



Montana Legionnaire

June



DEPARTMENT COMMANDER

KIM KAY C MCCARTY MARTIN

It was an Honor for the National Commander Dan K Wiley to visit Montana on the 7th of November till the very early morning of the 10th of November. There was a meet and greet after he settled in at P Gibson's before going to Bar S for supper. It was a good evening. The Next day was busy starting with taking National Commander Wiley to Dutton Post 64 for a pancake breakfast. There I presented Commander Wiley with a replica of a grain truck to collect donations for Veterans and Children's Welfare. After Dutton we came back to Great Falls where we took Commander Wiley to Giant Springs and around Great Falls. He used to live in Great Falls when he was in the Air Force stationed at Malmstrom AFB. Fort Benton Post 26 hosted Commander Wiley and us for a Spaghetti Supper on the 8th. November the 9th, Malmstrom Post 341 hosted National Commander Wiley for breakfast at Clark and Lewie's before traveling to Lewistown. In Lewistown we viewed the Veterans Memorial. It's an unique memorial with M-1 Grands as part of the display with the branches of bronze servicemen. Lewistown Post 16 hosted Commander Wiley and us for dinner before going to Valley Vista nursing home to say Happy Birthday to a 100-Year-old WWII veteran. After Lewistown we drove to Choteau Post 6 for supper and a meet and greet. National Commander Wiley left very early on the 10th of November. In all, even with the traveling, Commander Wiley and us who accompanied him from Department had a great weekend.

In March 2026, I had a wonderful opportunity to go to DC for National American Legion Conference where National Commander Wiley gave his address to Congress on what the American Legion has been doing and speaking on the legislation The American Legion is hoping to get passed in Congress. I went with the Montana Delegation which included our Adjutant Duane Cunningham, Legislative Chair Roger Hagan, Clara "PD" Santopietro, Jason More-Brown, and Cassie Johnson. We met with our Congressmen Senator Daines, Representative Zinke, Senator Sheehy, and Representative Downing. We talked about bills the American Legion would like to see passed along with topics that support veterans in Montana. I talked about women veterans' issues in the VA system in Montana and about needing more support helping Homeless veterans in Montana.

I went to all the Spring District meetings around Montana inspired by my DC experience. I hope I was able to inspire those whom I spoke with, as also with my speech, hoping our members believe in their goals so they are inspired to achieve their goals. Each meeting, I learned more on what posts in our state do for their communities and for veterans. I am proud to be a member of Montana American Legion.

I attended this year's Department Oratory contest held in East Helena High School. We had three contestants this year and I was glad I wasn't a judge as they all were outstanding speakers. I was honored to present them with their certificates, scholarships and my commander's coin. I spent a day on the 24th of April at the Gun Show in Great Falls selling raffle tickets, Big K, and Cash



Calendars. I met a few veterans and many veteran supporters. I attended the Women Veterans Symposium in Lewistown on the 1st thru the 3rd of May and stopped in on the 2nd of May to say Hi to the attendees of the Legion Riders College. During this time, I was able to talk briefly with National Vice-Commander Ben Headen whom was attending the Legion Riders College and came to visit the women at the Symposium.

I was on the Color Guard for a couple of funerals this past year with Choteau Post 6 and Firing Detail for Vaughn Post 130 for this Memorial Day in Fort Shaw and Sun River. I will be a Girls State Counselor for the American Legion Boys State, American Legion Auxiliary Girls State program this June in Helena.

Along with these specific events this past year, I have been in regular contact with Department Adjutant Cunningham and Department assistant Carpenter. I have also kept in contact with our Department Vice-Commander Dickerson as part of our duties as your Commander. Most of my duties as your Commander have been pleasant. I have found that if each post in the Department follows the Constitution and By-laws of the Department and their post things go smoothly and a lot of good happens in the post and their communities with the members.

I have been honored to be your Department Commander for 2025-2026. I hope I have made a good impression for you to continue being in our great organization of veterans serving veterans. If there is anyway I can help or if you just want to chat, give me a call. Thank you for everything and have a great 2026-2027 year!



Duane Cunningham

DEPARTMENT ADJUTANT



Another year has brought challenges, changes, and successes across the Department. The future strength of The American Legion depends on four key areas:

1. Risk Management
2. Membership Growth
3. Consolidated Post Report (CPR) Completion
4. Adapting to Change

These priorities work together to protect our organization, strengthen membership, demonstrate our impact, and ensure long-term success.

Risk Management

Risk management is about protecting our members, finances, facilities, and reputation. In March 2026, the Department Executive Committee approved a new Risk Management Manual that aligns Montana with National standards. Changes include updated requirements for youth program volunteers, background checks, training, and data protection.

While these changes may require adjustments, they help ensure the safety of youth participants and maintain insurance coverage for our programs.

Financial accountability is also critical. Posts must maintain accurate records, conduct audits, and provide proper oversight of funds and property. Likewise, strong leadership and adherence to Post Constitutions and Bylaws help prevent conflicts and protect the organization's reputation.

Membership Growth

Membership remains the lifeblood of The American Legion. Recruiting today's veterans requires meeting them where they are—both in the community and online.

Posts should increase visibility through community events, service projects, social media, newsletters, and outreach efforts. Veterans are more likely to join organizations they see actively serving others and making a positive impact.

Consolidated Post Report (CPR)

The CPR is one of the most important responsibilities of every Post. It documents volunteer hours, donations, youth activities, veteran assistance, and community service, demonstrating the value of The American Legion to communities, lawmakers, and National Headquarters.

For the past five years, Montana has achieved 100% CPR reporting. This year, every Post will be responsible for completing its own report. Without documentation, our work

becomes invisible.

National Convention and Department Procedures

National Convention registration is transitioning to Eventgroove, an online platform that will streamline registration, ticketing, and payments. Montana plans to utilize the same system for Department Convention beginning in 2027.

The Department has also updated its Uniform Code of Procedures for Department Conventions.

Delegates will see changes to registration and election procedures designed to improve efficiency. Timely submission of delegate registration forms will be essential.

Adapting to Change

One of the greatest challenges facing any organization is balancing tradition with modernization. Our values remain constant, but our methods must evolve.

Today's veterans communicate differently and often seek service opportunities, leadership roles, and meaningful community impact. Posts should embrace modern communication tools, efficient meetings, and opportunities for younger veterans to become involved and lead.

Organizations that refuse to adapt eventually decline. Those willing to evolve remain strong. The American Legion has thrived for more than a century because generations of Legionnaires embraced change while remaining committed to service.

The future of The American Legion depends on leadership willing to manage risk responsibly, grow membership, document our impact, and embrace necessary change. Tradition should guide us—not limit us. By adapting our methods while remaining committed to our mission, we ensure future generations continue to benefit from the strength and purpose of this great organization.

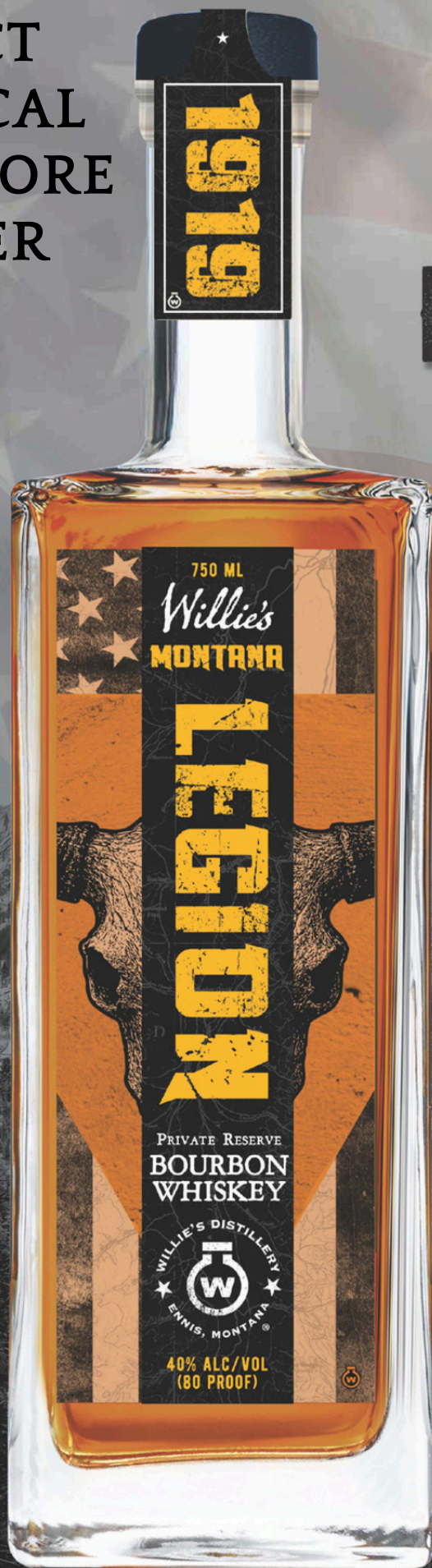


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Service Officer and VA & R

Eric Beal

H.R. 6583: The VA Research Reform Act of 2025

-To amend title 38, United States Code, to establish a centralized research data system for the Department of Veterans Affairs and to make certain improvements to processes applicable to major research projects of the Department, and for other purposes.

-The American Legion supports H.R. 6583 with amendments.

H.R. 6764: The Veterans Affairs Advisory Committee Oversight Act of 2025

-To amend title 38, United States Code, to establish new, and terminate certain, advisory committees of the Department of Veterans Affairs.

-The American Legion opposes H.R. 6764 as written.

H.R. 210: Dental Care for Veterans Act

-To amend title 38, United States Code, to require the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to furnish dental care in the same manner as any other medical service, and for other purposes.

-The American Legion supports H.R. 210 as written.

H.R. 5203: To direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to update directives of the Department of Veterans Affairs regarding the management of acute sexual assault, and for other purposes.

-To direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to update directives of the Department of Veterans Affairs regarding the management of acute sexual assault, and for other purposes.

-The American Legion supports H.R. 5203 as written.

H.R. 4114: Ensuring Veterans' Smooth Transition (EVEST) Act

-To amend title 38, United States Code, to automatically enroll eligible veterans in the patient enrollment system of Department of Veterans Affairs, and for other purposes.

-The American Legion supports H.R. 4114 as written.

H.R. 3869: Every Veteran Housed Act

-To amend title 38, United States Code, to expand eligibility for homelessness benefits under laws administered by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, and for other purposes.

-The American Legion supports H.R. 3869 as written.

S. 4043 Health Care for Homeless Veterans Act

-To amend title 38, United States Code, to make permanent the authority of the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to provide treatment and rehabilitation for seriously mentally ill and homeless veterans, and for other purposes.

-The American Legion Supports S. 4043 as Currently Written

S. 3286 Veterans Appeals Improvement and

Modernization Act 2.0

-To amend title 38, United States Code, to improve processes relating to appeals of decisions regarding claims for benefits under the laws administered by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, and for other purposes.

-The American Legion supports S. 3286 with amendments.

S. 3000 Fraud Reduction and Uncovering Deception in Department of Veterans Affairs Disability Exams Act of 2025

-To require the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to identify and report instances of disability benefit questionnaire fraud, and for other purposes.

-The American Legion Supports S. 3000 with Amendments

S. 3098 Presumptive Clear Legal Assessment and Review of Illnesses from Toxic Exposure Yields (CLARITY) Act of 2025

-To amend title 38, United States Code, to require the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to publish information about conditions and cohorts the Department of Veterans Affairs is considering for purposes of establishing or removing presumptions of service connection regarding toxic exposure, and for other purposes.

-The American Legion supports S. 3098 As Currently Written

S. 3170 Stuck on Hold Act

-To direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to implement an automated system with callback functionality for each customer service telephone line of the Department of Veterans Affairs, and for other purposes.

-The American Legislation Supports S. 3170 As Currently Written

S. 3653 Veterans' Bill of Rights Act of 2026

-To require the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to carry out efforts to inform veterans of their rights with regard to the receipt of health care, benefits, and services furnished under provisions of law administered by the Secretary, and for other purposes.

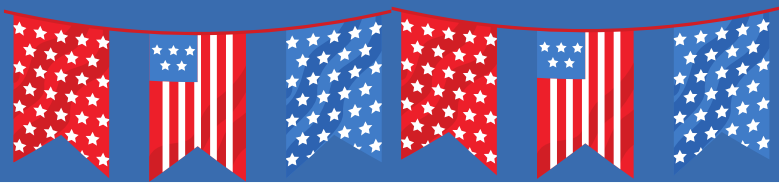
-The American Legion supports S. 3653 with Amendments.

S. 4108 Veteran Burial Benefit Correction Act

-To amend title 38, United States Code, to increase burial and funeral expenses paid by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs in the case of death from a service-connected disability, and for other purposes.

-The American Legion supports S.4108 as currently written.

Department Vice Commander Irene Dickerson



It has been an honor serving as Vice Commander for the Department of Montana this year. Throughout the year, I have had the opportunity to attend both Fall and Spring District meetings across Montana, meeting with Posts, hearing concerns, sharing information, and strengthening communication throughout our Department.

Traveling across our state has reinforced the dedication of our Legion family and the importance of staying connected at every level. From our larger communities to our rural Posts, our members continue to demonstrate commitment to veterans, youth, patriotism, and service to our communities.

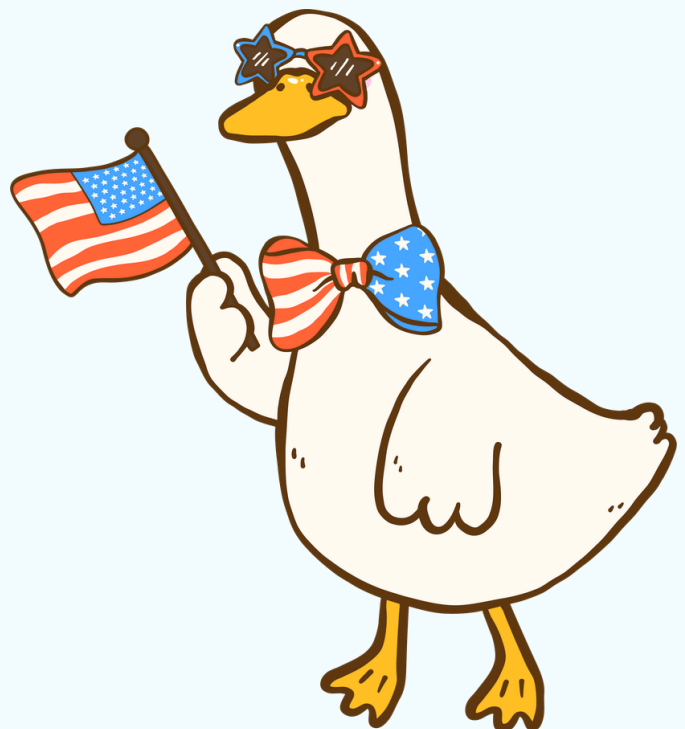
Membership remains a major focus. I have continued working alongside Posts and District leadership to encourage renewals, engage current members, and reach out to younger veterans. Strong membership ensures that the voice of The American Legion remains effective in advocating for veterans, servicemembers, and their families. I appreciate the hard work being done across the Department to meet membership goals and keep our organization strong for the future.

Another important effort this year has been organizing the Women Veterans Symposium. This event is focused on providing resources, support, education,

and fellowship for women veterans across Montana. Planning this symposium has involved collaboration with many dedicated individuals and organizations, all working toward ensuring women veterans feel welcomed, recognized, and connected to the benefits and services they have earned.

I want to thank all District Commanders, Post leadership, members, and volunteers for your continued support and dedication. Together, we continue to move the Department of Montana forward while honoring the principles of service and commitment that define our organization.

For God and Country, thank you.



DIANE CARLSON EVANS

It is with a heavy heart that I report the news of the passing of a legendary Montana Legionnaire. I understand tradition, and the passing of Legionnaires unfortunately occurs daily. Still, I truly feel that her inclusion in the records of the Montana American Legion is necessary and, on my part, required. On May 20th, 2026, Diane Carlson Evans reported to Post Everlasting. Diane was a true pioneer and American heroine who will never be forgotten. I considered myself lucky to have gotten to know her over the last 10 years and even more blessed because of her friendship.

Diane joined the Army Nurse Corps Student Program in 1966. Upon graduation in 1967, she was commissioned a second lieutenant and completed officer basic training. While serving as a medical-surgical nurse at Fort Lee, Va., she volunteered for service in Vietnam.

Her deployment began in the summer of 1968, for a one-year tour of duty as a surgical and burn nurse at the 36th Evacuation Hospital in Vung Tau, Vietnam, and head nurse in a surgical unit at the 71st Evacuation Hospital in the Central Highlands of Pleiku. While serving as a combat nurse, she treated thousands of wounded American GI's whom had sustained wounds in combat on the front lines. Upon returning home, she was promoted to Captain and assigned as head nurse in the surgical intensive care unit at Brooke Army Medical Center, Ft Sam Houston, Texas.

Diane had an amazing husband, children, and grandchildren; living in Helena, Montana, she also had a second family: the women and men in uniform with whom she had served during her six years of active military duty and the thousands more she met while founding and leading the Vietnam Women's Memorial effort to honor her military sisters. Dedicated in 1993, it was the first memorial in the United States to honor women in military uniform on the National Mall in Washington, D.C. In the decades since, she served as an advocate for veterans nationally and close to home. Diane wrote about her work with the Vietnam Women's Memorial in her book *Healing Wounds: A Vietnam War Combat Nurse's 10 Year Fight to Win Women a Place of Honor in Washington D.C.* For her tireless efforts on behalf of women veterans, she was awarded the Presidential Citizens Medal in 2025.

If you would like to know more about this truly remarkable Legionnaire, please copy and view the YouTube link below.

Diane Carlson Evans did "whatever it took to save lives" during the Vietnam War
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zDCQicMIEVs&t=888s>



Single Rider \$75

**With Ride Shirt
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DEPARTMENT OF MONTANA AMERICAN LEGION RIDERS INAUGURAL LEGACY RUN



2-Up Riders \$125

**With Ride Shirts and
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AUGUST 14th. 15th. and 16th.

**OVERNIGHT STOPS IN BOZEMAN AND KALISPELL. RESERVE
YOUR ROOMS SOON!**

START AND END AT YOUNG GRIZZLY HARLEY-DAVIDSON IN MISSOULA

Support Montana's Veterans and Donate to the 2026 Montana Legacy Run

The Montana Legacy Run is more than a ride — it's a mission to support veterans and their families. Funds raised go to The American Legion Veterans & Children Foundation to provide emergency financial assistance, keep families in their homes, ensure children's needs are met, and help veterans access the benefits they've earned.

Every donation makes a real difference. Your support means more than charity — it's a commitment to honor and care for those who served and their families.

Give today and help keep the legacy alive.

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AMERICAN LEGION RIDERS



Legion Riders Director

Brian Carpenter

The American Legion Riders Department of Montana have had one hell of a year. Across our wide-open state, Riders proved once again what happens when horsepower, heart, and service all point in the same direction. Every mile we rode carried purpose, and every project strengthened the communities we call home.

Chapter 16 in Lewistown continues to set the pace with their support of the local meat pantry steady, hands-on service that directly impacts families in the community. Their commitment reflects exactly what the ALR stands for, distributing 2,500 pounds of food in 2026 alone.

American Legion Riders Chapter 16 also led a deeply meaningful escort for Tyler Work from Lewistown to Helena, ensuring that a veteran whose remains were unclaimed received dignity, honor, and respect on his final journey to Fort Harrison. Riders from across Montana joined in support, reflecting the Department's commitment to service and the American Legion Riders mission of standing with veterans and honoring their lives with compassion and integrity.

Along the route, communities across central Montana came together in a powerful show of respect. In White Sulphur Springs, first responders provided a county-line-to-county-line escort, and the local American Legion Post stepped up by purchasing fuel for all participating Riders. Their actions, alongside the leadership of Chapter 16, exemplified the strength of the American Legion Family and the shared commitment to ensuring no veteran is forgotten.

Chapter 11 once again carried out their annual Wounded Warrior Run, a powerful mission ride that honors those still fighting battles seen and unseen. Their consistency and dedication keep this tradition alive, and it remains one of the most respected events in Montana. For four years in a row, we've been able to donate over \$14,000 to the program. Chapter 4 delivered motorcycle safety courses this year, stepping up in a big way to keep Montana Riders upright, confident, and ready for the next stretch of road.

Chapter 3 continued their strong support of treatment courts, ensuring veterans working toward recovery aren't walking that road alone. Chapter 119 completed flag presentations, each one reminding communities of the pride and patriotism at the core of who we are.

We're also seeing rapid growth in the Great Falls area

clear proof that the Montana Rider spirit is catching fire.

On top of that, there continues to be real interest in new chapter development across the state. After the recent district meeting where I sat down with several Riders and prospective members it's clear there's genuine momentum for expansion. We'll continue to follow up with those individuals and help guide the process so we can keep building a stronger Rider footprint throughout Montana.

Alongside all this momentum, we're still working through a familiar challenge: communication. Chapter-to-member and member-to-chapter information doesn't always move as cleanly as it needs to. Meeting attendance could be stronger, and when Riders miss those gatherings, chapters miss valuable updates and opportunities. This is an area we're committed to tightening up.

This year also brought major program successes. We launched the second R.O.M.P. early in the season an event that built camaraderie, increased our visibility, and showed Montana exactly who we are. Following that momentum, our first Legacy Run will come to life thanks to Riders who stepped up with grit, creativity, and follow-through.

To every Rider who stepped forward this year whether you led an event, supported a mission, held a role, or simply kept showing up thank you. Your dedication is the fuel that keeps this machine running strong.

We're also refining the way we recognize excellence. Award forms will be distributed directly to Chapter Directors to ensure accurate tracking, fair nominations, and clean reporting. Keep those forms current and make sure your chapter's accomplishments are captured. Looking ahead, the dues assessment for the 2027 membership year will be communicated early to give chapters time to plan and prepare without surprises.

As we roll into another year, I'm proud of what we've accomplished and even more excited about what's waiting around the next curve. Montana Riders don't do anything halfway, and this year proved that loud and clear.

Ride safe, ride proud, and I look forward to seeing every one of you out on the road.



THE AUXILIARY SERVICE STAR



Department of MT President

Leona Somerfeld

We are in the home stretch, my year is coming to an end. I am planning a Birthday Party at our Convention, come celebrate with us at the Best Western Capitol, 1714 11th Ave. Games, prizes, money march, and business.

Poppy Chairman, Dixie Parsons, has decided not to have a poppy boot contest.

Chairman program reporting has been concluded, a Book of Reports will be available at our convention.

If you are a chairman and need certificates contact the Dept. Secretary for the cards.

Make sure you have sent the Dept Secretary your updated officer names, addresses, emails and phone numbers for both Units and Districts for the Dept. Roster. Next year we will be sending the American Legion a roster. Please send in your deceased members to the Dept Secretary at ala.mt.sec@gmail.com for the Memorial Service.

How are you celebrating America's 250th? Make sure you do a write up and take pictures, send to Candice at mtala.candice@gmail.com

On Saturday of Convention, we are helping the American Legion Commander, Kim Kay McCarty Martin, with the Bags of Love and Harley Rodriguez, our Jr. member to fill makeup bags. We need hygiene items

and essentials to fill the purses for our women veterans.

Shareen Johnson, Northwest Division Vice President from Wyoming, will be making a visit on Wednesday June 17th attending our Girls State session for that day. It is an honor for her to visit our great state and department.

We will be kicking off a Raffle for a guided, 47 mile, 2 day, White Cliffs float trip on the Missouri River. The proceeds will go towards our Girls State program. We will need everyone's help to sell tickets! We already have sold \$3000 worth! We will be drawing the winner at Fall Conference.

I want to thank everyone for all the support, the visits and the learning experiences this past year. There were many challenges we faced, but everyone stepped up to make things happen and I believe we got things done.

For God and Country,
Montana Treasurers-Copper, Silver, Gold and Veterans,
Leona Somerfeld, Department of Montana Auxiliary president



Why Accidental Death Insurance Matters for Our Members in 2026 and Beyond

Life moves fast, and none of us expect an accident to change everything in a single moment—but it happens. Across all ages, accidental deaths remain one of the leading causes of loss in the United States, with car crashes consistently among the top contributors. When the unexpected happens, families are often left juggling urgent financial needs like daily living expenses, funeral costs, and the challenges of suddenly losing income.

That's exactly why accidental death insurance continues to be such an important—and practical—option for our Legion Family in 2026 and beyond.

Reliable Protection When Families Need It Most

Accidental death insurance through The Legionnaire Insurance Trust (LIT) provides cash benefits directly to your beneficiaries, regardless of any other insurance you may have. These benefits are designed to help families stay steady during a truly difficult time.

Better yet, this coverage is built with accessibility in mind:

- Guaranteed acceptance for all Legion Family members
- No medical exams or health questions
- 24/7 protection—at home, at work, in your car, or on vacation
- Cash benefits paid directly to your beneficiary

It's a simple way to add an important layer of financial security without jumping through hoops.

Your Coverage Helps Support Veterans, Too

Every time a member enrolls in an LIT program, it does more than protect their family—it strengthens ours. LIT generates valuable non-dues revenue that helps fund critical Department programs and services for veterans. In other words, choosing LIT coverage isn't just a smart personal decision; it directly supports the mission we all care about.

April Spotlight: Accidental Death Insurance

As we highlight this program in April, it's worth taking a moment to review what makes it so impactful:

What It Covers

- Cash benefits paid if a covered accident results in your death
- Guaranteed acceptance for all Legion Family members
- No medical underwriting
- Benefits paid even if you have other insurance

Why It Matters

This is one of the simplest, most flexible ways to strengthen your family's financial safety net. No exams. No complicated applications. Just straightforward, needed protection.

How to Enroll

1. Choose the amount of coverage that fits your family's needs.
2. Enroll easily—no medical questions required.
3. Enjoy quick activation: coverage begins the first day of the month after enrollment and first premium payment.
4. Risk-free review: if you decide within 30 days that the coverage isn't right for you, you can cancel for a full refund (as long as no claims have been made).



FREE RETREAT FOR FEMALE VETERANS HEALING FROM MST

Moral Injury: Healing Military Sexual Trauma (MST)

1 in 3 female veterans have experienced MST. Moral injury may occur when a person experiences betrayal by a trusted person or a person in a position of authority.

Moral injury isn't PTSD but it is related. Moral injury is an invisible wound of the soul that can result in intense shame, agonizing guilt, grief, depression, substance abuse, relationship struggles, anxiety, and suicide.

SOUND LIKE YOU? YOU ARE NOT ALONE. WE CAN HELP.

Join us for a Female only retreat where you will meet other women who have experienced MST and are working through their own healing.

Retreat Location

Boulder Hot Springs, Boulder, MT

July 31- August 2, 2026

FOR MORE INFORMATION ON THE RETREAT AND TO APPLY, CONTACT US AT:

 **EMAIL** MORALINJURY@VOANR.ORG

 **WEB** VOANR.ORG/SERVICES/MI-RETREATS

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