Greetings: I hope everyone took time out of their busy daily schedule to reflect or attend a Memorial Day Commemoration Ceremony, honoring America’s brave young men and women that have sacrificed their lives in service to their country, for the luxury of our Nations Freedom that we are enjoying today.

This is my last article as your Department Commander, and it has been an honor and privilege to have served as your Department Commander. My journey has been enjoyable, exciting and productive, although sometimes it was challenging, as I faithfully executed my duties, to accomplish the mission to completion. It has been rewarding to know that I had the privilege to place my thumbprint on some areas to enhance this great organization, with a guideline of my accomplishments to assist the leadership that wants to follow my path to move our department towards the future serving as Department Commander.

I have crisscrossed the State of Maryland attending Post meetings, Programs and Events, and also I attended numerous out of state National Conference meetings. I have traveled an estimate of over 24,000 miles. I have met some extraordinary grassroots members. I have learned a wealth of historical knowledge about the American Legion, and the member’s dedication to the American Legion Four Pillars, and I have enjoyed listening to the veterans sharing with me their amazing military stories and experience.

The Most Notable Highlight of my year:

• I had the privilege to attend the Naval Academy Commissioning Graduation in Annapolis, Maryland to present awards to the Cadets from the American Legion for their outstanding accomplishments.

• I was bestowed the honor and privilege to present the military Silver Star to the oldest ranking Marine Corps Officer, WWII Combat Veteran, Col Louis Schott. The Silver Star is the third-highest military combat decoration that can be awarded to a member of the United States Armed Forces. It is awarded for gallantry in action. I feel blessed and honored to have met Col Louis Schott. He’s 102 years old. “Semper Fidelis”

• I was bestowed the honor of a Life Membership from American Legion Federal Post 19 and John & Samuel Tyson VFW Post 8509.

• I presenting my Department Commanders Coin, to members in attendance at the Post meeting that has served over 50 continuous years, and still currently active in their Post.

By the time you receive this issue of the Free State Warrior, a lot of programs and events will have past. One of the most notable, is the Regions-District receptions honoring the Dept. Aux. Pres. Carmin Brittain, Jr., Aux. Pres. Wynter Wallace, Det. SAL Cmdr. Larry Ford and Youth SAL Cmdr. Gabriel Dorsey and myself Dept. Cmdr.

I want to take this opportunity to thank the Regions and Post coordinators. We had a goodtime, the food was delicious and the fellowship was exquisite and memorable.

Great Teamwork: It’s been an honor and privilege working with the Department Officers, mainly with Sr. Vice-Cmdr. Ruth Higgins she has been my right hand throughout the year, and as for the Region, District, Post Commanders and the Department Headquarters Staff, Adj. Russell Myers, Asst. Adj. Steve Tatro, Ebony Dixon and Darnetta Davis. Thanks to all of you for your hard work and for taken time out of your busy schedule assisting me and offering your encouragement and endeavors to accomplish the goals throughout the year. And for most of all trusting in my leadership, to faithfully lead our Department into the future and also for your outstanding dedication to the American Legion Four Pillars, throughout the administrative Legion years 2022-23.

Department Commanders Projects: The goal is to raise $10,000 dollars… as of this article, there’s over $14,000 dollars in the Commanders Projects Account. I want to take this opportunity to sincerely thank those who supported Department Commander Projects with their generous donations. I will be accepting donations at the Department Convention for “Casey Cares Kid Foundation”, and the National Commanders “Be the One Project”.

Membership Status: It has been a challenge for the Posts to achieve the membership retention target goal to stop the slide of losing members by June 6, 2023. I want to take this opportunity to thank the membership teams for demonstrating their dedication throughout the year to the (3R’s) Retention, Recruitment, Revitalization, Legion Programs and Community Events.

100% (Percent) Recognition:

Congratulation!! To all the Posts that achieved the 100% (percent) membership goal target date prior to January 1st 2023, and submitting their annual Post required documents to the Department Headquarters according to the compliance report submission deadline dates.

Congratulations!! District-Six Officers and Posts Administrator for achieving 100% (percent) plus membership goal for the second consecutive year.

District-Six Commander Billy Hill has been honored with an invitation to attend the National Convention August 25-31, 2023 in Charlotte, NC, representing the Department of Maryland District-Six Council for achieving the greatest membership percentage in Category II.

Department Commanders Membership Challenge Coins: The coins are still available for those who recruit 3 New Members into their Post, or any Post in the Department of Maryland. Check with your Post Adjutant to see if you qualify to receive the Department Commanders Membership Challenge Coin, and the National Commanders Be The One lapel-cap pin before the supplies runs out.

As the Legion year comes to a close, we must remember our commitment to the American Legion Four Pillars, current membership retention, recruiting for new members and most of all continuing to making BUDDY CHECK CALLS, all of which never ends.

Continued om page 7

Be The One Campaign and Suicide Prevention Program

On Wednesday afternoon at the Convention in Ocean City shortly after the session ends there will be a presentation on Suicide prevention and how to work through a crisis situation to assist the person to get help. This is a critical piece to our Be the One campaign and everyone that can make the event should attend. It is important to take this information back to our Posts as well.

The Suicide Prevention staff, Outreach Coordinator, and the Mobile Vet Center from the VA will all be on hand during the convention in the vendor area and offering assistance throughout the week. We have also invited a representative from Bergmann and Moore attorneys to speak on the PACT Act, Camp Lejeune water, and toxic exposures with our attendees. Bergmann Moore is the law firm that trains The American Legion Service Officers and has partnered with our organization to provide advice to our members. We understand the bombardment of ads and lawyers our Veterans are experiencing and want to provide someone to talk to about these issues at our convention.
**Reflections of an Adjutant**  
By Russell W. Myers, Jr.

My article this quarter will focus on the Department and National Conventions scheduled for this summer. The 105th Department Convention is in Ocean City July 11-14, 2023, 104th National Convention is in Charlotte, NC, August 24 - 31, 2023. Both events are packed full of highlights of programs, learning opportunities, and the ability to network with other Legion Family members.

The Department Convention is always a busy time of year for our Posts and Department Officers. The convention offers an opportunity to highlight the programs of The American Legion, and the deeds of many of our honorees from our communities and State. There is a draft timeline of events included on the front page. This schedule will see minor changes only so look it over and prepare for a great week.

Our Convention theme this year is recognizing and remembering the Vietnam War. The coin and book will highlight the Vietnam War and Memorial, and the opening on Wednesday will feature a special tribute and remembrance for our brothers and sisters from this war.

Some highlights are as follows: The Golf tournament is scheduled at Rum Point on Monday morning so please sign up at our website at www.mdlegionconvention.org.

Monday evening the Southern MD Region hosts their annual Fish Fry. The location will be the same as last year in the Dockside Hall in the SW corner of the Convention Center. It can be accessed from the interior of the Center by walking through the lobby to the back of the center, as it sits just past the food court area. It can also be accessed from outside the corner of the building closest to Thunder Island and the Bay. There is a plan for the SAL to provide some games and food for the children that join us that afternoon.

Legion College kicks off at 8:00 am on Tuesday morning, and these courses are essential for officers at all levels and I guarantee the instruction will teach you something about the Legion you didn’t know. Additional classes on MyLegion and a Chaplains Class will take place in the afternoon on Tuesday.

Our Joint reception and Opening Ceremonies will take place Tuesday evening. The reception is being held in the beautiful Bayview Grand Ballroom and offers a wonderful view of the sunset (provided it is not cloudy that evening). Bring the family and enjoy the light food and refreshments. Membership awards are being distributed on Wednesday morning, so ensure all Posts have representatives there to receive the recognition for this hard work.

On Wednesday afternoon shortly after the session ends there will be a presentation on Suicide prevention and how to work through a crisis situation to assist the person to get help. This is a critical piece to our Be the One campaign and everyone that can make the event should attend. It is important to take this information back to our Posts as well. The Suicide Prevention staff, Outreach Coordinator, and the Mobile Vet Center from the VA will all be on hand during the convention in the vendor area and offering assistance throughout the week. We have also invited a representative from Bergmann and Moore attorneys to speak on the PACT Act, Camp Lejeune water, and toxic exposures with our attendees. Bergmann Moore is the law firm that trains The American Legion Service Officers and has partnered with our organization to provide advice to our members. We understand the bombardment of ads and lawyers our Veterans are experiencing and want to provide someone to talk to about these issues at our convention.

Some other highlights are from our youth programs are scheduled for Thursday morning. The Oratorical Contest champion, Junior Shooting Sports State Champion, and the Boys State Governor should be on hand on Thursday morning as well for acceptance of his award and brief remarks. Also on Thursday the National Security-Public Safety Committee will hand out awards to first responders from across our State that stand guard and answer the call when needed. There will be others that come to present services offered to veterans and families around the State. Special Olympics of Maryland is a great partner for the Department and donations to their programs throughout the year make the dreams of many young people come true. Our Department Convention offers a glimpse at the busy year, and above all allows the Department to thank the committees and commissions for their hard work, and to thank the Posts that are the heart and soul of our organization. On top of all that it gives the Legion Family a week of fun in the sun, and ability to share the good times through a family vacation or get-away. Make this a fun time for the whole family.

Post Everlasting on Wednesday evening is a fitting tribute to those that have answered the last roll call since last Convention. If you have never seen this ceremony it is worthwhile and conducted beautifully by Vince Duly, the singers, and all the volunteers.

The 104th American Legion National Convention is in Charlotte, NC, August 24-31, 2023. If any Legionnaires are planning on attending the National Convention, they should make sure they get registered as a delegate. Delegate selection is controlled by the Districts and Regions. The initial selection is done at the District Caucuses and then ratified at the Region Caucuses. Any question about delegate selection should be referred to District leaders.

In closing, I pass along well wishes from myself, and my family, for a happy Independence Day celebration and a safe summer season.

Russell W. Myers, Jr.  
Department Adjutant

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**Department Sgt-at-Arms**  
By Frank Price

You can Help. Helping is easy. You may or may not know that I’m a United States Navy veteran and proud of it. I served as a Selected Reserve (SELRES) force sailor on several Naval Reserve Force (NRF) ships. My first assignment, for a several years, was on the (NRF) USS Steinaker DD863 and I was also a member of her decommissioning crew. For several years now I’ve been the Chairman of the USS Steinaker Reunion Association. Recently I got a message from the wife of a former crew member and shipmate; he and I worked together in the Combat Information Center (CIC) onboard ship, we’ve been the best of friends ever since. She shared with me that he was recovering at home from a life-changing surgery and that he would love to hear from me. Sadly, I got emotional from this news, and it was a few days before I could get myself together and call my friend. But I immediately sent out word to shipmates who served with us, one of which had been in a similar condition as him. All of them responded with calls and cards and his wife later told me how it totally changed his condition and outlook on things. When I finally made my call, it was like old times, and he assured me he’d see us all at the ship’s reunion in September of this year. The lesson here is that little things can make a big difference and change things for the better. Our American Legion if full of opportunities for each of us to do some little things that will have a big impact on the lives of veterans and their families and our community.

Here in the American Legion Department of Maryland we have countless ways for anyone to make a difference in someone’s life or community. It doesn’t take much from you to do this. Every Post in this Department is a portal to improving the lives of Veterans, Children and Youth, Family, and Community. How may you ask? Come watch a Legion Baseball game, help a Post sponsored Boys Scout Troop, stop by the Post and meet other veterans. And how about buying tickets to a legion function and bringing the family. Easy right?

We need volunteers, Not so Easy you say. Well, call a fellow legionnaire to see how they are doing (Buddy Check), become a member of your Post’s Executive Committee or just be the ONE. As member of an organization like our American Legion we provide Services, Comfort and Assistance to veterans and their families each day. Please join us.

With summer arriving and many of us are getting ready for our Department Convention in Ocean City MD, let’s all get outside the home and engage with our Legion Family, believe me you’ll enjoy it. I hope to see many of you at the Convention; it looks like a very busy time for me but if you see me say hello. To Commander Ronald L. Holcombe I wish to thank you for this appointment, it’s been a great year and I’m inspired by your efforts, and you’ve done work for the Department of Maryland. I also know your work on behalf of veterans will continue. And I’ll continue to work alongside Legionnaires helping to fulfill the Four Pillars of the American Legion.

Frank Price  
Department Sgt at Arm
Sr. Vice Commander
By Ruth A. Higgins

I want to thank everyone for their support, encouragement and hospitality shown to me this past year. It’s been an honor and pleasure to attend not only Post, District, Region and Department events but National meetings and events as well. I have traveled 12,009 miles this past year. My full report will be included with the end of year reports at the Department Convention.

As your Department Senior Vice Commander, I oversaw Membership. The Department of Maryland has teetered Nationally between 7th and 9th place the majority of the year and carried 1st place within the North East Region. While we didn’t achieve our goal of 100% by March 31, 2023, “Congratulations” to District 4 Commander, David Heredia, Southern Maryland Region Commander, John Baines, who played for Talbot Post 70, Easton, MD, who have been entered in the Baseball Hall of Fame, in Cooperstown, New York. (Harold Baines, who played for Talbot Post 70, Easton is one) not to mention the amount of money in scholarships awarded. We need to improve our image within our local communities as to who we are and what we do!

Thank you to Eastern Shore Region Commander, Nikki Randolph, North Central Region Commander, David Heredia, Southern Maryland Region Commander, John Countryman Jr. and Western Maryland Region Commander, Bob Ouellette, for overseeing and obtaining 100% of the Post Inspection Reports and 100% of the Post Data Reports. We’ve had a great year holding revitalizations and events promoting The American Legion. Remember, “Preserve” our memories, “Protect” our benefits and “Promote” The American Legion and its pillars.

Yours In Service,
Ruth A. Higgins
Sr. Vice Commander
The One-Hundred-Fifth Annual Convention of The American Legion, Department of Maryland, Inc., is hereby called, and in conformity with the action of the One-Hundredth-Fourth Annual Convention and the Department Executive Committee, will be held in Ocean City, Maryland, **Tuesday, July 11** through **Friday, July 14, 2023**.

**PURPOSE**

The Convention is called for the purpose of electing officers for the ensuing year, hearing and considering resolutions, and for the transaction of such other business as may be deemed necessary to come before the Convention.

**REPRESENTATION**

The Department Convention shall be comprised of representatives from each Post who shall be members in good standing of the Post by which they are elected, and all Past Department Commanders while in good standing in their respective Posts. Each Post having 15 members in good standing shall be entitled to two Delegates. Each Post having 26 members in good standing shall be entitled to three Delegates and to an additional Delegate for each additional fifteen members after the first twenty-six. Each Post shall be entitled to an Alternate for each Delegate. Membership strength of the Post, for determining Delegate strength, shall be computed as of paid-up membership in Department Headquarters at the close of business on June 6th. All Department and all National Officers listed in ARTICLE VI, Section 1 of the Department Constitution in the year in which they serve (excluding the Department Adjutant if serving as an employee of the Department), and all Past Department Commanders, shall be Delegates-at-large to Department Convention, with right to vote thereat, to be exercised by them with their respective Posts. Every Post shall file the name and number of the Delegates and Alternates to the Department Convention at least twenty days prior to the convening of the Convention, **(no later than June 22nd this year)**, and at the same time pay the registration fee of $20.00* for each and every Delegate, in the case of an Alternate taking the place of a Delegate such Alternate shall be required to pay the registration fee of $20.00* which shall be done when the substitution takes place or sooner; unless and until such registration fees of the Delegates have been paid, the Delegation is disqualified to act for any purpose, and no individual Delegate will be allowed to vote, provided, however, that the mere non-payment of registration shall not deprive a Delegate otherwise duly qualified, of the right to vote in any Region or District Caucus, on any matter (including election of officers) which thereafter is subject to ratification by the Department Convention. Post Commanders are urgently requested to have at least one member of their Delegation on the Convention floor at all times.

*Cost of Delegates will be $30.00 on or after June 23rd.

**VOTING**

**ARTICLE V, Section 3**

(a) On all matters of business except the election of Department Officers, members of the DEC and Delegates and Alternates to the National Convention, and except amendments to this Constitution or the By-Laws, voting shall be by voice. The decision of the chair thereon shall be final unless a vote by roll call be demanded; and upon demand of any person having proper voice, such other manner of voting shall be employed.

(b) The election of all Department Officers, and National Officers, shall be by roll call except where, in the case of individual offices, the necessity of a roll call is dispensed with by unanimous consent.

(c) The election of members of the DEC, and Delegates and Alternates to the National Convention, shall be in accordance with such rule as adopted by the Caucus in and for the Region from which such members, delegates and alternates are elected, but in no case, shall any such rule prevent the nomination of any member from the floor of such Caucus by any person having proper voice thereat. Voting at Caucuses shall conform to the provisions of Subsection (d) hereof.

(d) In all voting, the vote of each Post shall be equal to the total number of delegates to which such post may be entitled. Each delegate shall be entitled to one vote. The vote of any delegate who may be absent shall be cast by the delegate’s alternate, and the vote of any delegate absent and not represented by an alternate shall be cast by the majority of the present delegates from the member’s post. An alternate whose delegate is present may nevertheless move into the place of an absent alternate whose delegate also is absent, and thereby acquire the right to vote, provided said alternate delegate is the senior alternate present at the time. Alternates shall have all the privileges of delegates but may only vote as herein set forth; provided the alternate’s registration fee is paid. At the conclusion of all roll call voting, for each individual election required to be conducted by the Department Convention, the Department Officer conducting such elections shall ask if any Post desires to amend or change its vote; or ask does any Post, which has not cast its vote during the roll call vote, now wish to cast its vote. No Post shall be allowed to pass more than one time. After the Department Officer conducting the election has made the aforesaid announcement and taken due note of any changes in voting and has recorded the vote of any Post which originally passed, then the conducting officer shall announce that the voting is closed and direct that the tally be taken, and the results announced.

(e) All Past Department Commanders, while in good standing in their respective Post, shall be delegates for life to all Department Conventions with voice and vote, to be exercised by them with their respective Post and all Region or District Caucuses at which any election provided for in this Constitution shall be held, and at which their respective Post may be entitled to vote. The failure of such Post to properly register its delegation shall not deprive such Past Department Commander of their right to vote, provided the Past Department Commander is properly registered as a delegate.

(f) All Department Officers as set forth in Article VI of this Constitution, with the exception of Department Officers concurrently serving as a paid employee of the Department, and National Officers of this Department shall be Delegates-at-large to Department Conventions, with the right to vote thereat, in the year in which they serve, to be exercised by them with their respective Post; provided, however, that nothing contained herein shall give any person the right to more than one vote.

**ELECTION**

The following Officers are to be elected. A majority of the authorized vote of the Convention shall elect: (Per ARTICLE V, Department Convention Section 4)

- **Section 4 (a)** The Department Convention shall elect a Department Commander, a Department Senior Vice-Commander, a Department Judge Advocate, and a Department Treasurer, a National Executive Committee member and an Alternate National Executive Committee member for the respective terms for each office as specified in Section 4b hereof. The Department Convention shall elect such other offices as may be authorized by the Department Convention for such terms appointed by the Department Convention.

- **Section 4 (b)** The Officers positions listed in Section 4 (a), elected by the Department Convention shall be nominated and elected for office in the following sequence and for the term of office, as listed:
  1. Alternate National Executive Committee Member - 2 Year
  2. National Executive Committee Member – 2 Year

3. Department Treasurer – 1 Year
4. Department Judge Advocate - 1 Year
5. Department Sr. Vice-Commander – 1 Year
6. Department Commander – 1 Year

**REGION CAUCUSES**

(ARTICLE V, Sections 6-7-8-9)

A caucus shall be held by each Region during, or not more than twenty days prior to, the convening of each Department Convention, at which caucus the election of the Region Commander, (serves concurrently as Department Vice-Commander for said Region), Region Vice-Commander, District Commanders, District Vice-Commanders such Department Executive Committee members, and Delegates and Alternates to the National Convention of The American Legion to which such Region may be entitled by this Constitution shall be held. It shall be the responsibility of the Region Commander in and for each Region to see that at least fifteen days prior notice of any Region Caucus convened for the above purposes shall be given by mail to the Commander of each Post in the Region, and no such Caucus shall be deemed legally convened in the absence of such notice; provided, however, that any Region may caucus at any Department Convention upon three hours notice by announcement from the Rostrum, and all the purposes of this section may thereafter be fulfilled just as though prior written notice had been given. The action of such Region Caucus as to the election of any of the officials named in this section shall not be final until ratified by the Department Convention.

**Section 7.** A quorum shall exist at a Department Convention or at a Region Caucus when one third of the Posts in the Department or Region, as the case may be, are represented by duly elected Delegates or Alternates.

**Section 8.** Delegates to National Convention. Each Region in Caucus not more than twenty days prior to the convening of the Department Convention shall elect one delegate and one alternate delegate to the National Convention, this delegate and alternate delegate is to represent the first thousand members of their respective Region; there shall also be elected a delegate and alternate delegate for each succeeding thousand members.

The five Department Delegates shall consist of the Department Commander, the Department Commander for the immediate prior year, the Department Adjutant, the Alternate National Executive Committeeman and the Department Senior Vice-Commander who hold office at the convening of the next succeeding National Convention. The alternates for these delegates shall be appointed by the Department Commander.

Any additional delegates and alternate delegates
are to be elected by the Region with the highest percentage of their previous year’s membership as of the day that determines the Department Convention membership strength for the Region.

Section 9. Region Election of DEC Members. Each Region in Caucus not more than twenty days prior to the convening of the Department Convention shall elect one representative to the Department Executive Committee for each unit of 500 members or major fraction thereof in the said Region.

The membership strength of said Region for this purpose shall be computed as paid up membership in the Department Headquarters at the close of business on the 35th day prior to the convening of the Department Convention and as of July 1st, in each year, which ever date shall first occur.

In the event any Region shall have less than its first and only unit of 500 members, it shall nevertheless be entitled to elect one representative to the Department Executive Committee.

The distribution of the Regions’ representatives to the DEC shall be divided in an equitable manner between the Districts of the Region utilizing the membership strength of each District.

The Region shall submit the names of all elected as above for ratification to the Department Convention such ratification constituting election. At such Caucus each Post shall be entitled to the same number of votes as for the Department Convention. No Region Caucus for the purpose of such election shall be convened sooner than June 22nd, 2023.

MEETINGS

The opening Joint Session will begin at 8:00 PM, Tuesday July 11, 2022. All business sessions of The American Legion, Department of Maryland, will be held in the Convention Hall (Location to be determined) and will start promptly at 8:00 AM on Wednesday, July 12th, Thursday, July 13th and Friday, July 14th, unless changed by the Convention or Department Executive Committee. A quorum shall exist at the Department Convention when one-third of the Posts in the Department are represented by a duly elected Delegate or Alternate.

CREDENTIALS CERTIFICATES

For Credentials Certificates for Delegates and Alternates. A check made out to The American Legion, Department of Maryland, at $20.00* per Delegate, and MUST accompany the Credentials Certificate. All Constitutional Delegates (ART. VI) and Past Department Commanders must also pay the $20.00* Delegate Fee or they can not vote. It is extremely important that the certificates be forwarded to Department Headquarters as soon as possible after June 6, 2023 (35th Day before the Department Convention). District Commanders should personally check each Post under their supervision to see that the above is complied with. All Post Adjutants are charged with the responsibility of returning the Credentials Certificates to us at the earliest possible moment. The delegate fee shall be $30.00 per delegate on or after June 23rd.

AMENDMENTS

Amendments to the Department Constitution and By Laws must be submitted in typewritten form to Department Headquarters by June 3rd, 2023 in time for the Department Adjutant to forward copies to each Post in the Department at least 30 days prior to the convening of the Convention. These amendments require a two-thirds majority of votes of the representation at the Convention. However, the Constitution may be amended without notice by unanimous vote at any Department Convention. (ARTICLE XV, Section 1).

RESOLUTIONS

Resolutions shall be submitted typewritten, in triplicate, to the Resolutions Committee at the Convention, or prior to June 3rd to Department Headquarters. By order of the Department Executive Committee, each resolution MUST have supporting documents and authority attached to each copy. Resolutions submitted to Department Headquarters prior to June 3rd will receive preferred attention. Those submitted after that date will be considered only if the Convention Resolution Committee considers them to be of paramount importance to the Legion.

SPECIAL NOTICE

The thirty-fourth Annual Department Convention, 1952, unanimously resolved no one should be allowed on the main portion of the Convention floor on election day except Officers, Delegates, Alternates and working press. (Ref: Resolution #13)

POST OFFICERS

ARTICLE VIII, Sec. 6 of the Department Constitution states, “All Post Officers for the ensuing year shall be elected, or appointed as prescribed in the Post Constitution and Post Standing Rules, at least twenty days prior to the opening of the Department Convention and they shall assume their duties as such within twenty days after the closing date of the Department Convention.” YOU MAY HOLD YOUR INSTALLATION PARTY ANY TIME YOU WISH; YOUR POST OFFICERS MUST TAKE OFFICE DURING THE TIME ABOVE STATED. THE DEPARTMENT EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE HAS REQUESTED THAT EACH POST FILE A COPY OF MEMBERSHIP ELIGIBILITY DOCUMENTS FOR EACH POST COMMANDER AND ADJUTANT WITH DEPARTMENT HEADQUARTERS. THE DOCUMENTS WILL NOT BE RETURNED BUT RETAINED IN DEPARTMENT FILES.

REPORTS

1. You are urged to promptly file your Certificate of Elections of Post Officers which MUST be signed by both the Post Commander and Adjutant. The Certificate on the bottom of this form means exactly what it says. You MUST EXAMINE the service record of each of your Post Officers to certify their eligibility.
2. Consolidated Post Report Form should be filed promptly.
3. All other Report Forms. If you have lost or misplaced any of these report forms, send an e-mail or call Department Headquarters and ask for a duplicate.

REGISTRATION

For Tuesday the Registration Desk will be open at the Convention Hall beginning at 7:30 AM, July 12th. DO NOT SHOW UP BEFORE THEN AND EXPECT US TO ACCOMMODATE YOU. IT IS IMPOSSIBLE FOR US TO OPEN EARLIER THAN 7:30AM ON TUESDAY.

NO CREDENTIALS ARE REQUIRED FOR ATTENDANCE AT DEPARTMENT LEGION COLLEGE. EVERYONE WILL BE GRANTED ACCESS TO THESE COURSES WITHOUT CREDENTIALS.

On Wednesday, Thursday and Friday we will open at 7:30 AM. You are urged to pick up your Delegate’s Credentials and badges as soon as possible in order to facilitate the business of the Convention. A POST COMMANDER OR ADJUTANT MAY PICK UP THEIR POST DELEGATION REGISTRATION PACKET. ANY OTHER DELEGATE PICKING UP THE POST DELEGATION PACKET MUST PRESENT A WRITTEN AUTHORIZATION FROM THE POST COMMANDER OR ADJUTANT LISTING THEM AS THE AUTHORIZEDDelegate TO SIGN FOR THE PACKET. ALL DELEGATES MUST BE PAID.

THERE WILL BE A MEETING OF THE 2023-2024 DEPARTMENT EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE. THIS IS TO BE HELD IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING THE CLOSE OF THE DEPARTMENT CONVENTION.

THERE WILL BE NO FEE FOR LEGION COLLEGE THIS YEAR. PLANNING IS UNDERWAY TO OFFER COURSES, THE EXACT FORMAT IS STILL UNDER DISCUSSION. (But note there will be no pins or Certificates given out this year.) There is a link to the registration website for the Department Legion College on the Department website at www.mdlegion.org in the left-hand column under Web Letters/Mailings.

Russell W. Myers Jr.
Department Adjutant

Ronald L. Holcombe
Department Commander
CONVENTION PROGRAM
THE AMERICAN LEGION, DEPARTMENT OF MARYLAND, INC.
JULY 11, 12, 13, 14, 2023
CONVENTION HALL, OCEAN CITY, MARYLAND
PRESIDING OFFICER, WILLIAM L. TROTTER, DEPARTMENT COMMANDER

MONDAY, JULY 10, 2023
7:30 AM  Convention Center Set up; Volunteers always accepted
4:00 PM  Southern Maryland Region Fish Fry (Dockside Hall, SW Corner of Convention Center)
(All welcome; donations appreciated)

TUESDAY, JULY 11
7:30 AM  Registration - Convention Hall – Room 213, 2nd Floor
****8:00 AM  Legion College – Bayfront Ballroom, 2nd Floor
9:00 AM  Legion College – Classes Located as Posted
1:00 PM  Chaplain Course – Room 217, 2nd Floor
MyLegion.org Course TBD, 2nd Floor
****6:30 PM  Joint Reception for Opening Session (Light fare; All are invited) (Sponsored by Diamond Games)
8:00 PM  Pre-Convention Joint Session by the Convention Corporation, The American Legion, The American Legion Auxiliary, Eight & Forty, Sons of The American Legion – Bayfront Ballroom, 2nd Floor
Call to Order, Colors, Invocation
Introduction of Distinguished Guests
Principal Address
Benediction - Colors

WEDNESDAY, JULY 12
7:30 AM  Registration - Convention Hall – Room 213, 2nd Floor
8:00 AM  Business Session, Bayfront Ballroom, 2nd Floor
Call to Order, Invocation, Advancement of Colors, Roll Call
Membership Awards
National Staff Introductions
Veteran Employment
Community Services Programs
Rules Committee Report
Expression of Appreciation
Mayor Richard W. Meehan
Secretary, Maryland Dept. of Veterans Affairs
Special Presentations
Historian Report
SAL report
VSO reports

THURSDAY, JULY 13
7:30 AM  Registration - Convention Hall – Room 213, 2nd Floor
8:00 AM  Business Session, Bayfront Ballroom, 2nd Floor
Call to Order, Invocation, Advancement of Colors, Roll Call
Time and Place Report
Resolutions
Children and Youth Report
Americanism Report
Officers Reports
NATL SEC Report
VA & R Presentation

FRIDAY, JULY 15
7:30 AM  Registration - Convention Hall – Room 213, 2nd Floor
8:00 AM  Business Session, Bayfront Ballroom, 2nd Floor
Call to Order, Invocation, Advancement of Colors, Roll Call
Session, Call to Order, Invocation, Colors
Introduction of newly elected Officers of The American Legion Auxiliary
Election of Officers
Installment of newly elected Officers

After Session  Past Department Commander’s Luncheon (Invited Guests)
****7:00 PM  Post Everlasting Ceremony – Bayfront Ballroom, 2nd Floor

After Session  Rehabilitation Luncheon (Invited Guests)

After Session  First meeting of new Department Executive Committee

NATIONAL 6888TH CENTRAL POSTAL DIRECTORY BATTALION DAY / September 16th

What is National 6888th Central Postal Directory Battalion Day?
The National 6888th Central Postal Directory Battalion Day honors the all female, multi-ethnic unit that was predominantly Black and included other women of color of Puerto Rican and Mexican descent.

The mission of the 6888th unit was to clear the over two-year backlog of mail in the European Theater of Operations (ETO) during World War II. The unit was stationed in Birmingham, England, Rouen, France and Paris, France. The 6888th’s motto was “No Mail, Low Morale”. While station in Birmingham, England, the unit worked in three eight-hour shifts seven days a week to sort and redirect an average of 65,000 mail parcel per shift. The Army gave the unit 6 months to clear the backlog in England. The unit clear the backlog in 3 months. After that mission was completed, the unit was assigned to Rouen, France, again with the same mission, to sort and redirect the backlog of mail coming into France. Again, the unit clear the backlog in 3 months. Then off to Paris for the same mission, March 1946, the unit return to the United States and the unit was disbanded at Fort Dix, NJ.

Why was National 6888th Central Postal Directory Battalion Day created?
This national day of recognition is in honor of one of the 6888th Central Postal Directory Battalion members, the late PFC Deloris L. Ruddock who would have celebrated her 100th birthday on September 16, 2023. Ms. Ruddock was one of the five living veterans that attended the 6888th monument dedication on November 30, 2018 at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas.

Since the 2018 monument dedication, the unit has received several awards including: The Army’s Meritorious Unit Commendation Award (MUC) – February 2019; The Blue Historical Unit Marker, Birmingham, England – May 2019; and The Audie Murphy Award, American Veterans Center – October 2019.

And, on March 14, 2022, President Joseph R. Biden, Jr. signed the “Six Triple Eight Congressional Gold Medal Act of 2021” into Public Law 117-97.

How should National 6888th Central Postal Directory Battalion Day be celebrated?
We should honor the National 6888th Central Postal Directory Battalion Day by writing and mailing a card to family, friends and veterans. We should also extend our gratitude to our postal employees in acknowledgment of the work they do.
Warrior Squad

Congratulations to Legionnaire Tim (Squid) Clarke on his selection to participate in this year’s Warrior Expeditions Program. He is Life member of the Reisterstown Post 116.

The Warrior Expeditions Program is a veteran nonprofit outdoor therapy program that supports combat veterans transitioning from their military service by participating in long distance outdoor expeditions.

Tim (Squid) Clarke was very instrumental with the inaugural 9-1-1 Memorial Trail Hike as the participant made his way through Maryland last year.

Background

Historically, military units could spend months marching home from war. During this journey, they would process and come to terms with their wartime experiences. But in today’s age of modern transportation military personnel can find themselves home within a few days of serving in a combat zone.

Since 2001, over 3 million veterans have returned home from war but many of them have never transitioned from their experiences. The Department of Veteran Affairs estimates that up to 20% of post 9/11 veterans suffer from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder.

Recognizing the therapeutic value of long-distance outdoor expeditions, Warrior Expeditions created the Warrior Hike, Warrior Bike and Warrior Paddle Programs to help veterans transition from their wartime experiences.

The Warrior Expeditions consists of:

- 9 Long Distance Warrior Bike Program includes: Great American Rail Trail. 1 Long Distance Warrior Paddle Program includes: The Mississippi River.
- Tim (Squid) Clarke was selected to participate in the Warrior Paddle Program and will depart in June for a 2320-mile paddle down the mighty Mississippi River.
- If you like to support Tim (Squid) Clarke to help with his expenses/supplies or make a donation to the Warrior Expedition Program or even make application to the program please visit https://warriorexpeditions.org/ That’s right! If you give the money directly to Tim (Squid) Clarke, you can’t get a tax receipt. If you donate directly to the Warrior Expedition Program, they will treat it as a restricted donation and put it towards Tim (Squid) Clarke’s gear & they’ll get a tax receipt since we’re a 501(c)3. Or just make a tax-deductible donation to the Warrior Expedition Program.
- They just need to be clear on how they want the donation to be spent.
- Warrior Expeditions is currently accepting applications for the 2024 season. Selections will be announced in January of 2024 and expeditions will start in the spring of 2024.

New Product Announcement from Your Legionnaire Insurance Trust

The LIT is pleased to announce the availability of new insurance products designed to help serve the needs of Department members. They are accessible on www.theLIT.com.

We now are able to offer:

- HEALTH INSURANCE - This product is available for members under age 65 that need health coverage. The site offers a variety of medical plans to meet your individual or family needs. The site is able to qualify you if you are eligible for subsidies under the Affordable Care Act (a.k.a. Obamacare).
- DENTAL INSURANCE – The offerings include a full range of dental plans that are available to individuals and families. We invite you to shop for the plan that best fits your needs
- SHORT TERM HEALTH INSURANCE – This is the type of medical insurance needed by people such as those between jobs who have no medical coverage. The coverage period and premiums are adjustable to meet your requirements.
- TRAVEL MEDICAL INSURANCE – There are numerous plans available for different situations while you are travelling or working overseas.

Please let your members know through your newsletter or by email. Thank you!

Commanders’s Message

Continued from page 1

My concentration has been and always will be based on the (3R’s) Retention, Recruitment, Revitalizations and Legion Programs. I’ve always stated that the fewer members, the less our voice is magnified at the Conference held in Washington, D.C. addressing the VA Legislators for veterans rights and their families benefits, and our communities that are in need of the American Legion assistance.

Convention Election: This year there’s two endorsed candidates for the same position as Department Officers, It has been over 25 years since the last contested election for the same Department Officers position. Good Luck to both candidates, and the unopposed candidates nominated for the other available Department Officers positions. I wish them well, and I hope that they have a better year than the previous year.

My Next American Legion Journey: I have been unanimously nominated and endorsed by the following: Federal Post 19, District 3-4 of Northern Central Region-2 for Alternate National Executive Committeeman for year 2023-25. I’m looking forward to shadowing the incoming National Executive Committeeman PDC Melvin Smullen for the next 2 years. If you’re planning on attending the 105th Department Convention as a delegate, remember to cast your vote for Ronald Holcombe for ANEC. I hope you enjoy the Convention, and learn a wealth of knowledge to take back to your Post. My prayers are for you and your family to have a safe trip traveling to and from the fun-loving sunny Ocean City, Maryland.

Enclosing: I have a lifetime of fantastic memorable memories serving as the Department Commander, I will always treasurer. It’s Been Fun!

Ronald L. Holcombe
Department Commander
Eastern Shore Region

I can’t believe this is the last article for this year! Wow How does time fly!!! Pretty darn fast when you work with some outstanding Legionnaires making that commitment to improve conditions at their home posts and being the one that is out there calling, or visiting, or texting or whatever it takes to ensure that all our Veteran’s know that they are valued! Buddy Checks work!!! The ESR is full of stories being told of those out there reaching out to members that you haven’t seen in a while!

Our Posts in the ESR did a fantastic job this year in our quest to be the first Region to hit 100% in the Department. Every week they made a statement as together as a team we achieved just about every Dept goal by 3 to 4 weeks a head of schedule! That’s teamwork.

We do have a very active Facebook page for our Region, and if you’re bored and looking for somewhere to go or do, check out the page and see all the great events that are going on anywhere from Perryville to Crisfield and a whole lotta stops in between, guaranteed you will find something cool happening…… the food alone is enough for me! Want to be fed well? Come across the ditch to my side…… we got some awesome food in our home posts!

I am extremely proud of every Post in the Eastern Shore Region; all have done a remarkable job in membership; veterans’ outreach; children and youth activities; and so much more. As hard as we worked this year, there is always more to be done, and I am confident as we start strategizing for next year, our results will be just as outstanding!! I am looking forward to all the upcoming Post Elections, District and Region and the opportunity of working with new officers at all levels of Leadership.

Enjoy mid-June – mid July cause after Convention, we are gonna hit the ground running! A final shout out to our ESR District 1 and District 2 Commanders and your teams, the ESR Region SAL Detachment and their teams and the ESR District 1 and 2 Legion Auxiliary Presidents and their teams, together we achieved more than was ever expected. We truly encompassed the team effort and I thank you for all your outstanding work!

As we rush to the end of the year, I wish for all a happy and prosperous summer!!

Nikki Randolph

ESR Commander

District 1 Commander

Greetings Legionnaires. District 1 posts have as a group attained 100% of our membership goal for the district and contributed to the Eastern Shore Region in obtaining their 100% membership goal. We have attempted to work together as a family. We did not require our membership to be 1st to reach our goals. We asked that all our posts strive to give us the best possible outcome utilizing the tools provided and what has previously worked for their posts. Our goal was to solicit new members, renew existing members, transfer as many as possible from our area 297 list, and attempt to get our expired members to rejoin our ranks. We have encouraged our posts to promote veterans and their programs within our communities. We have been and still are successful.

I would like to thank the full membership of District 1 for its support this past Legion year. I wore a hat, stood at the podium, and received the “atta boys” (and girls) for our accomplishments. It has been my pleasure to serve this Legion year. The District 1 membership as a body needs to stand and take a well-deserved “pat on the back” for their past, current, and future accomplishments.

Jim Howeth

District 1 Commander

District 2 Commander

Greetings from District 2 serving Worcester, Somerset, Wicomico and Dorchester Counties State of Maryland.

To date we have all our reports 100% thanks to all our Posts doing a great job. Still working on membership to reach second

Or First place ... “Never give up.” Do “Buddy Checks” every day not just on a membership drive. Someone is sitting at home watching Wagon Train or Gun Smoke waiting for the phone to ring.

We, District 2, planned an event, Four Chaplains, chaired by Ralph Cordrey ... thanks to all who attended.

Think Baseball, Boys State, Boy Scouts give our boys something to think about beside drugs and evil. Take a boy fishing!

Congratulations to Jon David Black for earning the Volunteer Fireman for the State of Maryland. Well deserved.

Thank you for this year as District 2 Commander. I made lots of good friends and hope I made a difference.

I thank Commander Holcombe for lots of encouragement this year. I appreciate you.

Barbara Wharton

District 2 Commander

“The Land of Pleasant Living”

Northern Central Region

“Building a Legion for the Future, One MEMBER at a Time!”

Greetings, from the Northern Central Region Legion Family!

It has been an honor and a privilege serving you as your Northern Central Region Commander. I have enjoyed getting to know you while speaking with you about how we can continue to grow as a team and accomplish our goals as a Legion Family. To all the Post, District, or Region meetings I have attended while visiting the Eastern Shore, Southern Maryland, and Western Maryland regions, I thank you for allowing me to join you. I value our conversations and exchange of ideas about The American Legion Family. They not only helped me grow as a leader, but these conversations have also encouraged me to become a better Legionnaire.

News from around the Northern Central Region:

Since our initial support in December, the Region and the Department have continued aiding Alpha Company 392nd Expeditionary Signal Battalion (ESB) by sending care packages for female soldiers deployed to Kuwait. As of the end of March, the unit has received over
20 boxes of supplies. Thank you to VA&R Commission Chairman Reggie Jordan, Women Veterans Outreach Committee Co-Chairs Anita Stewart-Hammerer and Renee Thompson-Flores, as well as others from our Department for their assistance.

During the quarterly Governor’s Challenge, we discussed hosting training for veterans and their families on Suicide Prevention. This Question Persuade Refer (QPR) is free training being conducted by Harford County Office of Drug Control Policy, and it aligns with our Be-The-One campaign. This QPR training is different from the “regular” QPR that the county provides since it is taught by veterans. It is not a “check the box” suicide prevention course but is a very interactive session of 90-120 minutes. Although this training is being conducted in Harford County, it is open to any interested veteran. If you are interested, please reach out to me, and I will provide you with the point of contact.

Throughout Districts 3 and 4, our Posts have been working hard promoting the Legion programs. Our Legion Family has been actively working programs such as Special Olympics, Legion Baseball, Boys State, Scouting, and Oratorical. These programs, along with supporting local veterans requiring assistance, have been the focal point to promote our Posts, Districts, Region, and Department, ensuring that our military, our veterans, and their families know that we are here for them.

I would also like to extend congratulations to Towson Post 22 Legionnaire Odessa Scott who won two (2) medals and a ribbon in the 37th National Veterans Golden Age Games held May 20-25 in Des Moines, Iowa. Odessa won a 1st place medal for the free throw event in basketball, 3rd place medal for air rifle event, and a 4th place ribbon for corn hole. The games give veterans 55 and older enrolled in the VA health care system an opportunity to participate in numerous sporting events and to know that “Fitness is For Life.” Congratulations Odessa and thank you for making us all proud.

The Northern Central Region Legion Family is extremely proud of Tyler Walch, a member of Patrick Daily-Mark Logsdon Memorial Service Post 17, on his recent graduation May 17, 2023, from University of Baltimore School of Law.

Finally, as the year comes to a close, I would like to thank the Officers of the Northern Central Region, Districts 3 and 4, and the Posts. It is because of your dedication to our community, state, and nation, that we have been successful in promoting the Four Pillars and the Programs of the American Legion. Our Region has meshed as a Legion Family, and I have enjoyed working alongside each of you over the past two years. I look forward to our continued partnership in the years to come.

You have inspired me with our conversations, and the mentorship you have provided me has helped me grow as a Legionnaire and your Commander. To our Past Department Commanders, thank you for always being there when I called. The advice each of you has provided will help me be successful during my journey.

In closing, our tasks are not completed. We have more to do by continuing to work our memberships and our programs and by supporting our communities. Accomplishing these tasks will help make our Legion Family grow. So, for those Legionnaires around our Department that I’ve already spoken with on my visits to your Region, District, and Post meetings, combined with the entire Legion Department, I know we will “Build a Strong Legion Family for the Future, One Member at a Time!”

Thank you all, may God Bless us, and may God Bless the American Legion and our Nation.

Sincerely,

David Heredia, Jr.
Department Vice Commander
Commander, Northern Central Region

#BeTheOne - #VeteransStrengtheningAmerica
Hello Comrades! My, my, my, how time flies when you’re having fun! As another Legion fiscal year comes to a close, I am reminded of the fun times we’ve shared as comrades. The year has had its bumps and bruises, but through it all, we were blessed to have made it thus far. After numerous Department, Region, District, and Post meetings, many stayed back to fellowship and shared a laugh or two. It is those times when one sits back and reflects on their time in the service and fast forward to current situations that either make you laugh or start some really serious conversations.

We, as an organization, focus so much on membership that we sometimes forget that The American Legion is way more than that. Of course, without retentive and new members we’d fail to exist, we must not forget the four pillars on which we stand: Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation, National Security, Americanism, and Children & Youth. Each of these pillars encompasses a variety of programs that benefit veterans, service members, their families, the youth of America, and ordinary citizens.

I would like to thank Southern Maryland Vice Commander Stan Shaw for keeping me on track when it came to the many meetings we’ve had outside the regularly scheduled ones, and for providing attentive oversight of the membership incentives for our Region. To the leadership and comrades of the great Southern Maryland Region (Posts, Districts, and Region); you’ve done a magnificent job and kudos are to be given all around. Thank you for your dedication!

Although I won’t know, until the Department Convention in July, what the future holds for me as a Legionnaire within the Department of Maryland, what I do know is that it was a blessing to have served as the first Commander of the Southern Maryland Region, from 2021 to 2023. To the dedicated Region staff, I know I pushed you hard sometimes – I humbly say, thank you for all your support!

Comrades, please don’t forget to attend the Department of Maryland Convention in Ocean City, MD, from 10 – 14 JULY 2023. On 14 JULY 2023 we have a roll call vote for Department Sr Vice Commander; an anomaly for our Department. Please VOTE COUNTRYMAN for Sr Vice!

May God continue to Bless You, and may He continue to Bless these United States of America!

Still Serving,

JOHN R. COUNTRYMAN, JR.
Vice Commander, Dept of MD
Commander, Southern MD Region

“Failure is an Option” it is Forced Analysis Inculcating Long-term Understanding of Relevant Events

From the Desk of the District Six

My American Legion Comrades, Although it seems the end of the year is among us, I would suggest we look at the Spring and Summer as an opportunity for new beginnings and a chance for a stronger and more effective American Legion year.

The credit for our achievements belongs to the members of our Post. We have conducted training for our officers, raised money for our Posts, participated in pillar programs, and maintained or membership strength as requested by the Department Commander. The Dynamic District Six consists of Commander Kelly Major (Post 54), Commander George Hawley (Post 82), Commander Bob Sprecher (Post 85), Commander Renee Thompson-Flores (Post 170), Commander Scott Deacon (Post 206), Commander Everad Johnson (Post 220), Commander Dan Ion (Post 221), Commander Brenda Bowen (Post 227), Commander Blaque Tate (Post 233), Commander Don Purdy (Post 238), Commander Lance Glover (Post 248), Commander Mike Watson (Post 255), Commander Helen Smith (Post 259), Commander Tony O’Donnell (Post 274), and Commander Wes Simpkins (Post 298). We view our members as the engine that keeps our train moving, while our officers provide leadership and direction.

Effective leadership is expected from our officers, Murray Hall (First Vice Commander), Michael Hill (Second Vice Commander), Glenda Sturdivant (Adjutant), Gary Gifford (Finance Officer), Anthony Hinnant (Judge Advocate), George Hawley (Service Officer), Wes Simpkins (Chaplain), Charlotte Stringer (Historian), and Kelvin Jordan (Sergeant-at-Arms). We came into our term with an agreed upon mission and vision, supported by mature action and accountability. Maturity is the ability to think beyond yourself, see things from the perspective of others, and place their needs above your own. We recognize that good character makes trust possible and strong relationships make mentoring possible. We recognize that we will not be able to develop someone whose character we don’t trust. We know that our committees are where we need development and we agree to make this sure committee leadership is a priority in the days ahead.

As for me, the time has come for me to step down turnover the reigns to my relief. I believe as leaders, we must be performers, but also give our replacements the tools to take our organization to the next level. Over the last two years, the Post Commanders in my District have heard my vision and exceed our goals on various levels. They have done the work and accomplished the mission in each instance. Our officers have been strategic in their thinking and in their engagement, and our mentors have given us sound advice and a road map to success.

Today I salute our mentors, our officers, and our members for a job extremely well done. For God and Country,

Billy Hill
District 6 Commander
Western MD Region

It has been an honor to serve as your Region Commander for the past year and I am looking forward to another year serving the Ferocious Fourth! During the summer, I would encourage you to reflect on why you became a member of The American Legion and what you can do to ensure its success. As part of this reflection ask your friends or family who are not members to join, bring them to a Post event or sign them up. This year in Maryland the fastest growing segment of membership are the Sons of the American Legion. I would also challenge you to bring in 3 new Legion members. Our membership teams cannot sustain the membership without you. It is up to everyone.

You may have joined because a friend told you it was a good thing, or someone met you and shared what the American Legion does. That happened to me 27 years ago. Someone I knew said you should join the Legion. I did. Why did I stay? For the following reasons:

**Camaraderie:** The American Legion provides an opportunity for veterans to connect with others who have shared similar experiences and to build friendships based on a common bond.

**Service:** The American Legion is committed to serving veterans and their families, as well as supporting local communities through various programs and initiatives.

**Advocacy:** The American Legion advocates for the interests of veterans and their families at the local, state, and national levels, helping to ensure that veterans receive the benefits and support they deserve.

**Education:** The American Legion offers a variety of educational programs and opportunities for veterans and their families, including scholarships and training programs.

**Honoring Service:** The American Legion is dedicated to honoring the legacy of those who have served our country, including organizing ceremonies and events to recognize the sacrifices made by veterans.

As a Legioneer, there are several reasons why you should be more involved and consider getting active and engaged in the organization:

**Community and Fellowship:** The American Legion provides a community of like-minded individuals who have served their country and who share a common bond. As a member, you can connect with other veterans and build lifelong friendships based on shared experiences.

Advocacy and Support: The American Legion is committed to advocating for the needs and interests of veterans, and as a member, you can help advance these important causes. The organization lobbies for better healthcare, improved benefits, and more resources for veterans.

Programs and Services: The American Legion offers a wide range of programs and services designed to support veterans and their families. This includes assistance with employment, education, and housing, as well as programs to support mental and physical health.

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From the Desk of the District 7

Hello and good day to our veterans. Our members, and all our officers District, Region, and Department. As we come to a conclusion of this year of the American Legion I want to thank everybody for their support and for depending upon Me to carry out the duties as your District Commander. I enjoyed doing it with its ups and downs and was satisfied with a job well done. By all district Officers through the hard times and the smooth times. Elected to do it again? I certainly would! Our District programs have moved along smoothly and we are now able to get back into the Martinsburg VA Center to continue with programs that were stopped due to the covid-19 pandemic. Now that that is over and behind us it’s time to move on, pick up where we left off, and continue on with our moving into our third year of the reorganization of this department. Our regional reception and wine jug was very successful once again and I know that both districts working together will make another successful year in our region. We have new officers coming into our post. They will need Guidance, Assistance, And the support of their Post, District and Region. Remember the strength of our post, our districts, our region and our department all goes together with good teamwork and a positive outlook toward new and upcoming things. A lot of posts in our district held some sort of a ceremony to present members with certificates of continuous years memberships whether it be 50, 70 even a post gives their members a 40-year certificate from post level that is very thoughtful. I was able to attend a remembrance ceremony of local area residents who died serving their country, three from Vietnam and two from the USS Cole that was held at post 10 and there is a mural of them or our wall at the post. And each person had family present and received a shadow box and all had a great dinner, please see it sometime when you’re there. Post 10 had a certificate of continuous membership ceremony along with both Post 13 in Cumberland, I know more posts in the district held them but I wasn’t able to get a list of all who did that. Also post 13 and post 24 had their Centennial certificates issued to them earlier this year. They are very nice and are on display at their post. Hats off to everyone and congratulations on a good year. In closing I want to thank everybody once again for your support and your hard work over this past Legion year, I look forward to seeing you all in the very near future I will help you in any way I can for another successful year, I’m sure our Department convention has concluded by the time this Free State Warrior is distributed hats off to the newly elected Department officers and all officers at Region district and post level. Yours for god and country

Keith Clevenger
Commander, 8th District

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From the Desk of the District 8

Greetings from the WMR - District 8 Legion Family

As a Legion Family I personally feel we have had a great second year so far dealing with the Department of Maryland Reorganization. A lot of work has been put in by all 15 Posts in the District to complete and meet the required deadlines, there really hasn’t been a lot of the “Reluctance to Change” that everybody was worried about.

I am completing my second year as District 8 Commander, I want to thank everyone for their support. I wish the next set of officers to best and will always be around to help.

Thanks to all the Posts for their completed Post Inspection Reports, Working on the last few to finish the Consolidated Post Reports that are due. The CPR is a very important tool that The American Legion uses to show all that we do.

District 8 Membership and Retention efforts are still ongoing, District is still in 4th place in the Department. We still have work ahead of us to move forward and make goal. Meet with a couple of struggling Posts to see how we can help.

Our District 8 Oratorical winner Diya Jha won the Department contest on March 5th at Towson Post 22. Jamii and I again went to the National Competition in Indianapolis, if you have never to been at a National Competition it is amazing. There were 12 repeat competitors from last year, she was amazing but didn’t move forward. We wish her luck at Yale where she is continuing her education.

The following Public Safety nominations are forwarded from District 8 Western Maryland Region for consideration for Department Awards.

- Police Officer Nicholas Aylward from District 8
- Fire Fighter Jordan Coe from District 8
- Emergency Medical Technician Charles Hannaby from District 8
- Firefighter Coe and EMT Hannaby were selected by the Department to move on to the National competition.

We look forward to recognizing our District 8 winners in Ocean City at the Department of Maryland Convention in July.

We will have the District 8 Council Caucus at Francis Scott Key Post 11 1450 Taney Ave, Frederick, MD 21701, Sunday June 25th at 1130. Followed the same day with the Region 4 caucus at 2 pm. Looking forward to nominations and elections to continue the great work District 8 and Region 4 are doing. Hope to see all our Officers and Delegates there.

Stay safe and continue doing all you do for The American Legion

Keith Clevenger
Commander, 8th District
MEMORIAL BOOK INSCRIPTIONS

In Memory of James “Jim” B. Foxwell, by Dewey Loman Post #109.
**Baseball**

Happy Memorial Day. This weekend will start our 2023 Baseball season. As of this writing we have a total of 67 teams, Sr. Jr and Sandlot combined. I hope all the teams do well this season and make the playoffs.

Our Sandlot tournament will be played at Joe Cannon Stadium in Annapolis on July 14, 15, 16. Jr. tournament will also be played at Joe Cannon Stadium on July 22 and 23. The Senior tournament is in Frederick on July 21 through July 25. We would love to have a good turnout at these games to show our support to the teams.

To avoid fines teams must purchase insurance by June 1, 2023. The rosters due June 25, 2023 to be able to compete play for this season.

Have a great summer and get out to support your team and this fine program.

Mike Riston
Chairman

**Dewey Lowman Post 109 Hosts Dinner for Puerto Rico Veterans from Lone Eagle Honor Flight**

Last Eagle Honor Flight flew into BWI on April 12th. This was the first Honor Flight which brought 21 Army Veterans from Puerto Rico that served in the following Wars—WWII, Korea and Vietnam. On Thursday April 13th, I had the honor of accompanying these unique soldiers on their trip to see various Memorials in Washington, DC.

I interviewed several of these Veterans and I could write several stories; however, the most Honored Puerto Rico Veteran I met, served in 3 wars. This Army Staff Sergeant was assigned to an Infantry Unit and gave 24 years of selfless service, fighting in WWII, Korea and Vietnam. For his long standing dedication & commitment, this 101 year old soldier was presented with a Purple Heart and a Bronze Star. At the WWII Memorial this awarded Veteran had an emotional moment and was comforted by his fellow comrades.

Many of the Veterans on this Honor Flight served with the 65th Infantry Regiment (established in Puerto Rico & being the only all-Hispanic unit) and became the famous “Borinqueneers” that served in the Korean War. The Borinqueneers were awarded 10 Distinguished Service Crosses (one of the was upgraded to the Medal Of Honor), 256 Silver Stars, 606 Bronze Stars and 2,771 Purple Hearts. In April 2016 the 65th Infantry Regiment was awarded the Congressional Gold Medal.

After our visit to Washington, these 21 soldiers & their assigned guardians were invited to our Post for dinner. There was so much love among these Borinqueneers and this was expressed in various speeches given by those attending. At the end of the dinner, the Honor Flight staff provided “Mail Call”. As you know back then, the only means of communication during these wars was mail—letters from family & loved ones. So, these Honor Flight Veterans were given individual packets containing letters and cards written by people throughout the United States thanking these special Soldiers for their service. It was a great way to end a very memorable event for our Veterans from Puerto Rico.

Fact: Earl Morse, a retired Air Force Captain, founded the Honor Flight Network in 2005. The first Honor Flight came out of Ohio using 6 small aircraft each carrying 2 veterans and flying these 12 soldiers to Washington to visit the newly built WWII Memorial. Today, there are 140 regional hubs in the states and the Network has transported over 250,000 WWII, Korean & Vietnam veterans to Washington to be honored at their Memorials.

Greg (Doc) Reisz
Post Historian
American Legion Dewey Lowman Post 109

**The National High School Oratorical Contest 2023 Department of Maryland Contest: Another Success!**

Our 2023 Department of Maryland High School Oratorical Contest was held on Sunday, March 5, at Towson Post 22. We had speakers from five of our eight districts utilizing the reorganized Department of Maryland structure for the second time. Diya Jha, a senior at Thomas Johnson High School in Frederick, representing District 8, came in first earning her a Department Scholarship Award of $3000. If the name sounds familiar, Diya was also our winner last year. Second Place, and a scholarship award of $2000, went to Jonah Woo, a Junior at Marriotts Ridge High School in Marriottsville (Howard County). He was sponsored by District 4. There were three Third Place awards, each with a $750 scholarship: Cadence Natividad, a freshman at Southern Garrett High School, sponsored by District 7; Lydia Murray, a sophomore at Bowie High School, Sponsored by District 6; and Carmen West, a senior at Chesapeake Christian School in Easton, District 1.

This year’s Assigned Topic, drawn at random, was Amendment 16, concerning Income Tax. The other possible choices were Amendment 6; Amendment 10, and Amendment 14, Section 1. The 2024 Assigned Topics will be announced shortly.

Our six state judges were both incumbents and first timers from various levels of academia, legal, and community service. They brought a diverse perspective on history, the Constitution and public speaking. Many Legionnaires were also on hand as escorts, ushers, room monitors, tabulators, and time keepers. Most had served at post, county and district level in the past. We are extremely thankful for these volunteers without whom the program would not succeed.

Towson Post 22 hosted the contest again this year and their hospitality was top notch. We thank them for their support, without which the event would not have been possible. We especially want to recognize Post Commander Anita Stewart – Hammere and District 3 Commander Kraig Dean for preparing the facility and arranging Mission BBQ for lunch!

The National Contest was held the weekend of April 21-23 in Indianapolis. As the Maryland winner, Diya represented us again this year. A total of 49 candidates participated beginning with nine quarter final contests on Saturday Morning. Each candidate gave their Prepared Oration, followed by the Assigned Topic chosen by their quarter final group. Interestingly enough, Diya’s quarter-final round included two other repeaters for a total of three. Michigan and Kentucky advanced from her group.

On Sunday morning, the three semi-final winners competed in the National Finals: Haley Bock of Indiana, Ian Chung of New York, and Emma Johnson of Wyoming. Videos of this portion of the competition are available at the National American Legion website and on the Legion YouTube channel. Haley collected $25000 for her First Place oration. Ian, Second Place, won $22500 and Emma, Third, won $20000.

Diya (as well as all 49 candidates) won $2000 for being a Department Winner and Semi-Finalists won an additional $2000. Haley is a senior. She will be right across the river next year at Patrick Henry College. Ian and Emma are both juniors, but as National Winners, they cannot compete again. Further information about the contest and the candidates can be found at the National Website.

National Americanism Chairman Mark Avis announced during the Spring Executive Committee meetings that our National Staff has received a letter of intent from Hillsdale College in Michigan to host the 2024 Oratorical Finals! The event will be moved to May 17-19, 2024, in order to use the Hillsdale Campus. The College will provide free room and board, and transportation to the contestants, chaperones, and volunteers. “The Americanism Commission has been looking for a venue worthy of the prestige of the Oratorical Contest finals. Hillsdale exceeds any expectations,” Avis said. Needless to say, we are excited!!

Posts and Districts should begin planning NOW for 2024. Help is available from any committee member.

PDC Will Trotter, Department Chairperson
**PRESIDENT’S MESSAGE**

It has been an honor and joy to be the President for the Department of Maryland. I have met some amazing people and reconnected with some wonderful friends on this journey. Working side by side with Commander Ronald Holcombe and SAL Detachment Commander Larry Ford has been a joyous fun-filled ride with two great leaders. We have made some great memories that will last us a lifetime.

One of the most exciting highlights of this term would be the kayaking outing with a group of veterans and their families. On May 20, 2023 I joined four veterans and two family members of veterans at Smallwood Park in Marbury Maryland to kayak with Team River Runner. Jim Weiner gave us full instructions on what we would experience. Once we got into our kayaks. He fitted us, each with a life jacket, and a kayak paddle and pulled out our kayaks and assigned them. It took some getting used to, I eventually got familiar with how to hold the paddle correctly and utilize it to maneuver right left back and forward. I had a ball on our trip hour round Smallwood Park. There were only two of us who had never paddled before and one of us was nine years old. The kid took to the water with no fear or anxiety, and before you knew it, he was often paddling. For me, it took a little while longer to get used to the paddles balancing the kayak and letting go of my fear of tipping over the kayak. I’m not fearful of the water, but I did have the fear of tipping over the kayak. While kayaking I met a veteran named Alan who took time to ease my fear and anxiety of tipping over. Alan began paddling a little over a year ago and this year he has joined as a volunteer with Team River Runner. He comes out to paddle frequently and attends almost every event. Since becoming a volunteer, he has had special training in various types of kayaking, and in a few short months, he will go on a sea kayak event from Minnesota across Lake Superior to Isle Royal. Listening to his experience and how he found healing in the Kayak group, made me further understand how this program is valuable to our veterans and their families. I even had the opportunity to tell him all about the American Legion and the Legion Family. Team River Runner provides kayaking around the state, and it is FREE to any veteran or their family. All you must do is register and show up.

I chose Team River Runner as my President’s Project with a goal of $10,000.00 because river to recovery is a great way for veterans and their families to connect and start the healing process. For more information contact Tim Wiener Chapter Co-Coordinator for Southern Maryland Team River Runner (Phone: 301-751-3149 - Tim.Wiener@TeamRiverRunner.org) Check out their website https://www.teamriverrunner.org/ and Facebook page https://www.facebook.com/groups/394715387765395

I am looking forward to seeing you all in Ocean City in July

Carmin Brittain
ALA Department President
Email: carmin.brittain124@gmail.com

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**Golf Tournament Returns to Rum Pointe**

Duffers, hackers and even golfers! The William C. Kesting is set for June 10 as the prelude to the annual Department of Maryland Annual Convention in Ocean City.

Nestled on the bay side on greater Ocean City. Rum Pointe is near the former course, Ocean City Golf Course and is closer in to U.S. Route 50.

Plaque prizes will be awarded for the top three finishing teams along with longest drives for men and women and closest to the pin hole for both genders.

There will also be putting prizes at the start of the tournament along with other raffle gifts.

Entry fees are $400 for team or $100 per golfer. This included a round of play and the awards lunch.

Those in the 2022 tournament who did not receive their plaques due to an oversight of the company will receive their awards at the luncheon. With the Southern Maryland Region Fish Fry the tournament will make for a full day of fun and joy.

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**Western MD Region**

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Opportunity for Leadership: The American Legion provides opportunities for leadership and personal growth. As a member, you can serve in leadership roles, attend training and development programs, and participate in community service projects.

Honoring the Legacy of Service: Finally, the American Legion is committed to honoring the legacy of those who have served our country. As a member, you can participate in ceremonies and events to recognize and honor the sacrifices made by veterans.

In summary, being a member of the American Legion can provide a sense of community and fellowship, the opportunity to advocate for important causes, access to programs and services, opportunities for personal growth and leadership, and a way to honor the legacy of those who have served our country.

Bob Ouellette, Sr.
Dept Vice Commander
Commander, Western Maryland Region

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**S.A.L. Commander**

Wow, it is hard to believe that my year as Commander of the Great Detachment of Maryland is almost over. It has been an honor to represent so many great hard-working men of the Sons of The American Legion.

I want to recognize my First Vice Commander, Joe Lohman for the outstanding job that he has done in membership. I also want to thank Second Vice Commander, Mike Obrenski, my Project Chairman, Bill Stem and all my Committee Chairman’s on the outstanding jobs that they have done. I am proud of each and everyone of you!

I want to thank the Posts, Squadrons, and Individuals who donated to my project, because of your generosity we are able to buy a gator, refurbish the air conditioning/heat in the cabins and fix and buy new bunks.

Our Juniors program is up and running. They elected officers and are having meetings and fundraisers. Wish them well and give them all the help you can. They are doing a great job!

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**NEC**

Continued from page 3

College doesn’t accept funds from the GI Bill. Veterans are given priority for Hillsdale’s Freedom Scholarship. A Veteran who applies, meets the criteria, and is selected receives a free full ride to Hillsdale College.

There were 15 recipients from Maryland who received 2023 American Legion Legacy Scholarships totaling $73,504.11.

Congratulations goes to Billy Hill who won Category IV of the District Commander Race to the Top Challenge.

As this will be my final warrior article as your NEC, I want to thank everyone for your support and the honor to serve as this Department as National Executive Committeeman for the last 2 years. Melvin Smullen, if elected at the Department Convention, will be taking over as your NEC at the conclusion of the National Convention in Charlotte, NC. He is more than capable and will serve the Department well.

David Johnson
National Executive Committee
Legislative Session Yields Several Veteran-Friendly Bills

The 2023 Maryland General Assembly fresh off an election period yielded 16 bills deemed veteran-friendly with nine passing for a 57 percent success rate.

Chief among them were the Heroes to Hometown Act giving career military members 55-years-of-age or older a 20 percent tax elimination in Tax Year 2023, raising to 25 percent the following year. For the first time, the legislation also provides a $5,000 tax relief for military retirees.

Members of the Maryland National Guard including airmen and women will now receive free medical care including dental services.

Spouses of those who were killed in action, missing in action or prisoners of war will receive a college scholarship to local educational institutions.

Most critical was the passage of a bill allowing free burial service for spouses and minor children in any of the five Maryland Veteran Cemeteries operated by the Department of Veteran Affairs. This has been a priority for the American Legion Department of Maryland.

Also the Assembly passed a bill for expedited and temporary licensure for health care professionals who are spouses of active service members who transfer to the state.

A bill allowing a donation through the Maryland Tax form benefiting the Maryland Veterans Trust Fund after three session attempts was finally passed.

In a departure from normal procedure, Governor Wes Moore moved the bill ceremony on veteran issues from the State Capitol to the site of the Maryland National Guard in Baltimore County on May 11th.
LIFE INSURANCE

VA also offers life insurance to Veterans, service members and their families. VA life insurance programs and benefits include Servicemembers’ Group Life Insurance (SGLI), Veterans Group Life Insurance (VGLI), Family Servicemembers’ Group Life Insurance (FSGLI), Traumatic Injury Protection (TSGLI) and VA’s newest offering: Veterans Affairs Life Insurance (VALife).

Servicemembers’ Group Life Insurance (SGLI)

SGLI provides affordable term life insurance coverage up to $500,000 to active-duty service members and reservists. Service members are automatically enrolled in SGLI upon entering the military, and monthly premium rates are based on amount of coverage selected.

Veterans Group Life Insurance (VGLI)

VGLI allows Veterans to extend and keep their life insurance coverage after leaving the military. VGLI provides coverage up to the amount of SGLI coverage that the Veteran had while in service, and premium rates are based on age and the amount of coverage desired. Veterans must apply to convert their SGLI to VGLI within one year and 120 days after separating from the military.

Family Servicemembers’ Group Life Insurance (FSGLI)

FSGLI provides coverage to spouses and dependent children of service members, with coverage amounts up to $100,000 for spouses and $10,000 for each dependent child. Premium rates for spouses are based on the amount of coverage desired and their age. Coverage for dependent children is provided at no additional cost. FSGLI coverage can also be continued after separation from the military.

Traumatic Injury Protection (TSGLI)

TSGLI is a unique feature of SGLI that provides financial assistance to service members who experience a traumatic injury during their service. TSGLI coverage provides a tax-free lump sum payment ranging from $25,000 to $100,000, depending on the severity of the injury. This benefit alleviates the financial burden that can arise from a traumatic injury, such as medical expenses and other unexpected costs. TSGLI coverage is automatically included with full-time SGLI coverage with a premium rate of $1.00 per month.

Veterans Affairs Life Insurance (VALife)

VA’s newest life insurance program, VALife, offers up to $40,000 in guaranteed acceptance whole life insurance to Veterans age 80 or under with any level of service-connected disability (0-100%) with no time limit to apply. VALife has no medical requirements for enrollment, builds cash value, has fixed premium rates for the life of the policy, and has fully automated online enrollment with instant decisions about eligibility. Veterans age 81 or older may be eligible to apply for VALife under certain conditions.

VA DISABILITY AND SOCIAL SECURITY DISABILITY

Social Security pays disability benefits to people who can’t work because they have a severe medical condition that is expected to last at least one year or result in death. Federal law requires this very strict definition of disability. While some programs give money to people with a partial disability or a short-term disability, the Social Security Administration does not.

The VA pays disability compensation to veterans who have a service-connected disability resulting from a condition that was incurred during or aggravated by active military service.

SSDI and VA disability compensations are not affected by each other, so you may be eligible to receive both. However, you must apply for them separately. It may be possible to also qualify for Supplemental Security Income (SSI), depending on income and resources. Here’s a side-by-side comparison of the differences between SSDI and VA Compensation:

VETERANS HEALTH ADMINISTRATION

During the VSO & Congressional Stakeholder Meeting on 17 May 2023, the Acting Director for the VA Maryland Health Care System mentioned the monetary donations from 2 American Legion Posts. The first one was from American Legion Benedict A. Andrew Post 296, they donated $12000.

The second one was from American Legion Dorchester Post 91, they donated $15000.

These donations will be used by the Veterans Affairs (VA) Maryland Health Care System to benefit Veteran patients throughout the state.

Kudos to both posts!!

Please call or send questions to serviceofficer@mdlegion.org. Our office number is (410) 230-4420. All calls made from our office will appear as 1-800-827-1000 since we are co-located with the Veterans Benefits Administration at the Baltimore Regional Office.

Adrian Gamboa
Department Service

Reminder: To continue to receive the Warrior please make sure your dues are paid by the end of the year.