



THE AMERICAN LEGION DEPARTMENT OF MONTANA

DEPARTMENT CONVENTION REPORTS

2017

DEPARTMENT OFFICERS

&

COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN

Preamble to the Constitution

**FOR GOD AND COUNTRY WE ASSOCIATE OURSELVES TOGETHER
FOR THE FOLLOWING PURPOSES:**

To uphold and defend the Constitution of the United States of America;

To maintain law and order;

To foster and perpetuate a one hundred percent Americanism;

To preserve the memories and incidents of our associations in the Great Wars;

To inculcate a sense of individual obligation to the community, state and nation;

To combat the autocracy of both the classes and the masses;

To make right the master of might;

To promote peace and goodwill on earth;

To safeguard and transmit to Posterity the principles of justice, freedom and democracy;

To consecrate and sanctify our comradeship by our devotion to mutual helpfulness.



DEPARTMENT EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

DEPARTMENT COMMANDER

Hal Rice

First and foremost, I humbly want to thank all of Montana Legionnaires for "Finding their Montana Pride". You have made Montana proud. I give all of you a resounding "Hell Yeah".

I have had a very busy year, starting with the membership workshop in Indianapolis. On my schedule next was getting to attend the Naval Reserve change of command at Fort Harrison on August 13th, then departing for National Convention August 22. 4 of us drove there and arrived back on Sept. 2nd, a great experience! On October 2nd I was asked to attend the renaming ceremony for Army Guard and Reserve Center in Great Falls. Fall Conference was at Fort Harrison. On Veterans Day I was the guest speaker at Great Falls Veteran's Memorial service.

Next were the Spring District Meetings, Dist. 5 in Missoula, Dist. 4 in Polson, Dist. 10 in Colstrip, Dist. 11 in Park City, Dist. 8 & 3 in Great Falls, Dist. 9 in Lewistown, and Dist. 1 Scobey & Dist. 2 in Havre. I missed Dist. 7 in White Sulphur Springs. I attended 2 funerals for past Commanders in my year; Bob Williams/Hobson & Don Buffington/ Ledger.

National Commander Charles Schmidt's visit started on May 1st with dinner at Borries in Great Falls. May 2nd we drove to the US Canadian border where we toured the border patrol station and the Port of Entry and shared lunch with Post 73 members in Sunburst. The tour then took us to Lewistown where we toured a veteran's park that they were doing a lot of improvements and then were served dinner at Post 16. The next day we drove to Winifred for a visit with Post 120. We had coffee with Post members and toured their outstanding museum.

The next leg of the journey was to motor to Big Sandy on gravel/dirt roads. 2 Bighorn Sheep were observed on this trip beside the road. Made Loma for lunch

and showed the Commander Decision Point. (You know where Lewis & Clark had to make their decision). We had a self-guided tour of the Veterans Park and Levee in Fort Benton. Changed at the Grand Union, headed to my home Post 102 where they were eagerly awaiting our arrival.

At Geraldine Commander Kuhn and Commander Schmidt emplaced one of the fatality markers. Commander Schmidt was escorted into town with the Posts Mounted Color Guard. Upon arrival at Post 102 the Commander was greeted with a serenade of patriotic songs by grade school children & junior Auxiliary members. We had a wonderful meal of Prime Rib with fresh ground horseradish! The Commander had to leave early because he had an early flight.

On the 15th of June I am scheduled to speak at the Red Lion Hotel in Billings for VFW State Convention, then the American Legion Convention in Billings where I would like to see a large turnout so I can personally thank all of you for the opportunity of serving as your Commander for a year.

Thanks and "Hell yeah"

DEPARTMENT VICE-COMMANDER

Larry Dobb

The past eight months have been very busy. Between 4-6 November, I participated in Revitalization in District 8. Members of Posts 3 and 341 as well as some Auxiliary and SAL members participated. I teamed up with Department Commander Hal Rice to do some door knocking from lists provided by National. Overall, around 25 members were signed up including some new members. On November 10-12, I accompanied the Department Adjutant Gary White, Legislative Liaison Chairman Roger Hagan, and Past Commander of Post 2 Ray Stolp to Alberta, Canada to participate in Remembrance Day Ceremonies. I was one of the primary speakers at the community of Crowsnest Pass and participated in wreath laying ceremonies at three Royal Canadian Legion Branches (Posts) in Coleman, Blairmore #7 and Bellevue # 19. I was also able to visit a RCAL Branch in Pincher Creek #43. The hospitality at all these events was outstanding and participation of the communities impressive. In January, I attended the funeral of long time Lewistown Post 16 Adjutant Tom Killham. Again the turnout was wonderful with law enforcement officers from all over Montana, as Tom was the retired Fergus County Sheriff and had also retired from the Lewistown Police Department. On 25 February I attended the Four Chaplains service in Great Falls hosted by Malmstrom Post 341. On March 11, I attended the Department Oratory Competition in Helena where five Districts had contestants. An excellent competition, won by the contestant from District 5. The District 9 contestant (Harlowton Post 15) came in 2nd. That evening, I attended an American Legion Birthday dinner at Post 2 in Helena which packed the Post.

Between 12 March and 29 April, I attended ten of the eleven Spring District Meetings. I only missed District 4 in Polson, as I had the birth of a grandchild due on that date. Attendance by Posts varied widely from excellent

to poor. District 1 did not have a quorum, so were unable to conduct any formal business or expend funds. Many Posts that had assured the District Commander that they would be there were not. Other Districts had as many as eleven of thirteen Posts represented. The largest attendances were in District 6 & 7, both in numbers of Posts and numbers of Legionnaires. Overall, I believe the District Commanders did a better job running the meetings than during the Fall Meetings. Areas of concern however, are that there are Posts whose officers are not paid up members of the American Legion and some Districts have Posts who have not paid their per capita to the District in some cases for three years. Even if they showed up at their District Meeting, which they usually don't, they could not vote. This was my third cycle through the District Meetings and I have noticed patterns that repeat themselves in terms of attendance, activity and adherence to formal meetings procedure.

I was involved with National Commander Charles Schmidt's visit to Montana on May 1-4. May 1st was to be a rest day as the Commander and his aide had just got in from Alaska late the night before. Alternate National Executive Committeeman David Driver and me picked them up at mid-day for lunch and gave them a quick tour of Great Falls, including the Veterans Memorial on River Road and then visited Malmstrom AFB and toured their museum and watched an excellent film on the Minuteman Missile including footage of an actual launch taken in California. The next two days we covered a lot of country in Central Montana, as Commander Schmidt, his Aide Dirk Levy, ANEC David Driver, Department Commander Hal Rice, Adjutant Gary White and me toured the new Border Patrol facility in Sunburst and the US Customs operation at Sweetgrass, attended a gathering at the Sweetgrass American Legion Post 73 of District 3 Posts where we had lunch then went to Lewistown, where Post Commander Bost gave us a tour of various memorials in Lewistown that Post 16 has refurbished. There followed an excellent meeting and meal at the Post. The next morning we were off early to Post 120 in Winifred where we meet with Legionnaires and toured the local museum which had some nice military displays. From Winifred we drove to Geraldine, where the National Commander participated in placing a Highway Fatality Marker with press present. He was then led into town to the Post 102 Legion Hall by a mounted color guard, wearing American Legion chaps. A very well attended formal dinner meeting was then held and the Commander spoke as he had at the previous three meetings. He then returned to Great Falls to depart early the next day.

As of this date (15 May), the Department of Montana has not made the target of 100% by May 10th, however, the May 12 Membership Report shows us at 96.85%. Three Districts have surpassed 100%. District 9, 3 & 11 in that order reached goal, three others are over 95% and very close with only one District below 90%, but by just a few hundredths of a per cent. The Department was in 3rd place among the 55 Departments as of May 10th, but has since dropped a couple places. Yes, we are still about 346 members short of our goal of 11,000, but we still have a few weeks to go. National Commander Schmidt was very happy with our standing nationally during his visit.

I have spent a lot of time sending letters and making phone calls attempting to line up individuals who will serve in appointed officer positions and as committee chairman and members, if I am elected as Department Commander at the Department Convention in June. There are some 75 positions that need to be filled. I want to thank all the individuals who have stepped forward to say they are willing to accept these jobs. In many cases individuals have taken on more than one. The organization could not continue without such people.

ZONE COMMANDER – SOUTH CENTRAL

Len Albright

As Zone Commander I attended the Department Convention in June of 2016 in Bozeman. I drove the Post 14 1933 Chevy Hack to the airport to pick up Denise Rohan and her group and drove them to the meeting. The next day David Driver, Lori Perkio and I took them on a tour of Bozeman, The Gallatin Canyon and Yellowstone Park. I attended LEAD training at the Convention and found that very worthwhile and informative; I highly recommend all to attend. I give a special thank you to the Convention Committee for a job well done.

Bozeman Chief of Police, Steve Crawford, and myself were guest speakers at Post 14's annual 9/11 remembrance ceremonies. The event was attended by all law enforcement agencies, fire Departments, medical groups and security services throughout the Gallatin Valley.

Districts 7, 9, and 11 held their Fall meetings in Harlowton on the same day and it was well attended. As Zone Commander I was impressed on the organization and hospitality of Harlowton Post 15. The meetings were all executed in a professional manner and much was accomplished. District 11 held their Spring meeting in Park City this March and Post 100 organized a marvelous meeting. Richard Klose ran a good meeting and nominated Joyce Babcock for Zone Commander to replace me at the end of my term. District 9 had their meeting in Lewistown Post 16 with District Commander Demorise Allen in charge. It was very entertaining and a lot was accomplished. Post 16's hospitality was exceptional! The Spring meeting for District 7 was conducted in White Sulphur Springs at Post 25. District Commander Randy Kemp presided and Post Commander Bill Cummins and Adjutant Marvin Kostelecky, and other Post members hosted a well organized event. The lunch was the best I had of all of the meetings I have attended. A Fabulous Spring meeting! I spent many hours in early April emailing our Posts and other veteran organizations to contact legislators to support passage of HB224 and defeat HB655; I also did my part in calling and emailing.

I supported, congratulated and sent Thanks to my 4 District Commanders on a job well done on a regular basis; Duane Carlton (RIP), Randy Kemp, Demorise Allen, and Richard Klose were a delight to work with and I couldn't thank them enough. I was blessed with the best and I enjoyed every minute that I got to work with them. I coined them all.

As my last month's wind down I want to thank all of our Department Officers

and assistants, all Post Commanders and officers, all District Commanders for making my job easy. I enjoyed my relationships with all and it was a fun job thanks to all of you. This is an awesome Zone! I am carrying the legacy forward--my Dad was a Post Commander after WWII and Korea, myself as Post Commander and more, I know my son (RIP) Desert Storm Marine, would have committed and my Marine Grandson is already involved. We will be in the Memorial Day Parade. See you all somewhere down the road. God Bless America, our troops, and the American Legion.

ZONE COMMANDER – WESTERN

Larry Stroklund

Immediately following the Department Convention for 2016, I attended the Post Executive Committee meeting. We were all welcomed by the new Department Commander Hal Rice.

I was only able to attend two of my three Fall District meetings, District 4 in Columbia Falls and District 5 in Missoula. Paradise Post 129 from District 4 continues to be a problem with the reconstruction of its replacement Post home, after an arson fire in August of 2015. Post 101 in Missoula, District 5, added additional problems when both the Commander and Adjutant/Finance Officer passed away in December 2016. Hopefully these two Posts will recover and become operational by the end of 2017.

In October I attended the Fall Conference in Helena.

I attended the Department Oratorical contest in Helena on Saturday, March 11, 2017 and the District 6 Spring meeting in Butte the next day. All seems to be okay in this District.

I attended my last two Spring District meetings the following weekend on March 18 and 19. The District 5 meeting was held in Missoula and District 4 was in Polson.

My two year term as the Western Zone Commander ends with the conclusion of our Department Convention in Billings. I will be replaced by a Legionnaire from District 5. I look forward to seeing you all there; it has been a pleasure to serve with you.

ZONE COMMANDER – NORTH CENTRAL

Michael Mehegan

A joint District meeting of District #3 & #8 was hosted by Loy J. Molumby Post #3 Great Falls in the Baptist/United Methodist church on April 1st. District #3 Commander Charlie Coutts and District #8 Commander Kim Kay Mc Carty-Martin both did an excellent job of running a well organized meeting that was well attended. Post #3 American Legion, Auxiliary and Sons of the American Legion provided us with a great facility and an excellent catered meal.

District #2 had a very successful revitalization held March 22-25 in Havre. Twenty eight people were renewed, transferred or added as a new member. Great job District Commander Lowell Long for getting this organized and all the people needed to make this a tremendous success.

District #2 meeting was held April 23rd by Post #11 Havre at the Elks Club. District #2 Commander Lowell Long did an outstanding job of organizing the meeting and gave out very informative information.

The meeting was well attended and the Elks Club put out a very tasty meal.

All the District Commanders have done a good job with membership. District #3 Commander Charlie Coutts has reached goal and District #2 Commander Lowell Long and District #8 Commander Kim Kay McCarty-Martin with a little extra effort and help from their Posts can also reach goal.

ZONE COMMANDER – EASTERN

Michelle Harada

November 2016

4 - Worked Revitalization with Department Parliamentarian George Blackard, Post Member Jim Lish, and Department Adjutant Gary White at the Billings Vets Center. I participated in a Vietnam Veterans Commemoration also held at the Billings Vet Center. Vietnam Veterans who were present received pins & certificates and were welcomed home.

10 - Stopped in Terry to visit with Prairie Post #32 Commander Tim Rittal to discuss its membership. Recruited and signed up an Army Veteran.

11 - Attended the Veterans Day Celebration in Lame Deer on the Northern Cheyenne Reservation and presented Vietnam Veterans with 50th Anniversary Commemoration Certificates & Pins. Also welcomed them home! Enjoyed a free meal at the Texas Roadhouse. Many veterans were there enjoying the food and camaraderie. Signed up a Woman Marine and transferred her husband from Wyoming. Both are now members of Post #77 in Lame Deer.

December 2016

31 - Organized the Honor Guard for the Grand Entry at the New Year's Eve Powwow in Wolf Point. It was an honor to work with young veterans (ages 18-24).

January 2017

10 - Met with a recently discharged, young veteran and discussed the benefits of The American Legion and the possibility of joining.

February 2017

15 - Stopped in Miles City to have lunch with District 10 Commander Clancee Collins and discussed a plan of attack on membership during the NVC's visit. The American Legion National Vice Commander Paul Espinoza (NM) arrived in Billings, MT. Department Parliamentarian George Blackard, Post #117 Member Jim Lish, and I welcomed him to Montana. KULR 8 TV News conducted an interview. NVC Espinoza was taken to visit the Yellowstone National Cemetery in Laurel. Post #117 Commander Mitch Howe joined us for dinner at the Montana Club to discuss revitalization & membership.

16 - NVC Espinoza and I made a quick visit at the Battle of Little Bighorn Battlefield. I was able to share my ancestors' history in the battle. During the drive to Lame Deer, I talked about my hope of revitalizing Post #77. Due to high school basketball tournaments, the meeting scheduled at the Tribal Chambers was cancelled. However, NVC Espinoza met individually with 3 prospective new members: Ray, Sunshine, & Josh. He also welcomed Charlotte (who I signed up at the Texas Roadhouse on Veterans' Day) to The American Legion and presented her with an autographed license plate from his Post. We met with Colstrip Legion Post #44 Commander Robin Sterret & Auxiliary Unit #44 President Robin Walter. NVC Espinoza congratulated Post #44 for surpassing 100% goal. He listened to the Post Members concerns and presented Post Commander Sterret with an autographed license plate. We attended a small get-together at Forsyth Post #39. NVC Espinoza congratulated Post #39 for reaching the 90% target. He encouraged the Post to keep up the good work. He listened to several concerns about the Post's continued membership and growth. NVC Espinoza strongly advised the Post to follow its constitution & bylaws. He was delighted to present an autographed license plate to the Forsyth American Legion Family. Present were: Post #39 Commander George Robertson, Legionnaires Jerry Bowen & Larry Kautzman, Legion Rider Steve Boyer, and American Legion Auxiliary Member Linda Wolff Bowen. We traveled to Miles City where we were scheduled to meet District 10 Commander Clancee Collins for dinner. However, she was suffering from a few broken ribs and was unable to join us.

17 - NVC Espinoza and I met District 10 Commander Clancee Collins & Post #5 Commander Mark Ahner for breakfast to discuss revitalization. We took him to the Miles City VA CBOC/Nursing Home. He met MVAD Service Officer Keith Olson who led a tour of the facility. NVC Espinoza discussed how the CBOC could benefit from Operation Comfort Warriors (OCW) with Mary Haydal, VA Recreational Specialist. He met with VA Physical Therapist Eric Dufner and had a personalized visit with a VA social worker & a local veteran. We spent most of the day taking NVC Espinoza "door knocking." He was honored to meet 16-year Legionnaire James Minette who had not renewed. He discussed the importance of continuing his membership and thanked Minette for renewing his dues. NVC Espinoza and I visited Fallon Post #35, in Baker. He met with Post Adjutant Richard Stark. They discussed ideas on recruiting Legion members after the Post's drastic loss in membership to the Post Everlasting. He presented Post Adjutant Stark with an autographed license plate. Next, I took NVC Espinoza to visit the Fallon County Veterans Memorial. We made a stop at Dawson Post #28, in Glendive. Post officers were unable to meet us. In order to exchange Post license plates with Manager Linda DeSonia, NVC Espinoza had to take down the last Post #28 license plate that was hanging over the canteen! We stopped in Sidney, at the South 40, for dinner. There was an old wood stove in the entry way that reminded him of his grandmother. While we dined, we reviewed our accomplishments in District 10. I jokingly told NVC Espinoza after 2 days of windshield time, we were STILL in District 10! He was amazed! We attended a Coffee Social Hour at Thomas Mann Post #81, in Culbertson. NVC Espinoza took part in the local coffee culture. It was explained that many problems amongst the locals were solved over coffee,

usually early in the morning! District One Commander Joe Yeoman was pleased to have NVC Espinoza visit NE Montana. Post Commander David Dean & Post member Mark Ellerkamp discussed the Post's history with NVC Espinoza (who is a history buff). NVC Espinoza discussed membership & local Legion Youth Programs. He presented Post Commander Dean with an autographed license plate. He also presented Post Member Ellerkamp with a Vietnam War Commemoration Certificate & pin. NVC Espinoza & District One Commander Yeoman welcomed him home. We drove to Plentywood. Before calling it a night, NVC Espinoza, District One Commander Yeoman, and I visited the Vets Club (owned by The American Legion Post #58 and VFW Post #173).

18 - NVC Espinoza, District One Commander Yeoman, and I met for breakfast before attending an Open House sponsored by Plentywood Post #58. It was held at Angel Light Catering. NVC Espinoza discussed what The American Legion was all about. He encouraged Legionnaires to be there for ALL Veterans, regardless if they were members or not. He encouraged Posts to get involved with their communities as a way to recruit new members. He listened to the area veterans' concerns about the Choice Program & transportation for veterans to VA medical facilities. He answered several questions. He expressed his gratitude for the Posts hard work. He presented Plentywood Post #58 Commander Carey Borah & Scobey Post #56 Commander Ed Hammerly with autographed license plates. NVC Espinoza & District One Commander Yeoman presented Vietnam Veterans with Commemoration Certificates & Pins. These vets were finally welcomed home! I took NVC Espinoza to visit Bruegger Centennial Park, in Culbertson. We stopped by Thomas Holt Wynia Post #55, in Poplar, where I competed in the High School Oratorical Contest. I took NVC Espinoza on a quick tour of Wolf Point and introduced him to some of the local business owners. We visited the Wagon Wheel, in Nashua. He met the owners Ron & Traci Ost. Ron is an SAL member. Traci is a new Auxiliary member. Their sons Shayne Boushey & Christopher Ost are serving our country and are Legionnaires! Also present was Ron's brother, Rick Ost, a new SAL member. Traci presented an autographed copy of her book "Who Shall Protect the Child" to NVC Espinoza. All proceeds from her book sales go toward making and sending care packages to our soldiers overseas. NVC Espinoza presented Ron and Traci with an autographed license plate. We visited the NE Montana Veterans Memorial, in Fort Peck. NVC Espinoza was so impressed; he stated "this is the best veterans' memorial I've seen in the West!" We attended the Open House sponsored by The American Legion Glasgow Post #41 and Auxiliary Unit #41. It was held at VFW Post #3107. NVC Espinoza thanked District One's American Legion Family for inviting him to Montana. NVC Espinoza shared information about The American Legion's programs and what can be done for all veterans. NVC Espinoza discussed membership, especially recruitment and retention. He answered questions about eligibility requirements for The American Legion. He discussed the history of the G.I. bill and how it has evolved. Glasgow Post #41 Commander Rodney Ost took advantage of NVC Espinoza's expertise. He asked several questions about The American Legion and Sons of The American Legion. NVC Espinoza welcomed Glasgow's new SAL Squadron #41 to The American Legion Family. NVC Espinoza, District One Commander Yeoman, & I presented Vietnam Veterans with Commemoration

Certificates & Pins and welcomed them home. NVC Espinoza presented autographed license plates to Glasgow Post #41 Commander Ost & Hinsdale Post #45 Commander Bill Thayer. NVC Espinoza received literature on the NE Montana Veterans Memorial from Art Widhalm, VFW Past Department Commander, and Don Gudgell, VFW Member. NVC Espinoza had the honor of meeting "the infamous" Adeline Mitchell. She is a long time member of The American Legion Auxiliary. He thanked ALA Unit #41 for providing the awesome refreshments.

We stopped by Willie L. Nelson Post #45 (my Post) and the Veterans Memorial, in Hinsdale. While making a pit stop in Grass Range, we met Ron & Gayle Teddick, Ron is a member of Lewistown Post #16. Gayle is a member of Auxiliary Unit #16. Shortly after our arrival in Billings, we joined Department Parliamentarian George Blackard & Post #117 Member Jim Lish to discuss their recruitment efforts.

19 - Before taking NVC Espinoza to the airport, we joined Department Parliamentarian Blackard for breakfast.

March 2017

25 - Attended the District 10 Spring Meeting, in Colstrip. Addressed the delegation & presented Certificates of Appreciation signed by me and NVC Espinoza. District 10 did a Great Job working membership! NEC Merv Gunderson was in attendance. It was great to see my old mentor again!

26 - Attended the District 11 Spring Meeting, in Park City. Presented Certificates of Appreciation, signed by me & NVC Espinoza, to Department Parliamentarian George Blackard & Post 117 Member Jim Lish. Both were recognized for their dedicated service to The American Legion and their contribution of working toward the Department's 2017 membership goal during the Eastern Zone Revitalization.

April 2017

1 - Attended Andrew Pearson Post #117's Fourth Annual Benefit Banquet, held at the Red Lion Hotel, in Billings. The theme was "Honoring Women in the Military." There was an awesome display courtesy of the High Plains Women's Museum. Several Legionnaires and local veterans & businesses were recognized & presented awards. SAL Detachment Commander Lowell Long presented new SAL Squadron #117 with their charter. Charter Members who were present signed it. I had the honor of presenting SAL Squadron #117's very first Commander Tim Carson, Andrew Pearson's father Ron, & Andrew Pearson's son Kris with SAL National Commander Jeff Frain's pin. Several items were auctioned off to raise funds to benefit veterans. Legion Post #117 did an awesome job!

6 - Attended the dedication ceremony for the Yellowstone County Women Veterans of World War I, held on the courthouse lawn, in Billings. It was donated with honor by the Disabled American Veterans, Billings Chapter 10.

22 - Attended the District 1 Spring Meeting, in Scobey. Department Commander Rice presented me with a Certificate of Recognition for my participation in the 11th District Revitalization Program. I addressed both the Legion and Auxiliary on duties of the Zone Commander, the Eastern Zone Revitalization, membership (i.e. target dates & 2018 goals), Post constitutions & bylaws, Post incorporation, tax filing, recruiting delegates for ALBS, reports & award due dates, and district per capita.

May 2017

3 - Department Commander Hal Rice invited me to a no host repast at Geraldine Post #102, held in the Vet's Memorial Hall, in Geraldine. The American Legion National Commander Charles Schmidt was on an official visit to Montana. He was the guest speaker & was pleased to meet the Geraldine American Legion Family. ALA Unit #102 prepared an awesome meal.

9-13 - My uncle Byron passed away. He served 5 years in the U.S. Army as a Combat Engineer. It was his wish to have full military honors at his funeral. From the day he died up to the day of his funeral, I tried like h*** to get a detail together. Of all the Posts I made contact with, I was given nothing but a hard time and heard nothing but excuses. Besides experiencing my own grief and feeling sad for my mom & her siblings, I was frustrated and majorly disappointed. I could not believe how I and my family were treated. I felt shame for some Legionnaires and their attitudes. Every veteran who is entitled to military honors deserves to have veterans perform this right. I don't know the two who came from the National Guard to do the flag folding, but I did appreciate them showing up and presenting my uncle's flag to my aunt Cindy. It is with great sadness that the reality is that some just don't understand what it means to be a **true Legionnaire** and be there for a veteran's family when they really need support. (Report condensed, for full report go to mtlegion.org)

NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEEMAN (N.E.C.)

Merv Gunderson

My second term as NEC has been very busy. There have been many challenges with several successes. The national organization has been very busy with legislative and VA issues. During my term I have been privileged to be involved with many of those issues. At the national level I am an appointee to Commander Schmidt's publications Sub Committee.

I had a very challenging time following my motorcycle accident. During the Spring meetings I made an effort to thank all the Legion family for the numerous prayers, cards and letters. They made a miracle happen. I was able to return to Montana from Seattle. This was a very trying year regarding membership. I helped where I could. But, making phone calls is not my cup of tea. This is the first time in many years I will not be a gold brigade member.

I tried to make the Spring Meetings. However, I had a couple setbacks and returned to the hospital for treatment.

March 11, 2017 I went to Helena for the Department High School Oratorical contest. Corvallis had the winner this year.

The following Spring meetings were attended by me:

District 5 in Missoula on March 17, 2017

District 4 in Polson on March 18, 2017

District 8/3 in Great Falls on April 1, 2017

District 9 in Lewistown on Apr 2, 2017

District 7 in White Sulphur Springs April 29, 2017

All District meeting were well run and had good attendance throughout the state. Membership remains a big issue with the Districts.

Todd Dunlap traveled to the District meetings to help veterans navigate the CHOICE program. Bill White traveled too and briefed on the Veterans Transportation Services. My thanks go out to both of them for helping veterans.

I am looking forward to the National Convention in Reno, NV. I hope to see many Montanans there.

ALTERNATE NATIONAL COMMITTEEMAN (N.E.C.)

David Driver

After the Department Fall Conference I participated in lunch activities at Post 363, Rockport, Texas each Wednesday from December to March. I attended District 3/8 meeting in Great Falls and on April 2nd, Districts 9 in Lewistown. I attended District 1 and District 10 spring meetings in Scobey and Havre, April 22 and 23. On April 29th I attended the District 7 Spring Meeting in the position of Alternate NEC as the NEC, Merv Gunderson was present. I had the honor of escorting the National Commander of The American Legion, Charles Schmidt, on a tour of the Sweet Grass Broader Patrol Center and the Port of Entry. We had a great lunch with The American Legion Family of Post 73, Sweet Grass. Then it was down to Post 16, Lewistown, where the National Commander was shown the beautiful Veterans Memorial and the military honors park consisting of a USAF minuteman I missile refurbished by Post 16. After a great dinner at the Post, we headed for Post 120, Winifred. This was my first visit to the town where the highway ends. Commander Schmidt was very impressed with the membership of Post 120 and their commitment to The American Legion. I, personally, would like to return to Winifred to spend more time with Post 120 and more time at Winifred's museum. Next we headed North and took the National Commander via dirt and sometimes muddy road through the Missouri Breaks to Big Sandy, then down to Fort Benton. We toured the veteran's park and walked along the Missouri River front reading all and signs giving the history of Fort Benton. After changing clothes in the Grand Hotel, we headed for Post 102, Geraldine. Commander Schmidt helped place a highway fatality marker just off the highway at Geraldine (see KRTV.com, videos, marker placed in Geraldine 40 years after fatal crash). Our vehicle was escorted to Post 102 by a mounted honor guard comprised of riders from the Sons of The American Legion and a member of The American Legion Auxiliary Juniors. After a great meal and gifts for the Commander we headed back to Great Falls where the Commander departed early the next morning. Due to the fact that the NEC had some medical complications that

came up and could not fly, I attended the Spring N.E.C. meeting at National Headquarters from May 9 to the 12th. The N.E.C. Meeting was held on Wednesday the 10th and finished the morning of the 11th. Twenty-nine resolutions were passed. Just to highlight a few: Resolution 1 makes contact information for newly acquired DMS members available immediately to the Departments. Resolution 20 supports amendments to U.S.C. Titles 5, 10, 37 and 38 in order to provide Post 9/11 GI Bill benefits for these combat wounded National Guard and Reservists. Resolution 21 supports state and national funding for troops to teachers program. Resolution 26 urges the United States Congress to take immediate action to force the Department of Veterans Affairs to immediately comply with PL 114-31, Veterans Identification Card Act of 2015, which requires an appropriate and specific identification card be issued to any veteran that request it. You can see all the resolutions by going to Legion.org. Here are the results of what we "the Montana Legion Family" contributed to: The Operation Comfort Warriors program awarded 32 grants in 2016 impacting more than 7,500 individuals. During 2016 the Temporary Financial Assistance (TFA) assisted 1,396 children of 600 veterans throughout the United States maintain shelter, utilities, food and clothing with over \$830,000 in cash grants. The Sons of The American Legion presented the Board of Directors of The American Legion Child Welfare Foundation (CWF) a check for \$100,600 during their meeting on May 7th. This amount brings their total donations to the CWF to over \$564,566 for the current donation year, June 1, 2016 to May 31, 2017. The Newly Enhanced American Legion Legacy Scholarship program disbursement of \$671,890.80 to 55 eligible children of disabled veterans having a verifiable gap need. A more in-Department committee reports and resolutions can be found at Legion.org.

PAST DEPARTMENT COMMANDER

Jim Grosset

I have enjoyed my retirement from the position of Commander and at the same time miss it. I enjoyed meeting so many and seeing all those towns in Montana, but do not miss the long miles around the State. I have nothing else to report.

HISTORIAN

Ray Read

As the Department Historian, I have had the privilege and opportunity to travel to most of the 2016 Fall and 2017 Spring District meetings as well as attending the 2016 Fall Conference and special events such as the 2017 Montana Department National Oratorical Contest.

I find throughout Montana that the American Legion is doing what they have done best for 98+ years. They are supporting the veterans and their families as best they can, utilizing the Four Pillars of the American Legion's National Program: That is Supporting the many facets of Veterans Affairs; Supporting a Strong National Defense; Supporting viable Americanism

programs; and Supporting our Nation's most precious resource our Children and Youth.

I was able to travel the State, meeting with many seasoned, as well as newer, younger veterans who populate the 128 American Legion Posts, mostly in rural environments, with all the challenges that manifest themselves in the Frontier State of Montana. I thank all who made my visits so memorable. I want to thank all those helped me with Operation Ruptured Duck program. This program is still active and I am in the process of filling request by various Posts.

As an American Legionnaire and an American Legion family member, I am tasked to provide the following guidance as a continuing commitment to the duties and responsibilities of the elected position of Department Historian, especially in the further development of the American Legion Centennial 1919-2019. So this is a repeat worth repeating.

SUBJECT: The Montana Department, the American Legion, Centennial Celebration 1919-2019; the Department 100th Anniversary Committee; and Post One Year narrative and Post One Year yearbook (pictorial) history Program.

Reference is made to:

1. Letter, dated July 31, 2015, from the American Legion 100th Anniversary Observance Committee announcing the updated 5 year plan for the American Legion Centennial 1919-2019.
2. The American Legion's Centennial Celebration Workbook;
3. The American Legion's Legacy Vision brochure;
4. The American Legion's Post 9/11Veterans Booklet
5. Resolution No. 31, Spring 2011, National Executive Committee
6. The American Legion 2015 Officer's guide and Manual of Ceremonies
7. The World war One Centennial 100 Cities/100 Memorials Grant program
8. NEC Resolution No. 10 The American Legion Memorial Project

The Department of Montana, the American Legion, Executive Committee, has established a Department Centennial Committee in accordance with the request of the 100th Anniversary Observance Committee

And the Department Historian has been designated the Department Centennial Chairman. In addition the Department authorized a three person 100th Centennial Committee. The Committee's task is engaging the Montana American Legion Posts in meaningful participation concerning the American Legion Centennial.

I encourage all American Legion Posts to implement The American Legion's Legacy Vision for the American Legion Centennial 1919-2019. Resolution No. 31, states,

Some initial ideas for this very important program for Montana Legionnaires to review and implement.

1. All documents referenced above are available on the National American Legion website. Go to www.Legion.org/centennial and follow the prompts. If your Post/Auxiliary/Sons of the American Legion have access to the internet you can accomplish the American Legion

Centennial Challenge. Remember look to your strengths and leverage them. Also look to your local community for ideas and support.

2. I am asking all Montana Department American Posts to establish their Local Legacy-Your Post's History. National Headquarters has developed a webpage that will allow each participating Post its own place online where photos, text and videos can be Posted and shared. So whether your Post was established in 1919 to just few years ago you have the opportunity to tell your story in your community and throughout the American Legion.

I emphasize again that the all aspects of The American Legion Centennial Program are available on the National website www.Legion.org/centennial.

In less than 700 days the American Legion will celebrate its 100th National Convention in Minneapolis, Minnesota, and in little more than 800 days the American Legion 100th Birthday will happen, March 15-17, 2019, and then American Legion Centennial will culminate its year the 101th Convention in Indianapolis, Indiana August 2019. Montana's contributions to the American Legion Legacy deserves to place on the record.

It is a goal of the Montana Department to update its historical record by incorporating the current written record of the past 98 years in creating a Centennial History. With your cooperation and participation that can happen.

Annual One Year Narrative and one year yearbook (pictorial) history Contests

By utilizing the National Program of Post one-year Narrative and Yearbooks (Pictorial) history the efforts to produce the Post Web based Legacy History will support the collection of Post history and the Centennial program. For your information, there are four (4) annual contests conducted on the National level. The contests involve the Post "First Place" winners in the Montana Department for a one-year narrative and yearbook contests; as well as entries for a one-year Department Narrative and Yearbook. I will forward a first place winner in each Post category to the National Historian by September 15, 2016. The Judging will be accomplished in October 2016. Post entries are due at the Montana Department Convention, Bozeman, Montana at the end of June 2017.

The American Legion Officer's guide and Manual of Ceremonies contain much information about the history contest. Also in that section of the Guide are "Capsule History of the American Legion" and "Helpful Hints for District/County Historians." Please notify your Posts in your District of this readily available material. This information will also be sent out through electronic means via the Montana American Legion website www.mtLegion.org or by mail as necessary. All entries will be judged and the first place winners in either category (narrative or yearbook) will be certified and I will forward them to National Historian for entry in the announced contest for that category. Keep in mind the requirements that have to be met for the National Contest. And I refer you to the most current edition of the Officers Guide (March 2016) as the official rules of the 2016-2017 Legion year, or at the Legion website www.Legion.org. Report condensed, for full report go to mtlegion.org)

DEPARTMENT ADJUTANT

Gary White

The year started with my attendance at all the Class AA Baseball Tournament games in Missoula and Class A Tournament games in Great Falls, followed by the Northwest Regional Tournament in Laurel. I attended the National Convention in Cincinnati, OH where I performed the duties of delegation secretary and coordinated with all Montana delegates to ensure their stay was hassle free. I attended the Finance Committee meetings. Upon return from National Convention I attended all Fall District meetings.

In October I attended the Commander and Adjutants Conference at national Headquarters with the Department Commander and the Alt NEC. I also organized and executed the Department Fall Conference.

In November I attended Remembrance Day ceremonies with the Royal Canadian Legion in Bellevue, Blairmore and Coleman, Alberta with the Department Vice Commander Larry Dobb, Post 2 Past Commander Ray Stolp and the Department Legislative Chairman Roger Hagan.

In December I attended the welcoming reception for the new VA Montana Director.

In January I went to Reno, NV for a National Convention site visit and to finalize coordination at our hotel. I also attend Lewistown Post #16 Adjutant Tom Killham's funeral. Additionally in January the Montana Legislature convened and I started attending hearings pertinent to the American Legion mission as required.

In February I helped with the Boulder Post #46 Post Oratory contest and attended the Helena Post #2 contests. I missed the District 6 contest due to hospitalization.

During March I attended the Oratory finals in Helena and the Vietnam Veterans welcome home ceremony at the Capitol. Additionally I worked with Roger Hagan in the Legislature to gain support for various pieces of legislation, with various degree of success, however we were successful on HB 224 the property tax exemption.

In April I attend the WWI Nurses Memorial dedication in Billings and participated in a membership conference call with the National Commander and National Vice Commander. I also attended the Post 4 meeting in Billings.

During May the Department Commander, Department Vice Commander, Alternate NEC and I escorted the National Commander and his aide on his tour of Montana. We visited the Sweet Grass Border Patrol Station and the Port of Entry, Sweet Grass Post #73, Lewistown Post #16, and Geraldine Post #102. I would like to thank all the Posts involved in hosting the National Commander, they did an outstanding job. I also attended the VA Volunteer Service (VAVS) volunteer awards banquet.

All Spring District Meetings with the exception of Districts 1 & 2 were attended.

Other day to day accomplishments included assisting the Publications Chairman in publishing six issues of the Montana Legionnaire, attending Montana Veterans Affairs Division meetings, maintaining contact with the Montana National Guard Funeral Honors Program and the Yellow Ribbon Program; I attended 10 VSO VA Directors meetings and 3 VAVS meetings at Fort Harrison VA.

I managed the budget and finances of the Department, the Sons of the American Legion Detachment, American Legion Baseball, American Legion Boys State, Coordinated Children & Youth, HQ Post #105, Department's National Convention Fund and new this year the Team Montana Fund which was established as a National Commander Candidate fund. I would like to thank the Department Finance Officer Eddy White and the Finance Chairman Jeff Nelson for their assistance with our finances.

I coordinated and administered the Department 4 x 4 raffle and the Cash Calendar with the Ways & Means Chairman Bill Applegate. Once again I administrated the Big K programs

With the assistance of the Department Commander and Alternate NEC I coordinated and prepared National Commander Charlie Schmidt's visit to Montana. Again, I wish to express my thanks to the Posts and Districts that participated in these visits and went out of their way to show the National Commander their generous hospitality.

To the Zone and District Commanders and to the Post Adjutants that work so hard I thank you for your dedication and cooperation; I hope we can continue to work together for the good of the American Legion. I would especially like to thank Erin Carpenter for the excellent work she has done as the Department Adjutant's Assistant. I would find it hard to believe if anyone could find fault with the work she does.

CHAPLAIN

Sam Birky

It has been an honor to serve the past two years as Department Chaplain. I want to express appreciation for all Legionnaires who serve as chaplains for their respective Auxiliaries, Posts, Districts and Squadrons. Each chaplain is an inspiration to fellow service members, an example to their communities and a tribute to their nation.

My service as District #4 chaplain gave me the opportunity to attend the fall conference in Columbia Falls and the spring meeting in Polson. During those meetings, prayers were offered and Auxiliary chaplains visited. The chaplain mantle has been passed to new chaplains who will continue the mission of honoring God and Country.

To a large group of Americans who gathered to honor the fallen of Benghazi, Lybia on September 11th 2016, it was inspirational to watch a mounted color guard present the colors at Flathead Lake Lodge in Bigfork. Because it was Sunday, I was requested to be one of the three speakers remembering the four Americans who lost their lives on the tragic day, Ambassador Chris Stevens, Diplomat Sean Smith and retired US Navy SEALs Glen Doherty and Tyrone Woods.

The chaplain coverage at the MT Veterans Home in Columbia Falls continues. A team of volunteers that includes Legionnaire Ron Peebles and myself, Mike LaVigne and Dana Scranton, continue to make weekly visits among the residents and staff. The last Wednesday of the month a memorial service is conducted honoring and remembering the comrades in arms who have reported to their last duty assignment; the Post Everlasting.

The team also participates in the placing of small flags on each of the grave markers in the cemetery adjoining the Veterans Home. Many volunteers gathered to place the flags commemorating Memorial Day, Independence Day and Veterans Day. We also participated in the Wreaths Across America on the 16th of December. Major General Quinn, Adjutant General of Montana National Guard was the keynote speaker. On behalf of the American Legion, I was the chaplain.

This year began with sharing information and promoting Four Chaplains Sunday. "To The American Legion Family, Feb. 3, 2017, marks the 74th anniversary of the sinking of the USAT Dorchester and a very special display of bravery. On that day in 1943, a torpedo struck the ship reducing its time afloat on the surface of the Atlantic to only an additional 20 minutes. What happened during those few minutes is the reason we remember this day and the acts of courage and sacrifice that took place on her deck every year since." Taken from www.Legion.org

Beginning the month of May, our nation's leadership has set aside 4 May 2017 as a National Day of Prayer. I gathered with many likeminded citizens in Volunteer Park in Lakeside to pray for our nation, its citizens, leaders, service members and families. May ends with the longtime tradition of honoring our fallen. Memorial day is a time to recognize the 1.1 million Americans who have lost their lives fighting our nation's battles.

SERVICE OFFICER

Kelly Ackerman

As the AL DSO, I attended the following events:

Fall Conference in Helena, MT October 28-30, 2016.

I attended the Spring District 6 meeting in Butte.

Spring District meetings were attended by MVAD/AL VSO's according to area of jurisdiction for Districts 1, 2, 4, 5, 8/3, 9, 10, & 11.

During the Spring District meetings, they discussed all VA benefits including VA Healthcare, Disability Compensation, and Pension. There was an emphasis placed on the Choice Act, and the problems related to the criteria as well as recent changes.

Todd Dunlap, a VHA employee attended several of the District meetings to supplement the discussion regarding the Choice Act. He also assisted several Legion members with individual VHA issues.

I attended the Washington Conference February 26- 1 March, 2017.

I participated in a Regional Office Action Review (ROAR) site visit April 12-14, 2017. Zachary Hearn, AL Deputy Director of VA&R and Mike Spinekia, NVLSP Attorney visited Ft. Harrison for this ROAR site visit. They reviewed 25 case files and brought pertinent issues forward to the VA Area Director and Service Center Manager.

PARLIAMENTARIAN

George Blackard

Parliamentary procedure is a great thing and when followed and applied correctly it works wonders to shorten our meetings. Anyone who wants to participate in, or even attend, our Post and Department meetings should have a basic understanding of parliamentary procedure and Robert's Rules of Order. If everyone knew at least the basics, all of our meetings would move faster. Having said that, the worst thing you can do is to not participate. You are an important part of our organization and we want you to be an active participant at meetings. Don't be afraid to participate because you are afraid to do something wrong. If you do something wrong someone may and should explain proper procedure to you and they should be understanding and helpful. If they are anything less than helpful, you may be hanging out with the wrong crowd.

If you want to participate in a meeting there are a few things that may help you. If you are afraid to speak in front of a group, you are not alone. One statistic from the Journal of Social Psychiatry and Psychiatric Epidemiology states that 7.9% of Americans fear speaking in public. That may not seem like a lot but that equates to about twenty-seven million people. Our Legion meetings are relatively small and should feel like a family gathering so you can do this! I recommend starting with something easy; try starting with offering something during the For the Good of The Legion part of the meeting. It will give you an opportunity to practice standing, saluting the colors, properly introducing yourself, and delivering your information. Its short and sweet and a first step.

After you gain some confidence, move on to participating in discussion on motions. Then move up to making a motion and before you know it you will be presenting resolutions. The main thing to remember is this. Have something relevant to say, know what and how you are going to say it, say it with confidence, be succinct (brief and clear). Just remember that at one time, everyone in the meeting was standing in your shoes.

I appreciate the opportunity to serve as your Department Parliamentarian and appreciate your patience with me when I make mistakes. I know I have made a few the last couple of years but it is my desire to always recognize those, correct them, and learn from them. If everyone took a little time to learn proper procedure we wouldn't even need a Parliamentarian and that would be my wish for everyone. It's an honor to serve with you all in our Montana Legion Family!

FINANCE OFFICER

Eddy White

Each month, our various accounts that support our Department and programs go through reconciliation. The Department Adjutant and I confirm and ensure all balances and outstanding liabilities are reviewed and verified. Other activities include signing of checks for various activities such as drawing for cash calendars and day to day operations.

The reports before you are as of May 9th. The two new categories added last year, Big Sky Gas and Non Member Fundraising, exceeded the amount anticipated for 2017. Also, a pleasant surprise was our Interest and Dividend income was an increase of over 40%. Although these were very positive, we still encountered some budgeted items that fell short, in particular, the largest one, Membership Dues of over \$77,000.00.

There are several key items not balanced out until after the end of June 2017, the end of our fiscal year. However, I will say that our financial health is respectable. For income, we have collected 82% of budgeted and expensed only 69%. Not a bad margin, however, we have been over budget for expenses by over \$75,000 and our total income was well over \$158,000 of our planned budget.

In comparison to this time last year, our fundraising is down by over \$18,000.00. This reflects a significant decrease. I recommend that fundraising efforts need be looked at closer to set the goals set forth the next fiscal year. In short, we have made \$2000 less at this time than last year.

Over the last 3 years, I have noted that we still have checks outstanding that are well over 9 months old. This continues to be a liability to the Department. I am asking those Post Commanders, Adjutants and other Post Officers communicate with our membership to ensure that these distributed checks are not outstanding longer than a month. Please promptly cash or deposit these checks. **ADDENDUM AVAILABLE ONLINE**

JUDGE ADVOCATE

Jim Shockley

I. Paradise Post 129's building burned down on 31 July 2013 and the Post asked the Department for assistance in June 2015. A Committee was appointed by the Department to assist the Post.

Thanks to the work of Hank Dozal of Ronan and an assist from Marilyn Bischof, the Post bookkeeper, the building is perhaps 70% finished. We are still working to get more money out of the insurance company; it sees things differently than we do.

II. The lawsuit wherein the Sons of the American Legion Squadron 27 was suing Post 27 for its share of 2014 Bingo proceeds was resolved last year on satisfactory terms after a trial; I represented the Post. However in the suit against the former officers who embezzled a few hundred dollars from Squadron 27, I represented the Squadron. That finally ended in January 2017. The Squadron got most of the money back, but not all of it.

III. We still have the issue of divesting ourselves of the land that formally belonged to a defunct Post 67 in Dodson. The County Attorney of Phillips County and I have been working on this problem, but very slowly. I have finally ascertained from the Department of Environmental Quality that there is no record of there being environmental contamination on the parcel the Department wishes to convey to Phillips County. The County Attorney is preparing the deed.

IV. Last year it was brought to the Department's attention that we had "inherited" some lots in Ismay. It is a situation like Dodson where the Post is long gone and we I should get them sold this year. The Adjutant may already have a buyer.

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS

John Kougioulis

Last year at fall convention, I fined several Legion members, for various infarctions. I hope that those who "donated" learned a lesson. I know I did, because I also "donated".

This year's convention in Billings will be longer, and the program could use more "donations." If anyone has any questions about what you may get "fined" for, please ask I will be happy to explain the rules for you.

I went to the Vietnam Walk in Helena in April, and as I was listening to the program, after the walk, I noticed the eagle on the American flag was facing backwards. It was bothering me so much, that during a break between speakers, I went and turned it to face forward, the proper way to display the American Flag. As I was going back to my seat, one of the military officers that was speaking, thanked me as he was about to do the same.

Let's have a great convention and try and think about following the meeting rules of the American Legion.

EDUCATION & TRAINING

Jeff Holmes

Congratulations to all of the following winners within their respective divisions. I would also like to thank all of the Posts for sponsoring these contests as part of their Post objectives. It is a great way to promote the constitution and government to our youth. They were all great entries and the evaluations and rankings were tough for the judges. My cap goes off to you for making the time to make the tough decisions. Thank You!

2017 Winners!

High School Essay – 6 submitted

1 st	Jade Zeiler @ Florence Carlton HS	Florence Post #134
2 nd	Mara Johnson @ Twin Bridges HS	Twin Bridges Post # 31
3 rd	Emilie Lenoir @ Capital HS	Helena Post #2

Junior High School Essay – 8 submitted

1 st	Kenidee Wolery @ North Star Jr Hi	Chester Post #88
2 nd	Tiani Ertel @ Lone Rock Middle School	Stevensville Post #94
3 rd	Elizabeth Hamilton @ Sheridan Jr Hi	Sheridan Post #89

Government Survey for Seniors – 8 submitted

1st	Madison Hill @ St. Regis HS	93%	St. Regis Post #13
2nd	Caleb Noble @ Capitol High School	93%	Helena Post #2
3rd	Curtis Schneider @ Huntley Project HS	70%	Custer Post #111

Government Survey for Junior High 7th Grade – 1 submitted

1st	Jordon Bender @ CJI Jr Hi	76%	Chester Post #88
2nd	None Submitted		
3rd	None Submitted		

Government Survey for Junior High 8th Grade – 4 submitted

1st	Hailey Carpenter @ East Valley Middle School	100%	Helena Post #2
2nd	Kenidee Wolery @ North Star Jr Hi	88%	Chester Post #88
3rd	Bailey Stockett @ Twin Bridges Jr Hi	82%	Twin Bridges Post # 31

Thanks again to all who helped make these results possible. Congrats to all the winners!

DISTRICT COMMANDERS

DISTRICT 1 - COMMANDER

Joe Yeoman

I met with most of the Posts or Post Commanders on inviting the National Vice Commander Paul Espinoza and covering the cost of his visit; most of the Posts

said to invite him and pay our cost. He spent 2 days in District 1, February 17-18, visiting Posts in Culbertson, Plentywood, and Glasgow. He was very impressed with the size of Montana and the dedication of families and communities to the schools. He also learned about some of Eastern Montana's unique hardships.

We had our Spring District Meeting April 22, 2017; unfortunately we did not have a quorum and were unable to act on any official business. As a group we discussed American Legion Boys State and what we could do to get kids signed up. We also discussed placing a bench at the Northeast Montana Veterans Memorial which will need to be addressed when we have a quorum at our next meeting. Finance Officer Chelly Harada also informed us that the District has lost its 501-C (19) status and that she will work to get it fixed.

DISTRICT 2 – COMMANDER Lowell Long

This has been a good year for District 2. We currently have five of our Posts at goal as of the April 26th membership report. I am working on the rest. The goal Posts are Saco, Post 79 at 160.00%; Malta, Post 57 at 105.56%; Chinook, Post 48 at 100.00%; Big Sandy, Post 50 at 100%, and Fort Belknap, Post 110 at 100%. Congratulations to these Posts for achieving their assigned goal. The remaining four Posts are almost there. As of this writing, District 2 is 36 members away from goal and the Post Commanders and Adjutants are working hard to get the final few members needed to allow us to reach our target.

I visited most of my Posts this year. It was great to be able to visit with the members of the Posts and share greetings from our Department Commander and share information with the Posts. I was encouraged by the quality of the meetings I attended. There are great things happening at the Post level in District 2. I will try to get to the other Post meetings prior to convention.

District 2 held two meetings this year. We met in the fall in Turner and the spring in Havre. These meetings were informative and a lot of information was given to the members of the District that attended. We had good representation at these meetings but not all Posts were represented. That will be one area I will work on for next year. I would like to thank each officer and chairman of the Department of Montana for the quality information that was put out. I find this info to be very helpful as we work to do our programs in District 2.

Our Posts have worked with many of our programs this year. Three Posts worked to get contestants for Oratory. One Post does shooting sports. Several Posts are working on sending boys to American Legion Boys State. Our Posts have spent time working on the Fatality Markers along the highways in our area. In addition to this, we participate in many activities within our communities to show we are here.

District 2 held a successful revitalization effort in March and was fortunate to have Michelle Steinmetz from the National Headquarters and the Department of Montana Membership Chairman, Elmer Palmer come to assist us in this. Our Zone Commander, Mike Mehegan also attended and helped for several days. We had several members of our District attend and help out. We covered the entire District and were able to transfer or recruit 19 members for our Posts. The following Posts benefitted from this drive, Post 11, Post 48, Post 57, and Post 110. We contacted as many DMS and Post 105 members as we could to get them to transfer as well as many members that had not renewed yet. I would like to thank the Veterans Service Office in Havre, Judy Loendorf and Steve Mulonet, for their assistance as they provided a representative each day to assist veterans in any way they needed. I also would like to thank Jed Damson, Ken Weiderrick, Tom LaFond, and Les Johnson for their assistance with knocking on doors.

Information was handed out concerning the Centennial of the American Legion and as a District; we will be working on many events to commemorate this event in our communities. We have many of our Posts in District 2 that will be celebrating 100 years in 2019 as well so we will be working on activities to share where we came from and the vision of where we need to go in the future.

It has been a pleasure to serve you as your District Commander this year. I am looking forward to continuing to work with and for you in the next year as we move on to bigger and better things for our District. Thank you to each member of our District and what you do to make the American Legion what it is in our communities. It is an honor to serve you in this role.

DISTRICT 3 - COMMANDER

Charlie Coutts

October

- Get room reservations for fall meeting in Helena
- Take papers from Department. HQ to Glacier County courthouse for the Browning Commander of Post 127.
- Put Ad in local news paper for "Free Veterans Dinner" on veterans day
- Get decorations for the free dinner.
- Call Department and invite Department to the vets dinner
- Call all Post Adjutants and invite their Posts to the free dinner
- Go to Helena for the Fall Department meeting. There for 3 days
- Mail meeting information to Posts.

November

- Legion Post meeting
- Ad to local paper for vets dinner
- Ad to KSEN radio station for vets dinner
- Pick up fliers for vets dinner
- Order sheet cakes for vets dinner
- Post Commander #40 and myself went around to businesses and put fliers in windows for the vets dinner
- Order the food for the vets dinner
- Call Post 40 Adjutant to get school kids to be servers at the vets dinner. (Close up Kids)
- Get microphone set up for the vets dinner
- Went to local high school for vets lunch program
- Decorate tables at the Moose Lodge for the vet's dinner (my wife chief decorator was in charge.
- Ready for vets dinner 11/11/2016 at 5pm
- Pick up cakes at 3pm
- Get flags
- After the dinner the next day was clean up day at the Moose Lodge
- 11/17/2016 Honor guard at Lloyd Hansen funeral
- 11/18/2016 Honor Guard at Swankie funeral
- Take paper from Department to Adj.
- Honor Guard to Shelby for funeral
- 11/25/2016 Honor Guard for Shook funeral

December

- Post #40 Legion monthly meeting
- Work on membership

- Post #127 needs 12 Post #43 needs 16 Call Adjutant Post 127 Call Adjutant Galata

January 2017

- Meet with Commander Post #40 about no response from Browning Post 127(Commander for Post 40 is also District 3 Vice Commander)
 - Mail Legion paperwork to Post Adjutants
 - Go to myLegion and print Post 40 membership for Post 40 Adjutant
 - Print out e-mails from Department and mail to Shelby Adjutant as he does not have an e-mail account
 - Call all Post Adjutants for membership
- February

- Work on membership
- Make agenda for Legion Post 40 monthly meeting
- Legion Post 40 meeting first Tuesday of every month at 6:30
- 85% membership cut off—Made 85.06%
- Meet with Travis about next month's membership
- Go to Great Falls for the 4 Chaplains Service
- Print membership for Post 127 Browning and give to Randy Flammond

March

- Meet with District Vice Commander about District membership
- Post #40 monthly meeting
- 90% membership We are at 87.95% for the District
- To Shelby to meet with Post #43 Adjutant—Discuss membership
- At Post 40 meeting it was approved to take a can of coffee to the local VA clinic once a month
- Take coffee to VA clinic
- Call Gary White about Shelby Post 43 membership

- Meet with Randy Flammond and Jerry Buckely about Browning problems. Received an e-mail from Department about a member of Browning Post sending a letter to the National Commander about his membership
- Call all Posts about membership
- Call from District 8 Commander—update on District meeting April 1st (dist 3 & 8 combined meeting)
- Call Posts that did not respond to my last membership call
- Call Randy Flammond about NO RESPONSE FROM BROWNING
- Get paperwork ready for District meeting in Great Falls 1st of April
- Call Conrad about membership
- Call Randy Flammond about Browning membership
- Go to Great Falls and help set up for District meeting
- Take flags to Great Falls for District meeting

April

- 4/1/2017 Combined District meeting in Great Falls Randy Flammond needs a ride—rode down with me
- Got an e-mail from Department wanting to know status of Browning
- Called Randy Flammond and Adjutant Travis and let them know about e-mail
- Legion Post 40 monthly meeting
- Call all Posts about getting their Post data reports turned in by April 15th
- Call Randy Flammond about time to go to the Glacier County court house to see Browning Adjutant Kittson. Can't get in to see him, stuck in meetings. Tired of waiting around so went to the sheriff office. Talked to sheriff and he went to see Adjutant Kittson. Sheriff comes back and said we could go see Adjutant Kittson now. Randy Flammond said we are here about Post 127 membership and to try to help you do this. Told Adjutant we were there in response to the e-mail we received from Department found out they had big bags of mail from we don't know how long and none of the mail had ever been opened. Adjutant Kittson said he would get it done by the upcoming weekend, but he and the Commander had been promising to do this for the last couple of months. Randy was insisting on getting this done as we had the Department wanting to know the status on Browning Adjutant Kittson called the Post Commander. He told the Commander he was going home early to get this done and when he had it done he was no longer the Post 127 Adjutant As we

followed Kittson out of his office he told Randy and myself "NEVER COME BACK TO THIS OFFICE EVER AGAIN" Called Gary White to let him know what took place. Kittson did the membership and it was turned into the Department and Browning came in at 106.67%. The District did not make the 95% at the cutoff date

- Meeting at the Moose Lodge with the Legion Post 40 and the Cut Bank Golf and Country Club about the American Legion Liquor License
- Calls to Randy and Travis
- Print out membership for Post 40 from myLegion
- Print out membership from myLegion for Shelby Post 43
- Call Patrick Becker about membership for Conrad
- Call Dustin Bailey in Sweetgrass about lunch with the National Commander
- Call Adjutant Richard in Shelby and plan to meet him about membership
- Go to Shelby
- Get coffee for the Cut Bank VA clinic
- Work with Post 40 Adjutant Travis on Membership
- Send out e-mail to all Post except Shelby
- Collect membership due from members and take them to Adjutant Travis
- Call on other past due members
- Take WOMEN VET LUNCHEON E-MAIL to known women vets in Cut Bank

May

- Call Adjutant Travis and collect membership dues
- Call Gary White with new membership numbers
- Call Randy Flammond to get and take flags to Sweetgrass for the lunch with the National Commander
- Go to Sweetgrass and have lunch with the National Commander
- Have Randy bring flags back to Cut Bank for our monthly meeting at 6:30pm
- Got E-mail this afternoon from Department stating that District #3 has made 100% membership

DISTRICT 4 - COMMANDER

Jack Fay

Several members have volunteered several hundred hours driving veterans and the elderly to doctor's appointments either as a driver for DAV vans or their personal vehicles. Richard Jessen a member of 14 years has put in over 1200 hours alone driving DAV vans. Jack Collins has put in over 800 hours driving the DAV van and Jerry Fisher has nearly 200 hours driving for the council on aging.

Post volunteers and church youth groups placed flags on graves of Veterans on Memorial Day.

Post members in conjunction with Montana Department of Transportation places and maintained the Highway Fatality Markers in our area. Post 138 has extended their area in order to help a neighboring Post that is short on manpower.

I would like to thank all that have helped out with the building and fundraising for Paradise Post 129 and especially Hank Dolezal for all of the extra work he has put in to help them get back on their feet.

DISTRICT 5 - COMMANDER

Bill Applegate

- 1) Assisted with the District 5 Revitalization in September - went out and talked to members about renewing.
- 2) Went to the American Legion Maverick Baseball playoff games held here in Missoula in August; I also attended in April & May 2017
- 3) Conducted the September 25th Fall District 5 meeting held at Ruby's in Missoula
- 4) Visited Post 13 St Regis & Post 63 Condon
- 5) Assisted Missoula Post 101's revitalization in October/November: due to Dan Gallagher & Dan Kreig's death; met them several times and discussed the things that they would have to do to change leadership positions so the Post could function again.
- 6) Went to Lolo on Veterans Day (11/11/16) for their Flag ceremony at the Community Center; had breakfast & dinner in Florence; also attended Corvallis' Veteran's Day parade

DISTRICT 6 - COMMANDER

Lori Perkio

As I write this we are conducting District 6 revitalization with Membership Chairmen Elmer Palmer. The last revitalization with Jim Fielder was very productive, focused in the Boulder Post 46 area. Keep your eyes and ears open for Post 46 as they are definitely back and going places! While we have

all been busy this year it seems we have not been busy enough with our membership. Our Posts rely heavily on volunteers who can get out there and knock on doors and those who can make phone calls not just once or twice a year but all year long. I want to thank Department Adjutant, Gary White and Adjutant Assistant Erin Carpenter for all of the training they have provided to Post Adjutants. This training has made a significant improvement in Post operations. Their time and effort has definitely paid off. I attended Post meetings within District 6 but due to bad weather I was not able to travel to several Posts. I attended a National Guard Yellow Ribbon event in Helena to provide deploying National Guard members and their families with information about the American Legion programs that may be helpful to the families left behind. One item of particular interest was The American Legion Family Support Network as it gave those deploying a sense of relief to know there was help for the families during deployment. Family Support Network pamphlets were also provided to the chain of command. The last two years have been a learning experience and I want to thank you all for helping me along this incredible journey as District 6 Commander.

DISTRICT 7 - COMMANDER

Randy Kemp

The year has been very busy for District 7 and I have not been successful getting membership where I wanted it to be. I started off the year at Post 25's meeting on September 13, 2016. It was very well attended and the meeting was conducted in a most professional manner.

I attended the District 7 meeting in Harlowton on October 9, 2016. This meeting was a very informative meeting and most attendees left the meeting better prepared to be "Legionnaires" making a difference in their respective communities.

I attended Fall Conference in Helena in October 2016 where I met with the other District Commanders as part of the Executive Committee to discuss and share ideas about the future of the American Legion in Montana.

I attended Post 23's meeting on January 10, 2017 and I was very happy with the conduct of the meeting. The Post conducted the meeting exactly how the American Legion prescribes meetings to be held. I spoke briefly with the attendees about how they appear to be doing and their steady progression to becoming an extremely valuable part of the community.

I attended the District 7 Oratory Contest and presented awards and checks to the winners. I want to recognize Post 99 and their members for a truly extraordinary event conducted in the Big Sky High School. The facility provided a great opportunity for the contestants and observers to participate in the event. I can't thank Post 99 enough for their excellent conduct of the event. I recommend that District 7 make our District Oratory Contest location at Post 99 and they have agreed to be the Post that will hold the event.

I attended Post 87's meeting on March 13, 2017 and I was impressed with their way of conducting their meeting. Post 87 had a large number of members attending the meeting, and it proceeded smoothly, with attention to details and quick accomplishment of mission and positive committee reports.

I completed my first year as Commander at Post 25 for the District 7 spring meeting on April 29, 2017. My hat comes off to Post 25 and Unit 25 for their over the top preparation and carry through of the meeting. They made the meeting run flawlessly and I heard nothing but positive comments about the entire day. This provided a great format to accomplish all required business and attendees truly enjoyed the day. The meal was excellent and I personally want to thank the First Responders of White Sulphur Springs for their outstanding support of The American Legion.

During the year I stayed in constant contact with the Posts via email with any information that may have been of benefit to them from any source I could find. All information given to me by Department was forwarded to each of them in a timely fashion so they could use the information to their advantage. I failed to visit all District 7 Posts for reasons beyond my control. I hope to change this in the upcoming year. My goal is to visit all the Posts and work hand in hand with them to see if we can increase our membership over the 2018 membership year.

DISTRICT 8 - COMMANDER

Kim Kay Carol McCarty Martin

On the 3rd through the 5th of November, 2016, our District conducted a District membership drive with Michelle from National. The Veterans Service Officers in Great Falls were able to help veterans with questions in regards to claims. One volunteer from Post 341 made phone calls asking the veteran if they wanted to transfer their membership from the electronic Post to a local Post. Three teams of two from Posts 130, 3, and 341 were able to get a few renewals and some interest within the District but in all it was disappointing. On the 10th of January, 2017, at the request of a former Post 341 member, I attended Vets Court in Great Falls. With help from Post 341, District 8 Chaplain and I held the Four Chaplains Memorial Services in Great Falls on the 19th of February. On the 8th of March I was invited to Post 26 monthly meeting where we talked about membership. We set up the 23rd of March to go door knocking for renewals in Fort Benton with Diane Jones. We had one renewal that night. On the 9th of March I visited 3 Posts in my District and called the other Commanders or the Adjutants about getting in their membership. Went to Post 130 on the 15th of March to attend their meeting and celebrate the American Legions Birthday. I called each Post to remind them about the upcoming District meeting in Great Falls on the 1st of April where it's highly recommended to have at least one person from their Post be present. On the 31st of March I met with Post 3 to help set up for our combined 3 and 8 District meeting on the 1st of Apr. On the 3rd of May, I

attended a Dinner For National Commander Schmidt at Geraldine's Post 102. We did not host the Oratory Contest for District 8 as there were not any students in our District participating.

DISTRICT 9 - COMMANDER

Demorise Allen

At the Spring Meeting of 2016, a replacement District Commander for Larry Dobb who had thrown his hat in for Department. Vice Commander was not found so I agreed to step back in. I was then elected and later installed at the Department, Convention June 26th.

Larry Dobb, Tom Killham and myself collected our Post packets, Lewistown delivered Roy's and I delivered the rest. All packets were out by July 9th.

I made phone contact with all of our Posts. We do only have 9 Posts left after losing Winnett and Lavina the last few years. I have made visitations to Lewistown and Judith Gap. I am going to Hobson Tuesday evening.

After we had finished from the ZONE MEETING at our Spring Meeting there was a problem for Districts 7 & 11 finding new dates, locations etc. There was a conflict at Big Timber on the 8th. I suggested they could come to Harlowton and join our District #9 Meeting. I had talked to Post 15 and they said they could handle it. Basically things turned back into a ZONE MEETING. I had been in touch with Zone Commander Len Albright. All was fine; I did request that the afternoon was to be District Meetings only! I think all District Commanders were satisfied with that. The whole event went very well. Harlowton had nice facilities, a nice meal and the Legion/VFW hall was great with all of the history displayed. Our guest Speaker at our banquet, Larry Dobb did a great job.

The morning session went very well. The Department. representatives did a great job, including Larry Dobb, Lowell Long, Bill White, Sue Foster, Ray Read, Kim Kay and Erin Carpenter. We also had a special visit from our Department ALA President Jean Bossen. Thanks Madam President!!

Fall Conference (Oct. 28,29and 30th) was quite well attended, enjoyable and good weather. After that time, most of my time was spent selling Cash Calendars and keeping in constant contact with Posts, pushing membership and visiting Posts. Fran and I attended District 11's Spring meeting March 26th at Park City. We cannot find anyone to step up to take on Zone Commander so I forwarded our turn at Zone Commander to District 11, feeling I would be continuing as District Commander. Joyce Babcock was then elected to represent District 11 as Zone Commander. Her name will be placed in nomination and elected at the Department Convention. This was very enjoyable to go to another District Meeting.

Our District Meeting then came up April 2nd in Lewistown and we had a good meeting. I was elected as District Commander last Spring so have another

year. I believe we will have a hopeful to step up then next spring. Most all of my spare time in April and May has been spent trying to get all Posts at 100%. We are not there yet, but close. Congratulations to all Posts, especially Adjutants for putting up with my prodding about membership. You have all done a great job, especially Lewistown.

National Commander, Charles Schmidt visited Lewistown on the 2nd but we could not make the dinner. The next morning they stopped at Winifred and traveled through Loma and on to Geraldine where we enjoyed a Super prime rib dinner with all the trimmings. Russell Country and eating under the shadow of Square Butte topped the meal off. Fran presented a Montana Silver Smith money clip to the National Commander on behalf of the Department Auxiliary and I presented a check for \$100, from District 9, to the Commander's favorite fund. I also presented a gift, on behalf of District 9, a boxed History book of Charles Russell Art. He also received a beautiful Montana Silver Smith Charles Russell belt buckle from Hal Rice and the Department of Montana. The Commander's speech was tremendous. It was so informative and so close to his heart. We had a very, Very enjoyable evening, THANK YOU TO HAL AND MONICA RICE and all of their support team. Geraldine's Post 102 did Montana proud. Their Auxiliary, Junior members, Legion and SAL members and a very capable Post Commander Casey Kuhn put on a very special event for our National Commander.

RACE-TO-THE-TOP Not long after we got home, I received a letter on behalf of the National Commander congratulating our District 9 for placing 3rd in the Nation in our category. We will get a ribbon for our District flag and each Post will receive a ribbon also. In addition our District is receiving a check for \$375. !!!!! SUPER JOB TO ALL!!!!!!

I visited Roy on May 9th. Great attendance! They hope to get their Club and Legion Home activated again. We are all still working. Thanks also to our Zone Commander, Len Albright for all of his efforts.

DISTRICT 10 - COMMANDER

Clancee Collins

I was the keynote speaker at the VA Hospital's Veteran's re-pinning ceremony on Veteran's Day. This was a pretty busy day for me because I helped Custer Post 5 with erecting their 34 large flags at the eastern Montana Veteran's Cemetery in the morning and spoke at the ceremony at 2 pm. We then took down the flags at the cemetery and folded them.

I attended the Fall District Meeting in Forsyth and was disappointed about the lack of participants from my District. Forsyth and Colstrip had a good showing but not so much of everyone else. This is after I had sent letters and called either an Adjutant or Commander of every Post in my District.

I did not have the opportunity to visit any of my Posts due to many different health problems that plagued me for most of the year. I did however call each Commander or Adjutant at least 4 times in reference to membership, Post data forms, and times and locations of District Meetings.

I participated in 18 Veteran memorial services and 2 color guard presentations as a member of the local VFW Honor Guard. I also participated in the Post 5 Revitalization in effort with Zone Commander Chelly Harada and National Vice Commander Paul Espinoza. I am very grateful for all the help they provided in revitalizing Posts in my District.

Finally, I attended the Spring District meeting in Colstrip and was reelected as District Commander. Once again, many of my Posts were not represented. I hope to develop a concentrated effort in getting more of my Post Officers to District Meetings.

DISTRICT 11 - COMMANDER

Richard Klose

As I put this report together, and sent in by the deadline, this District is still trying to find twenty (20) members renewed or new, so we can meet target for the year.

Some Posts showed improvements. A couple should have improved but didn't. Some of the smaller Posts need more realistic numbers to have a chance to make target.

As for activities that went on, there are many. First, I was the M C at the Veterans Day Ceremony in Billings. In December it started with the Laurel American Legion Post providing color guard for Laurels December Christmas to Remember. On the 7th wreath laying ceremonies took place at both the Yellowstone National Cemetery and the Laurel city cemetery in honor of Pearl Harbor day. On December 23rd we did Wreaths Across America at the Yellowstone National Cemetery. In February I was invited to Hysham for their meeting and dinner. On March 16 I attended Post 119's dinner and fundraiser.

On March 26th District 11 had its District meeting at Park City. Five (5) Posts were no shows; to me that is a reflection on Posts having trouble meeting membership targets. There is a lot to learn at the District and Department meeting to help with retaining good membership.

There are a lot of dedicated Legion members in this District, who worked hard this past year on membership. I thank all those members for their help and support. It's been an honor to serve District 11 as its District Commander these past two years, and I thank everyone for their support.

DEPARTMENT COMMITTEE CHAIRS

AMERICANISM

George Blackard

Sometimes you can combine your efforts with another organization to help promote your message. Such was the case in May when The Breakfast Exchange

Club in Billings invited Post 117 to present our nation's colors at a Freedom Shrine dedication at Broadwater Elementary School. I was honored to be on the color guard that day and present the colors while wearing my Legion uniform. While there I had the opportunity to meet the National President of the Exchange Club organization, the school District superintendent, the school principal, several local politicians, and several inquisitive students. Any day we can get in front of our school leadership and students is a good day in my book.

The Freedom Shrine is an impressive display of replicas of our country's most important documents that remind students of our past and gives them a glimpse of the things we as Americans should all hold sacred. The Freedom Shrine is something the Exchange Club organization does however there may be an opportunity for you as a Legionnaire to work with their organization in your community to accomplish the goal of promoting Americanism. You may have connections in your school that they do not have and you may be the contact they need to place a new Freedom Shrine. If you know someone in your local Exchange Club talk to them and maybe together you can help bring one of these impressive displays to your school.

As I write this another Memorial Day is approaching and with it come thoughts of just how few people seem to recognize the day for what it is. I encourage all of you to do everything in your power to drive attendance to Memorial Day observations around the state next year. Take some time and write a letter to the editor of your local paper encouraging people to attend a local commemoration. Ask to speak to your schools and other civic organizations and spread the word of the true meaning of the day; explain the difference between it and Veteran's Day. Can you imagine what it would be like if newspapers across Montana received eleven thousand letters to the editor leading up to Memorial Day? Our government created Memorial Day so that we could commemorate those who gave their lives in service to our country, not so we would have another day to sit on the river or lake eating hotdogs. This tradition is disappearing at an alarming rate and we need to get families with young children to attend Memorial Day events and create family traditions of doing so or soon there will be nobody left observing this import day. The same applies to Flag Day, Independence Day and Veteran's Day.

I want to thank and commend Hardin Post 8 for revitalizing their community's Memorial Day commemoration three years ago. I have spent the last three years attending their event and they have done a great job. Judging from the Consolidated Post Reports there are several Posts in our Department that had active and effective Americanism programs this last year and I commend all of you for your hard work and dedication.

Not sure what is covered under Americanism? I encourage you to visit the National website at www.Legion.org and search Americanism. You will have access to a description of Pillar 3, the Americanism Manual, and the

Americanism Commission and an opportunity to learn all about it. Here is an excerpt from the Americanism manual to get you thinking...

Americanism Defined - Americanism is love of America; loyalty to her institutions as the best yet devised by man to secure life, liberty, individual dignity, and happiness; and the willingness to defend our country and Flag against all enemies, foreign and domestic.

It is a vital, active, living force. Americanism means peace, strength, the will and the courage to live as free men in a free land. It means a friendly hand to people everywhere who respects our institutions and our thinking. It is not a word; it is a cause, a way of life - the best way of life ever known - a challenge and a hope in this world.

Americanism is an ideal of loyal patriotism, religious tolerance, righteous freedom, fearless courage, honest integrity, abiding faith in the commanding destiny of the United States, and a fathomless love for the principles that led our forefathers to found this country.

It is complete and unqualified loyalty to the ideals of government as set forth in the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution of the United States. It is respect for, and ready obedience to, duly constituted authority and the laws of the land. It is freedom without license, religion without bigotry, charity without bias, and a desire to secure the blessings of liberty for our nation and for our Posterity.

BASEBALL

Ron Edwards

As I write my first report as the new Chairman for Montana American Legion Baseball, I need to take this opportunity to thank George Haegle for all his years of service. George served as our AA Chairman for 10 years and then another 20 years as our baseball Department Chairman which ran very successfully under his leadership. George was very gracious with his time as he took me to Indianapolis last fall to the National baseball meeting and introduced me to many people in the baseball program. Thank you, George!

We have 64 teams playing Department of Montana American Legion baseball across Montana and Alberta this season broken down into the following classes:

2017 TEAMS

CLASS AA	10
CLASS A	32
CLASS B	22
TOTAL	64

This is the same number of teams that played in the 2016 season. Columbus has indicated that they are interested in forming a Legion baseball team for the 2018 season. Class B teams will not play a conference schedule or in a sanctioned post-season tournament in 2017.

A new state-wide website was rolled out for the season. The new website site is on the web at www.montanalegionbaseball.org. Class AA and A teams each have a team page where team schedules, pictures and rosters are posted. The National American Legion Baseball Committee partnered with Sports Engine to make this possible across the country. We are in the process of finding sponsors for the website to help underwrite our costs in hosting it. So far, Montana 811 locate service has agreed to be our first sponsor. Individual teams will have space on their team pages for sponsors so if there are Legion Posts interested in sponsoring their legion teams they can contact me.

The District, State, Regional and World Series tournament schedules for the 2017 season are as follows:

TOURNAMENT	HOST TEAM	CITY	DATES
NORTHERN DISTRICT	HAVRE NORTHSTARS	HAVRE	JUL 20 - 23
SOUTHERN DISTRICT	BUTTE MUCKERS	BUTTE	JUL 20 - 23
EASTERN DISTRICT	MILES CITY MAVERICKS	MILES CITY	JUL 20 - 23
WESTERN DISTRICT	GLACIER TWINS A	GLACIER	JUL 20 - 23
STATE A	GALLATIN VALLEY OUTLAWS	THREE FORKS	JUL 27 - 31
STATE AA	BOZEMAN BUCKS AA	BOZEMAN	JUL 26 - 30
REGIONAL AA	MISSOULA MAVERICKS	MISSOULA	AUG 02 - 06
REGIONAL A (NWCART)		EUGENE, OR	AUG 04 - 08
WORLD SERIES		SHELBY, NC	AUG 10 - 15

We also have a new AA Chairman that has agreed to take over for Duwayne Scott. Carl Hennell who lives in Kalispell has been involved with our American Legion baseball programs for many years, and he sits on the National Baseball Committee. He is a welcomed addition to our volunteer staff. We currently have openings for the Class A Chairman and my old position the South District Chairman positions. Ural Wayne Raymond, West District; Jim Monteith, North District; and Pete Moe, East District are back for the 2017 season. Thank you guys we could not do this without your help.

BOY SCOUTS

Dick Ellwein

I attended the Sons of The American Legion National Convention, then the American Legion National Convention. Both were held in Cincinnati, Ohio. I participated in the Department Scouting Chairman teleconference in October. There was one applicant for the Eagle Scout of the Year. The Department winner is Zachery White. He is a member of Boy Scout Troop 1207, chartered by Lewis and Clark Post # 2 of Helena. There are seventeen Posts in the Department who charter twenty four Scouting units. I received eight Post Scouting Award forms. The Post Scouting Award winner is Libby Post # 97.

BOYS STATE

Don Jones

(No Report Submitted)

CENTENNIAL

Ray Read

Memorandum From Charles E. Schmidt, Subject Veterans Memorial Project

Time Sensitive: Approximately 100 Days to the 2017 National Convention in Reno, Nevada; 12 months to 2018 National Convention in Minneapolis, Minn. and 24 months until 2019 National convention in Indianapolis, IN. 830 days and counting.

This is the second stand alone report on the Montana Department, The American Legion Centennial Committee. Some of this is a repeat of the Department Historian Report.

During the 96th Annual Convention the Department Executive Committee addressed the establishment of the Centennial Committee. I was subsequently appointed as the Chair of this Committee. I, in turn choose three Legionnaires to assist me in the development a program to complete the mission of telling Montana's Rich American Legion history. I can be reached at 470 Ronda Road, Helena, MT 59602, Telephone: 406-458-9847/Cell 406-235-0290; email: myfun51@msn.com. The Committee currently consists of the following Legionnaires: Joyce Babcock (AC Buckner Post, Post #111), Custer, Montana) P.O. box 21, Custer, Montana 59024, Telephone No. 406-348-2089; email: donandel@midrivers.com Michael Shepard, (Columbia Falls, Post 72), 351 7th Ave. East N., Columbia Falls, Montana 59912 Telephone No. 406-250-9806; email: michaelshpard7@gmail.com Lowell Long, (Blaine Post # 48), P.O. Box 1144, Chinook, Montana 59523. Telephone 406-357-2387 email: lowell.long@hotmail.com. The following are the identified goals and objectives of the 100th Anniversary Centennial Committee at this date. They are subject to review and modification:

1. Plan and recommend a Montana Department Centennial Commemoration for the 2019 Department Convention.
2. Plan and conduct a robust collection and interpretation of Department History through the eyes of the current 129 Posts, broken down in 11 Districts, 4 command zones, and the Department Executive Committee with emphasis on accomplishments of The American Legion of Montana.
3. Planning for and publishing a Department 100th Anniversary Book, utilizing previously collected history of the various Posts, American Legion Auxiliary unit, and the squadrons of the Montana Detachment of the American Legion.
4. Surveying the various members of the American Legion Family to identify and quantify various activities to better demonstrate the strengths, lineage and honors of the American Legion of Montana.
5. Engaging the various communities of Montana that have an American Legion Post presence with meaningful dialogue and performance supporting the American Legion Four Pillars.
6. Conducting outreach in those communities that do not have an American Legion presence to bring them into the Centennial activities.

7. Working with the seven Tribal reservations engaging Montana Native American Veterans in meaningful ways.

8. Working closely with the American Legion National Centennial Committee to accomplish the mission as laid in resolution No. 31, Spring 2011, National Executive Committee, Stating,

"The American Legions wishes to call to the attention of the American People the record of achievements that have been accomplished by the American Legion during the 100 years since its founding, to emphasize the impact the organization has had upon the American society, and the extent of its contributions to national security, and the welfare of military veterans, their families and their communities...The American Legion wishes to set forth the objective and aims that will motivate its programs and activities during the years ahead and to illustrate the contribution made to the future of our country as intended by these programs and activities..."

9. Inculcate the sense of the importance of participating in the American Legion Centennial to the American Legion Family, American Legion communities, and State of Montana.

10. Build an adequate funding stream for all of the above.

Since the start several National Initiatives have been incorporated into the Centennial Program: These include the

(1) World War I memorial effort drives centennial energy

A nationwide project to locate, assess conditions and restore World War I monuments and memorials - many of which were erected by American Legion Posts - can "incite a national conversation" about the Great War and its many impacts, says Daniel Dayton, United States World War One Centennial Commission executive director. "We're three generations out, and we can't afford to miss this generation."

Dayton and American Legion Past National Commander Marty Conatser, Adjutant for the Legion's Department of Illinois and its more than 750 local Posts, were among the speakers at the Upper Midwest Regional Meeting of the World War One Centennial Commission last Tuesday. The Chicago event brought to the Pritzker Military Museum & Library state World War I centennial representatives from across the Midwest, including Deborah York of Tennessee, great granddaughter of Medal of Honor recipient Alvin York, a first-generation member of The American Legion. Tuesday's meeting was streamed live online to a nationwide audience.

"If we all work together, we can build a great puzzle," said York, who lives near Pall Mall, Tenn., home of the Sergeant Alvin C. York State Historic Park, which has undergone numerous renovations and improvements, including construction of an authentic World War I battle trench, frequent battle re-

enactments, a visitor center modeled after Sgt. York's General Store and more. "We can make something really beautiful because we come at this from so many different angles."

"Honor and remembrance are in the DNA of The American Legion and have been since its founding nearly a century ago," Conatser told the group. "Through the decades, The American Legion has been the official caretaker and supporter of innumerable memorials and monuments across the land and beyond our shores."

The American Legion National Executive Committee passed a resolution in May to support and promote the 100 Cities/100 Memorials grant program that offers matching funds of up to \$2,000 for projects to restore World War I monuments and memorials in local communities throughout the United States. To learn more about how to raise funds locally and apply for grants, [click here](#).

The 100 Cities/100 Memorials grant application deadline is July 15, 2017. The Pritzker Military Museum & Library plans to publish a coffee table book to showcase the 100 chosen memorials and monuments by 2018.

"Beyond the matching-money grants that will help many Legion Posts restore World War I memorials and monuments, this is an excellent opportunity to build one comprehensive inventory into a database that can be mapped and made accessible online," Conatser said. "These monuments and memorials are no good to anyone if no one knows where they are and what they express. As years and decades go by, they deteriorate with age and are forgotten - which is not what we want."

He said the entire American Legion Family can get involved with the effort to find and revive local memorials in honor of the centennial, whether they pursue grant money or not. American Legion Riders chapters, Sons of The American Legion Squadrons, American Legion Auxiliary units, Boy Scout troops attached to Posts and others in local communities can work together to locate and take inventory, he said. Conatser advised the centennial representatives to make contact with American Legion Department Adjutants to spread the word about the effort and to find opportunities to work together as the Legion draws nearer to its 100th anniversary, to be recognized between August 2018 and November 2019.

"Thousands of hometown American Legion Posts were named in honor of World War I troops who gave their lives to win peace in Europe," Conatser said. "The earliest American Legion members were dedicated to the fourth line in the Preamble to our Constitution: 'to preserve the memories and incidents of our associations in the Great Wars.'"

(2) The American Legion Memorials Inventory Project: **ADDENDUM AVAILABLE ONLINE** (Report condensed, for full report go to mtlegion.org)

CHILDREN & YOUTH

Sharon Doig

I would like to thank Commander Hal Rice for giving me the opportunity to continue as the Department Chair of Children and Youth. The beginning of the year has been quiet and as compared to previous years.

This year three TFA's were approved by National. A total of \$6417.34 helped three families with a total of 8 children. I received one that was incomplete and denied by me even though I let the investigator know what was needed. One was denied by me as incomplete despite letting the veteran know additional information was needed and a list given to the veteran.

I submitted another which was denied by National, but the investigator, veteran, and the mortgage company worked out an agreement.

An up to date application can be downloaded on the mtLegion.org site under Temporary Financial Assistance. On the page "other assistance" each column must be filled out and given a reason for ineligibility or the amount of assistance. The investigator must fill out his or her section completely.

Although you list all debts only housing and utilities, food, clothing expenses for the children are covered, if behind in those bills, the veteran must show proof. If approved by National, the check will be made out to the company and veteran. Page 4 shows all the paperwork that must be included in the application as well.

CONSTITUTION & INTERNAL AFFAIRS

Sandy Youngbauer

The constitution and internal affairs committee meet October 29, 2017 and we dealt with four resolutions. The first one discussed was to update the main sources for the American Legion database. This was about encouraging National to redesign the membership application and the Record (three part card) to include branch of service, date of birth, gender, email address and "zip plus four" information. The committee recommended approval.

The second resolution was to create a spouse membership for the Legion of Montana. This was to establish a spousal per capita of \$7. The committee voted to reject this one.

A resolution to revisit the PUFL program was the third one to be discussed. The intent of this proposal was to level the cost of the PUFL across the American Legion as Posts with lower dues are subsidizing those with higher dues. The committee approved this resolution.

The last one discussed acted on was to reinstate the snowbird program. Previously this program automatically changed the mailing address when

requested by a member. This resolution was rejected by the committee because of the administrative cost involved.

No further business was before the committee and as of May 15th, 2017 the chair is not aware of other business before the committee at the Department Convention in Billings June 22-25. I would like to thank Larry Dobb for facilitating the meeting and David Driver for his assistance.

CONVENTION 2017

George Blackard

Preparing for convention has been a great experience and opportunity for our Post. It has driven us to get out and speak to supporters and businesses in our community that we haven't had much contact with recently and allowed us to rekindle some of those relationships and meet some new partners. It has given us an opportunity to speak about The American Legion, our programs, and what we do.

As I write this we are still preparing and we have had some ups and downs and unexpected things come up but we are sure you will enjoy what we have to offer once you arrive for the event. No matter how much you plan and how far in the future you begin, there will always be surprises and you just have to roll with the punches and remain calm.

We would like to thank the Red Lion Inn for all of their help in preparing for this and if they perform like they always have for us, for being an excellent host. We hope that you will all want to return to Billings again in the very near future.

CONVENTION 2018

David Driver

Meetings with the Holiday Inn are ongoing by Post 341 as the Holiday Inn staff would not confirm rates so early in advance. Rates and rooms will be blocked out at a later time when the convention time gets closer. Post 130 will be handling the registration and will finish working on that as soon as we get the lodging information finalized. Our committee will be getting with the Great Falls Chamber of Commerce and Visitors to seek their assistance. Post 3 has set up a separate bank account for finances from advertisements.

We, Posts 3, 130 and 341 will continue working on bringing you the best Department Convention. Stay tuned to this network for upcoming new developments.

CONVENTION 2019

Jeff Nelson

The planning for the convention is moving right along. There are plenty of motels to stay in plus RV campgrounds. There will be great accommodations to

hold the convention with plenty of room. There are many activities to see and do with the Polson rodeo going on that weekend also. There will be a cruise around the bay and Islands on a tour boat planned for Thursday night. As this will be our Centennial Convention, we will try and make it one of the best ever.

DEPARTMENT EMERGENCY RESPONSE COORDINATOR

Karen Semple

Disasters and emergencies are events no one likes to think about - until it happens to them. Despite a winter and spring in Montana filled with emergency declarations for snow emergencies, fires, flooding, hazardous winter weather, large hazardous material spills, ice jams, large fuel spills, and severe thunderstorms, no National Emergency Fund grant applications have been submitted to Department. We can hope this means none of our members have been displaced from a damaged home due to one of these events.

Many Posts have still not accomplished basic disaster preparedness plans or business preparedness plans to place them in a position to survive and thrive following a disaster or emergency - which usually comes without warning. There's no time like the present to prepare, especially when no obvious danger is looming. Wildfire season will soon be upon us and can happen not just in forests, but also cities, grasslands and towns. FiresafeMT.org has information under the Home and Landowners tab on preparing structures to survive a wildfire. Members are also encouraged to go to Ready.gov for information on how to prepare their families and Posts for the unexpected.

In the shadow of 9-11, National Preparedness Month is September. Posts are encouraged to reach out to their members and communities with preparedness information. Some Posts host a "Preparedness Party" in September to further engage their members in preparedness. Consider contacting your county Disaster and Emergency Services Coordinator to attend Local Emergency Preparedness Committee meetings where Posts can find out how to participate in disaster drills and exercises. For more information on how to host a "Preparedness Party" shoot me an email or give me a call.

DISTINGUISHED GUESTS

Jim Grosset

I have nothing to report as of this date. I look forward to greeting and looking after our Distinguished Guests and making them feel at home, eh.

ENDOWMENT FUND

Jeff Nelson

The endowment fund was established to provide additional resources and scholarships to Legion youth programs, flags for schools, blue star banners to parents of service men and women, assist wounded veterans, and provide family support for deployed veterans in the case of emergencies.

If you are at a point in your lives, deciding on what would be a way of leaving a partial donation to a worthwhile fund; The American Legion Endowment fund was set up for that exact purpose. The endowment fund will not only help fellow Legionnaires but has tax benefits as well.

If there is any Legionnaire that would like to create a legacy and leave an amount to be used towards helping one of the programs mentioned earlier, please contact me.

FLAG ALLIANCE

Linda Cousineau

1. H.J.Res.61 - 115th Congress (2017-2018) Introduced in House (02/02/2017) [previously introduced as [H.J.Res.9](#) - 114th Congress (2015-2016) and many other titles in 6 previous sessions]

02/08/2017 Referred to the Subcommittee on the Constitution and Civil Justice.

Action By: House Judiciary

Currently has partisan support of 23 Republicans. Montana is not represented.

H. J. RES. 61

Proposing an amendment to the Constitution of the United States giving Congress power to prohibit the physical desecration of the flag of the United States.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

FEBRUARY 2, 2017

Mr. WOMACK (for himself, Mr. AMODEI, Mrs. BLACKBURN, Mr. JENKINS of West Virginia, Mr. ADERHOLT, Mr. FRANKS of Arizona, Mr. BYRNE, Mr. OLSON, Mr. PALAZZO, Mr. FORTENBERRY, Mr. COOK, Mr. ABRAHAM, Mr. WILSON of South Carolina, and Mr. JOHNSON of Ohio) submitted the following joint resolution; which was referred to the Committee on the Judiciary

JOINT RESOLUTION

Proposing an amendment to the Constitution of the United States giving Congress power to prohibit the physical desecration of the flag of the United States.

Resolved by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled (two-thirds of each House concurring therein), That the following article is proposed as an amendment to the Constitution of the United States, which shall be valid to all intents and purposes as part of the Constitution when ratified by the legislatures of three-fourths of the several States within seven years after the date of its submission for ratification:

"ARTICLE — "The Congress shall have power to prohibit the physical desecration of the flag of the United States.".

KEY FACTS » Surveys have shown that over 80 percent of Americans support passage of a constitutional amendment that would protect the flag from desecration. » Every state has passed memorializing resolutions to ratify a constitutional amendment prohibiting flag desecration. » The House of Representatives has passed the amendment six times by supermajorities, only to see it fall short in the Senate - by just one vote the last time it reached the floor.

WHAT CAN CONGRESS DO? » Pass House Joint Resolution 61 introduced by Rep. Steve Womack of Arkansas to give power back to the people to decide how best to honor and protect the flag under which every U.S. service member has fought.

Additionally, there is no MT legislation in 2017 introduced concerning flags.

REMINDER, as a community effort, consider giving a new flag and 'Thank You for Being a Patriot' certificate to low income senior citizens, veterans and other individuals in the community who have faithfully displayed the American flag but may need financial assistance to continue to do so. The certificate should also include directions on where to take their old flag for proper disposal.

I am honored to continue to be your Flag Alliance Chairman and will keep you updated on status as it develops.

FINANCE CHAIRMAN

Jeff Nelson

The Department. of Montana is beginning to shows signs of a diminishing membership each year and as a result funds that are there normally to support the many programs we promote have to make some budget changes.

With each year adjustments are made to accommodate requests from different chairmen and committees. We are always looking to various fundraising ideas to address some of the shortfalls in needed programs.

One of the new partnerships is with Big Sky Gas and is showing increasing revenues coming in. The address labels continue to provide additional funding, and USAA revenue share is increasing with every year. When you get the solicitations in the mail from the American Legion for fundraising programs, they are there to supplement the programs of the Legion.

I encourage all members to participate in either purchasing raffle tickets or help selling them. The Big K, the calendar, and the 4x4 mule raffle are ideas that came from the membership to help raise the needed funds so please get out there and support these promotions.

The centennial is getting closer and I can see our Department. as a leader in celebrating this once in a lifetime event. I encourage each Post to get ideas put together now for events in your communities.

Our investments with D.A. Davidson have done very well this past year. They are a conservative growth investment and perform safely for our future.

I would like to thank our Adjutant and the finance committee for their support in making many of the decisions needed in running the Department. of Montana.

There will be an addendum to this report at convention time and that report will be presented at the appropriate time.

HEROES TO HOMETOWN COORDINATOR

Josh Clement

The American Legion **Heroes** to Hometowns helps disabled veterans transition to civilian life, protecting their quality of life. This program ensures veterans wounded in the line of duty have the needed items for a quality of life for their residence or means of mobility as they transition smoothly to civilian life. This program is tied to active duty orders. Operation Comfort Warrior compliments this program.

The Department has not received any request in 2016 for support. The Montana National Guard has a few individuals deployed current in low kinetic operations. Navy and Army Reserve have individuals that have been called up for various missions but deployment locations and operations are not disclosed. I will continue to reach out to the full time leadership of these two components. My current position allows for me stay abreast with Montana National Guard deployments and planned operations.

Growth in this program needs to focus on readily available ceremonies for our wounded vets as they return to our Great State. Also able to coordinate and facilitate new employment services. Emphasis needs to be made by all Posts to ensure resources available throughout the state.

I look forward to support our Department and focusing on our first pillar of The American Legion.

HIGHWAY FATALITY MARKER

John Kougioulis

After Fall Conference, the requests for fatality markers increased. Also many calls about the program, many people want to know why the markers are not put up after the highway has been improved. Most people see the markers as a "memorial" not a fatality marker. They want to know why they can't decorate them. People want to know if they can put a marker up if the Legion Post won't. Does your Post know the answer to these questions? Does your Post know where to find the answers? Montana Legion.org would be a good place to start. Share this information with the members of your Post. You can call me at 406-459-0286. And I'll do my best to answer the questions. By now you should know about the stickers that DOT said we could put on the back of the markers about not decorating the marker or Post. I'll have my board display

at the Legion Department Convention in Billings in June. We now can give the families permission to put the same size stickers with the deceased name and date of accident. It might help the families because they are not allowed to decorate the markers. Make sure they don't use a reflective sticker, and no bigger than ours. I know there are some Legion members doing a great job with the fatality marker program. I feel their Posts should do something to recognize these folks. I have no budget from Department, so there is little I can do. But I want members to know I appreciate their dedication.

HOMELESS VETERAN COORDINATOR

Ray Read

Montana Department report Concerning Homeless Veterans for the period July-2016-May 2017.

The Montana Department's participation in The American Legion's Homeless Veterans Program is now 10 years old. Hal Rice, 2016-17 Montana Department Commander, re-appointed me as the Coordinator of the Program as the as the Homeless Veterans Coordinator in July 2016. I respectfully submit the following report of the record to date.

Montana Statistics Related to Homeless Veterans is as follows:

Of the 98,386 veterans recognized and recorded by the VA as being in Montana, 74,820 are indicated as wartime veterans. Breakdown by era is: Gulf War-33,741; Vietnam- 34,181; Korea-6, 7111; WW II-2, 93. Peacetime veterans number 23,566. The ratio of gender is Female veterans 8,613 and Male veterans 89,773. Comment: It is estimated that based on averaging 2.5 members per veterans household that the total veterans population including family members is at 245,000+- or nearly 1/4 of the total population of Montana.

National Statistics indicate that up to 3.8% of Montana's population of veterans is considered to be at risk or homeless. The definition of homeless as defined by United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) is, "Without and abode or home, living with family or relative because they cannot afford or qualify for a home residence, or living in a institutional setting because they cannot qualify or are financially unable to rent or own a home."

In the latest Montana Homeless Survey conducted in January 2016 of the 1,247 Household with 1709 person respondents of which 279 Veterans Households with 320 respondents were identified. This indicates that homelessness among Montana veterans was 18% of the total homeless of Montana based on the Survey results. I believe the true number falls between 3.8% National statistic and the 18% identified in the HUD survey. The 2016 data is not yet available.

The following information was provided for the January 2015 Point in Time Survey by Housing & Urban Development conducted in January 2015. These reflect the collection effort based in cities and towns broken into Districts

by Housing and Urban Development (HUD). These Districts do not emulate Montana Department /American Legion Districts as currently configured. HUD District 1,2,3-Eastern Montana; District 4- Havre; District 5- Great Falls; District 6- Lewistown; District 7- Billings; District 8- Helena; District 9- Bozeman; District 10- Kalispell; District 11- Missoula; and District 12-Butte Survey areas did not totally encompass Montana rural areas. The thing to take away from this is that Homelessness is still present and is a problem we must address at Post level and above:

Montana AHAR report for 2016 recorded a-17.0% in homelessness from the 2015 AHAR report

This is an -12.2 decrease over 2010 numbers. The complete report is not yet available and therefore I provided last year's report for 2016

The total homeless individuals recorded in the Point in time survey was 1,418 a -21.00% decrease in respondents from the 1709 recorded in 2015. Of the 1418 respondents it was determined that 44.4% or 630 were unsheltered and 55.6% (788) were sheltered

Homelessness has decreased in 37 States. With Montana in the top five with a 17% decrease. Individuals who were homeless in Montana decreased by 25% between 2015 and 2016. 574 family members were homeless with 40% (229) unsheltered.

Of the 100 unaccompanied youth determined homeless 48 or 48% were unsheltered. There were 165 veterans identified as homeless. This number is in my estimation under-reported as the Point In time does not reach into the rural areas of Montana that encompasses about 32% percent of State's population.

Recommendations for 2017-2018:

1. That the Montana Department of the American Legion continue to develop and conduct its Homeless Veterans strategy in coordination with the National Economics Division of The American Legion, the Veterans Administration of Montana, Federal Housing and Urban Development, the Montana Department of Health and Human Services and the many local service organizations who dedicate resources to reduce and ultimately eliminate homelessness in Montana.

2. That the Department of Montana of the American Legion strive to establish volunteer homeless Veterans coordinators at Post, District and, Zone levels as necessary to interface with the Department on issues and offer solutions of Veterans homelessness. In lieu of dedicated resources the responsibility falls to the Post, District, and zone Commander by default.

3. That the Department of Montana of the American Legion supports the various Homeless Veterans Stand downs scheduled throughout Montana for the Remainder of 2017. Veteran related events previously identified as being

in Plains, Helena, Missoula, Dillon, Miles City, Montana, and Libby, Montana and on the High line of Montana with Havre, Montana as the hub.

4. That those American Legion Posts conducting a Stand down coordinate and apply utilizing Stand Down Notice of Proposed Event Form available on line and complete the Stand Down After Action Report available on line at the National Coalition for Homeless Veterans. Email kmcevilly@nchv.org the website is www.nchv.org. Telephone number is 2020-546-1969.

Montana estimates of Homeless 2017 are pending. This is the last published report. **ADDENDUM AVAILABLE ONLINE**

INSURANCE DIRECTOR

Gary White

As of March 22, 2017 - \$201,401.00 in premiums were paid in the Department of Montana for Long Term Care, HIP, AUX HIP and Cancer, Cancer Disability, AD & D and Life Insurance; a decrease of \$24,826.00 since 2016. Last year we had a decrease as well, but only \$7,055.00. Allocations paid to the Department were \$11,664.00 a decrease of \$1500.00; this is after last year's decrease of \$1,978.00. We received a promotional bonus of \$1,166.00, a decrease of \$150.00, this after last year's decrease of \$31.00. Our decrease in revenue from last year is due to 4 factors - dropping membership, the deaths of our most active insurance participants (World War II and Korea veterans), the confusion over National insurance programs and the LIT programs and lastly the inability to market our Accidental Death & Dismemberment (AD&D). The decrease in all numbers is becoming a trend.

This year our projection of income for 2017 was \$15,500.00, we missed that projection by \$657.63. With the aging of our membership we continue to lose insured members at a higher rate than of new policies being written. We must rectify this by informing our members of the many insurance opportunities LIT offers. The LIT offers 28 different insurance products, but our most popular products are the cancer and EA+ insurance. There is a myriad of promotional information available for the Post to use, please contact me if you require any information. Our job is not to be insurance salesmen, but to inform our members of the insurance benefits. Please remind your members of the Accidental Death & Dismemberment benefit periodically so they can take advantage of this program. The information LIT gathers from these sign ups is the number one source of policies written. Of the 9,987 members on March 7, 2017 only 4,920 were enrolled in the free Accidental Death & Dismemberment program, 49.26% of our membership. This is an increase of 425 members, or a 5.32% increase from last year, we are still a long way from 100%, but are moving in the right direction. Signing up for the free AD & D is our best way of ensuring the LIT markets to the right age group. Please continue to emphasize members renew their AD & D. If a member is in doubt about being registered they can call LIT or go online to check their status, every year we have family members of deceased members attempt to file a claim only to

find their loved was not registered. Once a member registers now they are registered for as long as they are members. We have got to ensure our members are registered for this benefit, especially our new members, and remember any member acquired through DMS has never been given a registration opportunity for the free AD &D. **Senior Auxiliary and senior Sons of the American Legion members are allowed to sign up for the free AD & D under the same conditions.**

As I briefed at the District meetings we are having problems with marketing AD & D to our **new** members because of changes in insurance rules as a result of the Affordable Care Act. New members who have been trying to register are receiving rejection notices because at this time AGIA cannot market AD & D in Montana. AGIA, Transamerica and the Department are working with the State Auditor (our insurance commissioner) on rectifying the situation. This will be resolved June 15 , 2017, TransAmerica is no longer doing this type of insurance and a new company - Securian, has been selected and approved to market AD & D. New promotional materials should be available for Department Convention.

Over the years the insurance program has been a "cash cow" for the Department, however unless we get more members interested in the LIT programs it will continue to decrease in allocations paid. The LIT recognizes that they must continue to offer good reasonably priced products and introduce new products to interest our new younger members.

Our best selling policies continue to be the Hospitalization, EA+ and Cancer policies. This year the Auxiliary participated in marketing the EA+ and Cancer programs to their members, as a result they received an allocation of \$718.00.00, an increase of \$127.00.

Since 1967, when our Department joined with the Legionnaire Insurance Trust the Department has received \$652,552.00.

Check out www.theLIT.com for further information on LIT products.

This year the Department has received an additional source of revenue from USAA products being sold to our members. Our budget was set for \$5300.00, but we received a total of \$7260.07 an increase of \$735.97. **ADDENDUM AVAILABLE ONLINE**

LEGION RIDERS

Ken McMillon

This past year has seen some new interests in forming new Legion Rider Chapters. Corvallis has been asking about forming a new chapter, Helena wants to form one, Great Falls is trying to get one going and others are asking about where there might be a chapter close to their area. I have a SAL member that is an ALR member that has been putting together information section to where we can get out the information on the Chapter 30 website so that anyone

wishing to see what's going on in the state can go there and see if there is a ride in the coming future. The Riders are beginning to grow with each passing year.

In June, the Western Romp was held at Livingston and had a pretty good turnout.

We continue to sign up more members and work to make riding more pleasurable to all that want to "Just Ride".

LEGISLATIVE

Roger Hagan

The Legislative Committee has been busy since the last Convention. Your American Legion worked together with the Montana Veteran Affairs Division, VFW, DAV, National Guard Enlisted and Officer Associations, and others during the 65th Session of the Montana Legislature. Our presence was well acknowledged at the legislature as we monitored bills that affected the veteran and military members of Montana. While we had some losses, we were also successful in passing important legislation for our American Legion members.

Perhaps the most significant success was the passage of House Bill 224 carried by Representative Tom Jacobsen (D) Great Falls. In a nutshell, the bill extends the 'clubhouse' property tax exemption to property leased, rented or used by a Post (provided the property tax exempt savings be passed to the clubhouse organization) and deletes the requirement that the land exempted from property tax be owned continuously since January 1, 1960. This is a significant win for our Posts as many have just started to get tax bills for their land or have had to sell their property and rent/lease it back in order to continue operations.

It is important to note that the grassroots efforts of our members in all corners of Montana made a huge difference in getting this bill back alive, out of committee in the House and moving again. Those of you who responded to the several calls for action should pat yourselves on the back.

Thanks go to several key legislators on this bill as well as the sponsor. While the final votes were strong in both houses, Senator McClafferty (D) Butte, Senator Ed Buttrey (R) Great Falls, Representative Jeff Essmann (R) Billings, Representative Denley Loge (R) St. Regis, and Representative Mike Hopkins (R) Missoula spoke in support of the bill after it was amended in the Senate Taxation Committee. Take time to check the voting record on this bill and thank those who supported it or question those who did not.

Other important legislation that passed includes the designation of the Shelby Veteran's Memorial as a Veterans Memorial Site for state highway maps (HB 159), clarifying status of military dependent residency for hunting and fishing license privileges (HB 150), clarifying the process and recognition of the Honor and Remember Medallion (HB 271), revising the period of time

funeral homes are required to retain unclaimed veteran remains (HB 279), provide an apprenticeship tax credit for veterans (HB 308), extending work comp to home health care persons for veterans (HB 346), extending the period of time for a separating service member to update their driver's license (HB 485), encouraging schools to administer a civics test (SB 242) [note: this is a National American Legion Resolution] and revising the Montana Veteran Home Loan Program (SB 303). There were also a couple bills that passed related to our suicide and mental health concerns for veterans. There were many suicide/mental health bills but the ones that passed were most beneficial to our veterans.

Three resolutions of veteran significance passed were: a resolution commemorating anniversaries of Montana's military experience (SJ 16), a resolution commemorating the USS Billings (SJ 28) and a resolution commemorating the USS Montana (SJ 29).

One of our focus bills was a state income tax exemption for military retired pay. We knew going in that, in light of the tight fiscal situation, we would not have much of a chance. The bill was heard in the House of Representatives Taxation Committee early in the session however it never made it out of committee. This will most likely be a bill we will continue to put forward in the future.

While we had a few other losses, the most significant one was the failure of the legislature to pass an infrastructure bill. Every infrastructure bill had the Southwest Veteran's Home funding included in it which indicated strong support for our veteran's home. However, in the end, all infrastructure bills were defeated and the veteran's home remains in limbo.

All in all it was a moderately successful legislative session for the military and veteran population of Montana. So, go out there and get to know your state senator and representative. Talk with them about military and veteran issues and find out where they stand on those issues. It should be noted that Montana is ranked 2nd (sometimes 1st) in veterans per capita. We have 100,000+ veterans and 160,000+ veteran dependents in Montana. When you consider those numbers in a state of over 600,000 voters, we (you) could/should have a formidable influence in our state. Grassroots is the lifeblood of legislative efforts, both on the state and national level.

On the national scene, the Montana Department was represented at the February National Commander's Call-In by Roger Hagan, Bill White, Kelly Ackerman and Lois Schmidt. Senator Tester was one of the keynote speakers at the meeting and we met with him prior to his appearance. He also recognized our Department the next day at the beginning of the hearing for the National Commander's Testimony to the Joint House and Senate Veteran Affairs Committees.

Your legislative efforts continue to take a front seat with our 2 (3 in the future) Congressional Liaisons. Your liaisons are: Merv Gunderson (Senator Tester) and George Blackard (Senator Daines). Once we have a U.S. Representative a new person will be appointed. Your liaisons have done a

wonderful job communicating with staffers and their respective congress member on your behalf. Their work enhances the National American Legion's efforts and we are recognized by our national legislative staff for our proactive efforts.

If you have any questions or input, please be sure to share it with your Post or the Department so we can include your thoughts in our deliberations.

MEMBERSHIP

Elmer Palmer

I missed the Department of Montana Fall conference due to a medical situation.

Through the months, I have emailed the District Membership Chairmen, encouraging them to contact their Posts. Membership Chairman and District Commanders need to keep encouraging their Posts to strive for reaching and exceeding their Post goals.

In January, I attended the National Membership and Post Activities Committee meeting in Indianapolis. We, as a committee, drafted a resolution to have all Direct Membership Solicitation members transferred directly into a local Post. The resolution was forwarded on to other committees, and was amended to allow the information of these members to be immediately placed into the MyLegion.org and made available to the various Posts. This action will become effective on 1 July, 2017. The modification was required because each Post has the say as to whom they will allow into their Post.

In February, Zone Commander Harada invited National Vice Commander Paul L. Espinoza to do membership in the Eastern Zone. I was given a figure of about 12 members were added through this effort. At the same time, George Blackard and Jim Lish did District sponsored revitalization in District 11 and produced 10 new and 27 transferred members. In addition, they recruited Sons of The American Legion and American Legion Auxiliary members.

In March, I worked with Assistant Director Michele Steinmetz in conducting revitalization in District 2. We transferred 12 DMS members into local Posts from DMS and Headquarters Post. We renewed or reinstated an additional seven more.

At the time of this writing, I am working with the District Commander and Membership Chairman from District 6 on a revitalization to be conducted 18-20 May. We have a list of 95 DMS members and the listing of Headquarters Post members in addition to the expired members of the District to work. Having received the lists a little early, I have already transferred 20 of these members into local Posts. This revitalization will help the District.

Considering the information on the DMS members after the first of July and the numbers of eligible DMS and Headquarters Post members, it behooves each

Post to have a member trained on the MyLegion.org program. This makes finding members to help each Post, and, in turn, the Department make goal.

Additionally, the idea of holding new members signed in May and June for the next year is detrimental to the Department reaching goal. By reaching goal, the Department receives 'points' awards (money) for the targets that we have reached. We should all strive to reach the goals we are assigned.

I would like to thank Commander Hal Rice for the privilege of serving as your Membership Chairman this past year.

NATIONAL SECURITY

Randall Brown

At the Department Fall Conference that was held in Helena during the month of October 2016, I gave my written and oral report for National security issues. During the month of January the "Montana Law Enforcement Officer of the Year" selected was American Legion Post 117's candidate Timothy Hornung from Billings, Montana. The "Montana Firefighter of the Year" selected was American Legion Post 87's candidate Audrey Ulmen from Manhattan, Montana.

Islamic terrorism is the most critical National Security issue that our nation is currently faced with. Our newly-elected President, Donald Trump, is placing new emphasis on this serious problem. Trump's new Secretary of Defense James "Mad Dog" Mattis took the fight to ISIS by bombing them 31 times on his first day as the new Secretary of Defense. And, that is only the beginning. President Trump announced temporary ban on refugees from Syria and Middle East countries however, this ban was overturned in court. He stopped payment on Obama's final hour giveaway of \$220 million to the Palestinian Authority. He has asked for increased spending and additional support for our Armed Forces.

One of the serious National Security problems the United States is faced with is our open borders with Mexico. President Trump issued an Executive order starting the construction of "THE WALL." He then announced the hiring of 10,000 new border agents. Reducing our dependence on foreign oil is a National Security concern. President Trump signed Executive orders to give the go-head to the long-stalled Keystone and Dakota Access Pipelines. Recently, he has signed legislation to ease current energy policies that restrict coal and oil production in the United States.

Al-Qaida inspired Sunni militants, ISIS (known as Islamic State and the Levant), have seized many parts of Iraq and Syria and claim responsibility for these and other attacks which include the bombing of Russian and Egypt airplanes that killed all aboard. These terrorists are responsible for assassinations, beheadings, murders, rapes, thievery and other unspeakable atrocities against innocent civilians. Many of these terrorists and their supporters have been arrested in the United States, France, Belgium, England, Russia and other parts of the world. However, there are still many cells of

these terrorists and their supporters entrenched in different countries. ISIS is fighting a large coalition force made up of many countries including the United States. The majority of the US forces and their coalition allies are conducting air strikes on many of the ISIS positions with various degrees of success. The majority of the ground war is being fought with Iraqi and Kurdish Forces and their allies. The US and some of the coalition forces have some Special Forces and other personnel supporting these fighters. Turkey has been fighting the Kurds for over 30 years. A recent terrorist attack in Ankara, Turkey, blamed on Kurdish militants that killed 28 people and wounded dozens more, have complicated the Syrian situation. The Kurdish Forces now include renewed fighting with Turkey. Adding to this crisis was the recent attempted coup of the Turkish government which led to the firing and dismissal of many military leaders and government officials.

The Syrian government has been fighting demonstrators in that country that have been trying to overthrow their regime. Initially, other countries were siding with the demonstrators and wanted that regime ousted. However, since ISIS has taken over many parts of Syria and supported these demonstrators, support for them has diminished. Russia has entered this situation and is assisting the Syrian government. In April, President Trump ordered a missile strike on a Syrian Air Base after the Syrian government used poison nerve agents (chemical weapons) on opponents of their government. Many civilians, including children, died in the chemical weapons attack. The chemical weapons attack enraged world leaders from many different countries and has strained relations with Russia. Because of this conflict, thousands of Syrian refugees have fled their country and have been seeking asylum elsewhere. Other countries have welcomed them, however, it has led to some of the Islamic terrorists blending in and taking advantage of this situation. These terrorists then have become involved with attacks on those same countries and cities that have welcomed them, including Germany, Paris, England and Nice, France. Because of the potential of Islamic terrorists entering this country, there are many Americans that oppose allowing those refugees to come here without a recognition system that would identify possible or known terrorists. President Trump's proposed temporary ban on several Muslim countries, which was defeated in court, has infuriated those Americans that support this proposed action.

In Afghanistan, the Taliban, al-Qaida and ISIS continue their resistance with military action, suicide attacks and the use of improvised explosive devices. Recently, some of these terrorists have infiltrated the Afghanistan Security Forces and have killed several of our military advisors. Recent negotiations with the Afghanistan President have cleared the way to keep some US troops in that country for an extended period.

North Korea continues to be a national security concern because of its nuclear program and the fact that this country has launched various military strikes against South Korea many times over the past years. Currently, this country is making threats that it is ready to launch nuclear weapons on the U.S. and its allies. To bolster this threat, North Korea has launched several

missiles into the ocean with some degrees of success. This situation is a serious threat and must be kept in check.

In Pakistan increased military action against government forces, innocent civilians including school students, and prominent leaders has forced the Pakistan Army to step up the fight against Taliban militants with increasing degrees of success. Military missions that cross from Afghanistan into Pakistan are causing some potentially dangerous political ramifications with that country as the Taliban use parts of Pakistan as a sanctuary. The situation between Pakistan and India over Kashmir remains a national security concern because of both countries' nuclear capabilities.

Because of Iran's nuclear program, which western nations believe is enriching uranium for weapons purposes, the current situation in that country is a serious concern. Because the US and several other countries have reached an agreement with Iran concerning its nuclear program, the U.S. recently lifted sanctions which included Iran's ability to sell oil on the world market. Canada has closed its embassy and brought their ambassador home. They have also sent Iran's diplomats back to Iran. Israel considers a nuclear-armed Iran to be a threat because of its missile capabilities and support for anti-Israel militants. Iran has made frequent references by its president to destroy Israel. The US is concerned that Israel might be preparing to attack Iran over its nuclear program. The Republican Senators were opposed to this Iran deal. (The American Legion also opposed this agreement). This issue has resulted in US relations with Israel deteriorating considerably. However, newly-elected President Trump is in the process of restoring good relations with that country.

China has military strength and capabilities that cannot be ignored. Recently, China has constructed and deployed its first Navy Aircraft Carrier and has added many new naval ships and submarines to its fleet. Current relations with China are good and it is hoped that this will not change.

The situation between the Palestine's and the Israelis is always a national security concern. Almost daily, there are confrontations between Israelis and Palestinians resulting in deaths and injuries to both sides. Currently, the Fatah group controls the West Bank and the Hamas group has seized control of the Gaza Strip, therefore, splitting the two parties. Israel and other western nations are supporting the Fatah Group, but do not recognize or support the Hamas Group.

The recent takeover of Crimea by Russia from the Ukraine has caused major concerns from other nations including the United States. Because of this action, sanctions have been placed on Russia by several countries and NATO is beginning to get involved with this situation.

Illegal immigrants entering this country from Canada, and mostly from the Mexican border, continue to be a national security concern. A large percentage of these illegal's actually enter the United States on a VISA, however, never return to their country. Many of these illegal immigrants

siphon off welfare funds, become involved in criminal activity, and receive humanitarian aid that is designed for legal residents of this country. The Canadian border has many areas across the United States where it is relatively easy to cross without being detected. When illegal Mexican immigrants are apprehended, there has been little or no punishment involved, and they are returned to Mexico. Often times, they are back across the border within days of deportation. This is a serious problem. Fortunately, President Trump recognizes this problem and is taking steps to help solve this issue.

Currently, our country's economy has stalled, and unemployment rates are rising. Current energy policies are having a negative effect on the coal and oil industry and many miners and oil workers in that industry have lost their jobs. The current administration is making strides to try and help solve these issues. Unfortunately, the country is faced with huge debts that must be eliminated and the majority of employment opportunities are within the service industry. Many of the higher-paying manufacturing jobs have been eliminated or exported out of the country. It has become more and more difficult to even buy products that are made in America. Two reasons that US manufacturing has decreased are because of trade agreements that favor other countries and many frivolous lawsuits that end up causing US companies' huge amounts of money. (Examples: Some lunatic murders someone with a gun and the manufacture of that weapon gets sued. A drunken person wrecks their car and the car manufacture is held liable). Unfortunately, these are not isolated incidents and continue at an alarming rate.

Mandatory Federal spending cuts have taken place, which are having huge impacts on national security issues. However, during this same period, this country gave millions of dollars away in aid to other countries and continued to spend our tax dollars for perks and benefits. Almost daily, waste fraud and abuse issues have surfaced at all levels of government. These issues are all part of the debt problems that this nation is experiencing. Current policies need to be re-examined and it is evident that changes are needed. The American Legion organization is focusing on resolutions to balance the federal budget with the least amount of impact on our military forces. This country must be extremely pro-active in our search for dangerous Islamic extremists that kill innocent civilians and challenge our way of life. The recent Islamic terrorist attacks are a very serious problem. Cyber attacks on our nation's communications systems must be dealt with. Murders of some of our nation's police officers, and messages to the leaders of this country, confirm that our citizens believe positive changes are overdue and desperately needed.

Besides the threat of terrorism, there are many other national security concerns that affect this country. Our current administration must re-examine our foreign aid policies as many of them do not support American interests. Our US intelligence programs must be re-evaluated and changes appear to be needed. The things that our nation needs to make top priorities are the total support of the Armed Forces and its needs, balance the federal budget, encourage US manufacturing in our country, and continue changing energy

policies that are unfavorably affecting our coal and oil industry. The good news is that the current administration is working hard to help solve many of these National Security issues.

ORATORICAL

Jeff Holmes

First off, I would like to congratulate and thank Michael McKay of Corvallis for representing Montana at the National Oratorical Contest. You made us proud, and we are glad that you decided to further your leadership education through the American Legion Oratorical Program. Eric Reed from Harlowton placed second, Carter Johnson of Big Sky was third, and Isaiah Hesford of Boulder placed fourth. I would also like to thank Corvallis Post #91 and all other participating Posts for sponsoring the Oratorical Contest as part of their Post objectives. This year, we had 5 District winners participating at the Department level.

Our contest this year was almost a month later than last year as you know, and I think this date seemed to work well for everyone. The rotation for next year is back to Great Falls, and the plan is to keep it around the first part of March again. The date is dependent on deadlines issued from National, but I don't expect it to change much.

I would like to thank Dick Ellwein for lining up the Helena College University of Montana as the contest site and for arranging and picking up the lunch. Thanks also to Dick for lining up most of the judges and workers. I also owe a huge thank you to Teresa Allison and the Last Chance Toastmasters Club for helping with the judging. Thanks also to Mr. White and Mrs. Carpenter for keeping all the paperwork straight. I would also like to thank Lowell Long, Kathy Long, Leah Ellwein, and Dick Ellwein for their expertise, experience, and hard work preparing for, and running the contest. Special thanks also to all other Legionnaires who showed up and volunteered to help whenever needed. Our Department contest is truly a team effort, and would not happen without your dedication. Thanks again to everyone. Your students and I really appreciate it.

PUBLIC AFFAIRS & PUBLICATIONS

Lori Perkio

As I pass the baton to the next Public Relations and Publications Chair I want to thank all of you for sharing with me the events involving veterans and their families in your cities, Posts, Districts and Department to add to the next edition of the Montana Legionnaire. It has been a wonderful learning experience and extremely gratifying to work with all of you. Take lots of pictures and send in lots of articles!

SONS OF THE AMERICAN LEGION (S.A.L.) ADVISOR

John Pellegrini

Once again it's great to report that the Detachment of Montana is at 100% well before the Target Date. Thanks to the hard work of all the Squadrons. You all deserve a big "Atta Boy". At the time I am making this report, we are sitting at 5th place in the Nation. We'll have a front seat at the National convention in Reno.

I will be attending the Spring Meetings in Indianapolis on the 6th and 7th of May. I will make an addendum to my report when I get back telling all the great things the SAL has done for the American Legion programs during the 2016-2017 membership years.

The Montana Detachment should be proud of Dick Ellwein, who is doing a wonderful job as National Chaplain.

SHOOTING SPORTS

Ray Read

The American Legion Junior Shooting Sports Program is a gun safety education and marksmanship program that provides the basic elements of safety, education, enjoyment, and competition. The program utilizes the .177 caliber air rifle; both males and females can participate, through American Legion Post, Auxiliary Unit, or Sons of the American Legion squadron sponsorship. It is a three-part program that combines the Basic Marksmanship Course, Qualification Awards, and Air Rifle Competition.

The Basic Marksmanship Course is a comprehensive package for the beginning shooter with little or no marksmanship experience. Gun safety and marksmanship fundamentals are taught through a balanced mix of short lecture and discussion followed by hands-on activities. The cornerstone of the Basic Marksmanship Course is the SHOOTER'S GUIDE TO POSITION AIR RIFLE, now in its third edition. The guide provides a thorough explanation of the essential fundamentals need for success as an entry-level competitive shooter.

Another highlight of The American Legion Junior Shooting Sports Program is our annual JUNIOR POSITION AIR RIFLE TOURNAMENT.

The American Legion Annual 3-Position Junior Air Rifle National Championship is a tournament that begins with Postal match.

What is a Postal Match?

A Postal Match is a match in which competitor's fire on their home ranges using targets which have been marked for identification. The fired targets are then sent to the American Legion for scoring and ranking for awards.

The American Legion presents its 27th junior 3-Position Air Rifle Tournament, which provides competitors an opportunity to test their marksmanship ability in competition with other junior competitors throughout the nation.

The Individual Tournament has three phases of competition:

1. First Round - State Championships
2. Second Round - Qualifications
3. National Championships

The Team Tournament has two phases of competition:

1. First Round - State Championships
2. Second Round - National Championships

The First Round team tournament is a "paper" match and will be comprised of the top four athletes' individual tournament scores. A club with at least four individuals enters one team; at least eight individuals enter two teams; and so on.

The First Round and Second Round of the Individual Tournament are Postal matches whereas the National Championship of the Individual Tournament is a shoulder-to-shoulder competition.

The First Round and the Second Round phases of the Team Tournament are Postal matches.

The Individual and Team Tournaments was conducted in accordance with the Official Match Program (OMP) and the 2016-2017 National Standard Three-Position Air Rifle Rule Book 11TH Edition.

In 2016-17, more than 1,300 youth entered round one of The American Legion's Junior Shooting Sports individual Postal match competition for a chance to qualify for the Legion's 27th annual Junior 3-Position Air Rifle National Championships. The top 30 marksmen have been named and will be traveling to Colorado in July to compete The U.S. Olympic Training Center in Colorado Springs. The championships will be held July 18-23, 2017

During the competition, the participants in both the Precision and Sportier category shoot a .177 caliber air rifle in three positions - prone, standing and kneeling. One competitor in each respective category will win the championship and a \$5,000 scholarship provided by the Legion and Sons of The American Legion. A \$1,000 scholarship, provided by the Auxiliary, will be awarded to the second-place finisher in each category. This scholarship is being generously provided by The American Legion Auxiliary.

The following Montana JSSP teams/individuals participated in this year's competition but no team or individuals qualified for the National: ADDENDUM AVAILABLE ONLINE 2016-17 Awards include:

(1) Top Individual Precision; Jonna Warnken, Superior Montana -- Missoula Hellgate Junior Shooters

(2) Top Individual Sporter: Howie Edison, Superior Montana - Mineral
County Shooting Sports 1

(3) Top Team Precision; Mineral County 4H Shooting Sports - Edison Howie,
Bailey Milender, Heath Edison, Decker Milender

(4) Top Team Sporter; Missoula Hellgate Junior Shooters 1- Jonna Warken,
Alexandra Weisenburger, Abigail Donald, Samual Weisenburger

(5) Participation certificates for individuals and teams;

Teams submit your requests to the Montana Department JSSP Coordinator
with information to the Department Adjutant.

American Legion Posts & Coaches Notes: As you are getting started we would
strongly recommend that you focus your efforts on the Sporter category. It
does not take a lot of money to get started in the Sporter category. The
junior Sporter athletes do not need any sort of sophisticated shooting
clothing like the Precision category does.
If you have not already done so we would recommend taking a look at the
Civilian Marksmanship Program's WebPages. This will give you a very good
background on what is allowed in terms of sporter category rifles, clothing,
and additional equipment.

With regards to sporter category rifles, those that have been successful in
our National Championship tournament have fired the Daisy 753/853 pneumatic
rifle, the Daisy M888 CO2 rifle or the Daisy XS-40 Valiant compressed air
rifle. More information about these and other rifles can be obtained from
the [Daisy WebPages @daisy.ifware.com/cgi-bin/daisy2/products_avanti.html](http://daisy.ifware.com/cgi-bin/daisy2/products_avanti.html).

The CMP has an excellent extended payment program to purchase either the 853
or the M888 rifles. More information can be found @
www.odcmp.com/Services/Programs/Sporter_Air_Rifle.htm.

It is up to you, your finances, and the number of junior athletes you will
have as to how many rifles you would want to consider buying. Most teams
will have 3 or 4 athletes training on one rifle. Of course this will mean
re-adjusting the sights for each of the athletes but this is good training.
As you progress and find that you have two or three athletes that are better
than the others you may want to consider letting them fire only their
particular rifle.

If you continue with the program and have some athletes who are interested in
continuing in 3-Position competitive shooting that would be the time to
consider moving them into the Precision category. We can provide you with
more information if you would like. **ADDENDUM AVAILABLE ONLINE**

VA HOSPITAL VOLUNTEER REPRESENTATIVE – BILLINGS

Joyce Babcock

Due to the snowy and icy roads and difficult travel I only made one trip to visit the Facility in January and February but most other months I visited the clinic at least twice. I delivered coffee, cookies, and The American Legion National magazine to the clinic. Some visits I also delivered Western paperback books for the waiting rooms. Each month I had a minimum of four to four and a half hours volunteering at the CBOC.

VA HOSPITAL VOLUNTEER REPRESENTATIVE – Fort Harrison

Bill White

1. Attended fourth and first quarter V.A.V.S. meetings at VA Fort Harrison, MT.
2. Continued s an appointed representative to the national VA and R committee
3. Continue working with Gary White to ensure that All American Legion Volunteers are registered so that the American Legion gets proper credit
4. Re-appointed to the Veterans Advisory Council at Fort Harrison and Co-Chair and serve as a Veterans Representative and continue to attend called meetings
5. Re-appointed to The Veterans Transportation Committee that over sees the Veterans Transportation System (VTS) system used at VA Fort Harrison as one of the veterans representatives. This system now covers all of Montana and works with patients in parts of Northern Wyoming and Western North Dakota and parts of Eastern Idaho.
6. Attended Winter Conference in Washington DC for the American Legion on the National VA and R Committee
7. Appointed to Ad-Hoc committee with NEC Merv Gunderson to work on up-dating the VAVS Volunteer manual with the American Legion
8. Worked with Gary White Adjutant to provide patriotic hats for veterans in the behavioral health program.
9. Attended District meeting, invited as VAVS representative
10. Worked with Josh Clement, Merv Gunderson and Gary White on a major proposal for a yearly award to a VA employee that helped the Veterans the most.
11. Participated with new person orientation to give new employees an opportunity to hear some of the problems that Veterans face on a daily basis when going to the VA facilities also participating is American Legion members Doug Ham and Jim Gustafson

12. Attended District six meeting in Butte
13. Attended District 3/8 meeting in Great Falls.
14. Attended District 7 Meeting in White Sulphur Springs
15. Attended District 5 meeting in Missoula and recognized Stevensville in their support of Fort Harrison by bringing in students to meet with vet on Pearl Harbor day and Valentine's day only Post to do that
16. Worked with Adjutant on Membership by calling those who had yet to renew
17. Participated in teleconferences with Mr. Gunderson on National VA&R resolutions to be presented at the convention in Reno.

VA HOSPITAL VOLUNTEER REPRESENTATIVE – Miles City

Clancee Collins

- Attended a City Hall Forum in November concerning the sale of the VA Medical Facility to Custer County. I expressed concerns about what impact this would have on the living facility and the primary care clinic. I also was the keynote speaker at the Veteran's Recognition re-pinning Ceremony at their Veteran's Day luncheon.
- Volunteered at the VA Community Living Center Christmas Store in December and had a wonderful time helping the Veteran's with their Christmas shopping. There were 8 volunteers and many staff member in attendance to assist as needed.
- Visited with the activities Director on several occasions and asked if she needed anything. She thought that more of the residents were in need of audio headphones for the televisions in their rooms. I coordinated with the Commander of Custer Post 5 and 3 sets of headphones were purchased by the Post.
- Conversed with the Auxiliary Unit 5 to see if they needed anything in the way of monies or supplies to cover expenses for their monthly meals at the Community Living Center. They assured me that they were managing just fine and would let me know if they needed anything.
- Talked with Custer Post 5 Bingo volunteers who conduct Bingo every Friday in the Community Living Center and asked if they needed anything in the way of supplies, etc. I was informed that they had everything they needed and usually received what they did not have from the Post.

VETERANS AFFAIRS & REHABILITATION

Kelly Ackerman

I attended Fall Conference from Oct 28-30, 2016 in Helena, MT.

I attended the Washington Conference from February 26 - March 1, 2017 where I currently serve as the Vice Chairman of the VA&R Commission.

As the Vice-Chairman of the VA&R Commission, I participated in conference calls on February 16, 2017 and March 28, 2017 to discuss resolution to be presented during the spring NEC meeting.

VETERANS ECONOMICS

Byron Erikson

Veteran Employment Services

Because Montana is a "frontier" state Montana is not allocated enough money to place veteran representatives at each state employment office. This is because of a formula adopted by the U.S. Department of Labor that does not consider **service delivery area**. The allocation formula only considers the unemployment rate and number of veterans, of working age, that live in the state. Also, the DVOP/LVER program was suffering financially as it has been flat funded for a number of years. Lately, however, there has been a slight increase that funds another half position. It brings the staffing for the whole state to 7 full time positions. Some are split in half to get more coverage. If costs go up services dramatically drop. This means that over half of the Job Service/Workforce offices do not have a DVOP or LVER (job veteran representatives) to assist veterans.

The DOL/VETS did adopt a practice that promoted the training of a person from Workforce Services offices (about 23 across Montana) not having a trained DVOP/LVER on staff. Therefore, a person from a non-veteran representative staffed office receives training at the National Veterans Training Institute in Denver, Colorado (NVTI) at federal expense. The individual may not be a veteran but at least has knowledge of the needs of veterans. It is commendable that the DOL/VETS now promote the program to assist rural area employment offices.

There are programs implemented by the DOD and federal government to get service members leaving the military certified or licensed in a trade they learned in the military that will transfer to civilian life straight across. It works in certain trades and helps veterans transition into work expeditiously. It is working well in certain trades but difficult in trades that may have different requirements for different states.

ESGR (Employer Support for the Guard and Reserve) still helps educate in USERRA law and mediate employer and service member's employment difficulties. They are cutting back on helping service member's employment as there are

other organizations that provide that service. Disclaimer: The Ombudsman Director for Montana ESGR is also the author of this report.

There has been an on-going change in how veterans are served at the State Workforce Agencies/Job Services. The DVOP (Disabled Veteran Outreach Program specialist) is limited to disabled veterans and veterans most in need. The other employment staff assists veterans on a priority basis. There are not LVER (Local Veteran Employment Representative) staffing in the state of Montana. That job had been narrowly focused on doing employer contacts and getting employment opportunities for veterans.

Interestingly enough there is no priority of referral of veterans by the State of Montana employment offices. Their system brings up veterans first on a file search but the process used does not do the work of good priority of referral...in my book. Many larger offices utilize email notifications...not phone calls. Orders are not held to give the veterans time to apply for a job before non-veterans.

There is a belief that FCJL (those who get federal contracts) employers are required to give veteran preference when hiring for federal contract jobs. They are not. They are required to list with local employment offices or other places where veterans may go to find jobs. They also have other specialty employee recruitment requirements that may not be veterans. They can hire whomever they want, despite qualifications, no matter who applies, or their veteran status. No veteran preference. Poorly written law.

The State of Montana's Veteran Preference law lags in practice, and enforcement. The veteran is left to a civil lawsuit at the veterans' expense if harmed. There are examples in the details of this statement. If we want teeth in this law state legislators need to take up the cause and make a state veteran preference law that works.

All in all veterans are finding jobs at a faster rate than non veterans. Only low percentages who want to work are not working. Statistically this means the Montana economy is fairly healthy. Some counties have high unemployment rates due to suffering industries such as logging. Montana's unemployment rate as of March 2017 is now 3.8% indicating a very strong job market. It would help to improve our mining, logging, and oil industries. They have better paying jobs. Employment does not mean a worker is paid a living wage. Just because veterans can find work the pay in certain areas lags behind the national norm. Montana has a lower rate of unemployment than the nation as a whole ranking 15.

The VA in Montana has a high percentage of veteran employees compared to other regions. The VA in Montana has been directly appointing veterans to employment positions if they are recently separated, 30% or more disabled, or a Chapter 31 (education or some form of training for disabled veterans) veteran.

Native American Veteran Focus

Reservations still have the highest unemployment rate in Montana. They also have the lowest labor participation rate.

Federal agency hires at the Indian Health Services prioritized maintenance jobs for veterans. This is good, but disturbing as it is limited to this job classification.

There is a move by the VA to help train the individual Tribal Veteran Representatives (TVR) in Veteran Service Officer knowledge and duties to help tribal veterans apply for available veteran benefits. Unfortunately, it does not attach any funding to pay the TVR's to do the work. Some TVR's are paid by their tribe, but some are part time volunteers. Perhaps well intended, but not paying for services is ill-conceived. Why is the poorest of the poor expected to do with the least?

VA Benefits for Montana Veterans

Montana Department of Veteran Affairs is doing a great job of assisting veterans with application for medical or disability benefits. They are to be commended

Disclosure: Author of this report is a voting member of the Veteran Affairs Board.

Veteran Provider Meetings

There are 9 Veteran Services Provider meetings held in local communities across Montana. Members are able to cross educate about needs of veterans and coordinate local, state, federal, and service organization services. Check out the one closest to you and participate if you can.

WAYS & MEANS

Bill Applegate

- 1) Raffle - I have attended several gun shows and will be going to more as the year goes on. I have turned in 15 books and am working on more. There were 2000 tickets printed; which is 200 books; 196 have been distributed, 50 returned. We have a 10 person tent from Missoula's Costco, a sleeping bag & cot from Cabela's; am checking on a sleeping bag & cot from Bob Wards & Sportsman Surplus. Got a Kawasaki side by side from here in Missoula. Went to several trailer outfits; the best deal I got is from Murdock's for \$720.
- 2) Big K - 1000 memberships available at \$25. Drawings for 2016 - 17 start January 1st and there are 6 drawings per year. Budgeted amount - \$1100; actual income - \$1155.50; last year's income - \$1313.00. Differences from this year to last year - \$157.50. Paid to Districts - \$406; Paid to District Aux - \$100.50; Paid to Posts - \$2346.00; Paid to Aux Units -

\$629.00; Paid to SAL - 127.50; Largest amount to a Post - \$289 - Post 2 Helena; Largest amount to a Unit - \$110.50 - Unit 3 Great Falls; Largest amount to a Squadron - \$42.50 - Squadron 30 Belgrade; American Legion Members - 271; A/L Auxiliary members - 67; SAL members - 13; Total members signed up 354 - which leaves 646 memberships left. For every membership \$8.50 is returned to your Post; \$1.50 is returned to the Districts.

- 3) Cash Calendars: we purchased 1800 2017 calendars - 1770 have been distributed - 1315 have been turned in to Department - Printing Costs - \$4,200.00 - Prizes \$11,685.00 - Ads sold 33 color ads - Budgeted \$12,900 - Actual Profit - \$17,113.00 - went to Kalispell and met with Lee Hesser and did ads for the 2018 Calendar in Kalispell, Whitefish, & Columbia Falls. As of this report, the 2018 calendar ad space is completely full.

WOMEN'S VETERANS COORDINATOR

Kim Kay C McCarty Martin

I set up an appointment with Ms Berger, VA Director on 21 December 2017 to discuss health care for women veterans in Montana. We are in need of a full time gynecologist to care for the 13% of the veteran population that are female. After talking about this lack of care and asking for doctors who can care for women's health, I was informed that a Gynecologist falls under specialty clinics and that as such Fort Harrison, MT will not get a gynecologist. As I firmly believe that females served just as valiantly as the men, we also deserve the care with just as much consideration for our overall health.

I focused in February on the five towns in MT that were discussed at our Department Convention women's meeting to hold the Women Veterans Recognition Luncheons. They will be Townsend, Columbia Falls, Great Falls, Miles City, and Poplar. After a few conversations and some progression in readying plans, a committee was formed for the 2017 Luncheons. The core committee members will be Debbie Hancock, Clara Santopietro, Linda Cousineau, Jennifer Dalrymple, Clancee Collins, Michele Harada, Carol Gruwell, Phyllis Viccione, Sharron Doig, and I.

I visited with Debbie Hancock on the 18th of March to prepare papers for Women Veterans Recognition Luncheon and then on the 27th of March visited Clancee Collins to start the preparations in having the luncheon in Miles City at the VFW and having the VFW Auxiliary cook the luncheon. In March, Clara Santopietro and I visited Linda and Jennifer in Townsend to finalize a place to hold the Luncheon there. Phyllis Viccione went with me to Columbia Falls to set up the luncheon at the Nite Owl and visited Pastor Brown in Great Falls to ask for the usage of their facility for the luncheon to be held in Great Falls.

I went to 8 of the District Meetings and the combined District 3/8 meeting where I talked about my meeting with Director Berger, and my disappointment in how women Legionnaires are still not accepted by some of our male

counterparts. I spoke about the two documentaries that were made regarding veterans transition to civilian life and the similarities we had when we transitioned into civilian life. They are Journey On and Soldier on: Life After Deployment. I also spoke about the upcoming Women Veterans Recognition Luncheons so everyone was invited to attend and they could spread the word.

After the District meeting in Scobey, I visited with Adeline, a WWII female veteran from Glasgow and interviewed her for the Veterans History Project. I made another trip to Columbia Falls to visit with three women vets living in the Columbia Veterans Nursing Home. One, Patty, is an Iraqi veteran and Agnes and Virginia are WWII veterans. I invited them to the recognition luncheon in Columbia Falls and interviewed Agnes and Virginia for the Veterans History Project.

Linda, Jennifer, Clara, Sharron, and I went to various businesses to ask for donations to provide the monetary means of paying for the meals for the women luncheons. Our first Women Veterans Recognition Luncheon was held in Townsend on 6 May at Post 42. 13 people attended and two WWII women veterans were recognized posthumously as unfortunately they passed on this year. Our second Women Veterans Recognition Luncheon was in Columbia Falls on 13 May at The Nite Owl Restaurant. 16 people attended and two WWII women veterans were recognized for their service and each received their WWII Service Medal and a Ruptured Duck. It was a surprise to Virginia and Agnes to finally receive their medal after all these years, bringing them both to expressions of Joy.