

# Legionnaire

Volume CII

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## “2026 Vetearn Legislative Priorities”



Each year, veterans from all over Nebraska stand together to support or oppose legislation that is proposed by our State Senators. In Nebraska, The American Legion works with the eight other recognized Veterans Service Organizations through the Nebraska Veterans Council (NVC), to attend legislative hearings, send letters, and hold their Annual Legislative Day at the State Capitol. These other organizations are Veterans of Foreign Wars; Disabled American Veterans; Vietnam Veterans of America; American Veterans; The Military Order of the Purple Heart; Paralyzed Veterans of America; the Marine Corps League; and the County Veterans Service Officer Association of Nebraska. The NVC follows and supports legislative bills that advance veterans' initiatives. In this legislative cycle, the NVC chose six bills that they support, two they oppose, and one they are remaining neutral on. The NVC is asking for your help this year with these bills. Those bills being supported are LB-693, LB-738, LB-756, LB-786, LB-826, and LB-882. Those bills being opposed are LB-767 and LB-1117. The council is remaining neutral on LB-1072 except sections 127 and 128 which they are in opposition to. The Nebraska Department of Veterans Affairs has a legislative tracker on their website, and all of the bills can be followed at <https://veterans.nebraska.gov/legislative-issues>

At the National level, The American Legion selects about a dozen priority items to present to Congress that impact active-duty military, veterans, and their families. These priorities are chosen based off of the positions and views of its 1.6 million members. Once released the 2026 legislative priorities can be found at <https://www.legion.org/advocacy/legislative/legislative-agenda-point-papers>

These priorities align with the ideals of The American Legion: Mental Health and Suicide Prevention, VA Healthcare Modernization, PACT Act Implementation and Oversight, Protecting Veterans from Predatory Actors, Military Quality of Life, and Protecting the American Flag. To support these priorities and lobby the members of Congress, members from all 55 American Legion Departments make their way to Washington DC every February to participate in the Washington Conference. During this conference, The American Legion Family members visit with their State Senators and Representatives to see how they plan on voting on the priorities and why they feel the way they do about them. Nebraska will have more than fifteen members from The American Legion Family who will be attending the Conference and will be meeting with the State's representatives.

### 2026 Department Convention Make Your Reservations Now

The 2026 Department Convention will be held June 25 - 28 at the Quality Inn in Columbus. The DEC will meet at 1:00 p.m. on Thursday, June 25 and at 9:00 a.m. on Friday, June 26. The Joint Session will be held at 1:00 p.m. on Friday, June 26 and the Legion Convention will begin at 3:00 p.m. and go through Sunday, June 28.

Business sessions of The American Legion, Auxiliary, Sons, and Riders will all be held in the Columbus Quality Inn. Reach out to the respective organization for an agenda for the Convention.

The hotel is located at 265 33rd Avenue, Columbus. Rooms are \$112.95 a night plus tax. The last date to get reservations at the Legion rate is June 1 or when the reservation block is full. Call 402-564-1492 to make your reservation. The Convention Registration fee is \$10. For more information, please contact Adjutant Eric Martin.

### National Convention in Louisville, Kentucky

The 2026 National Convention will be held August 29 - September 3 at the Springhill / Fairfield Inn in Louisville, KY. Delegates should plan to arrive Saturday the 29th and depart Thursday the 3rd (late afternoon). Rooms are \$162.37 including tax. Legion HQ's, Aux HQ's and SAL HQ's are at other hotels. More information will be shared during the Department Convention and packets will be available to be picked up there. Please call the Department for more information at [emartin@nebraskalegion.net](mailto:emartin@nebraskalegion.net) or 402-464-6338.

FOR GOD AND COUNTRY

### COMPASSION, CHARACTER, & COMPETENCE

2026 MEMBERSHIP GOAL: 20,388 JANUARY 28TH TOTAL: 17,661 - 86.62%

DISTRICT 7 - 89.15%	DISTRICT 15 - 88.81%	DISTRICT 5 - 88.14%	DISTRICT 8 - 87.77%	DISTRICT 2 - 87.48%
DISTRICT 6 - 87.22%	DISTRICT 11 - 85.92%	DISTRICT 10 - 85.76%	DISTRICT 9 - 85.64%	DISTRICT 12 - 85.29%
DISTRICT 4 - 84.86%	DISTRICT 1 - 83.56%	DISTRICT 3 - 82.45%	DISTRICT 13 - 82.22%	





## Commander's Corner

Judy Walters  
Department Commander

It is the start of a new year, and as far as membership goes, it is looking good. Nebraska met and exceeded the January 14, 2026, 80% goal, achieving 82.54%. The next membership target date is February 11, with a goal of 85%. We are very close to that goal, and with your continued hard work, we will meet that goal. Hopefully, all Post Adjutants have timely submitted all dues payments received; otherwise, the legionnaire's status is delinquent if not received by 12-31-2025 and suspended if not received by 01-31-2026. If their status is suspended, their benefits through the Legion are suspended as well. Legionnaires who pay their dues on time, but whose Post does not submit them on time will not understand why they are not in active status. This can also affect retention, as members may not renew next year if they encounter issues with this year's renewal. Thank you all for your hard work in reaching the 80% goal, and I hope it continues so we are at or above 85% by February 11, 2026. The American Legion's Big Twelve Competition recognizes Departments that meet or exceed their pledged membership goal percentage by the March 90% target date. Our Department could win \$2,000 if we meet the March pledge to the National.

Adjutant Martin and I just got back from a short trip to Louisville, KY, where the 2026 National Convention will be held. We visited a local Legion Post, Shawnee Post 193, while we were there. It is the closest Post to our hotel. They are highly active in serving their community. They host regular tournaments for pool, shuffleboard, and cornhole. They regularly distribute food to children in their low-income community. They are well known in their community and have no issues with membership. Staying active and relevant in a community helps retain members and attract new ones.

February is Americanism Month. Some ideas of things to do in February: Host a Four Chaplains Day Program, plan school awards with local educators, start planning the upcoming American Legion Baseball season, consider hosting observances of Abraham Lincoln's and George Washington's birthdays, plan an American Legion birthday program for March, or go to legion.org for more ideas.

March is Community Service Month. The anniversary of The American Legion's founding, celebrated March 15-17, is an excellent opportunity for Post officers and members to focus on enhancing the vision and

**Commander Walters was presented with a Christmas gift from the Department Staff.**

image of the Legion with the community. Consider forming a committee to organize an open house between January and March to further engage the community.

I look forward to seeing many of you over the next several months at the District Conventions, which start in February. Hopefully, 1 - 3 members of each Post will attend their District Convention. Remember to make nominations for the District Citizenship Award. This award highlights a Legionnaire's contributions in civic duties (like school boards), administrative roles, public speaking, and overall embodiment of character traits like courage, honor, and patriotism, with specific recognition given for exceptional recruiting efforts or service in support of military deployment. Looking forward to having a Citizenship Award winner for every District at our Department Convention in June 2026 in Columbus.

Thank you to everyone for your hard work and continued efforts toward 100% membership. Wishing all a Happy and Healthy New Year.

**"Compassion, Character, & Competence"**



## Chaplain's Corner

Steve Witmer  
Department Chaplain

Well, 2026 is off to a flying start. Depending on what networks you watch, it would seem like the bad news of the last 10-15 years is getting worse. We have people from all over the world here in the United States, (which is nothing new), and a lot of them are trying hard to make our country like theirs (which is new). These are not the only changes that have been happening in recent years. We are being told that we have to accept things that run contrary to God's word. In some areas, it looks like it will never get fixed. But take heart. These are times of tribulation. Not the final tribulation, but hard times that have come in preparation for the second coming of Jesus Christ.

We will get through these times of tribulation with the assurance that God is still in control of everything. The only thing He wants us to do is live our lives holding on the assurance and salvation that came to us when Jesus took all our sins to the cross. 1 John 2: 15 – 17 says; "Do not love the world or the things in the world. "If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world – the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride of life – is not from the Father but is from the world. And the world is passing away with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever."

So, when you start feeling depressed about what is going on, just take a moment to thank God for his assurance and salvation and know that He's got your back.

## NEBRASKA AMERICAN LEGION Department Headquarters Office

Physical/Mailing Address: 150 NW 40th Street, Unit A, Lincoln, NE 68528  
Phone Number.....(402)464-6338  
FAX.....(402)464-6330  
Business Hours.....8:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m. (CST), Mon-Fri  
Web site.....<http://www.nebraskalegion.net>  
E-Mail Address.....[emartin@nebraskalegion.net](mailto:emartin@nebraskalegion.net)  
Editor.....[awashburn@nebraskalegion.net](mailto:awashburn@nebraskalegion.net)

## Department Officers

Commander.....	Judy Walters, Ainsworth
Senior Vice Commander.....	Doug Frahm, Amelia
Area A Vice Commander.....	Gary Davis, Pender
Area B Vice Commander.....	Kelly Hanvey, Center
Area C Vice Commander.....	Martin Neal, Hickman
Area D Vice Commander.....	Cliff Rininger, Rushville
Adjutant.....	Eric Martin, Lincoln
Programs Director.....	Vacant
Chaplain.....	Steve Witmer, York
Historian.....	Vacant
Judge Advocate.....	Joshua Stevenson, Papillion
Finance Officer.....	Mark Novak, Dawson
Sergeant-At-Arms.....	Fred Craigie, Lincoln
Assistant Sergeant-At-Arms.....	Gene vonForell, Crawford
Service Officer.....	James Foster, Lincoln
National Executive Committee.....	Jim Costello, Bellevue
Alternate NEC.....	John-Henry Pearcy, Papillion

## District Commanders

Dist. 1.....	Jerry Fullerton, Cody
Dist. 2.....	Gerald Bouska, Atkinson
Dist. 3.....	Jeff Finken, South Sioux City
Dist. 4.....	Kent Holmes, Scottsbluff
Dist. 5.....	Geoffrey Florom, North Platte
Dist. 6.....	Brian Rapp, Grand Island
Dist. 7.....	Virgil Blum, Omaha
Dist. 8.....	James Carmona, Omaha
Dist. 9.....	Amie Moores, Elwood
Dist. 10.....	Charles Tuttle, Nelson
Dist. 11.....	Robert Eyer, Jansen
Dist. 12.....	David Stander, Weeping Water
Dist. 13.....	Kevin McKinney, Tecumseh
Dist. 15.....	Ronnie Hindmand, Lincoln



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Legionnaire**

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Did you know you can read the Nebraska Legionnaire online at  
[www.nebraskalegion.net](http://www.nebraskalegion.net)?

If you would rather receive the Nebraska Legionnaire by email or view it online, send in this form. The email and online edition of the newspaper is usually available a week or so before the paper arrives in your mailbox. All we need from you is your email address.

I no longer wish to receive a printed copy of the Nebraska Legionnaire.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Email Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Member ID: \_\_\_\_\_

Mail this form to The American Legion, 150 NW 40th Street, Unit A, Lincoln, NE 68528, or you can email the information to  
[awashburn@nebraskalegion.net](mailto:awashburn@nebraskalegion.net)



## Rider's Rally

Dan Willets  
ALR Liaison



Greetings fellow American Legion Riders and American Legion Family and welcome to 2026! Hoping you all had a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year with family and friends.

Winter is half over and it won't be long now until we are ready to hit the road and represent the American Legion Riders and the American Legion Family in our communities and state.

In the latest edition of the American Legion magazine there was an article from the National American Legion Riders Chairman, Dave Heredia, asking all Riders to participate in the "American Legion Family USA 250 Challenge". This is an opportunity to honor our nation's 250th Birthday and can be completed as an individual or as a Chapter and either independently or in cooperation with your local Post or other Legion Family organization. He mentioned doing 250 hours of physical activity, riding 250 hours for mental health, or performing 250 hours of community service or any combination of the three. You can learn more and register at [legion.org/usa250/challenge](http://legion.org/usa250/challenge). Let's make it a point to support this program in 2026 and to celebrate the birth of our great nation.

Hopefully, many of you were able to attend the Mid-Year Conference in Norfolk in January. For those who couldn't attend I'll include a summary/update of any pertinent information that was covered in my next newsletter article.

Reminder, if you don't follow our FB page "Nebraska American Legion Riders" please do so as we are now able to share information, add events, etc. in this one centralized location.

As a reminder, any nominations for the ALR Rider of the Year Award need to be submitted before March 1st. Please send nominations to me or Danny Stefka.

Please remember to forward all your Chapter activities, i.e., mileage, group events, volunteer events and hours, or any other information you feel is noteworthy to myself, Danny Stefka, or your Area Assistant Liaison.

My contact info: phone 308-550-2648, email: [dwillets61@gmail.com](mailto:dwillets61@gmail.com), FB, or Messenger. My Chapter email is [grandislandne.alr53@gmail.com](mailto:grandislandne.alr53@gmail.com).

As always, ride safe and God Bless America and The American Legion Family!



Howells Post 155 presented Quilts of Valor to its members. Pictured (L to R) Glen Mlinarik, Dallan Schlautman, Eugene Brest, Dave Kaup, and Lyn Lerch.

## The American Legion Child Well-being Foundation



Established in 1954, The American Legion Child Well-being Foundation was developed as a repository of funds from individuals who wished to contribute to the betterment of children in this country. Our foremost philanthropic priority is to contribute to the physical, mental, emotional and spiritual welfare of children and youth by aiding progress in the field of child welfare through research, studies, surveys, projects, or by supporting programs and activities benefiting the welfare of children and youth.

Not all American children grow up inside the comfortable definition of normal childhood development. For thousands, each day is a challenge marked by pain, prayer and perseverance. Many of these children require specialized care. To overcome their obstacles, they need help from you and The American Legion Child Well-being Foundation.

This year the Nebraska American Legion, Auxiliary, and Sons were all recognized as a "HERITAGE CIRCLE" GIFT CLUB Sponsor for their cumulative donations made during the contribution year. This means that each organization gave at least \$1,000 to CWF. Thank you to our members for their donations.



Teacher of The Year Nominations Due May 1st



## Straight Talk

Levi Bennett  
Department Service Officer



### New State Benefit Available to Nebraska Veterans in 2026

As of January 1, 2026, Nebraska disabled veterans have access to a new state benefit that can reduce the cost of owning a vehicle. Under a change in state law, eligible disabled veterans may receive an exemption from the Motor Vehicle Tax and Motor Vehicle Fee for one vehicle that they own and use for personal transportation.

It is important to note that this exemption applies only to the Motor Vehicle Tax and the Motor Vehicle Fee. Other charges associated with vehicle registration such as plate fees, sales tax, wheel tax, and similar local or state fees are not affected and must still be paid. I encourage veterans who own multiple vehicles to review their registration documents and decide which vehicle they wish to designate for the exemption.

#### Who Qualifies

To be eligible, a veteran must have served on active duty in the U.S. Armed Forces and separated under honorable conditions. In addition, the veteran must have established the existence of a service-connected disability. This includes veterans who are rated at 0 percent. Eligibility also extends to veterans who are receiving compensation, disability retirement benefits, or a pension under a public statute administered by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) or a military department.

#### How to Apply

Before claiming the exemption, a veteran must have a profile in the Nebraska Department of Veterans' Affairs (NDVA) Military & Veteran Registry. This registry is how the Nebraska Department of Motor Vehicles verifies eligibility.

Contact your County Veteran Service Officer (CVSO) or NDVA staff to ensure you have a profile in the registry and that it is up to date. The CVSO or NDVA staff will advise if any additional documentation is needed.

The exemption can be requested during vehicle registration or renewal in one of three ways:

- In person: Inform county treasurer staff that you qualify for the disabled veteran motor vehicle tax exemption.
- By mail: Include a written request for the exemption along with your Social Security number.
- Online: During the second step of renewal (Eligibility), select the option indicating eligibility for the disabled veteran motor vehicle tax and fee exemption and choose the vehicle to which it will apply.

#### Timing Matters

For newly purchased vehicles, the exemption request must be made within 30 days of purchase. For renewals, the request must be submitted before the final day of the vehicle's expiration month. Requests made outside these timeframes will not take effect until the next renewal period.

#### Transfers and Renewals

The exemption may be transferred to another vehicle if a veteran sells their current vehicle or during the expiration month of the registered vehicle. Assistance with these situations is available through a CVSO or county treasurer. Once approved, the exemption automatically applies to future renewals unless the veteran requests a transfer.

I encourage you to consult with your local accredited Veteran Service Officer to learn more about this benefit and other state and federal benefits for which they may be eligible.

## Teacher of The Year Nominations Due May 1st

The Nebraska American Legion Teacher of the Year program serves to recognize dedicated and devoted individuals who, on a constant basis, give so much of themselves on behalf of the youth of Nebraska. Just like veterans, teachers are the unsung heroes who build our nation's future by working with the youth of today. Each year, The American Legion, Department of Nebraska, will recognize one teacher in each of the following categories: elementary school, middle school and high school.

For information on the eligibility requirements and to download an application please visit [www.nebraskalegion.net/Programs/Teacher.html](http://www.nebraskalegion.net/Programs/Teacher.html). Applications must be submitted to Department Headquarters in Lincoln by May 1st.



**POW/MIA**  
Boyd Yochum  
POW/MIA Liaison



Herbert Owen Brennan from O'Neill, was a 1947 graduate of West Point and a full Colonel. Brennan had NOT been required to serve in Vietnam and served as an instructor at the Air Force Academy before volunteering for Vietnam Service.

Col Brennan probably thought he was fortunate to have been selected to fly the F-4 Phantom. The Phantom was used by Air Force, Marine and Navy air wings and served a multitude of functions including fighter-bomber, interceptor, photo and electronic surveillance. The two man aircraft was extremely fast, and had a long range (900 – 2300 miles, depending on sorties and mission type).

He was an Aircraft Commander aboard a two crew member F-4C Phantom, (tail number 64-0697), 366th Tactical Fighter Wing. On November 26, 1967, they took part in a two plane strike mission against enemy targets in North Vietnam. The aircraft was over Quang Binh Province, about 12 miles from the Ban Karai Pass. As the Phantom made its first pass over the target, it exploded and burst into flames for unknown reasons. The Phantom crashed in the target area, and witnesses aboard the other aircraft did not see parachutes before the plane went down. Search aircraft were launched to the area, but received ground fire when they approached the crash site, and saw no evidence of survivors.

The Ban Karai Pass was one of several passageways through the mountainous border of Vietnam and Laos. American aircraft flying from Thailand to missions over North Vietnam flew through them regularly, and many aircraft were lost. On the Laos side of the border, was the "Ho Chi Minh Trail," heavily traveled by North Vietnamese troops moving material and personnel, through the relative safety of neutral Laos. The return ratio of men lost in and around the passes was far lower than those of men lost in more populous areas, even though both were shot down by the same enemy using the same weapons. It seems improbable that in one of the most heavily traveled sections of the Ho Chi Minh Trail, that many Americans lost went unnoticed by the other side.

Col Brennan and Lt Condit went down carrying FMU 1-35 fuzes. Circumstances indicated that the destruction of some American aircraft could have happened in one of two ways: They could have taken a direct hit, or the plane could have blown up by its own bombs. There was a distinct possibility that the FMU 1-35 time-delay fuzes had malfunctioned. Unfortunately, "they" were to prove months later, there was a defect in the fuzes when the military first began using them. Essentially, the bombs were arming when they were attached to the aircraft. This meant the bombs were live and deadly when released, allowing premature, sometimes immediate detonation. If this happened, over two tons of high explosive would have erupted less than fifty feet from the Phantom. They had rolled in on the target, released their bombs, and had immediately blown up.

The U.S. Air Force originally placed both men in the category of Missing in Action. The Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA) later refined that category according to enemy knowledge, concluding that there is ample reason to believe that the enemy knew the fate of Brennan and Condit. Following the end of hostilities, the remains of Col Brennan were recovered during a joint U.S. and Vietnamese mission and identified. Remains of the other crewman, Lt Condit, remain unidentified. Both are memorialized on the Courts of the Missing at the National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific.



**S.A.L. Notes**  
Todd Kabella  
Detachment Commander



Greetings American Legion Family!

Membership renewals need to continue to be a priority. Our "Detachment Renewal Rewards" program continues to prove successful. As of the end of year membership report, Nebraska was over 70%, #1 in the Midwest Region and #10 overall in the nation. Congratulations to our \$250 winner Jeff Vackiner of Valentine Squadron 90. We need everyone's help in the drive towards 100%.

Veteran suicide continues to be an extremely important issue, so don't forget about the "Be The One" initiative. You can download the "Be The One" app if you have a smartphone. If you or someone you know needs help, remember that the crisis hotline number is 988 and if you are a veteran press 1.

Is your Squadron planning any activities this spring? Keep the Four Pillars of The American Legion in mind when planning events; Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation, National Security, Americanism, and Children and Youth. You could plan an Easter egg hunt for the kids in your area. What is your Post/Squadron planning for Legion Family Day this spring?

I have chosen Moving Veterans Forward as my 2025–2026 Detachment Commander's Project. They are dedicated to helping veterans overcome homelessness by providing stable housing, support services, and a path toward independence. Their mission aligns perfectly with our commitment to serving those who have served our nation.

We encourage all Legion Family members to support this outstanding organization through awareness, volunteerism, and fundraising efforts. Together, we can make a meaningful difference in the lives of Nebraska veterans.

Donations can be presented at any Squadron meeting or sent to:

Detachment of Nebraska  
150 NW 40th St, Unit A  
Lincoln, NE 68528

(Please indicate Detachment Commander's Project in the memo line)

Learn more about Moving Veterans Forward and how you can help <https://mvfne.org/>

## New Media Specialist



The Headquarters Staff would like your help in welcoming our newest employee, Harlan Hiatt.

Harlan will be filling the role of Media Specialist and is excited to get started. He is working with Eric and Amanda to become familiar with our programs and other aspects of his role within The American Legion Headquarters.

Harlan and his wife, Roxanne, live in Lincoln. He is a member of Venango Squadron 270. Harlan looks forward to working with you all and learning more about The American Legion.

## Travel Accident Protection



**The Legionnaire Insurance Trust "ON-THE-MOVE" Coverage Stands By You — Around the Corner OR Around the World**

Here's a quick way to make an important difference in helping to secure greater financial confidence for your family:

Activate Your American Legion Department Endorsed "ON-THE-MOVE" accident insurance coverage today. You'll lock in important coverage (\$200,000.00 Accidental Death if you die in a private motor vehicle plus an additional \$200,000.00 for a total of up to \$400,000.00 if traveling in common carrier vehicle. You will also be eligible to receive \$500.00 a day if a covered accident lands you in the hospital for up to 12 months), and all at the group rate premium of \$9.26 a month.

**Here's What You Get: Up to \$400,000.00 in ON-THE-MOVE accidental death protection** – covering you whenever you're traveling ... anywhere in the world ... on just about any kind of transportation. In fact, this Department Endorsed Member coverage starts the moment you drive away from home.

In addition to your \$400,000.00 coverage, you're also paid \$500.00-a-day in cash benefits for every day you stay in the hospital, up to 12 months, because of a covered travel accident.

**Acceptance GUARANTEED\* – You Cannot Be Turned Down** - As a Legionnaire, you're officially eligible to receive this \$200,000.00 coverage. You cannot be turned down ... regardless of your health, occupation, past driving records, or the number of miles you travel annually.

All benefit amounts reduce by 50% at age 75, regardless of age at enrollment.

Plan underwritten by Securian Life Insurance Company

## Need a Copy of a DD-214?

**Military Discharge Request:** The National Personnel Records Center (NPRC) has provided the following website for veterans to gain access to their DD-214s online: <https://vetrecs.archives.gov>.

This may be particularly helpful when a veteran needs a copy of his DD-214 for employment purposes. NPRC is working to make it easier for veterans with computers and Internet access to obtain copies of documents from their military files. Military veterans and the next of kin of deceased former military members may now use a new online military personnel records system to request documents.

Other individuals with a need for documents must still complete the Standard Form 180, which can be downloaded from the online web site. Because the requester will be asked to supply all information essential for NPRC to process the request, delays that normally occur when NPRC has to ask veterans for additional information will be minimized. The new web-based application was designed to provide better service on these requests by eliminating the records centers mailroom and processing time.

Please pass this information on to former military personnel you may know and their dependents.

## Membership Minute

Steve Bartos, Membership Chairman

With the 2026 Mid-Year Conference behind us, it's time to catch our breath and then continue working hard on membership!!!

Gary Hanke, from Ceresco Post 244, won the \$150 drawing for PUFL or Department Life Members on our roster on January 1.

The "Mid-Winter Target Date," with a goal of 80%, occurred just before we went to Norfolk, Nebraska reported 17,300 members --- which was 84.85% of goal. Post 500 and every District --- save one --- were at 80% or more. And the lone District that missed the 80% mark did so by only 8 members. We looked good nationally, too. Nebraska ranked 6th among all Departments. Let's keep generating renewals, reinstatements, and new members so that we can keep leading the pack from the front!!!

The next national target date is the "Presidents' Day Target Date" on February 11, and the goal is 85%. That equates to 17,330 members. We left Norfolk only 7 members short of reaching that goal --- so, we look good in that regard. But I can't stress enough how important it is that we don't stop scratching for members. New. Renewed. Reinstated. Doesn't matter.

Of more important concern is the March 11th "Legion Birthday Target Date." The target is 90%. The American Legion's Big Twelve Competition recognizes Departments that meet or exceed their pledged membership goal percentage by the March 90% target date. The Department in each category that has pledged the highest percentage AND meets this goal receives the award. The percentage does not include members gained through DMS. The winner in each category will be reimbursed for computer equipment purchases of up to \$2,000. Runners-up in each category will be reimbursed for computer equipment purchases of up to \$1,000.

It turns out that Commander Judy pledged that Nebraska would achieve 90.70% of goal --- or 18,492 qualifying members. The information I presented at the Mid-Year Conference wasn't exactly correct in that the percentage Judy pledged was not greater than that of all other Departments in our category. That doesn't mean we can't finish first or second in our category. Those Departments pledging more may default by not making their pledge --- and we can move up accordingly. But we must get to 90.70% to have a chance. By winning or finishing second in our category in the Big 12 Competition, we get both some nice recognition and a bag of cash to spend on computer needs. Let's do it!!!!

Here's some food for thought. I recently sent out a personal email to 128 non-renewed members in my own Post for whom I had an email address. There were 85 non-renewed members for whom we did not have an email address on file. I then tracked the results --- and confirmed the idea that personal contact pays off. The renewal rate for the group that received my email was about 50% better than for the group that did not.

Please transmit your memberships early and often so that we can track our path to success in winning the Big 12 Competition.

Have a nice February.

## Honoring Our Veterans



Elwood Post 290 member Mason Ziegler recently worked with the Life Enrichment Team at the Elwood Care Center, Assisted Living & Rehabilitation Center to recognize the

veterans who live in the facility. They joined together and created a beautiful Wall of Honor. Each frame on the wall contains a current picture of the veteran and a picture of the veteran during the time he/she was serving. It also includes information from their time in the service.

Life Enrichment Coordinator Kasey Rushton stated, "We currently get the honor of caring for 13 veterans from different



branches, some who served during the Vietnam War and some that served during the Korean War. I am so thankful for my team members in helping achieve this vision and a special thank you to Mason, who is a veteran himself, for using his woodworking skills and making the sign."

Pictured are Post 290 member Mason Ziegler, Army National Guard veteran Theodore Gill, Life Enrichment Coordinator Kasey Rushton, and Life Enrichment Assistant Riley Ziegler.

## Leadership Through Service



The National American Legion College embraces a servant leadership model, that equips Legionnaires with the skills to lead through service, inspire others, and strengthen The American Legion's mission. This six-day immersive experience goes beyond traditional leadership education as it fosters a deep understanding of The American Legion's core values, and the power of collaborative, service-driven leadership. Students will develop practical strategies to lead with empathy, accountability, and vision, ensuring they are prepared to build strong teams, enhance community impact, and guide The American Legion into the future. Through critical thinking, creative problem-solving, and hands-on learning, participants will gain the confidence and knowledge to lead at every level—within their posts, districts, departments, and beyond.

This year Nebraska was able to have Jason Baker of Kearney Post 52 attend the program. Applications for the 2026 session are due to Adjutant Martin by June 1.

## Department Seeking Applications for Assistant Adjutant

The Assistant Adjutant position is currently vacant and the Department is looking to get a replacement onboard quickly.

The majority of time as Assistant Adjutant is spent managing Department Programs like Legion Baseball, Junior Law Cadet, Oratorical, Scholarships, and County Government Day. The Assistant Adjutant also assumes other duties as directed by the Department Adjutant. The job is full-time with very good benefits.

Please submit resume/application (and redacted DD-214) to HQ's no later than February 20th with interview(s) following shortly after. For more information please contact Adjutant Martin at HQ and he will be happy to answer them.

## Disabled Veteran Motor Vehicle Tax & Fee Exemption

Receive an exemption for the Motor Vehicle Tax and Fee for one vehicle owned and used for your personal transportation!

Eligibility requirements, application process, and more information available at [veterans.nebraska.gov/vehicletax](http://veterans.nebraska.gov/vehicletax)



## 2026 Mid - Year Conference - Norfolk



Department Officers are seated at the head table during the Joint Session. Pictured (L to R) ALR Liaison Danny Willets, Detachment Commander Todd Kabella, Department Commander Judy Walters, Department President Ruth Hietbrink, and Department Chaplain Steve Witmer.



National Vice Commander (Midwest Region) Jerry Landkamer was presented with a plaque to commemorate his visit to Nebraska. NVC Landkamer presented Commander Walters with a Louisville Slugger bat for her year as Commander.



Department Commander Judy Walters presented PDC John-Henry Pearcy with the 100% Consolidated Post Reporting plaque from his year as Commander.



Department Commander Judy Walters presented PDC Boyd Yochum with the yearbook, minutes, and Nebraska Legionnaire newspapers for his year as Commander.



Tyler Olson of Concord was awarded the 2025 Nebraska American Legion Baseball Player of the Year plaque. Pictured (L to R) Assistant Tyler Olson, Commander Walters, and Americanism Chair Mike Hatfield.



Past Department Adjutant Dave Salak was presented with a copy of the Department Yearbook to commemorate his last year as Department Adjutant.

## Lincoln Veteran's Day Parade

Several Posts in the Lincoln area participated in the Lincoln Veteran's Day Parade on Saturday, November 9th. Thank you to all Hallam Post 294, Havelock Post 342, Lincoln Post 3, Lincoln Chapter 3, Lincoln Post 1919, and Sterling Post 140 who represented our great organization!



## Nebraska American Legion 2025-2026 Lottery Winners

Thank you to all that participated in this year's lottery. The drawing was held during the Sunday Joint Session of the Mid-Year Conference in Norfolk. The winners were:

Grand Prize: \$2,500, James Hilger, Omaha  
 2nd Place: \$1,000, Duane Deterding, North Platte  
 3rd Place: \$ 500, Ronald Lemm, Omaha  
 4th Place: \$ 200, Marvin Brummond, Wayne  
 5th Place: \$ 200, David Dietze, Gretna  
 6th Place: \$ 200, Richard Egging, Gurley  
 7th Place: \$ 200, Duane Horseman, Gretna  
 8th Place: \$ 200, Thomas Jensen, Omaha

A special drawing was also held for tickets purchased at the Conference. Each of the following won \$100: Doug Frahm, Amelia (won twice); KayLynn Novak, Emerson; Don Nelson, Clay Center (won twice).



Frank Kovacs of Minden High School was the winner of the annual Nebraska American Legion Oratorical competition and was awarded a \$1,000 scholarship. Second place and a \$600 scholarship went to Braydon Hoessing of Wausa High School, third place and a \$400 scholarship went to Berlyn Holmes of Wisner-Pilger High School, and fourth place and a \$200 scholarship went to Ella Brennemann who is homeschooled. Pictured with the winners are Commander Judy Walters, Oratorical Chairman Michael Landkamer, and Americanism Chairman Michael Hatfield.





# T A P S

Abels, Dean W., Papillion, Vietnam  
 Arbogast, Glenn D., York, Vietnam  
 Atkinson, Eugene, Papillion, Korea  
 Bailey, Ernest G., Lincoln, Vietnam  
 Bauer, Edward L., Doniphan, Vietnam  
 Bauer, Raymond B., Spalding, Vietnam  
 Beavers, Dean A., Kearney, Korea  
 Beets, Randall, Omaha, Vietnam  
 Beins, Thomas L., Weeping Water, Korea  
 Benaivdz, Albert, Palmer, Vietnam  
 Benzing, Charles L., Elwood, Vietnam  
 Birt, Thomas M., Oxford, Vietnam  
 Bloom, Daniel J., Spalding, Vietnam  
 Boeselager, Gerald H., Chadron, Korea  
 Brown, Ronald G., Hastings, Vietnam  
 Brown, Wallace L., Lincoln, WWII  
 Bryant, Douglas C., Central City, Korea  
 Buhrman, Clyde E., North Platte, Korea  
 Buresh, Thomas L., Mc Cook, Vietnam  
 Burmester, Jill K., Hallam, Lebanon/Grenada  
 Cajka, Tom, Wahoo, Korea  
 Calabro, Tom Jr., Omaha, Vietnam  
 Caminiti, Lawrence P., Omaha, Vietnam  
 Carpenter, Larry, Wymore, Vietnam  
 Chapman, Robert M., Wymore, Vietnam  
 Chipp, Bob, Clearwater, Vietnam  
 Conrad, Leon E., Ponca, Korea  
 Cox, Joseph A., Fairbury  
 Cunningham, Harold E., Petersburg, Korea  
 Dedic, Dale D., Potter, Vietnam  
 Dodson, Merwin L., Venango, Korea  
 Dolezal, Albin, Lincoln, Korea  
 Dooley, James L., Gretna, Vietnam  
 Dorsch, Larry J., Auburn, SAL  
 Dreyer, Daryl, Rushville, SAL  
 Drummond, Fredric A., Hastings, Vietnam  
 Dunekacke, David, Johnson, Korea  
 Dunn, Michael M., Superior, Vietnam  
 Dush, Robert M., Silver Creek  
 Dvorak, Ervin E., Dwight, Vietnam  
 Eickmeier, Randal W., Hallam, Persian Gulf  
 Eigsti, Gerald R., Milford, Vietnam  
 Engel, Dennis, Friend, Lebanon/Grenada  
 Engel, Roland R., Doniphan, Vietnam  
 English, Richard L., Fairbury, Vietnam  
 Fear, Earl L., Hershey, Vietnam  
 Flaherty, Gregory., Saint Edward, Vietnam  
 Flanders, Gary D., Bristow, Vietnam  
 Frerichs, Darrel, Allen, Vietnam  
 Frisch, Eugene, Madison, Korea  
 Gappa, Howard, Ashton, Vietnam  
 Gardener, Clark E., Chadron, Vietnam  
 Gardiner, John E., Wood Lake, Vietnam  
 Gifford, Gary E., Elwood, Vietnam  
 Godemann, Mona K., Falls City, Lebanon/Grenada  
 Goff, James D., Burwell, Korea  
 Goodschmidt, Ronald S., Gering  
 Gordon, Michaelis M., Wymore, Vietnam  
 Graper, Donald, Wood River, WWII  
 Haller, Donald, Wood River, Vietnam  
 Green, William A., Palmer  
 Griess, Randall L., Grand Island, Vietnam  
 Hans, Russell G., Seward, Vietnam  
 Heer, Dwayne, Franklin, Vietnam  
 Heiden, Ed, Sterling, Vietnam  
 Hellbusch, Roger., Belgrade, Vietnam  
 Hermann, Fred, West Point, Vietnam  
 Hermann, Theodore A., Grand Island  
 Herndon, William C., Crete, Korea  
 Herzinger, Gerald, Beemer, Korea  
 Heskett, Mark E., McCook, Vietnam  
 Hill, Duane E., Omaha, Vietnam  
 Hines, Marvin O., Morse Bluff, Vietnam  
 Hofferber, William B., Elwood, Vietnam  
 Hutton, Harvey R., Eagle, Korea  
 Hyland, Robert J., Gering, Korea  
 Ingles, Aubrey L., Arthur, Vietnam  
 Jensen, Ralph C., Western, WWII  
 Johnston, Earl D., North Platte, Korea  
 Jorgensen, Rich, Gretna, Vietnam  
 Joynt, Darrell R., Hastings, WWII  
 Kankovsky, Frank J., Omaha, Korea  
 Keene, Delbert D., Union, Vietnam  
 Keller, Danny M., Lincoln, Vietnam  
 Kelly, Bradley D., Papillion, Korea  
 Kelly, Donald W., Scottsbluff, Korea  
 King, Wayne C., Norfolk, Vietnam  
 Kitzmiller, Geralds C., Papillion, Vietnam  
 Koch, Eugene F., Mc Cook, Vietnam  
 Koepp, Robert W., Wood River, Vietnam  
 Kohler, Jerry L., Kearney, Vietnam  
 Kowalski, Bernard, Comstock, Vietnam  
 Kowalski, Cheri, Loup City, Persian Gulf  
 Kriz, Leo, Hemingford, SAL  
 Lampe, Gerald I., Beatrice, SAL  
 Lampman, Ronald D., Blue Hill, Korea  
 Lancaster, Ronald H., Cody, Vietnam  
 Lattin, Steve M., Bayard, SAL  
 Leggett, O D., Beatrice, WWII  
 Lenz, Edward J., Omaha, Vietnam  
 Leonard, James, Elwood, Korea  
 Lewis, Thomas R., Lincoln, Vietnam  
 Lofgren, John W., Lincoln, Korea  
 Lorenzen, Larry D., Newcastle, Vietnam  
 Luebbe, James A., Beaver Crossing, SAL  
 Madison, Kenneth R Sr., Omaha, Vietnam  
 Maier, Bille W., Cairo, Korea  
 Malena, Robert J., Howells, Vietnam  
 Malsam, Don, Millard, Vietnam  
 Marrs, R. J., Elwood, Vietnam  
 Mathson, Stanley J., Morrill, Vietnam  
 Mayer, Travis B., Gretna, Korea  
 McAdam, Gary L., Venango, Vietnam  
 McCormick, William H., North Platte, Korea  
 McPherson, Donald M., Adams, WWII  
 Meyer, Gerald D., Wayne  
 Meyer, Merlin, Wymore, Vietnam  
 Milby, James L., Cairo, Vietnam  
 Miles, Alfred F., Omaha  
 Minno, Rocco R., Millard, Vietnam  
 Mitchell, Don, Hallam, Korea  
 Morris, Jerry W., Lincoln, Vietnam  
 Mortinsen, Merlin L., Neligh, Vietnam  
 Morton, Larry, David City, Korea  
 Needs, Jon, Morrill, Korea  
 Nelsen, Leroy C., Lincoln, Korea  
 Nollette, Ronald L., Cody, Korea  
 Nordquist, Paul T., North Platte, Korea  
 Nordstrom, Paul E., Lincoln, Korea  
 Novak, Jimmie E., Morse Bluff, Vietnam  
 Oliver, John J., Gering, Korea  
 Orr, Loyd G., Bellevue, Vietnam  
 Osterhaus, Robert, Wymore, Korea  
 Ostgaard, Terry, Lincoln, Vietnam  
 Pagel, Gary M., Wynot, Vietnam  
 Peters, Myron W., Hastings, Vietnam  
 Petersen, Darwin E., York, Korea  
 Piechota, Robert, Ashton, Vietnam  
 Pilger, Virgil G., Omaha, Vietnam  
 Piper, Dennis L., Walthill, Vietnam  
 Piskorski, Martin C., North Platte, WWII  
 Pohl, Anton R., Sidney, Korea  
 Pollock, James, Lincoln, Vietnam  
 Ponton, Barry E., Battle Creek, Vietnam  
 Prorok, Duane, Valley, SAL  
 Pryor, James R., Wayne, Vietnam  
 Rahe, Darold, Plymouth, Korea  
 Rauch, Robert L., Lincoln, Rein, Richard L., Gering, Vietnam  
 Roehrs, Dennis, Hampton Roesner, Richard, Cook, Vietnam  
 Ronhovde, Ronald, Korea, Eagle  
 Roskilly, Roger D., Steele City, Vietnam  
 Rosman, William F., Millard, Vietnam  
 Ross, Arnold D., Superior, Korea  
 Roth William J., Hastings, Korea  
 Sanders, Melvin F., Norfolk, Vietnam  
 Schneider, Robert, Aurora, Korea  
 Schoneweis, Harlan D., Wymore, Vietnam  
 Schott, Louis J. Jr., Osceola, Vietnam  
 Schreiner, David W., Weeping Water, SAL  
 Schurer, Gregory, Wood River  
 Schutte, Gerald H., Beemer, Korea  
 Seig, Chester T., Doniphan, Shald John J., Stuart, Vietnam  
 Shaw, Larry L., Beatrice, Vietnam  
 Shinn, Richard F., Brewster, Vietnam  
 Shipman, Melvin D., Curtis, Vietnam  
 Shoemaker, Dennis D., Stanton, Vietnam  
 Sitzman, Larry F., Culbertson, Vietnam  
 Smith, David G., Beatrice, Vietnam  
 Sobota, Lawrence J., Schuyler, Korea  
 Soto, Abraham, Wood River, Korea  
 Spencer, William K., Osceola, SAL  
 Sperling, Arnold, Wood River  
 Stahla, Richard, Chadron, Vietnam  
 Stalling, Gerald, Wakefield, Vietnam  
 Starns, Del, Ashland, WWII  
 Steele, Darrel W., Ainsworth, Korea  
 Stoddard, Will A., North Platte, Korea  
 Stuft, Francis A., Clearwater  
 Sundermeier, Gerald F., Grand Island, Korea  
 Szatko, Timothy L., Silver Creek  
 Thomassen, Lyle, Weeping Water, Korea  
 Thompson, David C., Waverly, Vietnam  
 Thorn, Larry E., Loup City, Korea  
 Tyrrell, Chandler A., Lincoln, WWII  
 Urdiales, Luz, Morrill, Vietnam  
 Valasek, Verden R., Lincoln, Korea  
 Vanamburg, David L., Campbell, SAL  
 Vopalsky, Charles R., Morse Bluff, Vietnam  
 Vrbka, Gerald., Shelby, SAL  
 Vrtiska, William M., Beatrice, Korea  
 Wadsinski, Terry L., York, Vietnam  
 Warner, David, Greeley, Vietnam  
 Weber, Harvey, Friend, WWII  
 West, Melvin L., Gering, Korea  
 Wilson, Harry L., Bellwood, Vietnam  
 Wright, Larry E., Plainview, Vietnam  
 Yuetter, Raymond E., Elwood, Vietnam

## Events Calendar

### February

16 President's Day - Office Closed

### March

1 - 4 Washington Conference - Washington DC  
 15 American Legion Birthday

### April

3 Good Friday - Office Closed

Check [www.nebraskalegion.net](http://www.nebraskalegion.net) under the meetings tab for upcoming National, State, and District events.

## Non-political Organization

This is a reminder that The American Legion Family is a non-political organization. Do not wear your cover, branded shirt, or any other branded item at any political rally or at any campaign event. Furthermore, any Post holding a political forum must extend an invitation to all those running for office and remember to remove any trademark items from view. Contact Adjutant Martin with any questions.



Members of the Nebraska American Legion Family held their annual Christmas Party at the Hot Springs, SD VA Hospital on December 13. The veterans there enjoyed some games of bingo and musical entertainment by a local country duo.

## Sons of The American Legion Membership As of January 15, 2026

District	2025 Members	2026 Members
1	299	226
2	564	481
3	237	191
4	341	271
5	138	111
6	1,317	1,121
7	785	678
8	856	703
9	289	213
10	303	187
11	1,005	879
12	257	186
13	126	90
15	133	134
Total	6,650	5,471



West Point Post 70 member Ken Hanel singed up a grandfather and grandson for membership at their Post. Pictured (L to R) Leroy Ortmeier, Ken Hanel, and Bryan Ortmeier.



Fremont Post 20 presented certificates for 60 years of continuous membership to two of its members. Pictured (L to R) Kiel Eltiste, Vietnam War era and William Calta, Korea War era.



Morse Bluff Post 340 presented certificates for 50 years of continuous membership to two of its members. Pictured (L to R) Commander Galen Johnson and Steve Chromy. Not able to attend Edwin Slavik.



Kearney Post 52 presented a citation for Good Citizenship to Adellyn from Troop 339 in Kearney. Pictured (L to R) Commander Jason Baker and Adellyn.



Dodge Post 122 presented Quilts of Valor to its members at their Veterans Day program. Pictured (L to R) Lumir Cech and Charles Throener. The quilts were made by Ellen Konsel and LuAnn Franzluebbers.



Wilber Post 101 members were presented with Quilts of Valor. Pictured back row (L to R) Mrs. Joe Kubicek, Betty Kubicek, and Julie Fuller. Pictured front row (L to R) Joe Kubicek, Jerald Kubicek, Robert Vales, and Carl Novak. Not able to attend Tom Cantrell.



Paxton Post 303 presented a certificate of 50 years of continuous membership to Lane Anderson. Pictured top (L to R) Land Anderson and Adjutant Richard Colson. Paxton Post 303 helped host the annual Veterans Day Program at the local high school. Pictured bottom are the students who attended Boys' and Girls' State and Junior Law Cadet in 2025.



Hallam Post 294 members were presented with Quilts of Valor. Pictured (L to R) Emery Brandt, US Army; Nicholas Egger, US Navy; Kevin Howat, US Air Force; Marvin Leners, Nebraska Air National Guard; and Eugene Trausch, Nebraska and Arizona Air National Guard.



South Omaha Post 331 members were presented with Quilts of Valor from the Piece Makers quilting group. All members are part of the Post honor guard.



Newcastle Posts 62 presented Quilts of Valor to its members from the Northeast Nebraska Quilters Association. Pictured back row (L to R) Carol Jean Stapleton, Becky Brennan, Sharon Sullivan, Marcy Roeber, and Joann Brennan. Pictured front row (L to R) Les Nelson, Brent Hogan, Jim Taylor, Brian James, Mick Fluent, and Pete Attema. Not able to attend were Dan Kneifl, Jeremiah Hintz, and Tony Rohan.



Plattsmouth Post 56 hosted their third annual Kids Christmas party at their Post home. They had 84 kids and their families attend.



## DEPARTMENT PRESIDENT - RUTH HIETBRINK



Happy New Year!  
What are you doing to stir up  
members?

It is a new year and a time to remember all the amazing opportunities that we have to consistently serve others. There are numerous ways we can provide service to others. The ALA offers members amazing opportunities such as community service projects, leadership development, youth mentoring, veterans support programs, scholarships, and participation in patriotic conventions.

It is time to act now on these opportunities and start stirring up members to get involved.

Thank you!

Suggestions from Mid-Year Conference:

Positive Affirmation that helps me through each day

1. This is going to be the best day of my life- be optimistic, open your mind to good things ahead!
2. I control my mind, it does not control me- remind yourself that you are positive!
3. I am grateful for everything I have- gratitude is key!

Say these things when you first get up, it will change your mood, provide strength to your outlook, and help you through daily challenges.

Ruth Hietbrink  
Department President



## HONORARY JR. PRESIDENT

Greetings from your Honorary Junior President!

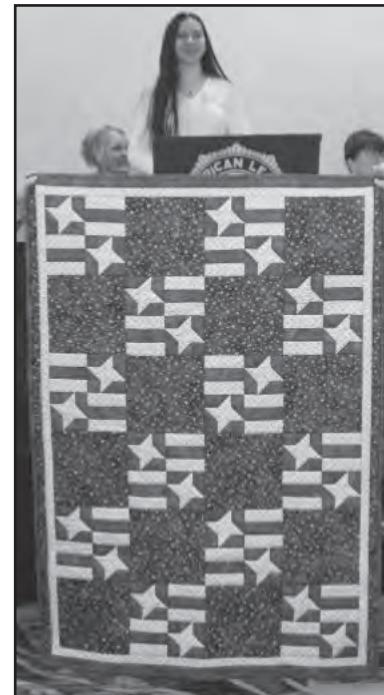
I have been working really hard this year with my project of "Quilting and Comforting for our Veterans' Valor," and have been taking my quilt that I'm raffling to all the places that I have visited this past year. I have sold many raffle tickets and am very proud of all of you who have supported me on my journey with this quilt during my year as Junior President. Thank you! As my term as Junior President nears the end, I will be drawing for the winner of the quilt at the Department Jr. Convention on Saturday, April 11, and you don't have to be present to win (although I would LOVE to see many of you there!).

The Department Jr. Convention will be held on Saturday, April 11, at the Arlington Vets Club located at 218 W Eagle St in Arlington. The day will begin at 9:30 a.m. with registration and rolls, juice, and coffee. Then, committee meetings and page and flag bearer rehearsal will start at 10:00, with the meeting being called to order at 10:15. Please RSVP your attendance to Sarah Fuchs (my mom) by calling or texting 402-641-4534 or

sending an email to me at nebralajr.president2526@gmail.com.

I look forward to seeing everyone who can make it to the convention. I can't wait to have an amazing day growing the future of the American Legion Auxiliary with all the Juniors and continuing to work toward "Quilting and Comforting for our Veterans' Valor"!

Erica Fuchs  
Honorary Dept. Jr. President



## NOTES FROM THE SECRETARY'S DESK

Greetings ! And glad the Holidays are over. Yay!! Here are some upcoming things to be mindful of:

- Always ongoing - Membership. Please work it in your units and get all those renewals sent in. If we do not reach the 85% membership goal by March 15, we are out of the running for the National Merit Medalion Award. Please help.
- Girls State applications need to be in to Department by March 1. Please call if you have any questions.
- Americanism Essays should be judged in your units and

into Americanism Chair Cie Kauth by March 15 for Department judging.

invited everyone to attend Junior Conference in Arlington on April 11, 2026.

In the March newsletter, the following will be enclosed:

- Unit Data Form
- Unit Reporting Forms
- Do them. Send them back to headquarters by their respective due dates. Thanks for all you do for your units and the American Legion Auxiliary.

Roxanne Hiatt  
Dept. Secretary

## PARTY LIKE IT'S 1999

Welcome to 2026! Why would I pick a topic from a time more than a quarter of a century ago?

"You can't really know where you are going until you know where you have been." - Maya Angelo

I contacted two past Department Presidents, Bonnie Dumler (1990-1991) and Virginia Nelson (2001-2002); and found that our membership in Nebraska was approximately 30,000 in 1990 and approximately 28,000 in 2000. This is when our membership in the Nebraska American Legion Auxiliary started to slide. By the time I was President in 2017, our goal was down about 10,000 more. That averages a loss of about 450 members per year since 1990. Today our goal is 14,284. This is a 1%

increase over last year.

What can we do to stop this slide? Our goal is at least 100% by President Ruthie's Birthday on June 10. This would be a Great Gift!!!

### YOUR JOB:

- Renew the membership of last year's members. SLAM DUNK!
- Rejoin members who did not join last year. (We need them, and they have an interest.) GET THEM TO COME BACK AND PARTY!
- Sign up new members. I am thrilled to report that last week there were 195 new members. WELCOME TO THE PARTY!

I am excited about what is happening in this organization; share YOUR passion!

Currently, we have sixteen units

that are at or above 100% and fifteen that are above 95%. We need every unit at 100%. It is not impossible.

Congratulations to District 3 and Laura Novak's crew for making the 85% goal by March 15! District 2 and Corrinna Janovec's gang are not far behind with 84%. And a big Congratulations to Nebraska, who continues to be in first place in the Northwestern Division --- and note that we have been in third, second, and now fifth in the nation for membership.

Let's Party like it's 1999 and start membership in the other direction!

Deb Albers  
Membership Chair

## AINSWORTH AFTERNOON TEA

The American Legion Auxiliary was founded in 1919 to support the American Legion and our nation's veterans.

Ainsworth Unit #79 of Brown County was formed on April 22, 1921. The President-Elect was Edith M. Ackerson (who also served as Department President in 1923-24). Charter membership was 103, taking honors as the largest organization in the state. Unit #79 has been honored to have two more Department Presidents, Joshephine See and May De Beel. Three Junior Auxiliary Department Presidents were Connie Peters Jackman, Jona Lucero Goble, and Heather Woods.

Membership Chairman Shari Luther welcomed the longtime members in attendance to the Afternoon Tea held on November 9th, 2025, the 106th Birthday of the Auxiliary. Department Legion Commander Judy Walters honored us with her attendance. She also belongs to the Unit #79 Auxiliary and is Post #79 Commander.

Ladies in attendance with 70 years to 36 years of membership were recognized. Each received a certificate for their dedication to our unit. Nichole Flynn and Katie Rau favored the group with

a song. Mary Halvorsen, Support the Troops Chairman, baked and decorated individual heart-shaped cakes depicting the Love we have for our Veterans! Much reminiscing was enjoyed by all.



**Front Row:** Audrey Wilson, Penny Dodds, Betty Mae Lucht, Elsie Coble, Connie McNally, Lois Brekemeier, and Alice Mitchell.  
**Middle Row:** Bonnie Finley, Mary Krause, Judy Walters, Mary Halorsen, and Shalia Bejot. **Back Row:** Shari Luther, Janet Schuyler, Cheri Coutts, Kay Anderson, Brenda Goeken, Ashley Titus, Mary Lou Hughes, Nichole Flynn, and Katie Rau.



## AMERICANISM

Hello to my American Legion Family. I hope everyone's holidays were good and full of joy.

I would like to talk about the upcoming essays and remind everyone that the essays are to be postmarked by March 1st. Also, I would like to mention that the ladies who are judging the essays are to follow the guidelines that I sent out and the one national guideline posted online, because that one would help you to judge them.

Make sure the Cover Sheet is fully filled out (even the check boxes), especially how many words there are in the essay. Last year, over half of the essays did not have that filled in. Make sure you can read the student's handwriting on the cover sheet as well. Lastly, before you send me the essay, please make a

copy for yourselves and send me the original essay. I say this just in case you would like to put it in your local newspaper or for a program, etc.

I can't wait to receive all the great essays from all of the units so I can read what the students will write about on this year's fun-filled topic.

### Americanism Trivia:

On what date do we celebrate the **U.S. Constitution Day?** Answer: September 17th

How many words make up the U.S. Constitution? Answer 4,400.

**Fun fact:** The U.S. Constitution is the oldest and shortest written Constitution of any major government in the world.

*Cie Kauth  
Americanism Chair*

## CONSTITUTION AND BYLAWS

I hope everyone had a Merry Christmas, and may everyone have a Blessed New Year.

Now with the New Year among us, it is a good time to look over your Constitution and Bylaws. Get them out of the mothballs. This is something we should do every year, just like a New Year's

Resolution. We need to take a good look at what we have and make sure it is following our National Constitution and Bylaws. This is the responsibility of each Unit, County, and District.

*Gayla Schmid  
Constitution & Bylaw Chair*



A Christmas wreath was hung on the American Legion Post 100 entrance door by the American Legion Auxiliary Unit 100 and VFW Auxiliary.

## PATRIOTIC QUILT RAFFLE

The Finance Committee has approved a fundraising event for our ALA General Account. A beautiful patriotic quilt --- made and donated by Donna Hatfield (thank you, Donna) --- will be won by someone at the Department Convention in June. This year's convention will be at the Quality Inn in Columbus

from June 26-28. You do not need to be present to win.

District Presidents will have raffle tickets at their District Conventions. They are \$5 each or \$20 for five tickets. Contact your District President to purchase tickets or to request tickets to sell.



Remember to send your assignments a couple weeks before the month they are due.							
2026 CENTERPIECE AND TRAY FAVOR ASSIGNMENTS							
Month	Grand Island VA Med Center 10 Centerpiece	Central NE Veterans Home 215 Tray Fav	Bellevue Eastern NE VA Home 24 Centerpiece	Norfolk VA Home 20 Centerpiece	Western NE VA Home 13 Centerpiece	Western NE VA Home 90 Tray Fav	Omaha VA Med Center 75 Tray Fav
Mar.	#335 Davenport	#290 Elwood	#156 Burchard	#70 West Point	#17 Sidney	#17 Sidney	#232 Malmo
Apr.	#251 Arcadia	#337 Wilcox	#266 Bennington		#7 Alliance	#7 Alliance	#266 Bennington
May	#126 Broken Bow	#303 Lebanon			#301 Dalton	#133 Culbertson	
June	#352 Deshler	#193 Ohiowa		#175 Jackson	#312 Broadwater	#312 Broadwater	#193 Ohiowa
July	#59 Callaway	#109 Mullen		#283 Platte Center	#7 Alliance	#301 Dalton	
Aug.	#236 Wolbach			#252 Winside	#12 Chadron	#12 Chadron	
Sept.	#288 Farnam	#126 Broken Bow	#353 Eddyville	#283 Platte Center	#10 Morrill	#200 Bayard	#354 Pleasant Dale
Oct.	#257 Eustis	#52 Kearney	#27 Beatrice		#10 Morrill	#160 Wilcox	#232 Malmo
Nov.	#225 Eddyville	#209 Franklin	#27 Beatrice	#322 Monroe	#57 Hyannis	#57 Hyannis	
Dec.	#109 Mullen	#288 Farnam	#27 Beatrice	#327 Bellwood	#7 Alliance	#145 Bloomington	#27 Beatrice
Jan.							
Feb.							

Some facilities have restrictions as to what you can use for decorations.  
If you have any questions, please contact the facilities contact person.

Service to Veterans Chair: Maria Atterberry, 704 Rochelle St, Elwood, NE 68937 · 308-325-2863



Bradley Buck Unit 310 of Gibbon had fun making centerpieces for the Grand Island Medical Center. Pictured are Lynelle Oliver, Marlyn McIntosh, and Susan Webster.



In honor of American Education Week, Bradley Buck Unit 310 of Gibbon donated cookies to Gibbon Public Schools. Pictured are President Lynelle Oliver and SUPERSTAR Secretary Hanna from Gibbon Public Schools. **TOGETHER WE THRIVE!**



## PAST DEPARTMENT PRESIDENT

The Past Department Presidents' Luncheon, with special guests Ruth Hietbrink (current president) and Northwestern National Vice President Shareen Johnson, was held during the Mid Year Conference.



*Pictured (l to r) Front row: Lisa Moore, Vicki Ozenbaugh, Shareen Johnson, Ruth Hietbrink, and Donna Hatfield. Back row: Amanda Washburn, Deb Albers, Barb Washburn, Lynne Wild, Luayne Weisgerber, Beverly Neel, Mary Ann Otte, and Roxanne Hiatt.*

## JUNIOR ACTIVITIES

Junior President Erica Fuchs' President's Project for the year is titled "Quilting and Comforting for Our Veterans' Valor." This project focuses on raising money for organizations across Nebraska that create Quilts of Valor. These quilts are given to veterans as a symbol of gratitude, comfort, and appreciation for their service. Through this project, Erica hopes to help these organizations produce more quilts so that even more veterans can be honored. Tickets are 1/\$5 or 5/\$20.

Please reach out to Erica if you have questions or would like to purchase tickets. nebralajr.president@gmail.com

The Department Junior Convention will be held on April 11, 2026 in Arlington, Nebraska at the Arlington VFW. We encourage all members to attend and participate in this important event.

*Kaylynn Novak  
Junior Activities Chair*



## CHRISTMAS PLATES

Twenty-one Christmas plates were prepared and delivered to veterans and Auxiliary members residing in the nursing facility, assisted living facilities, and homebound by members of the Syracuse American Legion Auxiliary Unit 100. Deliveries were made by Linda Halvorsen, Molly Keene (and sons), Laura Haynes, and Kathy Burns.



## MILITARY CHILD'S TABLE

Inspired by the POW/MIA remembrance table ceremony, the Military Child's Table Setting Ceremony honors military children. If you would like a copy of the ceremony/script, contact Education Chair Cindy Moore at 402-672-2040.





## CHAPLAINS CORNER

"Love comes to those who still Hope, even though they have been disappointed, To those who still Believe even though they have been betrayed, and To those who still Love even though they have been hurt before."

I chose this theme, as February is thought of as the heart month. These words could resound in our hearts for many reasons. One thing I thought of was perseverance or fortitude. Maybe this is an ability one is born with, or maybe acquired.

Love comes in many ways:

mother and child, brothers and sisters, couples, both old and young, pets, etc. Love for one's country. We see the good and the bad, and sacrifice and devotion. We may have many thoughts and reflections.

Think about John 3:16: "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish, but may have eternal life." Thank you for your love, Father. Amen

Vicki Colson  
Chaplain

**Exeter Legion Auxiliary**  
**SPAGHETTI DINNER & BAKE SALE**  
**Sunday, February 15, 2026**  
Serving 11:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m. | Exeter Legion Hall  
Dine In -or- Carry Out

*Spaghetti with Homemade Meat Sauce, Corn, Tossed Salad with Homemade Dressings, Garlic Bread, and Ice Cream Sundaes*

*Cash Wine Bar*

SPONSORED BY WILLIAM SULLIVAN UNIT 218 AMERICAN LEGION AUXILIARY  
A FREE WILL OFFERING WILL BE COLLECTED



Utica Unit #49 Chaplain Marlene Erks and Kelly Dana presented the Candlelight program at our December meeting using the service that Vicki Colson had in the ABC book. It was well done.

## DATES TO REMEMBER

### FEBRUARY

- 1 Four Chaplains Sunday
- 14 Valentine's Day
- 16 Presidents Day – Department Headquarters Closed

### MARCH

- 1 Girls State Applications due to Department
- 1 Scholarships due to Units
- 15 Scholarships due to Department
- Americanism Essay deadline to Chairman
- 17 St. Patrick's Day

### FOR YOUR ADVANCED PLANNING

- May 31 – June 6, 2026 ALA Cornhusker Girls State – Lincoln, NE
- June 25-28, 2026 Department Convention, Columbus, NE
- August 21-27, 2026 National Convention, Louisville, KY

## EDITOR'S NOTE

Please send articles and pictures for future editions of "THE STAR" to Lorene Bartos, Editor at 7441 San Mateo Lane, Lincoln, NE 68516 or email to: ALATheStarNE@yahoo.com. Send photos as jpg attachments. Material for the next issue needs to be submitted by MARCH 10, 2026.

## BATTLE CREEK

Battle Creek Unit 75 is blessed to have two members who have reached the age of 100+.

Betty Low, a 47-year member, celebrated her 100th birthday on July 19, 2025. Genevieve (Genny) Zohner, a 67-year SLM member, celebrated her 101st birthday on April 25, 2025. Sadly, Genny passed away in December of 2025.

Betty joined through her husband, Marilyn Low, in 1969. Genny joined through her husband, William Zohner, in 1959.



*Thank you* for all the cards and kind words I received on the passing of my brother, Gary. You are all wonderful, and thank you for letting me be part of your American Legion Auxiliary family.

Roxanne Hiatt

## In Memoriam

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Arlene R. Vyhildal	Fremont	20	Ann Wollenburg	Wallace	212
Marilyn Polage	Fairmont	21	Teresa L. Olberding	Shubert	222
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Bonnie D King	Wymore	25	Velma Stewart	Dannebrog	241
Maxine (Paulette) Marquez	Gordon	32	Sherlene Ohnoutka	Ceresco	244
Helen Finkral	Madison	35	Carol Swanson	Ceresco	244
Naomi M Campbell	Aurora	42	Arlene J Wills	Winside	252
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Joan Patrick	Grand Island	53	Marylou Schneidermann	Dorchester	264
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Mary Praeuner	Battle Creek	75	Alyce Havlovic	Brainard	273
Jolene Miller	Wakefield	81	Bonnie J Allen	Burwell	298
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Helen J Sheets	Blair	154	Nancy Lind-Olson	Valparaiso	371
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Dorothea L. Whitley	Beemer	159	Irene White	Department	500

## GETTING THROUGH THE WINTER

You know what they say about getting older – the days go on forever, but the years fly by. This is most apparent with the long, depressing nights of winter. I have a few ideas for projects to keep bored winter minds busy this season.

**CUPID GRAMS** – Here's a fun idea for a fundraiser! Gather a few members who like to sing, throw together some love songs, and hit the road delivering singing telegrams for loved ones for ten or twenty bucks a pop. I saw this done with great success, delivering love songs to spouses at work, grandparents, residents in nursing homes, and assisted livings especially.

The sillier the singers dress, the better --- especially if you can get a Cupid in the group. Provide them with a valentine or chocolate treat at the end. Some successful songs we had included Let Me Call

You Sweetheart, Love Me Tender, and Can't Help Falling in Love. I guarantee they will be asking for you again next year!

**ELEMENTARY SCHOOL VISITS** - Once again, I am encouraging members to get music into the schools! You don't even have to be able to sing or play! Just show up with recordings of your favorite songs (hopefully some patriotic) and let the kids move to the music! Once again, teaching them to march to songs burns off energy and gives the teachers a much-welcome break! Little flags, stickers, or slap bracelets add to the fun.

Thank you for all you do for our Veterans, youth, and community! And keep singing!

Jean Vackner  
Music Chair

## NEW VISIONS HOMELESS SERVICES - OMAHA

The American Legion Auxiliary (ALA) has helped New Visions Homeless Services-Omaha with support for an ADA wheelchair Ramp and Gazebo/deck on their undeveloped land. The ALA

Foundation provided a \$10,000 grant, and the Department of Nebraska's "Special Gifts" fund provided \$2,500 as a partial match.

New Visions serves only veterans at the Omaha inner-city campus and

is in need of therapeutic outdoor improvements at its site. They will also be opening up a half-way house for veterans in 2026 to help discharged participants transition from New Visions' programs.

