

LEGIONNAIRE RECEIVES MOH

WASHINGTON, D.C. 2/24/2026

Legionnaire Royce Williams receives the Medal of Honor

Williams, a member of **American Legion Post 416 in Encinitas, Calif.**, is the oldest recipient to ever wear the medal. He was a special guest of President Trump during the State of the Union address, sitting next to first lady Melania Trump, who placed the medal around his neck.



First Lady Melania Trump places the medal around his neck during the State of the Union Address. (Photo: New York Times)



Williams gave a thumbs-up to the bipartisan standing ovation that lasted several minutes. (Photo: New York Times)

Retired Navy Capt. Royce Williams, 100, received the Medal of Honor on Feb. 24 for his heroic actions in 1952 when he shot down four Soviet MiGs during a 35-minute dogfight, an aerial feat never achieved previously or since. In November 2017, an [American Legion Magazine story](#) first reported Williams' achievement after he was sworn to secrecy for more than half a century.

“Heroic American aviator, Navy fighter pilot Royce Williams served in World War II, Korea and Vietnam, flying more than 220 missions,” Trump said. “In 1952, Royce was in the dogfight of a lifetime. His squadron was ambushed by seven Soviet fighter planes. And despite being massively outnumbered and outgunned, Royce led the takedown of four enemy jets and almost destroyed the others. Vanquishing his adversaries while taking



263 bullets to his own plane. His story was secret for over 50 years. He didn't even tell his wife. But tonight, at 100 years old, this brave Navy captain is finally getting the recognition he deserves.

Trump also presented the Medal of Honor to Army Chief Warrant Officer 5 Eric Slover, a helicopter pilot wounded in the raid that captured Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro. Trump credited Slover for helping plan the mission and leading the first Chinook helicopter against Maduro's heavily fortified compound.

The president called Williams Feb. 3 to tell him he would receive the medal. During the congratulatory phone call, Williams told Trump, "As you know I am more than 100 years old, all 100-plus is excited. The event that is being celebrated is long ago. Thank you from the bottom of my heart."

On Nov. 18, 1952, Williams and three other Navy pilots encountered seven Soviet MiGs. Williams, flying an F9F-5 Panther, shot down four MiG-15s in 35 minutes. When he somehow landed his plane back on the aircraft carrier, it was riddled with more than 260 perforations from the Soviet fighters. The plane was in such poor shape that the crew pushed it overboard to its final resting place.

Upon landing, his superior officers ordered Williams to keep the story a secret. Russia declassified the information a decade ago, paving the way for Williams to talk openly about it.

Because so much time had passed, it took an extraordinary effort to award the medal to Williams. Thanks to efforts by The American Legion, that hurdle was overcome.

The FY 2026 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) cleared the way for the president to award the Medal of Honor to Williams. Specifically, language in the NDAA removed time limits that previously prevented Williams from receiving the honor.

Nearly a decade earlier, The American Legion [passed a resolution](#) calling for Williams to

receive the medal. Steve Lewandowski, also a member of Post 416, was among those leading the fight for Williams.

"Today is Royce's day," Lewandowski said. "It's a day when he finally gets the recognition he deserves and should have received decades ago. It's a day that also represents the impact of The American Legion and the dedicated team that worked to make this happen. Everyone with 'Operation Just Reward' put in hundreds of hours and endured countless setbacks over the years. It was our honor to support Royce. We can't wait to see him in person wearing his medal."

UPCOMING DISTRICT 19 EVENTS

March 11, 2026 – General Meeting at Whittier Post 51, Whittier, CA 7 PM.

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ARMY PILOT AWARDED MEDAL OF HONOR

Presented during Trump's SOTU address

By KONSTANTIN TOROPIN Associated Press •
February 25, 2026



U.S. Army Chief Warrant Officer Eric Slover receives a Medal of Honor during President Donald Trump's State of the Union address to a joint session of Congress in the House chamber at the U.S. Capitol in Washington, Tuesday, Feb. 24, 2026.

A helicopter pilot wounded in the raid that captured then-Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro received the Medal of Honor during President Donald Trump's State of the Union address Tuesday evening. Trump said Army Chief Warrant Officer 5 Eric Slover, who appeared using a walker, was the pilot of the lead CH-47 Chinook helicopter that descended on the "heavily protected military fortress" that held Maduro during a raid that, while successful, left seven U.S. service members with gunshot wounds and shrapnel-related injuries.

"While preparing to land, enemy machine guns fired from every angle, and Eric was hit very badly in the leg and hip, one bullet after another," Trump said, adding that Slover "absorbed four agonizing shots, shredding his leg into numerous pieces." Months of covert planning led to the brazen operation that plunged the South American country's capital into darkness as troops infiltrated Maduro's home and whisked him to the United States to face drug trafficking charges.

Trump's description of Slover's actions that night offers a new, detailed glimpse into the military action that has been largely shrouded in secrecy since it was carried out in the early hours of Jan. 3. As Slover prepared to land his helicopter, he was confronted with "two machine gunners who escaped the wrath of the previous planes," according to Trump.

"Eric maneuvered his helicopter with all of those lives and souls to face the enemy and let his gunners eliminate the threat," Trump said, "saving the lives of his fellow warriors from what could have been a catastrophic crash deep in enemy territory." The president said, "The success of the entire mission and the lives of his fellow warriors hinged on Eric's ability to take searing pain."

Lt. Gen. Jonathan Braga, commander of Joint Special Operations Command, presented Slover with the Medal of Honor in the gallery overlooking the House chamber. Slover was in his dress uniform and used a walker to steady himself. Trump said the soldier was still recovering from his wounds. Trump also said 10 other service members who took part in the operation will be receiving medals at a private ceremony soon to be held at the White House.

Read more at:

<https://www.stripes.com/theaters/us/2026-02-25/army-pilot-maduro-medal-of-honor-20869308.html>

Source - Stars and Stripes



COAST GUARD SWIMMER RECEIVES LEGION OF MERIT

Stars and Stripes • February 25, 2026



Coast Guard Aviation Survival Technician Scott Ruskan receives the Legion of Merit during President Donald Trump's State of the Union address in Washington on Tuesday, Feb. 24, 2026. (U.S. Coast Guard via X)

Coast Guard rescue swimmer Scott Ruskan was presented the Legion of Merit during the State of the Union address on Tuesday for his role in the service's response to deadly floods in Texas last July.

The aviation survival technician has been credited with helping to save 165 people, including those at Camp Mystic. Heavy rainfall caused the Guadalupe River to swell, and the resulting floods killed more than 130 people in the area, including 28 campers and counselors at Camp Mystic. "As the waters threatened to sweep her away, 11-year-old Milly Cate McClymond closed her eyes and prayed to God, she thought she was going to die," President Donald Trump said at his address.

"Those prayers were answered when Coast Guard rescue swimmer Scott Ruskin descended from a helicopter above. ... And he lifted not just Milly Cate, but 164 others to safety." "It was Scott's first ever rescue mission — young guy, but very brave," Trump continued, adding that McClymond was present at the address, reuniting her with her savior. "Petty Officer Ruskan, I'm pleased to inform you that I am now awarding you the Legion of Merit for extraordinary heroism."

Ruskan was also recognized shortly after the flooding, along with the other three members of his aircrew. Ruskan and the aircraft commander received the Distinguished Flying Cross for heroism during flight, while the co-pilot and aviation maintenance technician received the Air Medal. Not only was it Ruskan's first rescue mission, he had previously struggled with training for his role.

Ruskan initially failed a rigorous training course at the Coast Guard's Aviation Survival Technician school, he told the Press Democrat (based in Santa Rosa, Calif.) last year.

In particular, Ruskan struggled with a rescue technique involving a single panicked swimmer, failing three times in a row. When he returned for his second attempt at the course, he aced it.

Read more at:

https://www.stripes.com/branches/coast_guard/2026-02-25/coast-guard-rescuer-ruskan-legion-of-merit-20873484.html

Source - Stars and Stripes

VA BENEFITS CLAIMS BACKLOG UNDER 100K

First time since 2020

WASHINGTON – The Department of Veterans Affairs today announced that the backlog of VA disability compensation and pension benefit claims is **consistently below 100,000** for the first time since May 2020, during the first Trump Administration.

Hitting this milestone means the department has now cut the backlog of Veterans waiting for VA benefits by 63% since Jan. 20, 2025, after it increased 24% under the Biden Administration.

A VA claim for compensation or pension is considered backlogged once it has been pending in the claims inventory for more than 125 days. In 2013, 70% of claims were older than 125 days — the most ever — compared to just 17% today.

Reducing the claims backlog is an urgent priority for Secretary Collins, as it was well above 100,000 from



2021 to 2024 and stood at 264,717 on Jan. 20, 2025. During President Trump's first administration, VA reached the lowest disability claims backlog Dec. 21, 2019, at 64,783 claims.

“Under President Trump, VA is providing Veterans, families, caregivers and survivors all of the benefits they have earned as quickly and conveniently as possible,” said **VA Secretary Doug Collins**. “VA’s claims processing productivity is the highest it has ever been, and we look forward to continuing to provide record levels of service to Veterans and VA beneficiaries.”

This milestone is one of many [landmark VA achievements during the second Trump Administration](#), including:

- [Opening 33 new VA health care facilities](#), expanding health care access for Veterans around the country.
- Processing more than 3 million disability compensation and pension claims in FY2025, an all-time high that shattered the previous record set in FY2024.
- Offering Veterans more than 2.2 million appointments outside of normal operating hours, which give Veterans more timely and convenient options for care.
- [Permanently housing 51,936 homeless Veterans](#) across the country in FY2025, the highest total in seven years.

VA encourages all Veterans to visit choose.va.gov to learn more and apply for the care and benefits they have earned.

[VA’S RESCINDES INTERIM FINAL RULE](#)

This article’s original publication can be found [here](#)
National Commander Dan K. Wiley applauds U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs decision to rescind Interim Final Rule regarding medication management.

American Legion National Commander Dan K. Wiley issued the following statement after the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs announced it has rescinded the Interim Final Rule regarding

medication management:

“Today, the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs officially announced that they will rescind the Interim Final Rule regarding medication management. While The American Legion applauded Secretary Collins’ initial decision to halt enforcement, we believe that rescinding the Interim Final Rule was always the best choice for veterans. “Today marks a victory for our nation’s veterans and their families, and serves as another example of the influence the Legion’s voice has in Washington, D.C. As we have done for 107 years, The American Legion will continue working to ensure our veterans have access to the health care and benefits they earned.”

[COMMISSION REPORTS](#)

[AEROSPACE COMMISSION](#)

A ZOOM meeting of the California Aerospace Commission was conducted on 2/5/2026. The meeting was called to order by Chair Fred Shacklett and recorded on Zoom. Minutes and presentation material are posted on the aerospace website at <https://calegion.org/aerospace>

A calegion news article was written, approved, and published on the department website about joining the aerospace commission. The link to the article is located here. <https://calegion.org/shape-the-future-serve-on-the-aerospace-commission/>

A new Charter was presented, reviewed and approved by the commission.

A new three-year Strategic Plan for the years 2026-2029 was presented, reviewed and approved by the commission.

A SWOT analysis created by Chair Fred Shacklett was presented. A copy is included in the slide deck.

The chair, Fred Shacklett, commented that the Aerospace Roundup newsletter was published on 1/31/2026, and sent to all commissioners, as well as, to the Los Angeles County Council for further distribution.



A copy was placed on the commission website.

A commission resolution, Resolution 2026-XX, titled: Integration and Support for Aerospace Initiatives within the American Legion. The signed copy of the Resolution was reviewed and submitted to the Department of California Resolutions Committee on 1/19/2026, at the request of Michael Smith, Resolution Chair, for review and comment. No comments received to date.

A status of the CALTAP program was given by Chair Fred Shacklett. The website and the teacher registration page were reviewed. The intent is for the Aerospace Commission to serve as the integrator for CALTAP and assist with teacher registration for the program. The commission reviewed the program status.

Launch date for the CALTAP program is TBD, but hopefully by Spring DEC.

LEGISLATIVE COMMISSION

WASHINGTON CONFERENCE SCHEDULE

The Washington Conference is scheduled next week, Feb 28-Mar 5 at the Washington Hilton!

Some important dates and events to note:

March 2 – Legislative Commission Meeting and Commander’s Call

March 3 – Hill visits

March 4 – National Commander’s Testimony to Joint session of Congress

While we look forward to seeing many of you in Washington, D.C.

119TH CONGRESS, 2ND SESSION
LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES TRIFOLD
AND POINT PAPERS ARE NOW AVAILABLE!

You can view and download the Legislative Priorities trifold and point papers on the Legion website here.

There will be hard copies available at Washington Conference to be taken and handed out at your meetings on the Hill

HIGHLIGHTED CAMPAIGN

This week, we are asking Legionnaires to contact Congress to urge them to pass the Major Richard Star Act. This legislation would ensure that combat-injured retirees can receive both their Department of Defense retirement pay and the disability compensation earned through their sacrifices.

The American Legion appreciates all the emails you have sent so far.

Make your voice heard before the National Commander testifies at the Washington Conference! Go to the Action Center to quickly email a letter of support to your members of Congress

VALLEY FORGE WORKSHOP COMMISSION

Gil Soto, Commissioner

Honoring the Past, Inspiring the Future: The 2026 Valley Forge Program

As the United States rapidly approaches its **Semi quicentennial (250th) Anniversary** in July, the American Legion remains at the forefront of preserving our nation’s history. Central to this mission is the **Valley Forge Workshop Commission**, which has announced its most ambitious slate of programs yet for the 2026 season.

In partnership with [Founding Forward](#), the Commission is dedicated to bringing the spirit of the 1777-1778 winter encampment to life for educators, students, and veterans alike.

Professional Development for Educators

The core of the 2026 program is the [in-person professional development experiences](#) for teachers and educators. Understanding that today’s students are the keepers of tomorrow’s democracy, the Commission offers fully funded, immersive experiences for educators to deepen their



understanding of American civics and the Revolutionary War.



The 1777-1778 Winter Encampment. (Graphic Fred Shacklett/American Legion)

2026 Opportunities Include:

- **Residential Seminars:** Multi-day, content-driven programs at the Union League Liberty Hill and the historic Union League of Philadelphia.
- **Travel Seminars:** "On-the-road" learning experiences that trace the footsteps of the Continental Army across Pennsylvania and the surrounding colonies.
- **Immersive Workshops:** Hands-on sessions focused on the challenges faced by Washington's troops and the strategic importance of the Valley Forge encampment.

Teachers who participate join a prestigious network of over 14,000 educators nationwide who are equipped to teach American history with renewed passion and factual depth.

The 2026 Pilgrimage and Wreath Laying

A cornerstone of the Commission's annual activities is the **Valley Forge Pilgrimage**. In February 2026, Legionnaires, Scouts, and community members will gather to honor the sacrifices of the Continental Army.

- **Wreath Laying Ceremony:** Held at the **National Memorial Arch** on February 14, 2026. This solemn event pays tribute to the founders and the soldiers who endured the hardships of the winter of 1777-1778.
- **The 2026 Scout Encampment:** Running from March 6–8, 2026, this event (held at Fort Washington State Park this year for historical significance) invites youth to experience a "day in the life" of a Revolutionary soldier, featuring black powder demonstrations, 18th-century cooking, and military drill instruction.

The Road to USA250

As part of the **American Legion Family USA250 Challenge**, the Valley Forge Commission is encouraging all local Posts and Districts to use 2026 as a year of "Service and Storytelling." By connecting with local historical societies and state commissions, we ensure that the legacy of Valley Forge is not just a chapter in a book, but a living example of American resilience.

"The journey to 2026 is a chance to honor our history while imagining the possibilities of our next chapter." — *National America250 Leadership*

How to Participate

Applications for the 2026 Teacher Workshops are now open. If you know a teacher who is passionate about history or a veteran looking to volunteer for the March Pilgrimage, please visit the Department website.

- **Learn More:** calegion.org/valley-forge
- **Sponsorship:** Posts are encouraged to sponsor a local teacher's travel or provide supplies for the youth pilgrimage.



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

Sunday, Mar 29, 12:00 – 3:00 PM•

Redondo Beach Post 184 and Fleet Week

You are requested to volunteer for Fleet Week at the District 19 booth, 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.



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



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



OFFICER REPORTS

COMMANDER

Karl Wilvert

Comrades,

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

I have been working on the resolution to pull the charter from Arthur L. Peterson Post 27. They have been negligent in all aspects of their role as an American Legion Post. As part of this action, their members have been transferred to Lakewood and Lincoln Village, which are the other Long Beach posts. It is never good to see a post with this issue, and for the last several years, we have been trying to help them resurrect their post.

Unfortunately, due to various factors, it became clear that the only option available was to dissolve the post and absorb its members into active local posts in their area. I will be reading this resolution at the March DEC in Vacaville, CA.

I rode as an escort in Torrance, CA, representing Rider Chapter 804 from East LA, with Rider Chapter 184 from Redondo Beach. This took place on Feb 28th. For a US Navy WWII veteran who went to post everlasting on Feb 7th at 103 years old.

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 March district general meeting will take place **on Wednesday, March 11th, 2026, at Whittier Post 51**. I kindly request that each 19th District Post send at least one representative to our general meetings.

Karl Wilvert

American Legion Department of California

19th District Commander

Post 352 Adjutant/Finance Officer

City of Carson Veterans Affairs Commission
Chairman

karl.wilvert@yahoo.com

FIRST VICE COMMANDER

Manuel Vital

Fellow Comrades,

I hope everyone is doing well. Currently, our District is at #16 in California, at 84.27%.

Let's continue to work on Membership. We still have quite a few posts below 80.00%. Our next target date is March 11th, when we should be at 90.00%.

FYI, on March 13th, Montebello Post is hosting a free luncheon from 11 AM to 1 PM for all Veterans.

On March 21, Montebello Post is having a Comedy Night Fundraiser. Tickets are \$20.00. Doors open at 6 PM - at 8 PM. Food will be available for a Donation.

If you have any questions, you can always call me.

In Comradeship

Manuel E. Vital Sr.

1st Vice Commander 19th District

cuauhtemoc51@yahoo.com

Ph. 323-595-5407

SAVE PAPER.
SAVE POSTAGE.
SAVE TIME.



QUICKLY AND EASILY RENEW ONLINE

MEMBERSHIP MATTERS

AMERICAN
LEGION

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 Maldonado

Welcome Members, Riders, Sons, and Auxiliary,

What another busy month for our district. We had the honor to help with a honor guard for Leroy



Forehand, a 103 year old WWII Navy Veteran. So many of our posts in the district and outside the district helped. The Posts I would like to thank for the firing squad are Norwalk #359, Cypress #295 (82nd Airborne Association) along with Hawaiian Gardens VFW Post #7243, Wilmington VFW Post #2967 and La Mirada VFW Post #9148. We also had the riders from our own South Bay #184, Iowa Post #61 and Obregon Post #804. This is a true testament to the veterans not leaving one behind. You should all be applauded. I am so proud of our District 19...The Nosey 19!

Norwalk Post #359 will be hosting the Los Angeles County Council this coming Friday at 6 PM. We will have baked potatoes with a salad bar with all the fixings for you to self-serve for donation.

Reminder, I am still looking for some other Posts in the District to help with a fundraising event. Perhaps a taco night somewhere, spaghetti dinner, and still looking to set up the mystery bus trip. I am open to suggestions. Please reach out to me in order to plan at (253) 495-9462 or agandalf22@aol.com. Thank you for your support.

Another reminder: I am starting to look for donations from Posts in our district that have a Canteen or Post Hole for Hospitality, so let's get that done. We also will 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 volunteer.

We continue to collect for our Helmets for Heros 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 in Whittier this month. Hope to see you there, and thank you for your support.

I asked to be excused from the DEC this month due to the services for my dear friend and comrade, Post Chaplain Benito Richard Garcia. We are having a service on March 13th, 2026, at 2 PM at the Norwalk American Legion. It will be a great event, and we

have asked the fire department for a permit to retire flags the same day in honor and remembrance of my colleague. ¡Con Los Hombres!

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

Yours in comradeship,

Angelo Gandalf Maldonado, JD

THIRD VICE COMMANDER

Jesse Y. Leal

To start off with, on March 17th, there will be a funeral mass for USMC Veteran Larry Dewese, who passed away at the age of 88. The service will be held at St Anthony of Padua Catholic Church, 1050 W 163rd Street, Gardena, 90247, at 10:00 am. The committal will be at Green Hills at Rancho PV at approximately 12:00 pm. The American Legion Riders and Honor Guard will be providing escort and graveside services. All members are encouraged to attend.

On March 29th, Redondo Beach Post 184 will be celebrating Vietnam Veterans Day with a BBQ and entertainment. The event starts at 12:00 pm with our MCJROTC cadets from RUHS presenting colors and MC by Vice Commander Leal. Everyone is welcome to attend.

Our upcoming event for Fleet Week is approaching, and I am reaching out to all our Legion Posts for volunteers to help man our Legion booth. Our Legion members, SALs, Riders, and Auxiliaries are welcome to attend.

Also, on May 2nd, our SAL will be having its Rockin' Ribfest at Post 184, and everyone is welcome to attend.

For God and country,
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'll start off with a friendly reminder to all Post Adjutants that annual Post Data Reports are due on April 15. Yeah, I know it's early for this announcement, but we all know how time slips by! Here is the link to the fillable document:

[Post Data Report \(PDR\) - 2026 Updates Form--DRAFT v2](#)

Keep in mind that the Department only requires submission of the form for any changes, so look it over to verify whether you need to submit. You can no longer fill out the form directly on the CA Legion website. This form must be downloaded, completed, and emailed to the Department at the following address:

forms@caLegion.org

The next required form date is 6/1: the Consolidated Post Report (CPR). Do yourself a favor and keep a running record of your Post's activities through the year, so the form will be easier to complete when the time comes!

On a personal note, I've been showing up at the LBVA Medical Center on the last Friday of each month for their Veterans Connection breakfast, where any Veteran (patient or not) can come for some breakfast, learn about available services, and get clothing and hygiene items free of charge. I'm joined with District 19 Auxiliary members at these events where we combine our efforts to support those who "answered the call" to duty!

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In Comradeship,

Martin Martinez

Commander, American Legion Post 496

Adjutant, American Legion District 19

www.americanlegionlakewoodpost496.org

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.

Phone: 562-447-7332
 E-mail: editorpost51@yahoo.com
 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.

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>

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.*

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

Baseball Contact:
D19LegionBaseball@gmail.com



Triple B BBQ Guys Presents
Rock 'n Ribfest
Spring Fling!
Saturday, May 2nd, 2026 Noon to 3PM
\$25/plate

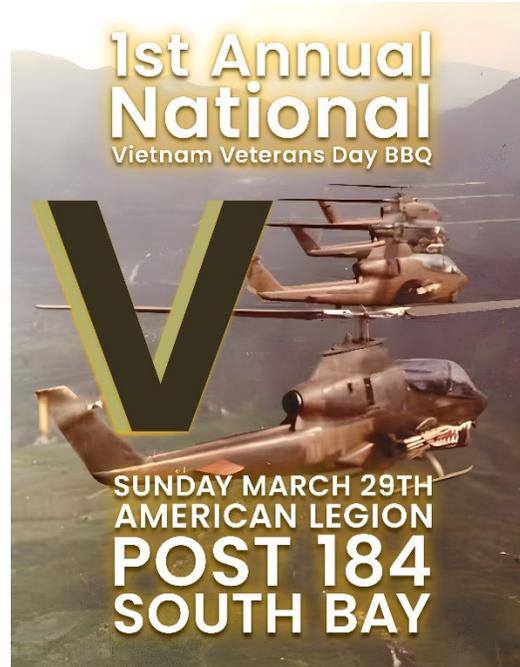




In addition to the delicious Ribs, there will be amazing side dishes. Check with Kelly to see what you can bring. No to go orders to make sure there is enough for those in attendance.

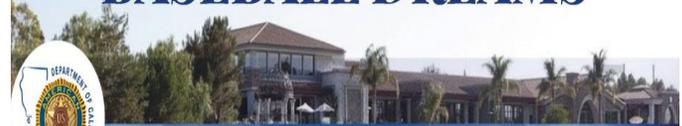
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1st Annual National
Vietnam Veterans Day BBQ



SUNDAY MARCH 29TH
AMERICAN LEGION
POST 184
SOUTH BAY

HEROES, LEGENDS & BASEBALL DREAMS




An Exclusive Evening of Legacy and Impact

Join us for an epic celebration where heroes and legends unite! A legacy built by the American Legion, a proud 106-year veteran organization to celebrate the 100th Anniversary of American Legion Baseball. For a century, this iconic program has shaped the future of America's pastime, with 51% of Major League Baseball players — including over 80 Hall of Famers— starting their journey on Legion fields.

Honor Our Heroes

Join distinguished guests, professional athletes, and community leaders for an unforgettable evening. Your presence and support will directly benefit veterans who created a legacy that has brought communities together for generations.

Live Cigar Roller ★ Swag Bag for Sponsors

Your Participation Makes a Lasting Impact

Exclusive Access to Celebrities ★ Silent & Live Auction ★ Seated Dinner



SCAN



**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. Pfluger
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 Ramierez
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, the Department Adjutant, meeting rooms, storage for records, as well as offices for our administration and support staff.