



For God And Country . . .

# FREE STATE WARRIOR



VOLUME 61, NUMBER 1

BALTIMORE, MD.

Winter 2024

## Commander's Message

Ruth A. Higgins, Commander, Department of Maryland

As I write this, Jack Frost is nipping at my nose, reminding me that winter is just around the corner. Be mindful of the needs of others, some may not be as snug & warm as yourself. I've had the honor to represent the Department of Maryland at numerous events, here's some of them: I attended the National Convention in Charlotte, NC; attended the Department Commander's Training in Indianapolis, IN; various post/district/region activities & programs; installations; monthly North East Region zoom meetings; held monthly department officers meetings; volunteered at the SAL's Youth Campout; attended the Department AUX's Fall Conference; funerals for fellow veterans as well as PDC Murdock. I had the privilege of witnessing Gov. Wes Moore sign two executive orders: 1. Establish a memorial to veterans of the Global War on Terrorism 2. Preventing suicide among military service members, veterans & their families, traveling 7,800 miles.



With membership, we've been floating between 8th - 14th Nationally. We met all our membership goals to date, congratulations! There's still more work to do, emphasize "value in membership", remember, our heritage, "service to veterans, service members, their families & our communities". Make "Buddy Checks"; "Be the One" to listen; get involved in legislative issues involving military/veterans. Plan Legion Family events, hold a community service project.

I am humbled to serve as your Department Commander, I thank you for your support & encouragement. May you all have a blessed holiday season & a healthy, Happy New Year. As always, "Preserve" our memories, "Protect" our benefits/rights, "Promote" The American Legion, & our pillars.

**Yours In Service,  
Ruth A. Higgins  
Department Commander**

## Department of Maryland Awarded American Legion Auxiliary National President's Award for Excellence

INDIANAPOLIS—The American Legion Auxiliary, Department of Maryland, was honored to receive the prestigious National President's Award for Excellence by American Legion Auxiliary 2022-2023 National President Vickie Koutz. This award was presented at the American Legion Auxiliary's National Convention, recently held in Charlotte, North Carolina.

The National President's Award for Excellence is presented annually to one (1) Department within the National American Legion Auxiliary that represents the "best of the best" in planning and implementation of the American Legion Auxiliary's mission. Selection is based on applications that address the Department's achievements in five (5) of the Auxiliary national goals and objectives.

The Department of Maryland, under the leadership of Past Department President Carmin Brittain, successfully implemented multiple community-based programs over the past year with a focus on Children and Youth, Community Service, Junior Activities, National Security and Veteran Affairs and Rehabilitation. Thanks to the hard work of the over 19,000 members, and the thousands of volunteer hours and donations, this award was possible.

The American Legion Auxiliary (ALA) is a community of volunteers serving veterans, military, and their families. Our members also support the mission of The American Legion in improving the quality of life for our nation's veterans. Proud sponsor of ALA Girls Nation, National Poppy Day® and recognized for advocating for veterans on Capitol Hill, the more than 550,000 ALA members across the country volunteer millions of hours annually and raise millions of dollars in service to veterans, military, and their families. Founded in 1919, the ALA is one of the oldest patriotic membership organizations in the U.S.A. To learn more and to volunteer, join, and donate, visit [www.ALAforVeterans.org](http://www.ALAforVeterans.org).

*The American Legion Auxiliary, Department of Maryland, was honored to receive the prestigious National President's Award for Excellence by American Legion Auxiliary 2022-2023 National President Vickie Koutz. Past Department President Carmin Brittain pictured to right with Award, Also pictured Maryland Auxiliary Delegation members at National Convention in Charlotte, North Carolina. Pictured left to right, President Joanne Weis, Marilyn Thomas, Paula Grimes, Past President Carmin Brittain, Linda Wallace, Linda PK Green, Alta Glotfely, Past National President Linda Newsome, Connie Johnson, Lynnette Dean, Wendy Rice-Morton, Starr Purnell and Nola Willis*

*Photos by: Sharon Holter*



# Reflections of an Adjutant

By Russell W. Myers, Jr.

This article marks my eleventh full year serving as the Department Adjutant. As in previous years, I would like to take this time to thank everyone for their support, and hope we can continue to serve our veterans, youth, and our communities together. I see every day the impact our Legion Family makes, and it makes me proud to assist you in any way possible. The job truly is rewarding when making a difference in the lives of so many.

The holiday season is upon us, and great times with family and friends are in order for the remainder of the year. During this time of festivities, please keep in mind those struggling and in need. Far too many this time of the year is cold and lonely. As the last line of our preamble so ably charges us, "To consecrate and sanctify our comradeship by our devotion to mutual helpfulness", remember and heed these words during this time and every day of the year. Our faiths and morals teach us to be benevolent and serve our fellow men and women, so take some time out to honor our faith and the bedrock of our organization by helping those in need. Buddy Checks have become instrumental in our organization and our Veteran community. The simple gesture to reach out to members and make them feel that someone cares about them takes little effort but has a lasting impact. I lost a dear friend 2 days after Christmas years ago as he was struggling with his feelings and the readjustment from his combat service, so let us all rededicate ourselves to watching our battle buddies a little closer this time of year.

Every year I like to remind our members that the holidays mark a time of celebration and renewal of our bonds together. These last two years it is truer than ever that we all face a difficult few months, no matter the reason for the struggles. As the last line of our preamble so ably charges us, "To consecrate and sanctify our comradeship by our devotion to mutual helpfulness", remember and heed these words during this time and every day of the year. Don't forget to check on your sisters and brothers in arms, and make sure the holidays, separation, or any other woe do not leave them feeling empty or alone. Take some time to catch up with old friends, and to share the holiday spirit with all our fellow veterans and their families. Donations to community services is essential to get through the difficult cold months, and we all know The American Legion Posts are working to have impacts on the lives of others every day. Let us commit to never allowing this mission to fail, or our organization to not be there when our nation's Veterans need our help.

For the second part of my thoughts this time, I would like to recall a fond memory of my early experience with The American Legion. At Carroll Post 31, like many others we have a tradition of conducting Post Everlasting services. For many years these services were conducted by our Post Chaplain, and Past Department Chaplain Reverend, Dr. Fred Eckhardt. Pastor Eckhardt's tireless service to the countless members of police departments, fire departments, and veteran service organizations and their families is beyond words to express a value. During each of the services, Pastor Eckhardt would recite a poem called "That's Why I'm a Legionnaire" and explain to the families in a brief passage that the words to the ode were a simple expression of why we served and continue service in The American Legion. This poem has been printed in The Legion Magazine before, but I thought everyone may enjoy its words, and the next time someone asks you Why should I join...

## "Why Join"

*For God and country, to serve and care,  
that's why I'm a Legionnaire.  
To make my country a better place  
and meet my neighbor face to face.  
To help the distressed, their cross to bear,  
that's why I'm a Legionnaire.  
To face with courage the coming day,  
and teach my children how to pray,  
To make my flag a symbol rare,  
that's why I'm a Legionnaire.  
And when our great commander calls,*

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# Department Sgt-at-Arms

By G. Douglas Willey

Comrades, I bring you greetings from the Department SGT AT ARMS Bunker. It is in a very secure and secret location on the Eastern Shore. All communication to the membership will be very forthcoming in future articles.

Since our last FSW article I have visited District 2 and District 5 and espoused the great work both districts are doing. Also was fortunate to attend the National Americanism Commission mtg in Indianapolis. Great time fantastic information that was brought to bare to bring back to the Departments throughout the nation. Had the wonderful opportunity to walk the museum at national Headquarters.

Again, uniform of the day at all official meetings of the American Legion. Meaning uniform cap, they are purchased through emblem sales. The cost is approximately \$60.00 with shipping. For male veteran they come in 2 styles Ft Knox and regular. For female veterans there is specific style for female. If you are an officer at any level, this is a requirement being in uniform of the day. This should not even be up for discussion. No ball caps, cowboy hats, fishing caps are allowed to be worn at meetings. When you are at Post meetings and wish to speak to the membership you should rise and speak

clearly for the benefit of the membership as well as the adj taking minutes.

Remember where we all came from the military, we all have had military customs and courtesies classes. We all know how to render a proper salute in saluting the colors.

Remember the holidays are right around the corner be nice and be patient and enjoy the freedoms that we have and that we all defended. May God Bless us all and may God bless our troops

No matter if your and old breed or new breed you are a Legionnaire breed, be proud of that be proud of what we do. For over 100 years of serving America, veterans and their families. Always remember, 100% Americanism.

In comradeship,

**G. Douglas Willey**  
Department of Maryland  
Sergeant AT-Arms



# From the Chaplain's Desk

Greetings Comrades, First, we want to wish all of you the best during the upcoming holiday season. Looking forward to seeing some of you at the Christmas Party. Secondly, we would like to acknowledge the humanitarian work that Darrell Truesdale, Nathaniel Russell, and Vanessa Deal are doing to feed, clothe, and find shelter for homeless veterans. Most of the donations they make are at their own expense, and during a time when they could be resting. There may be others who are performing the same type of service and to them, we say, keep up the good work! If you want to help, make a donation and/or volunteer, if you have spare time.

A friend sent me this in a text message and it is something that should be shared.

"Never Stop Praying and Never Stop Believing"

God is able to solve any problem you may have, help you overcome any obstacle, and work out things for your good Very Quickly!

Please continue to pray for yourself, your family, and friends; for those you know and others throughout the world who have lost their loved ones, lost their homes, and don't know where or when they will get a drink of water or food.

Respectfully submitted,

**Marian C. James**  
Department of Maryland Chaplain



# Sr. Vice Commander

By David Heredia, Jr.

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

**G**reetings, Department of Maryland Legion Family! Thank you for the support of our communities, veterans, active-duty service members, guardsmen, reservists, and their families.

On Veterans Day we honored and expressed our deepest gratitude to you, the brave men and women who have served and continue to serve our nation. Your selflessness, sacrifice, and dedication to preserving our freedom and democracy inspire us all. Thank you for your service and the sacrifices you’ve made for our country.

One way that all veterans can ensure that we keep contact with each other and preserve our freedoms is through service in The American Legion. The success of The American Legion depends entirely on our membership. This membership holds a significant importance in allowing our Posts, Units, SAL Squadrons, and ALR Chapters to support our active-duty military, veterans, their families, and communities. Without this dedication and support, our National and Department organizations could not exist.

Our Posts serve as vital hubs for veterans to connect, share experiences, and enjoy camaraderie. These spaces offer a sense of belonging and understanding among those who have served. Advocacy for Veterans actively engages in supporting veterans’ rights and benefits. Your work to ensure that the concerns and needs of veterans are addressed at local, state, and national levels is critical to the well-being of our veterans. Your community service contributes to the communities through various service projects and initiatives. This includes involvement in local charities, organizing events, and participating in civic activities to demonstrate a commitment to community viability.

Your support of our Youth Programs helps sponsor and support initiatives, scholarships, and educational opportunities. This involvement helps shape the future by investing in the education and development of youth. Our Posts provide education which plays a role in fostering patriotism by organizing events and activities that celebrate and honor the nation’s history. This includes ceremonies, parades, and educational programs to instill a sense of national pride. In some cases, our Posts provide

emergency response during times of crisis and can serve as community centers for emergency response efforts. They may coordinate resources and assistance for those affected by disasters.

Our American Legion Posts also provide for social interaction and recreational activities. This fosters a supportive environment where veterans and their families can relax, socialize, and participate in various events. Legion Posts offer a platform for veterans to mentor each other, sharing insights and advice. This camaraderie helps address challenges faced by veterans as they transition to civilian life. Our posts are integral to the fabric of communities, serving as centers for veterans’ support, advocacy, community service, and patriotic activities. They play a crucial role in connecting veterans with each other and with the broader community, contributing to the well-being and strength of both veterans and society at large.

Finally, let’s talk about this year’s GOAL of 41,741 members. Our National Commander has tasked our department with a 3% growth in membership. By working together and recruiting 1,216 new members into our department, or 304 new members into each region, we can reach this goal. We are asking each post to recruit at least 10 new members and maintain a 100% retention from last year’s numbers, understanding that we must also account for those members who joined Post Everlasting and that not every post will recruit 10 new members. Remember, we are “Better Together”! It highlights the importance of cooperation and unity in achieving common goals. Our goal is to stop the slide and increase membership. Together we can accomplish this goal of achieving 100% membership!

We can reach this goal through our involvement in working the programs and by being visible in our local communities. We will be successful. Now, together, let’s all “Build a Legion Family - a Legion for the Future - One MEMBER at a Time!”

**David Heredia, Jr.**

**Department Sr. Vice Commander**

#BeTheOne

#VeteransStrengtheningAmerica



# NEC Report

Melvin G. Smullen, National Executive Committeeman

**I**bring you greetings once again from our Newly elected National American Legion Commander, Daniel J. Seehafer from Wisconsin. Our commander was sworn in at our 104th National American Legion Convention held in Charlotte, North Carolina. I congratulate our own JR. Hall for being elected and sworn in as our National SAL Commander. We also have five National Vice Commanders that were elected and sworn in. They are as follow: Robert M. Shreve (Georgia), Raymond L. Vail (Kansas), Charles D. Aucoin (Louisiana), Willard H. Roy (New Hampshire) and Randy D. Edwards (Utah). The Department of Maryland falls in the Northeastern Region; in which Willard H. Roy is our National Vice Commander. I spent the week of October the 9th in Indianapolis for the primary purpose of attending the NEC on October 11th and 12th. Twenty-Five Resolutions were presented to the NEC for review and approval. All twenty-Five were approved. There were three Resolutions that I would like to bring to your attention. Resolution #16 changed the name of Department of Mexico to the Department of Latin America. Resolution #17 states that as an adult (18) who has contact with children will be required to complete Sexual Abuse Awareness Training and a criminal history background check screening and if you do not admit you cannot participate in programs involving children. Resolution #25 gave the Finance Commission approval to draw funds from the reserve Fund and that fund would be replenished from the revenues received. The

present Legion Funds were not efficient enough to cover the Legion expenses. The dates for future National Conventions are as follow:

- New Orleans, Louisiana August 23-20/2024
- Tampa Bay Florida August 22-28/2025
- Louisville, Kentucky August 28-Sept 3/2026
- Kansas, City, Missouri August 27-Sept 2/2027
- Columbus, Ohio August 25-August 31/2028

The National Security Commission successfully hosted the top seven senior enlisted leaders from across DOD, and the U.S Coast Guard during the National Convention. The event was extremely well received by Legion Members in attendance and even the members of the panel.

The American Legion continues to monitor activities in Congress for a possible shutdown. The current continuing resolution expires November 17, and the Legion is working with Congress to advance appropriate funding bills. Hopefully, the outcome of this will be positive. Our new National Commander, Dan Seehafer called on Congress recently to end its political standoff and prioritize legislative action to avert a government shutdown. The Military Services is presently in a recruiting crisis except for the Space Force and Marine Corps. In 2022, the Army fell short of its recruiting target by 25%, missing 15,000 of its target of 60,000 recruits.

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## THE FREE STATE WARRIOR

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 Vice Commander .....Robert Oullette  
 Vice Commander ..... Eric V. Warthen Sr.  
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THE FREE STATE WARRIOR Subscription: \$3.00 per year to non-members of The American Legion. Members of the Department of Maryland, \$1.50 of the yearly dues pay for publication.

You are eligible to belong to The American Legion if you served honorably in the Armed Forces of the United States during these periods:  
 April 6, 1917 to November 11, 1918; December 7, 1941 to the cessation of hostilities as determined by the U.S. Congress.

# Adjutant

Continued from page 2

*and taps are sounded for each and all,  
Forget not to breathe a prayer,  
And thank the Lord I'm a Legionnaire.  
-- Author Unknown*

I now want to touch on Boys State. Boys State has been a program in the Department since 1947 when 36 boys attended the session at Fort Meade. Last year 100 boys attended, and our program continued its return to a normal operation. The Boys State program needs additional staff. We are always looking for volunteers to join our staff and the duties are varied including city counselor, supply, medical, and security. The program is rewarding for our staff and if looking for a place to have an impact on youth of our State this is the assignment to fulfill that need. All staff undergo sexual abuse prevention training and a background investigation. As the number of boys applying is growing again, the need for city counselors is critical. We have lost several people that have helped over the years and without new volunteers the program's ability to properly educate the youth may be impacted. Please reach us at boysstate@mdllegion.org if interested.

In closing, I pass along well wishes from my family for a wonderful holiday season, Merry Christmas and Happy Hanukkah to everyone. Enjoy the time with family and friends, but always keep in mind those brothers and sisters in need.

**Russell W. Myers, Jr.**  
Department Adjutant

# NEC

Continued from page 3

The Airforce missed it's goal by 26,500 active-duty airmen by 10%. The Air National Guard and Airforce Reserve missed their target by 30%. The Navy missed it's target by 6,000.

The American Legion just announced partnership with Wellcare, the Medicare brand of Centene Corporation. Through the multi-year partnership, Wellcare will serve as the Official Medicare Provider of the American Legion. Wellcare will provide innovative products and solutions that complement the benefits that eligible veterans receive through their Veteran Affairs (VA) Healthcare.

I hope everyone enjoyed Veteran' Day and took advantage of your gratuities. Thank you for your service always. I had the pleasure of being invited to be the Guest Speaker at two major events during Veteran's Day. I was presented with a Maryland General Assembly Citation for being the Guest Speaker at one event.

BE THE ONE TO SAVE A VETERAN'S LIFE!

**Melvin G. Smullen**  
National Executive Committee

**AMERICAN  
LEGION**

**ON YOUTH**

**CHANGING LIVES – SAVING LIVES**

American Legion youth programs instill values, develop responsible citizens and inspire future U.S. leaders.

Youth mentorship is one prominent way former members of the U.S. Armed Forces in The American Legion live up to the motto, "Veterans Strengthening America." Around the

world, they passionately provide structure, guidance, education and opportunity for young people to better understand their nation, contribute to it and achieve their dreams.

Today, more than ever, donation-funded American Legion youth programs brighten the future by showing young men and women what

it means to live, compete, serve and lead in a free nation.

Your charitable gift will help The American Legion continue its mission, one community at a time, through youth programs that have made life-changing differences for nearly a century. No other organization has the same kind of impact for so many young Americans.



## Boys State and Boys Nation

Each year, more than **16,000** young men learn firsthand how state and federal government function in a democracy.

**"The first step in studying and understanding the Constitution is that it is meant to empower as well as protect us. We are responsible for it. I urge you to learn everything you can about it, which I know you do, because I went to Boys State."**

- Hillsdale College President  
Larry P. Arnn, 2021



**16,067**  
American Legion Boys State  
participants sponsored by local  
posts in 2023.

## Oratorical Contests

Nearly **2,500** teens a year learn the U.S. Constitution and how to speak fluently about it, with the opportunity to win hundreds of thousands of dollars in scholarships at the local, state and national levels.



**\$6.42**  
million  
Amount in  
scholarships  
presented to 2,962  
competitors in The American Legion National  
Oratorical Contest since its inception.



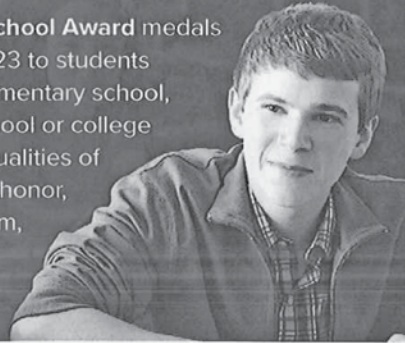
**"This contest achieved something that many classrooms and schools across America simply cannot achieve. It has taught thousands, myself included, how to become stronger as a person and how to use that strength to protect the ideals of the Constitution."**

- 2019 National American Legion  
Oratorical Contest winner Patrick  
Junker, Waukee, Iowa



# 18,547

American Legion School Award medals presented in 2022-23 to students graduating from elementary school, junior high, high school or college who exemplify six qualities of character: courage, honor, leadership, patriotism, scholarship and service.



## Junior Shooting Sports

More than **2,300** American Legion clubs worldwide impart the values of discipline, gun safety and sportsmanship each year to nearly **12,000** competitors, who strive to be the very best and earn college scholarships.

# 11,811

American Legion Junior Shooting Sports competitors in 2022-23.

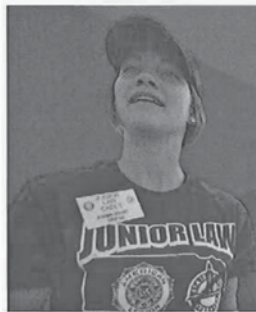


## Baseball

American Legion Baseball is much more than a game. It is an oath to work hard, dedicate oneself to fitness, good sportsmanship, community service and responsible citizenship. Nearly **50,000** athletes play on approximately **3,000** American Legion Baseball teams each year.

# 7,583

Participants in American Legion Youth Cadet Law Enforcement programs in 2022-23.



# \$622,500

Amount in American Legion Eagle Scout of the Year scholarships awarded since 1983.

# \$2,014,236

Amount American Legion posts donated to local Scouting units in 2022-23.



## Golf Tournament Planning Underway

We are trying to improve turnout for our annual convention golf tourney scheduled for Monday, July 15, 2024 this year.

We are sending out notice of the purchase webstore being available before the holidays in case loved ones want to purchase for their family members.

The link to registration and payment is <https://mdlegionconvention.org/collections/kesting-memorial-golf-tournament/products/american-legion-department-convention-kesting-memorial-golf-tournament-golfer-sign-up>

Please get the word out and help us get this info to the right people.

The Wm. C. Kesting Memorial Golf Tournament, July 15, 2024, at a Berlin, MD course to be determined.

Tournament play will be a Scramble (Captain's Choice, Best Ball)

The annual William C. Kesting Golf Tournament, prelude to the Department of Maryland Convention in Ocean City is underway with its committee charged with conducting the yearly competition a comprehensive planning phase.

Already with signups posted on the Department's website, the committee want to make the 2024 event one of the best in the tournament's history.

Its first task is to sign up teams and recruit sponsors. Sponsor fees range from \$75 to \$5,000. The higher ranges cover the cost of the Awards Luncheon (\$2,000) and the tournament (\$5,000) Appropriate signage and other recognition will be available to donors at the Rum Pointe Golf Course in nearby Berlin, MD, near West Ocean City.

Committee members feel the golf fees are an ideal Christmas gift or as an award by Posts for their excellent contributions to Post activities.

Members of the committee include Patrick Guibao, Chair and head of the Department's Legislative Committee; James Marchinke, Co-Chair and past Department Commander; Joseph D. Pruden, Jr. Chairing the Department's National Security Commission; Charee Reckner, DEC member; Jeff Hotchkiss, Commander of Post 13, Cumberland and Margaret Steele, Post 13 member and active with the Western Maryland Region.

This group wishes to express their hopes for all Maryland Legionnaires and their families to enjoy a warm, wonderful Christmas and a happy and rewarding 2024.

**Patrick Guibao**



American Legion Proctor Kildow Post 71 Family Hosts Post Visit September 23, Department Sr. Vice Commander David Heredia and Regional Vice Commander, Bob Ouellette visited Post 71. Post Leadership, Members, Legion Riders, SAL and Auxiliary, 35 in attendance. It was an opportunity to engage in personable and productive communication with a Q&A in a lunch setting. Topics included: Post Membership Plan, Mentorship, Community Involvement and engagement and planned activities, with focus on the 4 Pillars and the American Legion Programs. Membership praised the Leadership of the Sr. Vice and Regional Commanders, their Shared ideas, Individual conversations and the extra effort made to visit the post. Members felt revered, and valued. This kind of acknowledgment is crucial for Morale, Productivity and Motivation building a Successful Post Family.



Dor-Wic Post 218 in Sharptown (Eastern Shore District 2) held an Open House on Sunday, October 1. Post 218 celebrates this year with our first female commander, two department committee persons, and our state's National Executive Committeeman. Our SAL Squadron also has a Detachment Committeeman, Darryl English. We are proud of the leadership that shines from this small post. Pictured L to R: DEC Ralph Cordrey, NEC Melvin Smullen, DEC Dennis Renehan, and Post Commander Jen Wheatley.

## 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](http://www.theLIT.com).

### We now are able to offer:

**ID Resolve 360 delivers a comprehensive level of protection ... actively monitoring your identity to help identify early signs of theft and then stepping in to protect your money and your financial reputation if you fall victim to identity thieves.**

**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.

Below is just a sample of the insurance carriers that are offered.



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

## Are Your Friends and Family ... A Member of Our Family?



When asking an eligible person to join The American Legion, Auxiliary, or SAL, remember to extend the offer to include their eligible friends and family members.

# Treat Day at American Legion Post # 109

**T**runk & Treat: All the neighborhood children and their parents enjoyed another fantastic Trunk & Treat Day at American Legion Post # 109 in Arbutus on Sunday, October 29th. Once again, this year Mother Nature cooperated with us. The day was sunny and warm. We had a Bouncy House for the kids and plenty of hot dogs, chips and sodas. All the children looked good in their costumes and they certainly got their bags filled with the “trunk” goodies. The main event of the day again featured the K-9 Patrol from Annapolis. We certainly want to thank the following Police Officers and their K-9’s for taking time out of their busy schedules so they could be here with us: SGT Chris Tucker (Annapolis PD) with his K-9’s Peko and Atak, SGT Steve Deal (Capitol PD) with his K-9 Dawson & OFC Brandon Griffin with his K-9 Max. The kids had a great time interacting with the dog, enjoyed petting them and talking to them. However, once the officers gave the dogs a command, they were all business. SGT Tucker hid a bag of controlled substance on one of the trailers on the parking lot. Once the dog got the scent he immediately sat down. These dogs are trained to find drugs, bombs and “bad guys”. SGT Steve put a “bite sleeve” on his arm and made a motion to do harm. When OFC Griffin turned Max loose, he immediately went for the “bad guys” arm and wouldn’t let go until he received the command to do so. Personally, I think the dogs had more fun

then the Police Officers. Once again, we can’t thank them enough for attending this event and entertaining the “Arbutus Kids”. Also, we want to thank our many volunteers for making this event well attended by the community.



# Still Serving America

**J**unious Lewis and Jack Milburn conducting a pinning ceremony at Woodholme Assisted Living in Pikeville.

Pinning veterans during Veterans Day ceremonies conducted on Veterans Day.

Still Serving America

**Jack Milburn**  
National Vice Commander  
2018 - 2019  
Team 100



*A photo of the Commander of American Legion Post 24 Wesley B Harper awarding the Lowes Manager in Cumberland Maryland the award for supporting veterans and hiring more veterans than anyone else in Allegheny County.*



*This is a photo of Post Commander Wesley B Harper American Legion Post 24 Frostburg, DM awarding The American Eagle Scout Award and American Legion Patch to Gavin Ryan of Scout Troop 24 which is supported by Post 24 for achieving the rank of Eagle Scout.*

# REGION/DISTRICT DATA

## Eastern Shore Region

On behalf of the Outstanding Legion Family of the ESR, we truly wish everyone has a great holiday season.

With that said and the Be The One initiative, the holidays are the most traumatic for many of our Legion Family this year. For some this may be the first holiday season without a loved one, we are in winter time and soon we might experience some extreme weather, and some of our families may be suffering and without adequate heat; food, or something else. We must be cognizant of ALL of our members and make that effort to call and check up on those we know facing hardship.

Be the One in your post to make those buddy calls. Set the example for others. Prepare food baskets for those in need in your Legion Family. Invite those without families to join you in your celebrations. Help your Legion family in any way you can, there is no gesture too small or too big that may mean the world to someone struggling this season!!

A quick shout out to District 2 on their tenacity and determination to hit 100% membership sooner rather than later!! You Rock! District 1 you're not that far behind and you know how I roll... I believe we will take our rightful place at the top before too long! You keep doing what you are doing! Cause it's working!

The ESR tentatively has a MYLEGION training session scheduled for January 14th at Dorchester Post 91 in Cambridge, this training is open to anyone who needs more training in membership processing. We haven't had much interest yet, but it's early.

Starting in January, the ESR is going to try a new training method; and see if we get better results. Every month we plan on doing mini revitalizations and training sessions for every post that we can get to. If you won't come to us.... We will come to you! I think this is a great idea, because we can get through more extensive training with just a post and their members, then we are having with group trainings. Watch your emails ESR..... Ha! Our Training team will offer Commander and Adjutant training, Committee Training, Membership Training; Understanding the reports, the importance of them and why you should meet the due dates; Parliamentary procedures, and more! Bigger trainings that are planned are Judge Advocate, Service Officer, and Chaplain training. Coordination for these classes have already begun, so watch your emails or our ESR Facebook for updates. Of course, when the dates are set, we will ensure they are reflected in the Dept Calendar. Have a great Holiday Season!!



**Nikki Randolph**  
ESR Commander

### District 1 Commander

Greetings Legionnaires of District 1: First want to thank each Post that has completed their Post Inspections and have met their membership goals. Please continue to press forward, reach out to our membership and thank them for their continued support of the American Legion and its programs. Ask them, if they haven't already done so to renew that commitment by renewing their membership by December 15, 2023. In a perfect world we'd each hit 100% by December 31, 2023, that is my Christmas Wish. I'm blessed to serve this District and to work alongside such outstanding people. 1st Vice Commander Kevin Schreiber, 2nd Vice Commander Earnest "Hawk" Hawkins and I are here to support your efforts. Reach out to us and we'll schedule time to join your local membership team in making calls and visiting with members to help with revitalization efforts. A few things to remember as we approach the holidays. Buddy checks are essential, ESR meeting is December 3, 2024, 1400 at Dorchester Post 91, Cambridge, MD. District 1 meeting is December 10, 2023, 1300 at Susquehanna Post 135, Perryville, MD. If you haven't already done so please push the Oratorical Contest, we are



getting close, reach out and educate young men and women and get them registered for Boys and Girls State. Again I want to thank every Post as we move forward to achieve our goals.

Happy Holidays and Seasons Greetings,

**Ken "Radar" Huddleston**  
Commander, District 1  
Eastern Shore Region  
Department of Maryland

### District 2 Commander

Let's Not Forget. So many times I see members of the military and civilians thank those who served. Recently my wife and I made a trip to Georgia and I was shocked and surprised about how many thanked me for my service. My wife who is retired Army and a gold star child who lost her Dad in Vietnam, was walking right next to me and had a military hat and shirt on received no thanks. I noticed that even when she was alone and walking in front or behind me which often happened, I would get a Thanks and she got none. She told me that is why you really hardly see any female veterans wearing shirts or hats because they know that they will not get acknowledged like their male counterparts. To many times we forget that women have served in our military and served from Private up the ranks to General. They have become the forgotten and with so many female homeless in the United States we need to take time to Honor and thank them. So, the next time you see a veteran male or female please say THANKS its free.



**Leonard T. Ward, Jr.**  
District 2 Commander  
"The Land of Pleasant Living"

## Northern Central Region

"Building a Legion for the Future,

What are we thankful for? I am thankful for the sacrifices made by those men and women who came before me, that allow me to live in this great country. Sacrifices not only by the veterans, but also their families. We often forget about the spouses, parents and children who gave up so much to carry on while our brothers and sisters were deployed. More so the sacrifices they made when their loved ones didn't return. Whether peacetime or wartime, thank you for your sacrifice and for giving me the opportunity to be a part of this continued service for God and country. I hope you enjoy this holiday season and have a happy and healthy new year.

I am fortunate, lucky, blessed, whatever you want to call it, to have been selected to attend the National American Legion College this year. I, along with Orlando Nesbit, represented the Department of Maryland as two of 53 legionnaires to attend this year. However, my favorite attendee was Sarge, a service dog attending with John Brouse in District 4. Sarge even got his own diploma. We learned quite a bit about resolutions, protocol, meetings, Be the One, etc. More importantly, we learned about ourselves and the people in our assigned districts. My district had business owners, a retired VA disability judge, construction supervisors and business managers. Our military service was so diverse with ranging from me, a lowly 3rd class petty officer to a retired Army Colonel. We were all able to learn from each other, and more importantly, come together as a team to attain our goals each day. Our district began to gel almost immediately, and we were the first district to report our elected officers. Our District Facilitator (mentor) was Autrey James, Past Commander of the Department of California. Through the leadership and assistance of the NALC staff, Dean and Chancellor, we went from 53 individuals to 1 group with a common purpose. In any level of the American Legion we





# REGION/DISTRICT DATA

need to build on our relationships. Attend your post, district and region meetings. Come early and stay late. Relationships are not built during meetings, but are built in the times we spend socializing and discussing our ideas before and after. Visit other posts inside and outside of your district. You might learn something, or you may give that post an idea they desperately need. Remember, we are one.

You are in for a serious treat if you have not heard the National Commander speak. Daniel J. Seehafer, from the Department of Wisconsin was elected this past year at the National Convention. His eloquence and mannerisms make him one of the best speakers I have ever had the privilege to listen to. He will be in Maryland the weekend of March 16 & 17, 2024, so make sure to get your tickets to the banquet right away. His passion for this organization, his passion for the members, his passion for the programs and his passion for helping all veterans is clear. During his address to the NALC Class of 2023, he mentioned that he wants us to reflect on the three "C's" of leadership. Competence, character and commitment. Many times, we put someone in a place of leadership because no one wants to take the role. Is that leader competent, or just a placeholder? Does the leader possess a good character that you can be proud of, and support? Is this leader committed to the mission and vision of the American Legion? If these three items cannot be answered with a resounding yes, we are failing the organization. Commander Seehafer asked the graduates and guests, "Are you willing to make the commitment to the American Legion?", to which we unanimously answered, YES!

Wreaths Across America is an outstanding organization. Posts in Harford County are working together to place wreaths in several local cemeteries. The West Point Society is sponsoring the ceremony at Baltimore National Cemetery this year. The ceremony will be honoring PVT Joseph J. Balek, who died of combat wounds in 1944 during one of the battles in Belgium. PVT Balek posthumously received the Purple Heart and Bronze Star. These awards were found in a desk drawer in Post 180. We found out that someone bought them at a yard sale, because the family had no use for them. They have been on display in Post 180 since I found them 12 years ago. We shared that information with the West Point Society, and Past Post Commander, Jon Royer told the story to the organizer of the event at BNC, so they chose him as their veteran of the year. The Hamilton Young Marines along with the Civil Air Patrol will be hosting the wreath laying at Holly Hill Memorial Gardens in Middle River. If you have not yet purchased a wreath, please consider supporting one of the many ceremonies around your area.

Lastly, we all continue to serve this great organization. Most of us are 100% committed to the mission and vision of the American Legion. Some of us serve when we can, and a few do just enough to get by. Michael Unger was one who was committed. He took on the role of Post Commander more than once. He had just began reaching out to schools in the region and district to try to get some interest in Junior Shooting sports, and to set up relationships with posts and ROTC programs. Mike was serious about the programs of the American Legion at Dundalk Post 38 and had taken on responsibilities in the District 3 and Northern Central Region councils, and he assumed the position of District 3 Adjutant at the most recent meeting. His sudden passing has left a void that will be difficult to fill with the passion and drive he showed. Mike will always be remembered as a serious legionnaire, who liked to have fun. When he wasn't at work or working the American Legion Programs, he loved to sing karaoke and to watch the Ravens and Orioles with his wife and fellow legionnaire, Ann. We can never truly understand what someone goes through when they lose the love of their life, or their parent, or their child, but we can relate to the feelings that come from it. Each of us have an opportunity to learn and grow from Mike's untimely passing. It is my hope that you will accept that commitment to the organization and learn to Be The One when you are needed, and to reach out when you are in need. Reach out with a "Buddy Check" because someone just needs to know that you are here for them.

**For God & Country,  
Eric V. Warthen, Sr.  
Department Vice Commander  
Commander, Northern Central Region**

## **From the Desk of the District 3**

**S**GT Alfred B. Hilton Memorial (SABHM) American Legion Post 55 "2nd Annual "Community Back to School Bookbag Giveaway"

It was another successful year in helping Harford County's students (elementary, Middle, and High School) prepare for the upcoming school year! The SGT Alfred B. Hilton Memorial (SABHM) American Legion (AL) Post 55 partnered with several community organizations and churches to provide school bookbags (backpacks) and supplies. SABHM AL Post 55 was able to donate over 400 backpacks, each filled with school supplies. This event emphasizes the Children & Youth Pillar, which is one of the Four Pillars of the American Legion. With assistance and partnership with Ames and Clarks United Methodist Churches, NSTEP, Living Hope Outreach Ministries, APG Federal Credit Union, Buffalo Soldiers Association of West Point, Inc., Harford County Alumnae Chapter, Delta Sigma Theta, Inc., Maryland Tri-County Chapter of Federally Employed Women, ICOMMUNITY, and AAAAsk, LLC. Representatives from the Harford County Department of Social Services and Title 1 Schools also joined in the community event. The President of Harford County Community College President, Dr. Theresa Felder even stopped by to speak with attendees. Rainey Day College Foundations provided information on student scholarships while Entro Services provided counseling services for individuals and families.

SABHM Post 55 also provided Voter education and registration to event participants. Emphasis was placed on registering first time voters and young adults. Participants were provided with dates on the primary and general elections. SABHM Post 55 successfully registered six new Voters.

A huge thanks to the Bel Air Police Department for setting up a full display, including a motorcycle for the students to sit on while they were enjoying the interactions with Bel Air's Finest. More importantly, when the event needed an accessible location, the Harford County Community College was very gracious to provide the usage of their parking lot space to accommodate this event. According to the event organizers, Rev. Dr. Comrade Andrée Mountain-Campbell, Dr. Antoinette Coward, and Ms. Brinae Robinson; all of the volunteers were amazing! A huge thanks to everyone for their support to our students as they return to school for another year of enlightenment. Lastly, the Commander of SABHM Post 55 was also excited as Post 55 executed this event. These events are what allows the American Legion to make a difference locally, and on the state and national levels. It's who we are and what we do.



**Henry (Hank) Allen  
District #3 Commander**

## **From the Desk of the District 4**

**L**et's start off by saying this is the season of giving, so let us all give. Our prayers up for peace. District 4, I thank each post for all you do and supporting your community and programs to let them know we are still serving.

I would like to thank each post for the support you have given with helping the homeless veterans. District 4 have donated clothes, food, and health care items. This is really what the buddy check is about, making sure no one is left behind, and making sure that those less fortunate than we do have a chance and know someone still cares. That is how the posts in District 4 feel and have shown.

I am very proud to be a part of this district.

Thank you all for allowing me to spearhead our district. You all make me proud.

In your service

God Bless America and Bless our veterans for their service



**Darrel N. Truesdale  
District 4 Commander**

# REGION/DISTRICT DATA

## Southern MD Region

### From the desk of: Dept of MD Vice Commander

Greetings Comrades, Wow, time certainly flies, doesn't it? Today I bring you greetings from the Comrades in the Service Region also known as Southern Maryland Region. Since the last Free State Warrior, we celebrated the birthdays of the United States Navy and our United States Marine Corp. Nothing can replace the rich history of our military and your service.

Over the past three months, our District Commanders have taken pride in working with our Post in a variety of ways. We realized the real work of our American Legion must be executed in the Post. The amount of time and energy we see in our Post members is a clear indication of an increase in motivation and commitment towards the mission and our goals. In the short period since the Department Convention, the Comrades in both of our Districts have reached into the Post and asked our members, "what do you want from our American Legion?" The responses range from better awareness of Veteran services to help for Veterans returning from war. As a result of their responses, we've taken a proactive approach to training our Service Officers while they serve as a voice for the members and a resource for the family of our Legionnaires. During the Months of October, November, and December, we have doubled our efforts to focus on our Service Officers. The key to most our success comes from training our Post Officers to do what they signed up to do. We are a volunteer organization, therefore, we only ask them to do what they signed up to do for the Post, while we provide resources for success.

In Southern Maryland, we use experience from our Past Commanders, members of our Department Executive Committee, and National American Legion College to be successful. As a result of the experience we've received, we identified leadership of our committees as an area which requires more time and effort. As a leader we say this, when a person receives a position or title, some level of authority or power usually come with them. Often in the beginning that power limited, but that's okay because most leaders need to prove themselves with little before being given much. As a new Committee Leader, you should use the authority you are given wisely, to advance the committee and help the people you lead. If you do this, your comrades will begin to give you even greater authority. When this happens you also gain leadership, not just a title.

We aim to be a performance-driven Region. We are busy doing the work, but we do it as part of our service to our Veterans, everything else comes after that. Stop by and visit our Post in the new year.

Happy Holidays to you and your family...

Sincerely,

**Billy J. Hill**  
Department Vice Commander  
Southern Maryland Region



### From the Desk of the District 5

Greetings Comrades, Wow, it appears the year has taken off faster than we expected. District Five has had an unprecedented year so far. This year our leadership team took a closer look at changing the culture of the District and redesigning the way we go after our goals. We started with a complete review of last year's membership and programs. We found there was a need to improve in a few key areas, attitude, training, and consistency in our efforts to improve work done in the post. In Southern Maryland we support our members all year around.

As we embrace the wins we've received this year, we recognize the need to keep the train moving toward our goals, put work into our pillar programs, and educate our members on the activities that matter. Our number one priority are the Veterans we signed up to support. I recognize the Post is only as good as the members. There is no greater influence than the Post Commander in a post. District Five has 18 Posts, and all of them are committed to membership growth, and leading change.

We brilliantly hosted a "BE THE ONE" program that not only informed members of the



program, but provided tools to help others when the phone call comes in, and perhaps save a life. No individual person defines success but Together Everyone Achieves More in our District. The attitude this year changed our results. We have closed the door on last year's experience, embraced our current standing as servants for Veterans and armed our leaders with effective training, coaching, and resources to promote the American Legion across the District.

Our officers attended our Region Training Seminars, supported Children and Youth Programs, and really improved our support of Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation, completed all Post Inspections, reached our 75% membership goal, all of this happened because our Post are "all in" on the mission and vision of our Region.

Congrats to all of our 100% Posts, you are leading our efforts in this Race To The Top of the Department. Gone are the days when our District came short of our goals or missed deadlines. Are programs are better, our membership is up, and we are more proactive. I am extremely proud of each Post. We encourage all of you to keep doing the work we know you are capable of doing on a daily basis.

The District Five family wishes you a Happy Holiday season and a Happy New Year.

For God and Country,

**Melvin Graves**  
Commander, District 5

### From the Desk of District Six

Greetings Comrades, Wow, it appears the year has taken off faster than we expected. District Five has had an unprecedented year so far. This year our leadership team took a closer look at changing the culture of the District and redesigning the way we go after our goals. We started with a complete review of last year's membership and programs. We found there was a need to improve in a few key areas, attitude, training, and consistency in our efforts to improve work done in the post. In Southern Maryland we support our members all year around.

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The District Five family wishes you a Happy Holiday season and a Happy New Year.

For God and Country,

**Murray Hall**  
Commander, District Six  
Southern Maryland Region



# REGION/DISTRICT DATA

## Western MD Region

Recently on Veterans Day, Western Maryland Region came together to honor and express our gratitude to the brave men and women who have served in the military. Along with Sr Vice Commander Heredia, I was honored to attend the Veterans Day ceremony at Boonsboro High School on 10 November. On the 11th, I attended the Francis Scott Key Post 11 ceremony and on the 12th was the key speaker at Gold Star Post 191. These events served as a reminder of the sacrifices they have made to protect our freedom and ensure our safety. Districts 7 and 8 are working hard to improve investments in the Legion through membership. We all need to work together to ensure all veterans are not forgotten.

Veterans die two deaths, one when they die and the other when they are Forgotten. It is a poignant and powerful statement that highlights the importance of remembering and honoring our veterans. When we forget or fail to acknowledge their sacrifices and service, it can feel as though they have died a second time. It is our responsibility as a society to ensure that their memory and contributions are never forgotten. By actively remembering and honoring our veterans, we can ensure that their legacy lives on and that their sacrifices are never in vain.

As veterans, investing in the future of The American Legion through continued membership is an excellent example to America. Every day as Legionnaires we exhibit the courage, dedication, and selflessness exhibited by so many Veterans who have come before us.

As we start a new year, demonstrate your love of Country by encouraging others around you to become a Legionnaire, a Son, or an Auxiliary member. Together we can grow and ensure Veterans are not forgotten.



**Bob Ouellette**  
WMR Commander

## From the Desk of the District 7

Greetings comrades, Veterans, And all in our American Legion family. Our first quarter of this fiscal year for the American Legion is over. District 7 has a lot of good programs going on. We have oratorical candidates, We have Public Safety candidates, Posts are thriving hard to get those membership numbers up. Things are going well. There was a lot of participation for Veterans Day this year from a lot of posts in the district. And reaching out to the community once again. If you weren't able to, please email me any veterans programs you would like me to submit to our district historian. And please look closely at the Be the one Campaign. It is very important that everybody is aware of this and get the word out and keep hard driving on your buddy checks. It's really good to see a lot of our posts getting out and getting involved in the community, Remember we want the community to remember us. Would your community remember your post if it no longer existed? Let's let them know that The American Legion is there for them. Remember to look at what the program monthly reminders are, If in doubt check it out on the department website. We also have the holidays coming up with Thanksgiving, Christmas, New Year's, and it'll soon be Valentine's Day. Remember to do a four chaplains' ceremony at your post in February. As we continue throughout this new Legion year, I want to thank all the officers of district 7 for your hard work and dedication to duty and to our organization without all of us working together a lot of these things would not be possible. I want to thank you again for electing me as your District Commander for this year I will do the best that I can. Also a special thanks to our senior Vice Department Commander David Heredia on his visits to our region and also to the Eastern Shore region Commander Nikki Randolph for coming around and talking about her experiences, accomplishments and spreading her cheer of and in The American Legion. As always remember our individual obligation to the Community State and Nation

**Vaughn K. Beard**  
District Commander, Kerm  
Commander, 7th District

## From the Desk of the District 8

Greetings from District 8, proud member of the Western MD Region Ferocious Four. The holidays are upon us as we are busy in preparation for being with our loved ones. This is also the time of year when those Veterans who are lonely and without family are most affected. Remember to practice "Be The One" with all the Veterans in your post and community. Depression is one of the factors of why people kill themselves. You can make a difference. Look for the different signs that someone may be in distress. Talking about wanting to die, great guilt or shame, and being a burden to others. Feeling empty, hopeless, trapped, or having no reason to live. Extremely sad, more anxious, agitated, or full of rage. Unbearable emotional or physical pain. Behaviors like planning or researching ways to die. Withdrawing from friends, saying goodbye, giving away important items, or making a will. Taking dangerous risks such as driving extremely fast. Displaying extreme mood swings. Eating or sleeping more or less. Using drugs or alcohol more often. You can find out more information at <https://www.nlm.nih.gov/health/publications/warning-signs-of-suicide>.

I have been busy visiting my Posts in District 8. When I get my five minutes to address the members, I focus on three things: Membership, Outward focus, and "Be The One". Membership being important because the money we get for our dues fund some of the Department employees / expenses and most of National. Think of how the American Legion most recently was instrumental in getting the Pact Act approved. This cost money and your dues help pay for this. Outward focus is important to the survival of the Post and perception by the community. You want the local community to know that you care and are doing things to not only help Veterans, but also the community at large. Inward only focus will be the death of you. You don't want to be known as old men / women sitting around drinking cheap beer. If you fully embrace outward focus, this will resolve some of your membership issues. Lastly is "Be The One" campaign that the American Legion has embraced over the past three years. Not only is this our focus on Veteran Suicides, but it is a Marketing campaign so that the public see us as Veterans who care about Veterans. This theme should be the most important part of your Post. Lastly, District 8 had our second annual Martinsburg VA Canteen Poker Ride fundraiser. On Saturday Oct 28th forty bikes and forty-five participants raised \$2,169.00. Two thirds of the donations came from the Posts in District 8 and District 7. We had riders from outside District 8 participate. It was a great day and a safe day. Thank you all so much for everything you do to help our Veterans in need.

God bless you all,

**Cliff Bergstresser**  
District 8 Commander



**If you haven't given  
since the last Warrior,  
it is time to schedule  
an appointment.  
Please give if you are able.  
THANK YOU!**





29449 Charlotte Hall Road, Charlotte Hall, MD 20622

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### Region / District / Post Legend

#### ESR (Eastern Shore Region)

**District 1:** Caroline, Cecil, Kent, Queen Anne’s, Talbot

**POSTS:** 15, 18, 29, 36, 70, 77, 135, 143, 193, 194, 228, 246, 278, 296.

**District 2:** Dorchester, Somerset, Wicomico, Worcester

**Posts:** Post 16, 64, 67, 87, 91, 93, 94, 123, 132, 145, 166, 218, 231, 237, 243, 269.

#### NCR (Northern Central Region)

**District 3:** Baltimore, Harford, Howard

**Posts:** 2, 17, 22, 38, 39, 47, 55, 122, 128, 130, 148, 174, 180, 182, 183, 256, 263.

**District 4:** Anne Arundel, Baltimore City

**Posts:** 14, 19, 34, 40, 95, 109, 127, 139, 154, 156, 187, 213, 276, 277, 285, 294, 300, 332.

#### SMR (Southern Maryland Region)

**District 5:** Anne Arundel, Montgomery, Prince George’s,

**Posts:** 7, 41, 60, 66, 86, 105, 108, 131, 136, 141, 172, 175, 196, 217, 226, 235, 268, 275.

**District 6:** Calvert, Charles, Prince George’s, St. Mary’s

**Posts:** 54, 82, 85, 170, 206, 220, 221, 227, 233, 238, 248, 255, 259, 274, 298.

#### WMR (Western Maryland Region)

**District 7:** Allegany, Garrett

**Posts:** 10, 13, 24, 26, 42, 71, 155, 189, 202, 208, 211, 214, 222, 236, 239.

**District 8:** Carroll, Frederick, Montgomery, Washington,

**Posts:** 11, 31, 68, 96, 116, 120, 121, 168, 171, 191, 200, 223, 247, 282, 295.

## Americanism Commission

As your commission chairman would like to share and encourage participation in the American Legion Americanism programs. Some are familiar but many are not.

Under my commission We have Boys state, Legion Baseball, Ladies Fastpitch Softball, Oratorical, Jr Shooting, Temporary Financial Asst, Special Olympics, Scholarship and Scouting. All these committees have members that are supposed to work the programs and report them on our Consolidated Post Report.

Many other activities Vets in the classroom, American Legion School award which is very easy to participate in. Flag donations to the community presenting a certificate to a family or business who flies their flag every day.

I am saying that these activities on Americanism are the face of the American Legion being out their in the schools presenting a medal and a certificate and a school award medal to a young 8th grader in middle school

or talking to the counselors or PTA about oratorical and Boys state bring a face to the community that we care about the American youth.

In closing, I am asking every Post all 125 posts to work a program. Just do one program for example school award a certificate and a medal cost \$10.00 for a boy and a girl \$25.00 with shipping. Understand that posts cannot do all programs but mainly do one do what I can but do it.

I just want to say we as Legionnaires are on the front line for America, we must promote the love of country and the reverence to our flag. Inform the public about what we do what programs we have available. Remember what is in our preamble 100% Americanism.

**G. Douglas Willey**  
Chairman, Americanism Commission

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Our Fall Conference was a success due to the many chairmen who gave very information reports. They also included wonderful displays. I'm sure many of us, including myself, learned a lot of new information. WE were fortunate to have the National Eastern Division Vice President, Deb Tiernan in attendance with her Distinguished Fall Conference Chairman, Pat Walker taking care of her needs. Kudos to Pat for doing a wonderful job. We also had as speakers, Commander Ruth Higgins and representing the S.A.L. Mike Obremski. Also speakers for Mission Believe, my project and theme for this year. Everyone seemed to be impressed with this project and asked many questions about it. I also was honored to attend a breakfast in Annapolis at the Governor's Mansion with Governor Wes Moore A combat Veteran. At breakfast Governor Moore Signed Two Veteran bills. The first was establishing a



### American Legion Auxiliary



memorial to Veterans of the Global War on terrorism. The second was for Preventing suicide among our military service members, Veterans and their families. I also met the Secretary of the VA, Anthony Woods and Zanita I. Adams Deputy Assistant Secretary office of intergovernmental U. S. Department Affairs.

Wishing everyone a happy holiday.

God Bless America and our Troops.

**Joanne K. Weis**  
The American Legion Auxiliary  
Department of Maryland President  
Cell 410-200-5640  
E-Mail [chickiejo@hughes.net](mailto:chickiejo@hughes.net)

## National S.A.L. Commander Announces Homecoming:

Our own, National Commander, Donald "JR" Hall, has announced his Homecoming date and venue returning to his home state of Maryland on April 12 & 13, 2024. The Event Hotel is the Westin Baltimore Washington Airport BWI Hotel located at 1110 Old Elkridge Landing Road, Linthicum, MD 21090. A special rate has been secured at the Westin for \$163.85 per night (includes 13% tax). Overnight parking is \$8.00 per night. To make reservations call 888-236-2427, use group code "ALH" to book your room. The Homecoming Team put together a few activities and festivities for everyone's pleasure beginning on Friday, April 12, 2024, with a dinner hosted at JR's post home at Glen Burnie 40 starting at 6:00 PM. The cost will be \$40 and includes a Crab Cake and Chicken Dinner, cash bar and transportation to and from the event back to the Homecoming Hotel which leaves the hotel at 5:45 PM with the final run to return to the hotel at 11:00 PM. Saturday Morning, April 13, 2024, will be the start of a trip to our Nation's Naval Academy in Annapolis, MD. The cost will be \$60 and will include your transportation, tour, and lunch at the Naval Academy Officers Club. The bus leaves the

Event Hotel at 9:00 AM for the Academy and will arrive back at the hotel by 3:00 PM. The final event will be the Homecoming Banquet Dinner and Program on Saturday evening at the Westin Hotel starting with a Meet and Greet Cocktail Hour from 6:00 PM to 7:00 PM followed by the Banquet Dinner. The cost of the dinner is \$60.00 which features a Maryland theme and will be served buffet style. The dinner includes Maryland Crab Soup, Miniature Crab Cakes, Old Bay Roasted Shrimp over Rice, Grilled BBQ Chicken, Flat Iron Steak, Pan Seared Mahi, along with vegetables, salad and dessert. For reservations to any of these events contact Homecoming Chairman Joe Lohman, Campaign Chairman Joe Gladden, Adjutant Bill Matoska, or Event Co-Ordinator Tom Deal. A complete Homecoming Package and contact information is hosted on the Detachment of Maryland web site, [mdsal.org](http://mdsal.org).

Yours In Service,

**Bill Matoska**  
Detachment Adjutant  
[matoskaw@yahoo.com](mailto:matoskaw@yahoo.com)  
443-710-9664

## S.A.L. Commander

It's hard to believe we completed the first five months of this administration year for the Detachment of Maryland. This is my favorite time of the year as the crisp fall mornings are upon us and is considered the busiest time of the year for our bluecaps as they work on their squadron fundraisers and events.

I want to thank all our veterans and their service to this great nation. Veterans day was just a few weeks ago and it was an honor attending several of the services dedicated to our veterans in Maryland. I had the opportunity to attend a veteran day service at Frederick Memorial Park on November 11, 2023, and was fortunate enough to meet several veterans from Ft. Detrick. Although it was somewhat chilly outside, the 45-minute event was over the top with several guest speakers and dignitaries throughout Frederick County and Maryland.

As some of you are aware, we started a Detachment Caravan travel team to visit squadrons/posts throughout the state of Maryland. The team consists of the Detachment Commander and Vice Commanders along with anyone else who would like to travel with the group.

In July, the caravan team visited 3 squadrons in the Eastern Shore Region (Jeff Davis Post 18 in Centerville, Cecil Post 15 in Elkton and Susquehanna Post 135 in Perryville).

In September, the caravan team along with SAL WMR Commander John Davies made it a weekend trip and visited 7 squadrons (Dixon-Troxell Post 211 in Funkstown, Clopper-Michael Post 10 in Boonsboro, Joseph C. Herbert Post 222 in Clear Spring, Fort Cumberland Post 13 in Cumberland, Grantsville Post 214 in Grantsville, Farrady Post 24 in Frostburg and Webster B. Harrison Post 26 in Hancock).

In October, the caravan team along with Past Department Commander Pat McCoy visited five American Legion Posts in



Southern Maryland the weekend of October 21st (Gray-Ray Post 220 in Prince Frederick, Jameson-Harrison Post 238 in Hughesville, Ridge Post 255, Arick Lore Post 274 in Lusby, and Stalling-Williams Post 206 in Chesapeake Beach). The team was welcomed with open arms along with tours of their facility.

Our next Caravan trip will be in late November visiting several posts in Baltimore County.

As mentioned in the last issue of the Pride, my project is to build Pavilion at the American Legion Youth Camp in Cheltenham, MD. I want to thank my project chair Dave Hullihan for all his hard work and assistance promoting this project. I also want to give special thanks to the squadrons who made donations to the project at our Summer DEC meeting.

I also want to thank everyone who supported and attended the Detachment Campout on the weekend of September 30th, 2023. It was such a great event where Legion Family members throughout the state of Maryland came out and enjoyed themselves during this annual family tradition.

Until next time, take time to be with your family as the holidays are fast approaching. I look forward to seeing everyone at the Department holiday in mid-December and I wish everyone a safe and happy holiday.

**Joe Lohman**  
Commander,  
Detachment of Maryland

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



THE AMERICAN LEGION  
DEPARTMENT OF MARYLAND

*Proudly presents the*

## NATIONAL COMMANDER'S BANQUET

Saturday, March 16<sup>th</sup>,  
2024, 5:30 pm – 10:00 pm

*Hosted by*

Kent Island Post 278  
800 Romancoke Rd •Stevensville, MD 21666

Phone: 410-643-2728

Email: [esrcommander@mdlegion.org](mailto:esrcommander@mdlegion.org)

**Reservations Required**

**Ticket Price: \$40 per person**



**Daniel J. Seehafer**  
**National Commander 2023-2024**

Saturday, March 16<sup>th</sup>

## NATIONAL COMMANDER'S BANQUET

### SOCIAL HOUR

5:30 pm – 6:30 pm

*(open bar)*

DINNER

6:30pm – 8:00 pm

*(cash bar begins at 6:30 pm)*

PROGRAM

8:00 pm

*(bar closed during program)*

### MENU

*(Contact the legion for special dietary or vegetarian needs)*

#### APPETIZERS

Meatballs

Buffalo Chicken Dip

Fruit Salad with

Cinnamon yogurt

Crudit  Display with MAIN

COURSE

Ceaser Salad

London Broil

Oven Roasted Potatoes

Grilled Vegetables

#### DESSERT

Assorted Desserts

❖ Sunday, March 17<sup>th</sup> ❖

## BREAKFAST BUFFET

9:30 am – 10:30 am

KIAL Post 278 • Price: \$10 per person

### BANQUET RESERVATION INFORMATION

Tickets must be purchased or reserved by February 20<sup>th</sup>, 2023.

**Tickets cannot be purchased the date of the banquet!**

Checks should be made payable to: KIALPost 278.

(If you are attending both the Banquet and Breakfast Buffet, please include total amount on your check when paying.)

Event tickets shall be mailed out within seven days of receipt of payment.

Please note what Post you are member of on your reservation and check.

### HOTEL ACCOMMODATIONS



#### **Holiday Inn Express**

1020 Kent Narrows Road, Grasonville,  
MD 21638

Room Rate: \$187+taxes

#### **RESERVATIONS**

Book online at:

The room block code is NCB

Online Reservation Link:

<https://www.hiexpress.com/redirect?path=hd&brandCode=EX&localeCode=en&regionCode=1&hotelCode=KNTMD&PMID=99801505&GPC=NCB&cn=no&viewfullsite=true>  
or call Phone 410-827-4454

**Cutoff date: February 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2024**

# Department Service Officer

Adrian G. Gamboa

Greetings Legionnaires, It's hard to believe that 2023 is almost gone and the holiday season is knocking at our doors. William and I wish you and your loved ones a Happy Thanksgiving, Merry Christmas, and prosperous New Year.

At our third Department Executive Committee meeting on 19 November 21, 2023, I spoke about the workload the Department Service Office has, the purpose of the this was to make everyone aware of what we do and to ask our clients for their patience when calling or sending an email. Here's a snapshot of the workload:

- Our office has 2 accredited service officers. Each service officer manages 2 email accounts, American Legion and VA. On average we receive between 250-300 emails a month in each account.
- We receive between 400-500 calls a month. Our phone line can support simultaneous calls so if one extension is busy, the other phone can still accept or make calls.
- We schedule appointments for Mondays and Wednesdays.
- We have walk-ins on Tuesdays and Thursdays.
- We don't answer the phones on Tuesdays and Fridays.
- Our office is closed on Fridays, this is our administrative day.
- On average we see around 30-40 Veterans or eligible dependents a month.
- We accept forms for Appointment of Veterans Service Organization as Claimant's Representative (VA Form 21-22) from Maryland and surrounding states, we never turn away servicemembers, Veterans, or eligible dependents unless they have a case at the Board of Veterans' Appeals (BVA), or they did not know they had another Veteran Service Organization (VSO) as their representative.
- On average we accept between 60-70 new POAs a month.
- On average we process between 40-60 claims a month.
- This calendar year we have completed 13 BVA hearings and 7 Pre-determination hearings.

## VETERANS BENEFITS ADMINISTRATION PACT ACT

As of 11/03/2023, there are over 533,055 PACT ACT claims pending and 563,784 Non-PACT ACT claims pending. During fiscal year 2023, the Veterans Benefits

Administration (VBA) delivered over \$163 billion in earned benefits.

### PREDATORY CLAIM COMPANIES

No Veteran, surviving spouse, or other eligible dependents should have to pay for the processing of VA claims. Avoid predatory claim companies, they're illegally stealing billions of dollars in VA benefits from hundreds of thousands of our nation's injured, ill, traumatized, and disabled Veterans. These unaccredited individuals may improperly promise to send veterans to private healthcare providers that will increase the chance for successful decisions or higher benefits, or inappropriately advise veterans to avoid exams from a VA provider. Veterans should never agree to have their VA benefit payments directly deposited into the bank account of a claims consultant. These predators charge Veterans fees often exceeding \$10,000 for little to no work. In reality, Veterans get better results for free from a VA-accredited Veterans Service Organization (VSOs).

### ACCESSING THE VA.GOV WEBSITE

Veterans are encouraged to create a Login.gov account. Soon all VA websites will follow a new sign-in process through VA.gov with Login.gov as the recommended account.

Login.gov is a secure U.S. government account that meets modern security standards. You can use Login.gov to access VA benefits, services, and information in a single, secure account. And you can use your account to manage other government benefits and services (like Social Security benefits and federal job applications).

You can also choose to create an ID.me account. ID.me is a commercially owned account that also meets modern security standards. You can use your ID.me account to manage VA and other government benefits and services.

Multifactor authentication – This is an extra layer of protection on your account. It helps us make sure that it's you trying to access your account—and not a hacker. It's also sometimes called 2-factor authentication. Each time you sign into a VA website or app, you'll use multifactor authentication to verify you're you. You'll do this using a device that only you should have, such as your mobile phone. You'll get a unique code by text message or phone call, or through another



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

The American Legion  
Department of Maryland, Inc.  
The War Memorial  
101 N. Gay Street, Rm. E  
Baltimore, MD 21202

NONPROFIT ORG.  
U.S. POSTAGE PAID  
EASTON, MD  
PERMIT NO. 230

option you choose. Other options may include a supporting app like Google Authenticator, a security key, or backup codes. You'll then enter that code to access your account. This way, even if someone were to guess or steal your username and password, multifactor authentication can stop them from accessing your account. The VA will need to confirm your email address before you access to your VA.gov account. Login.gov and ID.me provide this service securely. You'll get an email from the account partner you chose. If you don't get a confirmation email, call VA at 800-698-2411 and select 0.

### VETERANS HEALTH ADMINISTRATION

Earlier this month, VA released its National Veteran Suicide Prevention Annual Report, providing a comprehensive analysis of Veteran suicides through the year 2021. The report shows that 6,392 Veterans lost their lives to suicide in 2021—an increase of 114 over 2020—emphasizing the urgent need for continued efforts in suicide prevention. Simultaneously, non-Veteran suicides also increased, reaching 40,020 deaths, an increase of 2,000 from 2020. These figures underscore the magnitude of the challenge and the pressing need for effective prevention, intervention and postvention strategies.

Since Jan. 17, 2023, Veterans in acute suicidal crisis have been able to go to any VA or non-VA health care facility for emergency health care at no cost—including inpatient or crisis residential care for up to 30 days and outpatient care for up to 90 days. Thus far, this expansion of care has helped prevent Veteran suicide by providing no cost care to more than 33,000 Veterans in times of crisis. Recognizing the severity of the issue, VA has allocated \$105 million in Veteran suicide prevention grants since 2021 through the Staff Sergeant Parker Gordon Fox Suicide Prevention Grant Program. These funds support various initiatives through 80 community-based organizations that provide or coordinate the provision of suicide prevention services for eligible Veterans and their families.

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

**Adrian Gamboa  
Department Service**