



The Flash

District 19 Council Newsletter



Email: editorpost51@yahoo.com

July 2025

Volume 101, Issue 1

New District 19 Commander Installed **Karl Wilvert from Post 352**

Visalia, CA

June 29, 2025

At the 106th Department of California Convention in Visalia, California, Karl Wilvert from Post 352, was installed as the District 19 Commander.



*Karl Wilvert, (Post 352) District 19 Commander
2025-2026*

He previously served as the District 19 First Vice Commander, and Post 352 Commander.

District 19 News & Updates **Successful Year Wraps-Up!**

Our recent District 19 General Meeting was a tremendous success! We had an excellent turnout, engaging discussions, and productive planning sessions. A special thank you to Clyde F. Hager Post 465 for their hospitality and generosity. The energy and collaboration demonstrated at the meeting was indicative of the strength of our district.

Membership Drive Pushes Forward

Let's keep the momentum going on our annual membership drive! Every new member strengthens our voice and our ability to serve. Remember to share the value of American Legion membership with eligible veterans in your community.

Resources and support for recruitment are available on the Department of California website.

<https://calegion.org/membership/>

Important Dates & Upcoming Events

June 26-29, 2025: Department of California Convention – Marriot Convention Center, Visalia, CA

July 2, 2025: District 19 Executive Committee Meeting – Post 411, Pico Rivera, 7:00pm

July 9, 2025: District 19 General Meeting - – Post 411, Pico Rivera, 7:00pm

July 12, 2025 – District 19 Installation of Officers, Norwalk Post 359, 1:00pm

August 8-10, 2025: Department Executive Committee Meeting, Post 132, 143 S Lemon St, Orange, CA 92866

August 16, 2025: American Legion Baseball State Championship - Hart Park, Anaheim, CA

Ongoing: Post-level membership drives and community service projects.

Please check the District 19 and Department of California calendars for the most up-to-date information.

Community Service Highlights

Many of our Posts have been actively engaged posting events and activities on Facebook and other social media with impactful community service projects.

We encourage all Posts to share their success stories with the District, so we can highlight your efforts in future newsletters and on our social media platforms.

Your excellent work is a testament to the Legion's commitment to community betterment!

District and Post Spotlights

LA Fleet Week 2025

District 19 was present in San Pedro California for LA Fleet Week.



District 19 group at the CaLegion.org table.

Legion Baseball Heros Dinner

Seal Beach, CA May 2, 2025

A banquet was held at the Seal Beach Golf and Country Club in honor of American Legion's Baseball Heros.

The banquet featured former Major League Baseball players that had been members of Legion Baseball



District 19 Commander Fernando Gallardo and his wife Isabella attending the Baseball Heros Banquet on May 2, 2025.



The Legion Baseball trophy was on display at the Baseball Heros Banquet. The 2024 State Championship was won by the team sponsored by Cecil Cox Post 147.



Suite/Conference Room. Meetings were held on each day of the convention beginning at 0800.

The Aerospace Commission announced that it will begin accepting applications for its Teacher Assistance Program, called CALTAP, beginning in August 2025. This program offers STEM teaching materials, related to all aspects of Aerospace Science, at no cost to the teacher. But the teacher will be required to fill out an online application and be approved for the program. The teacher can receive these teaching materials for life.



106th Convention Photos

District 19 was highly active at this year's convention. Representatives attended several commission meetings, such as the Aerospace Commission, Law and Order, Leadership, Baseball, Finance, Media and Communication, Ritual, and Ways and Means. Additionally, district members attended training sessions on, Aerospace Teacher Assistance Program, American Legion Gaming, Be The One, and Resolutions.



Fred Shacklett (R) receives the Certificate of Appreciation from the Aerospace Commission Chair, Kevin Burns (L) for his support for the commission.

For further details, please contact Fred Shacklett, Aerospace Commission, at fredgold1@live.com.



District 19 Caucus Meeting in Commander's Suite

Commander Gallardo calls District 19 morning caucus to order in the Department Commander's



Manny Vital (L) Post 272 receives a plaque from Department Commander Nick Rosa (C) in appreciation for his work as the Assistant Aide to the Dept Commander. Also receiving an award was Jeffery Jewell (R) Post 165.



District 19 Commander Karl Wilvert standing in line to cast his vote on a resolution.



View of the Convention Floor with delegates from all across the state.



L. Ray Gard (L) Area 4 Vice Commander and Greg Taylor (R) Post 578, present Certificates of Recognition from California State Assembly Member, Mika Gipson 65th District, to Dept staff members Makenna Uriarte (Left Center), and Crystal Silva (Right Center), and Carolina Calderon (Not Pictured). Certificate recognizes their exemplary work with the American Legion.



Past Department Commander, Janet Wilson (C), presents a check to Department Commander, Nick Rosa (L) and Department Adjutant, Sam Flores (R), from the Legionnaire Insurance Trust for \$107,621.00. The Trust provides insurance products to Legionnaires at little or no cost, depending on the product.

Whittier Post 51's Enduring Legacy

Whittier, CA May 10, 2025
Whittier Post 51 continues to uphold its long and proud history as the 51st chartered Post in California.

From its roots in 1919 at the end of World War I, all veterans, including one former U.S. President, Richard M. Nixon, the post continues a proud legacy of producing strong legion leaders and a strong commitment to our veterans.

Of historic note, and for the first time, District 19 had four legionnaires elected or appointed to Department level offices for legion year 2024-2025.

Nicholas Rosa – Department Commander
L. Ray Gard – Dept. Vice Commander Area 4
Richard Ramirez – Department Sgt-At-Arms
Fred Shacklett – Department Historian

Youth development programs like American Legion Baseball, Boys/Girls State, and the Oratorical Competition remain the Post 51's most active sectors.

Whittier Post 51 continues a strong legacy of community involvement, Legion leadership and remains a noteworthy example of legion resilience.



Post 51 Members at the Whittier Founder's Day on 5/10/2025. (L/R) Scott Frees, Gil Palmer, Norm Chavez, Nick Rangel (seated), Louie Adame, Frank Ventura, and Dennis Knight. (Photo: Post 51)

Montebello Post 272

West LA National Cemetery June 7, 2024
The Montebello, American Legion Post 272 Honor Guard rendering honors to a veteran at the West Los Angeles National Cemetery.



Montebello Post 272 Honor Guard folding the American Flag at Los Angeles National Cemetery for an honored service member June 7, 2025.



Montebello Post 272 Honor Guard rendering honors at Los Angeles National Cemetery June 7, 2025.

Norwalk Post 359

Norwalk, CA

June 14, 2025

Today Troop and Pack 924 participated in the American Legion Post #359s annual Flag Day Ceremony at Norwalk, CA is at American Legion Norwalk Post 359.

Every year, many members of the American Legion and other community members retire American Flags that are torn and damaged.

A huge thank you to Norwalk Post 359 for all that you do to retire our nation's flag each year.

Passing the BIG Gavel

In a long-standing tradition, the BIG Gavel was passed from Montebello Post 272 to Norwalk Post 359 at a District 19 general meeting on June 11, 2025, at Clyde F Hager Post 465, Bell Gardens, CA. The American Legion, like many organizations, uses gavels in its meetings and ceremonies to maintain order and signify the presiding officer's authority.



Commander Maldonado with members of Scout

Troop 924

While there isn't a specific, universally recognized "American Legion Big Gavel", the "Big" gavel is passed from post commander to post commander within the district, as a testament of solidarity and support for district events and traditions.



*Post 359 Commander Angelo Maldonado (R) receives the District 19 **BIG Gavel** from Post 272 Commander Carlos Lazarios (L). District Commander Fernando Gallardo looks on.*

"Big Gavels" (e.g., 24-inch gavels) are designed for display or as special awards rather than regular use in meetings, due to their size. These are more symbolic than practical.

Department Convention Highlights

Visalia, CA

June 26-29, 2025

This section will highlight everything that happened at the annual Convention in Visalia.

Commissions & Initiatives Focus

Aerospace Commission

Contact: Fred Shacklett – Chairperson

Email: fredgold1@live.com

The American Legion's Aerospace Commission is a vital component of the organization's broader National Security pillar, dedicated to advocating for and promoting advancements in military and commercial aerospace technologies and programs, including space exploration and research.

Historical Context: The American Legion recognized the critical importance of airpower for national defense from its very inception following World War I. Veterans of that conflict witnessed firsthand how aviation transformed warfare and were determined that the United States should not fall behind in this crucial area. Despite initial governmental budget cuts to aviation units after WWI, the American Legion actively lobbied to build aviation capabilities. When direct military lobbying proved difficult due to resistance from traditional military branches, the Legion pivoted to supporting civilian aviation infrastructure, understanding its crucial role in wartime readiness.

In 1922, the national convention reorganized its committees, establishing the national Aeronautics Committee under the National Security Commission. This committee, and its modern iteration, the Aerospace Commission, has historically worked on:

- Promote civilian air activities.
- Advocate for aerospace research.
- Support the expansion of airfields and airmail services.
- Change public perception of aviation from a dangerous pursuit to a reliable mode of transportation.

Purpose and Responsibilities: Today, the Aerospace Commission's purposes include:

- **Advancement of Technologies:** Considering and projecting the advancement of military and commercial aerospace technologies and programs, including space exploration and research.
- **National Security:** Making recommendations to ensure the U.S. armed forces possess sufficient numbers, quality training, and modern equipment to counter strategic threats. This includes reviewing budgets of the National Guard and Reserve components.
- **Policy Recommendations:** Advising on policies related to sufficient personnel, quality training, modern equipment, and intelligence sharing concerning national security, terrorist activity, and strategic threats.
- **Commercialization of Space:** With the increasing commercialization of space, the commission's focus also extends to

astronautics requirements in the civilian sector.

The California American Legion Aerospace Commission, for instance, actively works on:

- Promoting civilian air activities and aerospace research.
- Reporting on innovative technologies affecting the nation.
- Helping to set policy through resolutions and community action.
- Engaging in activities such as drone training classes for members to explore advances in drone technology and fostering connections between Legionnaires and younger veterans through initiatives like gaming.
- Archiving and documenting the history of California's legacy in aerospace and the Legion's support for it.

In essence, the Aerospace Commission plays a crucial role in ensuring that the United States maintains its leadership in aviation and space, advocating for robust military capabilities, supporting technological advancements, and promoting aerospace education and opportunities within the veteran community.

Veterans' Affairs: Advocating for Our Own

District 19 remains committed to advocating for the rights and benefits of all veterans. We encourage Post Service Officers to stay up to date on the latest VA policies and resources.

Remember, the American Legion is often the first point of contact for veterans in need – your knowledge and compassion make a real difference.

Legislative Commission

Washington, D.C. June 11, 2025
(Article courtesy of *Legion.org*)

AMERICAN LEGION TESTIFIES TWICE ON KEY VETERAN LEGISLATION

American Legion voices support for shielding veterans from fraud and human errors, holding

VA staff accountable and more.

American Legion representatives testified twice June 11 on Capitol Hill on behalf of the nation's veterans, servicemembers and their families.



American Legion Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Director Cole Lyle testifies during the House Veterans Affairs Committee Oversight and Investigations Subcommittee hearing. Photo by Sarah Silbiger

American Legion Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Director Cole Lyle expressed the organization's support for a series of bills under consideration by the House Veterans Affairs Committee's (HVAC) Oversight & Investigations Subcommittee.

[Among the bills under consideration](#) that the Legion supports:

- **H.R. 984**, which would amend title 38, United States Code, to direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to provide timely equitable relief to an individual who suffers a loss based on an administrative error by the Secretary, and for other purposes. "With the implementation of the PACT Act and record volume of claims submitted, the risk of human error has grown," Lyle said. "Veterans should not bear the financial or psychological burden of mistakes beyond their control."
- **H.R. 1663**, Veterans Scam and Fraud Evasion (VSAFE) Act of 2025. Veterans are 40% more likely to fall victim to scams, Lyle noted.
- **H.R. 3185**, Personnel Integrity in Veterans Affairs Act of 2025. "This legislation rightly balances due process with the need to maintain trust in the VA

workforce," he said. "We must hold ourselves to the same standards of honor and integrity we expect from those we serve."

- **H.R. 3482**, Veterans Community Care Scheduling Improvement Act.
- **H.R. 3494**, VA Hospital Inventory Management System Authorization Act.

In conclusion, Lyle told the subcommittee, "Our veterans do not ask for special treatment. They only ask for the care and benefit they earned delivered with competence, integrity, and compassion. The bills under discussion today move us closer to that standard."

Also on June 11, American Legion Senior Policy Associate Andrew Petrie testified before the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity on pending legislation affecting education, financial stability and housing for servicemembers, veterans and their families. [Among the bills under consideration](#) that the Legion supports:



American Legion Senior Policy Employment and Education Associate Andrew Petrie testifies during the House Veterans Affairs Committee's Economic Opportunity Subcommittee hearing. Photo by Sarah Silbiger

- **H.R. 1965**: Veteran Education Assistance Adjustment Act, which under the Post-9/11 Educational Assistance Program would increase the yearly book and supplies stipend for veteran students from \$1,000 to \$1,400.
- **DRAFT**: Expanding Access for Online Veteran Students Act, which would increase the monthly



housing stipend under the Post9/11 Educational Assistance Program for individuals who pursue programs of education solely through distance learning on more than a half-time basis.

• **H.R. 2791:** To amend title 38, United States Code, this legislation would increase the maximum amount of Department of Veterans Affairs Home Loan Guaranty entitlement from 25 percent to 150 percent to enable veterans to achieve homeownership and expand access to stable housing.

• **DRAFT:** To amend title 38, United States Code, to expand eligibility for homelessness benefits to ensure that servicemembers who were discharged under other than honorable conditions, excluding those separated by reason of a dishonorable discharge or General Court Martial sentencing, are included and not excluded from lifesaving assistance.

Homeland Security & Emergency Preparedness

As part of our National Security pillar, we encourage Posts to consider community emergency preparedness initiatives. Partnering with local first responders and creating awareness programs can significantly contribute to the safety and resilience of our towns.

Get Involved!

Do you have a skill or passion that could benefit our District? Are you interested in taking on a leadership role? We are always looking for volunteers to assist with various committees and initiatives. Please reach out to your Post Commander or a District Officer to learn more about how you can contribute.

About This Newsletter

District 19 Council of the American Legion, Department of California is a 503(c)(19) non-profit veterans organization registered with the IRS and the State of California. District 19 publishes this edition to all registered members without charge.

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District 19 meets on the second Wednesday of every month at 7:00 PM at various locations throughout Los Angeles County, California. See latest calendar for locations.

Officer Reports

Commander

Comrades,

As we enter the summer months, I would like to extend my heartfelt gratitude for your continued dedication and hard work.

I attended the Department Convention at the end of June in Visalia, CA. During this time, I will be working with Commander Fernando in my transition into my new role as the 19th District Commander. I look forward to working with each of you to aid in accomplishing our mission to uphold American Legion values and direction.

I invite you to attend our district general meetings on the second Wednesday of each month. These meetings are where we discuss upcoming events and post-activity plans. Our July general meeting will be on July 9th at Post 411. All meetings start at 7 pm, with dinner typically available from 6 pm. The FLASH will have more specific information on each meeting during the year.

We will be installing the District Officers on July 12th 2025, at 1 pm. The 4th Area Vice Commander will be attending our installation on July 12th. The ceremony will take place at Post 359 in Norwalk. There will be an early dinner after the installation. This is an excellent opportunity to meet the entire team and to enjoy comradeship with our Legion veterans.

District 19 remains a vibrant and active force within the California American Legion, thanks to the tireless efforts of each Post and every individual member. Your commitment to our four pillars – Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation, National Security, Americanism, and Children and Youth Programs – is truly inspiring.

This edition of our newsletter introduces a new format with new topics. We aim to keep you informed about recent successes, upcoming events, and essential updates from across our district. Let's continue to work together, strengthen our bonds, and serve our communities with the same spirit that has defined The American Legion and District 19 for over a century.

For God and Country,
Karl Wilvert, *District 19 Commander*

Jr. Past Commander

Fernando Gallardo
District 19, Jr. Past Commander,
Rivera Post 411
213-925-8927

Good morning, Comrades,
I would like to inform you if you are in the area of Norwalk on the 2nd Thursday and 4th Thursday of each month. I continue to assist with the Food distribution at Norwalk Post 359, from 10 till food items run out. So, if you know families that need help, inform them of Food distribution.

I attended and assisted with Norwalk Post 359, Flag ceremony.



Commander Gallardo retires a US Flag in a Burn Pit

I have been assisting the (Ritual team) with the installations of District 19 newly elected officers at Posts.



Commander Gallard with Manny Vital and newly installed Post 51 Commander Fred Shacklett.



District Auxiliary ladies being sworn in



Norwalk Post 359 Installation



The District 19 Installation Team at Post 184 Redondo Beach.



Isabel Gallardo sworn in as District 19 Auxiliary President



District 19 Installation Team with the new officers of Lakewood Post 496.

I attended the Department of California Visalia convention from June 26-29, 2025, and I attended the District 19 Auxiliary Presidents installations.



Commander Gallardo presenting a donation to Dept Commander Nick Rosa at 2025 Department Convention

I would like to inform you all that our new Department of California is David Brambilla.

I would like to thank of District 19 Officers, Post Commanders, and members for supporting me for 2 straight years. My time being the District 19 Commander is over.

Now I ask that you support Newly elected District 19 Commander Karl Wilvert has you support me. My last request is that as I was the District 19 Commander I worked hard in getting the District 19 Auxiliary team to work together with us. Let continue to be a strong family.

Thank you.

First Vice Commander

Manuel E. Vital

Fellow Comrades,

Hello, my name is Manuel E. Vital, and I am the New 1st Vice Commander for the 19th District. As your Past 4th Area Chairperson, we didn't achieve 100 % but came close. We ended up 1 in California for the 4th Area. I would like to Congratulate Post 27, Post 61, Post 314, Post 359, and Post 411 for Achieving 100% this year. As your incoming 1st

Vice Commander for the 19th District, I am hoping with the help of our Post 1st Vice Commanders that our Area and District can achieve 100% along with our Posts. I do plan on setting up some Revitalizations during the year. Just a reminder, Membership does continue until National Convention so please continue to reach out to Members who haven't renewed their dues. For those who paid their dues already Early Bird Dues, beginning July 1, 2025. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at cuauhtemoc51@yahoo.com or 1(323) 595-5407. Have a Safe Fourth of July.

Second Vice Commander

Angelo Gandalf Maldonado, JD

Welcome Members, Riders, Sons, and Auxiliary,

Hello Noisy 19! I am Angelo Gandalf Maldonado, your newly elected 2nd Vice Commander. I gained my eligibility to the American Legion in the early 1990s with Operations Just Cause and Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm. I am a 27-year veteran of the U.S. Army Infantry.

In our community, I am also, the President of the La Mirada Volunteer Center, Current Commander of the Norwalk American Legion, Past Commander of the La Mirada Veterans of Foreign War, Former Public Safety and Traffic Commissioner for the City of La Mirada, Former Member of the Board of Examiners, Appeals and Condemnation, City of Long Beach, Crime and Intel Analysis with the LAPD, Background investigator for the Los Angeles World Airport Police and Retired Sergeant First Class of the U.S. Army.

We don't have rank in the American Legion; this is only provided to give context and provide background to get to know me. I probably left out so many other volunteer and life work I have done to bring me to this position today.

In another life, I try to be a lawyer, but my love for helping veterans has kept me out of the law office. I love helping and advocating for my veterans.

As the newly elected 2nd Vice Commander, I plan on conducting at least 10 fundraising events this administrative year. I began with a turnaround bus

trip to Harrah's Casino in Rincon on July 20th.

We have a scheduled breakfast at Norwalk American Legion August 24th. We have a mystery bus trip in the works for either September or October. I am working with other Commanders to have a breakfast at Montebello, an event at the USS Iowa Post and a cigar night at South Bay Post (Redondo Beach) to name a few. These are just out of the box events to keep us going and support VA&R and later next year, hospitality.

For those young members that don't know what VA&R is, it's Veterans Administration & Rehabilitation. Clear as mud? It is the arm that the American Legion uses to help fund our Veterans Service Officers that help veterans obtain their benefits, supports events at our local VA Hospitals and anything related.

VA&R produces programs on direct assistance, outreach and support for veterans and their families with the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) claims and benefits, health care, memorial affairs and women veterans programs to ensure that they receive the highest quality of care from VA for their injuries and illnesses incurred from their military service. Still clear as mud? VA&R helps you and your families. Know that VA&R is here for you and there to help and ensure proper care.

I look forward to rolling up my sleeves and working for our district to obtain the fundraising to help our programs continue. Thank you for your support and confidence. I am your faithful servant.

Third Vice Commander

Jesse Y. Leal

Greetings Comrades. My name is Jesse Leal, newly elected 3rd Vice Commander for District 19. I am also the newly elected 1st Vice Commander for Redondo Beach Post 184. I was formally the Adjutant for my post for the last 2 years. I am a 6-year US Army Military Police Investigator (MPI) and also served 8-years US Air Force Security Police Patrolman.

On May 30th I attended the Redondo Union High School MCJROTC Annual Awards Banquet to award certificate of merit to our cadets.

During the month of June, I was honored to attend the 75th Anniversary of the Korean War honoring those military veterans who served in the war.



Vice Commander Leal at 75th Anniversary of the Korean War



Banner commemorating the 75th Anniversary of the Korean War.



Vice Commander Leal with Legionnaires at 75th Anniversary of the Korean War

In the month of July, we will have at Redondo Beach

Post 184 our annual 4th of July celebration to include our SALs Ribfest. We will also be celebrating our first annual Korean Veterans Day celebration on July 27th.

Adjutant

Martin Martinez

Biography -

- incoming Commander Lakewood Post 496
- Past Commander Lakewood Post 496
- Past 1st Vice Commander Post 496 (multiple terms)
- Executive Committee member

Report on Activities -

- Attended most recent Department convention June 27 - 29
- Volunteer - District 19 booth at L.A. Fleet Week at Port of L.A. during Memorial Day weekend.
- Recently donated blood at Red Cross in Long Beach - 82 lifetime blood donations
- Attended LBVA Veterans Social Breakfast held on 5/30 and last Friday of each month.
- Master of Ceremonies at city of Lakewood annual Memorial Day ceremony



Martin Martinez and another Legionnaire attending Memorial Day event at City of Lakewood

Fred Shacklett

The past month I had the honor to be sworn in as the Commander of Whittier Post 51, on June 21, at the Whitwood Branch Library in Whittier, CA.

L. Ray Gard, Area 4 Vice Commander, was the Installing Officer, assisted by District 19 Commander Fernando Gallardo, Manny Vital and Richard Ramierz. I am honored and pleased to continue my service to the Post, District, and our veteran community.

Additionally, I will be assuming the chair of the Department of California Aerospace Commission. I am replacing Kevin Burns who has stepped down after many years.



Commander Shacklett receives his gavel from L. Ray Gard, Area 4 Vice Commander. District 19 Commander Fernando Gallardo looks on.

District 19 Pin and Sticker Available

A limited number of District pins and stickers are still available.

The pin is approximately 1 ¼ inch wide. Made of polished brass, with dark blue background color. The pin has a double rubber clutch on the back and won't stain your cover or suit lapel.



Noisy 19th Pin Front and Back

The sticker is 3.00 inches wide, with yellow and blue colors on an adhesive back.



Noisy 19th Sticker

If you would like to have one of these collectables, come to a District 19 meeting.

You can get both a pin and a sticker for \$5.00.

Contact Us

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District 19 Adjutant: m.martinezal496@gmail.com

Newsletter Editor; editorpost51@yahoo.com



★ **PLEASE JOIN US FOR
DISTRICT 19, DEPARTMENT OF
CALIFORNIA INSTALLATION OF
2025-2026 OFFICERS** ★

**Auxiliary, Sons, and Legionaires
July 12th at 1PM**

**HOSTED BY THE NORWALK AMERICAN LEGION
FAMILY POST 359, WE ARE FAMILY**

**We Recognize the Past as we look
forward to the future**

**EARLY DINNER
FOLLOWING CEREMONY**

11986 FRONT STREET, NORWALK, CA 90650 (562) 474-1977

ABOUT THE DEPARTMENT OF CALIFORNIA

In 1919, many American Legion departments across the United States were holding conventions for the very first time. The Department of California held its first organizational gathering at Post 1 in San Francisco on October 10-12, 1919, where H. G. Mathewson was chosen as the first Department Commander. A year later, the first official Department Convention was held in San Diego on August 23-26, 1920, with David P. Barrow (Berkeley Post 7), elected as the second Department Commander.

Focusing on service to veterans and their families, the Legion evolved from a group of war-weary veterans of World War I into one of the most influential non-partisan and veteran, non-profit organizations in America.

The state headquarters was located at the Veterans War Memorial Building on Van Ness Avenue, across the street from San Francisco City Hall. The building is under the administration of the American Legion War Memorial Commission, [https:// alwmcsf.org/](https://alwmcsf.org/) . But in 2014, when the headquarters rent was raised from \$1 a year to \$2,500 a month, the Department decided to look for a new home.

As it was in 1919 and continues to the present day, California has the largest veteran population of any state in the United States, at approximately 1.8 million veterans (as of 2022). San Francisco was our headquarters until 2015 and was home to the first American Legion post in California. That post was named as American Legion San Francisco Post 1 (within District 8) and was also located in the Veterans Memorial building, but now meets at the First Lutheran Church on 2nd Avenue SW.

In 2015, after approval from a majority of the state Legion membership, the Department of California bought an 8,000 square foot former bank building in Sanger, CA, sixteen miles east of Fresno (Janet Wilson Department Commander).

In March of 2015, the Department of California headquarters officially moved to Central California. Conveniently located in downtown Sanger. Our new headquarters has ample parking and provides offices for the Department Commander, the Department Adjutant, meeting rooms, storage for records, as well as offices for our administration and support staff.