

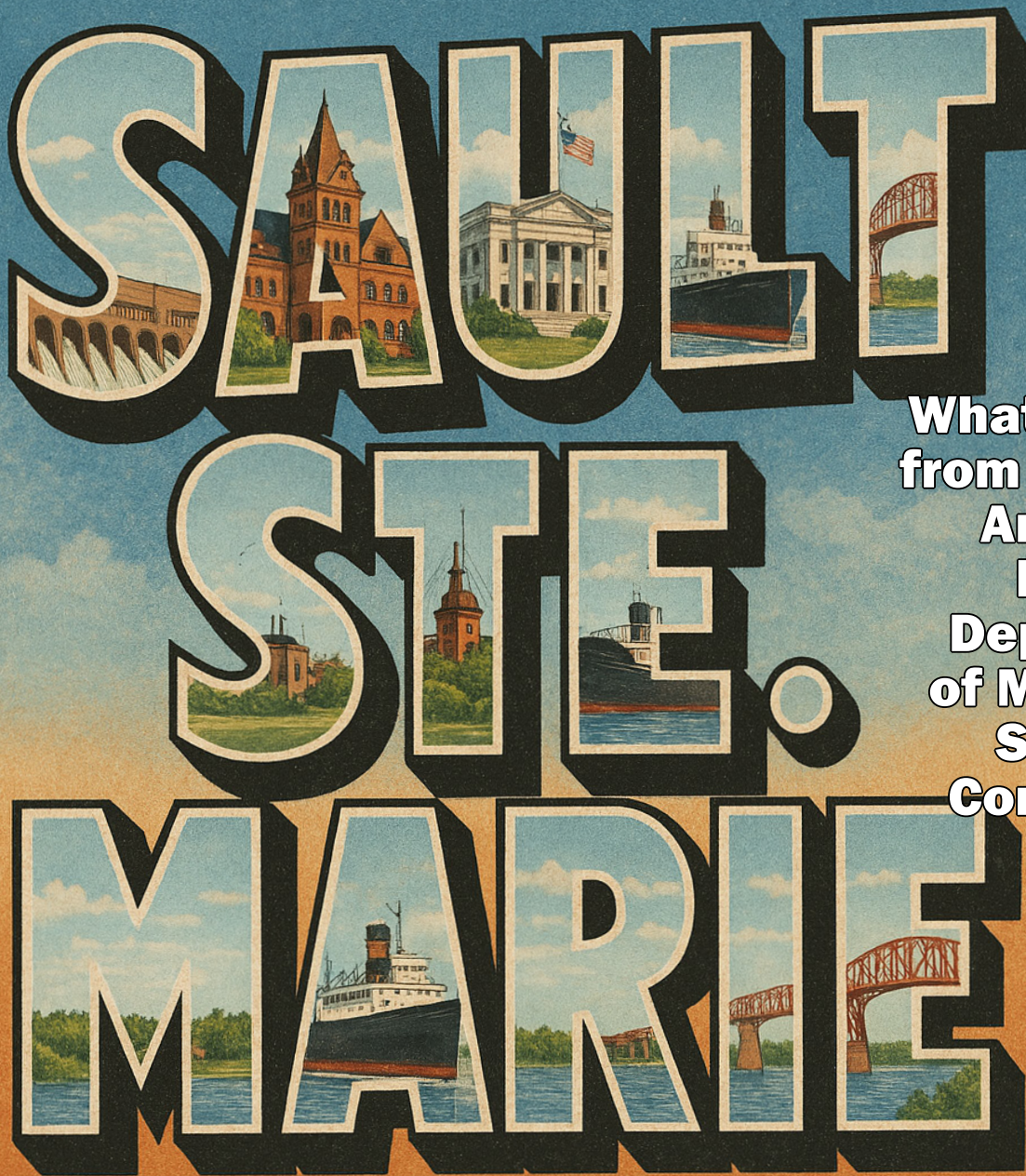
MI LEGIONNAIRE

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GREETINGS FROM



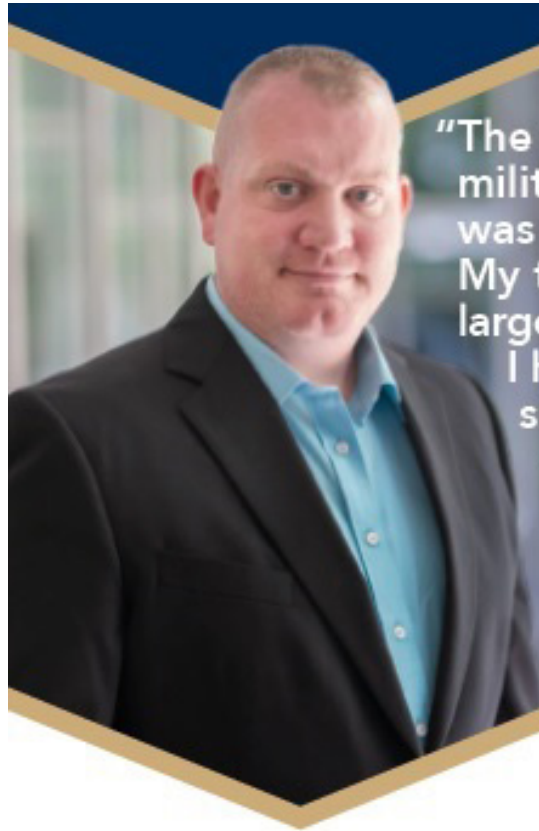
**What to expect
from this Year's
American
Legion
Department
of Michigan's
Summer
Convention!**

 **AMERICAN
LEGION**

DEPARTMENT OF MICHIGAN

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"The transition from military to civilian life was a complete change. My time at CSU has largely given me the tools I have needed to succeed professionally."

— Joshua McGinnis, Master of Public Administration

Transition Successfully Into Civilian Life

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If you have a photo you would like to submit for the Michigan Legionnaire and/or web-site use, E-mail it to us at

media@michiganlegion.org or mail it to Department, Attn: Jim Showers.

Please keep the photo at least 200 dpi or larger. If you are submitting a hard copy photo, please note photos printed from a home printer cannot be used, nor can photos clipped from newspapers.

We look for photos showing Legion caps in action whenever possible.

Interested in placing an ad in the Michigan Legionnaire?

Please Contact Jim Showers

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2nd Vice Commander Jim Austin
1st Zone Gary DeMars
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4th Zone Charles Bowman
5th Zone Tom Chernetski
Chaplain. Mike Schlaack
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Judge Advocate. Brett Holt
Sergeant-at-Arms Bob Salamon
Immediate PDC. Brian Mohlman
Alt. N.E.C Brett Holt
VA and R Director Gary Easterling



Dan Cooper
Department Commander

As I prepare my final message, I can't help but reflect upon the incredible experience it has been serving the Department of Michigan this past year. We have made great progress in setting the stage for the future of our

great organization. I look forward to our successful future as we welcome the new Department Leadership.

I cannot think of anything more satisfying than having been the State Commander for such Dedicated and Honorable Veterans. I want to thank each one of you from the bottom of my heart.

Thank you to the Department officers, Department Chairs, Committee Members, and everyone else who took the time out of their busy schedule to either volunteer or assist in making this a productive year. I know the expectations were high, and I tasked many individuals with some daunting tasks, but you all delivered and have my deepest respect and admiration for a job well done. To all the PDCs who gave me advice when I called, Thank you.

I must also thank my wife, First Lady Virginia, for her love and companionship, for enduring the many miles together and tolerating the times I had to travel alone. This year would not have happened without her support.

Virginia and I appreciate the hospitality from each post as we traveled around the state. Thank you for the

Commander's Comments!

warm welcomes, wonderful accommodations, gifts given to me during the trips, and all the heartfelt memories we have made this past year.

We have made so many friends and met so many wonderful, hard-working and fun-loving Legion Family members when we visited locations that we would not have had the opportunity nor the pleasure to see otherwise. Each one of you has made me not only a better Legionnaire but a better person.

I want to thank Auxiliary Department President Julie Becker, Detachment Commander Todd VanDam and his wife Kim for a fun-filled year together, traveling to many activities. I would also like to thank Abby Jones, Michigan's Auxiliary Junior President, for her tireless work in helping veterans. You are truly an inspiration.

Thank you to the Wonderful Office Staff for your daily hard work and dedication. I would not have been able to do this job without you.

Finally, Thank You to Post 6 in Holland for your tremendous support over these last 4 years. Your unwavering belief in me has been a true gift, giving me the strength and courage to keep going even when things got tough. I am so grateful for everything you do for me, and I want you to know how much your support means to me, Thank you.

I truly enjoyed my year as Commander, attending meetings, ceremonies, and events at the many Posts and locations and representing you throughout the State and at the National. It has been a great honor.

This has been the most fulfilling year of my life. "THANKS FOR THE MEMORIES"



Ron Runyan
Dept. Adjutant

Summer has finally hit Michigan, and we are ready for The Summer Convention

and changing of State, District and Post offices in the Legion and Sons of the Legion. I want to start by thanking all the members who made great strides toward our organizational success! Without all of you, including the members who just pay dues, too... we could not advocate and be a strong veteran organization!

Columbia Southern University Update

However, I am a little saddened as I thank you all and those who have served and are about to serve. We have an excellent partnership with Columbia Southern University (CSU). This has provided two of our members with full-ride scholarships to their university. One has even gone on and completed his Master's degree in fire safety! I cannot fathom that not a single member or family member applied for this year's \$32,500 scholarship! This is where you should be picturing Homer Simpson's head blowing off and steam coming out of his ears, Right? However, with more planning and pleading with the

Runyan's Ramblings Meet me out in the Woodshed

university, we will open the application period until the end of August 2025. The winner will be chosen and awarded the scholarship at our Fall conference in beautiful downtown Battle Creek. I am URGING all Legion, SAL and Auxiliary members to either put in for the scholarship for yourself or have one of your family members that qualifies for the organization apply.

Post Property & Closures

Our organization needs to remain strong and vibrant, and to do this, we need members, officers and Posts; this goes for Squadrons (SAL) too! The Department needs your post and members to be successful in every community. We are willing to share information, hold trainings and do whatever and whenever we can to achieve this goal. We do not want members to feel as though their dues and they do not matter. We want posts to be successful and have flowing income from dues and other revenue sources. The bottom line is WE DO NOT WANT ANYMORE POST TO CLOSE! If times are tough, officers need more training, or your membership is aging, PLEASE contact me directly or use the chain of command. We will get some help or make suggestions to make your post more successful or provide helpful insight to stay afloat.

BIG SHOCK HERE: We do not want your property! We do not want your post money!

WE want you to succeed and play an important role in each one of your communities. If this sounds familiar, and your post is struggling...What programs and activities are you providing the community? Does your community know who you are? Would your community CARE if you were gone? Each post around the state and nation should be well known and active in their respective community, or they will fail and seem like it is time to close. Have an aging group of members with no youth in sight, you say? What are you doing to attract or be visually seen by these young veterans or Sons to your organization?

Sometimes, the hardest thing to do is look inward and recognize self-blame for what is happening. Advertise what your post is doing or what programs we support. According to the Veteran Administration, there are over 400,000 veterans in Michigan. Most of which qualify for our organization. Yet, we can't break 55,000 for membership numbers. With a current 10%-12% market penetration, I think we could do better, but I will leave that up to the membership gurus to write about another time.

Membership Report

Wayne Blank
1st Vice Commander

We need you to make the Legion a place where we can help veterans formulate plans to help and assist all Veterans. The problem is we are not all as lucky as some other Veterans. Some are still dealing with conflict trauma, some are dealing with sickness from what they encountered during their service years, and some have just fallen into hard times. As legion members and veterans, we can't walk away from these Veterans. Remember, No Veteran left behind.

We can't pick and choose which Veteran joins our posts. If they have an honorable discharge DD214, they are eligible to be a member. It does not matter if they are Air Force, Army, Marines, Navy, Coast Guard, or Space Force. It doesn't matter if they are Male or Female. It doesn't matter if they are black, white, yellow, or their ethnic background. We must accept all because we all serve and are Veterans.

What can the American Legion do for you? The American Legion offers veterans a secure place to gather for Family and friends. A place to make your voice heard. A place to bring your positive ideas into play. A place to learn leadership and Legion programs. A place to teach youth about responsibility, leadership and discipline.

Attending meetings, making your voice heard and your vote count. Give your post community involvement. Ensure your post does Buddy Checks to let members know your post cares. Membership also gives our voice strength to Washington issues that affect Veterans.

By joining a local post, part of your dues will stay in your community. Posts are great resources for donations to your communities. Posts can assist local governments in achieving successful programs for youth, needy families and homeless vets.

Thank You for allowing me to serve you as 1st Vice Commander.

Chaplains Corner

Mike Schlaack, Dept. Chaplain

In St. Marks's Gospel (Mark 2:1-12) we read about a paralyzed man who was carried on a bed by his friends to be healed by Jesus, but because of the large crowd gathered around the house, the paralyzed man could not be brought inside. So his friends, demonstrating love and ingenuity, opened a hole in the house's roof and lowered him into the room where Jesus stood. Jesus, seeing the faith that his friends were demonstrating, forgave the sins of the paralyzed man (v. 5) and then restored him to physical health (v. 12). Without the help of his four dedicated friends, this account could have had a different ending, with the man on the stretcher condemned to live out the rest of his life paralyzed, never receiving the physical and spiritual healing he needed.

We can see similar scenarios play out on almost a daily basis within our local Posts: a disabled veteran who needs a new ramp built so he can get into his home, a widow who needs financial or material assistance to help make ends meet, veterans working together to help provide scholarships for the children of killed or disabled combat veterans. Even something as little as a kind word or an attentive ear may be all that is required to help lift the spirits of a desperate person through another day. In these situations, the healing acts would have

Americanism Report

Jim Austin
2nd Vice Commander

Hello fellow Legionnaires!! Ok, now this is my last article at your 2nd Vice Commander. With Summertime in full swing, now is the time to evaluate how your programs worked or did not work. Evaluate your strengths and weaknesses just like we do at Department. If you find a program that your Post excels at, concentrate on that and try to do a **better** job next year. Or you could find a program that you were weak at and then pay extra attention to that program to ensure **better** success next year. The success of the Legion programs depends on membership at the post level. We at the Department offer all the tools you need; however, it is up to you to utilize them and help our programs grow.

As I ponder my successes and shortcomings, I find one thing that I need to do, that we all need to do. We can all do **better**. No matter how successful we are, we can always do **better**. I could be a **better** leader, I could be a **better** parent, and I could be a **better** Legionnaire.

The successes were overwhelming this year, and we can all be proud of that. However, there is always room for improvement. That is what we need to offer at the Department level: more tools more opportunities to ensure **better** success. I am always open to suggestions for personal and professional development. Please do not hesitate to offer constructive feedback for the betterment of the Legion programs.

I look forward to seeing you all in July at the Summer Convention in Sault Ste. Marie. Americanism should be practiced daily, not just one month a year.

gone unmet without the sacrificial giving of the time, talent and treasure of the American Legion family members. Our willingness to help "carry" our veterans to the point of healing demonstrates our love and support for those who served our country.

But we can contrast the account of St. Mark's Gospel with another example of a paralyzed man, who this time DID NOT have the assistance he needed. In St. John's Gospel (John 5:1-9), we find a man paralyzed for 38 years who waited at the healing pool of Bethesda. Without someone to move him into the waters at a specific time, the man missed out on the opportunity to be healed of his paralysis (v. 7). Imagine the pain this man felt being within sight of the solution to solve his suffering but not having anyone willing to take the time to help him get there. The paralyzed man in St. Mark's account had the blessing of dedicated friends who brought him to the Source of healing, whereas the man in St. John's Gospel could only look at the source of his cure with the knowledge that no one was there to help him.

When we take the time to help lift our sick and suffering comrades, we become God's answer to someone's prayer. The help we provide, no matter how small, could be a life-changing act that makes a difference to someone in need. Do not pass up the opportunity to be the answer to someone's prayer.

Government Affairs Office Update

American Legion National Adjutant Rodney Rolland has instituted regular updates about progress the Government Affairs Office in Washington, D.C., is making. This is the first of these reports, which will be regularly distributed to you for awareness and dissemination throughout your departments.

Overview: The American Legion's Government Affairs Efforts: Safeguarding Veterans' Care and Benefits in the 119th Congress

The 119th Congress convened on January 3, 2025, followed by significant federal reviews of programs, staffing and infrastructure. In preparation, The American Legion developed its legislative agenda in late 2024, focused on non-partisan, veteran-centered priorities, regardless of electoral outcomes. Since then, our Government Affairs team has remained fully engaged with Congress, the administration, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and other key federal agencies. Our Washington, D.C., staff continues to serve as a steady and respected voice for veterans, ensuring that any proposed changes protect the quality, timeliness, and accessibility of care and benefits for our nation's veterans, service members, and their families.

Our approach: Working Strategically and Maintaining Non-Partisanship

The American Legion is proudly non-partisan, representing veterans from all backgrounds. We are concerned by increasing divisiveness in Washington, but we remain focused on principled advocacy — engaging constructively with federal leaders representing both parties. Our influence, which is growing, stems from direct, professional engagement, not public theatrics or rushed media responses.

For example, there was concern within the veteran community about the idea of changing the name of Veterans Day. The American Legion, which is opposed to the idea of ever changing the name, communicated directly with the White House. We expressed our concerns, voiced our opinion privately and offered recommendations for other courses of action for recognizing victories during WWI and WWII. To date, we believe our effort was much more productive and appropriate than going straight to the media as evidenced by the fact that the White House retreated on the idea.

Another example is a leaked VA memo that referenced possible workforce reductions. In response, The American Legion launched a Commander's Message and a national survey to gather firsthand input from veterans. While many reported no direct impact, our Service Officer network and D.C. Board Unit is actively assisting those with concerns and addressed pre-existing challenges through direct support and, in some cases, through coordination with the VA. Additionally, we have and will continue to meet with top VA officials to ensure our veterans receive the best health care possible.

Advocacy Influence: Driving a Legislative Agenda with Impact

The American Legion has significantly expanded its legislative engagement in the 119th Congress. Our team has already tripled its testimony activity compared to 2024, with three more testimonies scheduled for June. This robust approach prioritizes Congressional engagement to influence policy where it matters most. Since January 3, the D.C. staff has completed:

Hearings: Two in-person testimonies, Six Legislative Statements for the Record, Scheduled to testify in-person at three hearings in June.

Letters of Support: 10 Quotes of Support, 17 Letters of Support.

Plus, 80+ Scheduled meetings on Capitol Hill
Grassroots Messages per Campaign:
Love Lives On Act: 1,974,

Guard and Reserve GI Bill Parity Act: 8,430,

Major Richard Star Act: 19,698

SHIPS for America Act: 8,379

Engagement: Meeting and Working with VA Leadership

We have met face-to-face with VA Secretary Doug Collins at least three times and continue to work closely with Deputy Secretary Paul Lawrence and other senior officials. Our priorities include:

- Ensuring VA reforms maintain or improve access and quality of care.
- Supporting the VA's ability to conduct a full, uninterrupted assessment of its programs and infrastructure.
- Promoting collaboration with the VSO liaison team and leadership at the VA to ensure veteran feedback is represented at the highest levels.

Our Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation (VA&R) staff actively participates in regular VA workgroups and interagency meetings, providing ongoing feedback and sharing frontline veteran concerns. Our media team is always represented at the monthly VA calls with VSO communicators.

Additionally, we remain vigilant on oversight, while also highlighting success stories within VA and advocating for recognition of dedicated employees. Our media engagement, podcasts, and outreach efforts help spotlight both challenges and progress in veteran care. As one of the few VSOs who cover both National DOD and VA, we look forward to engaging with both departments now that they have signed an MOU to better collaborate on transition and other key issues that are also a part of our portfolio.

Broadening our Scope: Expanding Interagency Advocacy

To better support veterans' employment rights and access to federal benefits, VE&E and National Security Divisions have increased engagement with key federal agencies including: The Department of Defense, The Office of Personnel Management (OPM), The Department of Labor (DOL), The Social Security Administration (SSA), The Small Business Administration (SBA).

We are also contributing to broader federal initiatives, such as America's 250th anniversary planning. Additionally, The American Legion was invited to participate in the congressionally mandated commission to identify three candidates for the president's consideration to nominate and, pending U.S. Senate confirmation, ultimately serve as the VA Undersecretary for Benefits.

Looking Ahead: Ramping up our Efforts, Influence and Impact

Executive Director Marquez will continue meeting with White House officials regularly to ensure our voice continues to be heard by the administration outside of all the federal agencies. The American Legion remains steadfast in its mission: ensuring veterans are protected, respected, and supported. We continue to advocate through fact-based, solution-oriented engagement — always guided by our resolutions and unwavering commitment to those who served.

Still Serving. Always Advocating.





AUXILIAIRE

From the Desk of the President

July 2025



Julie Becker
Department President
2024-2025

It is hard to believe my year is almost over as your Department President. The past year has flown by. As always, I am very proud of all of you and your dedication to our Veterans, their families, and your communities. I strive to learn something new every

day. Well, this year was an eye-opening learning experience for me. As we all know, my focus this year was on our Units. We also took things back to our basics, policy procedure and protocol. For the most part, many of you grasped this. We also had our fair share of growing pains this year and overcame them. I want to send a BIG thank you to all our committee chairs for the amazing job you all did this year. You should all be very proud of yourselves. Also, District Presidents, thank you for stepping up and working with our Units in your district. Past Department Presidents, I relied on you very much this year for various issues that arose. I can not thank you enough.

As I traveled the beautiful state of Michigan as your President, visiting Units and Districts, I noticed we have one major issue in our organization. The 'Mean Girls Club' has gotten

Year in Review

out of control. This has a ripple effect on our organization. One member recently asked me, "Why do I pay money to listen to this grade school antics"? Members will stop attending their Unit and District meetings. They will not volunteer for events, and they may not renew their membership. This affects our organization at all levels. Another problem is unit members simply not knowing our basics. When I say basics, I am saying not reciting the pledge of allegiance or the preamble at the opening of meetings... NO JOKE! Please read your unit guidebook. Remember it is a guide, not a governing document.

During our travels, Commander Cooper, Detachment Commander VanDam HJP Jones and I focused on the Legion family this year. When we work as a family, amazing things happen. Membership grows, more volunteers for your events, and unity develops. Also, our resources are greater. The Legion, SAL and the ALA combined can help our veterans, their families and our communities. So reach out to other Legion family members if you need assistance with a project or when helping a veteran in need. Working as a family, we can make a significant difference.

Honorary Jr. President *Ohana means family, and family means nobody gets left behind or forgotten, not even our veterans!*

Abbie Jones

The year is ending, and it's been bittersweet. My Legion Dad Commander Dan Cooper, Auxiliary Mom President Julie Becker, and my Big Brother SAL Commander Todd VanDam thank you for all your love and support during this year. Then there is the 18th District and my Unit, Walter Frasier 108, and the President, Ellen Jackson. I will never forget the past two years.

I also want to thank my family, who drove me all over Michigan to help me talk about the Junior Special Project this year, the Mid-Michigan Honor Flight. Thank you to everyone who donated to my project. We cannot succeed if we don't all work together. At the time of this article, we have not raised enough for an entire flight, and that's okay because we did get veterans signed up to go on a flight, and we had others sign up to chaperone. My Nana said, "Reach for the moon, and if you don't make it, you will land on a star."

Sadly, this year, we did not have any juniors attend convention who wanted to run for office. Our Junior Convention was low in attendance, but we had fun. So, there is no Honorary Junior President for the 2025-2026 year. We included the younger SAL members and learned about flag etiquette, poppies, and how to run a meeting. We made poppy cards with our thumbprints and sang karaoke.

Being the Honorary Junior President has taught me so much: how to talk in public, how to raise money, leadership skills, why it's important to care and help in your communities, and respect for the flag, firefighters, and police officers. But more than that, I understand why our veterans deserve our help and respect. I hope the Auxiliary Leaders can develop a plan to refresh the junior program and that it comes back strong, but we need parents, grandparents, and mentors to help.

We all need to remember our why! Why did we join? Would the person who made us eligible for membership be proud? I'm sure my Why is proud of me. Thank you to everyone who has worked so hard on the programs and helped me. God bless our Veterans, and may God bless all our Legion family.

Americanism

Sue Hilgris, Chairman

Americanism, one of the pillars of the American Legion and Auxiliary, is alive and well in the Department of Michigan. Keep up the good work.

This year's Americanism Essay

Contest topic was "What Does America the Beautiful Mean to Me" (regarding veterans and our military?). 26 essays were received. The youth did a great job. The first-place essay in each category was sent to National.

Several units have applied for Department Awards. I am looking forward

to seeing everyone at the Department Convention, where you will learn who won the awards and the essay contests.

Please continue to promote Americanism in your communities and in the schools.

Fiscal Year End



Shannon Werner
Executive Director,
Secretary & Treasurer

It's hard to believe that we are ending our 2024/2025 fiscal year in just a matter of days. There have been so many great things accomplished this year but there is still more to do. Everyone is getting ready for our Department Convention in Sault Ste. Marie, Michigan. I use a checklist because there is no way I could remember everything that must be completed. I.e., the flag forms, flower ordering forms, Unit Delegate forms, Delegate at Large forms, report of incoming District Presidents and their First Vice, money sent for our Department Presidents' gift, arrangements for the Past Department

President being honored, special guest arrangements, and the list goes on. Never a shortage of work to do in the Auxiliary.

There are so many reasons why you should attend the Department Convention every year: you will know what (if any) changes are voted on and accepted, you can meet Auxiliary members from all over our State, you can pick up your Unit Membership packet (yes, we will have them on-site again this year), you can meet our Officers and District Presidents, you can ask questions (Mike Marriott will be on-site), you can get information you require and best of all, you can join in the fun and have a great time.

Incoming Officers and District Presidents, be prepared to have your picture updated (or taken for the first time) so we can add it to our website. I look forward to seeing everyone in the Soo!

Keep rocking 4 our Veterans!

UPAA District

Bonnie Taylor, District President

American Legion Auxiliary of Michigan: A New Year, A Renewed Commitment. As we welcome a new fiscal year, the American Legion Auxiliary (ALA) of Michigan stands united in purpose, passion, and patriotism. With the Department Convention scheduled for July 10th–13th, now is the time to look ahead with intention: how can we better serve our veterans and their families in the year to come?

Veterans: Our Reason for Being. Everything we do begins and ends with our veterans. They are not just our mission's focus—our reason for being. Their service inspires our service. Whether you joined the Auxiliary to honor a loved one, to give back to your community, or to be part of a legacy of patriotism, your membership is part of a powerful force for good.

As we move into a new year, let's reflect on what we've accomplished and how we can grow. Let's ask ourselves: What more can we do? Where are we most needed? Fresh Ideas, Stronger Impact. Every community has unique needs, but the call to serve is universal. Consider these ideas as starting points for new or expanded projects: Veteran Appreciation Events; Organize luncheons, award ceremonies, or community gatherings to honor local veterans and their families.

Mental Wellness Support: Partner with local health providers to offer workshops, peer support groups, or stress relief activities.

Care Packages and Cards: Send thoughtful items and handwritten notes to hospitalized veterans or deployed service members.

Scholarships and Student Support: Expand our impact by promoting educational opportunities for children of veterans.

Housing and Job Assistance: Work with community partners to connect veterans with stable housing, employment, and other life-sustaining resources.

These projects not only reflect our mission but also bring it to life. When we serve veterans, we strengthen communities.

What Is Your Why? As we gather for our Department Convention this July, let's come ready to listen, learn, and lead. But more than that—let's come ready to share our "why." Why did you join the Auxiliary? Why do you stay involved? What keeps you motivated to serve? Your story could be the spark that inspires someone else. Your "why" has power.

Looking Ahead Together. The new fiscal year brings with it new challenges and new possibilities. But with shared commitment and fresh energy, we can meet those challenges head-on. Let's build on our legacy with compassion, creativity, and courage. Because when we come together as Auxiliary members—bound by purpose and driven by service—we truly make a difference. In service and gratitude.



American Legion Auxiliary

MEMBERSHIP ELIGIBILITY EXPLAINED

RELATIONSHIP TO VETERAN:



- MOTHER
- DAUGHTER
- SISTER
- GRANDMOTHER
- GRANDDAUGHTER
- SELF — FEMALE VETERANS WHO HAVE SERVED
- MALE or FEMALE SPOUSE

ELIGIBILITY PERIODS: April 6, 1917, to November 11, 1918; and any time after December 7, 1941

TWO PATHS FOR ALA ELIGIBILITY

PATH ONE

The potential member is related to a living veteran by one of the relationships stated above and the veteran is living AND a current member of The American Legion.



If the potential member is a female veteran, she only needs to have served during the eligible time periods to be eligible for ALA membership.

PATH TWO

The potential member is related to a deceased veteran who served during the eligible time periods and was honorably discharged.



The deceased veteran did not have to be a member of The American Legion in order for the potential member to join the ALA.

For more information, visit www.ALAForVeterans.org

Memorial Day Celebrations



Post 110's Color Guard at the Mt. Pleasant Memorial Day Parade



Bob Lackie Grand Marshal of the Mt. Pleasant Memorial Day Parade



South Haven Post 49's Color Guard preparing for Parade



MOH recipient Jim "Doc" McMcloughan giving Parade participants thier marching orders



Parade Grand Marshall Army Veteran John Wallet



Post 231 New Boston



Mt. Pleasant Post 110 Color Gaurd



Local School Band Play in New Boston



Girl Scouts Sing the National Anthem at the Ceremonies put on by Post 231 in New Boston



Post 110 planting Flags on Memorial Day



MT Pleasant Post 110 host Veterans in their post on Memorial Day



Sons of The American Legion Detachment of Michigan

CLIVE R.A. SEYDELL

Detachment Commander 2025-2026



It is a tremendous honor to address you as the newly elected Detachment Commander for the Sons of The American Legion, Detachment of Michigan. Being chosen to lead our great organization for the 2025-2026 membership year is both humbling and exciting. I am grateful to all who have placed their trust in me during this important chapter.

This moment is deeply personal. My membership in the S.A.L. is rooted in the service of my late father, whose military service made my membership possible and whose steady example shaped the path that brought me here. Before his passing in 2015, he pushed me to get involved, encouraging me to attend District and Detachment meetings, to show up, to give back, and to honor our veterans not just in words but through action. His influence continues to guide me. I carry his memory with me in everything I do, and I know he'd be proud of how far this journey has taken me and the work we are about to do together.

To my fellow elected and appointed officers and chairmen: thank you for your dedication and willingness to serve. I look forward to a focused and productive year where we can strengthen our programs, grow our organization, and stay committed to the values that define the Sons of The American Legion. As we begin this new year, I've set my focus on three key goals:

1. Strengthening our squadrons through greater

communication, resources, and leadership development.

2. Promoting youth programs to ensure the next generation is empowered and engaged.
3. Deepening our service to veterans and their families, always keeping the "veteran first" mindset at the core of all we do.

I also look forward to visiting as many squadrons and district events as possible throughout the year. If your Post or Squadron would like a visit, whether for a fundraiser, ceremony, community event, or meeting, I encourage you to submit a request. While I may not be able to attend every event, I will do my best to represent the Detachment wherever I can. Visit tinyurl.com/commanderclive to submit your request.

My special project is close to my heart this year: supporting The American Legion Wilwin Lodge at Cygnet Cove. My goal is to raise funds to install at least one dedicated fishing-only dock on the property, a peaceful, accessible spot for veterans, Scouts, and volunteers to enjoy the outdoors, relax, and connect. If successful, I'd love to see two docks installed, but even one would be a meaningful step forward for Wilwin's healing and recreational mission.

To support this effort, I'll be offering Detachment Commander/Wilwin Challenge Coins for a donation of \$10 each, with proceeds going directly toward this project. I hope you'll join me in making this vision a reality.

Let's make this year impactful, not just through the titles we hold but through the difference we make.

1ST ZONE

Mike Globke, Commander

Greetings, fellow Sons of the American Legion. I am the new First Zone Commander for 2025-2026. Greg Price has stepped in as the Detachment Adjutant for Commander Clive Seydell. I know I have some big footprints to fill following Greg. We just had our Detachment Convention with a few surprises from National. The details will be coming out in the future. To the Squadron Adjutants, if you have not already, make sure you get all your 2026 forms and reports into Detachment ASAP. You will not get your 2026 membership cards without them. To all members, make sure you pay your 2025 dues. I will be attending as many District meetings as possible. My email is ponytailmike@sb-cglobal.net if a Squadron would like me to visit. See you throughout the year, and keep up your support of the American Legion programs.

NEF CWF REPORT

Sandy Lipman, Chairman

Let me be the first to congratulate the Detachment of Michigan for reaching a high of over \$12,000, the largest donation in the last 20 years. There were 26 separate donations from Squadrons, Districts and three from the Detachment, either line item from merchandise sales. The largest donation was 3,000 from Squadron 193. Thank you all.

As many of you know, the Foundation was renamed the Child Well-being Foundation. The change to another 501 status allows the American Legion to get grants for their projects without violating how the trust was set up. Please continue to donate, but if there is a project or Youth Charity within your community, you might want to consider donating directly to them.

Regrettably, the American Legion Nationally has seen fit to remove the SAL from the National Relief Fund. The Sons are one of the most significant

contributors to the American Legion NEF and the largest to CWF. A lawyer found language in the NEF Founding resolution from 1969 that only allows Legionnaires. I have included a letter in my Final Report from Internal Affairs Director Herndon.

I do have a suggestion. In 1996 or 1997, we created an SAL fund to help our members with financial difficulties. I think we should amend that to include members affected by natural disasters such as floods, fires, and tornadoes and donate from within our Detachment. Money needs to be put in the account and applied to the line item specified in reserve account #2003 note four from our Detachment Budget, and the dollar figure would have to be raised or another account added to the budget. To me, this is imperative, and I can give you the areas where we have already been denied. I still suggest we give our line-item donation to NEF to help our Veterans, but we also need to help ourselves when our members are in need.

5TH ZONE

Zach Pendell, Commander

A 5th Zone meeting was held in Iron Mountain on April 12, 2025, with 5 Squadrons in attendance. 100% membership certificates were presented to the Greenwood/ Ishpeming Squadron 114 and delivered to the Engadine Squadron #290. Discussions included the Detachment Commander's special project, "Operation Blacksheep," the election of Squadron officers with approval from the Legion and the submission of forms for 2026 membership cards. Assistance is available through John Pickard, U P Chairman.

Squadrons were asked to submit applications for "Son of the Year" and "Young Son of the Year" awards. It is a way to get a member recognized for their work for their Post. On May 24, I attended the 91st birthday of the Hermansville American Legion Post 340 in Hermansville. The Legion Riders organized a 100-mile ride with stops at the Iron Mountain VA, then Hermans-

ville Post 340 and Iron Mountain Post 50. There were over 100 riders with a State Police escort along with the Hermansville Fire and ambulance as the town warning sirens welcomed the riders. Music, food, and beverages were available for the celebration at Post 340.

The membership in the U P continues to grow and although we are not at 100% yet, we will be. There is a lack of internet service in areas of the Upper Peninsula, and some posts work by snail mail, slowing the process. Thanks to Bill Germain, U.P. Membership Chairman, for assisting Squadrons. Also, thanks to John Pickard, U.P. Chairman, for helping the squadrons collect information to submit online to the Department and National. In appreciation to my UP brothers, I want to thank you again for all your support and efforts to advance The Sons of The American Legion by assisting The American Legion and our veterans. Thank you for allowing me to be your Zone Commander this past year. Never Forget!

4TH ZONE

John Brown, Commander

Hello to all from the 4th Zone. I hope all our SAL members and their families are doing well. I sincerely hope our Legion Family in the 19th District is getting their lives back to normal.

I hope all our Squadrons hit their 100% goal for 2025. The 2026 cards, hopefully, will be coming in soon. Remember, SAL members, that part of your dues go to help our National & Detachment programs so they can support our Legion programs. You Blue Cappers are the SAL, define who we are and what we can accomplish.

I am proud to announce that the 10th District has a new Squadron. Post 211 in East Tawas has added a new squadron. The new squadron applied for its Charter in June 2025, and hopefully, by the time this article reaches you, they will have received their charter. I will keep you posted.

We held our Detachment Convention on June 6, 7, and 8, . I will relay our new Commander, any officer charges, and any changes or updates in my August 2025 report.

From all our members in the 4th Zone please help all that you can with your respective fundraisers and enjoy your July.

Scouting Back in Time

Clive R.A. Seydell, S.A.L. Wilwin Scouting Chair

Scouts from across Michigan gathered at Wilwin at Cygnet Cove for a unique immersive event called "Step Back in Time." Scouts demonstrated teamwork, resilience, and willingness to learn through experience, as the program offered hands-on historical experience that blended Scouting values with American skills and craftsmanship.



Special thanks go to Todd and Lori Fessenden and their team of volunteers, Duane and Barb Miller, Wilwin's dedicated caretakers, who work tirelessly to maintain the grounds and facilities year-round, and Past Department Commander and Eagle Scout Barry Wood, for lending his support and sharing in the experience.



Special Olypics Donation

Squadron 29 presented a check for \$1311 the Jackson Special Olympics Association. This funding was raised during a Scotch doubles bowling tournament.



L-R Randy Coleman, Special Olympics Director, Matthew Birdenough, athlete, Floyd Tripp, athlete. Michael Pritchard, Squadron 29 Commander

Legislative Report



Tim Poxson
Legislative Chariman

This last year has been interesting for our priorities and the way the Michigan Legislature has handled them, with only one of our Federal Priorities getting a bill. All of the priorities on our list of priorities had a bill introduced at the committee level. Most of those moved out of Committee toward the end of the legislative session, with promises that they would be passed in a lame-duck session.

However, because of some legislative issues between the elected parties and within the parties, the Legislature did not stay in session long enough for them to pass on much of the pending legislation, so none of our bills were even brought up. Because the session ended without passage, the bills automat-

ically died. We have worked with the new Legislators in the new 25-26 session, and most of our bills are in the process of being reintroduced, but they have to start all over with the process. We hope to see many of them pass and move on to the Governor's office to be signed. We will be working hard to make that happen.

The Departments finance committee voted to give us the funds to set up a system where you and all the American Legion Family can communicate your support for our priorities with your own Michigan Senators, Representatives and U.S. Congress members. The system is now operational, and we hope all American Legion Family members will use it. Please go to the Departments web page, scroll down to "Legislative Priorities," click on that, then click on one of the priorities. You will be able to sign up to have a letter sent to your elected Legislators or Congress members. Working together as a family, we will see more of our issues addressed by the Michigan Legislators or the Members of the U.S. Congress.

Scouting Update

Doug Carignan, Scouting Chair

The Eagle Scout of the Year for the Department of Michigan has been selected. Eagle Scout Michaela Witgen, from Saginaw, MI, is our selection. I want to thank the selection Committee from Squadron 4, Mike Tances (Past Scoutmaster), Bill Wilson (Eagle Scout and Past Scoutmaster), Steve Wright and his wife Bridgette (both have been involved with Eagle project reviews); all have been involved in Scouting for years.

I would also like to acknowledge Ronald J. Vilag, from Squadron 389, for receiving the American Legion Adult Square Knot award. Once the Department gets the award from the National Headquarters, it will be presented. Congratulations

to both for their accomplishments.

In March, I attended the Eagle Scout recognition dinner in Novi, along with other officers from the Department. When they were taking a group picture, we all passed out Eagle Scout challenge coins.

A reminder to those involved in the Scouting program: When you have an Eagle Scout candidate for Eagle Scout of the Year, ask them to see their form so that you can check to make sure all the signatures are there. The worst thing that could happen is that the Scout could be disqualified (which I don't ever want to happen) or have to send it back to the Scout. If you have any questions on this, please see me at the Department Convention.

I want to thank those who are running the Scout Outing at WilWin. I hope the Scouts had a good time. For God and



Country, and yours in Scouting



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For more information log on to www.TheLIT.com/Emergency-Assistance-Plus or call toll-free 1-888-310-1547 today to speak with a benefit representative.

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Cities Served

Phil Babcock.....	Charlevoix, Petoskey, Kalkaska, Manistee Ludington, Big Rapids, Lake City
Patty Breas.....	Hastings, Caledonia, Grand Rapids, Kentwood, Wyoming, Holland
Brian Brooks	Ann Arbor
Tripp Cantwell.....	Detroit
Josh Clark.....	Benton Harbor, Battle Creek, Coldwater
Kieshan Counts.....	Bay City, Saginaw, Vassar
Gary Easterling	Detroit
Stephanie Fisher.....	Onaway, Rogers City
Shay Grady.....	Rapid River, Ishpeming Little Lake, Marquette, Gwin
Thomas Kaiser.....	Battle Creek, Bath, Grand Ledge, Leslie Eaton Rapids, Jackson, Laingsburg, Corunna
Rebecca Lewis.....	Farwell, Ionia, Lansing
Courtney Mills.....	Ravenna, Muskegon, Grand Haven
Lisa Misenko.....	Troy, Oxford, Rochester, Detroit
Chad Parenteau.....	Detroit, Swartz Creek
Matthew Schantz.....	Garden City, Southgate, Detroit
Justin Schave.....	Detroit
Tommy Simpkins.....	Saginaw
Stacy Thill.....	Escanaba, Manistique
Rick Wiles.....	Sault Ste. Marie, St. Ignace, Gaylord
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District #7 Robert Montgomery, 1st Vice

I must tell you, it has been one heck of a month. During our May meeting, you showed the ultimate confidence in me to vote for me as your district commander. Thank you, and I will do my best to make our district what it needs to be. I also need to give a big shout-out to post #8 commander Travis Lay for getting his arms around the 50/50 and post #16 for one heck of a meal. Many posts that we have not seen in a while attended, which did my heart good.

As of Memorial Day, post #566 is now the Merrick-Potter-Scribner Post. The renaming was a long time in the making, and I do not have enough space to properly thank everyone involved. Rest assured, my pride is with you!

After all the Memphis festivities were done, we packed up and headed south to Michigan's Veterans Home of Chesterfield (MVH). Our 1st vice-elect, Oscar Gomez, DJ'd for a trivia music day. The winners received prizes, and it was a blast.

We have our nation's birthday coming up on the 4th of July. I encourage all to celebrate with safe, respectable reverence.

The State Convention is coming up, July 10th through the 13th. If you plan on attending please review the Amendments on the website to familiarize yourself with them to make the process easier for all involved.

If you have not done your CPR report, please do it ASAP. The Department has our cards and is dying to get them out, but the CPRs MUST be done before cards are mailed.

Last, I must give a heartfelt apology to Vanessa at post #499 in Port Austin. I told her I would be up to swear in new officers at the last meeting. However, God had different plans for me by giving me a bad upper respiratory infection. I promise I will make it up to you and your post.

2nd Zone Update



Dave Buist
Commander

As we move into the heart of summer and prepare to celebrate our nation's Independence Day, I want to take a moment to recognize and commend the outstanding dedication of the Posts in our 2nd Zone.

I'm proud to report that twenty-one Posts across Districts 3, 4, and 5 have exceeded 100% of their membership goals as of this writing. This is a tremendous accomplishment and a direct reflection of your commitment to the mission, values, and future of The American Legion. Reaching and surpassing membership goals is no small task-it requires persistent outreach, strong community engagement, and a shared belief in the importance of service.

To all the Posts who are closing in on their goals: keep pushing forward. Every call, conversation, and new or returning member welcomed brings us closer to building a stronger, more resilient Legion family.

Membership is the foundation of everything we do: supporting veterans, mentoring youth, advocating for patriotism, and serving our communities. When we grow, so does our impact. Let's continue this momentum through the rest of the year. Your efforts matter, and your work does not go unnoticed. Thank you for all you do.

Wishing you and your families a safe and meaningful Fourth of July.

These are our Department of Michigan Junior Shooting Sports Program Champions for 2025

Department Team Sporter Champion was Genesee Career Institute JROTC. Individual Sporter Champion is Natilie Steward Genesee Career Institute JROTC Department Team Precision Champion was Kent County Top Guns 4H and Individual Precision Champion is Carver Chittenden from Kent County Top Guns 4H.



Individual Sporter Champion - Natalie Steward
from Genesee Career Institute JROTC



Department Team Sporter Champion for 2025 is the Genesee Career Institute JROTC

Around the State...

LIT Dinner at the National Spring Meeting



L-R: Dave Buist, Liz Cuddington, PDC Brett Holt, Commander Dan Cooper, Ron Runyan, PDC Brian Mohlman, 2nd Vice Commander Jim Austin, Angela Jaworski, NEC Larry Money, Linda Wallace, PDC Jim Wallace.

LIT Presents a REALLY Big Check



Department Adjutant Ron Runyan receives a check for \$85,864.00 from representatives from the Legionnaire's Insurance Trust.

Post 257 Supports STARBASE Battle Creek with a \$1,000 Donation!



L-R: Post 257 Commander Bill Pfost, STARBASE Battle Creek Director, Amber Waterbury, & 2nd Vice-Commander (PDC) Brian Mohlman

Girl Scouts Recognized for contribution to 4 Chaplains Service



Past Commander David L. MacKellar Presented a Certificate of Appreciation for Americanism, to local Girl Scouts for their assistance with the "4 Chaplains".

President Lincoln is Guest Speaker at Memorial Day Ceremony

Eugene Eskelson (Abraham Lincoln) was the guest speaker at the Blumfield Post 229's Memorial Day Service ceremonies where he read the Gettysburg Address



Legionnaire Jim Lapan Hands a Civil War soldier as a gift to Mr. Eskelson

Avenue of Flags Addition

The Burial Flag of Past Department Sgt-at-Arms and Historian Ernie Berry, was added to the Avenue of Flags at Great Lakes National Cemetery.



Pictured are Sandy Moffett Ernie's long time Life Partner, Roger Barnett and PDC Steve Striggow.

Morely Post 554 Family donates \$8,230 to the Morley Stanwood Ball Association.



The donation was a group effort between the American Legion, the Auxiliary, and the Sons of the American Legion. We are deeply grateful to everyone who supports our initiatives through raffles, apparel sales (shirts, hats, flags), chili cook-offs, and other fundraising events.



Are you a female veteran looking to elevate your leadership skills, build meaningful relationships, and embark on a journey of personal growth? You are cordially invited to an exclusive Female Veterans Leadership Retreat, a transformative experience designed to empower and connect women serving in leadership positions within the American Legion.

About the Retreat:

Over the course of our retreat, you'll find yourself immersed in an atmosphere of encouragement and empowerment. Surrounded by the beauty of nature, You can anticipate invigorating discussions aimed at cultivating collaboration to enhance your communication, leadership, and team-building skills.

Where: Wilwin Lodge
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Cost: \$30 application fee
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