

THE TENNESSEE LEGIONNAIRE



Volume XLI, Number 3

www.tennesseelegion.org

February 2026

Message from the Department Commander

By **Todd McKinley**

Department Commander

What better way to begin the first Legionnaire article of 2026 than by talking about 2025. We ended 2025 in 5th place in annual Voter Voice actions and I thank you.

The National Commander's Department came in 1st (naturally) and beat us by nearly 3,400 interactions on the year, but I believe we can overcome that in 2026. After all, why not 1st place for us?

We've also met every membership goal thus far and are 1 of only 21 departments out of 55 to do so thus far, but we're beginning to slow as Membership Chairman Lanny Culver touched on at mid-winter. Now let me tie in membership with Voter Voice, because it's not a far leap. When we send a Voter Voice, especially en masse, those receiving it, be it a Member of Congress or the White House, they look at where the Voter Voice is coming from: not so much the individual, but the organization.

That's where the "strength in numbers" comes into play.

For those who don't know, we now officially have a new Adjutant. I hope everyone is treating Mike Griffin with the respect he deserves for stepping up to serve as Adjutant.

I've also begun editing the department website, but the changes are purely cosmetic as the hosting platform is antiquated. It suits our needs and budget for now, so I'll continue to make small edits moving forward, but don't expect a miracle.

Given our department website can't remotely do what my personal website can, I'm using my personal website to discuss Legion business as Department Commander (link below). Amongst the items I put out are my weekly blog updates, special updates, especially the March 12th Legion Family Day on the Hill, which will coincide



with Be The One Day in Tennessee.

Another important update is our upcoming Be The One Mid-South Roundup, please take a look and volunteer, we need your help.

Links mentioned above: · [National Commander Visit](#) · [Be The One Commission](#) · [TN Commander's Blog](#) · [Voter's Voice](#) · [Department website](#)

Boys State delegate registration begins this month

Boys State begins on Sunday, May 24 at Tennessee Tech University. Registration of delegates will begin later this month and tuition per student is \$425.

Each boy who attends should ideally be partnered with a post, even if your post isn't able to fund the cost of sending a student. If your post has never sent delegates and you'd like to know more, let us know and we'll help you get started.

Students who attend will participate in a 5-day exercise that involves the governing of a mythical 51st state, complete with elections, political parties, and operation of judicial, legislative and executive branches of government. Each school guidance counselor should have received a flier with more information about the program. Visit the Department website Americanism tab for more info. See flier on last page.

Department Adjutant's Corner

Thank you for the support as incoming Adjutant

By Mike Griffin

Department Adjutant

I want to sincerely thank the Department of Tennessee Membership and the Department Executive Committee for confirming me as the new Department Adjutant and Finance Officer. I am grateful to Past Department Adjutant Dean Tuttle for his guidance, training, and patience as I learned the many aspects of this position.

My thanks also go to Debi Cole for her dedication to keeping this Department's finances in order, for all her help, and for her invaluable

advice. I look forward to her continued role in this office.

Additionally, Kathleen Tuttle has been incredibly helpful and welcoming to my wife Mary and I during our travels within the Department and at National events. The insight and hospitality shared by Dean and Kathleen have been a steady source of reassurance as I adjust to the complexities of this new role.

As we continue ahead, I know I'll make a few mistakes, but it won't be because I didn't try. We're facing several challenges, most of which can be addressed by increasing our

membership and encouraging members to get involved.

Personally, I'll do my best to keep my promises and be someone you can rely on. I'm grateful for everyone's kind words, offers of support, and ongoing dedication to The American Legion.

In conclusion, I would like to thank NEC Lanny Culver for his instrumental support in facilitating my appointment to this role, as well as Shannon Rasmussen for her ongoing commitment to volunteerism and the encouragement she has given me along the way.

Message from the Senior Vice Commander

By Tonya Launsby

Senior Vice Commander

Personally, I would like to thank all the posts and individuals that assisted and or joined the National Commander Dan K. Wiley and his aide Doug Hensley as we traveled around West Tennessee. The hospitality, the escorts, and the food; it was an honor to see so many involved and it was appreciated.

District meetings are getting ready to kick-off for the fall. If you need any assistance, please contact me and I will assist you in any way that I can. I will be attending all of the meetings.

I would like to recognize the posts that either hit or ex-

ceeded their goal prior to October 20, 2025:

1. Post 203 McClendon-Garrison Inc., Spring City
2. Post 293 Captain Larry L. Taylor, Signal Mountain
3. Post 117 Macon County Inc., Lafayette
4. Post 137 Mark Twain, Jamestown
5. Post 40 Cheatham County Inc., Ashland City
6. Post 111 Flintville Inc., Flintville
7. Post 155 Hart-Beard, Petersburg
8. Post 200 Acie Moore Inc., Trenton

Thank you for the job well done and please make sure you follow the awards manual and put in the proper paperwork for your post award.

Resolutions for department leadership roles may be found on the website under the Tennessee Legionnaire pull-down menu.

FINANCIAL STATEMENTS as of JANUARY 31, 2026

ASSETS		INCOME	
UNRESTRICTED FUNDS:		Dues Regular	\$222,524.00
CURRENT ASSETS:		Riders/Legacy Fund	\$2,192.00
Cash and Cash Equivalents	\$696,874.28	Interest/General Funds	\$37.26
Investments	\$338,704.34	Charitable Contributions/NEF Donations	\$16,390.00
	-----	Dividends John Deere Stock	\$2,157.84
TOTAL CURRENT ASSETS	\$1,035,578.62	Conferences/Conventions	\$17,821.80
		Insurance Commissions	\$1,840.00
Property and Equipment	\$1,526,359.19	Closed Post Funds	\$84,252.90
Accumulated Depreciation	-\$506,886.47	Boys State Income (Expenses)	-\$652.49
	-----	Labels/Fundraising Programs	\$5,883.50
TOTAL UNRESTRICTED FUNDS	\$2,055,051.34		-----
		TOTAL INCOME	\$352,446.81
RESTRICTED FUNDS:		National Dues Current	\$8,624.50
Cash and Cash Equivalents	\$89,598.92	National Dues Prior Years	\$0.00
Investments	\$524,561.81	Salaries/Taxes	\$101,127.22
	-----	Commander/Adjutant/Asst Adjutant Exps	\$19,269.49
TOTAL RESTRICTED FUNDS	\$614,160.73	Vice/District Commanders	\$5,113.84
		Conventions/Conferences	\$45,795.59
TOTAL ASSETS	\$2,669,212.07	Office Machines/Equipment/Computers	\$8,818.12
		Membership Expenses	\$5,566.89
LIABILITIES AND EQUITY		TN Legion College/Basic Training	\$1,184.20
UNRESTRICTED FUNDS:		Emblem Sales/Flags	\$1,038.92
CURRENT LIABILITIES:		Postage	\$4,587.80
Accounts Payable	\$59,918.53	Printing/Supplies	\$3,068.91
Funds Held for Others	\$97,143.68	Telephone/Utilities	\$14,644.20
Surplus Capital	\$286,640.72	Maintenance/Repairs	\$11,389.93
	-----	VA & R Programs	\$1,000.00
TOTAL UNRESTRICTED FUNDS	\$443,702.93	Insurance	\$6,219.33
		Depreciation	\$22,191.05
RESTRICTED FUNDS:		Labels/Fundraising Expenses	\$664.00
FUND BALANCES:	\$2,165,953.84	Youth Programs	\$19,346.63
Net Income / (Loss)	\$ 59,555.30	Audit/CPA/Legal Fees	\$11,317.49
	-----	Miscellaneous Expenses	\$1,923.40
TOTAL RESTRICTED FUNDS	\$2,225,509.14		-----
		TOTAL EXPENSES	\$292,891.51
TOTAL LIABILITIES/EQUITY	\$2,669,212.07	NET INCOME	\$ 59,555.30

Boys State builds the future of Tennessee

By Jim Reed

Tennessee Boys State

We invite you to join us throughout to see the powerful impact this program has on its delegates, culminating on May 29 with the Inauguration and the swearing-in of the 87th Boys State Governor.

TNALBS is a premier leadership and civic education program, and we rely on the support of Legionnaires to

help promote this life-changing opportunity. We are seeking outstanding young men from all 95 Tennessee counties to participate in Boys State. During this immersive week, delegates:

- Learn firsthand how state and local government works
- Join political parties and campaign for office
- Serve in simulated leadership roles

- Develop leadership, teamwork, and civic responsibility
- Delegates also hear from distinguished state and local leaders, including Tennessee's Governor, Senators, Legislators, Military Leaders, and members of the Tennessee Supreme Court. Boys State builds leaders. Boys State builds citizens. Boys State builds the future of Tennessee.

Update From the First District Commander

By Michele Perry

First District Commander

The National Regional Information Conference was held 31 January in Indianapolis, IN. This was a great chance to gain information, network with other states, and ask questions. This one was attended by 21 Departments and another is being held 7 February in Atlanta. This conference is typically held every year, so officers and members are highly encouraged to attend when it comes around again.

The levels of leadership ensure that the principles of The American Legion are being followed. National provides leadership and guidance, but may not control or otherwise influence the specific activities and conduct of such organizations and local chapters. National may 'strongly encourage' because they cannot state 'have to' - unless someone advocates overthrow of the US Government.

National will tell us we have 'to follow the law'. National will tell you that you can't allow just random people off the street to come into your bar area. It's an IRS rule not TAL. Department and Districts fall under the same leadership and guidance rule. At the end of the day, the Post Commander is the chairman of the board for the Post business entity. The Post Commander is also there to provide leadership and guidance. Membership decides who will be the Commander and each Post shall judge of its own membership.

What guides the Post? The Constitution and Bylaws of each Post. If your last version is before 2019, it's out of date. Don't tie your hands too much. Ensure the minimum numbers for a

quorum are set for both regular and Executive Committee. Ensure the Executive Committee is an odd number and develop a succession plan in the event of illness or death.

You do not need to set everything in stone or you'll wind up drafting resolutions to change minor details. Reviews by the Department Adjutant help the Post align with National and Department.

36 USC 21707. Service of process 'The corporation shall file, with the secretary of state or other designated official of each State, the name and address of an agent in that State on whom legal process or demands against the corporation may be served.' Don't forget to submit your annual business filing requirement with the State of Tennessee. This is not a Legion rule but the law of the state. It grants state tax exemption to a particular Post. The IRS requires an N-990 submitted every year.

36 USC 21708 'The corporation shall submit a report to Congress on the activities of the corporation during the prior calendar year.' This falls under the Post Data Report (PDR) requirement each year. Those testimonies in front of Congress each year are developed from information provided by each Post throughout the US. I recommend 1 May as the due date. It's still a year's worth of data and any activities conducted after your submission carry over to the next year. The CPR can be found on mylegion.org for designated officers.

36 USC 21705 Exclusive right to name, emblems, and badges. The corporation and its State and local subdivisions have the exclusive right to use the name "The American Le-

gion" or "American Legion". There is a simple process to get permission to use 'The American Legion or American Legion' for those who wish to develop banners, t-shirts, etc. A request to National via the Department Adjutant is required to ensure compliance with Legion principles. The form can be found here: <https://register.legion.org/emblem/request>

Well done to Mountain City Post 61 and Johnson City Post 24 in the assistance and follow-up care of a TFA application which revealed a Legion member and his family in need of more than just the TFA. While the application started in Mountain City, extensive time was required in Johnson City. It made sense to get Post 24 involved and now Murfreesboro Post 141 as the member was medically referred to another location in his treatment. It's a great example of Posts working together for the good of the Legion.

Most experienced members know that a lot happens from January until Mid-Summer Conference. Emails pick up with reminders for various programs. There is wrapping up the old fiscal year and preparation for the new fiscal year (and possibly new officers).

Remember to breathe. Larger Posts manage quite a few programs. Smaller Posts will not be able to work all programs but can handle a couple. Do not expect one person to be responsible for everything. How do you eat an elephant? One bite at a time. The more people with forks in their hand, the faster the meal is finished.

Notes From the Third District Commander

By Mark Williams

Third District Commander

The Post Consolidated Report and Consolidated Squadron Report is not paperwork for the sake of paperwork. It is one of the most critical documents a post and squadron can complete. Information reported by posts and squadrons is combined nationwide, used by The American Legion, forwarded to the U.S. Congress and relied upon to apply for and verify many awards.

Every volunteer hour served and every dollar donated turns good intentions into verifiable proof of Impact. The CPR and CSR capture how the American Legion and the Sons of The American Legion support veterans, youth, military families, and local communities. When documented, local service becomes part of a statewide and national narrative that proves relevance, effectiveness, and mission execution.

Accurate CPR and CSR reporting protects the organization's non-profit standing. It demonstrates transparency, accountability, and charitable purpose—essential when facing audits, regulatory reviews, or public scrutiny. Service that is not reported cannot be defended, validated, or verified.



American Legion Jim King Post 107 Partners with Commissioner Marcus Keith to support Keeping Kids Warm Program by donating more than 30 new winter coats for boys and girls in the Soddy Daisy community.



Post 203 proudly serving their community, making a difference every day. From helping neighbors to supporting local events, Post 203 continues to live out the Legion's motto: "Service Above Self."

Monthly Post Adjutant Training takes place on the fourth Monday of each month at 4:30 pm CST. Training is open to any post, unit or squadron member. Zoom link is on the Department website.

Living Your Life With Purpose

By Shoney Shonebarger

Department Chaplain

To those who have worn the uniform, who have stood watch over freedom's frontier, and who continue to shape our communities with quiet strength, this reflection is for you.

The United States Air Force has long been a beacon of purpose, courage, and excellence. Its mottos and expressions are more than slogans; they are calls to live boldly, serve steadfastly, and aim higher than most dare.

"Aim High...Fly—Fight—Win" is not just a battle cry. It's a life philosophy. It reminds us that purpose is found not in comfort, but in challenge. Legionnaires understand this deeply. You've faced adversity, led with conviction, and sacrificed for something greater than yourselves.

The Air Force Core Values, "Integrity First, Service Before Self, Excellence in All We Do," are etched into the hearts of those who have served. These values transcend military life. They guide how we mentor the next generation, how we lead in our communities, and how we carry the torch of legacy.

Consider the motto, "Libertatem Defendimus" -- "Liberty We Defend." It's not just about national defense. It's about defending the dignity of our neighbors, freedom of thought, and the right to live with purpose. Legion-

naires continue this mission every day, whether through advocacy, mentorship, or quiet acts of compassion.

Even the poetic "Kiai O Ka Lewa" -- "Guardians of the Upper Realm," speaks to the sacred duty of watching over others. Legionnaires are guardians still: of values, of history, of hope.

As Winston Churchill once said, "The power of an air force is terrific when there is nothing to oppose it." But the true power of a veteran lies in what you stand for when everything opposes you. Your resilience, your honor, your unwavering commitment to truth and service; these are the forces that shape nations.

So let us continue to live with purpose. Let us fly higher, fight harder, and win not just battles, but hearts, minds and futures.

You are not retired. You are re-deployed! To a mission of legacy! Thank you for your service. And thank you for your continued impact.

Beyond the battlefield, the legacy of an airman extends into every facet of life. The discipline, courage, and commitment cultivated in service become the foundation for impactful leadership in civilian roles, like the American Legion Department of Tennessee.

Legionnaires bring a unique perspective to their communities, inspiring others to pursue excellence and integrity.

The American Legion's emphasis on innovation and adaptability continues to resonate in the lives of those who have served.

Whether mentoring youth, volunteering in local organizations, or advocating for veteran's rights, Legionnaires embody the spirit of continuous growth and service.

Moreover, the bonds forged in uniform create a lifelong brotherhood and sisterhood. This network of support sustains veterans through life's challenges and fuels collective efforts to build stronger communities.

Every Legionnaire's story is a testament to resilience and dedication. These stories inspire future generations to aim high and to serve with honor. In honoring this legacy, we recognize that the mission truly never ends. It evolves, adapts, and expands, just as those who have served do. The call to serve remains, echoing in every act of kindness, leadership, and courage.

Thank you, once again, for your unwavering dedication and the profound impact you continue to make in our world. Ultimately, living with purpose as a Legionnaire means recognizing that service is a lifelong journey. It is the call to impact the world positively, to uplift others, and to build a legacy that transcends time.

Aim high, always!

Dark Horse Lodge welcomes women vets

By Leanne Braddock

Women Veterans Co-Chair

Have you heard of Dark Horse Lodge? This fall, Tennessee women Legionnaires have a special opportunity to experience this remarkable veterans retreat.

Dark Horse Lodge was established by Kirk and Gretchen Catherwood following the tragic loss of their son, Alec, who was killed in combat in Afghanistan. Located in the peaceful woods of Springville, Tennessee, the lodge provides a serene environment where veterans from all branches of the military can relax, reflect, and

connect with fellow veterans.

Activities include fishing on nearby Kentucky Lake, enjoying nature, and sharing fellowship in a setting designed for healing and camaraderie. Operating as a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, Dark Horse Lodge is dedicated to serving combat veterans at no cost to them.

The retreat includes five cabins with a capacity of 25 guests. Each bedroom is uniquely designed and named in honor of one of the 25 Marines lost from the 3/5 Darkhorse unit, creating a lasting tribute to their sacrifice.

From October 20-24, 2026, the

lodge will host a Women's Week Retreat exclusively for 25 women Legionnaires from Tennessee. Participants will receive comfortable lodging, meals, activities, and access to fishing on Kentucky Lake for a one-time \$50 deposit to cover food costs.

Final reservations are due by September 1, 2026, but space is limited and filling quickly.

Women Legionnaires interested in attending should email co-chair@americanlegionwomensvets.org to reserve their spot. To learn more about Dark Horse Lodge and its mission, visit www.darkhorselodge.org.

2025 - 2026 Department Leadership

DEPARTMENT COMMANDER

Todd McKinley, 202-256-0219, toddmac78@yahoo.com

DEPARTMENT SENIOR VICE COMMANDER

Tonya Launsby, 731-636-9600, tonyalaunsby@gmail.com

NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEMBER

Lanny Culver, 731-225-8033, ldclga@hotmail.com

ALTERNATE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEMBER

Larry Kersey, 317-213-9607, navy78lk@att.net

East TN Vice Commander: Dwight Woodcock, 423-223-7966, dwoodcock2399@gmail.com

Middle TN Vice Commander: Ron Hessil, 262515-1746, rhessil@sbcglobal.net

West TN Vice Commander: Jean Launsby, 731487-2825, launsby55@gmail.com

DEPARTMENT CHAPLAIN : Shoney Shonebarger, 601-446-2427, jtshonebarg-er@gmail.com

District Commanders:

First: Jean Michele Perry, 423-300-8737, grimseyperryhold@gmail.com

Second: Sammie Cox, 865-356-2299, scox2299@gmail.com

Third: Mark Williams, 931-266-6778, maekwilliamsii@gmail.com

Fourth: Ed Bray, 843-696-3704, edbray44@yahoo.com

Fifth: David Brewer, 615-429-5362, dcbrewer@yahoo.com

Sixth: Glen Baggett, 615-319-5692, baggett.glen@gmail.com

Seventh: Vince Cuevas, 931-212-0257, vcuevas.alpost39@gmail.com

Eighth: Gary Wallace, 731-589-1107, gpwalljac@gmail.com

Ninth: David Brewer, (Acting) 615-429-5362, dcbrewer@yahoo.com

Tenth: Jeff Jungkans, 901-872-8833, junker1965@hotmail.com

DEPARTMENT ADJUTANT

Mike Griffin, 318 Donelson Pike, Nashville, 615-391-5088 Mike@TNLegion.org

Applications for The American Legion Oratorical competition must be submitted by Feb. 17 at 4:29 pm. The first place scholarship is \$3,000. Check Department website Oratorical tab for more details. Contact your local high schools to notify them of this opportunity.



LEAD AMERICA INTO THE FUTURE

TN AMERICAN LEGION Boys State



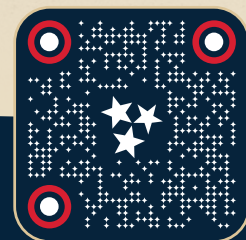
- Do you want to be a leader?
- Do you want to shape the future of our nation?
- Do you want to preserve the freedoms we all hold dear?
- Do you want to learn how to become a contributing citizen?
- Do you want to better your community, your nation, and society as a whole?

You can do all of this and more at **Tennessee American Legion Boys State**, a training ground for the leaders of tomorrow. This five-day gathering — made up of counselors and 600 young men representing every county in Tennessee — is designed to offer hands-on experience in the problems of government.

To accomplish this, participants are tasked with putting into practice the theories of government through actual participation in city, county, and state governments organized as a “Mythical 51st State,” complete with political parties, an election, and the establishment of judicial, legislative, and executive branches of government.

Want to learn more?

Scan the QR code or visit www.tnboysstate.org.



OUR MISSION

TN AMERICAN LEGION BOYS STATE



The mission of American Legion Boys State, Inc., is to develop leadership and to bring the young men who participate to a full realization of the duties of the American citizen.

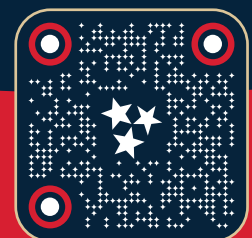
Why is this so important? Because American citizenship is the priceless possession of us all. America is a free land, and the principles of democracy as guaranteed by our constitution have made us a great and powerful nation.

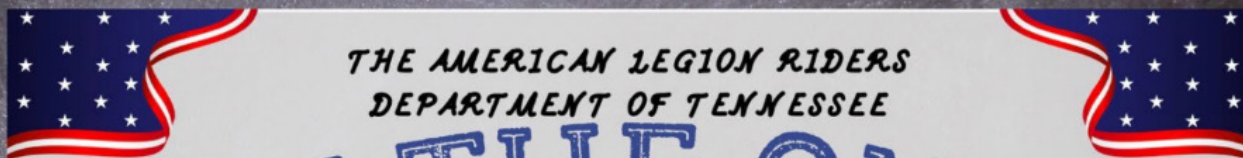
We believe that a prepared and trained youth will more effectively preserve and perpetuate this precious heritage and be ready to assume the trust and responsibilities that go with American citizenship.



Want to learn more?

Scan the QR code or visit www.tnboysstate.org.





THE AMERICAN LEGION RIDERS
DEPARTMENT OF TENNESSEE

"BE THE ONE" MID-SOUTH



ROUNDUP

TENNESSEE'S "BE THE ONE" COMMISSION TO END VETERAN SUICIDE
VETERANS **O**FFERING **L**IFESAVING **S**ERVICES

15-17 MAY 2026

!! ALL LEGION FAMILY INVITED !!
(ALL VEHICLES WELCOME)

RIDES: SCAVENGER HUNTS AND FUN ROUTES
FOOD: CATERED, COOKED, TRUCK VENDORS
LIVE MUSIC * LIVE AUCTION

EVENT SCHEDULE TO BE POSTED BY 3/1/2026



Register
Scan QR Code

Donation/Sponsors
Scan QR Code



FB PAGE

REGISTRATION ONLINE: WWW.TENNESSEELEGION.ORG

PUTNAM COUNTY CONVENTION CENTER
2121 Event Center Dr., Cookville, Tn 38501

State ID: C023613

Jared "RODEO" Melton
Department of TN ALR
Director
tn.alr.director@gmail.com



Roy "Bud" Davis
Department of TN ALR
Adjutant/Finance
alr.tn.clerk@gmail.com