

THE TENNESSEE LEGIONNAIRE



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February 2025

Message from the Department Commander

By John Davis

Department Commander

We started off in November with visits to two local Schools for Veterans Day Programs. It is always a pleasure to watch young children offer appreciation to the local veterans.

I was privileged to participate in the Annual Veterans Day Parade in Knoxville, TN, again this year. They did an exceptional job. We also finished the last three District meetings in Middle Tennessee, which were well attended, and a lot of good information was shared by District Commanders.

I was asked to attend the ALA National President visit hosted by ALA Unit 82 in Inglewood. It was a pleasure meeting her and getting to know her vision for the ALA. I attended the Be the One training hosted

by Post 135 in Cookeville. This was my third class on this outstanding program.

In December, I attended the Middle Tennessee Chaplain training in Lebanon. It was a very informative session, and I believe it was well received. I was honored to visit with the 2026-2027 National Commander leading candidate Jay Bowen in the Memphis area. We participated in the Wreaths Across America wreath laying ceremony at the National Cemetery in Memphis, TN. The weather was not the best, but we had a good turnout, and the comradery was great.

Together with the 2nd District Commander and East Tennessee Division Vice Commander, I met in Lafollette to revitalize Post 58. Nine members showed, but no one

wanted to step up to hold any of the required officer positions. We cut the lock on the building and looked inside at the deterioration of the building.

In January we held our Mid-Winter Conference at the Embassy Suites in Murfreesboro. The weather was very bad and a lot of the registered members were unable to attend. Several of the Exhibitors were also unable to attend. The conference went well considering the circumstances. We were able to honor four true heroes out of East Tennessee who assisted veterans and other neighbors within the area who were affected by the storm damage and flooding.

The entire Department of Tennessee Legionnaires and others from around the Country supported our Legion



Family in East Tennessee. I can't tell you how proud I am of all of you.

I'm looking forward to the Washington Legislative Conference coming up in February and the Oratorical Contests in February and March. In April, we have our District Conventions where you will elect your District Commanders for both the Legion and the Sons of the American Legion Squadrons.

Please try to attend.

Boys State Efforts to Begin This Month

Preparation for the Department of Tennessee's 2025 Boys State program begins this month with the launch of the website at tnboysstate.org and the mailing of information to posts and school counselors.

The program --held at Tennessee

Tech in Cookeville -- is open to young men who have completed their junior year of high school, and will run May 25-30. The cost-per-student is \$425, payable by the sponsoring post or the student, and due to the Department Headquarters no later than April 15, 2025.

If your post has never participated in Boys State activities, we'd love for this to be the year you send students from your area.

Let us know if you'd like more details about how to get started. Note, too, that everyone is invited to the inauguration on May 30.

Managing Risk at Your Post by Design

By Matt Bromund

Department Judge Advocate

The American Legion is a voluntary association of veterans coming together to support veterans affairs and rehabilitation, national security, Americanism, and children and youth. We have a compelling mission and thus draw into our family some great people who are willing to put in the work to accomplish that mission. Unfortunately, we also work in the 21st century where people sometimes look to cause chaos rather than promote success.

Fortunately, we have the ability to manage and reduce that risk by designing our Post operations wisely. In this article, I am going to offer some suggestions to capitalize on the opportunities in your community by recognizing the problems that are most often heard from our Posts.

PROBLEM: We can't recruit younger vets to our post

SOLUTION: Form a Post more focused on the interests of younger veterans. There is NO territorial exclusivity to a Post. If your Post is in a college town (Knoxville, Memphis, Cookeville, Murfreesboro, etc.), have a meeting of the town's

posts and form a Joint Post Formation team to recruit 15 members from that college's veteran student body. Focus this Post on an abridged scope of operations (leadership development, Americanism on Campus, Career Development, for example), and have the Post Formation Team assist in mentoring the new Post. Each Spring, have that Post's leadership facilitate introductions between graduating members and the Posts in the area where that graduate is going, thereby adding value to the Membership.

PROBLEM: Our members disagree on the activities of the post
SOLUTION: If the disagreement is minor, set up a special meeting as a 'Post Town Hall' where a senior member seen as impartial agrees to serve as Moderator and everyone is given two chances to speak for up to 3 minutes. At the end of the Post Town Hall, the Moderator offers a 'Resolution' to the Post Executive Committee that, ideally, represents a resolution of the disagreement. The Post Executive Committee will take this 'Resolution' as a source of input and, ideally, implement some sort of

resolution to move the Post forward together. By giving the Members the chance to be heard, you reduce the risk of people quitting or rumor-mongering about what 'goes on behind closed doors'.

PROBLEM: Our members disagree on the activities of the post and it's driving everyone crazy!

SOLUTION: If the disagreement is major and has caused some members to threaten to quit, or even worse, to quit, the challenge is more serious. But the solution is still easy to access: Form a New Post. Take the dissenters, hopefully they add up to 15 members, and help them form a new Post focused on the activities they want to pursue. Perhaps they want to focus on Legion Riders activities. Perhaps they want to have a 'No Alcohol' policy. Perhaps they just don't feel comfortable with the traditions of the Post. Rather than lose them to the Legion, help them make their own Post where they can pursue their own happiness. That's not just the Legion way, that's the American way!

PROBLEM: Our post executive committee is terrified we will be sued

out of existence if we do, well, anything!

SOLUTION: Good planning allows for insuring just about any activity. Rather than give into the CAVE (Citizens Against Virtually Everything) dwellers, map out the action steps for an activity that you believe will help the Legion thrive in your area. For each step, take a second and ask yourself, "Who could be hurt by this?" and "What is the dumbest thing someone could do at this activity?" and write down your assessment. Then, take your plan to one of your area's insurance agents (ideally a veteran, who you can then recruit into the Legion) to see what a 'Special Event Insurance' policy would cost. With that in hand, you can then present the idea to your Post Executive Committee and get your activity going in a way that has the risk managed.

That's it for now. I welcome you to contact me at mbromund@gmail.com between now and the Annual Meeting with your experiences managing risks in the American Legion. We can make our American Legion the best part of our veteran's community—if you speak out and step forward.

Notes From the East Tennessee Vice Commander

By James McLaughlin
East TN Vice Commander

The East Division continues to roll along, with 2 new Posts being chartered within the next month or so. Signal Mountain in the 3rd District, and Rutledge in the 1st District, have us all excited about watching these 2 Posts grow. I would like to personally Thank Commander Scott Foulks (1st District Commander) and Commander Dwight Woodcock (3rd District Commander) for their hard work in assisting the organizers on their efforts. A lot of hours and miles have been put in by both of them to make these Posts a reality.

Mid Winter was a great couple of days, even though weather kept a lot away from Murfreesboro. 1st District Heroes were on display as Department Commander John Davis presented plaques to 1st District Commander Foulks, and Post 49 Commander Paulette Baldwin for their efforts to take care of their communities after the floods and hurricane damage of September 27th, due to Hurricane Helene. For both the work continues daily, but it was nice to see them both rewarded for their efforts. Two plaques were also handed out by

Commander Davis, and these had a strong personal meaning for me. Two firefighters and Sons of the American Legion members were also honored: Patrick McLaughlin, Cocke County Swift Water Rescue Team, and Caleb Jenacaro, Parrottsville Volunteer Fire Department, both received plaques for their heroism, saving countless lives in Cocke County participating in over 180 swift water rescues. Certainly these 2 SAL members answered the call, when their community needed them the most. It was with great pride that I watched both of them be presented at the banquet, because Patrick happens to be my son, and Caleb will hopefully be my son-in-law in the near future. Indeed strength of service to our community, state, and nation was on full display by these 4 individuals.

The East is gearing up for our upcoming Oratorical Contests, with 8 participants ready to go for competition. I encourage all of the Legion Family to go out and support these young men and women as they give speeches on the US Constitution. Certainly we encourage support by the membership because the last thing we want is for these

high school students to be speaking to an empty room. Please go out and give them your support.

I am also please to announce that in the East, because of flooding, 3 NEF applications were approved: two for individual members, and one for Post 61, Mountain City, whose structure was severely damaged by the flood waters. On a tour of the community of Mountain City I was overwhelmed by the amount of damage sustained by that small town. I am incredibly proud of our organization for sending the money to help each of them begin to rebuild. I would like to encourage all Legionnaires and Posts to contribute to the National Emergency Fund. In the past 4 years the NEF has come through in the amount of \$19,000 to East TN Legionnaires. You never know when you may need help.

In November of 2024, Squadron 104, Sevierville member Reed Bull attended Tennessee Intercollegiate State Legislature, a college sponsored club designed very much like the Legions Boys State, and the Auxiliaries Girl State. Reed had to present a bill to the mock House and Senate for the club, and he presented

a bill that would ensure quality End of Life Care for our Veterans, in the Tennessee State Veterans Homes System. During the mock session Reed's Bill caught the attention of Tennessee Secretary of State Tre Hargett.

On January 17th Reed and I were invited to a meeting with Secretary Hargett and we presented a case of a Veteran in the East who did not receive the care he deserved in the last 4 months of his life. Reed's Bill and the subsequent meetings will help ensure that every honorably discharged Veteran in Tennessee will get the care they need, and the dignity and comfort they deserve, as they approach the end of life. As Legionnaires we can all appreciate the hard work this young 18 year old is putting into Veteran care, and we should all double our efforts to recruit for Boys/Girls State. Reed realized how much he cared about our nations Veterans, in Tennessee Boys State 2023. Reed was elected Lt. Governor of the class and represented TN well as a Senator at Boys Nation in Washington DC. Please recruit in your schools for Boys/Girls State, the best Civics classes offered to our youth.

Update From the First District Commander

By **Scott Foulks**

First District Commander

First and foremost I hope you are well and in great spirits.

We are bringing in the New Year with great things happening across the District. Mid-Winter we had a pretty decent showing even with bad weather in our area. Hopefully more of you will get to attend the Summer convention to vote for your post on our new positions being elected throughout the Department. I will not sway or try to convince you to vote for one person or the other, but please keep in mind the best for the American Legion as a whole.

I'm very pleased to report that District 1 is still very family strong and getting ready to add another post to our District out of Rutledge. Future Post 294 is waiting to hear back from National for their temporary Charter.

Mountain City Post 61 is working hard on their rebuilding after the hurricane and about ¾ of the way to their goal for monies to start the rebuild. They will start building when the weather warms up, possibly March, so be willing to lend a hand if you can. Email POC Cdr [Frank Bass](#) email:

Watauga Post 49 Elizabethton Continues to support the hurricane efforts by providing needed goods for the communities affected. If you would like to donate time or supplies please [email Commander Baldwin](#).

If you haven't donated your \$25 for the oratorical contest for awards for our District 1 Contestants please do so. If you're interested

in serving as a Judge or timekeeper, [email POC Bryan Lauzon](#)

Oratorical Contest Dates:

February 1, 10 am Practice Post 24 Johnson City

February 22, 1 pm Competition Post 24 Johnson City

March 1, Competition Post 145 Bristol

Bylaws and Constitutions need to be updated. Almost all of District 1 is outdated so let's please get those turned in by Summer Convention. If you need help let me know.

Please continue to work on membership as much as you can. I know it can be a tough task and repetitive. We're doing ok, but still a long way to go. I would love to have a District revitalization in March where we can sit down and reach out to all of our members that's not renewed and see if we can find out why they haven't. [Web Page for Membership](#)

District 1 Convention will be Held in Elizabethton Post 49, 19 April at 1pm. Please RSVP with [Adjutant Tony Banchs](#) or [Commander Baldwin](#).

I will be endorsing Michelle Perry for your new District 1 Commander for 2025-2026 year. I believe Michelle will fulfill the duty well and bring a great leadership quality to District 1. Will attach her Resolution for you all to read and have. If anyone else plans to run we need to get your resolution turned in ASAP.

I will attach the Resolutions of others who are running as well. If I don't have them I will send them as soon as I receive them.

Nominees:

1st District Commander: Michelle Perry

1st District SAL Commander:

Richard Delconte

State Commander : Todd McKinley

Senior Vice Commander: Tonya Launsby

East Tn Vice Commander: James McLaughlin

NEC: Nancy Harper, Lanny Culver

ANEC: Larry Kersey

If you're interested in positions throughout the district or higher please let me know so I can pass along for next year's nominees. It can't happen without your support.

Note the following events happening around the Tri City Areas. If you're willing to set up a booth to help the cause, links will be added.

Appalachian Veterans Fair AVF 2025 is right around the corner!!! You will find the registration form (link) and a sponsorship form if you wish to be a sponsor.

Click [here](#) to register.

If you have any questions, please feel free to [email Angie Sproles](#) or call her at 276.696.1905

East Division Chaplains Training: Post 70 Lenoir City, Saturday March 15th at 11 am at 103 B. St, Lenoir City. Instructor is [Department Chaplain Bob Howland](#) or East Division [Commander James McLaughlin](#)

Thank you all for the support you have given me throughout the year. I'm very pleased to be your District 1 Commander. If you have something you would like me to attend Please let me know I will try my best to make the event. You're only as good as your TEAM.

Notes From the Third District Commander

By **Dwight Woodcock**

Third District Commander

District 3 is working with East TN Vice Commander McLaughlin in welcoming a new post to Chattanooga/Hamilton County on Signal Mountain; veteran Andrew Flor is working with Department for that community.

Collegedale was to physically receive their Squadron 257 at the Midwinter Conference. Post 257 looks forward to Sons of the American Legion help the Legionnaires and Auxiliary in the Collegedale community.

Third District SAL Commander Dave Curler visited Post 203 Spring City January 16, at the invitation of the Adjutant to begin framing an SAL for the post. It is our goal to have their charter presented at the Department Convention.

Post 96, Copperhill and Post 11, Etowah are struggling. In Copperhill they have a very small pool of eligible veterans eligible to join the American Legion, so we are exploring ideas. Third District SAL Commander Curler has gotten the SAL heading in the right direction.

2025 membership drive dulled with buddy checks are encouraged and being conducted.

Next month of February we have four known high schools and posts participating in our Oratorical contest. We encourage more posts to get involved.

Boys State is just around the corner. Actively promoting attendance. February 11 – 15 – First District Commander and Department ALR Director Foulks and I will be attending the Department of Florida's ALR rally in Orlando Florida. Serving those still serving,

Department of Tennessee Legion Riders Update

By **Scott Foulks**

Department of TN Riders Director

Hello Legion Family. Update information on your Legion Riders in the Department of Tennessee. Mid Winter Conference was conducted. The weather affected the attendance for the conference but we still had an amazing turn out.

We had a resolution 2508 passed with intent to remove the word sponsoring out of our bylaws and constitution. More work needs to be done on this because the resolution did not state a specific area to remove the word from.

We're currently working on getting our standard operating procedures (SOP) together like most states use to bring to Summer Conventions. This will have to go

through the proper channels and procedures before we can get it approved.

We're working on a map that shows where all Legion Posts are located and different color coded to show who has riders programs at that individual post. As soon as it becomes available we will share it throughout the Department.

Legacy Run will be conducted by 3 Division runs this year.

We're asking \$300 per entity per post. For example, if you have Legion, Auxiliary, SAL, and Riders, the cost will come out \$300x4=\$1,200. Please help us make this happen

East-July 12,2025 [POC Paul](#)

[Spencer-](#)

Middle-June 5-8,2025 [POC Albert](#)

[Haas-](#)

West-May 29-June 1,2025 [POC](#)

[Jared Melton](#) -

Our Riders are ready to get the ball rolling and move our program forward and make the Department of Tennessee one of the best. We're trying to fill District director Chairs throughout the districts and working with our district commanders to get those spots filled. Most have been filled. We will make sure leadership gets a copy of those as well.

Thank you all for your support and I look forward to working with you. Keep an eye on our Facebook Page for more information. We only have one page for the Department of Tennessee named American Legion Department of Tennessee Riders.

Got Unserviceable Flags at Your Post?

Post 88 Donelson recently established an ongoing partnership with a local funeral home to dispose of unserviceable flags. If you have a large number of flags, have nylon flags that are difficult to manage, or simply aren't able to hold a ceremony of your own, consider whether a local funeral home might be able to help.

Working together for homeless veterans

By Sheila Van Dyke Billings

Homeless Veterans Committee Chair

The American Legion is dedicated to aiding homeless veterans through advocacy, essential services and a dedicated Task Force for housing, healthcare and employment. The American Legion supports the efforts of public and private sector agencies in cooperation with organizations that aid homeless veterans and their families. Additionally, the Legion supports legislative proposals to provide medical, rehabilitation and employment assistance to homeless veterans and their families.

The Legion recognizes that aiding homeless veterans requires a sustained coordinated effort. This effort should provide secure housing, nutritional meals, essential physical health care, substance abuse aftercare and mental health counseling.

This effort also works on personal development and empowerment. Homeless veterans may also need job assessment and training placement assistance. The end goal for this effort is total self-management for the homeless veteran.

Homeless Veterans Committee Chair Sheila Van Dyke Billings would like to create an emergency housing program for every district in Tennessee. Sometimes when a Veteran reaches out to an organization or agency for help, there are paperwork and time delays,

which may send that Veteran back to the street while they are waiting for these requirements to be satisfied. And there may not be locations where shelter facilities are available or favorable. We are positioned to make a difference that helps Veterans transition into purpose.

It is imperative that when a Veteran seeks help, the promise to assist begins at that very moment and not sending them back into the situation they are trying to escape from. The national initiative named “The Mayor’s Promise” also helps bridge the gap between landlord and the homeless Veteran. However, the critical time is between 24 – 72 hours when emergency housing and other assistance is greatly needed.

With the help of local organizations and agencies that aid homeless veterans, we will be able to create and sustain an emergency housing program. Funding is resolved through individual American Legion Posts’ fundraising efforts while creating long-term relationships with both local and regional hotel owners and seeking guidance through a team effort.

This effort will keep our Veterans safe, housed and healthy while transitioning them from homelessness to long term housing.

The favorable consideration of this emergency housing program will go a long way to improving the overall health and safety of our homeless veteran population in the state of Tennessee.

Resolutions

[Resolution 2025-01; Amend Article V, Section 2 of the Constitution of the Department of Tennessee](#)

[Resolution 2025-02; Amend Article V, Section 2 of the Constitution of the Department of Tennessee](#)

[Resolution 2025-03; Amend Article VII, Section 1 of the Constitution of the Department of Tennessee](#)

[Resolution 2025-04; Rescind Article IX, Section 13 of the Constitution of the Department of Tennessee](#)

[Resolution 2025-05; Cancellation of Sons of the American Legion Squadron 0290 Cancellation Request Form](#)

[SAL Resolution 2025-01; Amendment of Article VI Section 3 of the Detachment of Tennessee Constitution](#)

[Click here for Finance Report](#)

Officer Nomination Resolutions

[Nomination for Election as National Executive Committeeman for the Department of Tennessee](#)

Nancy Harper

[Nomination for Election as Alternate National Executive Committeeman for the Department of Tennessee](#)

Larry V. Kersey

[Nomination for Election as the Commander for the Department of Tennessee](#)

Todd McKinley

[Nomination for Election as the Senior Vice Commander for the Department of Tennessee](#)

Tonya Launsby

[Nomination for Election as the East Tennessee Vice Commander for the Department of Tennessee](#)

James McLaughlin

[Nomination for Election as the Middle Tennessee Vice Commander for the Department of Tennessee](#)

Jerry Brownstead

[Nomination for Election as the Middle Tennessee Vice Commander for the Department of Tennessee](#)

Ron Hessel

[Nomination for Election as the West Tennessee Vice Commander for the Department of Tennessee](#)

Jean Launsby

[Nomination for Election as the First District Commander](#)

Jean Michele Perry

Nomination for Election as the Second District Commander

None

[Nomination for Election as the Third District Commander](#)

Dwight Woodcock

[Nomination for Election as the Fourth District Commander](#)

Royce Fowler

[Nomination for Election as the Fifth District Commander](#)

David Brewer

Nomination for Election as the Sixth District Commander

None

[Nomination for Election as the Seventh District Commander](#)

Vincent Cuevas

[Nomination for Election as the Eighth District Commander](#)

Garold Wallace

[Nomination for Election as the Ninth District Commander](#)

Doug Marshall

Nomination for Election as the Tenth District Commander

None

Update from the Women Veteran Chair

By **Carla Bell**

Women Veteran Chair

It was great seeing everyone that attended the American Legion Mid-Winter Conference 2025. It was understandable if you had to cancel as the snow made road conditions terrible. There were 10 women veterans in attendance and we had a productive meeting.

I was able to present the long-awaited resolution that we talked about in previous sessions at the convention. This resolution from women veterans in the department regarding the position of the Women Veteran Chair as well as having a forum at the conventions has been cemented in a resolution. The resolution was presented to my post home post, Post 291, Scenic City Heroes on January 25, 2025 and is now on its way to the Department of Tennessee. I do apologize for delays, but I am extremely happy that we were finally able to make some progress.

So far, there has not been a volunteer to step up and chair the next excursion for women veterans. I had hoped that we could return to Darkhorse Lodge, but I have yet to find a person wanting to chair that activity.

I am, however, trying to coordinate talks and a

possible Zoom call with the [FULL RANGE FOUNDATION](#). The foundation had a table set up at the Mid-Winter Conference and they offer coaches and counseling to help veterans, their spouses, and family members navigate a variety of transitions. Whether it's deployment, ETSing, or medical issues, the foundation has a staff of coaches and counselors available to help. After completing their course, they offer a vacation in Florida for graduates.

There have been a lot of changes recently in the country and it can become a bit overwhelming just watching the news. Do not hesitate to speak to someone if you have any problems that you are unable to work out on your own. If you recognize that your veteran friend or neighbor needs help, [BE THE ONE](#).

Companies all over the country are downsizing for various reasons. If you work in government and your job may be discontinued, look into other job websites and services. The Goodwill center of Chattanooga is having several hiring events this month. For more information, call (423) 757-9527 or [email](#).

I look forward to seeing you at the next Department Convention in June 2025 in Murfreesboro.

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