

February- Participated in one Veteran’s funeral as a member of VFW Post #1579 honor guard.

March- Gave a presentation to the Eastern Montana Retired Teachers Association about the history and programs the American Legion has to offer children, youth, and their communities.

Participated in the teleConference call for District 1’s spring meeting.

April- Participated in the teleConference call for District 10’s spring meeting.

I am a member of the Miles City Fourth of July Parade and Park committee as a member of the American Legion. We have meetings bi-monthly and I oversee contacting civic organizations interested in participating in the parade or setting up a booth in the park. Members of the VFW Post # 1579, the local Marine Corps League and the American Legion Post #5 Auxiliary are also involved. This will be the first scheduled activity in Miles City since the COVID-19 crisis started. So far it is a go, but the Miles City city council has until 28 June to cancel the event.

May- As part of the Department executive committee I listened in on the American Legion Baseball Conference call hosted by Ron Edwards.

June- As of this writing I will be contacting members of District 1 to do “buddy checks” and discuss renewing memberships.

Membership- Easter Zone did very well with making target dates until April’s 95% date. I informed my District Commanders at Spring meetings to let me know if they needed any help with contacting members. At the end of May, seeing no improvement in membership, I contacted both my District Commanders. District 10 Commander informed me that he would start making “buddy checks” and soliciting members for renewals. District 1’s Commander told me that he was working long hours and had little time to make calls. I informed him that I would make calls for him in his District.

NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEEMAN (N.E.C.)

David Driver

During our 2019 Department Fall Conference I had the honor of escorting our National Commander, Bill Oxford, around the area. We had a tour of the Veterans Hospital with Bill White and Duane Cunningham. We were given a briefing by the Director of the Fort Harrison VA and staff. We were given a tour and briefing of the Native American healing site. We were given a briefing by the Director of Montana Veterans Affairs, Kelly Ackerman. Also, took a tour and briefing at the Navy Reserve Center by Past Department Commander Roger Hancock. I was unable to attend our annual gathering in Crows Nest Alberta Canada for Remembrance Day, as I was the guest speaker at the annual Veterans Day Ceremony at the Montana Veterans Memorial in Great Falls. Due to a medical situation which I was diagnosed with on 7 November, my duties as National Executive Committeeman was put on hold and turned over to the capable hands to the Alternate National Executive Committeeman Hal Rice. I was able to attend the last Spring District meeting via a phone Conference of the District 11 Spring Meeting after a long phone tag with the phone system to get on the Conference line. I feel that the Conference call went very well, although some important District 11 people, Post 117's Commander and the Department Vice Commander, could not get connected on the call. It would have been nice to have their input in the discussion on membership.

ALTERNATE NATIONAL COMMITTEEMAN (N.E.C.)

Hal Rice

Very short report, I went to Cascade for District 8 meeting on March 14th. It was a good meeting despite almost being cancelled. I made a trip to Cascade before meeting with District 8 President Monica Rice to help them figure out how to hold a District meeting, I also talked to their Adj. several times by phone. All the rest of the District meetings I attended, except District 11. These were all done by phone in Conference calls. I really missed driving around Montana and seeing old friends and making new ones. We got the job done by phone but hope it is the last time a shutdown like this happens.

PAST DEPARTMENT COMMANDER

Richard Klose

I attended the 2019 Fall Conference in Helena October 25/27.

In November I was among nine Dept of Montana American Legion members to go to Crows Nest AB. To Canada's "REMEMBERANCE DAY" celebration on November 11th. I spoke at the joint celebration (Bellvue/Coleman), held in Coleman. Going there and seeing how they honor their veterans was a great experience.

On November 15th I attended the POW/MIA ceremony at the BEN STEELE Middle school in Billings. That ceremony is held every year at the school around the date of Ben Steeles birthday, which is November 17th.

On December 7th I was part of the PEARL HARBOR ceremony at the Yellowstone National Cemetery.

On December 13th I attended the ROTC Commissioning ceremony at MSUB.

On December 14th I took part in the Wreaths Across America ceremony at the Yellowstone National Cemetery.

On January 3rd I was part of the Unattended ceremony at the Yellowstone National Cemetery.

On February 18th I attended the renaming of the Billings VA Clinic buildings. One is named after CHIEF/DR JOSEPH MEDICINE CROW and one after BENJAMIN STEELE.

Our spring District 11 meeting was a phone in meeting on April 26th.

On May 23rd, our American Legion Post 123 put out over 500 flags at the Laurel City Cemetery for Memorial Day and the Avenue of Flags at the Yellowstone National Cemetery.

Today, May 25th, I was part of a “closed” Memorial Day ceremony at the Laurel City Cemetery.

Throughout this past year as Dept. membership chairman I have spent much time phoning DMS members to transfer to a local Post and 2019 members to continue to support the American Legion by renewing their membership for 2020. As of today, May 25 the Department needs 129 members to get our Department to 100%. By the time you read this we should be there.

HISTORIAN

Ray Read

As the elected Department Historian, I attended the Montana Department 100th Annual Convention in Polson, Montana, the Department’s salute to the American Legion Centennial. Moving on I was also able to attend the 101st Annual National Convention in Indianapolis, Indiana. I have had the distinct privilege and opportunity to travel to most of the 2019 District meetings as well as attending the 2019 Fall Conference and special events such as the 2019 National Prison of War (POW)/Missing In Action (MIA). I attended the American Legion 2019 National Historian’s meeting in Indianapolis, Indiana, October 12-16, 2019. As Department was gearing up for such events at the National American Legion Oratorical Contest and Spring District meetings, COVID-19 (Chinese Virus/Wuhan Virus) disrupted all the plans! Even with all the distractions, I find throughout Montana that the American Legion is doing what they have done best for over the last 100 years. Now as we move into our second Century of service The members of the American Legion of Montana are continuing to support 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 Rehabilitation; Supporting a Strong National Defense; Supporting viable Americanism programs; and Supporting our Nation’s most precious resource, our Children and Youth.

In my journey I have met with many seasoned, as well as newer, younger veterans who populate the 125 American Legion Posts, Auxiliaries, Sons of the American Legion Squadrons, mostly in sparsely populated, rural environments, complete with all the challenges that manifest themselves in a premiere Frontier State, the Treasure State, Montana. I thank all Legion Family members who made my visits so memorable. I want to thank all those who have assisted the Department’s program to recognize our remaining WW II veterans through the Operation Ruptured Duck program in association with the Montana Military Museum.

Other programs such as the Welcome Home Vietnam Veterans initiative; The State’s American Legion History program and the Montana Department, TAL Centennial and Post Centennial projects have had some successes as well as challenges. All these programs are still active, and I am continuing to fill requests of various Posts based on available resources.

Even more exciting is the information achieved; such as finding out about history the Malta Trophy and its debut at Montana’s First State Convention in Malta, Montana in July 1919.

Also, I am impressed with Post, District, Department and National leadership participation during this year and previous years.

As a long term American Legionnaire and an American Legion family member, I am tasked to provide the following guidance as a continuing commitment to the duties and responsibilities of the elected position of Department Historian, especially in the further development of the American Legion emerging second century of service programs so all this is worth repeating.

*With the completion of 101st National Convention in Indianapolis, Indiana, The American Legion’s Centennial Celebration ended and a second century of service to veterans is beginning.

*Reference is made to the following American Legion documents:

- 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

*The Department of Montana, the American Legion, Executive Committee, authorized the establishment of a Department Centennial Committee in accordance with the request of the 100th Anniversary Observance Committee and the Department Historian has been designated the Department Centennial Chairman. The Centennial Committee unsettled at the end of the Department Convention in Polson, Montana.

*I again thank the members of the Montana Department's Centennial Committee members: Joyce Babcock (Custer Post #5), Michael Shepard (Post 72, Columbia Falls) Lowell Long, (Blaine Post 48, Chinook). The Committee's task was engaging the Montana American Legion Posts in meaningful participation concerning the American Legion Centennial. Also am profusely thankful for the assistance of the Convention Committee that helped to solidify our successes and identify those areas that still need to be completed.

*I continue to encourage all American Legion Posts to continue implement 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 implement ideas available for implementation for this very important program for Montana Legionnaires that continue to grow include:

- a. Establish a Post web site presence started in the American Legion Centennial Program.
- b. Invite the communities to American Legion Family events and actively participate in the support of events. Document and submit the After-Action Reports to bring them into the Department Record.
- c. Encouraging the various American Legion Posts to write a Post history and participate in the annual One Year History program.
- D. Be visible in all American Legion activities at the community level.

All documents referenced above are 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.

I am again asking all Montana Department American Posts to establish 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 had the opportunity to tell your story in your community and throughout the American Legion.

The Department's emphasize again that the Posts utilize all aspects of The American Legion Centennial Program are available on the National website www.Legion.org/centennial. Montana's contributions to the American Legion Legacy deserves to be placed on the record.

It is a goal of the Montana Department to update its historical record by incorporating the current written record of the past 100 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 Post narrative and yearbook contests as well as entries for a one-year Department Narrative and Yearbook. Post 23, Livingston won the State Contest and represented Montana at the 2019 Fall Historian Meeting in Indianapolis, Indiana

The American Legion Officer's guide and Manual of Ceremonies contain much information about the history contest. Also, in that section of the *Guide* are "Capsule History of the American Legion" and "Helpful Hints for District/County Historians." Please notify your Posts in your District of this readily available material. This information will also be sent out through electronic means via the Montana American Legion website www.mtLegion.org or by mail as necessary. All entries will be judged and the first-place winners in either category (narrative or yearbook) will be certified and I will forward them to National Historian for entry in the announced contest for that category. Keep in mind the requirements that must be met for the National Contest. And I refer you to the most current edition of the Officers Guide (March 2019) pp. 140-149, as the official rules of the 2019-2020 Legion year, or at the Legion website www.Legion.org. You may use older versions of this manual as the rules have not changed!

NOTE: This program is continuing even in the face of the management of the COVID-19 Pandemic. I am asking the leadership from Post to Department to identify and record all the support the American Legion has done in support of fighting this invisible enemy. Put this as a part of your Post narrative, scrapbook. Forward all those items to the Office of the Department Historian for inclusion in the Department's narrative and reports to National.

DEPARTMENT ADJUTANT

Gary White

In last year's Department Convention Report I wrote that it had been the most trying year in my 18 years as Department Adjutant; who would have known it would be a precursor to the year we are completing with the COVID 19 pandemic. Because of the pandemic we have had to make major adjustments and cancellations in our programs. The pandemic has affected just about all aspects of our business.

Membership is a bright spot, as a write this we are only 86 members from goal, and we have been in the top 10 in the nation for most of the year; currently we are 5th. The pandemic has affected membership both positively and negatively; positively by extending targets and negatively by eliminating personal contact and increasing the financial burden. Membership is always the 800-pound gorilla in the room, no one likes dealing with it, but it must be done. If you have good programs and your Post is living the Four Pillars and are known in your community, you can be successful with membership.

The purpose of The American Legion is laid out in our Four Pillars. Does anyone remember them? We have Posts that do no programs, Oratory is just barely surviving with an average of 20 contestants per year in the whole state, this year American Legion Boys State had less than 30 delegates registered when it was canceled due to the pandemic. The Constitutional Essays probably had no more than 40 participants statewide. The root of these poor numbers are our Posts not being involved in our schools, very few Posts go to the schools to talk about our programs, do not just go and visit once, but develop a relationship with your schools. We can say students are not interested all we want, but until we educate them on the programs, we will not see improvement. We have students that want to participate but the Posts say they cannot support them, nor do they even try to support them. The purpose of fundraisers and canteens is not to build bank accounts but to support our programs. When a Post has a large bank account but does not support programs what are they doing?

Speaking of fundraising, the Departments fundraisers have all seen decreased support, without the support of our Posts and Districts our fundraisers are ineffective. Every fundraiser the Department conducts provide funds for our programs and funds for the Posts that assist at no cost to the Post. The pandemic has really put a damper on our fundraising.

In November I attended Remembrance Day ceremonies with the Royal Canadian Legion in Bellevue, Blairmore and Coleman, Alberta with the Department Commander, Past Department Commander Larry Dobb, Past Department Commander Richard Klose, Post 2 Past Commander Ray Stolp, Post 15 Vice Commander Janice Dobb, Department Legislative Chairman Roger Hagan and the SAL Detachment Vice Commander Colter Landt.

In December I participated in Stevensville Post #94's school student visit to the Fort Harrison VA Hospital. We only had 1 District Meeting in person before the COVID 19 restrictions were put in place; that meeting took place in Cascade the same day that a blizzard hit, there was sparse attendance but a quorum was on hand and the meeting was conducted. All other District Meetings were conducted via teleConference. The teleConferences were adequate, but attendance was disappointing to say the least. I expected we might have better representation of Posts. The teleConferences led to a lot of short cuts that should not have happened; I would not recommend we do them again unless we have restrictions put on us by the government in emergencies.

In March I attended the Helena Post #2 Oratory Contest and attended the District 6 contest, which was changed to Helena at the last minute due to COVID 19. I also attended the Four Chaplains ceremony in Helena hosted by Post 2 Helena and Post #42 Townsend. I also attended the ANAVICUS Scholarship presentation at Carroll College with the Department Commander and Roger Hagan.

I would like to acknowledge the extra effort put forth by the Oratory Committee in organizing and executing the YouTube Department Oratory Finals to determine a Department champion. Due to the COVID 19 we had to cancel the finals contest and Jeff Holmes and his committee were able to adapt and conduct a contest on YouTube.

Also, Ron Edwards did Yeomans work in his efforts to have an American Legion Baseball program in the Department this year. With National cancelling all support it was left up to Department to execute a program. After lots of policy changes Ron was able to get a season started in May and has planned both an A and AA state tournament.

Other day to day accomplishments included assisting the Publications Chairman in publishing six issues of the Montana Legionnaire, attending Montana Veterans Affairs Division meetings, maintaining contact with the Montana National Guard Funeral Honors Program and the Yellow Ribbon Program; I attended 9 VSO VA Directors meetings and 2 VAVS meetings at Fort Harrison VA.

I managed the budget and finances of the Department, the Sons of the American Legion Detachment, American Legion Baseball, American Legion Boys State, Coordinated Children & Youth, HQ Post #105, and Department's National Convention Fund. I would like to thank the Department Finance Officer John Joyce and the Finance Chairman Elmer Palmer for their assistance with our finances.

I coordinated and administered the Department Raffle and the Cash Calendar with the Finance Chairman Elmer Palmer. Once again, I administrated the Big K programs.

With the cancellation of both Department and National Conventions due to the pandemic are Department Officers and Committees will stay in place in accordance with Resolution #1. Since there is no Convention the Department Commander called a special Executive Committee meeting, which the Department Headquarters planned and will execute on June 27, 2020.

To the Zone and District Commanders and to the Post Adjutants that work so hard I thank you for your dedication and cooperation. I hope we can continue to work together for the good of the American Legion. I would especially like to thank Erin Carpenter for the excellent work she has done as the Department Office Manager.

In closing if you raise your hand to be an officer or serve on a committee be prepared to actually work and contribute, if not it would be better for the position to be vacant than only have a name in the position. If you accept a position communicate, communicate, communicate, relentlessly communicate.

COVID 19 has caused many changes and hardships but it has not finished us off. Our Department can be proud of its past achievements and commitments, but we cannot rest on them. Let us all work together, many hands make for light lifting.

CHAPLAIN

Chaya Semple

During this reporting period served as Post No. 2 Chaplain, Chapter 2 American Legion Riders Chaplain and Unit 2 Chaplain as well as Chaplain for Montana City VFD, Character Development Officer for Montana Civil Air Patrol and a member of the Lewis and Clark Critical Incident Stress Management Team.

Served as Chaplain at Veterans Day Ceremony at the Lewis and Clark Veterans Memorial and attended a Veterans Day program at St. Andrews School. Attended Mental Health First Aid trainings to provide initial help to those experiencing a depression, anxiety disorders, psychosis and substance abuse disorders in November; attended a Moral Injury Workshop on November 17th. Worked at a Statewide Suicide Survivor Event in the Capitol Rotunda on November 28th; participated in a Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day Ceremony on December 7th, participated in a Religious Diversity Event at the VA at Fort Harrison on December 18th. Worked at a holiday party for homeless veterans and veteran families on December 19th. Spoke at the Longest Night Vigil, remembering homeless veterans who died of exposure on December 21st.

Served at both Post 2 and District 6 Constitutional Oratory Competitions. Continued to facilitate character development instruction monthly with Civil Air Patrol. Continued to actively participate in the Helena Ministerial Association as well as Lewis and Clark Critical Incident Stress Management Team debriefings of first responders.

During the statewide stay-at-home order, participated in a variety of webinars for clergy conducted by the Partnership Center for Faith and Opportunity Initiatives, US Department of Health and Human Services, to mitigate, recognize, and address stress caused by the pandemic. Also participated in an International Critical Incident Stress Foundation webinar on addressing pandemic stress and debriefing first responders.

Continued to visit the sick and dying in nursing homes and hospitals until the COVID-19 restrictions enacted on March 16th. Sent cards of condolence to bereaved family members and also to let those in hospital or nursing facilities know they are not forgotten. Continued to visit and call the bereaved. When requested by the family continued to visit those dying at home.

Actively participated in quarterly VA memorial services for veterans who died in the VA hospital until the COVID-19 shutdown at Fort Harrison as well as continued to serve as Chaplain with Lewis and Clark Veterans Council Honor Guard and Montana City VFD. Funeral services were suspended by the National Cemetery Administration (NCA) during the pandemic; however, interments were still taking place, albeit, without funeral honors or burial service. The three Montana State Veterans Cemeteries and one National Cemetery follow those Federal guidelines, which remain very limiting, with

families only able to view interment from their cars on the road closest to the gravesite – in spite of the reopening of Montana, these strict protocols are being followed by Montana Veterans Affairs. Starting April 13, each day, NCA adds the names, branch of service and location of burial for each Veteran interred in a national cemetery on the previous day. Those interred during this crisis are also memorialized with individual profile pages in the [Veterans Legacy Memorial](#) after the cemetery updates the Veteran's interment record.

SERVICE OFFICER

Kate Hahn

As the Department Service Officer, I attended the following events:

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 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

PARLIAMENTARIAN

Josh Clement

As parliamentarian for the last year I received no inquiries from the Department nor Districts during my tenure as this appointed position. At the time of this report I have little to offer to the Department. I would strongly encourage the Department Leadership to be very deliberate about actions executed at the Department Executive level. Bring to the attention of my fellow Legionnaires the resolution that was passed by the executive board to cancel Department Convention. I understand the need to be expeditious and efficient, but the loss of resolution standards should not be negated. Resolution should have a single action and the resolution passed had three. I hope that we can use that resolution as a learning opportunity. I understand I am not a voting member of this body but sometimes it benefits to have an outside

source looking at it. Finally, I encourage the board to use the right process to select the future Convention by bringing it to the Montana American Legion body.

FINANCE OFFICER

John Joyce

Hello my fellow Legionnaires, it has been an interesting year with the COVID-19 and everything else going on in the world. As the Department Finance Officer, I have been getting more and more comfortable with my position. Our Adjutant, Gary White, does a great job with representing the office and helping me keep our financial budget in check. If you don't know, the budget year runs from 01 July thru 30 Jun of the following year. Which is current with the state budget but is offset from the fiscal calendar year which runs from 01 Oct – 30 Sep.

The Liabilities and Equities are down 6.8% from last year and can most be contributed to the Covid-19 Pandemic and the fluctuation of the stock markets and other financial institutions. The Finance Committee set a budget of approximately \$550,000.00 and the Department has spent approximately \$242,000.00. We still have 43.61% of the budget remaining. As you can see, our income this year is down quite a bit from last year. Most of this is due to the fact that we have not received some payments from National. When that comes in, our income will look a lot better.

Since we have implemented the policy of checks being good for 120 days of issuance, the Department has been able to put \$2735.72 back into the budget. If you have a check that is out of the 120 day policy, let the Adjutant know and we try and resolve the issue.

Since the Convention has been cancelled for the year, the Department will save approximately \$4500, and will lose approximately a \$1000.00 in merchandise sales. As the finance officer, I will work with the Adjutant keep the expenses down as much as possible and hopefully as the pandemic becomes less and less, the Department will start getting financially better and able to keep supporting Legionnaires across this great state.

As the Finance Officer, I do reconciliations each month with the Adjutant and have had 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.

JUDGE ADVOCATE

Joe Leavengood

The past year has presented some interesting legal situations for the Department, and the key takeaways are that we should be learning from each other's experiences and looking ahead. In general, the Posts that are proactive and organized in their activities will better stay out of trouble – the unifying theme for the past year is that those who tried to just get by, hoping their little problems would go away, just ended up with bigger problems. Yes, the JAG is the person designated to say such things!

LAST YEAR'S CHARTER AND CONSTITUTION CHANGES, MENTIONED AGAIN

I have already reported in this last October but want to mention again that Congress acted last Summer to amend our Charter Rules on who can become a member of the Legion and of the Auxiliary. Our National Convention responded soon thereafter with details to flesh out these changes, and with an added rule on the procedure for removing someone from being a member. Getting into or out of the organization is changing, so do not act on such things until you are up to date on the new rules.

PROVIDE FISCAL OVERSIGHT TO POST ACTIVITIES, MENTIONED AGAIN

I also mentioned in October that we have had some Posts in trouble because there was not enough fiscal oversight of one or more of their business activities, most often the bars and rental halls that they operate. Please let me be more specific: get lots of critical eyeballs looking at the books for these operations, asking the 'stupid' questions, following the money,

challenging the assumptions, and trusting but verifying. People have been hurt in the past year by lax monitoring. When people ask “why are you being such an insistent jerk about this?,” you can say: “the Department JAG is angry that we hurt so many people last year by not insisting on full checkups, and the law enforcement officials are taking notice as well.” Audit the bars. Audit the enterprises. Follow the money. If you do not know how, please get help.

Some additional lessons to share since October:

USING THE LEGION’S NAME IN MATTERS OF OPINION OR CONFLICT

First, you probably have wonderful opinions and the local papers desperately want you to share them with others, but the American Legion is just not worthy of the credit for your amazing insights. You can often say in the text of your letter that you are a Legionnaire, but when you put that word after your signature it implies that you are representing the entire Post or Department or national organization. It is perfectly okay to add a side note to a letter to the editor explaining who you are, so they have some context in case they want to get a reporter on the trail of something, but you should still ask him or her to list only your name and town in the signature space. The Legion is a not-for-profit organization that must be careful about weighing in on political matters, lest we risk our legal status, which we value. Likewise, in matters involving lawsuits, assertions made in the press have a way of sometimes creating problems in the courtroom.

Think in the same way when putting on your Legion cap in public. To everything there is a season. Wear it with pride, but do not let anyone think that it gives you the right to speak on behalf of the Legion unless you have properly been given that duty.

PROPERTY OWNERSHIP RECORDS

A few Posts have also had some questions on ownership of properties of various sorts. All I can say is that this is information that often was well understood by the members of the Post long ago when the property was first acquired. But now, perhaps entire generations have passed the leadership torch and passed away without passing along the details. The newer leaders are truthfully saying “how do we hold title to this or that?” It would be worthwhile for the Posts that have property to sit down as a group and sort this out, to find out “what they know, what they don’t know and what they don’t even know that they don’t know,” and then to go get the legal documents in order for the convenience of future generations of Post leaders. It is better to have such information in hand before a crisis occurs, and who knows, you might save some money on insurance, taxes, or litigation.

LEGION BASEBALL STATUS IN 2020

Our National JAG sent out a few legal reviews in the past few months as well, the first discussing the steps Departments and Posts must take if they plan to run baseball leagues this year, in light of the global Coronavirus Pandemic. Essentially, the National level of the Legion has decided to get out of the baseball business for the year, because it cannot create a functional and safe organization that would be tailored effectively for all the diverse states and regions of the land, due to the ununiform impact of the pandemic. In places such as Montana where a league is possible (although sadly, without the Alberta teams this year) the Posts have some extra steps to take, and most are squared away already.

SUSPENSIONS OF POSTS

The second National JAG message discussed the process Departments need to use when suspending or ending the membership of a Post in the Legion. The key point is that the Departments are free to act quickly in order to protect the reputation and resources of the Legion, and a rogue Post doesn’t get to keep being a gang of scoundrels until a lengthy due process system has run it’s slow course.

Think of it this way when considering suspensions of Posts from the Department, or for that matter, suspensions of members from a Post: The United States Constitution in the First Amendment guarantees Freedom of Association, and that also included Freedom from Association. No group can be coerced by the law into maintaining its ties to any person or sub-group that is acting contrary to the group’s legitimate purpose and values. It is one thing to try to boot out a Post or Legionnaire for discriminatory reasons (not good), and another because they insist on damaging our reputation, mission effectiveness or health (good).

A NOTE OF FAREWELL

Some of you may have heard that I have departed Montana. This is true. I am a retired Air Force Judge Advocate, but I am also a Lutheran Pastor, and have accepted a new call with a congregation down in Texas. This is mostly for family reasons, with economic, professional, health and weather benefits as well. I have been a Texan all my adult life, and our children had remained in Texas while we were in Montana for the past five years. Now we are nearby again. When we decided to move, I told the Department leadership that I would be willing to continue as JAG until the time came to elect the next JAG – I did not suspect at the time that a pandemic would push back the Convention and delay the process. This is not really a hardship though because most of my work has been done via e-mail and phone anyway.

I am a paid-up-for-life Legionnaire and will refrain from formally transferring my membership to the local Post down here in Lee County, Texas until the Montana Department has had the opportunity to replace me. I showed up at one meeting here before the pandemic shut things down - the local guys were a bit confused by my white cap, but quickly decided to call me Joe Montana. If I am JAG from afar, I guess I do not have to take a shift sweeping, mowing, or buying the beer at the local Post hall, so I guess there is a silver lining.

It has been an honor to serve as JAG for the Montana Department, and I hope the best for my brother and sister Legionnaires of Montana. May God bless and keep you always, and may God bless our nation.

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS

Jared Flammond

I did not have much on my end that I got completed this year however for my report I did help set up the Memorial Day event in Cut Bank and had a good crowd turn out. Also, I helped set up the Avenue of Flags and veterans plot at Crown Hill cemetery in Cut Bank with the help of the local Boy Scouts and Sheriff's office.

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 in Lolo
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
3 rd	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 on in the school year and get them done long before the due date. The sooner the better.

Please push the programs early and get the money for the kids!

The Ad Hoc Committee created at Fall Conference has resulted in two resolutions being sent to Department for their consideration this 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 made round trips around the District last Fall meeting Post Officers at their work or wherever, over 300 miles each trip. With the shutdown of everything has made communications tough. Conference calls I only hear about a third. Emails work, but I think all need to acknowledge the receiving of them. Our District Officers will stay the same one more year.

DISTRICT 2 – COMMANDER

Vincent Schmoeckel

This is my report concerning my activities as District 2 Commander.

1. I have participated in many military funerals
2. I called my Posts and encouraged them to get in new memberships or renewals sent in
3. In November, I placed a new fatality marker at the overpass by Dodson
4. I mailed notices to Posts in District 2 of the upcoming District meeting in Chester. I asked them to contact Chester with total of persons attending. I called Chester again to make sure everything was a go for the meeting.
5. October 12, I conducted the District 2 meeting in Chester
6. October 25-27, I attended and participated in the State Conference in Helena
7. I was asked as District 2 Commander to be Master of Ceremonies at the annual all military dinner held in Malta on January 11, 2020. It was a fun and new experience for me.
8. Emails or letters were sent to Posts concerning Spring District meeting in Turner. I encouraged all to continue to send in renewals
9. I contacted all Posts via phone to notify them of change for Spring District meeting. Gave them appropriate information
10. I participated in the March 28th Spring District meeting with Department and Posts via Conference call

11. I sent notices to Posts on April 30th updating them on events such as Convention being cancelled, elections needed to be conducted, officers information sent to Department and to me, check on “shut-ins” and to keep trying to get memberships renewed.

DISTRICT 3 - COMMANDER

Randy Flammond

No report.

DISTRICT 4 - COMMANDER

Glen Sharbono

At the 2019 Department Fall Conference in Helena, I announced my candidacy for Department Vice Commander. I was then the MC for the Saturday Banquet. Guest speaker during the banquet was National Commander Bill Oxford of North Carolina. We also had the National Vice Commander for the Sons of The American Legion Chris Cook of Oklahoma and his wife Ashley. Saturday, I received the Mervin G. Gunderson Award for Top District in the Department of Montana with the highest membership percentage at Fall Conference. It was an honor to accept this award on behalf of the fourth District. The gauntlet was laid down by the Department Commander Jeff Nelson as he challenged the District Commanders to make 100% membership goal. The first one there would receive 2 nights lodging at the National Convention in Louisville Kentucky. Department Vice Commander George Blackard also made a challenge that he would award a Legion Family Flag to any Post that could recruit 8 new members under the Legion Act.

What was to be my campaign tour for Department Vice Commander was cancelled due to Covid-19. I had intended to attend most of the District Spring meetings except for Districts 3, 8 and 9 as they conflicted with the Post and District Oratory contest. Because of the outbreak the remaining District meetings were conducted via phone Conference. On April 10th, an email was received asking for the Department Executive Committee to vote on a resolution cancelling the Department Convention in Billings. It was a revision of resolution 3 put forth by National Headquarters cancelling the National Convention and programs. A first, in its 100 plus year history of The American Legion. *Imagine if this had happened last year during our Centennial celebrations!*

Since the Fall Conference I spent a lot of time on the phone with various Commanders and Adjutants.

I did as best I could to answer questions and solve problems as they arose. In doing so I have found that

the more often I was consulted by a Post the more successful they tended to be. That does not mean I had all the right answers but more so taking the time to listen and with two heads things were better resolved.

On November 9th I judged the Speech and Debate tournament in Ronan in hopes to boost participation at the Post level. There were 11 busses from Columbia Falls to Stevensville. The contest went from 8am to 4pm. With hundreds of contestants that participated and some exceptionally good talent. I still find it hard to believe that some Posts still are unable to come up with a candidate for The American Legion High School Oratorical Scholarship Program. But then again here we are, the one possible contestant I had cancelled for the Ronan Post as it interfered with her plans to attend the prom.

On December 13th I accompanied Polson Post #112 with Department Commander Jeff Nelson as they made their annual trip to the Columbia Falls Veterans Home to deliver a donation and Christmas cheer.

We were given a tour and stopped to visit several of the residents along the way. Something that isn't even allowed any more even by family, if ever again because they are high risk.

On March 12th I was invited as the District Commander by Polson Post #112 to attend their American Legion birthday party. Guest speaker was Bill Barron, County Commissioner, and past County Sheriff.

Just 5 days later Ronan Auxiliary Unit #138 had to cancel their party for Post #138 due to Social Distancing mandates.

On March 14th as District #4 Oratory Chairmen and Moderator I conducted the District level in Polson Montana. The District had 3 Contestants from Polson Post #112, Columbia Falls Post #72 and Kalispell Post #137. I was then expecting to go to Helena on the 21st of March for the Department High School Oratorical Contest to watch the winner of the District #4 level Scott O'Donnell compete. The Department level was Postponed until April 15th because of the Covid-19 outbreak and by March 20th The American Legion National Head Quarters had cancelled the National level of the contest. The Department Oratory was conducted under a new and challenging format as the candidates performed their speeches in front of a camera and uploaded their video to You Tube to be judged by the panel. Winner of the contest was Scott O'Donnell sponsored by Kalispell Post #137, District #4. This would have been the second contestant in a row from Post #137 and District #4 to have gone onto National finals had it not been shut down. It is a shame, because I think this young man would have done quite well at Nationals.

On April 19th District #4 conducted its Spring meeting via teleConference. It lasted about 2 hours and all the Department Officers were able to disseminate their information, as well the District reports were made, and 2 resolutions were passed. We also adjusted our numbers for goal as the District had to add 8 more to its 2021 roster for 100%. I would like to thank the 8 Posts that participated in the meeting and gave reports on the accomplishments they completed since the last Fall meeting. Something I like to have them spend a couple of minutes on letting the rest of the District know what is going on within our Area of Operation. Of the Posts that did not bother to make the call I cannot understand what was so complicated about picking up the phone and dialing a few numbers! It is not like you had to get dressed and drive anywhere. Point being there really was nowhere to go with all the self-quarantine and social distancing mandates in place. And if you were not able because of some other more pressing issue that is what the assignment of Delegates are for. There is a history of the Posts that fail to attend meetings that they are usually the first to complain about the changes and new rules. Please don't let this reflect your leadership. With that said I still appreciate everything you are doing as Posts and Legionnaires to make the Fourth District number one in the Department of Montana. This District did rather good with just over 60% attendance. Lack of interest was a Department wide issue.

I really do hate harping on membership as much as I am sure you hate hearing about it. But it's my job as well as yours. On July 1st we start the process all over again. This is the time to start to encourage members to renew with the "First" renewal notice and suggest automatic annual renewals. If everyone renewed up front there wouldn't be this big push for targets and incentives. And then we as Legionnaires could focus on programs, community service and general camaraderie with our fellow veterans in a more relaxed environment.

District #4 made 100% goal on March 23rd; District #4 then made 103% goal on April 24th. with 11 Posts making goal, 9 at 103% plus. With Thompson Falls Post #52, Libby Post #97, Polson Post #112, Arlee Post #113, Charlo Post #126, Paradise Post #129, and Ronan Post #138 all over 110%! As District Commander I was able to certify so far only 3 of 13 Posts with the National Commanders 2020 Post Excellence Award. Sadly, some had missed it merely by not attending the District meetings.

Here are a few thoughts for you to ponder, I find it rather mind boggling that the Class of 2000 is having their 20th Class reunion this year! If you joined the military in 2000 you are probably getting ready to retire! Also, what's amazing is that we are now two decades into the 21st Century and yet some Posts are still struggling to grasp the concept of computers and the internet! But then again, we have only had about 30 years to figure it out!

In closing this is my last report as the 4th District Commander as Department Vice Commander George Blackard resigned on the 28th of May and on the 29th of May I was appointed as Department Vice Commander to resume the remainder of George's term. I did not expect to move up in this manner and would like to wish George well and good luck in his future endeavors. I will still need to be nominated and elected on June 27th as the 2020-2021 Department Vice

Commander and hope to garner everyone's support. I must say I really enjoyed the last three years I served as the District #4 Commander and would like to humbly thank all the Post Commanders, Adjutants and anyone else involved with the success of this District leading the Department of Montana not only with membership but in other programs as well. Although at times I felt we could have done more, there were still a few more ribbons including a couple of Honor ribbons added to the District flag that has been in my possession now for the last Five years. It will be a bit hard to see it go, but I am sure the next Commander will take pride in giving it a new home. Polson in 2019 managed to host with great effort on behalf of all those involved one of, if not the biggest Department Convention ever with over 200 Legionnaires, Auxiliary and Sons of The Legion that attended the Centennial Convention. I am expecting to receive for the third time in a row the Mervin G. Gunderson Award representing the efforts of all the Posts within the District We finished the year at around 108%. I enjoyed and always looked forward to Post visitations. I challenge the next Commander to do the same and get to know some great people. Many of whom I am sure I will be seeing again very soon at the Fall District Meeting. Thank you, District Four Department of Montana, and please continue to strive for number one!

DISTRICT 5 - COMMANDER

Greg Marose

No report.

DISTRICT 6 - COMMANDER

Pat Sweeney

No report.

DISTRICT 7 - COMMANDER

Jim Howe

I delivered all Post packets that were not picked up at Department Convention in a timely manner.

I represented the 7th District in the 4th of July Parade in Livingston, and the Manhattan Potato Festival in August.

I was present at the 1A baseball tournament in Bozeman.

I went to the Ennis Post meeting in September and have been in contact with most of the other Posts.

I was in charge and ran the District 7 meeting on October 5th. Department Vice Commander George Blackard ran the Department issues.

I attended Department Fall Conference.

In January and February I went to Belgrade, Manhattan, and Livingston.

In March I started calling Posts.

I ran the 7th District meeting via telephone in April.

I have since been in contact with all Posts via email and telephone.

I was in on the Executive Committee vote to play ball.

That is my report. I have nothing more to report.

DISTRICT 8 - COMMANDER

Kim Kay Carol McCarty Martin

As District 8 Commander, I have sent/and forwarded various emails to all Posts in District 8 with updates from Department and other information that is of interest. The District 3/8 Spring meeting in Cascade turned out to be a District 8 meeting due to a snowstorm in MT. There were 24 people present and we did have a quorum and a good meeting overall. Cascade Unit 133 and Post Adj of 133 hosted a well put together meeting place and meal even with the weather as it was. I finally was able to meet Post 133 Adjutant Josh Munski at the meeting, but he did not provide any more Post officer names or numbers and did not provide any further information on how to communicate with him. He has since not responded to phone calls or messages so the Post itself is still not compliant with its own Constitution and By-laws in regard to meetings and officers. As the Covid-19 became a quick concern, going out and meeting the Post Commanders or Adjutants in the District was halted for safety reasons. Phone calls have been made to most of the Posts not including Post 3 and Post 130. I want to congratulate all the Posts that have made 100% for their continued hard work on membership and hope they feel as proud of their accomplishments as I am. I want to also take this time to thank everyone for the opportunity to serve District 8 Posts and members as the Commander. I enjoyed the comradery and the opportunity to get to know everyone and I will miss talking and visiting you.

DISTRICT 9 - COMMANDER

Richard Hackett

No report.

DISTRICT 10 - COMMANDER

Dave Ofalt

I served another year as District 10 Commander. I missed the Fall Conference due to circumstances beyond my control and I apologize for that. I conducted a Veterans Day ceremony at the Forsyth High School auditorium with all the students present. I feel it is vital for the younger generation to realize the sacrifices our military personnel make. Delivered stockings to veterans in the nursing home and assisted living facilities for Christmas. Conducted many military funerals with the honor guard. Assisted the new Post Commander at Post 44 in Colstrip on taking over that position. Lined Main street with flags for Veterans Day and Memorial Day. Coordinated with the VFW Commander and due to the current situation, we decided to do a Memorial Day ceremony over the local radio station. Practicing social distancing. Conducted District 10 spring meeting as a Conference call on April 25. Decided to raffle the American Legion silver coin off at the Fall District meeting. Decided the District 10 Commander and Zone Commander will stay in their current positions. Participated in the Conference call for American Legion Baseball. Hope everyone stays safe and healthy during these challenging times.

DISTRICT 11 - COMMANDER

Larry Tipton

As I was not able to attend many of the Post meetings in the District and elected during the meeting shutdowns, I am not able at this time to fill some of the District Officer positions.

My goal is not just to have a warm body in a position but find quality members to fill those positions, I submitted my roster with some positions not filed at this time. As soon as I can begin my Post visitations, I will have those filled.

DEPARTMENT COMMITTEE CHAIRS

AMERICANISM

Lonnie Johnson

After attending National American Legion College Class of 2019, I was able to get a better understanding of the concept of Americanism.

From *Jeff Stoffer editor of The American Legion Magazine*:

American Legion National Commander James E. Powers wrote in the May 1963 *American Legion Magazine* that he had been challenged to define the term “Americanism” for a new era. He wrote that of the 10 lines in the Preamble to The American Legion Constitution, seven refer to principles of Americanism.

“My real definition of Legion Americanism in 1963,” Powers explained, “would be the living record of what Legionnaires do this year to improve community, state and nation in thousands of projects ... what they do to give backbone to law and order ... what they do to oppose militantly the endless drive to supplant our American way with dictatorship ... what they do to transmit American principles through our Boys States and Girls States... through teaching thousands of youngsters the rules of fair play on the baseball diamond ... what they do to make the Constitution of the United States a familiar text to hundreds of thousands of boys and girls in our oratorical contest ... A full account of these deeds would be a definition of Americanism so huge it would fill an unabridged dictionary all by itself. It is a definition that is modern, progressive and alive.”

As I go through the CPR’s, it is amazing in these trying times that Legionnaires can still go out and practice true Americanism through their own local programs. I challenge every one of us to continue and adapt and overcome the obstacles to keep true Americanism in each of our communities.

BASEBALL

Ron Edwards

No report.

SCOUTS BSA

Roger Hancock

Scouting BSA’s purpose is to develop the character of youth. To fulfill this mission it takes adults that are committed to the cause. In Montana The American Legion sponsors 20 units (Packs, Troops, and Crews) with 347 youths participating and 146 adults developing and mentoring those youth. Comparing our numbers to National, we have 0.86% sponsored units, 0.61% sponsored youths, and 0.69% adult involvement. If we’re not sponsoring, mentoring or teaching, we need to do a better job of encouraging our youth in our communities to participate in scouting to develop character and the future leaders of Our Great Country.

Currently Scouting BSA is dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic. Scouting is continuing to use adaptive means to comply with social distancing. Scouts are camping out in backyards and completing projects over the internet.

This year we only had one Eagle Scout apply for the Department Eagle Scout of the Year (ESOY). Even though the awardee is an outstanding scout and earned the award, it would be nice to have some competition for ESOY. On my own I can only get the word out to the Montana Council and my local youth of the great opportunity of earning ESOY for Montana and Nationally. I need your help in getting the word out to your local troops.

BOYS STATE

Lowell Long

I assumed the duties of the American Legion Boys State Committee Chairman after the start of this year due to medical issues with Chairman Don Jones and his having to step down for a short time. Our year got off to a good start with boys being registered for the program. Then the bottom fell out of things when the world came under attack with COVID-19. With this, the Boys State Committee needed to take a good look at our options in light of this. We waited a short time while waiting guidance from National on it. National came out and cancelled Boys Nation for this year. After hearing that and seeing our registrations drop dramatically as schools were not in session, The Boys State Committee along with Director Greg Pohle, Chief Councilor Fred Trefelet, and Registrar Gary White met via phone Conference to decide the outcome for the 2020 Montana American Legion Boys State program. We made a unanimous decision to cancel the program for this year. We also determined that any boy who had registered prior to our cancelling would be able to attend next year.

I would like to take this time to thank the members of the Montana American Legion Boys State Committee for their work in getting the information out to all Posts in their Zones. As Chairman, I attended all the District meetings, District 3 and 8 in person and the rest by phone Conference calls. While on these calls, many of the questions surrounding these programs were answered. It was an interesting time as so many things were changing so fast that it was hard to keep up with it all.

We will be looking forward to our Boys State program next year. Keep watching for any new developments as they come out. Keep promoting the program within your Posts as we work to make the program better and bigger in the years to come. Any questions or comments can be directed to myself or any member of the committee. Our contact information is located in the Department Directory. We look forward to your help and support as we work to get the program going for next year.

CHILDREN & YOUTH

Sharon Doig

This is to be my final year as Department Chair of Children and Youth.

Of all my years, this has had only two applications, and both received money from National, one in August and one October.

I received an email from a veteran's wife for a TFA. I responded by email with the nearest Post (Deer Lodge) and her husband needed to become a member of that Post. A Service Officer could help her husband do an application once he had a membership number. I never heard anything further from her or the Post.

CONSTITUTION & INTERNAL AFFAIRS

Jim Grosset

We are living in unprecedented times and a lot of things will and have been changed. The following is a brief synopsis of the major items to be put to the committee.

Since the Fall Conference in Helena, I was approached with a proposal to have the Montana American Legion Riders constitution ready for the June Convention. Several letters have been brought forward for consideration and to be voted upon at the June Convention.

Due to the current Pandemic, the Spring meetings have been canceled and the June Convention as well. There was a resolution put to the Department Executive Committee to have the Convention cancelled and that **all Departmental elected and appointed officers continue serving in their current positions until the close of the next Department**

Convention scheduled in Helena, Montana, June 27-29, 2021. This resolution was electronically put to the Department Executive Board and was passed.

CONVENTION 2020

George Blackard

Convention cancelled.

CONVENTION 2021

Bill White

Convention work is under way with a contract with Delta (Marriott) in place and committee assignments are being made with more to follow. The logistics are being looked at with more ideas being presented with members stepping up to work the ideas and to help on the Convention itself. As Convention starts to get closer the major committees now being assembled will be harder at work preparing for this Convention.

With the Department Convention being cancelled for this year a package of information about the Helena Department Convention for 2021 will be made available at the Fall Conference in Helena. This Convention will be a busy one since there was not one this year and old friends will have a lot to talk about when we get together.

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

CONVENTION 2022

Roger Hancock

Chief Joseph Post 135 Lolo is excited to be hosting The American Legion 2022 Department of Montana, The American Legion Auxiliary 2022 Department of Montana, The Sons of The American Legion Detachment of Montana Convention, and The American Legion Riders 2022 Convention Department of Montana. Our Conventions will be at the Hilton Garden Inn in Missoula on North Reserve with easy access from I-90. We are looking forward to hosting and providing you the best possible experience we can deliver. There are numerous nearby shopping opportunities and restaurants within walking distances (<1 mile) or a short drive. We are looking forward to seeing our friends and Legion Family. This Convention will be held a week early; June 15-22, 2022

DISTINGUISHED GUESTS

Hal Rice

Fall Conference 2019, escorted National Commander Bill Oxford and National Vice Commander for SAL, Ned Fox to Fort Harrison VA, the Montana Military Museum and to dinner at Silver Star Steakhouse on Last chance Gulch, Helena.

DEPARTMENT EMERGENCY RESPONSE COORDINATOR

Chaya Semple

With a very mild winter over most of Montana, there were no major snow emergencies since the massive storm in late September 2019.

On January 20th, the City of Choteau issued a boil order for residents due to an ice jam along Spring Creek, created by unseasonal warming temperatures, permitted flooding into the city, compromising some wells.

On January 28th and 29th multiple grass fires were ignited by passing cars in Cascade and Lewis and Clark Counties due to the unusually warm and dry conditions. No homes were affected.

On March 13, 2020 President Trump declared a nationwide emergency due to the increasing death toll from COVID-19, which made its way into the US via air and cruise ship travelers. This increased federal support to the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) in its role as the lead federal agency for the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic response. As a result of the President's decisive action, FEMA was directed to assist state, local, tribal, territorial governments and other eligible entities with the health and safety actions they take on behalf of the American public. This declaration did not make direct financial assistance available to individuals. The emergency declaration did not change measures authorized under other federal statutes and HHS remained the lead federal agency directing the federal response to COVID-19. FEMA actions were in support of HHS and in coordination with state, tribal and territorial governments.

The SBA Economic Injury Disaster Loan program also became available to businesses that were impacted by the Coronavirus (COVID-19) with the recent legislation signed by President Trump.

On March 15, 2020, Montana Governor Steve Bullock issued a directive closing non-residential public schools in Montana through March 27. On March 24, he extended non-residential public-school closures through April 10 by Directive. The March 24 directive also closed certain on-premises dining and beverage businesses while expanding and encouraging delivery, takeout, and drive-up options through April 10. On March 26, 2020, he issued a directive providing that, to the maximum extent possible, all individuals stay at their home or place of residence unless engaging in certain essential activities or functions through April 10. This directive also required the temporary closure of non-essential businesses, provided social distancing requirements, and limited non-essential travel. On March 30, he issued a directive limiting evictions, foreclosures, and disconnections through April 10. On March 30, he also issued a directive requiring a 14-day self-quarantine for individuals arriving in Montana for non-work-related travel through April 10.

Multiple counties, tribes, cities, and towns declared an emergency for communicable disease COVID-19.

On March 26th, Governor Steve Bullock issued another directive requiring Montanans to stay home and temporarily close all nonessential businesses and operations to curtail the spread of COVID-19. The order went into effect at 12:01 a.m. on March 28 through April 10. The directive followed federal guidance to determine the businesses and operations deemed essential.

On April 1, 73 Montana National Guard Airmen and Soldiers were activated for COVID-19 response to assist with screening at train stations and airports throughout Montana, which began on April 3rd.

Also, on April 1, Governor Bullock issued a directive to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in State Correctional facilities. The measures included suspending new transfers into the Department of Corrections custody, screening those arriving at facilities and restricting in-person visitation.

On April 3rd, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control reversed its earlier guidance against wearing face masks when leaving home or in situations where social distancing is not possible and now recommended the voluntary practice, albeit, with cloth masks or other disposable paper masks that are not surgical or N95 medical masks.

On April 7, Governor Bullock issued an extension of the Stay at Home Directive, along with certain other directives, until April 24. Governor Bullock also issued a directive providing additional guidance related to evictions and providing a rent assistance program on April 13, effective through April 24. He had also issued other directives that, unlike those above, are effective for the duration of the state of emergency.

On April 21st, thirty-three members of the Montana National Guard were activate to build a temporary, 90-bed medical facility at MetraPark in Billings as a possible patient overflow site during the COVID-19 pandemic. MetraPark was already home to an isolation site for COVID-19 patients or those awaiting test results who were transient or came from an unsafe home situation.

On April 22nd, as detailed in the Governor's directive, the Stay at Home Directive was extended for individuals until Sunday, April 26, and for non-essential businesses until Monday, April 27, except as provided (e.g., bar and restaurant closures extended to May 4). This new directive superseded the Stay at Home Directive and any other gubernatorial directive, to the extent there is any conflict. The March 30 directive providing mandatory quarantine for certain travelers arriving in Montana from another state or country and all of its terms was extended through the end of the emergency,

unless modified by subsequent directive. The March 30 and April 13 directives providing measures to limit foreclosures, evictions, and disconnections from service and all of their terms were extended through May 24, unless modified by subsequent Directive, except as follows: For individuals who are members of a vulnerable population and who, pursuant to that directive, remain sheltered at home, the protections of the March 30 and April 13 directives will expire 30 days after the individual ceases to shelter at home or at the end of the emergency, whichever is sooner. The rent assistance program remained in effect for the duration of the emergency. All directives set to expire at the end of the emergency retained their effective date and terms except to the limited extent their provisions are in conflict with the terms of the latest directive.

Reopening Montana was then announced to occur in 3 Phases:

Phase 1: The Stay at Home Directive was extended for individuals until April 26.

Effective Sunday, April 26: All vulnerable individuals should continue to follow the stay at home guidance. Members of households with vulnerable residents should be aware that by returning to work or other environments where distancing is not practical, they could carry the virus back home. Precautions should be taken to isolate from vulnerable residents. (“Vulnerable Individuals” are defined as people over 65 years of age, people with serious underlying health conditions, including high blood pressure, chronic lung disease, diabetes, obesity, or asthma, and people whose immune system is compromised such as by chemotherapy for cancer or other conditions requiring such therapy.)

Under Phase 1, all individuals, apart from members of a household, should: When in public (e.g., parks, outdoor recreation areas, shopping areas), maintain at least six feet of physical distance from others. Avoid gathering in groups of more than 10 people in circumstances that do not readily allow for appropriate physical distancing. Minimize non-essential travel and adhere to Montana guidelines regarding quarantine.

For employers and business owners: Except as otherwise specified in the Governor’s directive, the mandatory closure of non-essential businesses provided in the Stay at Home Directive was extended until April 27. Following the expiration of the Stay at Home Directive, businesses were no longer designated essential or non-essential, except as otherwise provided in that directive. Effective Monday, April 27, employers were told they should: Continue to encourage telework whenever possible and feasible with business operations. When telework was not feasible, employers were encouraged to accommodate alternative work schedules such as shift work and staggered scheduling in order to adhere to social distancing guidelines. Close common areas where personnel are likely to congregate and interact or enforce strict social distancing protocols. Minimize non-essential business travel. Make special accommodations for members of a vulnerable population or those with vulnerable household members. Businesses that reopen are required to adhere to the reopening guidelines for Phase One by following to their county health Department’s guidance; some counties are more restrictive than the State guidance.

Effective Sunday, April 26: Places of worship were permitted to become operational with reduced capacity and where strict physical distancing protocols can be maintained between non-household members. Places of worship were advised to avoid gathering in groups of more than 10 people in circumstances that do not readily allow for appropriate physical distancing.

Effective Monday, April 27: Main Street and retail businesses were permitted to become operational with reduced capacity and where strict physical distancing protocols could be maintained. Businesses that reopened were required to adhere to the reopening guidelines for Phase 1. Outdoor recreation was permitted to become operational if sites adhered to strict physical distancing between groups and exercise frequent sanitation protocols if public facilities were open. Individuals and businesses engaged in outdoor recreation were required to adhere to the outdoor recreation guidelines for Phase One. Organized youth activities were permitted to consider becoming operational if physical distancing guidelines were implemented. Organized youth activities should avoid gathering in groups of more than 10 people in circumstances that do not readily allow for appropriate physical distancing. This provision allowed Montana American Legion Baseball to begin practices, restoring a modicum of normalcy for our team players, coaches and those who enjoy baseball in our Legion Baseball team communities. The first tournament held was Memorial Day Weekend in Helena at Kindrick-Legion Field.

Effective Monday, May 4: Restaurants, bars, breweries, distilleries, and casinos were permitted become operational on or after May 4, 2020 under strict physical distancing and reduced capacity protocols in accordance with State guidelines. These businesses were required to close their doors and have all patrons out by 11:30 p.m. Breweries and distilleries still were to follow existing laws on closing time. The expansions for delivery and takeout services, as provided both in the March 24 and March 26 Directives, were extended through the end of the emergency. In addition, restaurants, bars, breweries, distilleries, and casinos that reopen were required to adhere to the general and specific guidelines provided.

Beginning May 7, all schools had the option to return to in-classroom teaching delivery, at the discretion of local school boards. The intent of this provision was to allow local control over decisions about the provision of quality public education to students in Montana, while assuring that school Districts continued to receive full funding support from the state to provide learning. The mechanism for a gubernatorial waiver of student-instruction time expired. However, nothing in the Governor's directive prevented a local school board from declaring a local emergency as provided in § 20-9-806, MCA. Local boards and their Districts that do so will continue to receive all state funding, including transportation funding. Some smaller, rural schools throughout Montana did re-open in person instruction.

The Gubernatorial directives, along with any prior directive that implemented and referenced the public health authorities of the Department of Public Health and Human Services (DPHHS) provided in Title 50, constitutes a "public health . . . order[]" within the meaning of § 50-1-103(2), MCA, was, and is enforceable by the Attorney General, DPHHS, a county attorney, or other local authorities under the direction of a county attorney.

The directives are in effect statewide in Montana, regardless if there are no COVID-19 cases. In the interest of uniformity of laws and to prevent the spread of disease, all inconsistent emergency county health ordinances were and are preempted by that directive, but only to the extent they are less restrictive. (Authorities: Sections 10-3-103, -104, -302, and -305, MCA; §§ 50-1-202, -203, and -204, MCA; 37 A.G. Op. 132 (1978); Executive Orders 2-2020 and 3-2020; Montana Constitution, Art. VI, Sections 4 and 13; and all other applicable provisions of state and federal law.)

Many Post clubs in Montana reopened while some did not after May 4th during Phase 1.

On May 15th, gyms, theaters and museums were allowed to re-open with residents strongly encouraged to observe social distancing and sanitation procedures.

On May 20th, photos were taken of a possible tornado in Wheatland County; however, it did not touch down and damage did not destroy homes.

Phase 2 began June 1st with non-congregate group size increasing from 10 people to 50 people. All other provisions remain the same as Phase One for general business operations.

With the beginning of Phase 2, the 14-day quarantine restrictions implemented on March 30th for those who had traveled out of state or come into Montana from out-of-country or another state were also lifted.

At this writing, there is no date set for Phase 3 re-opening implementation as it is entirely dependent upon the number of new COVID-19 cases and spread of the virus.

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 7 Republicans. No changes since last report.

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. Here are some of the do's and don'ts:

The do's

- To raise the flag, hoist it up "briskly," but lower it "ceremoniously."
- The flag should be cleaned and mended when necessary.
- If you're raising other national flags too, the U.S. flag should be raised first and lowered last.
- The U.S. flag should always be in the center and highest when displayed with other flags.
- If displaying the flag off a staff, it should be displayed flat.
- If the flag is being shown on a wall, door or window, the blue section, also known as the Union, should go on your left when displayed horizontally. If you are displaying it vertically, the Union should stay in the upper left-hand corner.
- If you are covering a casket with the flag, put the Union at the upper right-hand corner.
- A flag should be displayed only from sunrise to sunset on buildings and on stationary flag staffs in the open. But it may be displayed 24 hours a day if illuminated.

The don'ts

- The flag should never be displayed with the stars down, unless as a signal of dire distress.
- The flag should never touch anything underneath it, such as the floor, the ground, water or merchandise.
- The flag shouldn't be displayed outdoors during bad weather.
- Don't ever carry the flag flat or horizontally; it should always be aloft and free.
- Don't improperly dispose of a flag.
- The flag should not be used as a drapery, or to cover a desk, drape a platform, or for any decoration in general. Bunting of blue, white and red stripes is available for these purposes. The blue stripe of the bunting should be on the top.
- The flag should never have placed on it, or attached to it, any mark, insignia, letter, word, number, figure or drawing of any kind.
- The flag should not be used for advertising and should not be embroidered, printed or otherwise impressed on cushions, handkerchiefs, napkins, boxes, or anything intended to be discarded after temporary use.

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

After the Department Fall Conference, I returned to business as always.

The Finance Committee was called upon to make a couple of special expenditures, including a new computer for the Department Adjutant and an increased per diem for the Executive Committee for the Helena meeting in June.

Through the efforts of the membership of the Department producing members, the bid of Commander Nelson for the Big 12 program was met, and the Department became \$2,000.00 richer, having had the highest bid membership number. Thanks Commander Nelson and all the members that helped accomplish the winning membership.

I had a phone meeting with the Adjutant where we discussed the 2021 budget that will be presented for approved by the committee at the June meeting. The Finance Committee will meet on Friday evening.

I will give a full report after the meeting with the Finance Committee. I will also have reports from the Endowment and Ways and Means Committees at that time.

I thank the Department for the opportunity to serve in this position.

HEROES TO HOMETOWN COORDINATOR

Chelly Harada

No report.

HIGHWAY FATALITY MARKER

Jim Kelly

It has been nearly a year since our then Vice-Commander approached me to propose, if elected Commander, he wished to appoint me as Fatality Marker Chairperson. He was elected, and I was appointed as Chairperson to one of my favorite American Legion endeavors, our Fatality Marker Program which had its foundation in Hellgate Post #27 in 1952.

I have completed a considerable amount of travel throughout the United States and particularly in Montana. It goes without saying, you cannot travel many portions of the state without noticing small white markers along our highways. They are not meant to have any religious meaning, nor are they memorial markers. The white markers are "Highway Fatality Markers" installed and maintained as a public service of American Legion Posts in Montana.

As a Life Member of the American Legion, I take pride in the program and the people who are dedicated enough to give time and energy to install and maintain these markers. Loss of life from a vehicle crash has a devastating impact on families, friends of the victim, first responders, and community. A loved one is suddenly no longer with us.

As the American Legion ages, so does our membership; often our interests and participation change. In some cases, we no longer have the manpower, the energy, or the resources to adequately maintain programs at the level we initially did. Recognizing this cycle, it was my intent to offer my assistance to any Post in District #5 that lacked the manpower or the resources to maintain the Fatality Marker Program. After two years, the effort expanded into District #4.

It is now an extreme privilege to be in a position which allows me to serve others and encourage individuals who are interested in continuing a valuable and visible program for the Montana American Legion.

My first endeavor was to review federal, state and Department guidelines and specifications as they apply to the Fatality Marker Program.

A second objective was to collect data on each American Legion Post in Montana and make contact. We found a couple of energetic individuals who have become my “go to people”. We currently have one official District Coordinator and seven other “go to people”.

My thoughts regarding a District Coordinator is, he/she will serve as a Liaison between the Chairperson and Post designated Fatality Marker representative. Assistance to Posts as needed.

A third objective was to recruit/urge/finagle/or pressure an individual to become the designated person, at the Post level, to provide leadership and knowledge for the actual installation and annual maintenance of markers within their jurisdiction. We currently have 45 individuals who fill those positions and receive bi-monthly information.

Summary:

1. State Guidelines
 - a. 2019 Worked with MDT on review of State Guidelines
 - b. 2019 Sought input regarding needed changes in State Guidelines to be submitted to MDT (None)
 - c. Review for grammar and clarity
 - d. 2020 Republish State Guidelines with emphasis
2. Collected data on each American Legion Post in Montana (2019).
 - a. Establish email contact list
3. Bi-Monthly Incident Bulletin/Newsletter (Initiated 2019)
4. Draft Job Description/Responsibilities for State Chairman (1st Draft)
 - a. State Chairman
 - i. Provide leadership for program
 - ii. Educate American Legion Members on purpose and history
 - iii. Offer assistance to District Coordinators
 - b. Proposed Organizational Chart (1st Draft)
 - c. Develop District Coordinators (In process)
 - i. Community Public Relations
 - ii. District Coordinator to offer assistance to Post Designee
 1. Glasgow - Joe Yoeman (Unofficial)
 2. Malta - Vincent Schmoeckel (Unofficial)
 3. Havre - Dave Brewer (Unofficial)
 4. Kalispell - Doug Zimmerman (Upon transfer from District #5)
 5. T Falls - Bill Beck (Unofficial)
 6. Missoula - Jim Kelly
 7. Bozeman - Greg Harbec
 - d. Recruit Post Fatality Marker Designee
 - i. Recruit a contact person from each Post to receive regular reports.
 - ii. Responsible to ensure Post members are familiar with Fatality Marker Program and all guidelines.
 - iii. Provide leadership, schedule, and coordinate the installation and annually maintain of Fatality Markers within area of responsibility.

5. Community Public Relations
 - a. Newspaper Articles
 - b. Television
 - c. Presentations
 - d. Rural Electric Magazine
 - e. Letters of Appreciation (Donors)

Seek Input - QUESTIONS ASKED OF POST REPS:

- f. **FIRST QUESTION:** Does anyone use the information regarding fatal accidents or is this a lesson in futility? It was gratifying to know those of you who responded indicated they read them and use them to monitor fatalities in their area.
 - i. **ACTION** OKAY, I will continue to monitor and produce a bi-monthly Incident Reports.
 - g. **SECOND QUESTION:** Soliciting input regarding the American Legion Fatality Marker Guidelines, as it is the time of year when I communicated with Montana Department of Transportation regarding proposed changes.
 - i. **ACTION** Limited comments, therefore, there WILL NOT be any changes for the sake of changes to the 2019 Guidelines. I will simply review the document for spelling and punctuation and republish.
 - h. **THIRD QUESTION:** Regarding a proposal to have a Fatality Marker Committee meeting at state Conference.
 - i. **ACTION** None as State Conference was cancelled due to Coronavirus.
 - i. **FOURTH QUESTION:** With no formal job description or expectations for the Chairperson of the Fatality Marker Committee, I ask, what can I do for you; what are your expectations for this position?
 - i. **COMMENT:** I think the job description is education. Which you are doing. We all have different ways of making things work. We need to adjust what you put out to fit us. Thanks! Joe Yeoman, District #1 Adjutant
 - ii. **ACTION:** Several comments. Most comprehensive comment is Posted above. Draft job description around central idea of providing encouragement and education to members of Montana American Legion and individual communities. Possible involvement of Auxiliary and Sons of American Legion. Looking to provide for veteran “Ride Along” opportunities with intent to possibly recruit members.
6. What else do you do?
 - a. Maintain fatality databases (statewide – county – District)
 - b. Provide fatality documentation upon request
 - c. Record/Follow-up on Requests for Markers
 - d. Prepare regular reports and presentations
 - e. Handle queries from Legion members and communities
 - f. Maintain a filing system pertaining to accidents and personal requests
 - g. Fulfill responsibilities to District #4 and District #5.

HOMELESS VETERAN COORDINATOR

Ray Read

The Montana Department's participation in The American Legion's Homeless Veterans Program is now over 13 years old., 2019-21 Montana Department Commander Jeff Nelson, re-appointed me as the Coordinator of the Program 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. Breakdown by era is: Gulf War- 32,416; Vietnam- 32,772; Korea-7,118; WW II-1,684. Peacetime veterans' number 19,796. The ratio of gender is Female veterans 8,365 and Male veterans 85,019. 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 is at risk or homeless. The definition of homeless as defined by United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) is, "Without and abode or home, living with family or relative because they cannot afford or qualify for a home residence, or living in an institutional setting because they cannot qualify or are financially unable to rent or own a home."

In the latest Montana Homeless Survey conducted in January 2018 of the 1,247 Household with 1709 person respondents of which 279 Veterans Households with 320 respondents were identified. This indicates that homelessness among Montana veterans was 18% of the total homeless of Montana based on the Survey results. I believe the true number Falls between 3.8% National statistic and the 18% identified in the HUD survey. The 2018 data is not yet available.

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 AHAR report for 2016 recorded a-17.0% in homelessness from the 2015 AHAR report in 2017 the homeless rate for veterans has increased 8% but still better than the base rate established in 2010. This is an -9.0 % decrease over 2010 numbers. The complete report is not yet available and therefore I provided last year's report for 2017

The total homeless individuals recorded in the Point in time survey was 1,418 a -21.00% decrease in respondents from the 1709 recorded in 2015

Of the 1418 respondents it was determined that 44.4% or 630 are unsheltered and 55.6% (788) are sheltered

Homelessness has decreased in 37 States. Montana in the top five with a 17% decrease.

Individuals who were homeless in Montana decreased by 25% between 2015 and 2017.

574 family members are homeless with 40% (229) unsheltered.

Of the 100 unaccompanied youth determined homeless 48 or 48% are unsheltered.

There are 196 veterans identified as homeless. This number is in my estimation under-reported as the Point In time does not reach into the rural areas of Montana that encompasses about 32% percent of State's population.

Recommendations for 2019-2020:

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

As of March 12, 2020 - \$183,798.00 in premiums were paid in the Department of Montana for Long Term Care, HIP, AUX HIP and Cancer, Cancer Disability, AD & D and Life Insurance; an increase of \$11,577.00 since 2019. Allocations paid to the Department were \$10,594.00 a decrease of \$24,521.00; this is after last year's increase of \$24,000.00. We received a promotional bonus of \$1,059, an increase of \$59.00, this after last year's decrease of \$70.00.

Last year we received a very large special allocation, hence the \$24,000.00 decrease; the next scheduled special allocation will be in 2022 but will not be anywhere close to the large amount received in 2019.

This year our projection of income for 2019 was \$15,000.00, we fell short of that projection by \$4,406.00 With the aging of our membership we continue to lose paying insured members at a higher rate than of new policies being written. We must rectify this by informing our members of the many insurance opportunities LIT offers. The LIT offers 13 different insurance products, but our most popular products are the cancer and EA+ insurance. There is a myriad of promotional information available for the Post to use, please contact me if you require any information. Our job is not to be insurance salesmen, but to inform our members of the insurance benefits. Please remind your members of the Accidental Death & Dismemberment benefit periodically so they can take advantage of this program. The information LIT gathers from these sign ups is the number one source of policies written. Of the 10,396 members on April 20, 2020 only 5264 were enrolled in the free Accidental Death & Dismemberment program, 50.63% of our membership. This is an increase of 36 members, or a 5.07% decrease from last year, we are still a long way from 100%.. Signing up for the free AD & D is our best way of ensuring the LIT markets to the right age group. Remember to when you transfer a member from DMS to provide them with the information on the free AD & D, they do not receive the info from National. If a member is in doubt about being registered, they can call LIT or go online to check their status, every year we have family members of deceased members attempt to file a claim only to find their loved was not registered. Once a member registers, they are now registered for as long as they are members. We have got to ensure our members are registered for this benefit, especially our new members, and remember any member acquired through DMS has never been given a registration opportunity for the free AD & D. Senior Auxiliary and senior Sons of the American Legion members can sign up for the free AD & D under the same conditions.

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

Our best-selling policies continue to be the Hospitalization, EA+ and Cancer policies. This year the Auxiliary participated in marketing the EA+ and Cancer programs to their members, as a result they received an allocation of \$326.00, a decrease of \$121.00.

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

Since 1967, when our Department joined with the Legionnaire Insurance Trust the Department has received \$714,483.00.

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

The Department has not yet received revenue from USAA products being sold to our members. Our budget was set for \$6,800.00.

LEGISLATIVE

Roger Hagan

Regardless of the COVID 19 obstacles your Legislative Committee has been active since our last report. Even with the limitations, we have had opportunities to continue to support the Montana Department of the American Legion since our last meeting.

The most significant event was our March 2020 National Washington Convention and Joint Veterans Legislative Congressional Committee Testimony by our National Commander Bill Oxford. Bill White, our Congressional Liaison to Congressman Gianforte, and I were able to attend this meeting in March of 2020. Also meeting with our Congressional members (Senator Tester’s staff, Senator Daines and Congressman Gianforte) was our American Legion Auxiliary Vice President, Christine Nelson. Additional attendees during the weeklong Conference and training session were Department Veteran Service Officers Kate Hahn and Tim Ingram. Fortunately, for all of us, we were able to come back to Montana safe and healthy and escape the COVID 19 concern.

October 29th of last year the State Administration and Veterans Affairs (SAVA) Interim Committee invited the Montana Department of the American Legion to testify on a panel titled “Training and accreditation for veteran service officers (VSOs)”. I was honored to represent our Department on that panel. We also attended the January 16th SAVA Interim Committee meeting to continue monitoring the progress of the study bill, HJ 23 – “study of structure & funding of Montana Veterans' Affairs Division”.

Your legislative efforts continue to take a front seat with our Congressional Liaisons. We have a vacancy created by the resignation of George Blackard as the Congressional Liaison to Senator Daines. If you have a personal relationship with Senator Daines or know someone who does and are interested in serving in this position, please let Adjutant White know. NEC Driver will be working to appoint the replacement. I wish to thank George Blackard for his outstanding work as a liaison to Senator Daines.

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

I attended the 2019 Fall Conference in Helena October 25/27.

In November I was among nine Dept of Montana American Legion members to go to Crow's Nest AB. To Canadas "REMEMBERANCE DAY" celebration on November 11th. I spoke at the joint celebration (Bellvue/Coleman), held in Coleman. Going there and seeing how they honor their veterans was a great experience.

On November 15th I attended the POW/MIA ceremony at the Ben Steele Middle school in Billings. That ceremony is held every year at the school around the date of Ben Steeles birthday, which is November 17th.

On December 7th I was part of the PEARL HARBOR ceremony at the Yellowstone National Cemetery.

On December 13th I attended the ROTC Commissioning ceremony at MSUB.

On December 14th I took part in the Wreaths Across America ceremony at the Yellowstone National Cemetery.

On January 3rd I was part of the Unattended Ceremony at the Yellowstone National Cemetery.

On February 18th I attended the renaming of the Billings VA Clinic buildings. One is named after Chief/Dr Joseph Medicine Crow and one after Benjamin Steele.

Our spring District 11 meeting was a phone in meeting on April 26th.

On May 23rd, our American Legion Post 123 put out over 500 flags at the Laurel City Cemetery for Memorial Day and the Avenue of Flags at the Yellowstone National Cemetery.

Today, may 25th, I was part of a "closed" Memorial Day ceremony at the Laurel City Cemetery.

Throughout this past year as Dept. membership chairman I have spent much time phoning DMS members to transfer to a local Post and also 2019 members to continue to support the American Legion by renewing their membership for 2020. As of today, May 25 the Department needs 129 members to get our Department to 100%. By the time you read this we should be there.

NATIONAL SECURITY

Ken Simon

Since last year when our focus was on securing the Southern Border there has been a lot happening and happened in our country and the world. We have had a virus erupt overseas in a foreign country, the Impeachment of the President, tension in the Middle East the virus called COVID-19 in the U.S., our military becoming effected by the Corona-Virus, spreading of the virus across the nation, quarantine in an attempt to stop the spread of the coronavirus, and untold numbers of citizens infected and dying from COVID-19!

As of the writing of this report, we have lost over 100,000 citizens including a number of deaths in our military family. To put this into perspective I will lay this out beginning with the US troops being pulled out of Northern Syria to create a buffer Zone in Oct 2019. In December, Articles of Impeachment were filed in the House against President Trump on charges of abuse of power and obstruction of Congress. His trial was to begin in January 2020 in the Senate.

On Nov 17th, 2019, an individual in the Hubei Province of China became sick with a pneumonia type case and may have been the first known case of the coronavirus traced back in China. Hubei province is where the Wuhan Laboratory is located. That is more than a month before doctors noted the case in Wuhan! At the time, authorities suspected the virus was from something sold at the wet market in Wuhan, however, it is now clear that some of the infected people had not connection to the wet market. It was concluded that this early case was an individual who had no connection to the wet market in Wuhan. Health officials in China reported on Dec 27th that a novel coronavirus was causing the disease, but by that date it had infected more than 180 individuals. On 10 December, Chinese medical doctors were dealing with an individual who was feeling ill and who was admitted to the Wuhan hospital with infection in both lungs, but resistant to anti-flu drugs. Seventeen days later health officials are told that a new coronavirus is causing the illness. At the end of

Dec, a director at the Wuhan Central Hospital Posts information and the Wuhan health commission notifies hospitals of a “pneumonia of unclear cause” and orders them to report any related information.

It was not until Dec 31st, that the Chinese government reported a cluster of cases of pneumonia in Wuhan. The Report was filed by Wuhan Municipal Health Commission from which a novel coronavirus was eventually identified. That same day the health commission confirms twenty seven cases of the illness and close a market they believe is responsible. Then China tells the World Health Organization about the cases of an unknown illness. Through all of this, the Chinese government attempted to suppress the illness and hide the reports and tests that had been conducted on patients

On January 1st the WHO (World Health Organization) set up the IMST (Incident Management Support Team) across three levels and put the organization on an Emergency footing for dealing with the outbreak. Those three levels were: Headquarters, Regional Headquarters, and country level. On the 4th, WHO reported on social media that there was a cluster of pneumonia cases with no deaths in Wuhan! By the time this is done, the Health Commission determined that the novel virus is similar to SARS, to stop testing samples and destroy existing samples.

January 2nd, President Trump ordered a drone strike on top Iranian General Qasem Soleimani, who was in the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps. He oversaw foreign Operations and head of the Quds Forces, a division primarily responsible for extraterritorial military and clandestine operations. Soleimani was headed to Iraq to allegedly meet with Iraqi government officials and was met at the Bagdad airport by Abu Mahdi al Muhandis, Deputy head of the Iraqi Popular Mobilization Forces. After the convoy departed the airport a drone strike was initiated that took out Soleimani and Muhandis along with six others. Soleimani was responsible to train Shiite Militias in Iraq and was also responsible for the deaths of over 600 American soldiers and many more coalition and Iraqi soldiers. This was accomplished by providing explosives, projectiles, arms, and other munitions to operatives in Iraq and other locations in the Middle East. The elimination of Soleimani put those in charge in Iran on notice that the U.S. is now willing to act against Iran.

During January, the Chinese finally announces that it mapped the virus genome but insists there are no new cases. Thailand reports the first case of the coronavirus outside of China around the middle of January and on January 15th the patient who becomes the first confirmed case departs Wuhan China and arrives in the US carrying the virus. It was not until the 21st of January that the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention confirms the first coronavirus case in the United States. Korea announces the first case of the virus on January 20th. On January 23 Wuhan and three other cities are put on lockdown and approximately 5 million people leave the city without being screened for the illness and it wasn't until the next day that China extends the lockdown to cover 36 million people. Their lapse in telling the WHO and the rest of the world about the coronavirus and not stopping the movement of several million people without testing, may have put the rest of the world in the sights of this virus!

At the end of January, the Emergency Committee for the WHO reconvened after their fact- finding mission to Wuhan China and studies about the transmission of the virus. The commission advises the Director to declare the outbreak a Public Health Emergency of International Concern (PHEIC). He accepts the recommendation and declared the coronavirus (COVID-19) a PHEIC. By the time of this declaration, there are 7,818 total confirmed cases worldwide, with the majority in China and 82 cases in 18 countries outside China. It is not until March 11th that the WHO concerned about both the alarming levels of spread, severity, and alarming levels of inaction, made the assessment of COVID-19 can be characterized as a pandemic! As of March 13th, there were nearly 148,00 cases globally and more than 81,000 cases in mainland China, with cases on every continent except Antarctica.

On March 30th, the USS Roosevelt had arrived and was anchored at Guam after a port call at Da Nang, Vietnam. Captain Crozier, Commander of the Roosevelt reported that there were more than 100 sailors infected with the virus out of the 4,000 personnel on board. The first three sailors tested positive fifteen days after leaving Vietnam on March 24th. The crew of 4,800 went through rotations of quarantine and more than 1,000 tested positive. Due to the manner in which the Captain reported the situation he was relieved of his command. In order to make sure that the carrier was able to continue its mission, it was determined that it would take a crew of three hundred fifty sailors ten days to conduct a thorough cleaning of the ship and make it ready for sea. On March 21st the USS Roosevelt departed Guam with a crew of about 3,600, leaving 1,800 on shore who were still in quarantine. One sailor from the carrier was reported to have died from COVID-19. While the ship had been extensively cleaned, crew members were taking a wide range of precautions to

prevent another outbreak, including social distancing, repeated medical checks, wearing masks, and fewer personnel allowed in the mess halls at a time.

How has the virus affected the US Military forces around the world?

The Navy said that with 100 percent of the Theodore Roosevelt crew tested, that ship's 840 cases, represented 58 percent of the Navy's infections and 21 percent of the military's overall. The Army has seen the second highest numbers of COVID-19 infections, as well as the second largest increase in the last week of April. Its 971 cases as of April 24th represents a 34-percent jump of the week, with 245 new cases. That number is expected to rise, as many soldiers fall into the first, second and third tiers of the testing plan, from counter-terror special operations units to deployed and forward-deployed troops around the world. The Air Force, comparatively, added 15 over the same time, bringing its total to 343. Many of its nuclear weapons units, however, are considered tier one, and will be getting 100 percent tested in the coming weeks. The Marine Corps has 282 cases as of April 24th, adding 46 in the week, for a 27- percent increase, and the National Guard, made up of airmen and soldiers, saw a 22-percent rise, to a total of 740 cases.

Currently, the infection rate among service members is 1,866-per-million, or 0.2 percent, versus 2,553-per-million in the general U.S. population, about 0.25 percent. To date, 1,057 civilians have been diagnosed, a rise of 86 – or 9 percent in the past day, as well as 229 this week – 26 percent. Of those, 90 have been hospitalized, 314 have recovered and 12 have died. Dependents now account for 814 of the DoD's 6,213 cases overall, with 32 cases in the past day and 139 this week, a rise of 4 percent and 21 percent, respectively. Overall, DoD's death rate with 26 total is 0.4 percent, compared to the U.S. rate of almost 6 percent.

On April 26th, General Mark Milley, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and Vice Chairman General John Hyten met with Dr Anthony Fauci and Dr Deborah Birx to discuss the military's efforts to manage the coronavirus pandemic and the medical expertise needed to protect the country's 1.4 million military personnel. The meeting underscored a critical national security issue that has not been discussed publicly in detail by the President, the challenge of ensuring the military is ready to deploy and fight amid the pandemic. The military is maintaining force readiness by limiting members working at home as necessary, not conducting change of duty stations, and continued testing of the force. One of the clearest indicators of the level of concern within the Pentagon is the fact Defense Secretary Mark Esper has put strict limits on the amount of information being shared with the American public. While it does publish information daily on the number of personnel who have tested positive for the virus, the military is not releasing information that it believes would reveal weaknesses in US readiness that could be exploited by adversaries. There is also a plan in place and approved by Secretary Esper for prioritizing who in the military will be tested first. It is based on the critical need to keep the military running and being able to meet individual threats.

Beyond the practical goal of maintaining readiness, there is the growing understanding that the nature of the US military, what it does, and the concept of what constitutes a national security threat may be changed by the pandemic. The challenge the Pentagon faces is that it will have to anticipate and react with agility because the next major threat may not come from another country. It could be another pandemic, a cyberattack or even climate change that cripples a military which is still reliant on the billions spent on traditional ships, aircraft, tanks, and missiles. Former Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel said, "You constantly have to review what you are doing, how you have been doing it, and match that with the challenges of the day!" I believe that this fits the Legions situation today more than it ever has.

What did our country and our leaders do to prepare our nation for a pandemic like the coronavirus?

Some fifteen years ago President George W. Bush said, "If a pandemic strike, our country must have a surge capacity in place that will allow us to bring a new vaccine online quickly and manufacture enough to immunize every American against the pandemic strain." Bush announced billions of dollars for a wide-ranging plan a pandemic like this one. It accelerated a new method of vaccine research, beefed up stockpiles, and steered aid to states to build mobile hospitals and more. But for all the creativity and ambition, a year later almost half of the states had not spent any of their own money for the preparedness subsidized by Washington, and in the years that followed – through the Great Recession, more war, more time passing – the federal effort languished too! "Our country has been given fair warning of this danger," Bush

said at the launch, recalling the lethal 1918 pandemic and bird flu outbreak then spreading overseas. Americans have “time to prepare.” But foresight became a thing of the past.

Lastly, COVID-19, the disease caused by the coronavirus, is a flu-like illness that has killed a small fraction of the number of people that the flu kills every year. Through the first four months of the outbreak, coronavirus has killed about 4,300 people. Flu kills 290,00 to 650,00 every year around the world, according to the WHO.

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 didn’t 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.

I am not sure where the rotation stands but will keep you updated. The current plan is to keep it on a Saturday, and to keep it in the neighborhood of the first couple weekends in March. I have not heard any complaints about the dates in the past, and I think it works out quite well. I work for you, so please let me know what I can do to help.

PUBLIC AFFAIRS & PUBLICATIONS

Jen Dalrymple

No report.

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

Dick Ellwein

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic The Sons of The American Legion have followed suit of The American Legion and cancelled events. The Detachment officers will remain the same for the 2020-2021 year. The dues will be \$11.00 starting with the 2020-2021 membership year.

SHOOTING SPORTS

Larry Dobb

Since my report for the Fall Conference, a lot has happened concerning the Junior Shooting Sports program. As I reported last Fall, the Department of Montana has at various times had twenty-seven Posts that participated in this program. Some sponsored more than one team or individual competitor. In 2019 we had eight Posts participate and in 2020 only six. There were a number of changes in the registration process last Fall, such as a shorter time frame to register, an updated

online only registration process and a credit card only option for payment all of which may explain some of those who did not participate in 2020.

The six teams that did participate were Gallatin County 4-H Shooting Sports (Post 87 Manhattan), Montana 10X, Mineral County (Ray Welch Post 13 Superior), Hellgate Civilian Shooter Association (Post 27 Missoula), Phillips County 4-H Shooting Sports (Post 57 Malta), Post 106 Junior Shooting Sports (James R. W. McCarthy Post 106 St Ignatius) and Ronan 4-H (Ronan Post 138).

The Gallatin Valley Sharpshooters received the highest score in the Precision discipline for the State of Montana and were the Team State Champion in The American Legion Junior Shooting Sports National Postal Tournament. In addition, according to the Official Match Program, the Precision team with the second highest score after the second round Postal is considered the runner up in the National Championship in team competition. Congratulations to the Gallatin Valley Sharpshooters affiliated with Post 87 Manhattan, Montana for both these honors.

The Montana 10X Mineral County received the highest score in the Sporter discipline for the State of Montana and is considered the Team State Champion in The American Legion Junior Shooting Sports National Postal Tournament. In addition, according to the Official Match Program, the Sporter team with the second highest score after the second round Postal is considered the runner up in the National Championship in team competition. Congratulations to Montana 10X affiliated with Post 13 Superior, Montana for both these honors.

The 2020 American Legion Junior Shooting 3-Position Air Rifle National Championship scheduled for July 21-26 in Colorado Springs, CO was canceled on March 24, 2020 by National Commander Oxford in response to the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

The Department of Montana had two teams participate in 2019 that did not in 2020. Hopefully they will again in 2021. They were Lake County Junior Shooting Sports (James R.W. McCarthy Post 106 St Ignatius) and Lewis and Clark County Shooting Sports (Post 2 Helena). I have also been contacted by Post 70 Judith Gap and Post 42 Townsend seeking information on becoming affiliated with their local 4-H program. I would love to see Montana represented by at least a dozen teams affiliated or sponsored by our Posts in 2021. It's an excellent opportunity for rural Posts to work with the local 4-H program. Especially, if the 4-H already has a shooting sports program with the necessary rifles and other equipment. The Post can get credit for participating in one of our major youth programs and the 4-H shooters have an additional opportunity for competition and perhaps to qualify for the National Championships in Colorado. If any Post is interested in becoming involved with this youth activity, please contact me (rgelar@gmail.com/406-452-2716/406-899-8885).

VETERANS AFFAIRS & REHABILITATION

Kate Hahn

As the ML DSO, I attended the following events:

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 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

VETERANS ECONOMICS

Vacant

VA HOSPITAL VOLUNTEER REPRESENTATIVE – BILLINGS

Joyce Babcock

In July I made 2 trips to Billings VA clinic and distributed 12 copies of the Active Service newspapers in the waiting rooms for a total of 6 hours. In August I again went to Billings VA clinic and left copies of Service newspapers 3 times, 9 hours and 18 copies of the papers. I also left 5 copies of The American Legion National magazine on the 2nd visit in August. In September I have visited the Billings VA clinic 2 times for a total of 6 hours distributed 12 copies of the Active Service newspapers throughout the waiting rooms in both Spring Creek and Majestic waiting rooms. In October I again made 2 visits to Billings VA and distributed the Active Service newspapers for an additional 6 hours.

A total of 27 hours and left cookies in Majestic waiting room in August with value of \$6.00 plus a can of coffee for the clinic at \$8.50 1st week of October.

November saw me in clinic assisting patients to move from Spring Creek facility to Majestic for various Lab tests and there were several Veterans who were in wheel chairs and were not comfortable with the idea of that trip down the sidewalk between the two clinics. Got my exercise pushing them over and back to Spring Creek when lab work was completed. This day I spent 4 hours in the clinic and then found that I was actually no longer a “certified VAVS” as I had allowed my credentials to expire.

With the arrival of December, I did not drive for two months which put an end to my clinic visits. This was due to physical disabilities and I had no one who wanted to sit there for a few hours while I visited around the 2 clinics. With the arrival of January, I still did not drive due to lousy road conditions and thus further delayed my time at the Veterans’ clinic. With the arrival of February, I took to the road again and returned to the clinic. My first visit I began the process of renewing my credentials by getting my fingerprinting renewed and made one more visit with a donation of a 3 pound can of coffee and a tray of cookies.

March saw me Fall by the wayside. No, not Fall, simply took ill and spent a week and a bit in the Billings Deaconess followed by 3 weeks of therapy which I did at one or the other of my nearby children’s homes. I finally was allowed to return to my own home the 10th of April; however, I was and still am doing therapy and now must use a cane or a walker

to get around. Therefore, I have not returned to the VA Clinic as yet. I have however, assured my contact at Fort Harrison that I do intend to resume my VAVS duties soon—as soon as I can walk across my kitchen!

VA HOSPITAL VOLUNTEER REPRESENTATIVE – Fort Harrison

Bill White

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. Continued to work on the Ad-Hoc committee on up-dating the VAVS Volunteer manual with the American Legion
5. Attended District meeting invited to as VAVS representative, Billings, Denton, Eureka, and Missoula
6. Continued to Participate with new person orientation to give new employees an opportunity to hear some of the problems that Veterans face on a daily basis when going to the VA facilities also participating is American Legion member Doug Ham,
7. Attended National Convention in Indianapolis and participated in All the VA and R meetings
8. Continue to be reappointed as the Legion Representative to Congressman Greg Gianforte
9. Helped with the tour of the VA Ft. Harrison with National Commander during Fall Conference 2019
10. Attended winter meeting in Washington DC with Roger Hagan and attended VA and R meetings
11. Worked with congressional delegation from Montana in getting the Atlas system back up and running in Eureka MT
12. Worked with the Department of Montana in settling in a new family that had been accepted at Freedoms Village at VA Fort Harrison
13. Participated in the four Chaplain's ceremony in Helena, Montana.
14. Attended Fall Conference in Washington DC as the Department of Montana's VA and R representatives and visited with the Montana delegation on Veterans issues
15. Attended spring District meetings via conference calls along with the rest of the Department Officers
16. Worked with Post 2 Helena members to do the buddy check with a 100% check

VA HOSPITAL VOLUNTEER REPRESENTATIVE – Miles City

Clancee Collins

I have been in contact with the Activities Director at the CBOC in Miles City on a monthly basis. Up until the COVID-19 crisis, I made sure the residents had prizes for their weekly bingo games which were provided by Custer Post #5. Now that outside persons are not allowed to enter the CBOC we have put this project on hold. Members of Custer Post #5 were calling bingo on Fridays every week.

In November I gave the Activities Director five books of transit tickets (good for fifty rides) so the residents could go into the community to shop, go to appointments etc. Their van is very unreliable and if they use it extra personnel must accompany the resident to their destination. I also provided seven more books of tickets in March before the COVID shut down at the CBOC.

At the end of January, I received a call from the main VAVS office in Helena informing me that I was not yet qualified to be a representative. Apparently, my ID picture and fingerprinting were not done within 120 days of each other and had to be redone. I am still waiting for Helena to contact me so I can get this resolved.

We have a volunteer member from Custer Post #5 who was taking her large dog (Newfoundland, 160#) to the CBOC once a week, much to the delight of the residents. The Activities Director informed me that she hopes the dog's visits can resume soon because the residents really miss the interaction with the dog. All are waiting for the COVID-19 situation to relax so the visits can resume.

WOMEN'S VETERANS COORDINATOR

Kim Kay Carol McCarty Martin

This year I refocused on getting an accurate data base of the women veterans in The American Legion in each District by sending to each District a questionnaire to be filled out by their women veterans. I have received 11 questionnaires' back so far and will be contacting others to see if they can fill them out for me. I am trying a different approach in hopes of being able to help women vets and get them information that they seek. I asked for the help of each District as I do not have access to the Department of Montana's membership, nor do I have a list from Department Headquarters. I can only get this information with their help. I am maintaining a Facebook page – Women Vets of MT American Legion where I Post information, however many women veterans do not know about that page still. I did put together a nice article in the Legionnaire that hopefully lets the readers know I am trying to help in any way I can along with a short history of women in the military. I will follow up with the questionnaires' by communicating with the Legion women veterans. Due to the Corona Virus the majority of the Spring District Meetings were held over the phone so I was not able to interact with veterans, It made me realize more than ever that socializing in person is so much better. I contacted a gentleman from the Montana Vet Project about an opportunity for women vets to do an overnight hike in Glacier in June for those women interested.