



AMERICAN LEGION

DEPARTMENT OF VERMONT

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July 2026 Bulletin

Messages from the Department Commander, Senior Vice Commander,
District Commanders, and County Commanders

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Mark Your Calendars – Upcoming Events

Department Commander

Fred E. Wilson, Jr.

Legionnaires,

Thank you. I am deeply honored to accept the responsibility of serving as your Commander of the American Legion Department of Vermont for 2026-2027.

This Department has a proud history built by men and women who answered their country's call, returned home, and continued serving their communities with the same devotion they showed in uniform. Today, we inherit that legacy. We are its stewards. And we are accountable for strengthening it for the next generation.



Our mission remains clear: **to support veterans, to advocate for their rights, to serve our communities, and to uphold Americanism and the values that define our nation.** These principles are not slogans. They are commitments — lived out every day in our posts, our programs, and our service.

I want to recognize the officers, chairs, and volunteers who have carried this Department forward. Your dedication sets the standard. I also thank the posts across Vermont — from our smallest rural towns to our busiest communities — for keeping the Legion strong at the local level. You are the heartbeat of this organization.

As Commander, my priorities are straightforward:

The American Legion's "Be the One" initiative is to reduce the number of veterans and servicemembers lost to suicide. Strengthen our membership and welcome new veterans into our ranks. Support our Department Service Officer so every veteran receives the benefits they have earned. Invest in our youth programs — Boys and Girls State, baseball, oratorical, law cadet, scouting (BSA & GSUSA), school awards, temporary financial assistance, and family support — because they shape and support tomorrow's leaders. And ensure that every Vermont American Legion Post feels connected, supported, and valued.

Commander's Project: We must sustain this mission through **fundraising**. From July 2026 through June 2027, my goal is to raise \$10,000.00 in donations to support the No. 1 issue facing the veteran community is suicide. We are leading the effort to reduce the stigma associated with mental health treatment, providing free suicide prevention training and empowering everyone to take appropriate action when a veteran or service member may be

at risk – “one life at a time.” Every Post will have opportunities to contribute, and every dollar will go directly toward assisting and saving people’s lives here in Vermont.

On our 250th anniversary year, we are reminded of three enduring truths:

- **Freedom requires responsibility.** The founders gave us a republic—its future depends on our actions.
- **Patriotism is more than celebration.** It is service, participation, and commitment to the common good.
- **America’s strength lies in its people.** In our diversity, our resilience, and our shared belief in liberty.

As we look ahead to the next 250 years, let us reaffirm our dedication to the principles that define us: democracy, opportunity, and the unshakeable belief that every citizen has a role in building the future of this nation. Let us instruct our children not only about our history, but the responsibility that comes with it. Let us honor our veterans not only with words, but with action—ensuring they receive the care, respect, and support they have earned. And let us continue to strengthen our communities because strong towns build a strong nation.

We have celebrated America’s 250th birthday. But more importantly, we celebrate America’s promise. We stand on the shoulders of giants. Now it is our turn to lead with honor, integrity, and purpose.

Thank you for your trust. I will work every day to earn it.

Fred E. Wilson Jr.

Commander - 2026–2027

The American Legion Department of Vermont





COMMANDERS' PROJECTS FOR 2026-2027

We must sustain this mission through **fundraising**. From July 2026 through June 2027, my goal is to raise \$10,000.00 in donations to support suicide prevention. Additionally, I would like to raise \$1000.00 each for the Oratorical, Green Mountain Boy State, Legion Baseball and (TFA) Temporary Financial Assistance. Every Post will have opportunities to contribute, and every dollar will go directly toward assisting and saving people's lives here in Vermont.



THE AMERICAN LEGION Oratorical Contest



Senior Vice Commander – William Charron

Hello Legionnaires,

First and foremost, I would like to thank you for the honor of electing me as your Department Senior Vice Commander. I am truly humbled by your confidence and look forward to serving each of you throughout the coming year.

Last year, I had the privilege of visiting many of our Posts and meeting a tremendous number of dedicated Legionnaires. I greatly enjoyed seeing the outstanding work being done across our department, and I look forward to visiting even more Posts this year.



This past week, Essex County Commander Roy McKinnon, Southern Area Commander Rich Baptie, and I had the opportunity to visit Mount Norris Scout Reservation. We were given a tour by the Camp Director and were impressed by the beautiful facilities and the incredible opportunities the reservation provides for young people. It was a wonderful visit and a great reminder of the importance of supporting programs that help develop the leaders of tomorrow.

One of my goals this year is to assist Posts that are interested in conducting membership revitalization. If your Post is looking to increase its membership, improve retention, or reconnect with members, I would be happy to work alongside you. All you need to do is reach out, and I will be there to help.

I am excited about the year ahead and the opportunity to work with each of you as we continue to strengthen our Posts, grow our membership, and uphold the values of The American Legion. Together, we can continue making a positive difference for our Veterans, our communities, and our Nation.

For God and Country,

Bill Charron,
Department Senior Vice Commander

NEC/PDC - Joseph Zickmund

The American Legion continues to be a powerful voice for veterans, service members, and military families on Capitol Hill.

The organization's current legislative agenda focuses on critical issues that directly affect the veteran community, including suicide prevention, ending veteran homelessness, improving care for women veterans, protecting and enhancing VA benefits, expanding access to quality health care, and strengthening opportunities for veteran entrepreneurship.



These priorities reflect the needs identified by Legion members across the nation and are aimed at ensuring that those who served receive the support and resources they have earned.

In addition to advocating for veterans' programs and benefits, The American Legion works closely with Congress to promote policies that strengthen national security and improve quality of life for active-duty military personnel and their families.

Through grassroots advocacy, legislative testimony, and direct engagement with lawmakers, the Legion encourages all members of the Legion Family to become involved in the legislative process.

Members can learn more about current legislative priorities and contact elected officials through The American Legion's Grassroots Action Center at <https://www.votervoice.net/AmericanLegion/home>, helping ensure veterans' voices are heard and meaningful legislation continues to advance the well-being of America's veterans and future generations of service members.

For God, Country, and the American Veteran,

Joe Zickmund
NEC/PDC Vermont

Northern Area Commander – Christopher Wood

Hello from the Northern Area.

I would like to start out by thanking the delegates of our last convention who gave me a vote of confidence for this position.

I will work to build trust in those delegates who did not vote for me while doing my best to fill the role entrusted to me.

I look forward to visiting the Posts of Districts One, Two, and Three while we work through the challenges of meeting the Four Pillars of the American Legion while we strive to build our membership. I have a lot to learn, but I promise I will do my best to listen to the concerns of all of the Posts in the Northern Area.

My first goal early in the new year is to help County and District Commanders settle into their roles. There seems to be a strong desire out there for training and guidance on what the roles entail. I encourage all Commanders to review Post bylaws to ensure Posts are following their own rules, and we must all provide strong support to Post Commanders to give them the tools they need to make their Posts run smoothly. It all starts with installations.

This is the first look at the health of a post and participants from its membership. Here's to a great 2026-2027!



Southern Area Commander – Richard Baptie

Hello legionnaires;

I am just starting my new position and hope I can assistance if needed.

I had the opportunity to tour the Mount Norris Scout Reservation, and it is simply amazing camp. With just over 1000 acres of land, they have a lot of room for many different activities. Randall K. Gates, the Camp Director and all of the staff are very dedicated to the Scouts so that they meet the goals set for them.



I will be visiting all Post in my area so if you would like to chat or have questions I can help with, let me know.

For God and Country,

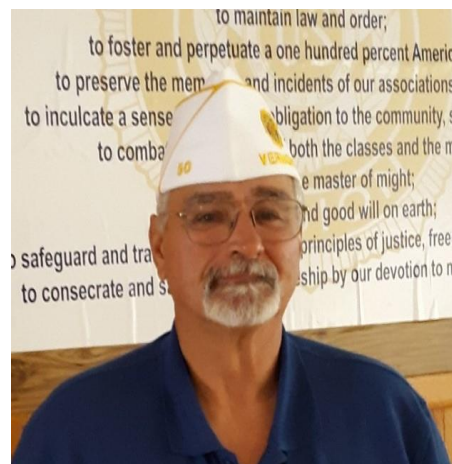
Richard N. Baptie
Southern Area Commander

Department Chaplain – Stephen Frost

Legion Family!

I hope this message finds all of you well, and contented. Cindy and I enjoyed a fruitful and informative Summer Convention, where Department officers were confirmed and sworn in, recently.

This convention really exposed the value of participation by those in attendance. Much like a revival, the attendees enjoyed abundant kinship and camaraderie. Especially, across the ENTIRE Legion Family!



It gladdens my heart to see our friends supporting each other's projects and programs. I encourage ALL members of our family to join in and participate, as there are exceptional opportunities to learn and grow from the well-informed speakers and trainers.

Of particular concern is a waning membership. We all know that our enthusiasm and knowledge of the Legion and its activities is paramount in creating interest in our contributions to our veterans, youth and communities.

I believe that "word of mouth "advertising, is of the highest quality, and the least effort and expense for posts, to attract attendance, attention, and renewal, as well as new membership.

Please help us, by multiplying your investment in our American Legion, through outreach and frequent, clear discussions with those you meet.

Please note, that "Buddy Checks "are NOT recruiting drives. However, Buddy checks may serve as such, indirectly, when members are reminded of the kinship within the organization, and the value of active participation.

Finally, a heartfelt welcome to our incoming Department Commander, Fred Wilson, and a sincere, "attaboy", to outgoing Dept. Cdr., Bill Brothers. We pray for a successful tenure for CDR. Fred and a Well-deserved rest, (briefly), for PDC Bill. Thank you, our brothers, for your strong service and leadership.

Okay, Folks, that's a wrap for me. Love one another, as blood relations, and check in and care for our members who are ailing, as well as those who are disconnected, discouraged or needing our friendship. I love you ALL and am GRATEFUL for God's Hand in our faithful service to His Holy Mission.

Heavenly Father, we pray for a swift and peaceful resolution to the conflicts among your Kingdoms, and we ask, in particular, that you keep our recently deployed service members, as well as ALL veterans, bathed in Your Holy Light, Lord. Please shore up their courage, valor and spirits, and convey them home, safely, in Your Devine and Loving Mercy... Amen.

Stephen Frost,
Department Chaplain

2nd District Commander – Scott Leigh

Had a great Convention! Hope everyone is enjoying this nice weather finally.

We are all starting a new year with the American Legion. Can't stress enough to make sure you all do your buddy checks. Also, we must all strive to hit our membership goals because every year we keep losing numbers and without numbers and members we don't survive as an organization.

The Legion is a big voice for Veterans and their families and their benefits. The bigger our membership is the louder are voice is.

Happy 250th America!!!! Pray for all our deployed men and women in our armed forces.

For God and Country,
2nd District Commander, Scott Leigh



4th District Commander – Dolores Krawczyk

Happy Birthday America and Good Morning to all,

What an exciting time to be part of the largest veteran organization in the country. I'm grateful that I volunteer at the Veteran's Home in Bennington and honored to serve the most valuable members of our community.

VVH provides more activities, opportunities and events than any other Veteran State home in the nation. How lucky I feel every time I walk through those doors.

Imagine an American Legion Post with the same intention and love for the Veterans in their community. It's absolutely a win-win situation for all.

Post members and volunteers have the opportunity to bring music, entertainment, competitive card games, baseball, Oratorical, Boys State and that's just a few core elements that make an American Legion Post respected around the community and state.

To all Post in District 4, how can I help you to become the best revitalized Post in the state. Please call or email me now.

For God and Country,

4th District Commander Dolores Krawczyk



Bennington County Commander – Joe Bump

Comrades,

Hard to believe another year is gone. For me, convention was less than stellar. I was glad to see so many attending.

As I step into the job of Bennington County Commander, I will be out to visit the Posts next month and into the Fall. I look forward to seeing you all.

Good job on membership, I'm sure we will have a great year. Congratulations to Delores on her election, give her as much support as you can. Until I see you again.

Joe Bump, Commander
Bennington County



Essex County Commander – Roy McKinnon

I have been elected as your Essex County Commander for the upcoming year. I will be setting up Post visits in the next couple of months.

We are starting a new year and there are a lot of things happening all over the State.

First is we have County and State Fair season coming up and are looking for Posts that are in those areas to help man the Legion Membership tent. This is going to be part of membership drive this year.



In October is Fall Conference at Rutland Post 31. There will be good training opportunities for all Post leadership and Post members, we will pass more information as it becomes available. Mid-Winter Conference will be coming in January. And before long we will be in Jay Peak one year from now for Convention 2027. Let's make this year a great one and hit the ground running.

I had the opportunity this week to accompany Senor Vice Commander Bill Charron, Southern Area Commander Richard Baptie on a visit to the Mt Morris Scout Camp, what a great facility with a lot of fun activities for scouts. I advise if you get a chance to visit or send a scout to this camp you will find one of the hidden gems in our State.

And last, good luck to all Posts and their new officers for this year. Please let me know if you need help with anything; that is what we are here for.

Roy "Buz" McKinnon
Essex County Commander/ 2nd District Sargent at Arms
603 331-5000
Buzzmckinnon@gmail.com

Membership Director – PDC, Bill Brothers

Hello everyone!

I hope everyone is doing well. Convention is over and new officers, and our new Department Commander is in office, Congratulations to you all.

My new role will be as Membership Director; this is a 5-year appointment, and I am excited about the work and the plan I have been working on for us. Teamwork is key, we can all work together on retaining and recruiting new members throughout the year. If anyone has fresh ideas, please let me know, we can add them to the plan and if you have an event in your area I would like boots on the ground with membership in hand.



Legion Family headed by Karlene DeVine will be attending Addison County Field Days again this year. Rutland State Fair headed by Sr. Vice Commander Bill Charron is on the agenda as well. We will not be in the same spot as last year (building) we asked to be moved outside by the National Guard booth for better exposure.

I will be setting up Zoom Meetings and in-person meetings with our County and District Commanders. It is imperative that they are on board with membership roundups and events.

In closing I want to thank everyone on my year as Commander, it was busy and I appreciated all the support. Thanks to all for a great year and I will be requesting your support as Department Membership Director. On to National Convention in August and then Fall Conference in Rutland!

For God and Country,

PDC William Brothers

Post Everlasting
Gone but Never Forgotten...

Irons, Paul ...	03	Harmon, Lawrence ...	28
Laperle, Norman ...	10	Martin, Frederick ...	31
Kress, James ...	14	Therrien, Philip ...	47
Wright, Richard ...	14	Dow, David ...	48
Woolery, Kirk W. ...	14	Ballou, William ...	51
Sumner, Phillip ...	19	Raposa, Frank ...	69
Hallock, Kenley ...	19	Hartwell, Steven ...	80
Whipple, Lee ...	21		





Its Vermont Country Fair season

One of the best recruiting opportunities that we have . . .
The Legion Family must be represented across the board . . .

Sign Up for a shift at your local country fair.

First of the summer, **Addison County Fair & Field Days, Aug. 4th – 8th**. A true agricultural fair with tractor pulls, 4-H animal shows, pig races, fair food, midway, horse shows and lots of vendors. Non-profit organizations, agricultural vendors, and ACFFD T-shirts.

The American Legion Department of Vermont will have the pop up tent (undercover) with handouts and information about joining the legion.

SEEKING Legion Riders, Auxiliary, SAL and regular Legion members for 3 1/2 hour shift between 11:30 AM and 6:30 PM. Longer on Friday and Saturday.

Bring your best Legion smile and all your enthusiasm for your Legion family.

Must be able to speak about what your post has to offer a prospective member and community. (Example, free meals—Early Bird, Family Picnic, Veterans Day), support of your local community as in sponsorship of Memorial Day and July 4th parades and activities, Legion Baseball, Boys State, Girls State, High school scholarships, Children's Christmas party, free, professional assistance with VA disability claims, discounts at restaurants & businesses, travel & vacation discounts.

Take Aways

Call or text Karlene DeVine to volunteer, (802)377-7380

Free ticket for the day that you volunteer

3 ½ hr shift

Sign up new members for the Legion Family

Wear Legion "uniform"

<https://www.addisoncountyfairfielddays.com/schedule> Daily Schedule



Mark Your Calendars – Upcoming Events

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HQ Closed – August 5th – Aug 10th

National Convention August 27th – September 3rd

(HQ will be closed for Vacation) – **Packets to attendee's forthcoming!**

Fall Conference – October 17th Rutland Post 31

Directory is in the works! If you have NEW phone, email, address let us know @ HQ!

Committee and Chairmen welcome letters are on their way!

Website is under construction! New info and updated photos, forms and etc., are being uploaded, stay tuned!

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Take Care of America's Veterans Act: A \$58 Billion Decision for Veterans

America's veterans could lose as much as **\$58 billion** in benefits and programs if Congress fails to pass the **Take Care of America's Veterans Act (TCAVA)**.

According to American Legion National Commander **Dan K. Wiley**, the stakes could not be higher.

The Department of Veterans Affairs has proposed a rule that could redirect an estimated **\$19 billion to \$58 billion** away from veterans' benefits and into the U.S. Treasury. Despite strong opposition from The American Legion, the proposed rule remains under consideration.

The message is straightforward: **Use it or lose it.**

Rather than allowing those funds to disappear from veterans' programs, TCAVA would preserve those resources by advancing more than **60 pieces of veterans-focused legislation** designed to improve the lives of those who served.

The American Legion has joined **23 national veterans' organizations** in urging Congress to pass the legislation. Together, they argue that these funds should remain dedicated to serving veterans—not be diverted elsewhere.

Commander Wiley emphasizes that this is **not about trading one veteran's benefit for another**. Instead, it is about ensuring available resources continue supporting veterans through meaningful improvements, including:

- Expanding suicide prevention programs.
- Improving treatment for traumatic brain injuries.
- Providing long-overdue relief for combat-injured military retirees through the **Major Richard Star Act**.
- Strengthening support for family caregivers who care for wounded veterans.
- Advancing dozens of additional reforms that improve veterans' health care, benefits, and quality of life.

If TCAVA fails to pass in its current form, these reforms—and the opportunity to preserve billions of dollars for veterans—could be lost.

Commander Wiley encourages every member of the American Legion Family to learn more about the legislation and contact their members of Congress in support of the **Take Care of America's Veterans Act**.

The choice is simple: Keep these resources serving veterans—or lose them.