



DEPARTMENT ORATORICAL CONTEST

State Winner Announced March 10, 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.

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.*

Oratorical Contest on 3/10/2026. (Photo: Gil Soto/American Legion)



Christina Sayad, with her check for \$2400, Winner of the 2026 Dept of California Oratorical Contest, Veterans Administration Hospital Auditorium. (Photo: Gil Soto/American Legion)

Link to photos of the Oratorical Contest.
<https://flic.kr/s/aHBqjCSvCe>

UPCOMING DISTRICT 19 EVENTS

5/13/2026 – General District Meeting, Post 184, Redondo Beach 19:00

5/16/2026 – Area 4 Recognition Banquet, Proud Bird Restaurant, El Segundo, CA 12:00 to 16:00.

5/16/2026 – Celebration of Life Memorial for PDC Jere Romano, Hollywood Post 43, 11:00 to 16:00.

5/22 to 5/27/2026 – LA Fleet Week 2026, San Pedro, CA. To volunteer, contact Jessie Leal at 310-951-8199.



Contestants (L/R) Joseph Schimmoller, Andrew Lei, Omkar Sadeswaran, Christina Fayad, Jonas Marschner, and their families at the annual American Legion Department of California



6/26 to 6/28, 2026 – Department Convention at the Marriott Visalia Convention Center, Visalia, CA, 0900 to 1600 daily. Hotel info at <https://calegion.org/calendar>

IN THIS ISSUE

Department Oratorical Contest 1

Upcoming District 19 Events..... 1

Memorial Day Discounts for Veterans 2

Iraq and Afghanistan Neurologic Study 5

 Aerospace Commission 6

Legislative Commission..... 6

 CALL TO ACTION..... 6

Commission Reports..... 8

 Aerospace Commission 8

Get Involved! 9

FLEET WEEK Volunteers Needed 10

Officer Reports..... 10

 Commander..... 10

 First Vice Commander..... 11

 Second Vice Commander 11

 Third Vice Commander 12

 Chaplain..... 12

District 19 Pin/Sticker..... 13

List of District 19 Commanders 1927 to Present.. 11

About the Department of California 17



Green Hills Memorial Park, 2025 (Photo: U.S. Navy Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class John A. Miller)

Editor’s Note: It’s that time again: Our team at The California Legionnaire, sponsored by The American Legion Department of California, have put together a list of Military Appreciation Month and Memorial Day discounts for Veterans, active and reserve Service Members specifically in California. (Some deals may be regional or nationwide). Shoutout to our staff writer Rikki Almanza for laying the groundwork for this one!

We will be updating this list as new deals are confirmed, so be sure to check back regularly. To feature a business on this list, send inquiries to Southards.CALegion@gmail.com. All businesses, including online-only, are welcome!

DINING

Applebee’s

Over Memorial Day weekend, Applebee’s typically gives military members, Veterans, and first responders a discount on dine-in meals. The savings typically range from 10% to 20%, depending on the location and promotion. It is recommended to call your local Applebee’s ahead of time to confirm.

Cinnabon

Cinnabon often gives Veterans and active-duty military personnel 10% to 15% off on Memorial Day. Since locations are individually operated, discount amounts may vary, so it is best to check with your local store before visiting.

Joe’s Crab Shack

Active military and Veterans may receive 15% off

MEMORIAL DAY DISCOUNTS FOR VETERANS

2026 Military Appreciation Month
by [Rikki Almanza](#) | May 1, 2026



dine-in orders on Memorial Day.

Note: Joe's Crab Shack's Memorial Day promotion may be out of date. We will update this listing upon confirmation.

Outback Steakhouse

Outback Steakhouse gives Veterans and active-duty Service Members 10% off their check year-round. Around Memorial Day, some locations increase the discount to 20% for Veterans, active military, and first responders.

Pilot Flying J

Pilot is giving Military Families three free weekly deals throughout May through the myRewards Plus app. Offers may include coffee, fountain drinks, pizza, and breakfast sandwiches. Users must verify their military status with ID.me to access the deals.

Wendy's

Wendy's has partnered with WeSalute to offer Veterans, Service Members, and their families discounts. Individual franchises may offer a discount for Memorial Day. It is recommended to call your local Wendy's ahead of time to confirm.

Clothing & Apparel

Academy Sports+Outdoors

Through July 4, Academy Sports+Outdoors is offering a 10% Military discount on one online or in-store purchase with ID. The discount applies to the entire order.

Adidas

Veterans and Service Members can get 30% off online and in-store purchases year-round at normal Adidas locations, as well as 15% discounts at Adidas Factory Outlet stores. Must verify eligibility through ID.me.

Alpha Industries

Alpha Industries typically runs sitewide holiday sales, often up to 30% off or more. Eligible military members and Veterans may also be able to combine those savings with their verified discount.

Bass Pro Shops

For Memorial Day, Bass Pro Shops and Cabela's are increasing their Legendary Salute discount from 5%

to 10% on most in-store and online purchases.

Columbia Sportswear

Columbia Sportswear is offering 25% to 40% off during its Memorial Day Sale from May 18 to 25. Military personnel and first responders can also receive an extra 20% discount year-round.

Crocs

Crocs is giving military members 25% off full-priced styles. Verify through ID.me at checkout to receive the discount.

Eyemart Express

National optical retailer [Eyemart Express](#) is recognizing individuals affiliated with active members, non-active members, retirees, Veterans, and dependents with a 20% off discount on all prescription eyewear, along with 2,000 available frames, lens upgrades, sunglasses, and accessories. Valid military ID needs to be presented in store (dependents will need the military ID-bearing parent to be present).

Levi's

Levi's offers a standard 10% discount on clothing and apparel for eligible military members. Active duty, Veterans, retirees, and reservists can qualify, and during Memorial Day, the discount may be combined with store promotions such as markdowns up to 40%.

Nike

Nike is giving eligible U.S. military members 10% off, including active-duty, reservists, Veterans, and retirees. Spouses and dependents may also receive the discount after verifying military status.

Rack Room Shoes

Military personnel and their families can receive 20% off in-store purchases on Memorial Day (and July 4) with a valid military ID at checkout.

QALO

Veterans can receive 15% off regular-priced QALO purchases year-round after verifying their military status. During the Memorial Day season, QALO has also offered extra promotions or special edition items tied to Military Appreciation Month.



Entertainment and Travel

Armed Forces Vacation Club

The Armed Forces Vacation Club offers free membership for Veterans, with year-round resort stays starting at \$329 to \$409 per week. Around Memorial Day, AFVC often adds limited-time deals such as flash sales, booking bonuses, or extra discounts on top of its standard rates.

Blue Star Museums

All institutions participating in the Blue Star Museum Program will offer FREE admission for Service Members and their families, including National Guard and Reserve, from Armed Forces Day through Labor Day.

California State Parks

Veterans and service members can visit most California State Parks for free on Memorial Day with a valid ID.

Editor's note: This deal has not been officially announced yet.

California Theme Parks

Many of California's theme parks, from Disneyland to Six Flags offer discounts or free admission for Veterans, Service Members, and their families.

Furniture

Bear Mattress

Veterans and active military who verify their ID through ID.me will receive a 40% discount on online purchases.

Mattress Firm

Mattress Firm is offering up to 50% off select mattresses, adjustable bases, and bedding during its Memorial Day sale.

Sleep Number

Sleep Number typically gives active, Veteran, retired, and reservist personnel of the US Armed Forces a 5% discount, which can usually be stacked on top of their major promotional events.

GENERAL RETAIL & MISCELLANEOUS

7-Eleven

7-Eleven is thanking active-duty military members

and Veterans with an increased fuel discount. From May 1 to 31, verified 7Rewards and ID.me members can get 10 cents off per gallon, plus the everyday 5-cent app discount, for a total savings of at least 15 cents per gallon at participating locations nationwide.

AMERICA'S TIRE

America's Tire is offering Veterans and Service Members a 5% discount on purchases who verify their identity via ID.me, which can usually be stacked on top of other promotional discounts.

DISCOUNT TIRE

Discount Tire gives active-duty military members, Veterans, and reservists 5% off through ID.me. The discount can be combined with current deals and rebates.

STARGAZER CAST IRON

Stargazer Cast Iron cookware typically offers a 30% discount on Memorial Day when verified with VerifyPass. It is best to verify the offer ahead of time before making a purchase.

ESET

ESET gives a 25% discount year-round on consumer digital security products for Veterans and Service Members who verify their identity via ID.me.

LOWE'S

Active-duty Service Members, Veterans, and spouses can receive a 10% everyday discount, along with special savings on appliances, grills, patio furniture, and more through May 25.

MIDAS

Midas is giving active military members and Veterans 15% off tire and auto repair services at participating U.S. locations. A valid government ID is required, and the discount is available through the end of the year.

Navy Federal Credit Union

Members of NFCU who open a 12-month EasyStart certificate in May and make three recurring transfers will earn an extra \$30 courtesy of the credit union.

SHERWIN-WILLIAMS

From May 15 to 25, Sherwin-Williams customers can save 30% on paints and stains, 15% on paint supplies, and 40% on Color to Go® samples. Military members can also receive an extra 15% off. The offer is available in stores only, and exclusions apply.

VITAMIN SHOPPE AND SUPER SUPPLEMENTS

The Vitamin Shoppe typically gives Veterans, retirees, and active-duty service members 20% off eligible purchases. The discount is usually available in stores only with a valid U.S. Military or Veterans ID. It is recommended to verify the offer ahead of time before making a purchase.

WALGREENS

Walgreens typically offers a 20% off eligible regular-price items May 23-25 with myWalgreens membership for Veterans, military, and their families, Memorial Day weekend. It is best to verify the offer ahead of time before making a purchase.

IRAQ AND AFGHANISTAN NEUROLOGIC STUDY

Federal Panel Seeks Input from Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans on Neurological Conditions

by [Rikki Almanza](#) | Apr 16, 2026



Dust kicks up from the back blast as Tankers from 1-9 Field Artillery, 2nd HBCT, 3ID fire a 155 mm howitzer round, while nearby Soldiers cover their ears, Iraq, Feb. 20, 2010. (Photo: Gregory Gieske)

Editor's Note: The [National Academies are seeking](#)

[the perspectives of Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans](#) who have adverse neurological conditions believed to be caused by select military experiences.

A federal panel is asking Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans to come forward as it examines possible links between military service and long-term neurological conditions that may not appear until years later.

The review, led by the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, is focused on understanding whether exposures during Post-9/11 deployments are connected to issues affecting memory, thinking, and motor function. According to Stars and Stripes, the panel is gathering input from Veterans, ow w, and caregivers to better understand how these conditions develop over time.

A major concern in the review is that many symptoms do not show up right away. Some Veterans report that problems such as memory loss, difficulty concentrating, or changes in behavior only started well after leaving the military. In some cases, those changes were subtle at first and became more noticeable over time. That delay has made it harder to connect those issues directly to service and has left gaps in both research and care.

Repeated exposure to blast waves is one area being closely examined. Many Service Members in Iraq and Afghanistan were around explosions regularly, even if they were never diagnosed with a traumatic brain injury. Researchers are also looking at burn pits, environmental toxins, and the cumulative strain of long deployments in combat zones as factors that may contribute to neurological impairment later in life.

Veterans' groups have been raising concerns about these types of injuries for years. Unlike physical wounds, neurological issues are not always visible, but they can still have a serious impact on daily life. Some Veterans describe ongoing problems that affect their ability to work, maintain relationships, or handle routine tasks. Others say the symptoms have changed how they interact with family members or manage stress.



Officials involved in the review say collecting firsthand accounts is critical. While medical records provide part of the picture, personal experiences can help identify patterns that might otherwise be missed. Those accounts may also help researchers better understand how symptoms progress and what early warning signs could look like.

See this link for more information.

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

CALTAP is an Aerospace Commission program developed in concert with the Civil Air Patrol (CAP) and the American Institute of Aeronautics and Astronautics (AIAA).

The findings could also influence how the VA handles disability claims, especially in cases where symptoms appear long after service. For now, the panel continues to gather information to build a clearer understanding of how Post-9/11 service may still be affecting Veterans today. The review is expected to continue as more data and personal accounts are collected.

We have worked to introduce a low-cost, effective means of supporting Aerospace and STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math) programs in schools located in California and the American Legion communities, and to provide teachers with free support for the rest of their teaching careers.

Author: [Rikki Almanza](#)

Rikki is a Web Content Coordinator for the American Legion, Department of California. With a deep-rooted family connection to the military, Rikki is committed to using her skills and knowledge to provide valuable assistance and resources to servicemembers and veterans.

LEGISLATIVE COMMISSION

CALL TO ACTION

This week, we are calling on you because combat-injured veterans face a reduction in their retirement pay for every dollar of disability compensation they receive.

AEROSPACE COMMISSION

Fred Shacklett, Chair 5/1/2026
SANGER, CA - The Department of California, Aerospace Commission has announced that the California American Legion Teacher Assistance Program (CALTAP) registration page is now live.

The Major Richard Star Act aims to rectify this by allowing combat-injured veterans to receive both their earned retirement pay and disability compensation without offset.

Your action in advancing this crucial legislation is essential and greatly appreciated. Contact your Senators today!

The American Legion appreciates your advocacy efforts. Visit the [Action Center](#) to quickly email a letter of support to your members of Congress. Remember to report any recent meetings or calls to help showcase the impact of Legion advocacy [here](#).



The academic material is provided by the American Legion, the Civil Air Patrol (CAP), and the American Institute of Aeronautics and Astronautics (AIAA) to any California teacher who teaches a STEM-oriented curriculum.

Buy a Home – New Bill

by [Rikki Almanza](#) | Apr 1, 2026

Once registered, they can access the teaching materials for a one-time, reimbursable cost of \$35 for their entire career.



(Photo: Jens Neumann)

A new bipartisan proposal in Congress could make it easier for Veterans, especially those in rural communities, to purchase homes using VA-backed loans.

The VA Appraisal Modernization Act is designed to fix long-standing issues in the appraisal process that slow down home loan approvals. According to lawmakers backing the bill, a shortage of VA-certified appraisers has slowed down loan approvals, sometimes causing Veterans to lose out on homes to buyers using faster financing options.

This issue is more noticeable in rural areas such as Northern and inland California, where fewer appraisers are available, and travel distances can add even more time to the process.

The proposed legislation focuses on increasing the number of appraisers participating in the VA program. One of the main changes would adjust appraisal fees to better match current market rates, making the role more appealing to licensed professionals. In high-demand areas, fees would be raised to at least 125 percent of standard rates starting in 2027, with regular updates to keep pace with industry costs.

Additional measures in the bill include providing mileage reimbursements for appraisers working in remote or underserved regions and requiring the VA to increase fees in areas where appraiser shortages are most severe. Lawmakers also want the agency to study new ways to contract appraisers in hard-to-fill locations and explore whether parts of the VA appraisal process could be adjusted to align more closely with systems used by other federal housing programs.

By guaranteeing loans through private lenders, the VA home loan program helps Service Members and Veterans access homeownership. As part of that process, however, every property must be evaluated by a VA-approved appraiser to confirm it meets safety standards and is priced fairly. While this requirement protects buyers, it has also created challenges when there are not enough appraisers available to meet demand.

Supporters of the bill say these changes would reduce delays, speed up closing, and make VA loan offers more attractive to sellers who may currently avoid them due to longer timelines. The goal is to create a more efficient system that still protects Veterans from overpaying or purchasing homes with serious issues.

If passed, the legislation could help more Veterans secure housing without unnecessary setbacks, while maintaining the safeguards that have long been part of the VA home loan program.

Veterans Could See Faster Access to Emerging Treatments Under Senate Bill 4220

by Rikki Almanza | Apr 8, 2026

Senate Bill 4220 is moving through Congress with bipartisan backing, seeking to prepare the VA to deliver emerging medical treatments to Veterans as soon as they receive federal approval.

Introduced on March 26, the proposal would establish an Office of Novel Therapeutics within the Veterans Health Administration to evaluate, guide, and implement new forms of care. This will create a more direct path between medical innovation and patient access.

The bill is sponsored by Sen. Tim Sheehy (R-Mont.) and co-sponsored by Sen. Ruben Gallego (D-Ariz.), Sen. Tammy Duckworth (D-Ill.), and Sen. John Boozman (D-Ark.). Supporters say the current system can lag behind advancements in medicine, leaving Veterans waiting years for treatments that are already available in other healthcare settings.

Much of the urgency surrounding SB 4220 comes

from growing interest in alternative therapies, including psychedelic-assisted treatments that are currently under federal review. Early clinical research has shown potential in treating PTSD and other mental health conditions, particularly for patients who have not responded to standard medications or therapy. While these treatments are not yet widely available, lawmakers want the VA prepared to respond once regulatory decisions are made.

Support has also come from Veteran advocacy groups, including Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America and Disabled American Veterans. These organizations have raised concerns about gaps in treatment options, especially for PTSD, depression, and traumatic brain injuries, or TBI.



*Doctor talking to patient.
(Photo: Mart Production)*

The legislation focuses on building the internal framework needed before new therapies become widely available. That includes setting clinical standards, training providers, establishing safety protocols, and coordinating research efforts across the VA system. By putting these pieces in place early, the department would be in a position to act quickly once treatments receive FDA approval.

Lawmakers behind the bill have stated that the VA has often taken longer than the private sector to adopt new treatments. Without a centralized structure, the process can be fragmented, with different facilities moving at different speeds. The proposed office would serve as a dedicated hub to align those efforts and reduce delays that can impact care.

If enacted, the bill would also support collaboration between the VA, academic institutions, and private research organizations. That coordination could help expand clinical trials involving Veterans and improve the overall understanding of how these therapies perform in real-world settings.

The bill is now under consideration in the Senate Committee on Veterans’ Affairs. As it moves through the legislative process, discussions are expected to continue around oversight, safety, and how the VA balances innovation with patient protection. 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](#) and press 1 , [Chat](#), or Text [838255](tel:838255)
- [Vet Centers: 1-877-927-8387](#)
- [Homeless Veteran Resources: 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.

COMMISSION REPORTS

AEROSPACE COMMISSION

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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](#)

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](#)

FLEET WEEK VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

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.



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

OFFICER REPORTS

COMMANDER

Karl Wilvert

Comrades,

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

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

I understand that there will be disagreements amongst comrades concerning many things. We all need to ensure that we keep discussions concerning any disputes within the confines of those directly involved. Never air any disagreement outside of the concerned comrades. If there is an issue, parties to the issue need to discuss it face-to-face. If neither party is present, nothing productive can be done to resolve the dispute. I am always available to help or to act as a sounding board; however, I cannot take sides. Post officers oversee all post disputes and through motions and resolutions during official post meetings. The outcome of the proceedings will have



the final say on any issue. The officers in the District, Area, Department, or National American Legion will not resolve post issues. Your bylaws are your guide, as well as the American Legion Officer Guides.

I ask that we, as American Legion members and as veterans, do not publish negative information concerning our disagreements on social media that includes American Legion imagery. Publicly bringing the Legion into individual disputes is unwarranted and makes it harder for us to recruit new members. Social media is a powerful tool for both good and bad.

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, June 3rd, 2026, at Hawthorne Post 314.** The May district general meeting will take place **on Wednesday, May 13th, 2026, at South Bay Post 184.** I kindly request that each 19th District Post send at least one representative to our general meetings.

FIRST VICE COMMANDER

Manuel Vital
Fellow Comrades,

Here are the latest Membership Numbers as of April 24th:

- Currently, Department is @90.52% and #44 out of 55 Departments
- Area 4 is 90.26% and #3 in the Department
- District 17 is 91.24% and #8
- District 19 is @89.78% and #15
- District 23 is 87.79% and #21

Area 4 has 10 Posts that have reached 100% + Congratulations to those Posts!

Our next Target Date is May 13th where we should all be at 100%

These are the last few weeks to meet our 100% Deadline, so let's continue to renew our Members. Those Posts who achieved 100% will receive

Awards for reaching their goals at the Convention in June.

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 Maldonado
Welcome Members, Riders, Sons, and Auxiliary,

If we are not having fun, we aren't gonna do it! What does that mean to you? I keep asking myself the same question. We have so many things going on in the district, it's hard to hit every event, let alone keep track. It's a testament to how active and involved our whole district has become. We are now in the home stretch of this administrative year and therefore continue to remind everyone about our upcoming fundraisers. The next upcoming fundraiser is May 30th, starting and ending in Norwalk American Legion as 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 fundraiser will also be at Norwalk American Legion on June 3rd, a Comedy night (price to be determined by talent in a few weeks). Both are to benefit the Hospitality Suite for the



convention. We are still looking to do another cigar night in South Bay or in Hawthorne; we are working out a date and time.

I wish to do a taco night and another spaghetti dinner, which would be great. I would like to travel the district and not have the events in just one location. I hope to see you all there. Fliers have been and will be forthcoming.

Norwalk Post #359 will host the Los Angeles County Council this Friday at 6 PM. We will have a steak dinner now that Lent is over, for our comrades who observe Lent. The steak dinner will be a \$15 donation, which includes a light salad, baked potato, corn, and dessert.

Reminder: we are seeking donations from Posts in our district with a Canteen or Post Hole for Hospitality. We will also be passing out a sign-up sheet for Fleet Week at the coming district meeting in May. Please help and support.

We are especially looking for volunteers on Memorial Day itself, as many of our Posts have their own programs in 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.

Keep collecting our Helmets for Heroes to help our VA&R mission, and please remember to bring your funds to the district meeting for presentation.

Thank you all for your continued support for our district.

Yours in comradeship,
Angelo Gandalf Maldonado, JD

THIRD VICE COMMANDER

Greetings Comrades,

On March 29th, we celebrated our 1st Annual Vietnam Veterans Day BBQ and had a great turnout. ABC7/Salute covered our event. We need your assistance! On May 16th, the city of Torrance is celebrating the 64th Annual Armed Forces Day Parade. Due to the conflict with Iran our military

departments have been depleted and we need all our Legion members to be part of this event.

We are asking for Riders, volunteers, and family members, your scouts, and MCJROTC teams to participate in the parade. Contact Rick Horner, (310) 756-7425, who is the main contact for this event, as soon as possible.

Also, your participation is welcome to display your Post canopy at the military display area at the Torrance City Yard. Post 184 will be there. This is a great opportunity for the American Legion to showcase our department and reach out to our communities, and this event will be televised.

Also, we need your help with volunteers for Fleet Week coming up Memorial Day weekend. Check with your District 19 representative for your Posts signup sheet.

All departments (Legionaries, SALS, Auxiliary, and Riders) are welcome to join us. We will have drinks and snacks available. Our next District meeting will be hosted by Redondo Beach Post 184, Wednesday, May 13th, at 7 pm. Dinner will be served at 6pm. We will be serving Teriyaki chicken with steamed rice and dessert for \$15 a plate.

For God and Country.

Jesse Y. Leal
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

CHAPLAIN

Monika Rueda
Hello Comrades,

I hope this report finds you in good health and good



spirits. As we enter into a new month, we also enter our season of elections.

The good thing is our organization is full of honorable men and women with excellent leadership skills and the best intentions for our American Legion family.

To all candidates running for positions and to all officers and board members currently in position, best of luck to you all. I will pray that you all campaign in such a way that honors one of the core missions of the American Legion, "mutual helpfulness."

You can always recognize a good leader by the way they campaign and how they utilize their position when they're in office.

Do they run an integral campaign based on their skills to lead? Or do they resort to gossip and vindictive attacks to gain momentum or get revenge?

I believe you can determine a good member from a toxic one in the same manner. Are they a team player? Do they respect and honor the core values of our beloved American Legion? Or are they exhibiting behavior that is for the benefit of oneself? Do they demonstrate unity?

Or do they create or condone division? These are questions we might want to ask ourselves. Remember, actions speak louder than words.

Why am I addressing this?

Unfortunately, there has been a wave of toxic behaviors running through many posts within our District and throughout our Department.

Toxic behavior like vindictive attacks, gossip and backstabbing undermine the very core of why the American Legion exists.

It creates a space of hostility, division, discourages members from participating and new enrollment. Our foundation is, God and Country. The bible clearly states that division is not of God but a work of our spiritual enemy.

The American Legion is supposed to be a sanctuary

for veterans and their families. A place where members feel safe, respected and valued.

We, as officers and members, cannot entertain this negative behavior. If any member is encouraging or creating this type of behavior, they must

be held accountable. We have a Code of Conduct that is very clear on that. Comrades, we must get back to our foundational values of service to veterans and their families. This toxic behavior has no place in our American Legion. If this is happening in your post, please take the necessary channels to address the matter before it turns into a large problem. I am always available for discussion and/or prayer.

Blessings to you all.

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.

Both can be yours for a \$5.00 donation.

Baseball Contact:

D19LegionBaseball@gmail.com

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.

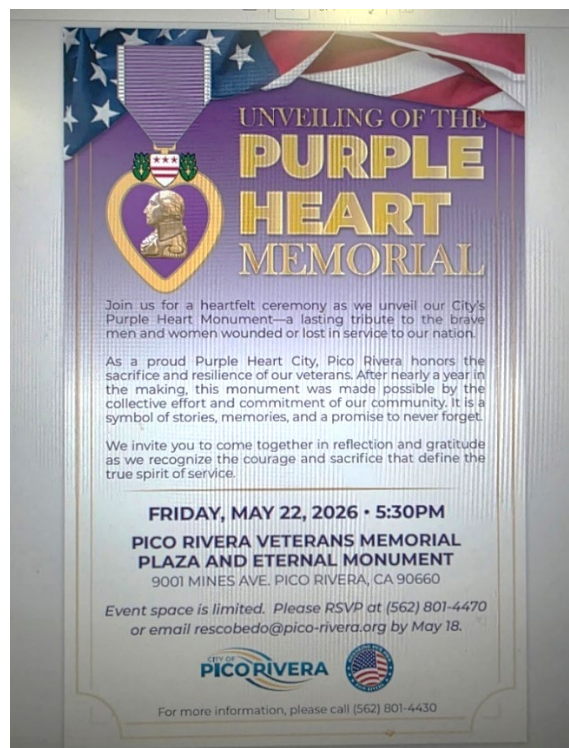
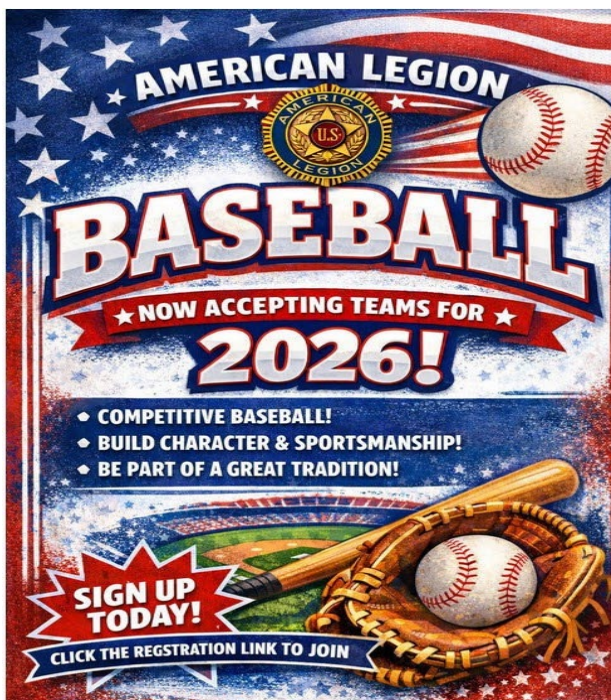
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District 19 meets on the second Wednesday of every month at 7:00 PM at various locations throughout Los Angeles County, California. See the latest calendar for locations.





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