



AMERICAN LEGION AUXILIARY

Serving veterans, their families, and their communities

Department of South Dakota

Amy Howard, Department Secretary

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February 2026

Please share with your units and members.

What's Included:

- Mid-Winter Information
- Mid-Winter Agenda
- Americanism Essay Contest Information
- Americanism Essay Rubric-corrected 2/2026
- Finance Committee Meeting Minutes-12.29.25 unapproved
- D.E.C Meeting Minutes- 11.24.25 unapproved
- D.E.C Meeting Minutes- 1.16.2026 unapproved
- Unit Member of the Year Form
- Standing Rules #1 & #2- will be voted on at Mid-Winter
- Legislative Information 2025-2026
- Legislative Program-Mid-Winter Training
- Department Convention Save the Date

2026 MidWinter Conference

The MidWinter Conference is being hosted by the Potter Post Unit 3, Chamberlain. It will be held at the Arrowwood Resort in Oacoma, February 20-22, 2026. I have hotel availability and rates below.

We have Breakout Sessions planned for ALAMIS training/review and for Fiscal Policy/Monetary Addendum.

President Susie is hosting a Silent Auction to raise money for the General Fund. If you'd like to donate, please bring your new/gently used items to the Bridges Reception Area upon check-in. Please include a note with the estimated value and the bid you'd like to start at.

There will also be a "Happy 250th Birthday America" table centerpiece contest. Join us by bringing a creative, handcrafted centerpiece celebrating America's 250th birthday.

Junior members are having a meeting and will be sharing their quilt projects with us.

Northwestern Division National Vice President Shareen Johnson will be joining us and giving an update and information about National President Pam Ray's message.



Northwestern Division National Vice President

Shareen Johnson

Department of Wyoming: Don Stough Unit 33

Eligibility: Through father, Master Chief Petty Officer John Sturgeon, who served in the U.S. Navy during the Korean War and Vietnam War as a naval submariner. Also adds military service through her twin sister, Kathleen Ebert, who retired from the U.S. Navy after 20 years.

Professional/personal background: Shareen has been a member of the Auxiliary for 42 years. She worked as a medical transcriptionist for 21 years for a group of orthopedic surgeons. Shareen then worked 12 years for the State of Wyoming through the Department of Health at the Wyoming Life Resource Center — a facility for intellectually disabled and dual diagnosis residents — as the clinic coordinator until retiring in 2022. Since then, she has worked full time at a grocery store as the pricing coordinator and staff scheduler.

2026 MIDWINTER LODGING

The MidWinter Conference will be held at the Arrowwood/Cedar Shore Resort in Oacoma. Conference dates are February 20-22, 2026. The entire hotel is already booked. Other lodging options are listed below. Be sure to mention that you will be attending the American Legion Auxiliary MidWinter Conference for a discounted rate.

- AmericInn 1981 King Street, Chamberlain (605) 234-0985) \$105
- Best Western 220 West King Street, Chamberlain (605) 734-5575 2 beds \$98, 1 bed 2 people \$88
- Baymont 1100 East Hwy 16, Oacoma 1-888-712-6558 \$119
- Howard Johnson 203 E Hwy 16, Oacoma (605) 234-4222 \$89
- EconoLodge 400 East Hwy 16, Oacoma (605) 734-4100 \$69 single queen bed, \$79 2 queen beds
- Quality Inn 100 Hwy 16, Oacoma (605) 734-5593 single queen bed \$ 89, 2 queen beds \$ 99, one king bed \$94.00

2026 MidWinter Conference

Cedar Shore Resort & Conference Center~Oacoma, SD

Thursday, February 19, 2026

- 530 pm PDP's Supper, Organizer: AnnaMae Warnier-Restaurant
Silent Auction Items-Bridges Conference Center-Reception Area

Friday, February 20, 2026

- 630-10 am Restaurant opens for Breakfast Buffet, no ordering from menu, \$12.86/person + gratuity
730 am Registration desk opens- Bridges Conference Center-Reception Area
800 am Opening Ceremonies, President Susie Learing-Wetlands/Riverrun
800 am Finance Meeting, Finance Chairman Laura "Susie" Clyde-Wetlands/Riverrun
1000 am Break
1015 am DEC Meeting, Install Dept Secretary Amy Howard-Wetlands/Riverrun
1200 pm Lunch on your own or Taco Bar, MUST have your advanced ticket \$20-Bridges
130 pm Auxiliary Session: NW Division National Vice President Shareen Johnson- Wetlands/Riverrun
Department President Susie Learing's Report-Wetlands/Riverrun
Department Secretary Amy Howard's Report-Wetlands/Riverrun
Department Treasurer Christine Patnoe's Report-Wetlands/Riverrun
300 pm Leadership Chairman Patrice Sorensen-Wetlands/Riverrun
330 pm AEF Chairman Linda Holmes-Wetlands/Riverrun
400 pm Community Service Chairman Alyssa Mathis-Wetlands/Riverrun
430 pm Adjourn
530 pm No-Host Cocktails-Bridges Conference Center Reception Area
630 pm Join Legion Family Banquet-MUST have your advanced ticket \$30 -Wheeler/Oacoma
830 pm Hospitality Rooms-Cedar Shore Resort Hotel

Saturday, February 21, 2026

- 630-10 am Restaurant opens for Breakfast Buffet, no ordering from menu, \$12.86/person + gratuity
730 am Registration desk opens- Bridges Conference Center-Reception Area
800-915am American Legion Family Joint Session-Town Hall-Wheeler/Oacoma
930 am VA&R Chairman Laura "Susie" Clyde-Wetlands/Riverrun
1000 am Juniors Meeting-Missouri Winds (behind the restaurant area)
1000 am PDP meeting, Chairman Patsy Madsen-Location TBD
10-1015am Set up for Breakout Sessions-Wetlands/Riverrun
1015 am Breakout Session-Wetlands/Riverrun
#1 ALAMIS/ C&BL Rose Kraft
#2 Monetary Addendum/Fiscal Policy, Chairmen Jill Lamer & MaryJo Stier
1200 pm Lunch on your own or Burger Bar, MUST have your advanced ticket \$20-Bridges
130 pm President Susie to announce the winner- 250th Birthday centerpiece-Wetlands/Riverrun
130 pm National Security Chairman AnnaMae Warnier-Wetlands/Riverrun
200 pm Legislative Chairman Micheline Nelson, also Good Deed Awards-Wetlands/Riverrun
230 pm Children & Youth Chairman Theresa Maeschen-Wetlands/Riverrun
300 pm Juniors Chairman Heather Krueger-Wetlands/Riverrun
330 pm Juniors will join the Seniors to show their quilt projects-Wetlands/Riverrun
345 pm Close Silent Auction- Linda Holmes & Patrice Sorensen-Bridges-Reception Area
345 pm Unit Membership Awards-Rose Kraft
415 pm Adjourn

Sunday, February 22, 2026

- 830 am Non-Denominational Service Four Chaplains-Hale
1030 am SD American Legion-Oratorical Contest, State Finals-Hale (Board Room for Judges)



AMERICANISM ESSAY CONTEST

Contest Rules

The American Legion Auxiliary's Americanism Essay Contest is for students in grades 3-12, including students with special needs, divided into six classes. One award in each class will be presented in each division. Winners will receive a \$50 check, and a \$50 donation in the student's name will be made to the Spirit of Youth Scholarship Fund.

Essay Title:

"Celebrating America's 250th Birthday and the Veterans Who Fought for Our Freedom"

Essay Classes:

Class	Grade Level	Word Requirement*
I	3 and 4	150-250
II	5 and 6	250-300
III	7 and 8	350-400
IV	9 and 10	450-500
V	11 and 12	450-500
VI	Students with special needs	Word count should correspond with student's grade level

1. The Americanism Essay Contest cover sheet must be filled out **legibly** and **completely**. Failure to do so will result in disqualification.
2. Departments (states) will determine the deadline for the local unit contests.
3. Essays will be due from the state department chairs to the Americanism Division chairs by April 15.
4. Essays received after the contest deadline will not be accepted.
5. Submissions become property of the American Legion Auxiliary. Through submission of an essay, contestants and their legal guardians grant non-exclusive reproduction and publication rights to the works submitted and agree to have their names and writing published for commercial use without additional compensation or permission.
6. The essay shall be the work of only one individual.
7. Use of AI in writing essays is not allowed. Essays will be checked for use of AI. Any essay determined to be 30% or more AI written will be disqualified.
8. Essays will be scored using the following rubric:
 - Word Count: 5pts.
 - Cover Sheet: 5pts.
 - Topic/Theme — Does the Essay Answer the Topic Question?: 25pts.
 - Content — Original Thought: 25pts.
 - Grammar: 10pts.
 - Clarity/Coherence: 10pts.
 - Organization — Introduction, Body, and Conclusion: 10pts.
 - Correct Word Usage: 10pts.

THE DECISION OF THE JUDGES SHALL BE FINAL.



AMERICANISM ESSAY CONTEST 2026 Cover Sheet

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Essay Checklist:

- ☐ Class competing in _____
- ☐ Sponsoring ALA unit _____
- ☐ Typed or neatly written essay conforming to the word requirement for class
- ☐ Completed essay cover sheet as first page of essay
- ☐ Word count of essay _____
- ☐ Due date for student to return to ALA unit _____

To be completed by the student and parent/guardian:

*** Please write legibly in ink.**

Student Name: _____

Parent/Guardian Name: _____

Address (Street, City, State, ZIP): _____

Student or Parent/Guardian Email Address: _____

Phone: _____

Parent/Guardian Name and Signature: _____

School Name: _____

Teacher Name: _____

School City/State: _____

Auxiliary Use Only (Must be completed for entry to be considered.)

Sponsoring Unit Name/Number: _____

Signature of Unit Americanism Chair: _____

Unit Winner Due to Department on: _____ Department: _____

Signature of Department Chair: _____

Department Winner Due to National Americanism Division Chair by April 15, 2026

Americanism Essay Contest Scoring Rubric

"Celebrating America's 250th Birthday and the Veterans who Fought for Our Freedom."

	Student Name				
	Class competing in				
	Class Word Count				
		Scoring			
Word Count	Essay does not comply with applicable word count = 0 Essay complies with applicable word count = 5	5			
Cover Sheet	Cover sheet is incomplete = 0 Cover sheet is fully complete = 5	5			
Topic/Theme - Does the essay answer the topic question?	Essay does not address topic = 1 Essay somewhat addresses topic = 8 Essay mostly addresses topic = 18 Essay thoroughly addresses topic = 25	25			
Content - Original thought	Essay does not display original thoughts = 1 Essay displays somewhat original thoughts = 8 Essay displays mostly original thoughts = 18 Essay displays original thoughts = 25	25			
Grammar	Essay is not written well grammatically and contains many spelling errors = 1 Essay has some grammatical and spelling errors = 4 Essay has few grammatical and spelling errors = 7 Essay has no grammatical or spelling errors = 10	10			
Clarity/Coherence	Essay is not easily understood = 1 Essay is somewhat understood = 4 Essay is mostly understood = 7 Essay is clearly stated and easily understood = 10	10			
Organization - The essay is organized with an introduction, body, and conclusion.	Essay is not organized = 1 Essay is somewhat organized = 4 Essay is mostly organized = 7 Essay is organized = 10	10			
Correct Word Usage	Essay does not use correct word choices = 1 Essay somewhat uses correct word choices = 4 Essay mostly uses correct word choices = 7 Essay uses correct word choices = 10	10			
TOTAL SCORE		100	0	0	0

Finance Meeting-December 29, 2025

7 pm CST, 6 pm MT, via Zoom [Audio file-audio1250658908 \(1\).m4a](#)

Welcome: Finance Chairman Susie Clyde

Prayer: Chaplain AnnaMae Warnier

Pledge of Allegiance: 1st VP Patrice Sorensen

Preamble: President Susie Learing

Roll call: President Susie Learing, Finance Chair Susie Clyde, Finance Co-chair Dawn Barber, 1st VP Patrice Sorensen, 2nd VP Rose Kraft, Immediate PDP AnnaMae Warnier, Member at Large Nancy Andres, Member at Large Lisa Lee, Department Treasurer Christine Patnoe, Department Secretary Amy Howard and Invited Guest NEC MaryJo Stier

Checking Account Transfers:

Susie Clyde reported that she consulted with the parliamentarian regarding the bank accounts, including savings accounts and CDs. She explained that, in her assessment, the governing documents apply to financial assets managed daily, the general accounts and associated sub-accounts, which include seven specific accounts such as VAR, Children and Youth, Past President Parlay, and Girls State. According to the governing documents, these accounts must be held in one, two, or three statewide banks.

For savings accounts and CDs, however, these may be placed in banks that are conveniently located either near our primary banking institutions or accessible to individuals who need to cash them when required. It is important to consider what will yield the highest returns, since these banks are not used for daily operations. As checking accounts require flexibility due to the potential hiring of secretaries and treasurers throughout the state, we have chosen Bank West—a statewide bank—to accommodate our needs for versatility.

Amy got an email today stating Bankwest was almost ready for us to sign. He was hoping to have the Docusign sent out to Susie myself and Christine late this afternoon. Once we have signatures, then he can order the checks and deposit slips. Then he can do the safety deposit box. Amy stated that he would order 1 box of checks for each one of the seven accounts we are opening with Bankwest.

Minutes from Previous Meetings:

Patrice made a motion to dispense with the reading of all minutes as they have been distributed, review as needed in date order for discussion and approval in date order. President Susie 2nd the motion. Motion Passed

June 20th meeting notes discussions. There were corrections to the wording for the recommendation to the DEC regarding membership awards to the units. Also, a correction that the meeting was *turned over* to the Finance Chairman. Motion by Patrice and 2nd by Dawn to approve the June 20, 2025, Pre-Convention meeting minutes with the corrections. No further discussion, motion passed unanimously.

August 2nd, 2025, Finance meeting minutes were discussed. There were corrections to the roll call as the PDPs were listed, but they aren't part of the Finance Committee, so they are to be removed. Also, the spelling of a few names needs to be corrected. Patrice made a motion to accept the minutes with the discussed corrections. Dawn Barber 2nd the motion.

November 24th Finance minutes were discussed. The Title of NW Division Vice President, Shareen Johnson, needed to be corrected. Motion by Patrice, 2nd by Nancy to approve with the correction.

Outstanding CD Transfers:

Amy gave an update regarding the CDs. AnnaMae reinvested the one at Dakotah Bank for seven months for 3.70%, and that was on December 2nd. Once we have these minutes approved, I can e-mail the bank and have Susie, Christine and I added, and then Anna may be removed from that. Thank you AnnaMae for helping us get those completed. Amy will continue to update the financial spreadsheet as CDs and accounts are added and transferred to the Dept Secretary, Dept Treasurer and Finance Chair per our governing documents. The Foster Scholarship Fund CD we had voted on October 15th to invest at BankWest, 24 months at 3.78% interest, is in progress. The check Amy has in the safe is for \$7715.53. That is what we are going to be opening a new CD with, once established at BankWest.

Regina cashed a CD at A&B Trust in Bruce. She had access to the General account, so that is where she deposited the \$14,639.82. It was decided to put it into First Interstate Bank for 7 months at 3.78%. Christine and I (Amy) signed a CD with maturity date of 6/14/2026 on November 14th. The deposit amount of the CD was \$14,639.82 for seven months.

We have a CD at First Premier -Rehab fund coming up on December 31st, 2025. Christine, Kayla and Kate are the signers on that one. Christine has been asked to complete this. She will reinvest this CD for 7 months at 3.6%. She will also add Amy and Susie C and verify the

mailing address to be the Headquarters address. We have a recommendation to roll it over, keep it at the same bank, and go for seven months at the 3.6%, which is our best interest rate. Changing the signers over and the mailing address to the office. Patrice made the motion for these specifics, and Susie L seconded the motion. Motion carried, no further discussion.

Amy is tasked with updating the financial spreadsheet by January 15th, 2026. Dawn and Nancy will assist as needed to ensure the spreadsheet is current and accurate. Following the completion of the update, the team will focus on streamlining and simplifying the associated financial documents. This process is scheduled to be completed prior to the Mid-Winter meeting, allowing for a more efficient review and discussion of the organization's financial status at that time.

Girls State Program Funding and Budgeting-Address at Mid-Winter:

It is recommended that the Girls State program be discussed during the upcoming Mid-Winter session due to persistent challenges that require attention. Tiffany's participation in these conversations is important, as the group will explore strategies to increase revenue or secure additional funding to address the current budget shortfall. Department President Susie L. has been asked to meet with Tiffany prior to Mid-Winter to gather her input regarding a potential rate increase for Girls State. While a rate increase of \$50 has been suggested, it is recognized that a \$100 increase may face strong opposition. The group acknowledges the need to adjust rates in response to changes since 2014, preparing for the realities of 2026.

Tiffany has expressed reluctance to raise program rates and continues to seek alternative fundraising opportunities, such as organizing event tables, which have helped offset some meal expenses. Although meal costs are not expected to decrease, the program benefits significantly from the university's generosity in providing complimentary accommodations. While delegates at a previous convention opposed a rate increase, the possibility remains to revisit this topic. Any proposed amendment regarding rates should originate from the Finance Committee if deemed necessary.

There is a general agreement that Tiffany should be actively involved in budgeting for Girls State to ensure she fully understands the financial challenges facing the program. The organization has implemented various budget cuts without increasing participant fees, a contrast to other departments that have relied more heavily on volunteers and involvement from American Legion Auxiliary members. It is recommended that Tiffany assume a greater role in fiscal responsibility by reviewing counselor fees and mileage reimbursements for potential cost savings.

Patrice will ask for a lunch meeting with Tiffany to review the current budget, to clarify fund allocation, and encourage Tiffany to participate in future meetings and bring forward proposals, as discussed previously. Should an increase to the Girls State rate be approved this year, it will go into effect starting in 2027.

The current ratio of 11 junior members for every 15 girls and one senior member for every 30 girls, though these ratios are not formally documented. Tiffany will be informed that she is expected to either identify further opportunities for reducing costs or propose an appropriate rate increase to ensure the program's financial sustainability.

Business Savings Account Transition:

At present, our savings accounts are earning minimal interest, typically around 0.01–0.02%. This low rate provides limited growth potential for our funds. Transitioning our savings accounts to business money market accounts would allow us to earn a significantly higher interest rate, approximately 1.3%. These accounts offer flexibility, permitting 6–8 transactions per month, such as checks or transfers. Importantly, the funds remain in the bank and are not invested in the stock market. However, the interest rate may fluctuate as banks periodically adjust rates based on market conditions. Each bank sets its own minimum balance requirements to open these accounts. We retain access to our funds and transaction flexibility, while earning higher returns compared to standard business savings accounts.

The FDIC insurance limit applies to each depositor at each insured bank, based on account ownership category, such as checking or savings accounts.

Rose proposed that we transfer our savings accounts to business money market savings accounts. She suggested considering investments at First Premier. AnnaMae seconded the motion.

We would combine these 2 general savings accounts (one at First Interstate and one at First Premier) into one Business Money Market Savings at First Premier, with the setups as they currently are for general, etc. Motion passed.

Auditor update:

Christine explained why we are unable to change the auditor right now. Brady Martz is completing the 990 information for the fiscal year that ended June 30th, 2025. We have an engagement letter that they are to do the 990. Concerns were raised about Brady Martz continually raising their rates. That is partially why we were going to change to Jennifer Young Bookkeeping. Christine will complete the W2s and 1090s.

In August, the Immediate past president completed research on the accounting firms of Brady Martz, ELO and Jennifer Young. She made a motion to hire Jennifer Young, Bookkeeping and Tax in Rapid City, to file our 990 and do an outside audit every other year starting in 2025-2026. It was seconded by Finance chair Susie Clyde. This motion passed, but has never come to the DEC. We'll bring it to the DEC at Mid-Winter.

Past President Parlay:

Regina Whipple bought backpacks and she sent in a request to get them printed to the tune of \$500, asking the PPP to pay for it. The PPP chairman was much against that, so we put it to vote. Many of the PPP's did not vote. I have 10 responses, 5 yes, five no and one with voice and no vote. Five and five, it's a tie. There were additional questions regarding the look of the bags, who was printing, logo used, etc. Being it's a tie vote, it was suggested to have the PPP review it more during the Mid-Winter dinner.

During Convention last June, the Legionette fund was in the red, and President AnnaMae asked the PPP chairman, Joyce Smith, if they could take \$700.00 from the PPP fund and put it into the Legionette fund. This was done incorrectly. The money from the PPP is for postage, for mailing out the department mailings, and such. So the money should have gone into general postage, not directly into the Legionette. \$700.00 needs to come out of Legionette and go towards General Postage. There was a motion that we transferred this money from the PPP to Legionette and that was the error. But it was approved by the chairman of the PPP at the time.

The standing rule, the standing rule it's in is X1V number six, but there is no amount. It has since been shared that it used to be \$350.00 a year from the PPP that was to send the mailings to PDPs pay to send the convention proceedings books to them.

However, the motion has already been paid; it was also stated that it was for \$5 that was behind, and that money was supposed to go back to the PPPs once there was money in the Legionette account. If there isn't \$700 in the Legionette fund, you can't take \$700.00 from general and put it back into the PPP.

President Susie appointed Anna Mae chairman of the PPP for Mid-Winter, as the PPP Chairman is not able to attend. They will discuss the \$500.00 for the bags and the \$700 transfer at Mid-Winter.

Outstanding recommendations from Finance to DEC:

*Motion made by President AnnaMae was at the June 20th pre-convention meeting to recommend to the DEC. If a district president lives outside of her district, that they are only paid or paid mileage and expenses from her home unit. This motion passed but has not been brought to the DEC.

*2nd Vice President Patrice made a motion on the June 20th pre-convention meeting that the credit/refund balances for units be reviewed and create a fiscal policy to allow units to 1. hold, 2. refund or 3. put towards the unit's obligations. It was seconded. Motion passed. This has not been brought from Finance to DEC. This process is being worked on by the Fiscal Policy Committee.

Poppy Payment Process:

Much discussion was had on the poppy fund during the last audit and the process of how veterans get paid, etc. It was asked to write this down as a committee item to research. Have we set up a committee to research the poppy fund and how it is handled? A committee isn't needed. We need to talk to Jane. She writes a warrant. They send the check, and she puts it in the checking account. She writes the check for postage and to the veterans. We don't have a warrant for every veteran. All the money goes into the poppy account because it is all accounted for in the register and on the bank statements. Does anybody have the complete process from beginning to end documented somewhere on file? Susie C will type up a process and give it to Jane to approve, and then send it to HQ.

Mandatory Obligations:

Decisions about what appears on the mandatory obligations and the amounts involved require amendments for mandatory obligations. The Finance Committee can recommend to the DEC to add a \$10 mailing fee to the obligation form, rather than placing it under mandatory obligations, or suggest increasing the postage budget as a business expense.

Currently, about 50 units have not paid any obligations, raising questions about enforcement and financial accountability—especially when membership cards must be mailed out, often covered by the general fund due to a lack of policy. National guidelines require units to be in good standing to hold officer positions, but definitions and standards vary; some departments use annual checklists to track obligations, proof of filing, and participation.

Units lacking officers or regular meetings still maintain members but don't fulfill obligations, leading to financial strain on the Department. There is a clear need for stronger policies and unit accountability. For example, adding a note requesting voluntary postage contributions resulted in many units sending funds to help cover costs when membership cards were mailed.

With rising mailing costs, evaluating whether monthly mailings are necessary or if online access suffices is important to reduce waste. It is suggested to revisit online communication and assess actual mailing expenses per member. These issues should be

discussed further at the Mid-Winter meeting, after gathering relevant facts and input from all members.

Other Discussions:

Rose had several discussions with Jill Lamer, her colleagues, and a consulting lawyer about updating our secretaries' wages. There are talks about a standardized base wage increase, not a raise, but secretaries still get paid a 2014 rate, which is inadequate. We plan to address this at Mid-Winter with the finance committee and later with the DEC.

We also discussed comp time regulations for our nonprofit. Comp time must fall within the same week, so we need to define our workweek (e.g., Sunday–Saturday) and update the employee handbook accordingly. When Amy started, expectations were unclear—no contract or tax support—and although it was intended as part-time, it has become a full-time role exceeding 40 hours. Jill's job includes travel and overtime options, which we could add to the policy, possibly including a time limit on comp time.

Regarding pay, we should consider a salary between \$29,000 and \$31,000 or move to hourly, allowing flexible hours based on workload. This is not a raise but a base wage adjustment for new hires as well. Despite concerns about funding, costs have risen, making current wages unsustainable; starting January 1, 2026, South Dakota's minimum wage increases to \$11.87, while our secretary earns only \$0.26 above minimum wage at this time. Our secretary effectively serves as an executive director, handling vital tasks beyond clerical work. Although higher salaries like \$35,000–\$40,000 aren't feasible, reallocating funds from discontinued positions and accounting changes could help reach a \$30,000 baseline. We may need to raise dues or use savings/CDs to address compensation issues.

Dues Increase:

The Constitution Bylaws Committee plans to propose a dues increase, which will be discussed at every spring meeting with members. The Finance Committee will also suggest a raise and amendment; we need to determine the amount to request. Last year's proposal wasn't discussed by delegates, so we should clearly explain the cost per member, showing that current dues do not cover expenses. Effective communication about units failing to pay obligations is necessary; listing non-paying units may ensure accountability.

***Questions** have arisen about whether members from units not in good standing can run for office. Amendments are being drafted to clarify that members must belong to units in good standing to be eligible. While enforcing participation in department or district meetings, caution is needed to avoid discouraging units that contribute positively to their

communities and veterans but are less active at higher organizational levels. Imposing strict consequences may not be practical or beneficial.

***Suggestion:** We need to put a deadline on when obligations need to be paid. And the membership obligation is December 31st should be the same as the membership.

Motion to Adjourn: I'll make a motion to Adjourn by Dawn, second by AnnaMae.

Meeting was adjourned at 10:09 pm CST

Respectfully Submitted,
Amy Howard
Department of SD Secretary

Redrafted: 11.24.25 DEC Meeting via Zoom

This meeting started after the Finance Committee Meeting adjourned on the same date.

This meeting was called to order by President Susie at 852pm CST.

Attendance Roll call was answered by 19 members: NEC Mary Jo Stier, President Susie Learing, 1st VP Patrice Sorensen, 2nd VP Rose Kraft, Chaplain & PDP AnnaMae Warnier, Historian Sharon Broghammer, D1 President Kayla Kennedy, D2 President Debra MacDonald, D3 1st Vice President Marla Mosiman, D4 President Deanne Hoyle, D5 President Mary Jo Boner, D6 President Linda Holmes, D7 President Jill Lamer, D8 President Karen Richelieu, Treasurer Christine Patnoe, Poppy Chairman Jane Benzel, Secretary Amy Howard, PDP Regina Whipple, PDP Joyce Smith.

Amy read the minutes from the August 2nd, 2025 DEC meeting. The minutes have been approved by all with the stated corrections.

CBL Chairman Rose Kraft reviewed that the Amendment/Standing Rules have all been sent out to the Units in the Department Mailing. There was a concern regarding SR 17, Section 14, at the end, the words “be placed” were not included. The omission was discussed at the National CBL Committee meeting. Mary Jo Stier reached out to the National Parliamentarian for her opinion on the missing words. She stated, “that unless the 2 missing words are something that are major, that might influence people, there is no need to resend it, and she can't imagine anything is missing that would change the meaning of what was provided.”

Rose made a motion to approve the updated SR section 17, Rules 13.14.15, as given with the addition of the words “be placed”. Sharon Broghammer seconded the motion.

There were long discussions regarding hiring a labor lawyer to review the SR amendments. There hasn't been at this time, as there wasn't a motion made to do so. The hiring committee reached out to the Labor Department in Pierre for guidance. There had previously been little feedback from members regarding this. It was mentioned that there were several conversations at the recent National Convention and how they stressed the importance of keeping their secretaries. The message received and heard repeatedly is that the department needs to take care of them (secretaries) and up the benefits package to keep them. The secretary is the liaison between National and the state. There are a lot of protocols that our secretary is responsible for, making her our executive director. There is still a lot of manual work for the secretary as some units are using ALAMIS, but most units won't as they don't want to get a credit card just for membership entry.

Mary Jo moved that we reach out to our National Parliamentarian and pay her for 1 hour prior to us approving them. Her fee is unknown, but it would be a lot cheaper than a lawyer's.

The motion from Rose is still on the floor. Rose shared that she visited with units during district meetings, and comments were heard that the DEC needs to take care of it. If there were questions or concerns, they needed to talk to the President or the CBL chairman. She thought this should have been taken care of before this meeting.

Rose asked if we want to reach out to National Parliamentarian, and if we want to continue with her motion. It was decided to call for a vote. A verbal vote was completed. It was unclear, so a roll call vote was initiated. The motion was repeated for clarification. The motion is to approve all amendments as sent out for SR 17, section 13.14.15, with 14 adding "be placed" at the end. There were 4 yes votes and 10 no votes. This motion has failed to pass these amendments.

Mary Jo Stier made a motion to contact our National Parliamentarian, Chris Dickey, to hire her for one hour to review our current SR article 17, Section 13-14-15, to make sure they are correct. Kayla Kennedy seconded the motion. Further discussion, these amendments failed, so now they (the committee) would have to redraft the amendments. The idea is to have Chris look at what we currently have and how to move forward. All were in favor of the motion. No further discussion.

There is a request from Amy for her to update the Poppy Standing Rule as the amount to charge has been increased since believed to be October 2024 and mentioned again in March 2025, but the SR has never been updated or corrected. It was decided that this is a housekeeping task; no motion is needed. Amy will review previous documents and will update the Standing Rules accordingly.

Amy also requested to update/correct the SR regarding the Poppy Chairman having a credit card. The Chairman has always had a bank card, never a credit card. This is housekeeping; no motion needed. Amy will update.

Mary Jo Stier spoke on behalf of Katie, the Legionette Editor. There was a discussion at the D5 fall meeting. It was brought to our attention by Micheline that Amy entered the information for subscriptions and then sent it to Katie. It was suggested that the Secretary could/should just send the editions out to all subscribers as she held the database. This was talked about but never finalized. Amy and Mary Jo reviewed this further. Katie will continue to send out the Legionette editions as she receives an updated database monthly.

Further Legionette discussions:

- Everyone who gets the Legionette at the end of the year automatically gets the Legionette the following September and October.
- The question was raised if they pay after the 20th of the month, do we have to go back and send the edition for that month? No, the deadline is the 20th of the month. The day we receive the subscription at HQ is the day the subscription starts.
- Are Unit Presidents supposed to get the email copy free? Yes, they are. Amy stated they hadn't prior to November. She has since added all unit presidents from ALAMIS to the email subscriptions list. There were a few Presidents that had reached out asking about it. Amy has emailed them copies of those issues they hadn't received.
- It was also noted that we may not have the correct President or chair information if we haven't received the Officer/Chair forms at HQ yet.
- There were a few units that sent their Legionette subscriptions and payments directly to Katie, payable to Katie. It was asked how to reiterate that all information needs to be sent to HQ for processing. No action taken.
- Content sent to the Legionette cannot be in text form. Please send via email or mail to Katie for it to be published.
- If there are concerns about what is being published, reach out to President Susie, and she can review with Katie.
- It was asked why the District Presidents don't get the Legionette subscription for free. The Unit Presidents receive it for free, but District Presidents must pay for it. It was suggested to submit a resolution for the District Presidents to receive a free email copy. Some District Presidents stated they pay for their own subscriptions.
- It is in the SR Legionette that the Unit Presidents receive the email editions of the Legionette for free.

Other points of interest:

- Headquarters rent: A new contract isn't needed as it is between ALA and Mr. Adamo, not a specific person. He allowed us to use our \$750 deposit towards our November, 2025 rent. No change in rent currently. Mr. Adamo also stated that we will never have a late fee. He is slow to enter the payments received, and a late fee is automatically added. He removes them monthly as our payments are on time.
- Christmas Tree at the Capitol: President Susie, Secretary Amy, NEC/D3 President MaryJo, and Legion Commander Kevin met in Pierre on November 21st, 2025, to decorate the tree. The theme is "White Christmas". All the decorations and lights used were from prior years. The only item purchased was a white tree skirt.
- Audits: President Susie stated that we are "all caught up." Patrice and Nancy completed the first one. AnnaMae and Dawn completed the second one.

- President Susie said the Mid-Winter agenda went out in the Legionette this month. She asked if you are scheduled, please be ready to speak.
- A Finance Committee recommendation was brought forth to bring our NW Division Vice President, Shareen Johnson, to Midwinter and pay for her visit out of the National visit funds. No further discussion was had. All were in favor. Motion was carried.
- President Susie, on behalf of Amy, would like to hire someone to get her printer, scanner, and copier machine to work. Kayla stated that the machine was purchased from Office Depot a year or so ago. There is no service agreement, etc. . It was discussed by all that this would be a cost of business, and working equipment is needed. It was suggested to have an unbiased third party come in and fix the machine. No motion is needed as it is the cost of doing business.
- The Finance Committee recommends reinvesting CD #111562 at Dacotah Bank for 7 months at 3.70% interest. It was approved unanimously by the DEC.

No other business was brought forward.

Kayla Kennedy made a motion to adjourn. Patrice Sorensen seconded the motion. All were in favor, none opposed.

The Meeting was adjourned at 10:05 pm CST.

Respectfully submitted,
Amy Howard
SD Department Secretary

DEC Meeting 1.16.2026

via Zoom 7 pm CST, 6 pm MT

Audio file-[audio1807971417.m4a](#)

The Meeting was called to order at 7 pm CST by President Susie Learing

Prayer-Chaplain AnnaMae Warnier

Pledge of Allegiance- 1st Vice Patrice Sorensen

Preamble- 2nd Vice Rose Kraft

Roll call by Secretary Amy: NEC Mary Jo Stier, President Susie Learing, 1st VP Patrice Sorensen, 2nd VP Rose Kraft, Chaplain AnnaMae Warnier, Historian Sharon Broghammer, Finance Chairman Susie Clyde, D1 President Kayla Kennedy, D2 President Deb MacDonald, D3 VP Marla Mosiman, D4 President Deanne Hoyle, D5 President Mary Jo Boner, D6 President Linda Holmes, D7 President Jill Lamer, D8 President Karen Richelieu, Dept Treasurer Christine Patnoe, Department Secretary Amy Howard, Finance Co-Chair Dawn Barber, PDP Carol Edwards, PDP Joyce Smith, PDP Patsy Madsen,

We have a quorum. This meeting will review the finance committee's recommendations from June 20th and August 2nd that have not yet reached the DEC. Susie L previously corrected and prepared both sets of minutes, which were approved with changes. Tonight's discussion ensures these items are addressed before Mid-Winter.

Madam President, I, Deanne Hoyle, make a motion that we dispense with the reading of those minutes since they were distributed prior to the meeting. Patrice seconded the motion. No further discussion.

It was discussed that the meeting minutes from 11.24.2025 DEC be rewritten and then resubmitted for approval at our next DEC meeting. The discussions stated the minutes were too direct and comments shouldn't be word for word. They should include the employment lawyer and the items that ALA National suggested at National Convention. Mary Jo Stier moved that we postpone accepting these minutes and have her bring them back to midwinter with a, with updated. as requested. Patrice seconded the motion. No further discussions. Amy will rewrite the minutes and they will be reread for approval at our next DEC meeting.

The Finance Committee makes a recommendation to the DEC: A District officer who lives outside of her district, that they are paid mileage and expenses from their home post. Discussions: relating to the Standing Rules, can the officers both get paid if the District

President isn't available? Yes, along with postage and long-distance phone calls. SR VI, #4. If the District President assigns another officer, can they get reimbursed? Yes. The finance committee will amend the recommendation to say "District President", to read as: A District President who lives outside of her district, that they are paid mileage and expenses from their home post. All in favor. Passed.

The Finance Committee recommends the hiring of Jennifer Young, Bookkeeping and Tax in Rapid City, to file our 990 yearly and do an outside audit every other year starting 2025-2026. Discussions were had regarding the specifics of the year and duties. It was withdrawn by Finance Committee Chair Susie Clyde to make corrections and review. This will be brought forward at the next DEC Meeting.

The Finance Committee stated they moved 7 checking accounts from First Premier or First Interstate to a statewide bank, BankWest in Mitchell. This has already been completed. Savings accounts are in the process of being moved to First Premier for a Money Market Business Savings account, starting at 1.5% APR minimum. As CDs are coming due, the Finance Committee is reviewing the best rates, etc. There is also a complete document with all financials listed for the SD ALA. Discussions were had on whether the Finance Committee should have brought this to the DEC prior to moving or changing anything with finances. Are we in compliance with the FDIC amounts? Rose made a motion that the DEC approve the banking transfers. Kayla seconds this motion. All in favor. Passed.

Mary Jo Stier's name was omitted from the Monetary Addendum Fiscal Policy Committee from the August 2nd DEC minutes. She is the co-chairman. It's an appointment, so consent of the DEC was needed to add her name to the documents. Consent was given by the DEC. Amy will update the meeting minutes to include Mary Jo Stier.

President Susie has appointed Anna May to the position of a liaison for the Mid-Winter Conference as Patsy wasn't going to be there, and now she is. There is now only one topic that we need from the PDPs. The \$700 that was previously transferred in May of 2025 from the PPP account to the legion was to be used for postage. This was done incorrectly, and how can we move forward to correct this? There were further discussions about whether there could be an official meeting after the dinner or when this could be discussed further. Suggestions were made to have Chairman Patsy send out a letter to all PDPs to let them know during Mid-Winter that the PDPs would have a meeting and what would be discussed, and to include what/how things have been done in the past. It was also asked that the PDP put together a history of the PPP to be written down.

Housekeeping: We had a recommendation to change an account title in QuickBooks from national president's expense to national visitor expense. This is an FYI to the DEC.

A committee is needed for the six-month reviews of the department treasurer (due December 20) and secretary (due February 26), per standing rule X1X. The committee will be used for both employees' annual and six-month reviews. Motion by Kayla to use one committee for both roles and review cycles was seconded by Patrice and passed unanimously. Rose Kraft nominated Jill Lamer; Patrice nominated Linda Holmes. AnnaMae moved to close nominations and made a motion to appoint Jill Lamer and Linda Holmes to the committee, seconded by Kayla Kennedy. Both motions carried. The President will serve as Chair. It is recommended to formalize this procedure for future post-DEC, post-convention meetings.

Madam President, Mary Jo Stier, NEC was tasked to reach out to National Parliamentarian Chris Dickey regarding some concerns we had with the secretary language. Her recommendation was to contact an employment lawyer. She is not a lawyer, and she could not give us any recommendations on the questions that we had at hand. She didn't charge us for anything.

The Employee Handbook Committee met and discussed the employment lawyer last week. They would like to recommend that there be a group of two or three people who contact an employee lawyer. Jill Lamer and Kate Aulner have agreed that they would be on that committee. They would meet with a lawyer or two and maybe have something to bring to Mid-Winter. There were discussions as to what the proposals would cost, whether there is a spending limit, and what is the clarifications they are going to ask. Rose made a motion to have Jill and Kate research the cost of an employment lawyer, bringing at least 2 bids to DEC via an email to our Department Secretary for approval. After input of the DEC, we would get information for all involved for the employee and employer (SDALA) to Mid-Winter. Sharon Broghammer seconded the motion. There was further discussion. Rose withdrew the motion as there is already a committee. Carol Edward made a motion to have the Employee Handbook Committee come up with an action plan and present it to the Finance Committee at Mid-Winter. Patrice seconded the motion. Passed.

Rose Kraft brought to the finance committee that she is requesting \$500 to use for several awards for unit memberships throughout the year. The finance committee approved it and has recommended it to the DEC. No further discussion. All in favor, motion passed.

A motion had been previously made to set up a committee to research mailing expenses. It was mentioned that the CBL committee may be working on an amendment to put a line

item on the obligation chart for units to help cover postage expenses. This was not on the original agenda and was asked to be moved to the Finance and DEC committees at Mid-Winter.

Amy will be out of the office; headquarters will be closed January 20-24th, 2026. She will transfer the office phone to Susie L this evening and will continue use of out of office memo on the email.

Amy will research other possibilities for printing companies. This is the second department mailing we have had issues with. The December mailing was sent to the printing company on December 12th and finally received January 12th. The August mailing was also not received until the end of September. It was stressed to make sure that the Legionette and the Dept Mailing would be a volume discount when getting estimates.

Amy asked for a list of all Chairman duties. Patrice stated she is working on this. Rose also stated that the Employee Handbook Committee is working on this currently. There was talk that in the past there were boxes, etc., passed from chairman to chairman but it is the ultimate goal to have it documented, so we know as a whole, we're following up with what we need to be doing and when we're doing it, so nothing's missed.

Amy is still trying to get her Printer/Scanner working. She has been approved to hire someone to get this resolved.

Having no further business to come before this committee, Kayla Kennedy made a motion to adjourn. Patrice seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned at 839pm CST.

Respectfully Submitted,
Amy Howard
SD Department Secretary



UNIT MEMBER OF THE YEAR ENTRY FORM

YEAR: _____

-Every Unit has the choice to nominate a Unit Member of the Year. The nomination is sent to their District President.

-DEADLINE: All entries must be sent to your District President and postmarked no later than February 21, 2026!

-The District President then chooses one nominee for the District.

-The Department Past Department President chooses the Department Member of the Year.

REQUIREMENTS:

1. Open to senior members who are not currently, nor have ever been, in an elected or appointed leadership role higher than unit president.
2. Units must submit a narrative of 1,000 words or less describing the nominee's accomplishments and activities together with the nominee's name and address. Please include this narrative with this form. Units will send their entry to their District President.
3. **District Presidents are to send the winner to the Department Past Presidents Parley chairman.**
4. Departments may submit only one entry. Entry is due June 1 and must be signed by the Leadership or Past Presidents Parley Chairman. Please send the department entry to Linda Newsome at Leadership@ALAforVeterans.org

NOMINATING UNIT:

TOWN: _____ UNIT #: _____ DISTRICT #: _____

UNIT OFFICER: _____

UNIT OFFICER EMAIL: _____

UNIT OFFICER PHONE: _____

DEPARTMENT PAST PRESIDENTS PARLY CHAIRMAN:

NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

CITY/STATE/ZIP: _____

TELEPHONE: _____

EMAIL: _____

SIGNATURE: _____

UNIT MEMBER OF THE YEAR INFORMATION:

NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

CITY/STATE/ZIP: _____

TELEPHONE: _____

EMAIL: _____

This Amendment will be voted on by the DEC at the MidWinter Convention during the DEC Meeting on Friday, February 20, 2026. If any members have concerns, please contact the Department Constitution and By Laws Chairman, Rose Kraft, Department Headquarters Secretary, Amy Howard or Department President, Susie Learing.

Proposal # and Location in Constitution/Bylaws/Standing Rule		
Proposal #1 - Standing Rules XXI – Section 3 Dues and Assessments		
Current Wording	Proposed Amendment	If Adopted, Will Read
South Dakota Auxiliary Headquarter Unit #500 Senior Membership and Junior Membership shall be Department Dues plus that of Nationals and what is set for Unit dues by the Department Secretary with the approval of the Department Executive Committee.	South Dakota Auxiliary Headquarter Unit #500 Senior Membership and Junior Membership shall be Department Dues plus that of Nationals and what is set for Unit 500 dues by the Department Secretary with the approval of the Department Executive Committee. <i>The total of Senior Unit 500 dues must be a minimum of \$5.00 more than the largest Department Unit dues.</i>	South Dakota Auxiliary Headquarter Unit #500 Senior Membership and Junior Membership shall be Department Dues plus that of Nationals and what is set for Unit 500 dues by the Department Secretary with the approval of the Department Executive Committee. <i>The total of Senior Unit 500 dues must be a minimum of \$5.00 more than the largest Department Unit dues.</i>

Proposed by: Constitution and By Laws Committee

Rationale: The preferred practice is for members to be affiliated with a unit and engaged in a community. The 500 Unit is designed as an interim or “slide-through” placement for members whose units are closed, offering a temporary assignment until a new unit is chosen.

This Amendment will be voted on by the DEC at the MidWinter Convention during the DEC Meeting on Friday, February 20, 2026. If any members have concerns, please contact the Department Constitution and By Laws Chairman, Rose Kraft, Department Headquarters Secretary, Amy Howard or Department President, Susie Learing.

Proposal # and Location in Constitution/Bylaws/Standing Rule Proposal #2 – Standing Rules – Article XXIII – Miscellaneous – Section 4		
Current Wording	Proposed Amendment	If Adopted, Will Read
The price of the South Dakota Legionette will be seven dollars for mailed subscriptions and four dollars for email subscriptions. (A courtesy copy will be emailed to all unit secretaries, or other unit officers that receive email at no charge.) Legionette subscriptions run from September through December.	The price of the South Dakota Legionette will be seven dollars for mailed subscriptions and four dollars for email subscriptions. (<i>A courtesy copy will be emailed to the Department Executive Committee, the eight District Presidents, the Unit President or their designated recipient that receive email at no charge.</i>) Legionette subscriptions run from September through December.	The price of the South Dakota Legionette will be seven dollars for mailed subscriptions and four dollars for email subscriptions. (A courtesy copy will be emailed to the Department Executive Committee, the eight District Presidents, the Unit President or their designated recipient that receive email at no charge.)Legionette subscriptions run from September through December.

Proposed by: Mary Jo Boner

Rationale: The District Presidents serve as our primary liaisons to the units. Providing them with a guaranteed email copy at no cost to the department ensures they have the most up-to-date information necessary to communicate effectively with the units.

Submitted 12.10.2025

Amendment Template

Form Updated 4/8/2024



2024-2025 SD ALA Legislative Chairman: Micheline Nelson
Email: Micheline.nelson@live.com
Phone: 605-645-1346
2025-2026 SD ALA Legislative Committee: Kathy Evenson
and The SD American Legion Legislative Committee

Get Involved

Purpose: The purpose of the Legislative Committee is to provide information and assistance to American Legion Auxiliary members to advocate for the legislative agenda of The American Legion. *Standing Rule #5, National Committees – Mission Outreach*

- Utilize The American Legion's Legislative Website at www.legion.org/legislative to obtain information on legislative priorities, call for immediate action, and connect with representatives.
 - [Grassroots Action Center](#)
 - [Sign up for alerts.](#)
 - [Locate pending legislation.](#)
 - [Contact your representatives.](#)
 - [Report on meetings with representatives.](#)
- Host a Meet the Candidates Night. Invite all candidates involved in a specific election for a question-and-answer session, not a debate with a townhall format **with no Legion Family signage**.
<https://member.legion-aux.org/Member/Committees/Legislative/How-to-Host-a-Meet-the-Candidate-Night>
- Promote the ALA Legislative Advocacy Guide to develop a plan to increase legislative awareness in your community. <https://member.legion-aux.org/Member/Guides/Advocacy-Guide>
- Join the Legislative Mini-Council to advocate for The American Legion Family's legislative priorities with members of Congress with whom you have personal relationships.
- Stay on top of upcoming legislative initiatives that may impact the efforts of Be the One and mental health awareness <https://www.legion.org/betheone>

Nonpolitical Etiquette

ALA C&BL - Article II Section 1. The American Legion Auxiliary is a civilian patriotic service organization that supports the mission of The American Legion. Section 2. The American Legion Auxiliary shall be absolutely nonpolitical and shall not be used for the dissemination of partisan principles nor for any promotion of the candidacy of any person seeking public office or preferment.

- The ALA Legislative Committee is requesting that each ALA member respects the ALA nonpolitical status by avoiding posting pictures of any candidates when wearing the ALA brand logo, on any social media platforms. It could be misinterpreted as taking a political position.
- The ALA Legislative Committee is also requesting to avoid political comments in person or on social media when wearing the ALA brand logo.

The American Legion Legislative Center



Key into your computer or phone
<https://www.legion.org/action>

Speak into your phone
www.legion.org/action



Scan this TAL Legislative Action
Center QR Code

How to Complete your Report and Awards

Key Program Statement:

The Legislative program provides information and assistance to American Legion Auxiliary members to advocate for the legislative agenda of The American Legion. [Legislative Committee \(legion-aux.org\)](https://www.legion.org/action)

As part of **your narrative report**, please include answers to the following questions:

1. How did your unit promote the legislative agenda of The American Legion? What training or information did your unit use to inform members of legislative priorities and the Grassroots Action Center on The American Legion's legislative website?
2. What course of action did members or unit use to advocate for The American Legion's legislative agenda?
3. What legislative activities (town hall meetings, legislative receptions) did members attend and host in their communities? What suggestions did members have to improve those activities?
4. What avenues did members use to develop relationships with elected officials? Did members serve on the Legislative Council?
5. Please describe how members connected with their local, state, and national officials and their successes. How many members received a response from their officials and in what format?
6. These should be tied directly to the Program Engagement Plan (where applicable) or the Key Program Statements.

Due Dates

After an event, you may complete a narrative and email it to Micheline.nelson@live.com and ALA president

April 15, 2026: Unit submit their written narrative report (answer as many questions as possible) and attach pictures. Preferably by email to micheline.nelson@live.com
Or mail to Micheline Nelson, 19650 Mossing Lane, Spearfish – SD 57783

May 1, 2026: SD ALA Chairman submits the department report to the Northwestern Division Chairman

June 1, 2025: Deadline to apply for the Unit Program Award or Department Program Award – online form on the National ALA website.



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American Legion Auxiliary Legislative Program

Midwinter Convention
Oacoma, February 21, 2026

Micheline Nelson
SD Department Legislative Chairman

Purpose of American Legion Auxiliary Legislative Committee

- The purpose of the Legislative Committee is to provide information and assistance to American Legion Auxiliary members to advocate for the legislative agenda of The American Legion.
- The Legislative program provides information and assistance to American Legion Auxiliary members to advocate for the legislative agenda of The American Legion.
- American Legion Auxiliary Advocacy Guide is found at www.legion-aux.org. Log into national website and once in members section click on “Guides”.
- Click on Legislative Advocacy Guide

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- **Did you create your member account on the national ALA website?**
- **Scan this QR code**

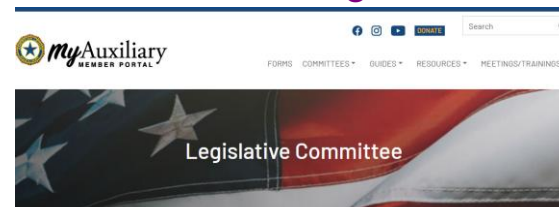
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and their Families*

Ideas to Get Involved

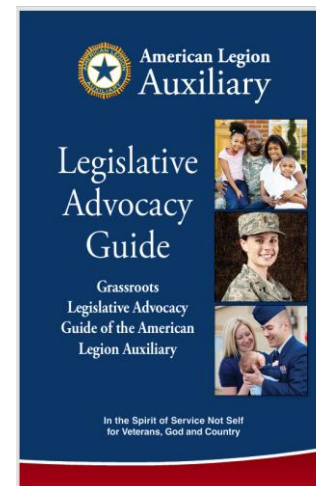
<https://member.legion-aux.org/member/committees/legislative>

Find resources

 Legislative Key Resources
Legislative Advocacy Guide
Introduction Letter to Representative Template (MS docx)
Letter to Support Legislation Template (MS docx)
 The American Legion Legislative Website
 The American Legion Legislative Action Center
 The American Legion Dispatch
How to Host a Meet the Candidates Night



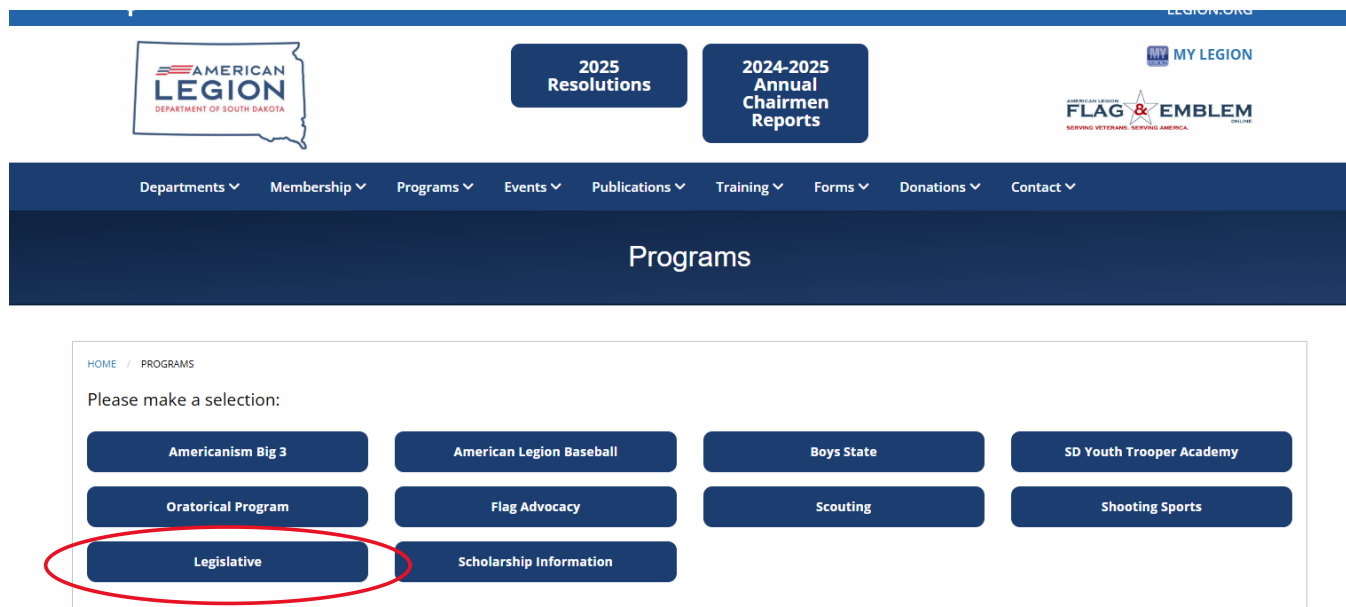
[Legislative_Advocacy_Guide.pdf](#)



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South Dakota Department American Legion Legislative Committee

<https://sdlegion.org/programs>



LEGION.ORG

2025 Resolutions

2024-2025 Annual Chairmen Reports

MY LEGION

AMERICAN LEGION FLAG & EMBLEM
SERVING VETERANS. SERVING AMERICA.

Departments ▾ Membership ▾ Programs ▾ Events ▾ Publications ▾ Training ▾ Forms ▾ Donations ▾ Contact ▾

Programs

HOME / PROGRAMS

Please make a selection:

Americanism Big 3	American Legion Baseball	Boys State	SD Youth Trooper Academy
Oratorical Program	Flag Advocacy	Scouting	Shooting Sports
Legislative	Scholarship Information		

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[Home | South Dakota Legislature](https://sdlegislature.gov/)

<https://sdlegislature.gov/>

LATEST

[Testifiers to Register Digitally for 2026 Legislative Session](#)

2026 BILLS

2026 CALENDAR

2026 CHAMBERS AND
COMMITTEES

2026 LEGISLATORS

CODIFIED LAWS

LEGISLATIVE RULES

RESOURCES

LEGISLATIVE DATA

Call to Action of The American Legion, Department of South Dakota.

We are in the 101st Session of the South Dakota Legislature and The American Legion needs your help. Please see below the official positions of the Department. Contact your legislators and let them know this is where we stand as Legionnaires.

Find your Legislator here- <https://sdlegislature.gov/Legislators/Find>

Set up an account to track legislation and get updates- <https://mylrc.sdlegislature.gov/>



Get Involved at the National Level

Purpose: The purpose of the Legislative Committee is to provide information and assistance to American Legion Auxiliary members to advocate for the legislative agenda of The American Legion. *Standing Rule #5, National Committees – Mission Outreach*

•Utilize The American Legion’s Legislative Website at www.legion.org/legislative to obtain information on legislative priorities, call for immediate action, and connect with representatives.

- [Grassroots Action Center](#)
- [Sign up for alerts.](#)
- [Locate pending legislation.](#)
- [Contact your representatives.](#)
- [Report on meetings with representatives.](#)

•Host a Meet the Candidates Night. Invite all candidates involved in a specific election for a question-and-answer session, not a debate with a townhall format with no Legion Family signage.

<https://member.legion-aux.org/Member/Committees/Legislative/How-to-Host-a-Meet-the-Candidate-Night>

•Promote the ALA Legislative Advocacy Guide to develop a plan to increase legislative awareness in your community.

<https://member.legion-aux.org/Member/Guides/Advocacy-Guide>

•Join the Legislative Mini-Council to advocate for The American Legion Family’s legislative priorities with members of Congress with whom you have personal relationships.

•Stay on top of upcoming legislative initiatives that may impact the efforts of Be the One and mental health awareness.

<https://www.legion.org/betheone>

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Topics on Legislative Division

**AMERICAN
LEGION**

ABOUT ▾ ADVOCACY ▾ MEMBERSHIP & SERVICES ▾ GET INVOLVED ▾ INFORMATION CENTER ▾

HOME / ADVOCACY / NATIONAL LEGISLATIVE ADVOCACY

NATIONAL LEGISLATIVE ADVOCACY

The American Legion's National Legislative Division addresses issues of national importance and advocates for servicemembers, veterans, and families on Capitol Hill, ensuring their voices are heard in Congress.

About the National Legislative Division

The American Legion's National Legislative Division actively addresses issues of national importance in Washington and across the country. Serving as *The Voice of the Veteran* on Capitol Hill, the division advocates for servicemembers, veterans, and their families by advancing The American Legion's legislative agenda, guiding Congress with trusted expertise, and building strategic partnerships that ensure veterans' benefits and services endure for generations.

**VA
DEBT
HELP**

VA has extended debt relief to veterans including suspension of action on veteran debt under jurisdiction of the U.S. Treasury and suspension of collection action or extension of repayment terms on preexisting VA debts.

BENEFIT DEBTS | HEALTH CARE DEBTS

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Grassroots Action Center Components

- ❖ Report Meeting
- ❖ Sign Up for Alerts
- ❖ Find Officials
- ❖ Find Legislation

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Grassroots Action Center

Grassroot Action Center

- Complete & submit Congressional Contact Form
- Sign up for legislative alerts to act
- Locate officials using your zip code
- Locate pending legislation and key Legion supported legislation by category

The screenshot shows the American Legion Grassroots Action Center website. At the top is the American Legion logo. Below it is a dark blue header with the text "GRASSROOTS ACTION CENTER". Underneath the header is a navigation bar with four red buttons: "Report Meeting", "Sign Up for Alerts", "Find Officials", and "Find Legislation". Below the navigation bar are four main content areas, each with a red arrow pointing from the text box to it:

- Service Dogs Assisting Veterans (SAVES) Act**: A card featuring a photo of a dog and text about the critical support veterans need to recover from the visible and invisible wounds of war.
- SHIPS for America Act**: A card featuring a photo of a ship and text about the American Legion endorsing the Shipbuilding and Harbor Infrastructure for Prosperity and Security (SHIPS) for America Act.
- GI Bill Parity Act**: A card featuring a photo of a graduation cap and text about protecting borders and state capitals to delivering pandemic aid, supporting local law enforcement, and serving in combat overseas.
- View Your Election Center**: A section with a form to enter an address to view voting resources and your officials & candidates.
- Sign Up for Alerts**: A section with a form to enter an email and ZIP code to sign up for alerts.
- Find Legislation**: A section with a form to enter keywords to view and search for legislation.

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Grassroot Action Center

The Grassroots Action Center provides shortcuts to:

- View Your Election Center
- Sign Up for Alerts
- Find Legislation

The screenshot shows the American Legion Grassroots Action Center website. At the top is the American Legion logo. Below it is a dark blue header with the text "GRASSROOTS ACTION CENTER". Underneath the header are four red buttons: "Report Meeting", "Sign Up for Alerts", "Find Officials", and "Find Legislation". Below these buttons are two links: "Campaigns" and "Surveys". The main content area features three cards: "Service Dogs Assisting Veterans (SAVES) Act", "SHIPS for America Act", and "GI Bill Parity Act". To the right of these cards are three sections: "View Your Election Center", "Sign Up for Alerts", and "Find Legislation". Red arrows point from the list items on the left to these sections: from "View Your Election Center" to the "View Your Election Center" section, from "Sign Up for Alerts" to the "Sign Up for Alerts" section, and from "Find Legislation" to the "Find Legislation" section.

**AMERICAN
LEGION**

GRASSROOTS ACTION CENTER

[Report Meeting](#) [Sign Up for Alerts](#) [Find Officials](#) [Find Legislation](#)

[Campaigns](#) [Surveys](#)

Service Dogs Assisting Veterans (SAVES) Act
Too many veterans are left without the critical support they need to recover from the visible and invisible wounds of war. For those living with physical disabilities, PTSD, or other service-connected conditions, the lack of access to trained service dogs becomes a major...

SHIPS for America Act
The American Legion endorses the Shipbuilding and Harbor Infrastructure for Prosperity and Security (SHIPS) for America Act to improve the maritime security of the United States. This crucial domain has been overlooked for too long. Our members are clear in their...

GI Bill Parity Act
From protecting our borders and state capitals to delivering pandemic aid, supporting local law enforcement, and serving in combat overseas, National Guard and Reserve servicemembers have been increasingly called upon to confront unique and dangerous challenges. They often...

View Your Election Center
Enter your address to view voting resources and your officials & candidates
ZIP Code

Sign Up for Alerts
Enter your information below to sign up.
Enter Email
ZIP Code

Find Legislation
View and search for legislation.
Enter Keywords
[View key legislation](#)

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Grassroot Action Center

Compose Your Message

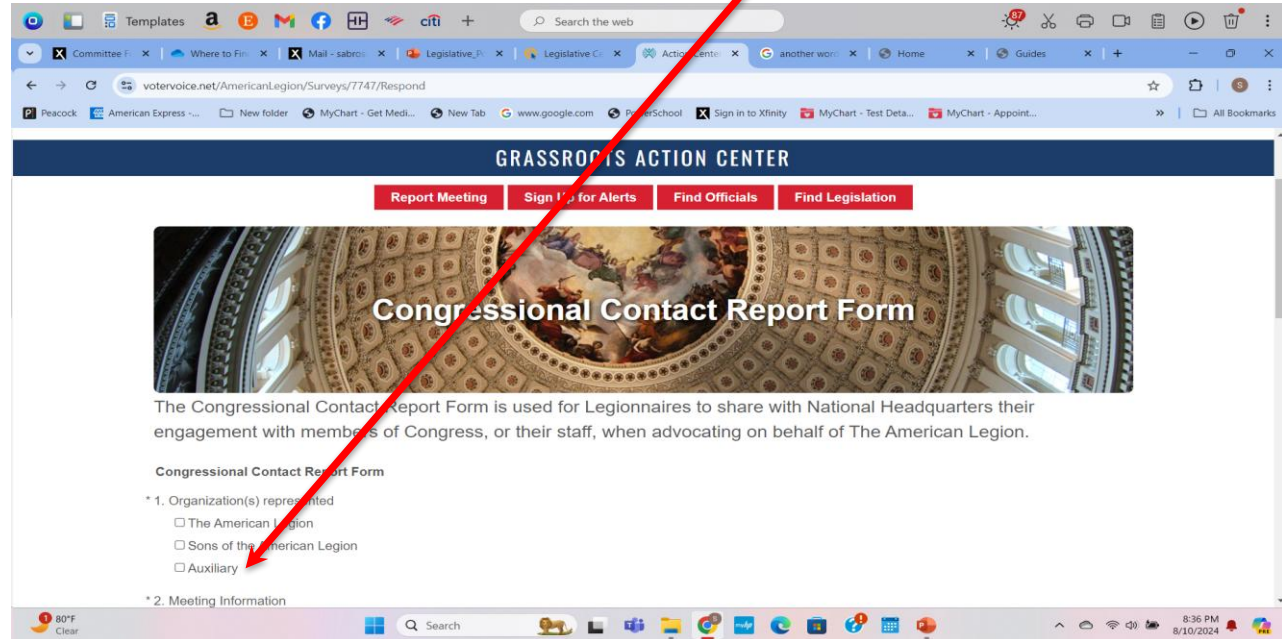
The Legion has standard messages for the legislation on their agenda. Click on the legislation you will compose a message.

- These messages can be amended by a member before sending to your representative.
- Review your profile before clicking “Send Message” or “Print”
- Maintain a record of messages sent for year-end reporting.

The screenshot displays the 'GRASSROOTS ACTION CENTER' interface. At the top, there are navigation links: 'Report Meeting', 'Sign Up for Alerts', 'Find Officials', and 'Find Legislation'. Below these are links for 'Campaigns' and 'Surveys'. The main content area features three legislative cards: 'Service Dogs Assisting Veterans (SAVES) Act', 'SHIPS for America Act', and 'GI Bill Parity Act'. To the right, there are sections for 'View Your Election Center', 'Sign Up for Alerts', and 'Find Legislation'. The bottom section, titled 'Compose Your Message', shows a draft message for the 'Senator Elizabeth Dole 21st Century Veterans' legislation. The message body is pre-filled with text about the American Legion's support for the legislation. To the right of the message is a 'Review Your Profile' section with fields for 'Your Information' (Name, Email, Phone) and 'American Legion Relationship' (Auxiliary, Home Information).

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Report Meeting American Legion Auxiliary Members



The screenshot shows a web browser window with the URL votervoice.net/AmericanLegion/Surveys/7747/Respond. The page is titled "GRASSROOTS ACTION CENTER" and features a navigation bar with buttons: "Report Meeting", "Sign Up for Alerts", "Find Officials", and "Find Legislation". Below the navigation bar is a large image of a congressional dome with the text "Congressional Contact Report Form" overlaid. The text below the image states: "The Congressional Contact Report Form is used for Legionnaires to share with National Headquarters their engagement with members of Congress, or their staff, when advocating on behalf of The American Legion." Below this text is a section titled "Congressional Contact Report Form" with two numbered sections: "1. Organization(s) represented" and "2. Meeting Information". Under section 1, there are three radio button options: "The American Legion", "Sons of the American Legion", and "Auxiliary". A red arrow points from the "Report Meeting" button in the navigation bar to the "Congressional Contact Report Form" title, and another red arrow points from the "Auxiliary" radio button to the "Report Meeting" button.

GRASSROOTS ACTION CENTER

Report Meeting **Sign Up for Alerts** **Find Officials** **Find Legislation**

Congressional Contact Report Form

The Congressional Contact Report Form is used for Legionnaires to share with National Headquarters their engagement with members of Congress, or their staff, when advocating on behalf of The American Legion.

Congressional Contact Report Form

* 1. Organization(s) represented

- ☐ The American Legion
- ☐ Sons of the American Legion
- ☐ Auxiliary

* 2. Meeting Information

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Sign Up for Alerts

- Complete all sections
- Check all the following to receive all alert information: under “Other Information”
- ✓ Subscribe me to Weekly Updates
- ✓ Keep me subscribed to email updates and action alerts from American Legion
- ✓ Remember me

GRASSROOTS ACTION CENTER

[Report Meeting](#) [Sign Up for Alerts](#) [Find Officials](#) [Find Legislation](#)

Review Your Profile [Not Micheline?](#)

Your Information

☒ Yes, sign me up to receive text alerts

By providing your mobile number, you agree to receive periodic call to action text messages from American Legion. Message and data rates may apply. Reply HELP for help. Reply STOP to unsubscribe. Message frequency varies. [Privacy Policy](#).

American Legion Relationship *

☒ Auxiliary

Home Information 📍

Other Information

☒ Subscribe me to Weekly Updates

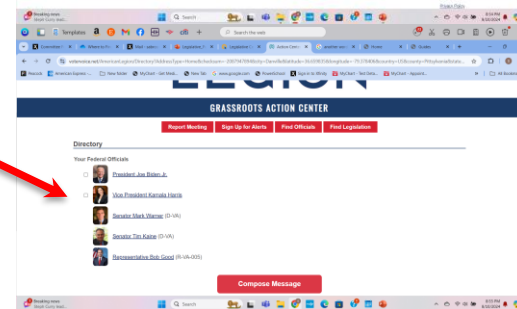
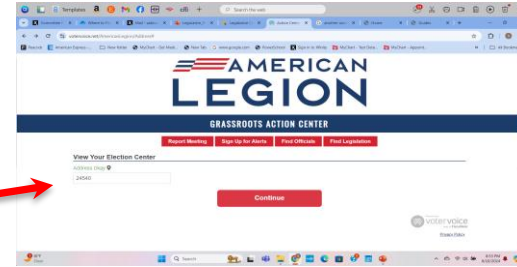
☒ Keep me subscribed to email updates and action alerts from American Legion

☒ Remember me

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Find Officials

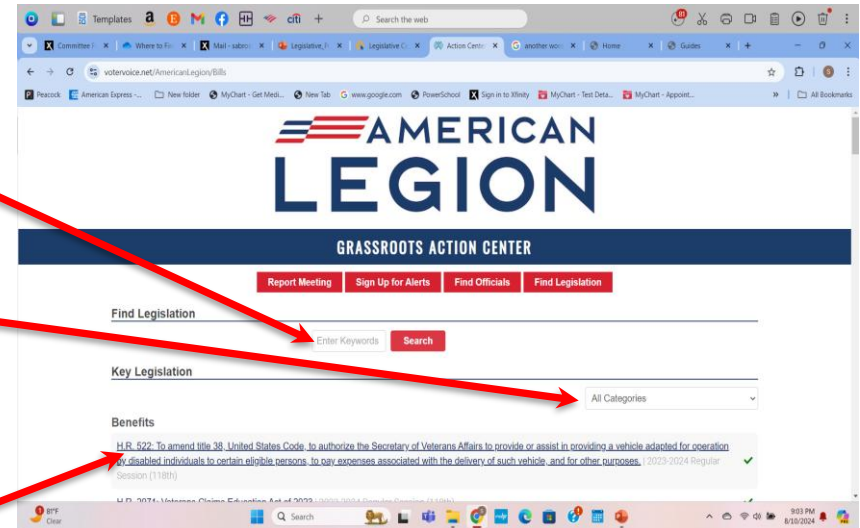
- Enter zip code & click continue
- Enter Street Address & click continue
- Select officials to contact, click Compose Message, write message, & click send message.



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Find Legislation

- Search for legislation by keyword
- Search for legislation by category
- Scroll through the Legion supported legislation. Click on the legislation to review.



Methods to Contact Your Assigned Representative

➤ **Schedule a meeting**

Congress is now open to visitors, meaning legislators and their staff may now physically meet with people. A 15- to 30-minute meeting with your legislator's office will give you an opportunity to delve into a deeper conversation about [the Legion's Legislative Agenda](#).

➤ **Call your legislator**

You may also call your representative's office and ask to speak with the staffer who handles the veteran and/or military portfolio. You can also ask for an email address if a phone number is not provided.

➤ **Send an email**

Congressional staff are closely monitoring office emails and will note the issues most prevalent in their district.

What You Should Speak About

Review The American Legion's legislative priorities using the Legislative Agenda and the point papers. This will give you a clear understanding of the issues and The American Legion's recommended solutions to the problem.

After the Meeting

Please be sure to fill out a congressional contact report form after you contact your congressional office. This will allow the national Legislative staff to know that the meeting took place and make staff members aware of any follow-up actions to take with the representative or their staff.

How to Host a Meet the Candidates Night



Contact Information for Questions: legislative@ALAforVeterans.org

**Encourage and empower members to be more knowledgeable to act on
The American Legion's legislative priorities.**

Step-by-Step Instructions: A “meet the candidate” night is a question-and-answer session where all candidates for a specific election are invited to answer questions. It is not intended to be a debate.

Suggested Date of Event: 2-3 weeks before elections

<https://member.legion-aux.org/Member/Committees/Legislative/How-to-Host-a-Meet-the-Candidate-Night>



3 Months Prior to the Event

To make this a Legion Family event, work with your Legion post, SAL squadron and Riders chapter (if applicable) to form a planning committee. If this isn't a Legion Family event, the unit Legislative chairman and unit president should appoint a planning committee. Identify a place, date and time for the event. Map out a plan to get the word out to the general community. Think about if you'll serve refreshments; will they be donated, or do you need to buy them? Set guidelines for candidates before the event about literature, political signs and handouts.

- If the place is the post home, ensure you have approval for the space and it's on the calendar. Determine if your post allows political material (like signs) to be displayed on post property
1. After the candidate filling deadline has passed, pull a list of candidates from your state's election board or Supervisor of Elections' website. Prepare a spreadsheet of all ballot-ready candidates (local, state and/or federal) who will be invited. List their name, address, phone, email, party and office. Allow ample time to contact them and receive their response.
 2. Mail and email invitation letters with Legion Family Point of Contact name and the deadline date to reply. Remember: The Legion Family is nonpartisan, so you need to invite **ALL** candidates. Follow up periodically with candidates who have not replied. Suggest to the candidate they send another representative if there is a conflict in their scheduling.



2 Months Prior

1. The planning committee arranges for volunteers for the following roles:

1. Moderator (1) – Someone impartial and ideally not a part of the Legion Family, such as local news reporter or radio host or someone known and respected by the community. Using someone on TV or radio also ensures that it will be announced on TV/radio.
2. Timekeeper (1) – To keep everyone on track. Each candidate should get an equal amount of time each round.
3. Legion Family Ambassadors (Several) – To man a table on programs and services your Legion Family offers. They should also have membership applications on hand.
4. Servers (Several) – Have a small team of volunteers serve refreshments.
5. Crowd Control (Several) – Volunteers to ensure that no attendee gets out of control. (Legion Family Sergeants at Arms might be great for this role).
6. Screeners (Several) - Volunteers to collect and review questions from attendees. Selected questions will be given to the moderator for a Q&A period. *Note: Candidates can stay after to talk with people and address their issues.
7. Public Relations Coordinator (1) – Someone who will ensure that event is advertised in local newspapers, social media, websites and any other media outlet. They might invite a radio station or local TV station to stream the event live. (They might form a team to help promote the event on social media, create a hashtag, etc.).



2 Months Prior to the Event (continued)

2. The planning committee sets an agenda and how the event will proceed. Depending on the number of candidates in attendance, allow time for opening and closing speeches for each (this could be 2 to 3 minutes). After opening speeches and introductions, the moderator will ask for questions (that have been screened).

- If question is to a particular candidate, allow 1-2 minutes for the answer and allow opposing candidate the same amount of time. There should be no rebuttals!
- If it is a general question, the moderator can ask any candidate to address it, but again only 1-2 minutes per candidate.



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Day of Event

- ✓ Ensure there is no Legion Family signage and no branded apparel on members in the meeting room as the Legion Family is non-partisan.
- ✓ Set up the room with the candidates in front of the audience.
- ✓ Prepare tent cards for all candidates with their name, party and the office they're seeking. You may wish to seat candidates alphabetically to not show favoritism.
- Set up a table to talk about the programs and services your Legion Family offers. They should also have membership applications on hand and other Legion Family branded information.
- ✓ Setup a table for voter registration¹. Members of your Americanism committee might be good to man this table, or you can invite an outside organization, like the League of Women Voters to help with the voter registration.

After the Event

- ✓ Follow up with thank you notes to all the candidates who participated.
- ✓ If media did not attend, work with your Public Relations chairman to send pictures to be published and posted on social media.

Legislative Key Resource QR Codes

- [ALA Legislative Advocacy Guide](#)



<https://member.legion-aux.org/member/committees/legislative>



- [The American Legion Legislative website](#)



- [The American Legion *Dispatch*](#)



Legislation Annual Reporting Guidelines

Department chairs' annual reports reflect the cumulative summary of units' mission service in the department. Each department Legislative Committee chair is required to submit via email a narrative report to the division Legislative Committee chair, plus copy the national Legislative Committee chair by May 15.

The annual report is separate from the submission for national award consideration and impact number reporting. However, department reports may be taken into consideration for national awards.

Photos (in a high-resolution format) that show unit mission Legislative Committee activities accompany these reports.

April 15, 2026: Unit submit their written narrative report (answer as many questions as possible) and attach pictures. Preferably by email to micheline.nelson@live.com

Or mail to Micheline Nelson, 19650 Mossing Lane, Spearfish – SD 57783

Legislative Annual Reporting Guidelines

Department Chairs' Annual Reporting Guidelines:

Department chairs' reports share the positive impact of our mission! They help us tell the world who we are, what we do, and why we matter. Just three simple steps are needed to add your part to our national success story:

- Department reports are limited to 1,000 words.
- Provide details/examples about the activity. Be sure to include specific information such as unit name and number.
- Submit your department chair report to your division and national chair with photos by email by May 15. [Find contact information here.](#)
- Photos should be in a high-resolution format (at least 300 DPI) or sent using the high-resolution option on your smartphone. When emailing the photo, select “actual size” for attaching to the email.
 - When possible, include photos of actual events
 - The request for photos is important for our national chairs to highlight members serving our mission.



Legislative Annual Reporting Guidelines

As part of your narrative report, please include answers to the following questions:

- How did units and the department promote the legislative agenda of The American Legion? What training did units and the department use to inform members of legislative priorities and the Grassroots Action Center on The American Legion's legislative website?
- What course of action did members, units, and the department use to advocate for The American Legion's legislative agenda?
- What legislative activities (town hall meetings, legislative receptions) did members attend and host in their communities, units, and the department? What suggestions did members have to improve those activities?
- What avenues did members use to develop relationships with elected officials? Did members serve on the Legislative Council?
- Please describe how members connected with their local, state, and national officials and their successes. How many members received a response from their officials and in what format?
- These should be tied directly to the Program Engagement Plan (where applicable) or the Key Program Statements.



Legislative Program Awards

2025-2026 Legislative Program Awards Deadlines and Submission Requirements

All award submissions must include a narrative (either a PDF or Microsoft Word document) explaining why the department or unit you're nominating should receive the award. The narrative can also be the department chair's report.

You may also upload other supporting documentation that will give the committee a full picture of the important mission work your department, or unit has accomplished this year. These files can be photos (JPG, JPEG or TIFs -- no larger than 14MB) or PDF documents. If you have more than three supporting files, please email the committee email address listed in the form.

National Awards Form Link: <https://www.legion-aux.org/National-Awards-Form>



Legislative Program Awards

Unit Award: Most Outstanding Unit Legislative Program (per division)

- ❖ Presented: One unit in each division
- ❖ Materials and guidelines:
 - ✓ The narrative should not exceed 1,000 words and should include specific examples of how the unit delivered mission service. The narrative can also include portions from the department chair's report.
 - ✓ It should include action (high-resolution) photos, scans/links to news articles, etc.
 - ✓ All unit entries must be submitted via electronic form by 5 p.m. EST on June 1.

Note: You will receive a confirmation when your award is submitted.

National Awards Form Link: <https://www.legion-aux.org/National-Awards-Form>



Legislative Program Awards

Department Award: Best Department Legislative Program (per division)

- ❖ Presented to: One department in each division.
- ❖ Materials and guidelines:
 - ✓ The narrative should not exceed 1,000 words and should include program-related mission service; it may consist of the department chair's report.
 - ✓ Should include action (high-resolution) photos, scans/links to news articles, etc.
 - ✓ All department entries must be submitted via [electronic form](#) by 5 p.m. EST on June 1.

Note: You will receive a confirmation when your award is submitted.

National Awards Form Link: <https://www.legion-aux.org/National-Awards-Form>



Legislative Program Awards

Photographs with youth (age below 18) have signed permission from parent(s) for publication.

Award submissions become property of the American Legion Auxiliary National Headquarters. Through submission of reports and award entries, the submitter grants nonexclusive reproduction and publication rights to the materials submitted and agrees to have their names and submission published for ALA use or commercial use without additional compensation or permission.

Please fill out the information as completely and accurately as possible. Award certificates will be completed using the information given on this sheet, so please be sure to complete the [electronic form](#) in its entirety.

Please refer to the webpage for the specific criteria such as photographs, narrative length, submission deadline, and point of contact. All awards will be mailed to the department office after ALA National Convention. Department presidents may wish to recognize award recipients by presenting them with the award at a department function.

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“The American Legion Auxiliary is that group of citizens whose involvement in the Legislative program which provides information and assistance to American Legion Auxiliary members to advocate for the Legion's legislative agenda. Awareness of The American Legion's priorities and call-to-action alerts prepares the Auxiliary to communicate with representatives on impending legislature. Using knowledge to persuade elected officials to achieve The American Legion's priorities is often the process of changing or reforming attitudes toward the needed legislature.”

Sallie Rossman, 2024-2025 National Legislative Chair

**“We do not have
government by the
majority. We have
government by the
majority who
participate.”**

-THOMAS JEFFERSON

SAVE THE DATE

105th Annual Convention of The American Legion Auxiliary

Department of South Dakota

2026 Department Convention

June 19 - 21, 2026

Best Western Ramkota Hotel

and

Aberdeen Convention Center

Address:

1400 8th Ave NW

Aberdeen, SD 57401

Phone: 605-229-4040

When making reservations, please mention that you are with the American Legion Auxiliary. There is a block of hotel rooms reserved for our Convention that does not show on online reservation websites.



Conference Expense Form

Date: _____

Expense Reports must be filed **within 90 days** of the Convention/Conference/Meeting to the Department Secretary

Event: Mid-Winter Conference Location: Oacoma, SD

Name _____

Address _____

City, State Zip _____

The following positions receive \$175.00 (Indicate your position)

☐ District President # _____

☐ Parliamentarian

☐ Sergeant-At-Arms

☐ Asst. Sergeant-At-Arms

☐ Participating Dept Chairperson Program: _____

Amount \$ _____

☐ Member at Large (Finance Committee) \$50.00 \$ _____

Officers (Indicate your position)

☐ National Executive Committee person

☐ Department Secretary

☐ Department President

☐ Department Treasurer

☐ First Vice President

☐ Historian

☐ Second Vice President

☐ Chaplain

Transportation

of miles (round trip) _____ X \$0.30 per mile = \$ _____

I did **NOT** drive ☐ I was a passenger of _____

Room Allowance

☐ NEC/President (100% of Room Allowance)

☐ Secretary/Treasurer (100% of Room Allowance)

☐ 1st/2nd Vice/Historian/Chaplain (50% of Room Allowance) \$ _____

☐ I shared a room with _____

Total \$ _____

Signature _____

Warrant # _____