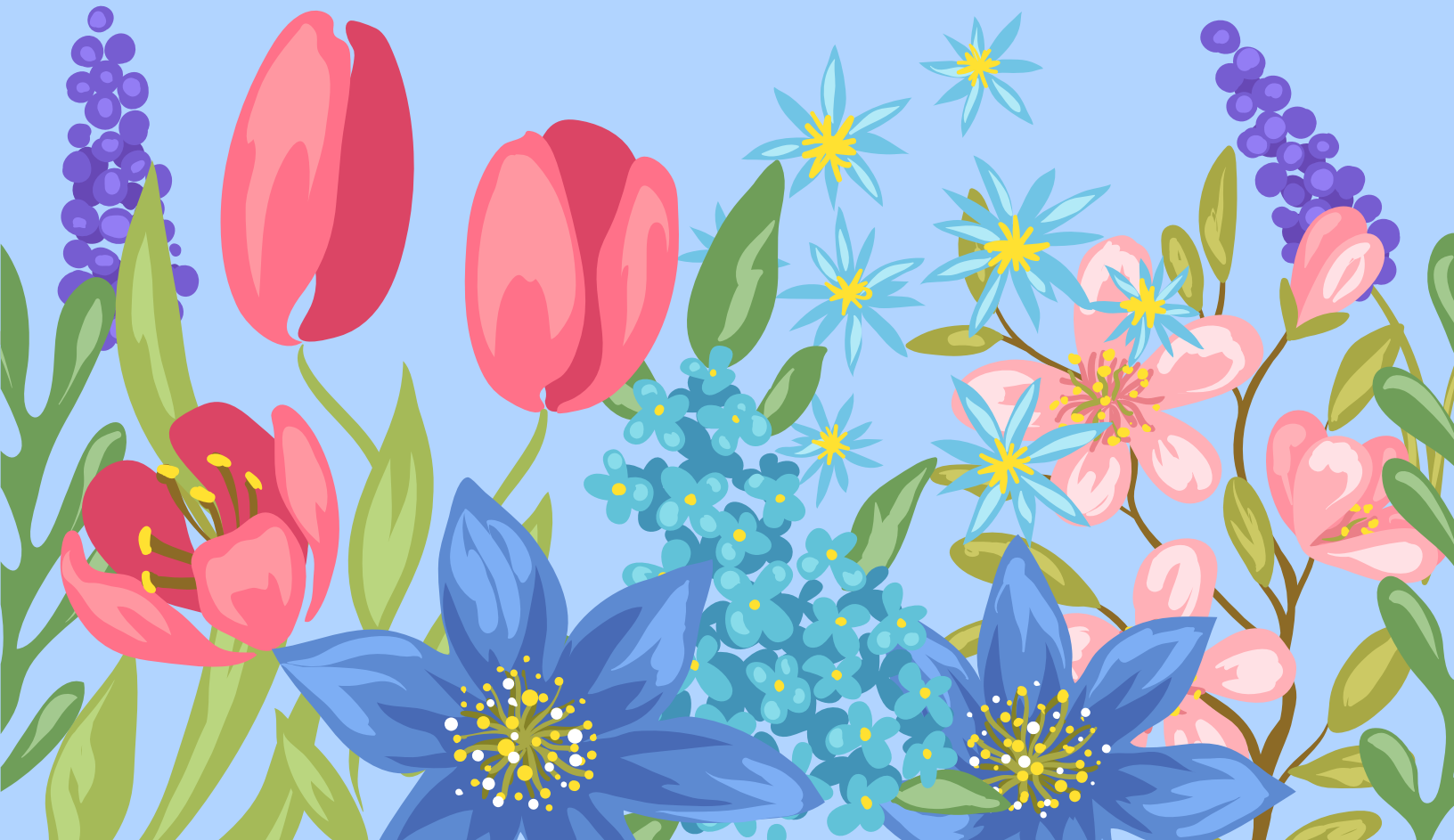


MONTANA LEGIONNAIRE

May



DEPARTMENT COMMANDER

KIM KAY C MCCARTY MARTIN

I had the great opportunity to meet many Legionnaires this Spring at the District meetings. I really enjoyed talking with many and seeing friends again. The District meetings are open to every Legionnaire in every area. They are an opportunity to learn from each other, and hear what other posts are doing in their area and in their communities. As I listened to each Posts report on what they have accomplished since the fall, I know we are the best veteran's service organization!

I had the opportunity to go to Washington DC in March and have been inspired to write a speech for the Spring meetings. I wanted to talk about my experience with our Adjutant Duane, Legislative Chair Roger, Lakeside member Josh, Post 341 member PD, and Auxiliary member Carrie. We had a memorable time talking with our Congressional Representatives Senator Daines, Representative Zinke, Senator Sheehy, and Representative Downing. I was so inspired by our experience; I wanted to inspire all our members in the Montana Legion. I wanted to inspire everyone to get another member in their posts they can mentor and conduct activities with an active post.

My motto for this year has been to inspire, imagine, believe, and achieve. This goal has happened for me and I hope it has for you too. I hope by talking to you that I have been able to inspire. That your imagining an idea and believing in that idea has become fruitful and an achieved goal. I imagined my post becoming 100% in membership, a hard but achievable goal with the help of many. We are now at 110% and I have many to thank for



achieving that goal. I imagined our post becoming more active in the community and with helping veterans. I believe we have accomplished that goal too. The District meetings were led by members of the American Legion whom were inspired to become leaders in our organization. I want to thank each of you for putting together meetings that met goals and shared information that all of us can use to become a better Legion member. Following our Post District, and Department Constitution and By-Laws will continue to help us as we grow in our organization while we inspire, and mentor others. Keep up the good job and Keep helping others as they grow within the organization. Thank you to everyone and enjoy our spring weather.

Duane Cunningham

DEPARTMENT ADJUTANT

DURING THE FIRST WEEKEND OF MAY, THE DEPARTMENT OF MONTANA PROUDLY WELCOMED WESTERN VICE COMMANDER OF THE AMERICAN LEGION, BENJAMIN HEADEN OF ARIZONA, TO LEWISTOWN FOR A MEANINGFUL AND IMPACTFUL VISIT THAT HIGHLIGHTED THE VERY HEART OF THE AMERICAN LEGION'S MISSION: ITS SERVICE TO VETERANS, STRENGTHENING COMMUNITIES, AND BUILDING LASTING CONNECTIONS.

From May 1–3, Vice Commander Headen engaged with Legionnaires from across the state, VA Healthcare providers, innovative and veteran-specific services providers, and community leaders across several events that showcased Montana's commitment to the pillars of The American Legion: Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation, National Security, Americanism, and Children & Youth.

One of the highlights of the visit was Vice Commander Headen's participation in the Women Veterans Symposium. During the symposium, he met with women veterans, local businesses, and healthcare teams to discuss the growing need for specialized care for female veterans within VA healthcare systems. The conversations emphasized the importance of ensuring women veterans receive equitable access to quality healthcare, resources, and support tailored to their unique experiences and needs. The discussions reinforced The American Legion's ongoing advocacy efforts to improve VA services and expand awareness surrounding women veterans' healthcare.

Vice Commander Headen also attended the Montana Legion Riders College, where he spoke about the importance of membership growth, community visibility, and the brotherhood that defines The American Legion Family. As he interacted throughout the day, his message encouraged Riders and Legionnaires alike to remain active and visible within their communities, reminding attendees that every interaction and every act of service helps strengthen the organization and its mission. He emphasized that visibility is one of the greatest tools The American Legion has



in demonstrating continued relevance and support for veterans and their families.

Another memorable stop during the visit was a tour of the Lewistown Post 16 Meat Pantry. Vice Commander Headen was deeply impressed by the innovative program, which provides wild game and locally sourced fresh meat to veterans and families in need. The pantry stands as a powerful example of neighbors helping neighbors and communities coming together to care for those who served. The effort reflects the spirit of volunteerism and compassion that has long defined The American Legion in Montana.

Throughout the weekend, Vice Commander Headen repeatedly spoke about the strength of Montana's Legion Family and the importance of community partnerships in fulfilling the organization's mission. His visit reinforced that The American Legion is at its best when it remains connected, visible, and engaged in meaningful service.

Vice Commander Headen was so impressed and motivated to service, that he plans to return to Montana in June to participate in the first-ever American Legion Riders Legacy Run

in the state. It's another opportunity to showcase the dedication, patriotism, and community spirit of Montana's American Legion Family, and a positive reflection of the camaraderie and leadership within the Montana ALR. Having a National officer participate in our first-ever Legacy Run just adds to the legacy!

A special thanks to our own Vice Commander Irene Dickerson for putting together another great Women Veterans Symposium, Montana ALR Director Brian Carpenter, National Guest Instructor

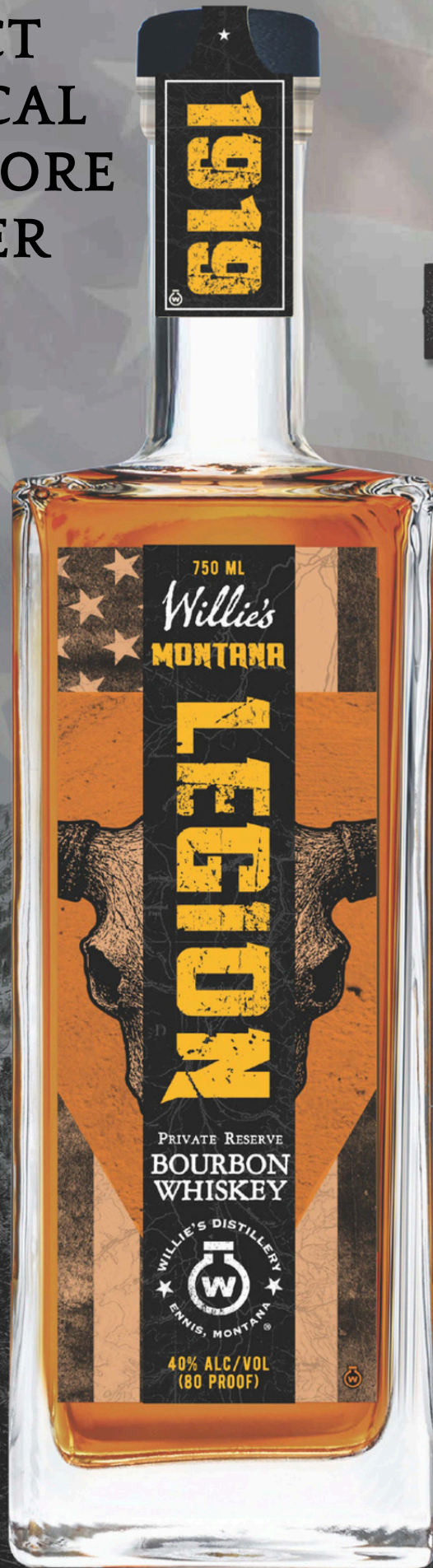
Lucky Nadeau, and the rest of the Montana ALR leadership, for an informative and interactive Legion College class. But even more importantly, a heartfelt thanks to the men and women of American Legion Post 16, the Unit 16 Auxiliary, and SAL Squadron 16 for coordinating and implementing an outstanding weekend of American Legion hospitality. The American Legion Family shone bright as you were at your finest. Could not have pulled it off without all of you. Bravo Zulu!!

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Montana Veterans Deserve Better Than “Claim Coaches”

Eric Beal

Why Investing in Accredited Veteran Service Officers Is the Right Path Forward

In Montana, we pride ourselves on taking care of our own. From the smallest rural posts to the largest veteran organizations in the state, we understand something deeply important: when a veteran asks for help, that help should come with integrity, accountability, and trust. Unfortunately, a growing number of unaccredited, for-profit companies are stepping into the veteran benefits space and marketing themselves as experts in helping veterans increase their VA disability ratings. One of the most visible names is Veterans Guardian. While the advertising may sound appealing, Montana veterans deserve to know the full story before signing contracts or paying significant fees.

The Accreditation Problem

Veterans Guardian is not accredited by the Department of Veterans Affairs. That is not a minor technicality—it is a serious concern. VA accreditation exists to ensure that anyone assisting veterans with disability claims meets federal standards for training, ethics, and accountability. Accredited Veteran Service Officers work under oversight and are specifically trained to protect veterans throughout the claims process. Organizations such as the American Legion, Veterans of Foreign Wars, and Disabled American Veterans provide accredited service officers at no cost to veterans. That means veterans can receive legitimate, qualified assistance for free. So why are some veterans paying thousands of dollars elsewhere?

The Veteran Still Does the Work

Many veterans are surprised to learn that these companies often do not actually file claims on the veteran's behalf. Instead, the veteran is typically responsible for:

- Filing the paperwork
- Scheduling appointments
- Gathering medical documentation
- Communicating directly with the VA
- Managing deadlines and submissions

For Montana veterans living hours away from VA facilities or county offices, this creates an even heavier burden.

At the end of the day, veterans may be paying substantial fees while still carrying most of the workload themselves.

Warnings From the VA

This issue has already drawn attention from the Department of Veterans Affairs. In 2019, the VA issued a cease-and-desist letter to Veterans Guardian expressing concerns regarding unauthorized claims assistance and the charging of fees connected to VA claims work. That warning should matter to every veteran and every policymaker. If questions exist about whether a company is operating within the intent of federal law, veterans deserve to know that before signing agreements or turning over personal information.

Montana Needs More Service Officers—Not More Consultants

Montana veterans face unique challenges:

- Rural isolation
- Long travel distances
- Limited access to healthcare and benefits offices
- Aging veteran populations needing in-person support

The answer to those problems is not outsourcing veteran assistance to remote consulting companies operating outside traditional accreditation systems. The answer is strengthening the trusted systems we already have.

Accredited Veteran Service Officers:

- Work directly for veterans, not profit
- Understand VA regulations
- Provide free services
- Build relationships within local communities
- Help veterans avoid costly mistakes
- Remain accountable to the organizations and agencies they represent

Most importantly, they are there for the veteran long after the paperwork is filed.

A Direct Legislative Ask

Montana lawmakers, county commissioners, and veteran organizations should act now to strengthen veteran support across our state.

We urge leaders to:

1. Increase Funding for Accredited Veteran Service Officers

Montana Veterans Deserve Better Than “Claim Coaches” continued

Every Montana county should have reliable access to trained, accredited VSOs who can provide in-person assistance without cost to veterans.

2. Expand Rural Outreach

Mobile outreach programs and regional service days can help veterans who live far from population centers receive the support they earned.

3. Educate Veterans About Free Accredited Resources

Veterans should know before signing any contract that accredited help already exists through organizations they know and trust.

4. Strengthen Oversight and Consumer Protections

Montana should support stronger transparency requirements for companies marketing VA claim assistance services to ensure veterans fully understand accreditation status, fees, and limitations.

The Bottom Line

Veterans should never feel pressured to pay for help they can receive for free from trained, accredited advocates.

They should never be left wondering whether the company assisting them is operating in a legal gray area.

And they should never have to navigate the VA system alone while someone else profits from the process.

Montana has always believed in neighbors helping neighbors, veterans helping veterans, and communities standing together.

Now is the time to invest in that tradition—not replace it.

Because supporting veterans should always be about service.

Not sales.

Chaplain's Corner

As we leave the month of May, we are reminded of renewal, sacrifice, and service. Spring has brought new life to our communities and provided an opportunity to reflect on the mission and values that continue to guide the American Legion. At the heart of that mission stand the Four Pillars: Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation, National Security, Americanism, and Children & Youth.

These pillars are more than organizational principles — they are commitments to one another and to our nation.

Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation reminds us that no veteran should ever stand alone. Many of our brothers and sisters still face battles long after their military service ends. Whether through hospital visits, assistance programs, or simply checking in on a fellow veteran, we carry forward a sacred duty of compassion and support.

National Security reflects our continued dedication to protecting the freedoms we defended in uniform. Even after service, veterans understand the value of vigilance, preparedness, and unity. We honor those currently serving and pray for their safety and strength.

Americanism calls us to preserve the values and freedoms that define our nation. Respect for the flag, our Constitution, and our fellow citizens remains essential in today's world. As Legionnaires, we lead by example through patriotism, civic involvement, and service to community.

Children & Youth may be the most hopeful pillar of all. Investing in young people means investing in America's future. Through mentorship, scholarships, youth programs, and encouragement, we help shape the next generation with integrity, respect, and love of country.

May is also a time when we pause to remember those who made the ultimate sacrifice. As Memorial Day approaches, let us honor their memory not only with words, but through continued service to others. Their legacy lives on through the work we do every day.

May God bless our veterans, our active military, our families, and this great nation.

MORE THAN A RIDE:

THE HEART BEHIND THE HANDLEBARS

There are some rides measured in miles, and some measured in something far greater. The escort for Tyler Work was not simply a journey from Lewistown to Helena. It was measured in honor, compassion, grief carried together, and in the quiet promise that no one rides alone.

People often see the leather vests first. They hear the engines. They see motorcycles, patches, and flags. What they do not always see is the heart underneath all of it.

The American Legion Riders were built around service. They ride for veterans. They ride for communities. They ride for children, for causes, and for those who may have no one else standing beside them. Sometimes they ride in celebration. Sometimes they ride in support. Sometimes they ride because someone deserves dignity and honor, no matter the circumstances.

This was one of those rides.

Tyler was lost to suicide. Loss like that leaves behind grief that does not fit neatly into words. It leaves questions that linger and moments people replay in their minds. Many who knew Tyler — and many who only came to know his story later — were left carrying a common thought: Could I have done more? Could someone have reached one more time? Could someone have been the one? That question lives at the center of the American Legion's Be the One mission. Be the One asks people to notice. To reach out. To listen. To check on someone whose silence feels different. To understand that a simple conversation may matter more than we realize.



And perhaps there is another lesson too: being the one does not begin after tragedy. It begins before.

As Tyler made his final journey across Montana, people came out and stood along roadsides. Some placed hands over hearts. Some waved flags. Some stood in silence.

In White Sulphur Springs, first responders met the procession and escorted Riders from county line to county line. The local American Legion Post stepped forward and purchased fuel for every Rider making the trip. Fuel seems like a small thing. Until you understand what it really meant. It meant: We see you. It meant: This burden does not belong to you alone. It meant: We are riding with you.

For Tyler, whose remains could have been met with silence, Montana instead answered with engines, honor, and people who refused to let his last ride happen alone.

Perhaps that is the heart of the American Legion Riders. Not just riding beside people when life is easy. Not just showing up for celebrations. But stepping into empty spaces and saying: You matter. You still matter. And maybe for every person reading this, that becomes the challenge we carry forward from Tyler's story:

Reach out. Make the call. Send the text. Ask the difficult question. Be the One.

Because some rides should never have to happen.

The Viking Battalion Left a Legacy of Honor

Irene Dickerson

It was New Year's Day 1942, when Brigadier General (BG) Raymond E. Lee sent a memorandum to the Chief of Staff General George C. Marshall. In the memo, BG Lee proposed that the US Army form ethnic infantry units. There were approximately 380,000 expatriates of Axis-occupied nations living in the United States. To allow the men to serve, the Army would need to lift the ban on foreign aliens in uniform. BG Lee indicated the troops would be able to assist in landings in their homelands, as well as giving them a sense of pride. Dwight D. Eisenhower, a Brigadier General at the time, was vehemently opposed to the concept of using foreigners to join the army. He thought it was un-American. He was overruled by General Marshall. Five ethnic battalions were created: the 1st Filipino, the 100th Japanese American, the 101st Austrian, the 122nd Green, and the 99th Norwegian battalions. On August 15, 1942, the 99th was activated at Camp Ripley, Minnesota. The battalion consisted of Norwegian-born aliens, first- and second-born Norwegians who could speak, read, and write Norwegian, and Norwegian merchant seamen who had been stranded by the occupation of Norway. The battalion's shoulder sleeve insignia featured a Viking longship. They were known as the Viking Battalion. Across five campaigns, the 99th spent 101 days in combat: Normandy, Northern France, Rhineland, Ardennes, and Central Europe. Of the 1000+ soldiers assigned to the Viking battalion, fifty-four were killed in action, 207 were wounded, and six went missing. The men earned 15 Silver Stars, 20 Bronze Stars, and 305 Purple Hearts, with some men wounded more than once. The Green Berets can trace some of their heritage to the Viking Battalion, many of whom still train on skis in the winter mountains.

Save the date. The American Legion, Post 39 of Forsyth, is hosting a community spaghetti lunch. It will be on Saturday, May 15, at noon. It is open to all community members and their families. The lunch will be at the American Legion post building, 110 Ave S, Forsyth, MT. There will be a charge for the plate. Let us know if you can make it. RSVP with the commander, Alan Potter, 406-970-4900, or myself 406-351-9775.

If you have a memory, reflection, or story related to veterans, I encourage you to reach out and share it. Your voice helps build a stronger community and honors those who have served. Every story matter and contributes to preserving our collective history.

Do you have a story to share? I'd love to hear from you. Your story is important, whether a personal experience or a tribute to a loved one. Email at rosebudveteranscorner@gmail.com or call me at 406-351-9775. I look forward to hearing from you.



DAN BROCKMAN AMERICAN LEGION POST 31 AWARDS HIGH SCHOOL SCHOLARSHIP

On 15 May 2026, the American Legion Post in Twin Bridges awarded their \$500 Veterans High School Scholarship to Brayden Pettigrew. We are all very proud of his accomplishments and are excited to see what his next level goals achieve. "Well Done Brayden".

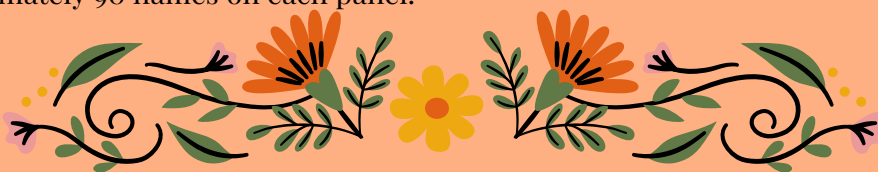
Pictured is Joe Witherspoon left, Brayden middle and Doug Martin right

POST 58 PLENTYWOOD

In the fall of 2020, American Legion Post 58 and VFW Post 4018 in Plentywood began fund raising for a Veterans Memorial in Town Square in Plentywood. The Sheridan County Chamber of Commerce graciously provided an easement for the Memorial. It was estimated that fund raising would take three to five years however by the fall of 2021 there was enough money to begin phase 1 and 2 consisting of the concrete base and flag poles. This was completed by Gary Brekke and his crew with the concrete from Kanning Concrete of Plentywood.

Phases 3 and 4 were completed on June 21, 2022, when Cowboy Crane of Sidney MT unloaded the 10,500-pound black granite monument purchased from Montana Granite of Great Falls. The monument was installed by technicians from Montana Granite. The base is an approximate three ft. tapered square three feet high. The upper portion is a tapered hexagon approximately six feet high with the five seals of the armed forces and the POW/MIA emblem engraved in it. Phase 4 was completed by sculptor Fred Hoppie of Hoppie studios Columbus NB when he installed bronze eagle on the top.

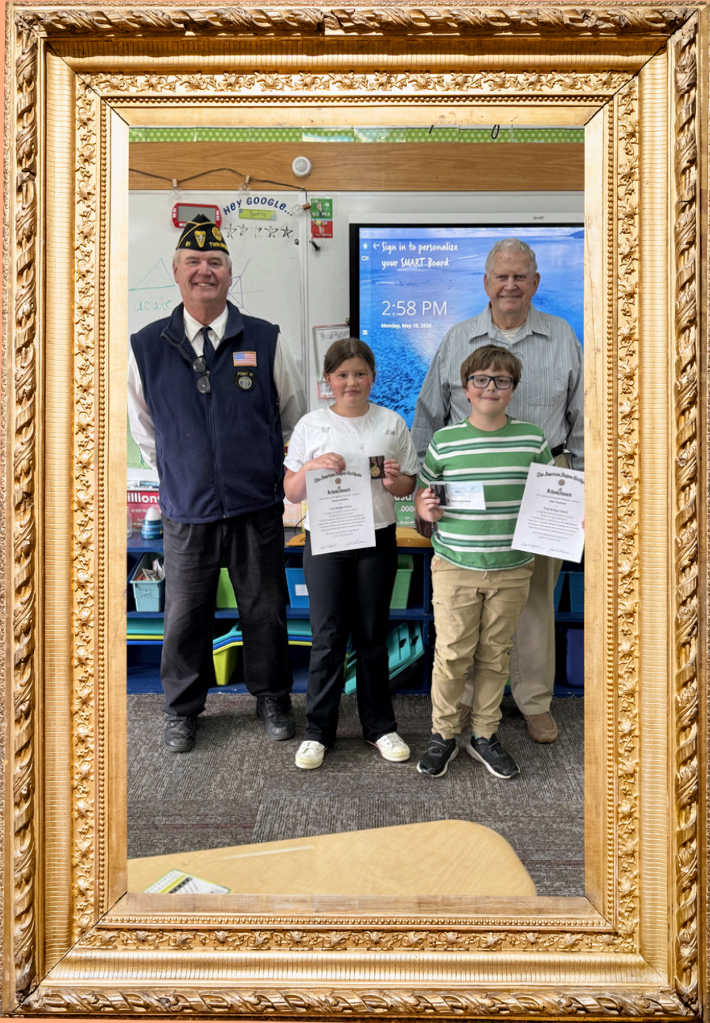
The next steps were the installation of the panel frames built by Strandlund Welding of Homestead MT. The Panels contain area Veteran's names cut into 1/8" stainless steel by Air Design of Scobey MT. The panels were bolted into the frames by volunteers from both Posts with help from US Border Patrol volunteers. In the spring of 2026, we hope to complete the brick work around the lights that illuminate the granite and eagle. We continue to accept \$100 donations until May 1, 2026 to have names of area veterans, including the Guard and Reserve, cut into the last two 4'X 4' panels. There are approximately 90 names on each panel.



AMERICAN LEGION POST 31 SCHOOL AWARDS PROGRAM: 4TH AND 8TH GRADE

On 18 and 19 May 2026, the Twin Bridges school awards program winners were announced for the 4th and 8th grade. At the end of the school year youths are often awarded for their athletic and scholastic achievements; however, the American Legion believes they should also be affirmed and recognized when they demonstrate strong qualities of character and good citizenship.

That's why, since 1921, the Legion has publicly recognized worthy students with its School Award Program for demonstrating outstanding qualities of good citizenship. These students must exemplify six qualities that define character: courage, honor, leadership, patriotism, scholarship and service. Kenna Sandru and Josh Wayland of the Twin Bridges 4th grade and Evalyn Breakall and Kyle Huss of the 8th grade were elected by their classmates for this honor. Congratulations go out to these students for attaining this high level of achievement and demonstrating great citizenship!



Doug Martin, Kenna Sandru, Josh Wayland, and Joe Witherspoon



Evalyn Breakall, Joe Witherspoon (in the back), and Kyle Huss





Single Rider \$75

With Ride Shirt
and Patch

**DEPARTMENT OF MONTANA
AMERICAN LEGION RIDERS
INAUGURAL LEGACY RUN**



2-Up Riders \$125

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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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BRIAN CARPENTER

For Vice Commander

I am honored to announce my candidacy for Department Vice Commander for the 2026–2027 membership year. My years of service within our posts, programs, and communities have deepened my belief in the mission of the American Legion: to serve veterans, strengthen our communities, and protect the legacy of those who wore the uniform.

As Department Vice Commander, I will focus on three core priorities:

- ✓ **Strengthening Membership and Engagement**
Supporting posts across Montana with tools, outreach strategies, and personal connections to help them grow and retain members.
- ✓ **Championing Communication and Unity**
Ensuring every post, district, Rider chapter, and Legion Family member feels heard, valued, and supported as part of one united department.
- ✓ **Supporting Veteran Advocacy and Community Impact**

Backing the programs that matter most—support for veterans in crisis, youth programs, Americanism, and local community projects.

I believe leadership is service, not position. Together, we can continue building a strong, connected, and forward-moving Montana American Legion.

I respectfully ask for your support.



Energy Share Can Help

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Winter is over, but often those heating bills have piled up by now and it's hard to get ahead of them. If you or someone you know cannot pay their home energy bill, please call Energy Share of Montana at 1-888-779-7589 or visit www.energysharemt.com/how-to-apply.

Energy Share is situationally-based, not income-based. That means you don't have to be under a certain income in order to apply for Energy Share. Our biggest qualifier for receiving assistance is whether the applicant is facing a no-heat situation (about to lose their heat or lights, and there is no money in the bank to pay the bill themselves). It's about Montanans helping Montanans, and we are here to help.

2026 American Legion Department Convention

The American Legion of Montana Prepares for 2026 Department Convention in Helena

The American Legion of Montana will convene in Helena June 25–28, 2026, for its annual Department Convention, bringing together Legionnaires, Auxiliary members, Sons of The American Legion, and American Legion Riders from across the state for four days of training, business, and fellowship.

This year's gathering places a strong emphasis on leadership preparation as the organization looks ahead to the 2026–27 Legion year.

Thursday, June 25: Training and Kickoff Events

Convention activities begin Thursday with a slate of training sessions designed to strengthen posts and districts for the year ahead. Training locations will be announced closer to the event, with many sessions expected to take place at Fort Harrison.

The afternoon will feature guest speakers, including candidates for various offices, providing attendees an opportunity to hear directly from those seeking to serve. The Department Executive Committee will hold its pre-executive meeting to conclude end-of-year business, while the Sons of The American Legion will meet at 12:45 p.m.

Thursday will conclude with a barbecue at the Devils Brigade Community Center, with proceeds supporting the 2027 Women Veterans Symposium.

Friday, June 26: Convention Officially Opens

Friday begins with the Past Department Commanders Breakfast, which will be open to all attendees this year. Chairman Ken Simon will serve as master of ceremonies, welcoming Department Commander Kim Kay to reflect on her term and inviting declared candidates for office to share their vision for the future.

At 9 a.m., the official opening session will take place at the Helena Civic Center, where the American Legion will hold its primary convention meetings. The morning will include guest speakers and departmental awards presentations.

A luncheon centered on America's 250th celebration will follow, featuring guest speaker Jeff Stoffer. During the afternoon, delegates will move into committee

meetings to discuss resolutions and establish departmental priorities for the coming year.

The American Legion Riders will meet at the Devils Brigade Community Center under the direction of the Department ALR Director. The evening concludes with a barbecue featuring Willie Blazer of Willie's Distillery, who will also sign bottles of Montana Legion Bourbon.

Saturday, June 27: Membership and Service

Saturday opens with a Membership Breakfast focused on recruiting and retention strategies. All incoming leaders at both the post and district levels are strongly encouraged to attend.

American Legion business sessions will continue at the Helena Civic Center, while the American Legion Auxiliary will meet at the Best Western.

Following the lunch recess, attendees will participate in a community service project in partnership with Touchmark and Helena Food Share. Additional details will be announced. Those interested in participating are encouraged to email Erin at amlegmtsec@gmail.com.

The evening concludes with the annual convention banquet, emceed by Irene Dickerson.

Sunday, June 28: Closing Business and Elections

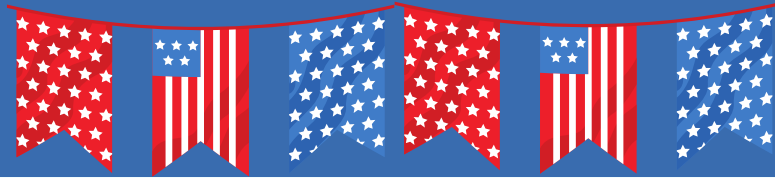
The final day begins with a God and Country service.

Attendees will then move into the final business sessions of the convention, culminating in the election and installation of department officers.

A post-executive board meeting will immediately follow, formally beginning the new Legion year.

The 2026 Department Convention promises four days of connection, leadership development, and planning, ensuring the American Legion continues its mission of service to veterans, families, and communities across Montana.





2026 WOMEN VETERANS SYMPOSIUM

The American Legion Women Veterans Symposium was held May 1–3 in Lewistown, Montana, bringing together women veterans from across the region for a weekend focused on connection, support, education, and camaraderie. The event created an atmosphere where women veterans could share experiences, build new friendships, and learn more about the many resources available to them and their families.

Throughout the symposium, attendees had the opportunity to visit with a variety of vendors and organizations dedicated to serving veterans. Representatives from the Veterans Administration (VA), the Montana Veterans Affairs Division (MVAD), Brent from Battle Born Financials, Bre Rodriguez from Veterans of the Volunteers of America Northern Rockies, and Erica Wells from Operation Juliet all participated in the event. Vendor tables were also set up at the historic Calvert Hotel on Friday, giving attendees additional time to connect one-on-one, ask questions, and gather valuable information and resources.

The women veterans who attended received not only important information and guidance, but also encouragement and support from fellow veterans who understand the unique experiences of military service. Many conversations throughout the weekend reflected the strong sense of community and mutual respect that made the symposium so meaningful.

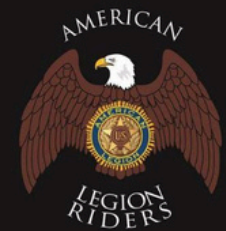
Saturday's events included a special visit from National Vice Commander Ben Headen, whose presence underscored the importance of supporting women veterans and recognizing their

service. The symposium also featured an outstanding lineup of speakers who shared their expertise, personal experiences, and dedication to veteran care and advocacy. Speakers included retired Air Force COL Elisabeth Auld, VA Women's Health Coordinator; COL (Ret) Sue Calentine; VA health coordinators and nurses; Heidi Zentz; Catherine Shackelford; Christina from Miles City CBOC; Jeanette Ricks; Cynthia Otter; fellow Legionnaire Joe Wagner from Emily Wish, LLC; and Juliana Mercer, Post Commander from Lakeview Post.

In addition to the educational sessions and networking opportunities, attendees enjoyed delicious meals catered by Brooks Market, whose outstanding food added to the welcoming and comfortable atmosphere of the event. The ladies who attended also received small gift bags and special handmade ornaments created by HCR Inc., thoughtful touches that helped make the symposium feel even more personal and appreciated.

Overall, the symposium was a tremendous success, highlighting not only the resources available to women veterans, but also the strength, resilience, and sense of sisterhood shared among those who served.





AMERICAN LEGION RIDERS



Building Momentum Through Connection and Purpose

Brian "Carp" Carpenter

The American Legion Riders across Montana continue to set the standard for what it means to serve with purpose, unity, and heart. This spring has been a powerful reminder of what we can accomplish when we come together not just as members of an organization, but as a family.

One of the highlights of the season was the incredibly successful Riders College and Annual Meeting. It was more than just a gathering it was an opportunity to learn, to grow, and to strengthen the foundation of our programs across the state. Riders from all corners of Montana came together to share ideas, discuss best practices, and build relationships that will carry us forward into the coming year.

A special thank you goes out to National Vice Commander Ben Headen for taking the time to join us and share his insight and leadership. We also extend our appreciation to Ken Nadeau, National Vice Chair of the American Legion Riders Committee, for their support and dedication to the continued growth of the Riders program nationwide. Their presence reinforced just how important the work being done here in Montana truly is. Looking ahead, we have several meaningful events on the horizon.

The annual ROMP will be held in Lewistown June 12–14. This event continues to be a cornerstone of camaraderie and shared purpose, bringing Riders together for a weekend that blends fellowship, riding, and strengthening our mission. If you've attended before, you know the impact. If you haven't, this is the year to make it happen.

In August, we will once again take to the road for the Legacy Run, scheduled for August 14–16, 2026. This ride stands as one of our most important

traditions, supporting the legacy of those who served and ensuring we continue to honor their sacrifices through action. More details will be shared as the date approaches, but now is the time to mark your calendars and plan to be part of something bigger than all of us.

Equally important is the work we do when it matters most.

On May 15, Riders we came together in support of the honorable transfer of a soldier we lost to suicide, escorting him to his final resting place at Fort Harrison Veterans Cemetery. This is one of the most sacred duties we carry to stand for those who can no longer stand for themselves and to ensure they are not alone on their final journey. Riders and Legion family members from across the state joined the escort from Lewistown to Helena. Post 25 in White Sulphur Springs purchased fuel for all Riders as we passed through and arranged an escort with the Meagher County Sheriff's Office to escort us from the county line. As we entered Lewis and Clark County we received the same welcome as a deputy helped us make the final stretch to Fort Harrison.

As we move into the summer season, one thing is clear: the Montana American Legion Riders are not slowing down. We are building momentum through education, through service, and through unwavering support of one another.

This is what we do.

This is who we are.

Ride safe, stay connected, and we'll see you on the road.

LOOKING FOR MOTIVATED YOUNG LEADERS

IRENE DICKERSON

Every year, the American Legion Department of Montana brings together outstanding young leaders from across the state for a unique, weeklong experience in government and citizenship. The American Legion (AL) sponsors AL Boys State, and the American Legion Auxiliary (ALA) sponsors ALA Girl State—two parallel programs designed to teach students about democracy, civic engagement, and the responsibilities of citizenship. In 2026, the program will be held at Carroll College in Helena, from June 14–20. During the week, delegates will participate in a model state government, taking on elected roles at the city, county, and state levels. They will learn how government works through hands-on simulations, campaigns, and legislative sessions. The students will build essential leadership, communication, and teamwork skills. During the week, they will connect with motivated peers from across Montana and gain confidence by stepping outside their comfort zones. More importantly, they become eligible for college scholarships and, at some institutions, for college credit. AL Boys State and ALA Girls State are open to high school juniors who are completing their junior year this spring. The American Legion founded the first Boys State in 1935 to promote democratic values among young people, and the program remains one of the most respected youth leadership experiences in the country. If you know a junior who is motivated, curious, and eager to learn how our government works, Post 39 is now accepting applications. We are looking for students who are excited to learn, ready to lead, and willing to take on the challenge.

Save the date. The American Legion, Post 39 of Forsyth, is hosting a community spaghetti lunch. It will be on Saturday, May 16, at noon. It is open to all community members and their families. The lunch will be at the American Legion post building, 110 Ave S, Forsyth, MT. There will be a charge for the plate. Let us know if you can make it. RSVP with the commander, Alan Potter, 406-970-4900, or myself 406-351-9775.

If you have a memory, reflection, or story related to veterans, I encourage you to reach out and share it. Your voice helps build a stronger community and honors those who have served. Every story matters and contributes to preserving our collective history.

Do you have a story to share? I'd love to hear from you. Your story is important, whether a personal experience or a tribute to a loved one. Email at rosebudveteranscorner@gmail.com or call me at 406-351-9775. I look forward to hearing from you.

CALL TO CONVENTION

TO: Officers and members of the American Legion Posts in Montana

GREETINGS

The 107TH Annual Convention of The American Legion, Department of Montana is hereby called to meet and assemble at Helena, Montana June 26, 27, 28 2026 to transact and consider such matters as are included in this call and any other business which may properly come before it.

PURPOSE

The Convention is called for the purpose of electing officers to the ensuing year, electing delegates to the National Convention, amending the Department Constitution, presentation of annual reports, and the transactions of such other business as may be brought before it in conformity with the provisions of the National and Department Constitution.

BASIS OF REPRESENTATION

Representation in the Convention will be by Posts. Each Post in good standing shall be entitled to two delegates and two alternates and in addition shall be entitled to one delegate and one alternate for each one hundred members, or major fraction thereof, whose dues have been received by the Department thirty days prior to the date of the Convention, or May 27, 2026. A Post, to be in good standing must have a minimum of ten paid members and no indebtedness to the Department.

CREDENTIALS

Posts shall submit to Department Headquarters in Helena prior to June 15, the names of delegates and alternates. Cards for voting delegates will be in the Convention office. Each Post delegation should select a Chairman prior to departure of delegates for the Convention.

DEPARTMENT EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

A regular meeting of the committee will be held on Thursday, June 25, 2026 at 4:30 P.M. The first stated meeting of the Department Executive Committee following the Department Convention will be held immediately upon adjournment of the Convention. The term of office of the newly elected members will commence immediately with the adjournment of the Convention.

INSTALLATION OF OFFICERS

All Department Officers and District Commanders will be sworn into office at the conclusion of the session on Sunday morning, June 28, 2026 and will automatically become members of the Department Executive Committees.

Any inquiries for information with reference to the Convention will be answered from Department Headquarters.

Duane Cunningham: Department Adjutant

Kim Kay McCarty Martin: Department Commander



2026 Montana Department American Legion Riders

2nd Annual R.O.M.P *Ride on Military Pride*

The Second Annual Montana Department American Legion Riders R.O.M.P. is set for June 12–14, 2026!

This year's event will be hosted by ALR Chapter 16, sponsored by Fergus Post 16 in beautiful Lewistown, Montana.

Ride Headquarters:

All day rides will launch from and return to the Fergus Post 16 American Legion Club, making participation easy and stress-free. With Lewistown sitting at the geographical center of Montana, this year's ROMP is perfectly placed for Riders from every corner of the state.

Lodging Options:

- Camping is available—contact Derek, Chapter 16 Director, at 406-350-0797 for details.
- An Airbnb with four rooms is available for two nights at \$145 per night. If interested, reach out to Erin at 406-461-6658.

What to Expect:

Lewistown sits right where Montana's mountains roll into the plains, giving Riders an incredible variety of scenery. Expect winding mountain passes lined with evergreens, sandstone river bottoms, sweeping prairie views, and even a look at the historic B-17 training facilities used during World War II in 1942–43.

Each day's route is crafted to bring out the best of rural Montana—great roads, great people, and plenty of miles to Ride on Military Pride.

Flag Day Finale – Sunday, June 14:

We'll close out the weekend with a relaxed morning ride, giving everyone one more chance to soak in the scenery. The ride returns in time for all Montana ALR members to participate in Fergus Post 16's Annual Flag Retirement Ceremony—a meaningful and deeply respected tradition. It's a fitting and powerful way to end the ROMP: time on the road, time with friends, and time honoring the flag we ride for.



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).

VOA NORTHERN ROCKIES

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

FUNDED BY STAFF SERGEANT PARKER GORDON FOX SUICIDE PREVENTION GRANT





THE AUXILIARY SERVICE STAR



Department of MT President

Leona Somerfeld

The month of May Day, Mother's Day, and Memorial Day! We have reports due to all department program chairmen. You need to toot your horns on all you do. We are a vital part of our communities. Impact Reports are due to Community Service Chairman, Tricia McKinney at ala.triciamc@yahoo.com Please send your Unit and Department officer rosters into the Department Secretary, she sent out the form in an email. The updated rosters need to be ready for the Department Convention. I hope you have successful Poppy Drives and special Memorial Day activities. Remember our veterans and keep them and our military in our prayers. Poppy Posters need to be sent into Dixie Parsons as soon as possible, she will be looking for the Poppy Reports by the end of May! Dixie's address is: 211 Quinella ST Belgrade, MT 59714. Send your poppy money with the donation form to: Dept. Sec PO Box 867 Glasgow, MT 59230

Girls State is fast approaching, June 14 to 20th, the committee is still looking for delegates and donations to the program.

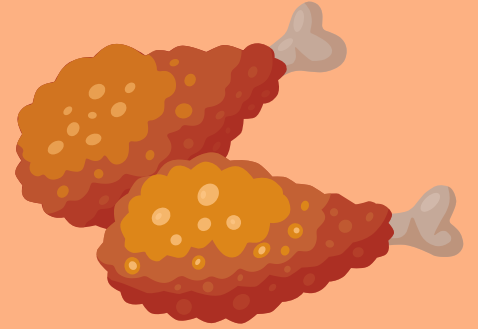
Western Helena, all meals are at the Civic Center except for the Incoming and Past Presidents breakfast which is at the Best Western Helena. I have everything all ready to have a very nice convention atmosphere. We will have

some fun activities to raise a few bucks. I am excited to see all of you! Border Unit 73 will be kicking off their raffle with the proceeds to go to the 2027 Girls State Program. The Auxiliary will be helping Commander KimKay with her "Fill the Purse" project, and the Junior Activities project of "Fill the Makeup Bags". We have the Makeup bags, we need purses, they can be found in your closets or at thrift stores. We need toiletries, hygiene products, whatever is necessary for women to feel human. Commander KimKay, delivers the purses to The Grace Haven and Women's VA Centers in Great Falls, Billings, Helena, Havre, Butte, Hamilton, Belgrade and Missoula. We will be filling these on Saturday afternoon. If there are too many we can take some to our communities. I will be sending out a Convention schedule in the June newsletter.

For God and Country,
Montana Treasures-Copper, Silver,
Gold and Veterans

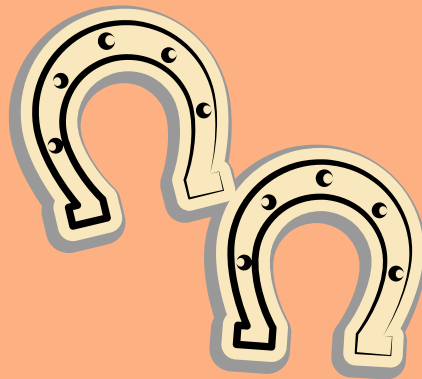


Join Us in Louisville for the 107th American Legion National Convention



The American Legion Family will once again gather for our largest annual event — the 107th American Legion National Convention, taking place **August 28 – September 3, 2026**, in Louisville, Kentucky. This week-long gathering brings together thousands of Legionnaires, Auxiliary members, Sons of The American Legion, and American Legion Riders from across the nation to conduct the business of the organization, celebrate our shared mission, and strengthen connections with fellow veterans and supporters. At the National Convention, delegates will approve updates to the Legion’s constitution and bylaws, set membership dues, and elect the National Commander and Vice Commanders who will lead the organization for the coming year. Beyond the official sessions, attendees enjoy workshops, committee meetings, award presentations, and special events that highlight the best of what The American Legion has to offer. In addition to the business agenda, the convention is also an opportunity to reconnect with old friends, forge new partnerships, and engage in the broader mission of service to veterans, military families, and communities. Whether this is your first convention or your fiftieth, Louisville offers a welcoming backdrop filled with Southern hospitality and plenty to explore between sessions.

Complete your registration today and make plans to be part of this meaningful and memorable event in Louisville, Kentucky. We look forward to seeing you there!



AMERICAN LEGION OF MONTANA

107TH DEPARTMENT CONVENTION

HELENA, MONTANA

JUNE 25-28, 2026 REGISTRATION

NAME OF REGISTRANT(S):

CIRCLE ONE:

LEGION ALA SAL

LEGION ALA SAL

ADDRESS

CITY

STATE

ZIP CODE

EMAIL

CELL PHONE

PLEASE NOTE ANY SPECIAL DIETARY RESTRICTIONS!

| ACTIVITY | COST PER PERSON | TOTAL |
|--|-----------------|-------|
| REGISTRATION FEE | ___ X \$40.00 | |
| LEGION FAMILY NIGHT 6/25/26 | ___ X \$20.00 | |
| PAST DEPT COMMANDER, INCOMING PRESIDENT & PAST PRESIDENT BREAKFAST 6/26/26 | ___ X \$25.00 | |
| AMERICANISM LUNCH 6/26/26 | ___ X \$35.00 | |
| LEGION FAMILY BBQ 6/26/26 | ___ X \$20.00 | |
| MEMBERSHIP BREAKFAST 6/27/26 | ___ X \$25.00 | |
| JOINT BANQUET 6/27/26 | ___ X \$45.00 | |

CONVENTION HOTELS

DOUBLETREE BY HILTON HELENA DOWNTOWN

22 N LAST CHANCE GULCH, HELENA, MT 59601

EMAIL: John.Lytle@Hilton.com

406-443-2200

BEST WESTERN CAPITAL \$132+tax

1714 11TH AVE

CALL: 406-442-1770

CONTACTS

AMERICAN LEGION DEPARTMENT OF MONTANA

DUANE CUNNINGHAM deptmtadjutant@gmail.com 406-465-1451

ERIN CARPENTER amlegmtsec@gmail.com 406-324-3990

COMPLETED REGISTRATION FORMS

MAIL PAYMENTS AND FORMS TO:

AMERICAN LEGION DEPARTMENT OF MONTANA

PO BOX 155

FORT HARRISON, MT 59636



Dear Posts, Units, and Squadrons,

Each year, Montana American Legion Boys State and American Legion Auxiliary Girls State provide young leaders from every corner of our state the opportunity to experience hands-on government, develop leadership skills, and build lifelong confidence in civic engagement. These programs continue to stand among the most impactful youth leadership experiences offered in Montana—but they are only possible because of the unwavering support of our Posts, Units, and Squadrons.

As we look ahead to the 2026 sessions, we have set an ambitious and important goal: to host at a minimum, 100 Boys State delegates and 100 Girls State delegates. Achieving this benchmark will strengthen our programs, broaden statewide participation, and ensure we continue shaping the next generation of Montana leaders. To make this possible, we remain committed to keeping the program fee as low as \$300 per delegate and, most importantly, ensuring that no family is ever asked to pay out of pocket.

Your sponsorship is what allows us to uphold this mission. Every \$300 sponsorship directly covers housing, meals, materials, campus services, and instructional programming that would otherwise place a far greater financial burden on the students and their families. By stepping up to sponsor a delegate (or several), your Post, Unit, or Squadron helps guarantee that a student's opportunity to attend is never determined by their family's financial situation only by their willingness to learn and lead.

Enclosed is the 2026 Boys State & Girls State Sponsorship Form for your Post, Unit, or Squadron. We respectfully ask that you review it, determine how many delegates you can sponsor this year, and return the form with payment no later than May 1, 2026.

Your continued support ensures that Montana youth, whether from our largest cities or our most rural communities, have access to this life-changing experience. Thank you for helping us reach 100 and 100, and for investing in the future of our state through the power of leadership, service, and civic education.

MONTANA AMERICAN LEGION
Boys State & Auxiliary Girls State Sponsorship Form
For Posts, Units, and Squadrons Only

Post / Unit / Squadron Number: _____

Name of Post/Unit/Squadron Commander or Adjutant: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____

Number of Delegates Being Sponsored:

Delegates: _____ × \$300 = \$ _____

Total Sponsorship Amount Enclosed: \$ _____

Payment Information

Please remit payment with this form.

Checks payable to:

The American Legion of Montana

PO Box 155

Fort Harrison, MT 59636

Deadline: May 1, 2026

Montana

Boys and Girls State

Support democracy in action.

Support better citizens and leaders.

Invest in educated youth.



**For more than 80 years,
American Legion Boys and
Auxiliary Girls State has
been a premier civics
program, immersing high
school juniors in a week-
long, hand-on experience of
democratic government.**



Sponsored by The American Legion Department of Montana

American Legion of Montana Launches 2026 Rifle Raffle

The American Legion of Montana is proud to announce the kickoff of the 2026 Rifle Raffle, an exciting opportunity for Montanans to support veterans' programs while entering to win a premier firearm.

This year's grand prize is a Ruger American Gen 2 chambered in 6.5 Creedmoor—a rifle known for its precision, reliability, and quality craftsmanship. Whether you're a hunter, sports shooter, or collector, this firearm is sure to be a prized addition.

Raffle Details:

- Tickets: \$20 each or 6 for \$100
- Limited Availability: Only 1,500 tickets will be sold
- Drawing Date: June 28, 2026
- Eligibility: Must be 18 years or older to purchase
- Winner: Need not be present to win
- Prize Pickup: The winner must claim the prize at Mitchell Supply in Great Falls

The American Legion extends its gratitude to Mitchell Supply for generously donating the prize and for their continued support of veterans and their families.

Why It Matters

Every ticket purchased goes beyond the excitement of winning—it fuels the American Legion's mission to support Montana veterans, their families, and local communities. From youth programs to veteran services, raffle proceeds help strengthen the foundation of service that defines the American Legion. Don't miss your chance to win a top-quality rifle while giving back to those who served. Tickets are going fast, and with only 1,500 available, they won't last long!

For ticket information, contact your local American Legion Post or visit the Department of Montana office.

