

PAST DEPT. COMMANDER LAID TO REST

CULVER CITY - On Saturday, March 21, 2026, we said goodbye to our brother, Jere Romano, and committed him to the Post Everlasting at Holy Cross Catholic Cemetery and Mortuary in Culver City, CA.



Jere L. Romano, Past Dept Commander 2023-2024 and National Executive Committee member 2024-2026

The service was attended by legionnaires, friends, and family members from all across the state.

We honor his life, his service, and his fellowship with deep respect and gratitude.

Though he is no longer with us in body, his memory will remain a part of our Post and in the hearts of all

who knew him.

May he rest in peace, and may we never forget his dedication and spirit.

Till we meet again, brother.

Editor's Note:

I served as Jere's Historian for the Department of California during his tenure as Department Commander. It was an honor to serve and be part of the American Legion's continuing legacy and official recorder

UPCOMING DISTRICT 19 EVENTS

April 1, 2026 – General Meeting at Lakewood Post 496 at 7 PM.

April 8, 2026 – General Meeting at Montebello Post 272 at 7 PM.

April 7, 2026 – LACC meeting, Norwalk Post 359

May 2, 2026 – Area 4 Caucus and PCC, at Ben Bowie Post 228, 5115 S. Central Ave, Los Angeles, 9 AM to 2 PM.

May 13, 2026 - Post 184, Redondo Beach 7 PM

DEPARTMENT ORATORICAL CONTEST RESULTS

by [caLegion HQ](#) | Mar 27, 2026



FRESNO, CA The Department Oratorical Contest took place on Sunday, March 22, at the Veterans Administration Hospital Auditorium in Fresno, CA.



Thank you to all of the participants and volunteers who made this event possible, and congratulations to the winners! We wish you the best of luck on your future endeavors.

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DEPARTMENT ORATORICAL CONTEST RESULTS:

- 1st Place – Christina Fayad, Area 5 | \$2,400
2nd Place – Andrew Lei, Area 2 | \$2,000
3rd Place – Joseph P Schimmoller, Area 6 | \$1,400
4th Place – Omkar Siddeswaran, Area 4 | \$1,400
5th Place – Jonas Marschner, Area 1 | \$1,400

The Area 3 participant was unable to participate in the Department contest due to personal matters.

MORE INFORMATION:

For more information on Oratorical Contests, please see our Oratorical Contests Commission page.

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VA ANNOUNCES \$112M GRANT OPPORTUNITY

Strengthens community-based suicide prevention efforts

For immediate release March 18, 2026 11:00 am

WASHINGTON — The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs today announced a \$112 million grant funding opportunity for organizations that provide suicide prevention services to Veterans across the country.

Grant funding is available to nonprofit organizations, state and local governments, federally recognized tribes and other community-based organizations that have a demonstrated capacity to serve Veterans. These funds are made available through the Staff Sergeant Parker Gordon Fox Suicide Prevention Grant Program, and grantees have until June 12, 2026, to apply.

“These grants invest directly in communities that know Veterans best and are often the first to recognize when someone is struggling,” said VA Secretary Doug Collins. “They have been successful in connecting Veterans, service members, and their families — especially those not yet engaged with VA — to services that help reduce suicide risk and promote well-being.”

For details about eligibility, priorities and application requirements for this year’s Fox grant awards, visit https://grants.gov/search-results-detail/361498. VA also offers technical assistance and application resources, including webinars and guidance materials at MentalHealth.VA.gov/ssgfox-grants.

Background:

In 2025, Fox grants supported more than 17,000 Veterans, service members and family members — a 31% increase from 2024. This includes nearly 9,000 Veterans with an elevated risk for suicide,



91.8% of whom reported a decrease in risk factors after getting help from Fox grant recipients.

Additionally, more than 2,500 Veterans enrolled in VA health care for the first time in 2025 as a result of their interaction with grantees, a 43.7% increase from 2024. Since the launch of Fox grants in 2022, VA has awarded \$210 million to 111 organizations across 46 states, U.S. territories and tribal lands.

Sixty percent of the Veterans who die by suicide were not in VHA care at any point in the two years prior to their death. That's why VA has taken steps to enroll new Veterans at VA. In 2026 so far, VA has enrolled more than 76,000 Veterans into VA health care.

That's just one of many [landmark VA achievements during the second Trump Administration](#), including:

1. [Opening 33 new VA health care facilities](#), expanding health care access for Veterans around the country.
2. [Reducing the backlog of Veterans waiting for VA benefits by 63% since Jan. 20, 2025](#), after it increased 24% during the Biden Administration.
3. Completing 82,083,918 direct care appointments in FY2025, up 4.1% from FY2024.
4. Offering Veterans more than 2.2 million appointments outside of normal operating hours, giving Veterans more timely and convenient options for care.
5. [Permanently housing 51,936 homeless Veterans](#) across the country in FY2025, the highest total in seven years.

INTRODUCING THE CLAIM ASSIST PORTAL:

A new, easier way to respond to VA claim requests

- March 4, 2026
- Office of Business Integration, Veterans Benefits Administration

VA is making it easier than ever to keep your [claim](#) on track. With the new Claim Assist Portal, you'll have a faster, more convenient way to

respond when additional information is needed. If you've filed a benefits claim, you may receive an email with a direct link to the portal, helping you respond quickly and confidently so your claim can keep moving forward. No paperwork, scanning or searching through VA.gov required.

What to expect

Fast notifications – You'll get an email and subsequent SMS text if more information is needed.

Secure access – Log in using:

- The email that received the message.
- A temporary password provided in the message.
- A time-sensitive verification code sent to your email after you log in using the email address and temporary password.

Simple responses – You may need to check a box, type a short answer to a question or digitally sign a form online.

Trusted sender – Messages will come from "U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (do-not-reply@notifications.va.gov)," a known VA Notify email address that should not go to your spam folder.

Faster processing – Responding through the portal helps move your claim forward faster.

What you need to do

Watch for a message – If VA needs more info, you'll get an email and SMS text.

Open the portal – Click the link and follow the instructions to log in.

Respond to the request – Follow the steps in the portal to respond.

Helping you stay on track

The Claim Assist Portal makes it easier for you to respond when VA needs more information, so your claim can move forward without delays. It's fast, secure and built to save you time. This is another step VA is taking to simplify the claims process and better support you every step of the

way.

Using the portal is not a requirement. You can continue to use mail as an option, but the Claim Assist Portal offers a faster, more convenient alternative.

VA RESOURCES.

- For any questions or requests, [1-800-MyVA411 \(1-800-698-2411\)](tel:1-800-MyVA411) is always the right number.
- [Veterans Crisis Line: 988](tel:988) and press 1, [Chat](#), or Text [838255](tel:838255)
- [Vet Centers: 1-877-927-8387](tel:1-877-927-8387)
- [Homeless Veteran Resources: 1-877-424-3838](tel:1-877-424-3838) or [Chat](#)
- [Ask VA](#)
- [Schedule a 1-on-1 Appointment with a VA Benefits Expert](#)
- [Find a VA facility near you](#)

For non-urgent questions, you can reach VA using the [VA Health & Benefits App](#) or [MyHealtheVet](#) secure messaging to schedule an appointment, refill prescriptions, and access your medical records.

LEGION FAMILY TO HONOR VIETNAM VETERANS

This article's original publication can be found [here](#)



MARCH 29 Honors those who served and those lost during the Vietnam War.

March 29 is set aside as National Vietnam War Veterans Day and provides an opportunity to pay special tribute to the 9 million Americans who served during the Vietnam War era, to the 58,000

names memorialized on the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, D.C., and to those who never received the recognition they deserved when they returned to America from war.

The date references the day in 1973 when the U.S. Military Assistance Command Vietnam, was disestablished, and the last U.S. combat troops departed Vietnam. Also on that day, Operation Homecoming was completed when the last of 591 U.S. prisoners were released and returned to the United States.

Across the country, American Legion posts will either host or take part in Vietnam War Veterans Day events, inviting veterans of the war to their facilities to honor, thank and welcome them home.

If your post or American Legion Family members are commemorating Vietnam War Veterans Day, please share your stories and photos at www.legiontown.org.

The following are a few events scheduled across the nation.

California

In **Redondo Beach, South Bay Post 184** is conducting its first Vietnam War Veterans Day BBQ on March 29. The full Legion Family will provide a meal that includes hamburgers, hot dogs, and hot links; the public is invited and encouraged to bring side dishes and other foods to add to the event.

The day will also include live music and the Redondo Union High School ROTC presenting the colors.

On March 28, **Whittier Post 51** will join other veteran service organizations at the Welcome Home Vietnam Veterans event at Liberty Community Plaza, 14181 Telegraph Avenue in Whittier.

A LIFE OF SERVICE

Louis Dominguez served in Vietnam, served his community for 50 years, and never stopped. Now, a veteran resource center bears his name

By [Supervisor Janice Hahn](#) | March 26, 2026
(Article courtesy of San Pedro Today)



[Louis Dominguez and Supervisor Janice Hahn at the dedication ceremony for the Louis Dominguez Veteran Resource Center on February 28, 2026. \(photo: Martin Zamora\)](#)

San Pedro has always been a community that cares about service to this country and supporting our veterans.

That spirit is exactly why a few years ago, my office partnered with Volunteers of America to purchase the old Best Western on 1st and Gaffey and turn it into something our Harbor Area desperately needed: a place where veterans who have been sleeping on our streets can find not just shelter, but stability, dignity, and a path forward.

Today, that vision is a reality. Veterans who walk through the doors find more than a bed for the night—they find a support system, new friendships, and the resources they need to create a new future for themselves.

And when the time came to name the center, one name immediately came to mind—my friend **Louis Dominguez**.

Louis grew up here in the Harbor Area. As a young

man, he enlisted in the Army and deployed to Vietnam as a forward observer. While serving, he was seriously wounded by machine-gun fire in an attack that killed his best friend. He spent nine months in army hospitals and never regained full use of his legs. For his bravery, he earned a Purple Heart, a Bronze Star with Valor, and several other military decorations.

But Louis's service didn't end when he returned home. In many ways, it was just beginning.

He went back to school, earned his degrees, and built a career in public service—working for Assemblyman **Vincent Thomas** and Mayor **Tom Bradley**.

Louis and I even ran for the same City Council seat back in 1993. We both lost to our friend **Rudy Svorinich**, but Louis remained as committed as ever to serving his community.

Over the years, he has worn many hats in San Pedro. He has helped fellow veterans through the American Legion. He has volunteered as a docent aboard the USS *Iowa*. He spent years teaching seniors computer skills at Harbor Community Adult School. Today, he continues his public service as my appointee to the Los Angeles County Commission for Older Adults.

And of course, there is one San Pedro landmark that will always bear Louis's fingerprints.

For 17 years, he led the effort to finally light the **Vincent Thomas Bridge**. Today, the iconic blue lights of our bridge have become a symbol of pride for the Harbor Area and a beautiful welcome to every ship entering our port.

I was proud to work alongside Louis in that effort when I finally was elected to City Council, and I learned something important about him along the way: When he commits to something, he sees it through.

Louis Dominguez embodies what our veterans deserve—not just thanks but action. Not just

ceremonies but meaningful investments in their futures. That’s why it felt so appropriate to name our veterans resource center here in San Pedro after him.

Last month, we hosted a ceremony officially dedicating the **Louis Dominguez Veteran Resource Center**. Congresswoman **Nanette Barragan** joined us, and we unveiled a plaque to Louis in front of a room filled with his beautiful family, friends, and local veterans.

San Pedro’s own Louis Dominguez Veteran Resource Center bears the name of someone who not only served his country in war but also dedicated decades to strengthening the community he calls home.

San Pedro is fortunate to have people like Louis Dominguez. His is a legacy worth honoring.

Post 61 and Port of LA VFW Post 2967 were honored to present colors.



Members of the LA VFW Post 2967 and Post 61 with Louis Dominguez (Center).

COMMISSION REPORTS

AEROSPACE COMMISSION

Why We Need the Aerospace Committee

by [Kevin Burns](#) | Mar 25, 2026



U.S. intelligence officials and defense experts widely agree that China engaged in extensive cyber espionage to steal F-35 design data, which was then incorporated into its own stealth fighter programs like the J-31 and J-35. These planes are now sold by China to countries that are adversarial to the U.S.

When aerospace was the first committee formed in the American Legion (alongside committees to determine the official name, headquarters, etc.), Legionnaires were very concerned about how unprepared the United States was for aviation in World War I and about the important role airpower played in winning the war. Over the following decades, the American Legion played a major role in promoting airpower in the military and in building a civilian infrastructure to support it, as European countries had far surpassed American aviation technology. With a strong and difficult push by the American Legion to develop American airpower, the United States entered World War II.

For most of the past century, every Department in the American Legion had a commission or committee for Aeronautics, with representatives at every administrative level of the Legion, right down to the Post level. Over the last few decades, the Aerospace Committee seems to have lost its appeal, and today, California seems to be the last Department with an

active Aerospace Commission, and the National Aerospace Committee has not even held a meeting in many years.

This is an alarming situation, as even during the years from 1927 to 1930, when there was no National Aerospace Committee due to the lack of a Chair, the grassroots work of aviation was continued enthusiastically by Legionnaires at the Department and other levels right down to the Post.

According to the American Institute of Aeronautics and Astronautics, space is now a contested warfighting domain. As global competition accelerates and adversaries expand their counter-space capabilities, the United States faces an urgent challenge: strengthen the national security space ecosystem while accelerating innovation across the industrial base.

The Secretary of Defense issued a directive stressing that space is a priority domain for the U.S. military underpinning our national security. Space is fundamental to establishing, maintaining, and projecting military superiority across all other domains. U.S. and allied forces rely on satellites to deliver critical capabilities enabling the military to communicate, move, surveil, and engage the enemy. Dependence on space-based technology will only increase in the future joint all-domain connected battlespace.

Currently, the war in Iran is an all-air war, with no ground battles taking place; again, demonstrating the importance of air power. However, we would not fare so well if the threat were from an adversary that was on an equal technological echelon, which is why it is important that the American Legion maintain its work in Aerospace through the National Security Commission, with support and participation from every Department.

LEGISLATIVE COMMISSION

Major Richard Star Act Blocked Again in Senate

- by [Rikki Almanza](#) | Mar 12, 2026

The Major Richard Star Act—legislation designed to open full retirement pay to thousands of medically

retired combat-injured Veterans—has been blocked in the U.S. Senate for the second time after the measure was prevented from advancing on March 3. The decision frustrated Veterans advocates and renewed calls for Congress to address what many see as an unfair policy.



The latest effort to advance the bill stalled Tuesday when Sen. Ron Johnson (R-Wis.) objected to a unanimous consent request that would have allowed the Senate to vote on the legislation. Johnson said the proposal would add between \$10 billion and \$12 billion in defense spending over the next decade and raised concerns about the nation's growing debt.

“This legislation has never been accepted because we simply cannot afford it,” Johnson said during remarks on the Senate floor while referencing the federal government's nearly \$39 trillion national debt and rising costs tied to Veterans benefits.

The bipartisan Major Richard Star Act would eliminate an offset that reduces military retirement pay for certain wounded Veterans. Under current law, Veterans medically retired before reaching 20 years of service must have their retirement pay reduced by the amount of disability compensation they receive from the VA.

Supporters say the policy unfairly penalizes Veterans whose injuries forced them to leave the military early.

The American Legion has repeatedly urged lawmakers to pass the legislation. During testimony before a joint hearing of the Senate and House Committees on Veterans' Affairs earlier this month,



American Legion National Commander Dan K. Wiley said ending the offset remains a priority for the organization.

The Major Richard Star Act would allow medically retired combat-injured Veterans to receive both their full military retirement pay and their VA disability compensation without the current dollar-for-dollar reduction. More than 50,000 Veterans are affected by the offset, which can reduce retirement income by thousands of dollars each year.

Wiley referenced the story of Major Richard Star, an Army Veteran who developed lung cancer linked to burn pit exposure after multiple deployments. Because Star was medically retired before reaching 20 years of service, his retirement pay was reduced by the amount of his disability compensation.

According to Wiley, the policy wrongly treats retirement pay and disability benefits as the same thing. Retirement pay is earned through years of service, while disability compensation addresses injuries sustained while serving.

“This is wrong,” Wiley told lawmakers during the hearing. “Collecting both benefits is not double-dipping. Retirement is for time served; disability compensation is for harm caused during service.” Other Veterans Service Organizations have also spoken out following the Senate’s decision, including the Veterans of Foreign Wars and Disabled American Veterans.

The bill continues to have strong bipartisan backing with 77 co-sponsors in the Senate and more than 300 in the House of Representatives.

Advocates say the issue comes down to honoring the nation’s commitment to combat-injured Veterans whose military careers ended because of their service. Organizations, including The American Legion, say they will continue pushing Congress to revisit the measure.

SB 1034 (Vehicles: Special License Plates)
by [caLegion Contributor](#) | Mar 5, 2026

SB 1034 by Senator McNerney has been introduced this session, and the author is requesting support. Please see the following information regarding the measure.

BILL OVERVIEW:

SB 1034 expands California’s definition of ‘disabled veteran’ to include more medical conditions that qualify veterans for special license plates and parking placards. The bill recognizes conditions such as severe arthritis, neurological disorders, vision impairments, heart disease, and lung disease. Notably, it allows 100% permanently disabled veterans to obtain special license plates based on general disability standards, even if their mobility limitations are not service-connected, potentially benefiting thousands of veterans whose disabilities developed after military service.

WHAT THIS BILL CHANGES:

As currently written, SB 1034:

- Vehicle Code Section 295 — Expands the definition of ‘disabled veteran’ to include veterans unable to walk 200 feet without rest, those with severe arthritis or neurological conditions, specified vision impairments, cardiac conditions, and pulmonary diseases.
- Vehicle Code Section 295 — Creates a new qualification pathway allowing 100% permanently disabled veterans to obtain disabled veteran license plates if they qualify for a disability parking placard under general disability standards, regardless of whether the disability is service-connected.
- Vehicle Code disabled veteran plate provisions — Broadens eligibility criteria to recognize age-related and non-service-connected disabilities that substantially limit veteran mobility and functioning.

FACT SHEET:

[View Fact Sheet](#)

IMPORTANT NOTE:

This bill may be amended as it moves through the legislative process. Positions may need to be revisited if substantive amendments are adopted.

OFFICIAL BILL TEXT:



[View Official Bill Text](#)

POSITION REQUEST:

We recommend a Support position for this measure.
Seth Reeb
Reeb Government Relations, LLC

UPCOMING CONGRESSIONAL HEARINGS

Congress is in recess from March 30 through April 10, and no hearings are scheduled during this time. Regular committee activity is expected to resume once Congress returns April 13.

HVAC hearings can be viewed at: [Calendar Home | House Committee on Veterans Affairs](#)

SVAC hearings can be viewed at: [Hearings - U.S. Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs](#)

HASC hearings can be viewed at: [Hearings – House Armed Services Committee](#)

SASC hearings can be viewed at: [Hearings – U.S. Senate Committee on Armed Services](#)

[View The American Legion Legislative Handbook Here](#)

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 or join a commission.

Legion COMMISSIONS: Most commissions have six commissioners, who represent the California Legion Area where they reside (i.e., Area 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6).

There are 27 commissions in the Department of California, with one commissioner appointed from each of our six areas. Our American Legion Baseball Commission is the exception, with two commissioners from each area.

Commission Web Pages

Go to <https://calegion.org/commissions/> for

information on all open commissions.

- [Aerospace Commission](#)
- [Agriculture, Natural Resources, and Energy Commission](#)
- [Amateur Radio Commission](#)
- [American Legion Baseball Commission](#)
 - [CALegion.org/baseball](#)
- [American Legion Riders Commission](#)
 - [American Legion Riders Website](#)
- [Americanism Commission](#)
- [Boys & Girls State Commission](#)
 - [Boys & Girls State Foundation](#)
- [Constitution & Bylaws](#)
- [Children and Youth Commission](#)
- [Community Service Commission](#)
- [Disaster and Emergency Services Commission](#)
- [Finance Commission](#)
- [Foreign Relations and National Security Commission](#)
- [Housing \(Veteran\) Commission](#)
- [Internal Affairs Commission](#)
- [Law and Order Commission](#)
- [Leadership Commission](#)
- [Legislative Commission](#)
- [Media and Communications Commission](#)
- [Naturalization Commission](#)
- [Oratorical Contests Commission](#)
- [Ritual Commission](#)
- [Scouting Commission](#)
- [Sons of The American Legion Commission](#)
 - [Sons of The American Legion Website](#)
- [Valley Forge Workshop Commission](#)
- [Veteran Affairs and Rehabilitation \(VA&R\) Commission](#)
- [Veterans Employment and Education Commission](#)
- [Ways and Means Commission](#)

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED & EVENTS

You are requested to volunteer at the District 19 booth during Fleet Week and to attend the National Vietnam Veterans Day event at Redondo Beach Post 184 on March 29th, with interviews for the Boys & Girls State Scholarship program starting soon.



Note

- Check out the website for future events [here](#)
- Volunteer for Fleet Week
- Attend the National Vietnam Veterans Day event.

Festival & Ship Tours

<https://lafleetweek.com/>

- Memorial Day weekend at LA Fleet Week® means family fun at the West Coast's Memorial Day Fleet Week and Los Angeles's Memorial Day tradition. Come out and enjoy:
 - **Active Ship Tours** available through virtual queue on the day of your visit
 - Battleship IOWA “**VIP Experience.**”
Save time, skip lines, enjoy exclusive collectibles, and relax in the VIP lounge.
 - Over 90 different exhibits, including games and displays to experience firsthand.
 - Competitions and entertainment throughout the day
 - **Food trucks and beverage vendors**
 - A covered tent for dining adjacent to the stage
 - **Activities** throughout the LA Waterfront to visit using the **free trolley and shuttle service.**
 - **Parking** lots and street parking are available throughout the area.



OFFICER REPORTS

COMMANDER

Karl Wilvert

Comrades,

I hope this message finds you and your loved ones in good health.

I presented my resolution to pull the charter from Arthur L. Peterson Post 27 during our March DEC in Vacaville, CA. The resolution passed and is now in the hands of the department to forward up the line to national for final disposition. I presented our \$1700 Helmets for Heros (HFH) collections to the department. Final tally for HFH for the March DEC was over \$3200.

The current candidates for Department Commander, Sgt at Arms and Area Vice Commanders spoke but there were no babies for them to kiss so the stumping continued into the evening(s). With the passing of Jerry Romano, the current alternate NEC, Eric Measles was elevated to NEC. Jim Higera was nominated and elected as the alternate NEC for the remainder of the term.

On a personal note, I rode my motorcycle to Vacaville for the DEC. The 840 mile round trip ride was spectacular. I raised just over \$300 for the March Stop Soldier Suicide 400 Mile Motorcycle Challenge. Thanks to all who donated to this effort.

We are now beginning nominations for the 26/27 slate of officers for the district and all posts. I ask that you seek members of your post and encourage them to step up and learn the legion mission and to consider going through the chairs. We are always looking for members that want to participate in the business beyond just volunteering and voting.

I encourage everyone to support those in need. Please pay your dues for 2026.

Please note that I have scheduled the next District 19 Executive Board meeting for **Wednesday, April 1st, 2026, at Lakewood Post 496**. The April district general meeting will take place **on Wednesday, April 8th, 2026, at Montebello Post 272**. I kindly request that each 19th District Post send at least one

representative to our general meetings.

FIRST VICE COMMANDER

Manuel Vital

Currently our District is at # 14 @ 86.91% our next target date is April 8 where we should be at 90.00% so lets continue working Membership so we can reach our Goal. We still have many post below 80.00% & 85.00%.

Hope everyone has a great Easter. See you at are next District meeting.

In Comradeship,
Manuel E Vital Sr.

1st Vice Commander 19th District.

323-595-5407

cuauhtemoc51@yahoo.com

SAVE PAPER.
SAVE POSTAGE.
SAVE TIME.



QUICKLY AND EASILY RENEW ONLINE
MEMBERSHIP MATTERS



3 ways to renew!

- Pay by check or money order to Post or Department
- Call Department at 559-875-8387 to renew with a credit or debit card
- Pay online with a credit or debit card at Renew (mylegion.org)

SECOND VICE COMMANDER

Angelo Maldenado

Welcome Members, Riders, Sons, and Auxiliary,

Time flies when you are having fun... or at least, must be having fun, because it seems like yesterday, I was writing last month's newsletter... Well, I was a little late. We are in the homestretch.

I have scheduled the next two fundraisers for our 19th District. The First is May 30th, starting and ending at the Norwalk American Legion for the "Mystery Bus Trip," at \$45.00 per person. This trip



will start at Norwalk, go to three other posts, and return to Norwalk. A total of 6-7 hours of fun. The other will also be at Norwalk American Legion on June 3rd, a Comedy night (price to be determined by talent). Both are to benefit from the Hospitality Suite for the convention. This isn't the end-all.

We are still planning another cigar night in the South Bay or Hawthorne, and I believe someone mentioned a taco night and another spaghetti dinner. Either way, we will get the info to you to help strengthen our camaraderie and esprit de corps while supporting our district. I hope to see you all there. Fliers will be coming out shortly. ..The Nosey 19!

Norwalk Post #359 will be hosting the Los Angeles County Council this coming Friday at 6 PM. We will have tostadas, with a chicken-and-seafood option, for those who celebrate Good Friday with dessert. \$6.00 for one, \$10 for two by donation.

Reminder: we are looking for donations from posts in our district that have a Canteen or Post Hole for Hospitality, so let's get that done. We will also be passing out a sign-up sheet for Fleet Week this coming May. Please come out and support.

I am especially looking for volunteers on Memorial Day itself, as many of our Posts have their own programs at their home cities. So please see if you can help me with volunteering. Please reach out to me in order to plan at (253) 495-9462 or agandalf22@aol.com. Thank you for your support.

We continue to collect for our Helmets for Heroes, and please remember to bring your funds to the district meeting for presentation. We will also continue to have our 50/50 raffles. We will be meeting at South Bay and then Montebello this month. Hope to see you there and thank you for your support.

Thank you all who helped celebrate the life of our Post Chaplain Benito Richard Garcia. We had the help of our local Veterans of Foreign Wars and American Legion. It was a wonderful event; the family was so grateful. Until Valhalla, my friend!

Thank you for all that you do to support our district.

Yours in comradeship,
Angelo Gandalf Maldonado, JD

THIRD VICE COMMANDER

Jesse Y. Leal
Greetings Comrades,

On March 29th, we celebrate our 1st Annual Vietnam Veterans Day BBQ. I am grateful to all my Legion members, SALS, Auxiliary, and Riders for their support, including that of our South High School students, at this event held at Redondo Beach Post 184. We are still seeking volunteers to help with Fleet Week coming up Memorial Day weekend, May 22nd through 25th. Sign-up sheets are available. Our Post's infrastructure is having a serious impact on our building.

Our building is over 100 years old, and it affects our electrical grid, plumbing, and sewers. We are looking at \$150,000 to \$200,000 in repairs. And that doesn't include our retaining wall, which is slowly moving into our canteen walls. That's an additional \$35-\$50,000.

We need to seek a solution to help keep our Post functioning or we may to shut down our Post within the next two years. Thank you to the Montebello Post 272 Honor Guard for your service at the March 23rd funeral for Elizabeth Krcmarik, who passed away at the age of 103. Beth was a member of our Post 184 Auxiliary for 40 years and President for 13 years. Her husband, Don, passed away earlier and was a WWII veteran.

For the Good of the Legion,

Jesse Y Leal
Department of California
American Legion
1st Vice Commander
Redondo Beach Post 184
Area 4 District 19 3rd Vice Commander
US Army / Air Force Veteran
Email: post184vicecommander@gmail.com
(310) 951-8199



ADJUTANT

Martin Martinez

Comrades, I must report a correction from last month's Flash newsletter in which I stated that the Department only requires submission of the annual Post Data Report (PDR) for any changes. I found that the Department is indeed requiring all Posts to submit a PDR regardless of any changes, so let's get them in!

If there are no changes, then state "NO CHANGES" on the top of the form and submit. The link to the form again is [Post Data Report \(PDR\) - 2026 Updates Form--DRAFT v2](#). This is a fillable form; however, there is no "check box" to indicate no changes, which requires you to print out the form, write "NO CHANGES" on the form, scan, and send.

Once completed, please email copies to forms@caLegion.org in addition to myself at mmartinezal496@gmail.com

The remainder of my report for this month is on behalf of Auxiliary Unit 496. The unit will be hosting a Poppy Day Breakfast on April 25th to support their Poppy Program and Community Service program. Hours are 9 AM to 12 Noon.

Post 496 will also host a Kentucky Derby Day Party on May 2nd from 3 PM to 7 PM, featuring a light buffet and a live band! Come watch the Kentucky Derby race and wear your stylish outfits and hats!

Finally, Unit 496 has started a sewing club for Veterans who would like to learn how to sew! All materials and machines provided. Meet on the 2nd Tuesday of each month from 2 PM to 4 PM starting April 14th. Contact Cindy Orcutt at corcuttala@gmail.com

HISTORIAN

Fred Shacklett

Good Day Comrades,
We have come through a rainy Winter, and it's now Spring in the San Gabriel Valley. With that comes a number of changes

Since last month the district has been

Meetings/Events

I have made notes of and recorded several events within the district.

11 Facebook postings were saved.

March 14, 2026, I attended the Department Executive Meeting via Zoom from Vacaville, CA.

March 21, 2026, My wife and I attended the funeral and internment of Past Department Commander Jere L. Romano at Holy Cross Cemetery and Mortuary in Culver City, CA.

On March 28, 2026, I attended the Welcome Home Vietnam Veterans Day event at Liberty Community Plaza in Whittier in the morning. Then Post 51 had a recruitment table at the Whittier Eggstravaganza at York Field in Whittier, CA, on the same evening.

Post 51 Website Update

The Post 51 website is still out of commission. I received the codes to transfer ownership of the domain from the District 19 Commander, Karl Wilvert. Our domain was previously managed by Amazon Web Services (AWS). Post 51 will continue that service for the near future. It is anticipated that our website will be up and running by mid-April.

A new Post 51 Recruitment Flyer has been designed along with a Post 51 tri-fold brochure. Copies of both were placed in several city buildings and public boards around Whittier.

DISTRICT 19 PIN/STICKER

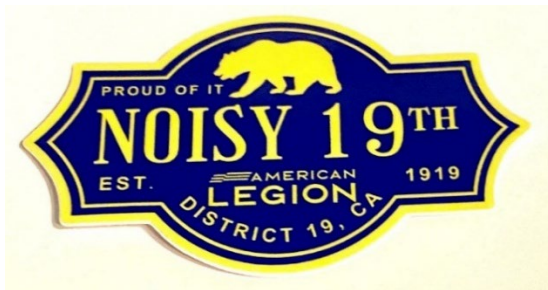
A limited number of District pins and stickers are still available.

The pin is approximately 1 ¼ inches wide. Made of polished brass, with a 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 receive both a pin and a sticker with a \$5.00 donation.

About This Newsletter

The 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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Editor-in-Chief: Fred Shacklett

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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 the latest calendar for locations.



LA Fleet Week® is Memorial Day Weekend with Festival & Ship Tours: 22-25 May 2026

Palm Springs Drone Fest 2026

Thursday, April 30 to Saturday, May 2, 2026

Palm Springs High School, Palm Springs, California, USA

**Featuring
FIDA USA**

Grand Nationals Drone Soccer Tournament

Class 20, Class 40, Orb 40 Cracing, Super Pilot, & Coding
Competitions
Pairing Party
Opening Ceremonies
Drone Demonstrations
Live Music, Food, & So Much More!

Contact for Partnership Opportunities:

Tim Ingram,
tim@fidausa.com
(760) 660-3372

Ellen Goodman,
egoodman@psusd.us
(760) 416-8455

Hosted by



Palm Springs Drone Fest 2026, 4/30 – 5/2/2026, Palm Springs High School.



CALIFORNIA AMERICAN LEGION COLLEGE

MINDSET MONDAY

YOUR JOURNEY TO GROWTH AND LEADERSHIP CONTINUES HERE!

Join our inspiring online training sessions designed to elevate your American Legion Experience. On the second Monday of each month, unlock new strategies, boost your confidence, and cultivate a winning mindset to make a lasting impact in your community.

DATE	CLASS	INSTRUCTOR
Dec 8th	TAL: Community Engagement & Impact	Vic Martin
Jan 5th	Labor Law Compliance	Attorney Diane Coderniz
Feb 9th	Maintaining my Post Tax Exempt Status	John Hudson
March 9th	Parliamentary Procedures: Tactical Motions	Diane Devries
April 13th	Post Adjutant: Administrative Excellence for Legion Posts	Chris Yates

Each class will start at 6:00 pm and are approximately 60 minutes with an added 30 minutes for Q&A. Register for your virtual seat today at <https://calegion.org/mindset-mondays-registration>

Triple B BBQ Guys Presents

Rock 'n Ribfest Spring Fling!

Saturday, May 2nd, 2026 Noon to 3PM

\$25/plate






In addition to the delicious Ribs, there will be amazing side dishes. Check with Kelly to see what you can bring. No to go orders to make sure there is enough for those in attendance.

Post184.com Post184.com Post184.com Post184.com Post184.com


AMERICAN LEGION



BASEBALL

NOW ACCEPTING TEAMS FOR 2026!

- ◆ COMPETITIVE BASEBALL!
- ◆ BUILD CHARACTER & SPORTSMANSHIP!
- ◆ BE PART OF A GREAT TRADITION!



SIGN UP TODAY!

CLICK THE REGISTRATION LINK TO JOIN

VETERANS SOCIAL CONNECTION

0830-1030 | Canteen Patio | Bldg 165

JAN 26	JUL 26
FEB 23	AUG 30
MAR 29	SEP 27
APR 26	OCT 25
MAY 31	NOV 15
JUN 28	DEC 20

Proudly Sponsored by:
Tibor Rubin VA Medical Center
Veterans Connection Committee
Food and coffee will be served

VA  U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
Veterans Health Administration
VA Long Beach Healthcare System

Baseball Contact:
D19LegionBaseball@gmail.com



**LIST OF DISTRICT
19 COMMANDERS
1927 TO PRESENT**

Department of California

Year Served	Name
1927	A. B. Waddingham
1928	Charles C. McGonegal
1929	Charles C. McGonegal
1930	Lawrence Klinker
1931	Lawrence Klinker
1932	Ray Hoskins
1933	Art Bliley
1934	Stephen M. Cope
1935	Lawrence M. Windle
1936	Authur Longnecker
1937	John C. Dunn
1938	Charles F. Walter
1939	Charles S. Warren
1940	Tracy C. Hicks
1941	Richard J. Myerscough
1942	Ray F. Tucker
1943	Raymond E. Jones
1943	Walter E. Mueller
1944	Merl W. Horn
1945	J. E. Child
1946	R. Y. O'Shaughnessy
1947	Robert L. Rossier
1948	Joseph F. McCann
1949	Emerson C. Miller
1950	Ralph E. Smith
1951	Henry S. Wilson
1952	Al Kaiser, Jr.
1953	W. Devore Walden
1954	Leonard G. Cross
1955	H. Ed Hissey
1956	J. Vincent Walker
1957	Ray Kimberlin
1958	Albert F. Mazzie
1959	Fredrick J. Pelletier
1960	Thomas Pope
1961	Willam H. Gilmore
1962	Nathan Sommer
1963	Christian A Akeo

1963	Maynard E. Norquist
1964	H. Gordon Gregson
1964	Kenneth L. Van Sant
1965	Marvin Jones
1966	J. U. MacCartney
1967	Raymond R. Pflugler
1968	Roy W. Grimwood
1969	Guy F. Millburn
1970	Clifford R. Bell
1971	Casper C. Rea
1971	Robert A Okeson
1972	Floyd W. Schultz
1973	Daniel M. Castillo
1974	John Hudak
1975	Thomas G. Jaurez
1976	Elbert W. Ralston
1977	J. W. McCormick
1978	Donald R. Carter
1979	John E. Mummert, Sr.
1980	Robert R. Hart
1981	Raymond F. Berucki
1982	Patrick M. Reese
1983	Lauro J. Jaime, Jr.
1984	Werner E. Wolf
1985	Thomas Vincent
1986	Fernando Soto
1987	Louis R. Gomez
1988	Gary CmCracken
1989	Frances F. Berlucki
1990	Carl F. Shasha
1991	Malcolm A. Jeffris
1992	James W. Wysong
1993	Ray Curry
1994	Albert B. Clugston
1995	James T. Higurea
1996	Ralph W. Shipley
1997	LeRoy "Lee" Spann
1998	John H. Holloway
1999	Rudy Moreno
2000	Johnny T. Brown
2001	James Potter
2002	Brian Franklin
2003	James Drew
2003	Richard Benninger

2004	Henry Pacheco
2005	Joe Gonzales
2006	Bull Musser
2007	Frank Dulleson
2008	Robert Mitchell
2009	Gil Soto
2010	Art Castro
2011	William Perry
2012	Gil Palmer
2013	William (Bill) Miller
2014	Dennis Radcliffe
2015	Robert Boyd
2016	Nick Rosa
2017	Richard Ramirez
2018	Patrick Dowd
2019	Ray Gard
2020	Ray Gard
2021	Louie Adame
2022	Louie Adame
2023	Fernando Gallardo
2024	Fernando Gallardo
2025	Karl Wilvert



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 and the Department Adjutant, meeting rooms, storage for records, and offices for our administration and support staff.