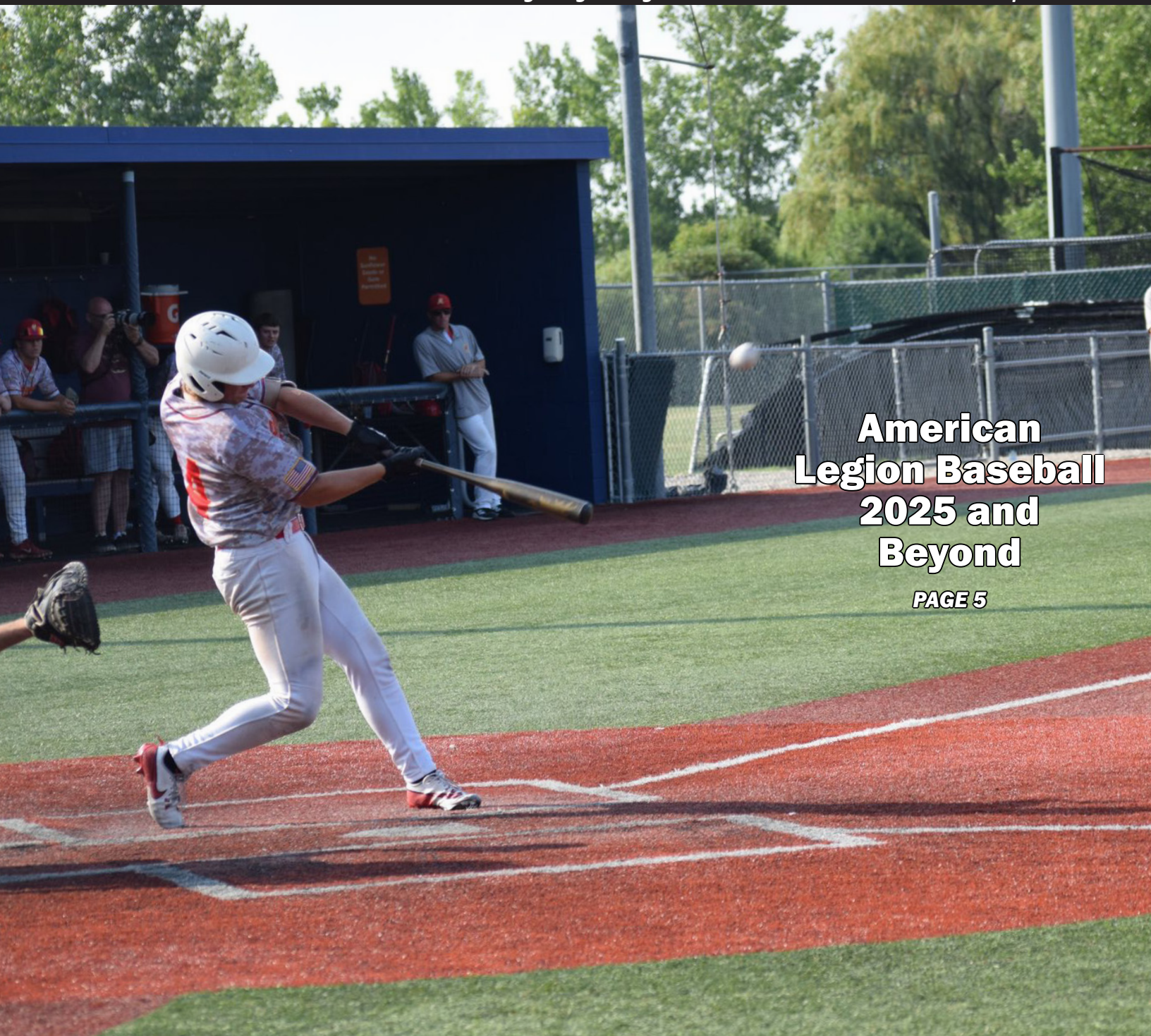


MI LEGIONNAIRE

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September 2025



American Legion Baseball 2025 and Beyond

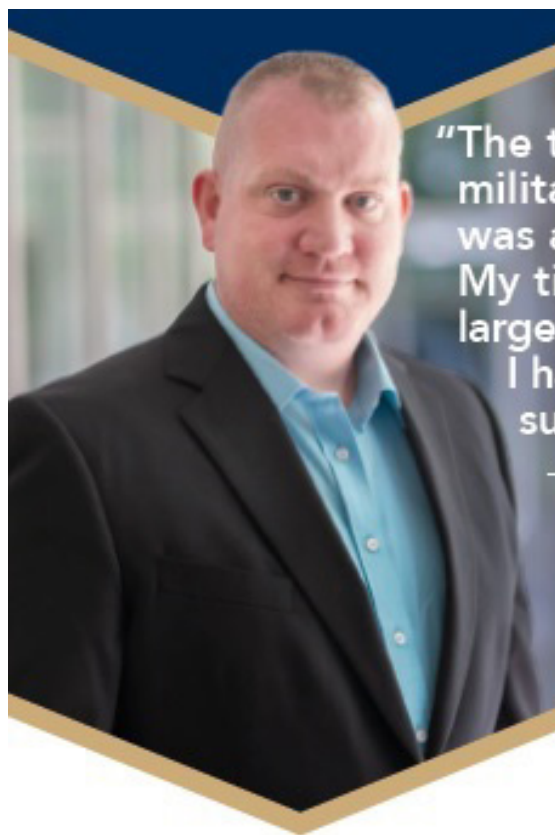
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 **AMERICAN
LEGION**

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

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DEADLINE DATES

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Please keep the photo at JPG. Do not submit a hard copy photo. Also 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?

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1st Zone Scott Nichols	Finance Officer. Brian Mohlman	Alt. N.E.C. Brian Mohlman
2nd Zone. Fred Youngs	Historian Robert Higley Jr.	VA and R Director Gary Easterling

Commander's Comments!

Roger Avie
Department Commander

August has been a busy and productive month for our Department. On August 2nd, I participated in Vet Fest in Ann Arbor, where I had the opportunity to meet with a variety of veteran organizations, draw raffle winners

for some great prizes, and speak with several National Guardsmen about what the Legion can do for them both during service and in retirement.

The Department Executive Committee at the 30 Day meeting confirmed my appointments, and I outlined the agenda for the 2025–2026 term. Our new chairpersons spoke with enthusiasm about their committee goals for the year, setting the stage for strong progress.

Later in the week, many of us from the 30-day meeting attended membership training in Indianapolis. The trip was excellent—not only for the learning opportunities but also for the camaraderie on the bus ride down and back. The training itself was valuable, offering fresh insights for first-time attendees and updates for returning members.

Throughout the month, I participated in several Zoom committee meetings, helping set agendas and approve key items to move us forward. I also traveled to Escanaba to represent the Legion in honoring Ray Carlson as the Upper Peninsula Veteran of the Year. Having worked with Ray for over a decade, I can say this recognition was richly deserved.

While at the Upper Peninsula State Fair, I met with Lieutenant Governor Garlin Gilchrist and several state representatives and spoke with Legislative Chair Tim Poxson on upcoming bills. I visited the Legion Booth and found them in great form, signing up a number of new Legionnaires and Auxiliary members. On my way back from the Upper Peninsula, I visited Camp Grayling, where even a few British soldiers noticed the Legion decals on my car and stopped to talk about our work in the Legion. Driving the "Legion billboard" is a great way to start conversations!

I have just returned from Tampa for the national convention and look forward to sharing more next month. May the Lord watch over you and guide you.

Ron Runyan
Dept. Adjutant

fabulous year!

So, we are all getting older, which means we are all going to hit that age when we qualify for Medicare. Medicare open enrollment is just a few weeks away, and you should be prepared to make a new selection or switch to a different vendor for better benefits or products. To better understand when and why to sign up, visit the Social Security Administration's link for more information: <https://www.ssa.gov/medicare/plan/when-to-sign-up>

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Medicare Advantage - These plans offer coverage at a budget-friendly monthly price, and many offer exciting benefits. They're a great option for those who see providers locally and are comfortable with referrals and provider networks.

- Many plans offer budget-friendly options
- Includes prescription drug coverage
- All-in-one coverage and some additional benefits
- Typically operates within a network

Medicare Supplements (Medigap) - These plans help cover costs from Part A and Part B care, significantly reducing copays and deductibles. They're a great option for those who frequently visit doctors and want predictable costs without referrals or network restrictions.

- Most popular plans generally have no deductible or copays
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Visit www.thelit.com to take advantage of your earned benefits today and also financially assist your American Legion! And if you need to know more we will be holding a Medicare 101 class open to all at the Fall Conference in Battle Creek.

Runyan's Ramblings

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Membership Report



Jim Austin
1st Vice Commander

I just returned from Indianapolis for The National Membership Conference, and man, am I fired up! We had the opportunity to discuss membership goals for next year, and I came away with a bunch of ideas. I think new membership is easy; retention is the real challenge. To retain your members, you must give them some kind of value. You must ask, "What can your post do for them?" It can be as simple as your Friday night fish fry, but it will include everything you do for your community.

You must find out what works in your community, and expand on it, because what works down here in Metro Detroit may not work in Sault Ste. Marie. You need to identify the value in your post that will retain your one-year members for a second year and your second-year members for a third, and so on. Most of the membership goals have remained the same, but we are working on different things to motivate our Leadership to improve on the foundation we have built. Consider membership as a sales pitch, be confident, and learn everything you can about your new members (Service, family, concerns). If you build that connection, it will ensure membership renewals for years to come.

Membership is the key to the organization. If you have any questions or ideas regarding membership and its continued growth, always feel free to reach out to me personally.



Chaplains Corner
Mike Schlaack, Dept. Chaplain

At our 30-Day D.E.C. meeting, Cmdr. Avie put out a challenge to all of us in the Department of Michigan: "Be One, Get One and Coach One." His objective is to "personalize" the Legion; to change the image of our Posts that will make a definite and lasting impact on the veterans and their families in our respective communities, with the local Post being the focal point for promoting the work of the American Legion.

While we see the word "One" being used three times in the commander's challenge, it is by no means an indication that the work of promoting and strengthening the American Legion is a one-person operation. While we each have an important part to play, the success of the Legion in Michigan will not be accomplished by just one person, no matter how dedicated that one person may be. We can truly say that "It takes a Post" to make a difference in each of our communities, with each member of the Legion family doing their part.

Although battles are often won based on superb strategies, we should not forget that it is the work of each person in the entire military force that must be brought to bear against a single, defined enemy that will ultimately determine the outcome. The book of Exodus describes the battle between the Israelites and the Amalekites. So long as Moses held up the rod of God in his hands, the Israelites prevailed in the battle, but when he dropped his arms, the enemy prevailed instead. As the battle wore on, Aaron and Hur, who were accompanying him, sat Moses down on a rock and, with one on each side, held up Moses' arms throughout the day. As a result of their unique teamwork, Joshua and the Israelites defeated Amalek and his army in Raphidim (Exodus 17:8-13). While we can give credit for the victory to many individuals, including God, it was by the work of many individuals, some doing small works, that eventually saved the day.

Never forget that each of us has an important, although sometimes very small, part to play in the success of our mission as the American Legion. You may not be able to lead the group, but your job of supporting the one who does is vitally important. By working together, we can all be successful in moving our individual Posts forward and help the Department of Michigan to be the premier department in the American Legion.

Americanism Report



Roger Deaton
2nd Vice Commander

Legionnaires, what a great month! The Department of Michigan held its 30-day meeting at headquarters in Lansing. This meeting is designed to train the new officers, have elected and Committee chairpersons discuss their plans for their respective programs, and get ready for the National Membership meeting in Indianapolis, IN (August 6-9).

The Americanism Committee has its assigned Committee chairpersons approved by the Department Executive Committee (DEC) for 2025-2026.

- Junior Shooting Sports; Subcommittee Chair, Mark Downing
- Law & Order; Subcommittee Chair, Jim Wallace
- Scouting; Subcommittee Chair, Gary Tanner

Good investment for the Legion, as we took 37 district, zone, and future leaders to the National Membership workshop in Indianapolis, IN. The experts from American Legion National Headquarters provided annual membership training that is up to date and geared to help us grow into the future. Training classes covered a range of topics, including membership retention, post-revitalization strategies, Recruiting Techniques, and the use of digital tools and applications, among others. This was also a great time to discuss new ideas and best practices with leadership from all 50 states. Please reach out to your District and Zone Commanders to have them visit and share their information at your future post meetings.

The American Legion Baseball Champions from Michigan, Midland Berryhill did us proud by advancing to the semi-finals in the Great Lakes Regional this month. A big thank you to the team, the Berryhill Baseball family, and American Legion Post 165, Midland, for fielding such a fine group of young men.

In closing, start getting ready for another fun and exciting Legion year in Americanism. Our goals are to increase participation in all our Americanism programs, which will increase the American Legion brand and awareness of our involvement in our communities.

American Legion Department of Michigan Baseball

Tim Walters, Baseball Chairman

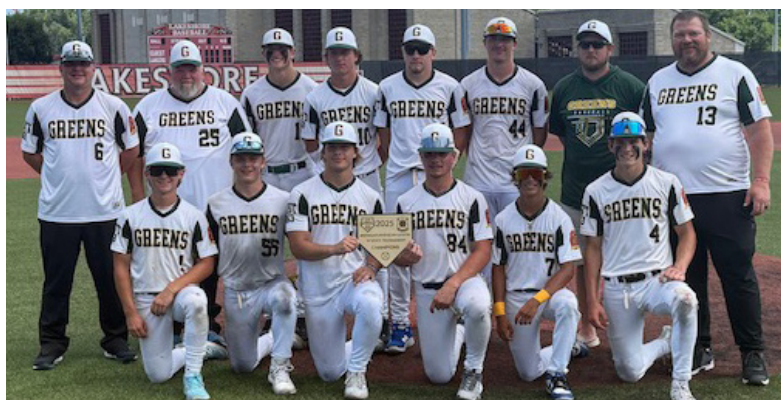
First, let me introduce myself: US Army Ret with over 23 years on active duty, retired SFC(P) in 2004, another 18 years as a Government Intel Contractor, before I moved back to Michigan, but not to my hometown in Howell, but Watton, MI, in Baraga County in the 12th District. I am in my 21st year as a Legionnaire and have served as a Post Commander for 5 years and a District Commander for 2 years in Virginia; I moved to the U.P. in May of 2022 and I have just finished two years as the 12th District Commander, and I am in my second year as the Post Commander of Post 114 Greenwood (Ishpeming). I was asked by the New Department Commander to continue serving on the Baseball committee and also to be the Chairman for this year.



2025 Adrian Class AA Post 275 Team

Second: I am not going to tell anyone that I am here to "Fix" baseball in Michigan. I will not say that I know better than you or anyone else in the state when it comes to baseball. I was asked to serve and see if I can help make Baseball in the Department of Michigan better. That is what I will be working on with you and the four other committee members.

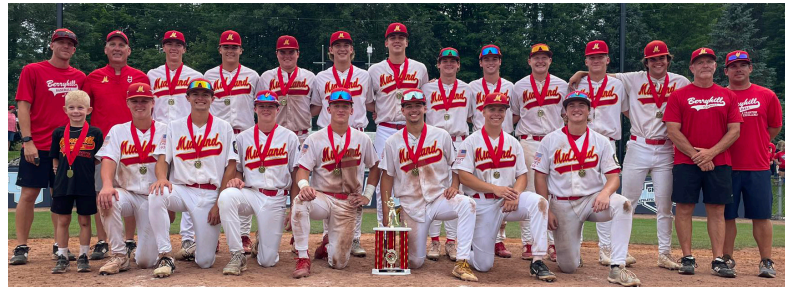
I have plans and ideas that may or may not meet with your approval. My ideas are just that, my "Ideas", and I, along with the other committee members, will listen to your ideas, as long as they are written down and complete. We are required to follow the National Baseball Rule book and the Constitution and By-laws of the Department, along with the Department Rule book for baseball. We (The Baseball Committee) can, if we choose to, be stricter or define things differently than National, "if" that is what we want and can convince the Commander and DEC that it is for the betterment of the boys playing Legion Baseball.



Kingsford Greens Post 363 Class A Champs 2025

As of right now, "A" and "AA" are on the books for the 2026 Legion Baseball season. So, what I see we and I do mean "WE", need to do is work on a way to make Legion Baseball in Michigan fun, fair and exciting for the teams and most especially the boys playing the games.

I do not think that there should be any difference shown to U.P. teams or teams below the bridge; this is the Department of Michigan Baseball league. With all things taken into consideration, there has to be a way to make it fair for any team on any

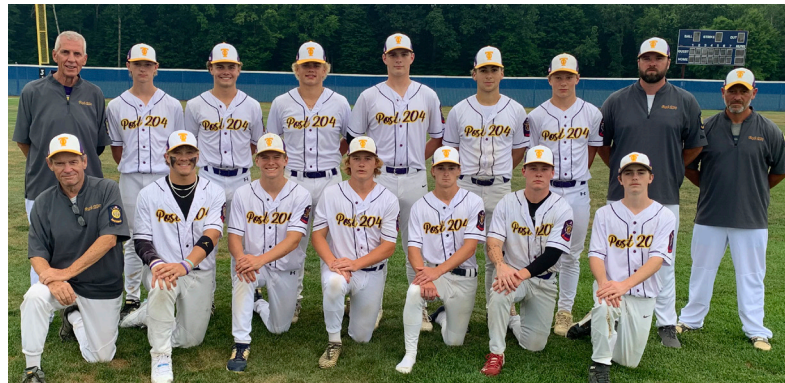


Midland Berryhill Post 165 Class AA Champs

given day to compete for the "A" or "AA" championship.

Once we have a fifth member of the team, I will send out a meeting invite and share my thoughts on issues, as well as possible changes or adjustments to our current processes, or updates to the Department Rule Book. If you disagree with me or my thoughts, please tell me point-blank why, rather than simply stating you dislike it without providing a reason or suggesting an alternative proposal.

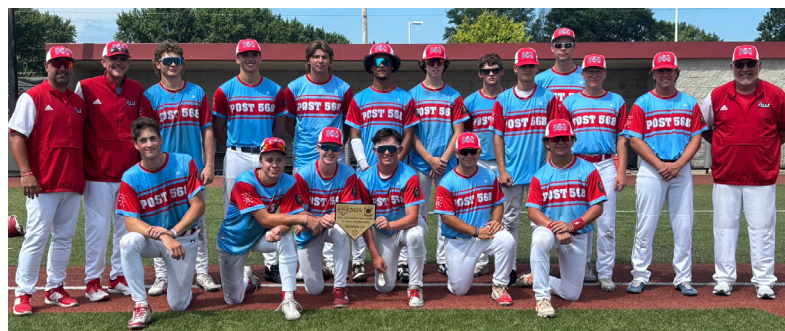
Commander Avie has given us all the rope we need to hang ourselves with or to make real changes that will improve and expand Michigan Baseball for the next decade or more. I will also



2025 Three Oaks Post 204 Class A

ask the Department Commander to add the Baseball Committee to each of the Conferences this coming year, so we and others who have questions or concerns about Michigan Baseball can give and get answers at those Conferences. I will also work on having the "Zoom" link for those meetings. I can be reached at this email: cdrstubby1962@gmail.com.

Lastly, if I never get my picture taken at a game or have an amazing article written about me in the Legionnaire Magazine, I will be just fine with that. This position I have been asked to fill is not about me, and I will never take credit for anything that "WE", the Baseball Committee, do, because I do not care about the spotlight or seeing my picture in the paper. I want to help and make things better for our Veterans and the boys playing Legion Baseball; it's really that simple.



2025 Stevensville Post 568 Class A team



AUXILIAIRE

From the Desk of the President

September 2025



Dawn Gramza
Department President
2025-2026

Mission Possible!

I am so excited for the upcoming year. I am looking forward to visiting many of you in your units and districts. I hope to receive many invitations.

My theme is Mission Possible; we can all make the programs of the American Legion Auxiliary possible. I hope all our members find their passion and remember why they joined the ALA. If every member found a program they are interested in, I can only imagine what the Department of Michigan could report.

My special project this year is Adaptive Sports for Veterans. I will be working with the VA and DAV. My goal is to help many veterans remain active. I believe any activity is terrific, but not everyone can run a marathon, play a round of golf, play basketball, or softball without assistance. With adaptive sports, everyone can be active.

I am so thankful for the support of many of you over the past years, with a special thank you to my private angel Peggy Nolf, who brought me into this wonderful organization.

Ann Arbor VA Healthcare System

Krystal A. Hall, ALA VAVS Representative

The VA Ann Arbor Healthcare System provides healthcare to service men and women. It is a privilege to help with their healthcare needs. The Ann Arbor Medical Center is a 1A facility, providing the highest level of care complexity. They provide sophisticated levels of care like Neurosurgery, coronary artery bypass, and laparoscopic surgery. It includes the main hospital, several outpatient clinics, the Community Living Center (CLC) providing extended care, three research buildings, five administrative outbuildings, two parking garages, and the Fisher House. The Ann Arbor System has clinics in Adrian, Canton, Howell, Jackson, Flint, Lansing, Toledo, and Findley (Ohio), providing service to over 72,000 Veterans living in a 15-county area of Michigan and Ohio during the past fiscal year.

The main hospital in Ann Arbor operates 114 acute care beds, where stays average less than 7 days. They also have a Community Living Center that accommodates another 40 patients. The facility saw over 700,000 outpatient and nearly 6000 inpatient procedures. The Medical Center Staff also provided 140,634 Telehealth visits.

The Fisher House is a 'beautiful home away from home' offering temporary lodging for families of those undergoing care at the VA facilities. Since its opening in June of 2020, The Fisher House has hosted more than 11,000 individual guests, including 164 children. Most guests stay for about four days, but the longest was 219 days. They saw guests from 33 different states, eight countries across three continents.

The Auxiliary Annual Gift Shop was held November 24-27. Thanks to the help from members from the 2nd and 18th Districts, whose units showed support with cash and in-kind donations totaling over \$6,500. 24 volunteers donated 124 hours, helping 74 veterans select 284 gifts that were sent to their families.

During the past fiscal year, volunteers continued to have a strong impact at The Ann Arbor Health System. The Management Team reported that in-kind donations increased to \$663,969, and \$115,508 in monetary contributions had been received. The number of volunteers increased to 253, and

volunteer hours significantly increased to 26,005. Total impact of volunteer involvement and donations exceeded \$1.6 million, a 19% increase.

American Legion Auxiliary involvement and dedication for the Year 2024-2025 were very positive/proactive. Volunteer hours increased 55%, Monetary donations increased 180%, and the total estimated value of non-monetary donations increased 60%.

I hope to recruit volunteers to support several new and ongoing initiatives/programs, including the Compassionate Contact Corps (CCC), where volunteers will communicate with Veterans off-site. Currently, there are 45 Veterans enrolled. We are working with the Red Cross to promote blood drives now that COVID-19 restrictions have lifted. We still have the CLC Saturday afternoon Bingo program. My Life My Story—a Veteran Experience program where the Veteran is interviewed and their story is compiled and included in their medical record. There is also "Veteran Whole Health," which will help Veterans receive more life support, including primary care, volunteer help/support, recreational therapy, life guidance, family support care, and arts and crafts opportunities.

The goal is to provide the best care and support for our country's Veterans and their families. As I complete my 13th year as the Department of Michigan American Legion Auxiliary Representative to the Ann Arbor Medical System, I have two goals and/or projects. First, the goal is to provide support to ALA Members and the Ann Arbor staff in fulfilling both existing and new volunteer opportunities. Secondly, to facilitate donations to fulfill special needs identified by the Medical Staff. Lastly, to host successful events, like the Gift Shop, Father's Day, and the Annual Baby Shower, while also developing new opportunities.

In closing, I am honored and humbled to have the opportunities to work with such dedicated staff and supporters, especially 'my Deputy' Ethel Putala—thanks, Ethel, for all you do.

Operation - 250 Candles

*Carol Burke, Membership Chairperson
aka: General McSquawker*

Welcome to the 2025-26 membership year! Your Department membership team invites you to join the fun celebrating and growing our organization. Our Mission Possible is for each and every Unit in the Department of Michigan to achieve goal membership by July 4, 2026. Our NOT very "secret" agents (area membership chairs) will be working closely with District Presidents and District Membership Chairpersons to accomplish our definitely NOT secret mission.

Join the Department of Michigan Membership Facebook page (ALA MI Membership) and the National Membership Facebook page (American Legion Auxiliary National Membership Group). Please refer to Department's website @ michalaux.org and the membership pages on the national website @ alaforveterans.org, for materials.

In addition to National's recruit/rejoin 10 membership challenge, this year a new challenge has been organized, the Family 3 Award. Each member who recruits three new Legion members, three new Auxiliary members, and three new Son's members will receive a gift selected by the National President.

Please review the current program guide for a complete list of Department awards. This year we will offer 4 membership incentives with first drawing at Fall Conference

No Goose Eggs-Two Units who have paid membership greater than 0% of goal per the ALAMIS report (09/15/2025). In other words, if you have membership greater than ZERO your Unit will be added to the drawing. Award: \$50.00 for membership promotion. Drawing will occur at Fall Conference.

We Love Our Veterans-Two Units who have paid membership at 75% or greater of goal per the ALAMIS report (11/11/2025). Award: \$50.00 for membership promotion. Drawing will be mid-November via Facebook live.

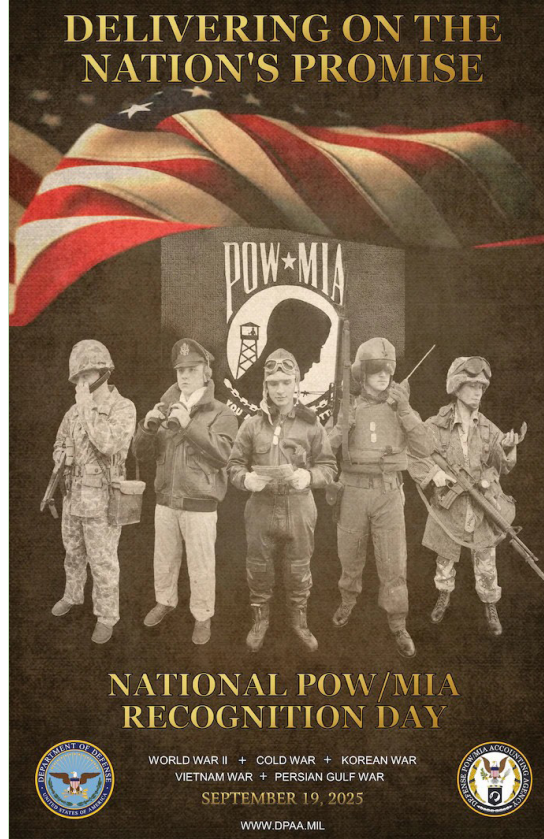
We Love Ribbons from National-Two Units who have paid membership at 100% or greater of goal per the ALAMIS report (01/31/2026). Award: \$50.00 for membership promotion. Drawing will occur at Winter Meeting.

No Secrets Here-First Area (Eastern, lower Northern, Western, Southern and UPAA) to reach 100 % of goal. The area chair will have \$100 donated on their behalf to the Legion Family program/project of choice.

Keep an eagle eye on the mission and get ready to celebrate! Operation 250 Candles is a mission possible. Remember that membership is everyone's responsibility.

National Security

Debbie Weatherbee, Chairman



I am so excited for this year with National Security! Thank you, President Dawn Gramza, for giving me this chairmanship. Also, thank you, Peggy Meyer, for being on this committee.

Coming up very soon is POW/MIA Recognition Day, which is Monday, September 15, 2025. I would like each of you to please remember our many POW/MIA military personnel who are still missing. Take a moment to remember them on this day as a member of this great organization. Maybe host a ceremony at your Post and have your POW/MIA table as a focus of remembrance.

There are many things that each District, Unit, or member can be working on, such as: Emergency Preparedness Kits, CERT training, donating blood, and care packages, to name just a few.

Hope to see you at Fall Conference and learn more about this important committee! If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to email, text or call me.

Historian's View

Darlene Jones, Historian

I am honored and humbled to be elected as this year's Department of Michigan Historian. I am very excited to hear about our history throughout Michigan. "Our future can only be judged by our past. Be mindful that the lamp of recorded experience may do much in guiding the footsteps of those who follow." Our Past Department, District, and Unit Presidents are so important to reach out to when you need information or advice.

Looking back over the years, we see not only the changes but also how we've grown into a significant organization, supporting our veterans and community. Girls State is a great example of how we have grown. Instead of teaching our girls how to butter bread, how to dress, be a proper wife, or set a dining room table. Now, the only table the girls' staters are taught to set is the POW/MIA table. Now, at Girls State, they learn how to be politicians, how to be leaders. How to run a democratic government.

Going forward, I hope to have many scrapbooks and history books to judge this year. Please reach out to me if you have questions about how to put these books together for judging. It is not too early to start your narrative or your scrapbooks. Remember, the history book is a written history about your Unit or District. Your scrapbook is a picture history; you can be creative in this book. Remember, sometimes less is more. Your pictures need to be labeled with the names of everyone in the picture. If you don't know the names of everyone, it may be best not to use that picture.

Again, thank you for electing me to this office. I am very excited to get this year started.

For God and Country.

Something Happening at your Unit? Submit it to the Michigan Auxiliaire!

Send your articles and Pictures (with Cutline) to : info@michalaux.org

Fiscal Year End



Shannon Werner
Executive Director,
Secretary &
Treasurer

Most of you have noticed and/or experienced the compliance to the four P's we adhere to at the American Legion Auxiliary, Department of Michigan Headquarters. I.e: policy, protocol, procedure and personal responsibility. We must follow the path and best practices our Department Executive Committees and the National Executive Committees have outlined and provided for us to be a successful business.

Some may recall the old days of missing transmittals, uncashed checks, messages (phone and email) unreturned, duplication of forms, cashed checks related to pending members left pending and ultimately being deleted from ALAMIS, incomplete/incorrect paperwork being retained by office personnel without correction or completion. All of these issues contributed to our Department being egregiously delinquent in all functions of the organization. Mike is diligently working to address and resolve decades of outstanding membership relat-

ed issues, please be patient, it will take time.

It's a new day and I am happy to say we are making progress. Our membership is entered into ALAMIS and processed within 48 hours of being received, if all of the information is accurate and complete. This includes transmittals, transmittal lists, membership applications, member data forms, and checks. If the documentation we receive is outdated, inaccurate or the numbers just don't add up, it is immediately returned to the Unit for correction. Following this practice allows the folks handling your membership to learn and expand their knowledge of how the Auxiliary works.

There are two of us here at Department Headquarters, me and Mike. We are small in number but large on loyalty, motivation and duty to our Veterans. We have a Mission Possible before us and we love to compete and win. If you follow our membership you know we are close to having 30,000 Auxiliary members in Michigan. The ALA Department of Michigan is the fifth largest Auxiliary in the entire Nation and with your help, we can surpass 30,000 members as we celebrate America's 250th birthday in 2026. Together, we will do everything we can to make this a Journey to remember! Service not Self.

Chaplain's Corner

Dawn Gilbert, Department of Michigan Chaplain

Matthew 7:12 "So whatever you wish that others would do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets." The Golden Rule is how we should conduct ourselves in our dealings with others, and I hope we all remember this as we move through the year.

Starting our year of 2025-2026, you've been given a Mission Possible, should you desire to accept it, by President Dawn. So, the mission for you is to receive prayers from everyone for President Dawn's prayer book. I hope that we'll have a thick book to provide at the end of the year.

Remember, we should be opening and closing our meetings with prayers. Sources for those are, of course, a bible, the Chaplain's Prayer Book available on emblem.legion.org, or you can simply look one up on the internet. Let's all plan to keep performing the meeting ceremonies to remind us of our mission to support the Legion and our veterans.

Looking forward to seeing many of you at Fall Conference in Battle Creek. Until then, safe travels. Yours in service, not self.

A New Role

Charlotte Ellard, 19th District President

I want to thank everyone for your support as I assume the role of District President. My husband and I became American Legion and Auxiliary members in 2016 because we wanted to be a part of the American Legion Riders. It didn't take long for me to begin an active role in fundraising efforts. Volunteering to make a dessert, serve dinner, or distribute poppies was an easy way to do my part for the veterans. In the past 9 years, I have served in several officer positions, beginning with membership chair and eventually unit president. I am currently a member of the Robert Vroman Auxiliary Unit 122 in Wolverine.

Up north, we are small units making a big difference for veterans and their families. I want to work with the units, highlighting their accomplishments. I look forward to meeting the members in this district to learn what makes each unit special. Attending district meetings helped me grow as an auxiliary member. I encourage each unit president to attend district meetings to share their unit's accomplishments and the individual contributions of their members.

As District President, I want to recognize the collective efforts, including individual contributions of each member, to our mission of serving veterans, military, and their families.

Poppy News

Christine Merlington, Poppy Chair

It is never too early to start planning for Poppy Days. The department has plenty of Poppies available for purchase. As we have wrapped up the previous year, it's time to start thinking of the upcoming programs. Poppies can be distributed all year long. We are dedicated to the National Poppy Days in May, and that will come sooner than you think. Look to ordering poppies and getting locations and ideas started.

If you go onto the ALA for Veterans website, you can download and print a News Release to promote your Poppy Days in your neighborhood, you can drop off at local busi-

nesses to let the community know when it is happening. You can even print out a Poppy Day Proclamation and leave it in businesses around your community. There are even Poppy Program Certificates that can be printed and given to the community businesses that let you set up at their locations as a way of saying thank you to them.

In the Fall, local businesses such as Menards will be trying to clear out their flower seeds. Poppies can sometimes be found in these places and can be handed out in the Spring for planting. It is also never too early to get with your schools for the Poppy Contests. As a friend of mine always says, "Poppy On."

COMMUNICATION IS THE KEY TO SUCCESS

Beryl Robbins, Girls State Chairman

Your ALA Girls State Program was held on the campus of MSU, June 22 through June 28, 2025. There were 188 delegates in attendance on opening day. One student left sick on Monday, and another student was excused to leave Friday afternoon. 187 students received their ALA Girls State pin and certificate of completion.

One of our shining moments was achieving our goal of having every delegate write a thank-you note to their sponsor. We provided each city counselor with a batch of pre-addressed thank-you cards for their citizens. We required them to return the completed cards to our ALA Staff in order to receive their city's certificates of completion, and we are pleased to report we had 100% compliance!

The students and counselors who attended the 2024 ALA Girls State program did a fantastic job spreading the word about our program and recruiting students who attended our 2025 program. That effort, along with our social media posts, almost doubled our numbers, a trend that we hope will continue for our 2026 program.

Unfortunately, we had 20 sponsored

students who either neglected to follow up after receiving their acceptance letter or cancelled before the start of our session. This is something we need to resolve, and maybe you can help find a solution. Our online application process was a success, which also contributed to the increase in our numbers. We will continue this process, in addition to using the online pledge form. All of our forms are in the process of being updated and will be available by the end of September.

Here is a short synopsis of how the process works: Sponsors are encouraged to use the online pledge form that provides us with their organization's contact person and the estimated number of students they are able to sponsor. As delegate applications arrive, we first search the pledge forms for sponsors in the students' area. If none exist, we reach out to the ALA District, Unit, other American Legion family groups or an organization we have worked with in the past. Once we find an interested sponsor, we provide them with the students' applications. **IT IS HIGHLY RECOMMENDED** that the sponsor contact the applicant to make sure they are serious

about attending and available to attend the entire program before submitting their reservation form and sponsorship check. If you are a sponsor who has already contacted one or more students you plan to sponsor, please provide them with your name, organization, and contact information (email or phone number) for inclusion on their application. When we receive that application, we will forward it directly to her sponsor. Once we receive notification from our department office that a reservation form and check have been received, we email the student their acceptance letter, copying their parent/guardian and the sponsor. Again, it is highly recommended that the sponsor follow up with the student and/or parent. Communication is the key to success!

Our 2025-26 ALA Girls State Program Guide contains detailed sponsor information. We encourage you to refer to that and provide the pertinent information to sponsors in your area that you are working with. This will ensure that we receive reservation forms and checks that are completed accurately. Get an early start; don't wait until May. Give your students time to prepare. Let's work together to double our numbers again this year!

JUNIORS ACTIVITY PROGRAM

Sue Verville, Chairman

This year, we do not have any Junior Officers, so Madame President Dawn would like all the Units with any Juniors to participate at the unit level and share what the Junior members are doing. Thank you, Sheila Maxwell, for being a member of this committee.

The goal of the ALA Junior Activities program is to develop our Junior members into leaders and keep them connected. The purpose of the Junior Activities Committee is to interest eligible young women under the age of 18 in continuing their membership as senior members through the positive experience of mission-based volunteering that instills the ideals of the organization.

The Success of the Junior Activities program is dependent on the leadership provided by the unit, district, and department. Juniors are not separate organizations but are under the guidance of an adviser (or Junior Activities chair) and a committee of members. Juniors conduct their meetings and activities, and are highly encouraged to participate in senior member meetings and activities. The Junior officers are honorary in title. Their work should be coordinated with the work of the seasoned officers in their unit, district, and department.

Americanism should be a major focus to teach patriotism, citizenship, and loyalty to America. There are many teaching tools available to help instruct a variety of ages in Americanism. All member activities should encourage Junior participation. There are many ways to engage your Juniors. You will have Juniors of all ages, and you will need to be sure there is something for each age level to do in whatever activity you

choose. Juniors are encouraged to incorporate aspects from the Auxiliary's programs into their projects throughout the year.

Participating in the American Legion Auxiliary Junior Patch Program allows Junior members to increase their knowledge of patriotism, citizenship, leadership, health, and fitness. Juniors can be involved with the Patch Program as a group or as an individual. There are four levels in the Patch Program, grouped according to what grade the Junior is in school. These include the Purple level for Pre-K ages 3 through kindergarten, the Red level for 1st through 4th grades, the Gold level for 5th-8th grades, and the Blue level for grades 9-12 (or high school graduation). Young Sons of the American Legion are permitted to participate in the ALA Junior Patch Program. We encourage you to work with your squadron to involve their school-aged members.

Plan your events so your Juniors can participate in any of them with your senior unit members. Allow them to participate in all aspects. Remember: They do not want to just be the "clean-up crew." If you're hosting a dinner, consider letting them help serve. Your older Juniors could prepare a dessert. A dinner is a great time for the Juniors to visit with veterans. Some ALA units have only a handful of Juniors. If your numbers are small and you cannot find someone to coordinate a separate Junior group, be sure to include them in your meetings. They could lead the Pledge of Allegiance, lead the Preamble, or say an opening and/or closing prayer. Consider assigning them to a senior officer or committee chair. They can learn more about the ALA and become excited about our programs.

District Meetings

First District

September, 24 2025

K of C Hall, 19801 Farmington Road, Flint 48152
6:30 pm

Second District

Meetings start at 11 am with the SAL followed by Riders at Noon with a Lunch VSO training at 1 pm and Legion at 2 pm

October 19, 2025

Chelsea Post 31

January 11, 2026

Ida Post 514

March 8, 2026

Milan Post 268

May 17, 2026

Blissfield Post 325

Third District

Lunch is at 11 am, and Meeting at Noon.

September 14th 2025

at Post 48, Grand Ledge

November 9th 2025

at Post 55, Albion

January 11th 2026

at Post 257, Battle Creek

March 8th 2026

at Post 54, Battle Creek

May 3rd 2026

at Post 36, Kalamazoo

Fourth District

Service officers training at 11:00 am meal at 12:30 pm
Meetings at 1:30 pm.

TBD

Fifth District

Meetings are on the 2nd Thurs of every month meal @ 5:30 pm & meeting @ 7 pm.

September 11th 2025

at post 154

November 13th 2025

at post 0047

January 8th 2026

at post 258

March 12th 2026

at post 305

May 7th 2026

at post 28

July 9th 2026

Location TBD by the next commander's post

Sixth District

Service Officer School at 11:10 am (when scheduled), Lunch at Noon, Meetings at 1 pm

September 21, 2025

Grand Blanc Post 413

November 9, 2025

Stockbridge Post 510

January 18, 2026

Howell Post 141

March 15, 2026

Swartz Creek Post 294

May 17, 2026

Holt Post 238

Seventh District

Lunch at 12:30 with meetings at 2:00 pm

October 19, 2025

Seabewaing Post 293

January 11, 2026

Lapeer Post 16

March 16, 2026

Port Huron Post 8

May 17, 2026 TBD

June 2026

State Summer Convention

Eighth District

Trainings will start at Noon, Dinner at 1:00pm with Legion and Auxiliary meetings immediately following

TBD

Ninth District

Executive meetings are at 11:00am with Lunch at noon. Meetings at 1:00 pm

TBD

Tenth District

All meetings will start with lunch at noon. Meetings at 1:00 pm.

TBD

Eleventh District

All Meetings Start at 10 am, with Lunch to after.

TBD

Twelfth District

Coffee and Doughnuts at 9, meeting at 10 am, with a lunch and additional hour after lunch if needed.

TBD

Sixteenth District

All meetings start at 7:30 pm

September 9, 2025

Melvindale

17011 Rupp Rd

October 14, 2025 *

Riverview 389

734-767-3786

November 11th, 2025

Allen Park Post 67

Phone: 313-388-2088

December 9th, 2025 *

Southgate Post 478

January 13th, 2026

Stitt Post 232

February 10th, 2026 *

Fort Dearborn Post 364

March 10th, 2026

Wyandotte Post 217

April 14th, 2025 *

Trenton Post 426

May 12th, 2025 **

Lincoln Park Post 67

Phone: 313-388-2088

June 10th, 2025

Garden City 396

Phone: 313-381-2245

* Service Officer School at 6:30 pm

**Memorial Service & Elections

Eighteenth District

All meetings Meeting for the District Legion and Auxiliary Convene at 2:00 pm

May 18th, 2025

Rochester Post 172

234 Walnut Blvd

Rochester, MI 48307 Phone:

248-651-2247

Nineteenth District

Training at 10:00 am, Social Meet and Greet at 11:00 am, lunch served at noon. The both the Legion and Auxiliary will start at 1:00 pm

All meetings will be held at: The Landing Zone Gaylord Bowling Center 1200 Gornick Ave, Gaylord, MI 49735.

September 13, 2025

December 6, 2025

March 14, 2026

May 9, 2026

Law and Order

Jim Wallace, Chairperson

In an emergency, we call 911—and law enforcement, firefighters, or EMS respond quickly to ensure our safety. These brave, selfless public servants protect our communities every day, ready to assist the next person in need.

The American Legion, Department of Michigan, honors these dedicated individuals through its annual recognition programs. With approximately 340 Posts statewide, each has local, county, or state law enforcement, fire, and EMS services in its area. Posts are encouraged to request 2026 nomination packets from Department Headquarters (or visit michiganlegion.org) to recognize outstanding service in these fields.

We also encourage Posts to connect with local high schools to share applications for the 2026 Youth Law Cadet Law Enforcement Program (formerly the Student Trooper Program). Open to boys and girls in grades 10–12 with an interest in law enforcement, this elite, week-long course at the Michigan State Police Training Academy in Lansing includes firearms training, self-defense, fingerprinting, K-9 handling, accident and criminal investigation, and patrol car operation. Applications, including scholarship information, will be available in late September at www.michiganlegion.org/trooper.

By participating, your Post can help honor today's first responders and inspire the next generation of law enforcement professionals.



District 11

**Mark Maida,
Commander**

Greetings from the Upper Peninsula! It was great seeing everyone in Sault Ste. Marie and we hope everyone had a wonderful time in District 11.

This summer has been very busy as usual with numerous parades, festivals, poker runs etc. As a district we are renewing our focus on Americanism programs by being more involved with committees. We continue to work hard on membership. And most importantly we are becoming more enlightened to opportunities to assist veterans and their family's.

Finally, we would like to congratulate all of the newly elected State Officers and we are looking forward to working with you.



DEPARTMENT OF MICHIGAN

Tentative Program Dates and Deadlines

2025-2026

December 2025

December 5th- Oratorical Registrations deadline
December TBD- JSSP First round postal match competition target set sales and registration closes.

January 2026

January 1st- Baseball registration opens on baseball.legion.org
January 5th- Brewer/Wilson Scholarship submission deadline.
January 9th- Law Officer of the Year submission deadline
January 9th- Firefighter of the Year submission deadline
January 25th- District Oratorical Contests deadline

February 2026

February TBD- JSSP Targets due to the Civilian Marksmanship Program (CMP) - must be postmarked on or before this date to be eligible for scoring.
February 22nd- Zone Oratorical Contests deadline.
February TBD- JSSP Second round postal match competition targets mailed out by CMP.

March 2026

March 1st-Eagle Scout of the Year Award submission deadline
March 6th- Teacher of the Year Nominations deadline
March 28th-Oratorical State Contest at the Michigan Historical Museum in Lansing.

April 2026

April TBD- End of 2nd round postal match competition. Targets due to CMP - must be postmarked on or before this date to be eligible for scoring.
April 3rd- Skilled Trades Scholarship Application deadline

May 2026

May TBD-Boys State Application submission deadline
May 1st- Student Trooper Application submission deadline
May 15th- Baseball insurance purchase deadline
May 15th-17th- National Oratorical Contest at Hillsdale College in Hillsdale, MI

June 2026

June 1st- Final day for Baseball teams to register
June TBD -Boys State program at TBD

July 2026

July 1st-Robert Turner Baseball Scholarship submission deadline
July 15th- Diamond Baseball Scholarship deadline
July 19th-24th- Student Trooper Program
July TBD- JSSP American Legion National Championship(Individual Tournament)
July TBD- Class AA, Class A Senior Baseball State Tournaments in TBD.
July TBD- Junior Baseball State Tournament in TBD (Class A Senior Baseball Tournament Date/location TBD in December 2025)

2025 - 2026 NATIONAL MEMBERSHIP TARGET DATES

EARLY BIRD/NEF KICKOFF	SEPTEMBER 10, 2025	50%
FALL MEETINGS	OCTOBER 15, 2025	55%
VETERANS DAY	NOVEMBER 13, 2025	65%
PEARL HARBOR DAY	DECEMBER 10, 2025	75%
MID-WINTER	JANUARY 14, 2026	80%
PRESIDENT'S DAY	FEBRUARY 11, 2026	85%
LEGION BIRTHDAY	MARCH 11, 2026	90%
CHILDREN & YOUTH	APRIL 8, 2026	95%
ARMED FORCES DAY	MAY 13, 2026	100%
DELEGATE STRENGTH	30 DAYS PRIOR TO NATIONAL CONVENTION	

Target dates fall on the second Wednesday of the month unless there is a holiday on that day or at the beginning of that week.

The October Target Date is moved a week to allow departments to participate in Fall Meetings without affecting membership processing for that week.

Since Veterans Day falls on a Monday, the November target date will be on a Thursday.

You Can Renew!

Your renewal is just a click away. Click on your organization to renew on the national website right now.

LEGION
AUXILIARY
SAL



Sons of The American Legion Detachment of Michigan

CLIVE R.A. SEYDELL

Detachment Commander 2025-2026



It's hard to believe we're already rolling into fall. Since assuming the role of Detachment Commander, I have been honored and humbled by the support of our membership and proud of the work already happening across the state.

In just a few short months, I have had the chance to travel, attend events, and connect with members of our Legion Family across the state. Whether it's visiting Posts, joining in on District events, or supporting local projects, it is clear that the Sons of the American Legion are engaged and making a difference throughout Michigan.

One of the biggest things I've committed to this year is my Commander's Project: building a dedicated fishing dock at Wilwin at Cygnet Cove, a place close to my heart. Wilwin is a place of peace, healing, and purpose for our veterans and their families, and I believe this dock can be a lasting, meaningful addition that supports not only our heroes but also the scouts and volunteers who visit. Planning is underway, and we have already had some early conversations and commitments from generous supporters. I am hopeful that by working together, the entire Legion Family - Legionnaires, Sons, Auxiliary, and Riders - we can make this dream a reality. I want to hear from the blue cappers, the Sons making

things happen in their communities every day. Whether it is a flag retirement, a fundraiser, a parade, an award ceremony, or a simple act of service, please consider sending in a short article or a few photos for upcoming editions of the Legionnaire. These stories matter. They highlight the impact we are making at the local level and help inspire others across the Legion Family to stay engaged and active.

Looking ahead, I will be one of several representatives from Michigan attending the Sons of the American Legion National Convention in Tampa this August. I am looking forward to connecting with fellow leaders from across the country and bringing new ideas back home.

I'll also be working closely with our officers and chairmen to ensure our programs, communication, and community outreach remain strong throughout the year. Leadership does not end at the top; it grows through collaboration, consistency, and service. Together, we can continue to build a Detachment that is engaged, responsive, and focused on the mission.

Whether you are involved with the Sons, the Legion, the Auxiliary, or the Riders, I encourage you to stay visible, stay vocal, and stay engaged. Our strength is in our service, and when we work together as a family, the results speak for themselves.

Let's keep moving forward.



ALTERNATE N.E.C.
Victor C. Fisher

It's with great pride that I extend heartfelt congratulations to the entire Detachment of Michigan on an incredible membership year. As of August 4th, we've reached 28,189 members, finishing 12th out of 55 Detachments nationwide — a truly impressive accomplishment that speaks volumes

about the strength and dedication of our Michigan Sons. The Detachment is also first in the Central Region.

Even more noteworthy, we achieved an 89.19% renewal rate, showing that our members are not just signing up — they're staying engaged and committed to our mission. This kind of consistency is a reflection of strong leadership at the squadron, district, and detachment levels. Thank you for your continued efforts and tireless support.

I also want to congratulate everyone who traveled to Tampa Bay for the Sons of the American Legion National Convention, held August 22-24. Your presence, participation, and representation of Michigan at the national level truly matter. It's inspiring to see so many of our members stepping up to help shape the future of our organization.

As this edition of The Legionnaire goes to press, stay tuned — we'll have more updates and highlights from the convention to share in the coming weeks. We will also be posting info and pictures on our Facebook Page.

Let's keep the momentum going. Michigan is strong because you make it strong. Be A Guiding Light For Our Veterans.

HELP US TELL MICHIGAN'S SAL STORY

Across the state of Michigan, Sons of The American Legion Squadrons are making a real impact by organizing community events, honoring veterans, supporting local families, and keeping our mission strong. But these great efforts often go unnoticed simply because the stories aren't being shared. That's something we can change — and we need your help to do it.

As the Detachment of Michigan's Media and Communication Chair, I am looking for content to feature in The Legionnaire, social media, and other platforms. Whether it is a recap of a recent event, a spotlight on a dedicated member, or just a photo with a caption, every submission helps us show the pride, patriotism, and purpose that define the Sons here in Michigan. Remember all photos must have the event and names of all people in the photo. Keep alcohol out of photos. Show your pride with your SAL gear in the picture.

Send your articles, photos, or ideas to me at sal-media@sons.michiganlegion.org, and let us make sure your Squadron gets the recognition it deserves. By sharing what we do, we build a stronger connection with our members, our communities, and the mission we serve. To keep it simple, the deadline for the Legionnaire is the First of every month. If you have any questions, feel free to contact me. Hopefully, I will hear from you soon.



5TH ZONE

Zack Pendell, Commander

Twelve days of touring the Upper Peninsula began on July 9 with the installation of officers at Post 71 Gladstone, then off to the Department convention in Sault Ste. Marie. Visitation and membership awards delivered to Newberry, Marquette, Greenwood and a stop at La

Anse.

Arrived in Hancock and worked with Post 90 Lake Linden for the Young Son of the Year award dinner and a Channel 6 news interview. Traveled to Stambaugh Post in Iron River for a meeting with members to set up a 12th District for the Sons. Stopped in Iron Mountain and then Carney for a membership award, back to Gladstone before heading home. Visited the 179 Grandville and Dorr Post before reaching home.

I want to say once again how proud I am of what the Squadrons are doing to assist their veterans. These places are impressive when you walk in the door and are greeted by the Legion family. Family always makes the work enjoyable, and you always feel at home.



NOMINATIONS ARE OPEN

Seth Fisher, Son Of The Year Chairman

Hello everyone, I wanted to share a quick reminder about two important honors within the Sons of the American Legion—the Son of the Year and the Young Son Award. The Son of the Year award is open to any active member over the age of 18 who shows outstanding dedication to service, leadership, and community involvement. The Young Son Award is for members under 18 who are already making a positive impact and representing our values at an early age.

I have been working to help get nominations going because it is important to recognize the people who consistently go above and beyond for our veterans, our programs, and our mission. If you know someone who fits the criteria, let us make sure their efforts are seen and appreciated. You can reach me at 313-801-5970 or email me at sethfisher58@gmail.com if you have any questions.



NEWS FROM THE JUDGE

Dominic Merlinton

The Sons of the American Legion, Detachment of Michigan, has officially updated its Constitution and By-Laws to include a new requirement for Squadrons. As outlined in Article IX, Section 3, each Squadron must now approve and endorse its own Constitution and By-Laws.

These documents, along with any amendments, must be approved by: The sponsoring Post, the District Sons Judge Advocate (where applicable) and the Detachment Judge Advocate. Only after receiving these endorsements should the document be placed on file with the American Legion, Department of Michigan.

Squadrons that have not yet submitted their Constitution and By-Laws are asked to do so as soon as possible. Documents can be emailed to saljac@sons.michiganlegion.org or mailed to Department Headquarters in Lansing, attention: Detachment Judge Advocate. A fillable template is available at sons.michiganlegion.org/resources to assist Squadrons with this process.

While the form provides a suggested structure, Squadrons are welcome to tailor it with content specific to their needs. However, one key requirement must be included: "The American Legion sponsoring Post must have the Post Finance Officer on all Squadron bank accounts as a signatory. This is necessary to facilitate taxes and banking paperwork. Please take time to review and update your Squadron's governing documents to ensure compliance with this important change.

If anyone has pictures of a Detachment function, please share them. Please send me photos of the event, including the date, names, and a brief description of what the event was for. I am working on our scrapbook for the 2025-26 year for our Detachment Commander Clive Seydell.

Thank You, Kirk Maves Detachment Historian



REFLECTIONS FROM BOYS STATE 2025

John Beeman, americanism Chair

It was an honor and a privilege to serve as Chairman for the 2025 Boys State of Michigan program. Being part of this incredible experience—

both as a chairman and a committee member—was deeply rewarding and inspiring.

When the boys first arrived, many of them were understandably nervous. There was a sense of uncertainty in the air, and the group felt a bit reserved. But by the second or third day, that all began to change. You could see friendships forming, confidence building, and teamwork taking root. By the time I had to leave on Thursday, it was like watching a group of

lifelong friends. The transformation over just a few days was remarkable.

These young men, most of whom had never met before, had grown into a cohesive, respectful, and enthusiastic group—ready to lead, learn, and support each other. The Boys State program continues to demonstrate the promise of our next generation of leaders. I was impressed not only by their intelligence and curiosity but by their maturity, compassion, and willingness to grow. We often worry about the future, but I walked away from this year's session with renewed faith. These young men are going to make a difference.

A special thank-you to Sons of the American Legion 2nd Zone Commander Scott Kelly, as well as members Matt Becker, Jamie Dudash, Daniel Possett, and

the rest of the American Legion Boys State staff. Your warm welcome, leadership, and dedication helped make this experience possible for the participants and for those of us privileged to serve them. As we look ahead to next year, now is the time for squadrons to begin planning fundraisers to support sending local boys to the Boys State program. Whether you are sponsoring a delegate from your community or making a donation directly to Boys State, your support is essential to keeping this valuable program strong and accessible year after year. To all who helped make Boys State 2025 a success, thank you. And to the young citizens who took the leap and participated: well done. You made us proud.



Greg Price, Adjutant



Carvin Chapman, Membership



John Beeman, Americanism



David Seydell, Chaplain



Earl Ruttkoski, Finance Officer



Dan Tyack, Nat. Security



Kirk Maves, Historian



Todd VanDam, PDC



Steve Loewstein, Asst. Adjutant



Ron Wyatt, Veterans & Children Fund



Dominic Merlington, Constitution & Bylaws



Mike Holley, N.E.C.



Victor Fisher, Alt NEC



Russ Bayliss, VA&R



Sandy Lipman, Child Welfare



Seth Fisher, SGT at Arms



Clive C.A. Seydell, Asst. Sgt. at Arms



Bill Willey, Asst. Sgt. at Arms



Chris Dohnal, Budget Chair



Henry Van Dusen, Charities/Cmdr's Project



Mike Globke, 1st Zone Cmdr



Scott Kelly, 2nd Zone Cmdr



John Brown, 4th Zone Cmdr



Zack Pendell, 5th Zone Cmdr



Fred Ruttkofski, Pin Sales

Detachment Commander Seydell Tours the 18th District



Joining Detachment Commander Seydell on a trip through the 18th District were SAL Chaplain Dave Seydel, Detachment Assistant Sargent at Arms Clive C.A. Seydell and DEpartment President Dawn Gramza, show here at Post 14.



L-R Sandy Lipman, Kim Lamboris, Dan Tyack, Kim Lipman, Detachemnt Commander CLive R.A. Seydell, DEpartment President Dawn Gramza, Clive C.A. Seydel, and Dave Seydell



2025 - 2026

SONS OF THE AMERICAN LEGION NATIONAL MEMBERSHIP TARGET DATES

SEPTEMBER 10, 2025	10%
OCTOBER 15, 2025	25%
NOVEMBER 13, 2025	35%
DECEMBER 10, 2025	45%
JANUARY 14, 2026	60%
FEBRUARY 11, 2026	75%
MARCH 11, 2026	80%
APRIL 8, 2026	90%
MAY 13, 2026	100%
** JULY 29, 2026	105%
** DELEGATE STRENGTH TARGET DATE - 30 DAYS PRIOR TO NATIONAL CONVENTION	

Be A Voice Not An Echo

AMERICAN LEGION
FEMALE VETERAN LEADERSHIP RETREAT
OCTOBER 16-19

TO REGISTER VISIT
[HTTP://WWW.WILWINLODGE.COM/LEADERSHIP-RETREAT](http://www.wilwinlodge.com/leadership-retreat)

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.



"A Week That Shapes a Lifetime"

Mark Brejcha
Boys State Director



During our Boys State session this year, Xavier Evoy was the overwhelming selection as our 88th Boys State Governor. He's a gifted orator with a welcoming personality. Gabe Lencioni went to Boys Nation and was elected as Senate Chaplain, giving over a dozen invocations and benedictions that roused the hearts and lifted spirits. Both young men were the right stuff in representing themselves, the Legion, their communities, and the Posts that sponsored them. A salute goes out to Post 390 in Livonia (Lencioni) and Post 54, Battle Creek (Evoy) for sponsoring such fine young men. Let's do it again in 2026.

Standing outside while our two Boys State Senators from Michigan, Xavier Evoy (Ferndale) and Gabe Lencioni (Canton) were buying souvenirs, Senator Slotkin and her entourage passed by and she stopped as she looked at my Legion cap with Big Rapids on the side and said, "Hey, now there's a fellow Mich-i-gander." I greeted her and asked if she had time to visit with Xavier and Gabe. She obliged, and with a 5-minute inspiring visit in the middle of the hallway, she left a lifelong

Tim Poxson
Legislative Chariman



If you missed the State Convention, you missed a great opportunity to learn what the Michigan American Legion is doing and meet new friends and fellow veterans. At the Convention, I reported on three bills that have passed the Senate and are now in the House. The

legislative committee is collaborating with House leadership to advance these bills through the committee and to the floor for a vote. SB207 and SB208 will establish in law that our Veteran Service Officer program is recognized and that, if we remain qualified, we will receive a grant from the State to help fund the Service Officer Program. Any funds remaining in the budget from one fiscal year will carry over into the next fiscal year.

The other bill would place guardrails in Michigan law to help control the Lawyer Veteran Claim Sharks. It does not block all of them, but it is the best we could do at this point. If a law were passed nationally prohibiting anyone other than V.A. accredited service officers and V.A. accredited lawyers from filing claims, we would be able to add that restriction to the law. This bill, however, places restrictions on those who are not V.A.-accredited.

I hope you all visit the Department's website and find the "Legislative Priorities" button, then click on it. It will generate a message you can send to your elected officials to show your support for the different priorities. Please review all of our priorities and send messages to your elected officials to show your support with just one click.

Anyone can use it regardless of membership, and we are offering a monetary award for the highest users at next year's convention. If you'd like a video outlining the steps to use this new system to contact your elected officials, please contact Legislative@MichiganLegion.org.

The American Legion Membership Application

(Name)	(Mailing Address)		(Phone Number)	
(City)	(State)	(Zip)	(Post #)	
(E-mail)	☐ Male ☐ Female (Gender)		(Dues)	

☐ I certify that I served at least one day of active military duty since December 7, 1941 and was honorably discharged or am still serving honorably.
Please check appropriate service era and branch of service below

☐ Global War on Terror ☐ Gulf War ☐ Panama ☐ Lebanon/Grenada ☐ Vietnam ☐ Korea ☐ WWII	☐ U.S. Army ☐ U.S. Navy ☐ U.S. Air Force ☐ U.S. Marines ☐ U.S. Space Force ☐ U.S. Coast Guard ☐ Merchant Marines (WWII only)
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Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation

**Gary Easterling
Director**

Our staff is dedicated to providing the very best veterans' advocacy to Michigan Veterans and their families. They can assist with Claims Preparation, Presentation and appeal counsel in Veterans' benefits services. Let us assist you and your dependents in getting the benefits that you have earned by your service to your country.

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Call for a Service officer in your area:

833.648.3826 Option 1

e-mail - al.vbadet@va.gov

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Check out all your benefits at

www.mivabenefits.org

DON'T FACE THE VA ALONE!

Find an American Legion Veteran Service Officer near you. Use an Accredited Veteran Service Officer. Find a Service Officer near you at <https://www.mivabenefits.org/find-service-officer/> OR Call **833.648.3826** Option 1 and they will guide you to an accredited veteran service officer who will help you.

Service Officer

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
Kimberly Napoleon.....	Saginaw



1st Zone

Scott Nichols, 1st Zone Commander

The Legion cap is an iconic symbol. Members show off their past military and legion experiences, as well as their current positions or awards. Some keep it clean and pristine, and others like to load it up with ribbons, pins and medals, giving them that "lived in look."

I use my cap to remind me why The American Legion was created. One important pin on my cap was passed down to me from my great-grandmother. It is a Gold Star pin she was given by the Auxiliary to honor the sacrifice her son, Howard Nichols, made in France during WW I. It is one of the smallest tokens I possess, but it's a powerful reminder of why we serve.

The second is an American flag pin. I took it off my father's legion cap, which he wore to every meeting and every time he called bingo. When my father went into assisted living, I transferred his membership to my post. Our monthly

routine was to grab a burger and a beer, then head to the post for the meeting. I always say that by wearing that pin on my cap, my dad is still attending meetings and serving with me.

The third pin is from the 10th Mountain Division, where my son is currently assigned to the US Army. I have that pin to remind me of all the future veterans who are depending on us to keep the organization vital; to be here when they need us long after we are gone.

The last pin is a vanity pin. It's one I received from the National American Legion College. I keep that to remember that we all have something to learn in the Legion and that change is good.

However you adorn your cap, I hope you wear it with pride, knowing how hard those who came before us have worked to get us where we are today.

Ray Calrson Named UP Veteran of the Year



Raymond E. Carlson has been named the 2025 Upper Peninsula Veteran of the Year and was honored with a ceremony at the U.P. State Fair. The Committee announced Carlson's award, recognizing his contributions to the veteran community and his unwavering commitment to service.

Carlson's leadership of Michigan's American Legion over the past two decades serves as a focal point for his accomplishments. He's held positions including post commander, district commander, zone commander and served on the State Department Finance Committee, with extensive experience and dedication to his work securing his influence within the American Legion across Michigan.

Carlson has also successfully bid on and coordinated American Legion conventions for 14 years, leading to the success of the event in the U.P. during his time as president of the U.P. Convention Corporation.

He's also secured future convention dates in Sault Ste. Marie through his work.

During his time as the commander for Post 44, Carlson was in charge of a \$240,000 renovation project to enhance and revitalize the post. He also commits himself to social events sponsored by the post for community veterans such as bingo at the Marquette County Fair, bingo at the Jacobetti Veterans Home in Marquette and Boys State initiatives that promote youth development and civic engagement.



UP Veteran of the Year Ray Carlson and Department Commander Roger Avie at the UP State Fair



Ray Carlson accepting veteran of year in the UP

Allen Park's Maple Heights Senior Living Community Honors Veterans

American Legion and other veterans representatives joined residents at Maple Heights Senior Living Community April 28 to honor its resident veterans with a wall honoring their service.

World War II veteran and Pearl Harbor survivor John Williams, 104, helped cut the ceremonial ribbon to open the display with the help of American Legion Chaplain James Warunek, American Legion Service Officer and Army veteran Frank Roche, American Legion Navy veteran Denise Murphy and Army veteran and Veterans Administration representative Allen Bray.

Maple Heights Life Enrichment Coordinator April Russell said the veterans wall ribbon cutting ceremony commemorates the more than 20 veterans living in the senior community.

"We've taken their pictures, we are putting them on the wall and we're revealing it today," she said. "It's amazing, just the different wars that they have all fought in, and just that they've risked their lives and dedicated themselves to our country."

Russell said she is so pleased to be able to honor the senior community's military veterans, who served in World War II, Korea, Vietnam and the Middle East.

She said many of the veterans are in their 90s. "They are here to share their stories," Russell said. "A lot of times our veterans are very reserved in what they want to share, and for them to come here and share their experiences and what they went through and all that they have done for us is incredible."

She said the gathering was very emotional for her.

"When it comes to our veterans and them sacrificing, it's just heartwarming," Russell said. "We take things for granted every day and we don't realize what they've been through."

Bray said the United States needs to know more about its veterans and appreciate their service and what their families go through.



Veteran resident (left) joins American Legion Chaplain James Warunek, Legion Service Officer Frank Roche, Pearl Harbor survivor John Williams, Denise Murphy, & Allen Bray

Around the State...

The Upper Peninsula State Fair



L-R JanLepinski, Kurt Lepinski, Commander Avie and Legislative Chair Tim Poxson

Washtenaw Community College Hosted the third annual Vet Fest



L-R Dave Draper, Bruce Lowry, & Nate Powell



The event attracted more than 700 veterans and Post 46 served 680 free meals.

Lt. Dan Stops By Post 28



When the Lt. Dan Band, Gary Sinise Foundation were scheduled to play downtown Grand Haven on Aug 2 and reached out to the Post for a place to park their trailer prior to their concert. Most of our members reaction was "Are you kidding, we get to help Gary Sinise? Just tell us what you need!" What a privilege and honor it was to be able to assist this organization. The Trailer was parked in front of the Charles A. Conklin Post 28 in Grand Haven during the entire Coast Guard week.

Post 46 hosts, 6th District Veterans Town Hall



The event, featuring Congresswoman Dingell, brought together over 30 veterans and several veteran organizations. Members asked Congresswoman Dingell questions about cuts to the VA and staffing, as well as women's healthcare issues and the Fisher House.



L-R Derrik Blunke, Debbie Dingell, and Scott Nichols



Commander Avie announces his Special Project



At a fundraiser for the Freedom Center at Fox Hill Country Club, Commander Roger Avie announces his special project to raise funds for new furniture for the Freedom Center.



5th. District BoysGirls state participants returning to the UP



THE FREEDOM TORCH FALL OUTING FREE EVENT FOR SCOUTS & VETERANS

BSA TROOPS, GSUSA TROOPS (CADETTE & ABOVE)

THIS IS NOT A CUB SCOUT EVENT

ALL VETERANS WELCOME

ACTIVITIES:

- *FLAG ETIQUETTE
- *FLAG RETIREMENT CEREMONY
- *AIR RIFLE SHOOTING
- *TEAM BUILDING CHALLENGES
- *ROPE CHALLENGES
- *OBSTACLE COURSE
- *GAMES
- *STORIES WITH VETERANS



OCTOBER 17-19, 2025



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