

MILEGIONNAIRE

Vol. XCIV No. 2

michiganlegion.org

August 2025

LEGION FAMILY ELECTS NEW LEADERSHIP



Department Commander Roger Avie



Department President Dawn Gramza



Detachment Commander Clive Seydell

See Their Bios on Page 11

CSU Extends Scholarship Deadline

The 2026 Scholarship Columbia Southern University has graciously extended the application date to **September 1st** for this years \$32,700. The American Legion, Department of Michigan and Columbia Southern University to provide educational opportunities and to give back to those who give so much.

The American Legion Department of Michigan Members, Spouses or Dependents Learning Partner Scholarship: The scholarship is provided through a partnership with Columbia Southern University (CSU) to show our support for members and families of The American Legion Department of Michigan, the American Legion Auxiliary of Michigan, and the Sons of the American Legion Detachment of Michigan. The scholarship will cover up to \$32,700 in one online degree program. The scholarship will be directly applied to the recipient's tuition for up to 60 semester hours or 36 consecutive months in the selected online degree program, whichever comes first.

The Scholarship has proven very popular in previous years and allows our legion family to better their lives through higher education.



SUMMER CONVENTION REVIEW



Commander Cooper with the Royal Canadian Legion who posted the Colors at the Friday Convention Session in Sault Sainte Marie

Convention Photos on Page 8

In this Edition

<i>Commanders Comments</i>	<i>Page 3</i>
<i>1st and 2nd Vice Commanders Reports</i>	<i>Page 4</i>
<i>Auxiliaire</i>	<i>Page 5</i>
<i>Convention Gallery</i>	<i>Page 8</i>
<i>Sons of the American Legion</i>	<i>Page 10</i>
<i>Around the State</i>	<i>Page 15</i>

Richard A. Morrison Combined Advocacy Training**September 10 - 12 (Wed-Thu-Fri)****PLEASE COMPLETE THE FOLLOWING****Cost = \$250.00 per person**

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The American Legion Department of Michigan - Higgins Lake

American Legion VA&R Division

477 Michigan Ave, Room 1231 Attn: Tripp C.

Detroit, MI 48226

Check-in starts September 10 at 3:00pm

HIGGINS LAKE DNR

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Message From The Commander



Roger Avie
Department Commander

It is with deep humility, gratitude, and a profound sense of duty that I accept the position of Commander of the Michigan American Legion. I am truly honored to stand before you today, entrusted with a legacy that spans generations of service, sacrifice, and unwavering patriotism.

To those who have come before me in this position, I offer my respect and appreciation. Your leadership has paved the way for progress, unity, and strength within our ranks. I am committed to upholding that tradition, while also meeting the challenges of our time with courage, innovation, and compassion.

Our mission — to serve veterans, support their families, promote American values, and strengthen our com-

munities — has never been more vital. As Commander, I pledge to listen to your voices, represent your interests, and lead with integrity and transparency.

We will work together to ensure our younger veterans feel welcome and empowered. We will continue to advocate fiercely at every level for the benefits and support all veterans have earned. And we will honor the memory of those who gave all by continuing to live out the values they fought to protect.

This is not a position I take lightly. It is a sacred trust — one that I will carry forward with the full measure of my heart and energy.

Thank you for your confidence, your support, and for the privilege of serving alongside each and every one of you. God bless you, God bless our veterans, and God bless the United States of America.

Attention Military Retirees: New ID Card Required by 2026

Ron Runyan - Runyan's Rambling
Department Adjutant

Beginning in (very early) 2026, the old-style, blue ID cards will no longer be accepted, regardless of the printed expiration date. In order to maintain base access, please visit your nearest DEERS/ID card office to obtain a new ID. You do not need to wait until the expiration date.

If you're unable to make it to a military installation, you can also request a new card through the RAPIDS ID Card Office Online: <https://idco.dmdc.osd.mil/idco/>



UPDATE: This policy applies to ID cards of all colors (except the new white ones). They should all be updated in order to maintain base access.

You will have the opportunity to get a new ID Card at the Retiree Appreciation Day event on 20 September 2025. Bring two forms of non-expired identification in order to get your new ID card. Applies to both retirees and spouses.

STATE OFFICERS

State Commander. Roger Avie
State Adjutant. Ron Runyan
1st Vice Commander Jim Austin
2nd Vice Commander Roger Deaton
1st Zone Scott Nichols
2nd Zone. Fred Youngs
3rd Zone Leo Cowdry
4th Zone Mike Pergande
5th Zone Mike Trickey
Chaplain. Mike Schlaack
Finance Officer. Brian Mohlman
Historian Robert Higley Jr.
N.E.C. Brett Holt
Judge Advocate. Brett Holt
Sergeant-at-Arms Duane Miller
Immediate PDC. Dan Cooper
Alt. N.E.C Brian Mohlman
VA and R Director Gary Easterling

DEADLINE DATES

September 2025 is August 10th

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HEADQUARTERS DIRECTORY

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If you have a photo you would like to submit for the Michigan Legionnaire and/or website 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

media@michiganlegion.org

517-220-2747

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Membership Report



Jim Austin
1st Vice Commander

Wow, I just returned home and settled in from this year's American Legion Department Convention in Sault Ste. Marie, I was elected to the honorable position of 1st Vice Commander. Thank you to Debbie Abraham, John Harper and all the great Legionnaires who supported me.

I look forward to an amazing year of hard work and great times with fantastic results. I am SO honored and proud to work for the world's greatest veterans organization and to do everything I can to support our Veterans.

The leadership and membership team in place this year is great. With all that I have learned from Wayne Blank, I look forward to continued growth in membership. We hit the ground running.

We have until the end of this year to increase our 95% membership rate. Please continue to work on your membership, including past renewals and planning for the year ahead. There are many tools available to help you achieve your membership goals. Feel free to contact me, the Department website, or on the National website for more information.

Many of the existing membership incentives will remain in place, and we are exploring opportunities to enhance and increase other membership incentives. Stay tuned!!

Again, thank you for all your support and your trust in me to ensure that membership keeps growing. With the past leadership mentoring and the impressive membership team this year it is almost guaranteed to grow and be successful.

Americanism Report



Roger Deaton
2nd Vice

I want to thank you for your support and my election as 2nd Vice Commander for the Department of Michigan.

"Not all are perfect & and I certainly am not." – I pray every day to be a better person and to do the best I can each day. I will be a good steward of the 2nd Vice position and promise to leave this and every position in a better spot than when I took over.

I am the Chairperson of Americanism... I could not be prouder to have this role. My team and I have hit the ground running. Reaching out to all current committees and asking what we can do better, and sharing my vision going forward. As this article is being printed, the 100th anniversary of American Legion Baseball will come to a close, and I will be gearing up for the 101st year. Our committee will support baseball by adding the Junior tournament in Flint, Michigan, Post 64. The student trooper, Junior Shooting Sports, Oratorical Contest, Scouting America, Boys State and our National Cemeteries in Michigan will have my full attention. Looking to establish a statewide marketing plan that is strategic in nature, meaning it will consider not just one year but also progression over three years and beyond.

Most in the Legion know "I Love the American Legion Family." As an active Legionnaire & American Legion Rider, I visit posts and Veteran events every week. Please feel free to reach out and share your event with me and the Americanism team, as we are "All in on growing and sustaining our American Legion Programs".

Great Lakes National Cemetery Advisory Council

PDC Steve Striggow, American Legion Liaison

The Great Lakes National Ceremony Advisory Council is an organization that meets monthly and is made up of VSOs and other organizations that support veteran causes. The American Legion and American Legion Auxiliary are both proud members of the Advisory Council. The ceremonies that take place at the cemetery are funded solely by the Advisory Council, including the Memorial Day Service, Veterans Day Service, and Headstone cleaning twice a year. The Unaccompanied Veteran Burial Services and POW/MIA Remembrance are also funded by the Council.

The Council also provides snacks for the honor guards while they are on duty and at quarterly meetings. The cemetery itself cannot spend government money for anything but burials.

The Avenue of 100 Flags that lines the road into the cemetery is supported solely by the Great Lakes National Cemetery Advisory Council. Last year, over \$70,000 was spent on the avenue for flagpole maintenance and the purchase of flags.

Each Monday at 0900, volunteers assemble to patrol the avenue of flags, ensuring that any flags that need repair or replacement are changed. The appearance of the avenue is a great source of pride to the volunteers. Volunteers are always welcome. Between Memorial Day and Veterans Day, cotton burial flags are flown. These flags are donated by families in exchange for a certificate or purchased by the Advisory Council. From Veterans Day to Memorial Day, all-weather flags are flown to withstand the winter storms. These flags are purchased with funds raised by the Advisory Council's golf outing or through monetary donations. The American Legion is very proud to be an active part of this council.

Great Lakes National Cemetery Update

PDC Steve Striggow, American Legion Liaison

Construction on Phase 2 at the cemetery is ongoing and is being completed gradually.

The bathrooms are over a year behind with no projected finish date. Committal Shelter #4 is slowly approaching completion. It is a very beautiful location in the woods.

All the inground burial sections have been turned over to the cemetery, and it is projected they will provide enough graves for 5 years. They have already started using the new sections.

Columbarium D is almost complete, and the finished portion is now in use.

They are starting the design for Phase 3, which will see grave sites on the other side of Fagan Lake. Next year, the bidding process for construction will begin, with work scheduled to start in 2027.

The number of burials has picked up a great deal with the good weather. There are 30+ funerals per day on average.

If your Honor Guard does not participate in funerals at the Cemetery, please consider doing so. There are days when no teams are available to honor the veterans. The Honor Guards that are near the cemetery are doing extra funerals and are overworked and losing members due to age and burnout.

There were problems in the past with the ability of Honor Guards to park close to the Committal Shelters. Phase 2 installed an Honor Guard parking lot at each Committal Shelter and golf carts are available from the cemetery to use if needed.

Fiscal Year Stats from October through May 31, Burial = 2571, Month of May = 466 Total Burials since 2005 = 68,827.



AUXILIAIRE



From the Desk of the President

August 2025



Julie Becker
Department President
2024-2025

It is hard to believe this will be my last article as your Department President. The past year has flown by. As always, I am so very proud of all of you and your dedication to our Veterans, their families, and your communities. Congratulations to our new leadership team. I know you will all make us very proud. As we look forward to the next year and our new leadership, please be respectful and kind. You may not get along with the person in a certain position, but you will respect them. They did the work to get to that position. As Past Department President Jackson had as her theme song "Be Humble and Kind", along with practicing the golden rule, we could have an amazing year and future.

Commander Cooper, Detachment Commander VanDam Honorary Junior President Jones and I focused on the Legion family this year during our travels. When we work as a family amazing things can happen. Membership grows, more volunteers for your events and unity develops. Also, our resources are greater.

The Legion, SAL and the ALA combined have the vast

Last Thoughts

capability to help our veterans, their families and our communities. So, reach out to other Legion family members if you have a need for assistance with a project or assisting a Veteran in need. Working as a Family we can make a major difference. I would like to Thank Commander Cooper, First Lady Virginia, Detachment Commander VanDam, First Lady Kim and Honorary Junior President Abbie for the amazing year we had together. You made it very easy to form the "family" bond. I appreciate each of you greatly. You all hold a special place in my heart and always will xo. And Now ... Peace Out.

If I leave here tomorrow
Would you still remember me?
For I must be traveling on now
'Cause there's too many places I've got to see
But if I stay here with you, girl
Things just couldn't be the same
'Cause I'm as free as a bird now
And this bird you cannot change

Lynyrd Skynyrd

Saginaw VAMC

Sandy Nuechterlein, Representative

This year has been very busy. I have been volunteering every Monday by sorting donations, greeting Veterans in the lobby and visiting the inpatients. I offer them supplies and games from my cart, I help with mailings, I transport patients to their vehicles, etc. I help and assist wherever there is a need.

On behalf of the Auxiliary, I sponsored four bingo parties in recreation therapy. All were well attended by the inpatients. They are so thankful for the activity.

I have attended four VAVS meetings in the past year. Of special interest was the December 2024 meeting where we assembled 40 backpacks full of donated items such as clothing, socks, flashlights, back scratchers, puzzle books, wrist-watches, hand warmers, etc. The backpacks were then distributed to the CLC patients on Christmas Eve. It was a very rewarding experience.

Thank you for donating and supporting this medical center location. Our Veterans are very appreciative and well taken care of here at the Saginaw facility.

Adaptive Sports

Mark Sutton, Auxiliary Media & Communications

Did you know the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs has an Adaptive Sports Program? What is Adaptive Sport?

Adaptive sports are competitive or recreational sports modified to meet the needs of individuals with disabilities, allowing them to participate fully and safely. Modifications can include adjusted rules, specialized equipment (like wheelchairs or prosthetics), or tailored environments to accommodate physical, sensory, or cognitive impairments.

The US Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Adaptive Sports Program empowers veterans with physical, emotional, or cognitive challenges through sports, fostering confidence, health, and community.

Like the Creative Arts Festival, the VA sponsors five other events annually for Veterans seeking more physical expression. They are the National Veterans Wheelchair Games, National Disabled Veterans Golf Clinic, National Veterans Golden Age Games, the National Disabled Veter-

ans Winter Sports Clinic, and the National Veterans Summer Sports Clinic.

The Adaptive Sports Program also has an Adaptive Sports Grant Program offering qualifying organizations funding to plan, develop, manage, and implement adaptive sports programs to encourage a healthy and active lifestyle through sports and equine therapy.

Veterans can participate in a range of sports, from traditional activities to specialized adaptive sports like wheelchair rugby and skiing, accommodating all skill levels.

The National Golden Age Games are open to Veterans 55 or older and enrolled in the VA Healthcare system.

Want to learn more about the adaptive sports programs and upcoming events? Visit the VA website at <https://department.va.gov/veteran-sports/> or talk to your VA Healthcare provider.



Current status and the next 60 days

**Shannon Werner - Executive Director,
Secretary and Treasurer**

We have just returned to the office from Department Convention in Sault Ste. Marie where so many gave so much. There are literally thousands of action items and details completed so the Auxiliary has a successful Convention. If you know a member that was involved, thank them. It is very time consuming and I can't speak for anyone else but I am exhausted.

It was a very rewarding and humbling convention for me. I enjoyed hearing Mr. Dennis Schur speak to our members regarding the Legion Post #722 that he manages in Freeland. The Veterans of Post #722 have made our poppy program so successful with their poppy making. Not to mention the positive impact they have had on their community with the generous donations they were able to make in the last year.

We also met and heard from Kristen Acciola, a Veteran, Mother and dual member in our Legion family. It makes me so happy to assist those in crisis and see the result of our hard work. What a difference support, kindness and friendship can make! If we all focus on the mission, we can accomplish great things. Surely you saw it with your own eyes at Convention.

We can't rest though, we are currently four weeks out from National Convention and eight short weeks until our Fall Conference. So many tasks to complete in order for things to move forward smoothly with regard to both events. Right now, I am still completing tasks generated from Department Convention. The checks for special projects, the delegate fees collected, donations, problems, suggestions, etc. Wish me luck!

Community Service

Debbie Weatherbee – Chairman

One year may be ending, but Community Service never ends. Please keep doing the things you do. Please continue with donating to food pantries, donating to the homeless shelters, donating blood at your local blood bank, helping a neighbor mow their lawn, take them to their doctor visits, just a few suggestions.

Remember to think of your members that you may have not seen in a while or friend/family you have not kept in touch with. Please give them a call or send them a note letting them know you are thinking of them or maybe meet them for lunch. This simple act of kindness will put a smile on their face and you may just be saving their life.

This year was spectacular, and the Unit/District reports were outstanding. Thank you so much for all you do for Community Service! The hours added up and the money that was donated was really great. It was a pleasure being the Department Community Service Chairman and this really taught me so much. A big thank you to the committee of Mary Rogers and Alicia Minster. You were the best!

A Year of Learning

Christine Merlington, Department Chaplain

Chaplains are a unique kind of person. They give of themselves with no regard to their own personal needs. This is what I have found out working during the year as Department Chaplain. This is not because of what I had to do, but what I learned watching and working with different Chaplains during this year. It has been an eye-opening experience.

I pray all the Unit, Post and Squadron Chaplains continue to do what God has given them the strength to do. The work they do comes from strength and wisdom that not everyone has. The Chaplains are blessed to be these kinds of people.

May God Bless each and every one of you. Thank you for the opportunity of being your Department Chaplain this year. It was an honor and a blessing to be in this position. Always remember the following scriptures and their wisdom to help in everyday life:

Philippians 4:7

And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Numbers 6:24-26

The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make his face shine upon you and be gracious to you; the Lord lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace.

A Promise to the Pledge

During convention, the attached short story was read. Someone made a motion that it be shared through the Auxiliaire.

A Promise to the Pledge

by Fatme Khalil, Champion City

She had said the Pledge of Allegiance hundreds of times before classes, at assemblies, under flags fluttering in the morning air. She said the words because that's what everyone did. They came out of her mouth smoothly, automatically. She never thought much about them.

But they felt like someone else's words.

She wasn't sure what "liberty and justice for all" really meant. Not when the world around her seemed unfair. Not when voices like hers were too often overlooked.

But then came Girls State.

Suddenly, she was surrounded by girls from every corner of her state – leaders, thinkers, dreamers. They debated ideas, wrote laws, and ran campaigns. They asked questions she never thought to ask, and answered them with courage.

In the space of a week, she saw what democracy looked like – not as something locked in history or government buildings, but something alive, something fragile. Something that needed care, action and belief.

She found her voice in city council meetings, her strength at the podium, her passion in conversations that stretched late into the night, and quietly, something inside her shifted.

On the last day, when the flag was raised and the words began, she stood a little taller.

"I pledge allegiance..."

They weren't empty now.

They were a promise.

A promise to use her voice, to shape her country, to stand for something greater than herself.

"With liberty and justice for all."

She knew the words wouldn't fulfill themselves. But she also knew she could help make them real.

And for the first time, she didn't just say the pledge. She meant it.

Grand Haven High School Student Selected as Scholarship Finalist

Article by Mark Sutton

On Saturday, June 28, Grand Haven High School incoming senior McKenna Twa was selected as a Michigan ALA Girls State 2025 Samsung American Legion Scholarship National Finalist at the graduation ceremony of the American Legion Auxiliary Girls State program held on the Michigan State University campus. She could be awarded a scholarship of up to \$10,000.

The Samsung American Legion Scholarship was established to express gratitude for U.S. veterans who came to Korea's aid during its struggle against communist forces during the Korean War. Worldwide electronics leader Samsung endowed a scholarship fund of \$5 million in 1966. The American Legion administers the Samsung American Legion Scholarship Program, which is funded by the interest and other income from the endowment.

Applicants must be high school juniors who attend either American Legion Auxiliary Girls State or American Legion Boys State. Direct descendants (i.e., child, grandchild, great-grandchild, or legally adopted child) of a U.S. wartime veteran who served on active duty during one or more of the periods of war officially designated as eligibility dates for membership in The American Legion. Awards through the Samsung scholarships may be used for undergraduate studies and applied toward tuition, books, fees, and room and board. Winners are selected according to academic record,

involvement in school, and community service.

Ten National Scholars will receive \$10,000 each (two from each region). Ten National Runners-Up receive \$5,000 each (two from each region). The remaining department finalists receive \$1,250 each, guaranteed. McKenna was sponsored by the Charles A. Conklin American Legion Post 28 family in Grand Haven.

Michigan ALA Girls State is a week-long, immersive program that simulates state government, providing participants with hands-on experience in leadership, civic engagement, and public speaking. It's more than just a summer activity; it's a transformative experience that empowers young women to become active and informed citizens. McKenna shared ... "ALA Girls State is an incredible and rewarding program, regardless of whether you have an interest in government or not. Being surrounded by intelligent, strong, and passionate women was an incredibly enriching experience, and I had the privilege of making many amazing friends. This program helped me solidify my interest in government through being elected to hold positions such as mayor and house representative, and it built my confidence, leadership skills, and passion for politics. Girls State is truly so inspiring- it gave me so much hope for the future leaders of our country, and all the glass ceilings we will break."

2nd District is Growing

Karen Kurzynowski, 2nd District President

The 2nd District has had a phenomenal year of growth. Not only has our unit membership increased by almost 200 members, but we were fortunate in establishing a New Unit. We welcome Herbert J. McKune, Unit 31, Chelsea, Michigan. Looking forward to them making their mark in the district.

Serving this District has been a highlight of my year. Each time I visit one of my units, I am amazed at all the hard work they are doing to support our veterans and the American Legion. Some of the activities include working with local community groups to assist in homeless shelters, blood drives, church food and toy drives. One unit displayed 22 flags a day for the month of September to bring awareness to Veteran Suicide. There were units that supported a dinner for veterans and their caregivers.

The Districts golf outing was just held in May and supports several college scholarships. A few units supported the Junior President's Project of Honor Flights. Many units funded the entire cost for one veteran (\$661). The district also funded the cost for one veteran.

My President's Project was Michigan Ability Partners (MAP). This organization collaborates with veterans who have disabilities and support their self-directed transformation to self-sufficiency. They serve over 1,200 people through permanent supported housing. Services include case management, rehousing, employment training and job placement services. MAP owns and operates forty-four units of affordable housing within the 2nd District. The units within my district supported my project very generously.

I remain hopeful that we will meet or exceed goal. I may be a bit biased, but I am so proud to be the President of this Second to None group of individuals.

What is a Mentor?

Mary Anne Yuncker, Leadership Chairman

Anyone can be a mentor. A mentor advises or trains someone who has less experience than they do. They have knowledge that will enhance the less experienced Auxiliary member's personal and organizational growth. There are 3 C's of mentoring. A mentor will be 1) a consultant. They will share the insights they have learned through their own experience; 2) a counselor. They listen and guide, not just giving quick answers; and 3) a cheerleader. They will provide support and enthusiasm, celebrating the successes of their mentee no matter how big or small they are.

Where did the word Mentor come from? In Greek mythology, when Odysseus had to go fight the Trojan War, he entrusted his young son to the care of his aging trusted companion Mentor. Mentor then taught the young future king all he would need to know to rule the land. In the same way, a mentor in the Auxiliary helps teach and guide newer members to have all they need to carry on the goals and programs of our great organization.

A mentor can be anyone who teaches newer Auxiliary members how to be the leaders of our organization. They follow carefully the 3 C's mentioned above. They can be older or younger. They are available and take the time to guide, without being critical. Their role is to teach how the Auxiliary works and then show how a new member can move into their place either as a leader or as a more experienced member of our group.

The My Mentor award is your chance to honor the Auxiliary member whose example has encouraged you to become a good member/leader. They may have worked closely with you or you may have admired them from afar. There is no time limit on this award. It can be someone who inspired you years ago or someone you just worked with recently. Write about how they have impacted your life as part of the ALA. In 500 words or less tell us about them including their name, Unit name and number and District. Send your entry to your District Chairman by the deadline for next year.

This year we sadly had no entries for the My Mentor award. We have all year to think about this. Let's make sure we write about the mentors in our lives this coming year.

2025 Summer Convention

Kawadin Casino - Sault Sainte Marie



The Calm Before the Storm



Detachment Commander
Clive Seydell



Heading to another Meeting



Law Enforcement Officer of the Year Zachary
Painter



Deb Weatherbee at the 2025
Memorial Service



National Vice Commander Roger Mathison

2025 Summer Convention

Kawadin Casino - Sault Sainte Marie



Jim Austin is elected 1st Vice Commander



2025-26 Department Commander Roger Avie



Newly Elected 2nd Vice Roger Deaton



Distinguished person of the Year
Denny Gilem



Keynote Speaker Army Chaplain,
Captain Josh Twiest



Royal Canadian Color Guard Presented the Flags on Friday



The 2025-2026 Zone and District Commanders are sworn in at the end of Convention



Commander Cooper and Virginia

Click here fo more photos from The Convention. or visit:

<https://michiganlegion.org/media/2025-convention-gallery/>

Meet your New Leaders!



Department Commander Roger Avie

Commander Avie is a highly accomplished professional with a diverse and distinguished career across business, finance, education, and veteran service. Starting out as Circulation Manager and Editor at the Southfield Observer, where he honed his skills in media and communications. He has served as CFO for Burns & Wilcox, one of the largest surplus lines insurance companies in the United States, managing over \$2.5 billion in premiums during his 14-year tenure.

A dedicated Legionnaire, Roger has held numerous leadership roles in the American Legion. He is a member of the National Legislative Commission, Department Finance Officer, and Chairman. He was the 17th District Commander and currently serves as the 1st District Finance Officer, Post 390 Adjutant, Assistant Finance Officer, and past Commander of Post 390. He is also the current Finance Officer for the 40 & 8 Voiture 1002, as well as the current Vice President and Past President of the Michigan American Legion Foundation.

Roger was an instructor at Wayne State University and Lawrence Technological University. He is also a past president of the Lawrence Technological University Alumni Association and the Sojourners Masonic Veterans Association.

Roger is the vice chairman and former chairman of the Farmington Hills Emergency Preparedness Commission (EPC). Additionally, he has managed the Farmington Founders Festival Parade for 26 years and the Holly Days Parade for 8 years.

Roger is currently a licensed insurance and surplus lines agent. He owns a video surveillance company, a tax practice, a computer and networking, and a property management firm overseeing multiple properties across Michigan. Roger also owned a video production company working for both corporate clients and government agencies.



Department President Dawn Gramza

President Gramza is eligible for membership due to the service of her father, Donald Earl Stewart, a U.S. Army veteran, and was a member of the James E. Yenor Post 193 before his passing. She joined Unit 514, Lynn C. Weeman, in October 2009 and has served as historian, Vice President, and President, as well as a member of the executive board.

Dawn has served the 2nd District American Legion Auxiliary Department of Michigan in various capacities, including secretary, vice president, president, chair of community service, legislative, and national security committees, as well as past president parley, and a member of the finance committee.

Dawn has served the Michigan American Legion Auxiliary Department as historian, chaplain, chair of the community service committee, and second vice president. She has also served as a member of the Michigan Leadership Committee and as Chairman of the Community Service Committee.

Dawn is involved in her community, serving on the City of Luna Pier City Council, the planning board, and the Lotus Manor housing board. Dawn has served her community actively since 2010 as a member of the Luna Pier City Council, City Planning Commission, Zoning Board, Freedom Festival Committee, and a member of the Lotus Manor HUD Housing Board, as well as chair of the South County Water Board.

Dawn has retired after 25 years of service with Visiting Nurses of Southeastern Michigan.



Detachment Commander Clive Seydell

Clive is a proud 26-year member of the Rose City Squadron 324 S.A.L. and has held leadership roles at every level of the organization. At his home Squadron, he served as Commander and Adjutant and currently is the Finance Officer. At the District level, he has served as Commander, First Vice Commander, Chaplain, and Adjutant. At the Detachment level, he served as Zone Commander and Adjutant. Additionally, Clive has chaired numerous Detachment-level committees, helping shape impactful programs across the state.

His is eligible through his father, who served in the U.S. Army during the Vietnam era and his grandfather, a World War II aircraft mechanic. Their legacy of service continues to inspire Clive's dedication to the American Legion Family and the values it upholds.

Outside of his Legion service, Clive is deeply involved in Scouting, serving as Committee Chair for both Cub Scout Pack 339 and Scouts BSA Troop 396, as well as a registered Merit Badge Counselor. His 12-year-old son, Clive C.A., is a motivated Scout currently working toward his Star rank, and the two regularly team up on camping trips, merit badge work, and community service projects.

Clive is proudly supported by his "Commander's Lady," Stephanie, who also enjoys being actively involved in both the Legion Family and Scouting. Along with her children, Tom and Felicity, they form a close-knit blended family that values tradition, teamwork, and giving back.

As Detachment Commander, Clive is focused on strengthening communication across all levels of the organization, growing membership, and deepening engagement with Squadrons. He is a strong advocate for youth involvement, supporting programs that empower the next generation.



Sons of The American Legion Detachment of Michigan

CLIVE SEYDELL**Detachment Commander 2025-2026**

It has been an exciting and humbling first few weeks serving as your Detachment Commander. I have hit the ground running, and I am grateful for the warm welcome and support I have received from members across the state.

In June, I had the honor of traveling to Menominee for the U.P. Summer Convention. Fifth Zone Commander Zack Pendell did an outstanding job leading the meeting, and I was especially encouraged by the enthusiasm for forming an 11th and 12th District Association. We are seeking greater participation from Squadron members in those districts to help fill key officer positions. If you are interested in serving, please reach out to Commander Pendell directly.

While in Menominee, I was also surprised and honored to receive a beautiful plaque from the Menominee Squadron. I extend my sincere thanks to the entire Menominee Legion Family for their hospitality and for making our time there so memorable.

My Commander's Lady, Stephanie, and I also had the opportunity to enjoy some of the natural beauty of the U.P. We

visited four stunning waterfalls and stopped at Nature's Way Woodworking Gift Shop in Alberta, where I picked up my Commander's Gavel, marking a meaningful milestone in this new chapter.

We wrapped up the month by attending the Wilwin Lodge at Cygnet Cove Benefit. Duane, Barb, and all the volunteers did a fantastic job organizing the event! I was especially proud to have several Scouts from my Cub Scout Pack and Scouts BSA Troop - both chartered by American Legion Post 29 - join us for the weekend. It was great to see them learning fire starting, outdoor cooking, swimming, and even completing a fishing merit badge!

During the event, I also joined PDCs John Beeman and Butch Maxwell, along with Detachment Historian Kirk Maves, to scout a few potential sites for a new fishing dock as part of my Commander's Project. I look forward to sharing more about that initiative in the weeks ahead as plans come together.

It is already shaping up to be a meaningful and memorable year. I look forward to visiting more posts, attending events across the Detachment, and connecting with our dedicated members. I hope to see many of you soon as we work together to serve our veterans, youth, and communities.

HISTORIAN'S TWO CENTS

Kirk Maves, Detachment Historian

As Detachment Historian for the Sons of the American Legion, Detachment of Michigan, it's my honor to help preserve the story of our organization, one photo, one moment, and one memory at a time. One of my key responsibilities is overseeing the Scrapbook Program, including organizing the Scrapbook Awards and assembling the official Detachment Scrapbook. This book tells the story of the Detachment Commander's year and captures the many events and activities happening across our great state, whether or not the Commander is present.

This year, I'll be taking the scrapbook I created for Past Detachment Commander Todd Van Dam (2024-2025) to the National Convention, where it will be submitted for national-level recognition. I'm also proud to be submitting a scrapbook on behalf of my home Squadron 34 for consideration in the Squadron Scrapbook category. Now is the time to start your Squadron's scrapbook! If your Squadron is interested in competing for a Scrapbook Award at next year's Detachment Convention, the time to begin collecting photos and memorabilia is now.

Document your community events, service projects, fundraisers, and Legion Family activities. Strong scrapbooks are built over time, not thrown together at the last minute. Let's make sure the incredible work being done in our Squadrons gets remembered and celebrated. If you have questions about formatting, judging criteria, or where to submit, feel free to reach out. I'm here to help. Let's preserve the memories we're making today for the generations that follow tomorrow.

Hello everyone,

I hope your summer is off to a great start—stay cool out there! It has been an honor to serve the great state of Michigan over the past years, and I look forward to continuing that service in the year ahead.

The Sons of the American Legion had a wonderful convention. We shared a meaningful memorial service, bid farewell to Commander Todd VanDam, and warmly welcomed our new Commander, Clive Seydell. It was truly a time of reflection and renewal.

Each day, I pray for our brave veterans, our dedicated SAL members, and our wonderful Auxiliary. Thank you, Commander, for providing our new email communication—it will be a great tool for staying connected. If there is ever anything I can do

CHAPLAIN'S CORNER

David Seydell

to assist, please do not hesitate to reach out. I will work to get a card sent as soon as possible when needed. salchaplain@sons.michiganlegion.org

Today, and every day, we honor our veterans—worthy men and women who gave their very best when called upon to serve and protect our country. We pray for blessings upon them—for their unselfish service in the ongoing struggle to preserve our freedoms, ensure our safety, and uphold the proud heritage of our nation. Amen.

Let us continue to make our veterans proud of us, Sons—as I know you will, in service and prayer.

5TH ZONE UPDATE

Zack Pendell, Commander



Recently, a meeting was held in Menominee for the 5th zone. Six squadrons and the Detachment Commander represented us; Clive Seydell was our special guest.

This year, we are looking to start an 11th and 12th District for the Sons in the Upper Peninsula. We are trying to make it easier for information to get to the squadrons and for assistance from us to the squadrons to be readily available. If you are interested in helping to establish the new districts, please contact me. Zach Pendell, 5th Zone Commander, at (269) 816-2869 or zackp170@gmail.com. We need two adjutants and finance officers.

I had challenged the squadrons this

past year to select a member for Son Of The Year (18 and above) and Young Son of the Year (17 and younger). This is not only a way to recognize a squadron member for their efforts, but also a way to celebrate their achievements. Lake Linden was the only squadron to submit a Young Son of the Year, and he was selected at the convention for the award. This is a great honor, as there are now over 28,000 Sons in Michigan, and only two are chosen each year.

In closing, I would like to address the importance of your participation at the squadron level. Being a member is an honorable thing because it is your PRICELESS HERITAGE.

The Sons of the American Legion were first chartered in 1932. Most of us are now retired or nearing retirement. We need younger members, and we need to mentor them into the squad-

ron officers before we lose the ability to survive. Squadrons are beginning to close because there is no one to fill the positions to keep the squadron going. If you are a member, please support your squadron by becoming an officer, helping to keep it alive, and assisting your veterans. We are all volunteers when we join, so please consider volunteering. When we work together, we accomplish wonderful things.

Membership cards for this next year are ready for mailing. Please submit your officer's list, proof of insurance, and your cards, and your cards will be sent to you. Never forget your priceless heritage, our veterans, and our POW/MIAs. Be The One.

Thank you again for all you are doing in your squadrons. You make the difference.

NOTES FROM WILWIN

Butch Maxwell, Detachment Wilwin Chair

The Detachment of Michigan's annual Wilwin Lodge fundraiser was once again a resounding success! This year's event brought together members from across the state for a weekend filled with camaraderie, service, and support for one of our most meaningful causes.

We're proud to share that the volunteers' quarters are now complete a major milestone that ensures our dedicated crew has a comfortable place to stay while giving their time and talents to Wilwin. Even better, we had enough space to house a few veterans for the weekend as well, which speaks to the heart of what Wilwin is all about: service, healing, and community.

The event itself went very well. We raised a solid amount of funds, enjoyed good food, and shared plenty of laughs and stories around the campfire. It was an honor to spend time with Detachment Commander Clive Seydell, Boys State Chairman John Beeman, and the always-energetic crew from Tecumseh Squadron 34. None of it would be possible without the tireless efforts of Duane, Barb, and all our incredible volunteers who continue to make Wilwin such a special place.

Now that the volunteers' quarters are ready, we would love to welcome more helping hands throughout the season. There is always a need for mowing around the property, maintaining trails, and helping with small projects that Duane might need assistance with.

Whether you can spare a day or a weekend, your time and support make a difference. Thank you to everyone who came out, donated, or helped behind the scenes. The mission continues, and we are proud to be part of it.

American Legion Riders Update

Robert "Skip" Kamin, Department ALR Chairman

Hello Riders. I hope this finds everyone well. We just ended the Department State Convention in the Soo. I want to start by saying it was nice seeing everyone at the Riders meeting on Saturday. Thank God they put us in a bigger room. For those that didn't make it, we discussed the new ALR Department of Michigan ROP. Copies were distributed to attendees. I will work to get them listed on the department's web page so that they can be easily found. We also discussed the Chapter Data form as well.

As I have said many times, if you have attended any of the Riders' meetings, Michigan is the founding state of the Legion Riders, but it is probably the most unorganized. The ROP and Chapter Data Form will help fix that issue. Unfortunately, when a post does the CPR, they don't indicate that they have a Rider chapter. We are not 100% sure how many chapters there are. I have heard anywhere from 50 to 150. By filling these out and sending them in for each chapter, we can get a more accurate count. It will take all your help.

The 2025 Legacy ride is now in the books. Dan Shew and his crew out of Jackson Post 29 did a great job. They worked very hard for over 8 months to put it on; it is a lot of work. They raised \$20,190.98 for the American Legion Veterans and Children Foundation. So, if you see any of the riders from 29, tell them thank you for the job well done. The 2026 host post for the Michigan Legacy Ride is, drum roll please, Hillsdale Post 53. I hope that all of you will support them in this endeavor. We hope that other chapters, Posts, Auxiliaries, and SAL will also hold fundraisers to contribute to their endeavors.

I want to thank all the incoming Department officers: Roger Avie, Commander; Jim Austin, 1st Vice Commander; Roger Deaton, 2nd Vice Commander; and all the new people making up the new DEC. I hope all the new District Commanders will appoint their liaison for the committee. Please send their name and contact information to alr@michiganlegion.org. If you are a rider member of a chapter and either don't know who your liaison is or that you may be so inclined to do that position, reach out to your District Commander and advise that you are interested in that position. Hope to see you on the road somewhere sometime. Be safe out there, keep your knees in the breeze.



Chaplains Corner “Memory Eternal!”

Mike Schlaack, Department Chaplain

This is what the Orthodox Christians sing at the funerals and memorials for their beloved departed. The belief is that as long as a person is remembered, they remain alive in our thoughts and our prayers.

I often think about how many past generations of my family I can remember, and it usually ends with my grandparents, only a couple of generations back. These are people who came in physical contact with me during my lifetime. The generations after my grandparents are nothing more than names on the family tree or maybe even a faded photo. Their lives, the impact they had on those around them, are lost in time. As the years go on, their names and faces become more blurred and are harder to recall.

This is why it was so gratifying to have had the privilege to participate in the Memorial Service Sunday morning on the final day of Department Summer Conference this weekend in Sault St. Marie, and to be part of the wonderful work of Christine Merlington and the Auxiliary members who organized the event. To take the time to remember the men and women who served our Legion Family is one of our most important responsibilities. To say their names helps bring them “back to life” in the hearts and memories of those who worked with them in the past. It is a valuable lesson for those of us who may not have known them personally, having the opportunity to see, often with tearful recollection, the impact their service had on the lives of others.

I also need to express my gratitude to our new Past Department Commander, Dan Cooper, for allowing me to serve this past year as the Department Chaplain. I appreciate the opportunity to learn about a small part of our department's functioning and to work with some of the most dedicated people who help keep Michigan the best Department in the American Legion. Good luck to our new commander, Roger Avie, and may God continue to bless the men and women of the American Legion family.

19TH District Report

Brian Morrison, Past District Commander

As the outgoing 19th District Commander, thank you to all of the members of the 18 posts within the 19th District. A third of our posts are at or above 100%, with four more exceeding 95%. The Atlanta Post #201 surpassed its goal by the Fall Meetings last September, and remains #4 in the state.

As I visited each of the posts in our District, I was again impressed with the number of activities with which our local posts are involved. But I shouldn't be surprised. No one in your district, especially the District Commander, should be surprised by the good things and activities your post is doing. This is one reason to ensure that a representative from your post attends each district meeting. Under “Good Of”, your post should highlight what you have done and provide teasers of what's to come.

If your post is doing something, BRAG ABOUT IT! Invite some of the other posts to join you, to participate. For districts that are all in one county, or even one-half of a county, mutual support should be the name of the game. We have it a little different up here, covering nine counties from Alpena on the East Coast and Elk Rapids on the West Coast. 120 miles, over 2 hours one way, is a little extreme. Granted, some of those traveling on the freeways in lower Michigan can be on the road for two hours as well when stuck in traffic, but they are only going 35 miles total.

The Department Convention has just passed. I hope you were able to attend, even if only for the educational experience. Perhaps you met some of the Department's and other areas' leadership in person and spoke with them one-on-one. Explored the possibilities that come from hearing different ideas, different approaches to resolving issues. Asked questions about the operation of this multi-million dollar corporation. As a long-time participant at the Department level, I can say you will seldom find a person at the Convention who is unwilling to help you and your post grow.

Hoping you have a busy and productive Summer season of events and activities. Use this time to learn about the programs, especially the school and Americanism programs, because those deadlines will be upon us SOON.

I hope to see someone from each of our District's posts at the Fall Meeting on September 13 at The Landing Zone in Gaylord. New Commander Pat McGinn will bring a fresh outlook to the District activities. I am looking forward to participating at the Department Fall Conference in Battle Creek.

Congratulations to our 2025 Department Convention Sweepstakes Winners !!

GRAND PRIZE \$5,000

ROBERT WURN

2ND PRIZE \$1,500

DANIEL DUMAS

3rd Prize \$1,000

GEORGE DEYOE

4th Prize \$500

CHARLES MILLER

5th Prize \$500

MICHAEL GAGACKI

6th Prize \$500

JEFFREY ARMSTRONG

7th Prize \$500

RAYMOND MAIDA

8th Prize \$500

FRANCES BURNS

9th Prize \$500

WILLIAM FEDELEM

\$100 Prize Winners

Jeffrey Oslund

Thomas Bowling

Chris Filcek

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Stanley Warzocha

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Tripp Cantwell, Assistant Director

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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

Crossing the Generation Gap Glen McKinney 2nd Vice, 19th District

Sometimes we see a young new face walk into the Legion post canteen, sit down, and start a conversation about your post. Perhaps you asked service-related questions, about where they were stationed, what branch, how long they served, etc. Some light-hearted service jabbing jokes, and after the 30 minutes or so, the conversation died. The young legionnaire gets on his phone and has a drink or two, then leaves.

I know that's how these encounters typically go, because that is what I have done. When I visit Legion post canteens across the state, that is generally how it goes, but there were some exceptions. While we all have different experiences, some questions can spark a great conversation because we all have stories to share on these topics.

After the general conversation, you can ask that new face, "What was the dumbest order you had in service?" Who was the dumbest guy in your unit? What did he do? Who was your favorite officer/enlisted member?

Why? Do you miss the service?

Take your time asking questions, be involved in follow-up questions, and alternate storytelling between you and that new face. Pull in another member you know by asking them the question from across the canteen.

You can make this a great conversation for the whole canteen! Some of you are wondering why is it up to the older generations to provoke the younger generations to engage in conversation. The younger generations are not as comfortable talking to random individuals in person. Some may not even know how to maintain a conversation, as so many of them communicate over text, phone, or internet.

In the end, you have made a great impression on that new person and had fun in the process. They are also more familiar with other members of the post. I used this approach and had an epic conversation with a Cold War veteran and a Vietnam veteran at the State Convention recently.

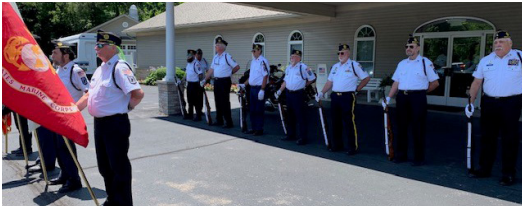
After a good conversation, ask them about their hobbies and interests and con-

nect them with programs provided by the post, as well as upcoming events. Don't pressure new young members into taking officer positions, most of the time they will decline, and sometimes they may stop coming to the post altogether. You need to build rapport and connection with those young veterans.

Some may not be interested in talking about their service, and that is okay. Please pay attention to their responses and body language, let it guide you through topics to discuss. Be advised, talking about medical issues and speaking for extended periods about yourself will disconnect the individual from the conversation.

Allow the individual time to speak and voice their input. Forming familiarity and friendships take more time than you think. The true purpose of Legion posts is to serve as a meeting place, fostering community connections and new friendships. We often forget our camaraderie of service is our connection, even when the age gap is quite large. Sometimes the simplest concepts have the most profound impacts

Around the State...



Post 49 Honor Guard supports funeral honors for Army Veteran Richard Variell. The Color and Honor Guard supports approximately 50 events per year.



Army Veteran and 30-year member of the John Walcott Post 49, celebrates his 90th Birthday with family and friends in July.



Post 127 Commander, Bill Genther, presents Gary Paquin, with a 50-year certificate during the commemoration ceremony June 28



Hastings Post 45 2nd Vice Commander Steve Carr, Judge Advocate Barry Wood, and Commander Larry Harshman provided opening ceremonies for the "Ole Fashion 4th of July" at Charlton Park in Barry County



Members of the Detroit Wolverine Chapter #67 of the Women's Army Corps Veterans Association and the Berkley American Legion Post 374



The Post Honor Guard performed a flag-folding ceremony, symbolizing the sacrifices made by those who have served.



Flag Day Ceremony at Northville Brookdale Assisted Living Facility



The event brought together members of the Post 32 Riders and Northville Township Police



Members from Charles A. Conklin Post #28 Honor Guard attended Boys State 2025 at Grand Valley State University with Commander Cooper



Harbor Beach American Legion Post 197 conducted its annual Tattered Flag burning Ceremony on July 2nd

Fun for the Fourth

Commander Cooper and Virginia at a White Caps Game in Grand Rapids on the left. Detachment Commander VanDam enjoying ice cream with his Family Below



Honoring Staff Sergeant Essie Dell Woods

On July 7th, the Berkeley Post 374 Honor Guard and Firing Squad proudly participated in the memorial service honoring Staff Sergeant Essie Dell Woods, a decorated World War II veteran and member of the groundbreaking 6888th Central Postal Battalion—the first all-Black, all-female battalion deployed overseas during the war.



The American Legion Department of Michigan
September 26 – 28, 2025
2025 FALL CONFERENCE REGISTRATION FORM

DoubleTree by Hilton Battle Creek
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Battle Creek, MI 49017

Call (269) 380-0320, Group Block Code ALF
or [Link to Hotel Reservations](#)

Regular Rooms (2 Queen or King) - \$124 + tax
+ \$7/Day Parking
Rate Expires at 5:00 PM 11 Sept 2025

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[Link to Hotel Reservations](#)
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Contact Brian Mohlman with any questions at 269-579-6458
or smiconvcorp@gmail.com

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Or Mail the form below...

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Name: _____ Group: ☐ TAL ☐ AUX ☐ SAL ☐ ALR
Address: _____ City/St/Zip _____
Phone: _____ Email: _____

Others Attending that you are Registering (Registration Fee is \$25 per person)

Name: _____ Group: ☐ TAL ☐ AUX ☐ SAL ☐ ALR
Name: _____ Group: ☐ TAL ☐ AUX ☐ SAL ☐ ALR
Name: _____ Group: ☐ TAL ☐ AUX ☐ SAL ☐ ALR

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