



NEW DEPARTMENT COMMANDER

By Fred Shacklett

7/1/2026

VISALIA, CA — Janice Somers, District 22, was elected as the 2026-2027 Commander of the Department of California at the 107th Annual Convention in Visalia, California, on June 28th, 2026.

She defeated J. R. Duarte, past Area 4 Vice Commander, in a vote of delegates on the convention floor.



Additionally, Chris Yates was elected to the National Executive Committee (NEC), with Larry Maggio elected as the Alternate NEC. Michael Smith was elected as the Department Sergeant-at-Arms.

New Area Vice Commanders

- Area 1 Vice Commander, Robert Tyndall
- Area 2 Vice Commander, Phil Cazella
- Area 3 Vice Commander, Roy Santiago
- Area 4 Vice Commander, David Fuller
- Area 5 Vice Commander, Victor Martin
- Area 6 Vice Commander, Jeff Daly



Delegates on the convention floor at the American Legion Department of California convention in Visalia, CA on June 27, 2026





Women Legionnaires attending the 107th American Legion Department of California convention in Visalia, CA on June 27, 2026.

UPCOMING EVENTS

7/8/2026 – District 19 General Membership meeting at Lakewood Post 496 at 19:00. This will also serve as the District 19 Installation of Officers.

7/30-8/2/2026– Department Executive Committee meeting, Merced Post 83, 939 W Main St, Merced, CA 95340-4518. 0900 to 1600 daily.
Hotel info
El Capital Hotel
609 W Main St, Merced, CA 95340
(209) 383-1234

9/2/2026 – District 19 Executive Board, at TBD at 19:00

3/12-14, 2027 Department Executive Committee meeting, Santa Maria Post 56
501 N Pine St, Santa Maria, CA 93458

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Take Care of America’s Veterans Act (TCAVA)

A message from National HQ | Jul 6, 2026

Dear American Legion Family members and friends,
The Take Care of America’s Veterans Act (TCAVA) is really a \$58 billion proposition.

If the legislation, which includes more than 60 veterans-related bills, does not get approved by Congress, veterans stand to lose up to \$58 billion in programs, benefits and other matters.

Just like when we were in the military, this is a case of “Use it or lose it.” Let me explain.

The VA has proposed a rule which estimates say will result in somewhere between \$19 billion and \$58 billion being diverted from veteran benefits to the U.S. Treasury. The American Legion has objected to this rule change. Despite our best efforts, the VA has not withdrawn this proposed rule. That means if we don’t act, billions of dollars will go from supporting veterans to funding other causes.

The American Legion is among a coalition of 23 veteran organizations that wrote to the leaders of Congress, advocating to pass TCVA and keep those tens of billions of dollars for veterans. **(Read the letter [here](#).)**



Let me be clear. We are not trading veterans' benefits. We are using up to \$58 billion to help our brothers and sisters, rather than lose it. That's it — use it or lose it.

And that is why The American Legion supports the Take Care of America's Veterans Act. This legislation combines more than 60 bills, most of which The American Legion supports.

- It expands suicide prevention.
- It improves care for traumatic brain injuries.
- It offers relief for combat-injured retirees through the Major Richard Star Act.
- It gives real support for the family caregivers who hold our wounded together.

If the Take Care of America's Veterans Act does not pass in its current form, none of these reforms will happen.

That is something The American Legion won't stand for. And neither should you.

I recommend reviewing the facts about this legislation, understanding the Legion's process and encouraging your members of [Congress to support TCVA](#). Visit [this special web page](#) for those resources and more.

Dan K. Wiley

National Commander
The American Legion



Author: [National HQ](#)

Published with permission. The American Legion is built on a promise from men and women who swore with their lives to defend and protect the United States through military service. The promise begins

at enlistment, grows through training and discipline in the U.S. Armed Forces, and continues after discharge, as veterans in service to the community, state, and nation.

COMMISSION REPORTS

AEROSPACE COMMISSION

Fred Shacklett, Chair

7/1/2026

This is a summary of the activities of the Aerospace Commission of the Department of California between July 1, 2025, and June 25, 2026,

The California American Legion Aerospace Commission focused heavily on expanding educational programming, addressing committee recruitment shortages, and engaging with modern technologies like drones alongside traditional aerospace policy.

Based on their official portal, here is a breakdown of their primary activities, publications, and initiatives during this period:

1. Program Launches & Community Events

CALTAP Launch (May 1, 2026). The commission officially launched the California American Legion Teacher Assistance Program (CALTAP).

Developed in collaboration with the Civil Air Patrol (CAP) and the American Institute of Aeronautics and Astronautics (AIAA), this program provides educators with curriculum and resources to promote STEM and aerospace learning.

Palm Springs Drone Festival (May 2026): Highlighting the commission's shift toward modern unmanned technologies, Area 5 Aerospace Commissioner Amado C. Salinas II helped coordinate and cover the 2026 International Drone



Soccer Stars tournament, which brought in competitive teams from 11 countries.

2. Strategic Planning & Governance

Strategic Plan (2026–2029): The commission drafted and published its formal Aerospace Strategic Plan, setting policy objectives and technological milestones for the upcoming three years.

Commission Recruitment Drive (February 2026): Commission Chairman Fredrick Shacklett issued a public call to action ("Shape the Future: Serve on the Aerospace Commission") detailing an urgent need for personnel. He noted that only 10 of California's 30 American Legion districts were actively represented on the commission, prompting a push for wider local involvement.

Regular Meetings & Reports: The commission held regular structured meetings to update policy, releasing official minutes and presentations in September 2025, January 2026, and February 2026. They also delivered status reports to the Department Executive Committee (DEC) in January and March 2026.

3. Policy Commentary & Publications

Resolution 2026-001 was passed by the delegates at the convention on 6/28/2026. The resolution encourages the department and the national organization to support a robust Aerospace initiative.

The commission regularly kept members updated via its Aerospace Roundup newsletter (releasing editions in September 2025, January 2026, and June 2026) alongside several targeted columns written by member Kevin Burns:

March 2026: An essay on why the historical intent behind the Aerospace Committee remains relevant for commercial and civilian space infrastructure.

June 11, 2026: A commentary defending the strategic necessity of Southern European U.S. bases to protect international airpower.

June 16, 2026: An op-ed tracking historical preservation, specifically calling attention to the closure and maintenance failures of the historic World War II-era Blimp Hangar B in Tillamook, Oregon.

Four editions of the Aerospace Roundup newsletter were published during this legion year

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](#)
- [Valley Forge Workshop Commission](#)



- [Veteran Affairs and Rehabilitation \(VA&R\) Commission](#)
- [Veterans Employment and Education Commission](#)
- [Ways and Means Commission](#)

OFFICER REPORTS

COMMANDER

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

I have just returned from the 107th Department of California Convention held in Visalia, CA.

There was a lot of business to complete. We started Thursday morning at 9 am with Pre-Convention DEC to handle some important tasks, with the convention being cut short on Sunday at 4 pm. The number of resolutions, presentations, ceremonies, and administrative issues overwhelmed the schedule.

We were unable to install the incoming Department officers, so this was postponed to the July DEC in Merced. This was a blow to the traditions of officer transfers and was unfortunate.

Many comrades find the convention proceedings plodding and boring. Unfortunately, I must agree with some of the points. In my opinion, this is due to the unexciting methodologies required to present information.

I will continue to find ways to improve this process and to help make our post, district, area, and department presentations more efficient. Even giving this report falls into this improvement process. A work in progress.

I challenge each officer in each post to mentor your post comrades in how the Legion operates. While doing this, I am asking you to invite them to attend

district, area, and department meetings. This will help everyone see how the business of helping veterans in our communities is managed.

If they see things they feel could use improvement, have them bring them to the bodies for consideration. Getting new members involved is how we will evolve as an organization.

Mentoring new members to step up and begin navigating the chairs is an evolutionary tactic. We need fresh minds to bring fresh ideas to the table. I encourage everyone to support those in need. Please pay your dues for 2026/27.

Please note that the next District 19 Executive Board meeting is on **Wednesday, September 2, 2026, at Location TBD.**

The July district general meeting will take place on **Wednesday, July 8th, 2026, at Lakewood Post 496.** We will also be installing our officers during this meeting night. I kindly request that each 19th District Post send at least one representative to our general meetings.

Karl Wilvert
19th District Commander

FIRST VICE COMMANDER

Manuel Vital
In Comradeship,
Manuel E. Vital
19th District `
1st Vice Commander

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SAVE POSTAGE.
SAVE TIME.



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- Pay online with a credit or debit card at Renew (mylegion.org)



SECOND VICE COMMANDER

Angelo Maldonado

Welcome Members, Auxiliary, Sons, and Riders,

What a wonderful end to our administrative year. The convention was great! Thank you to everyone that helped make our hospitality suite a success. Especially Diana Levas, Debbie Butler for organizing the venue and the food, Rob and Fran Motsenbocker for organizing the bar and the raffles; and of course Rita Lambert for being an excellent bartender. You are all amazing in my book, and you helped the 19th District shine.

I hope everyone enjoyed the esprit de corps and camaraderie of the convention. We had some great fun activities. The coloring contest, chair decorating, and, of course, the Blue Falcon Award. Great times with great people. Thank you to all who attended and made our district look good.

We did have a nice Comedy night at the Norwalk American Legion in support of the 19th district. Thanks to Coach and Javier Ortiz for organizing the show and to Lori Long for helping with the food. Again, things happen when we work together as a family.

We are starting our calendar for next year, so I am looking for posts to host events and share fundraising ideas. Please contact me to arrange events for our VA&R. Thank you for your interest. You can reach me at agandalf22@aol.com or (253) 495-9462.

Thank you all for your continued support for our district.

Yours in comradeship,

Angelo Gandalf Maldonado, JD

THIRD VICE COMMANDER

Greetings Comrades,

On Friday, June 19th, we sent 20 Student Delegates to our Boys & Girls State Scholarship Program. They will compete with several other students in Sacramento in mock government programs. Very proud of our delegates.



Our 4th of July celebration is coming up, starting at noon. This is open to the public. Our Legion, SALS, Auxiliary, and Riders will be providing BBQ with donated side dishes and desserts.

On July 26th, we will hold our 2nd Annual Korean 73rd Armistice Celebration, starting at noon. This event is open to the public. We will have BBQ, Korean side dishes, and entertainment.

A celebration will be held on July 24th, starting at 10:00 am, at the Joint Forces Training Base - Los Alamitos to mark the 73rd Korean War Armistice. See attached photo for more information.

Jesse Y Leal

Department of California

American Legion

Commander Elected

Redondo Beach Post 184

Area 4 District 19 3rd Vice Commander

US Army Veteran

Email: post184vicecommander@gmail.com

(310) 951-8199



CHAPLAIN

Monika Rueda
Hello Comrades.

I'd like to take this time to congratulate all the 2026-2027 officers of the Department of California, all California Districts, including our own District 19, and all Posts.

Here's to a new year of serving our veterans and their families!

God Bless You All!
Chaplain Monika Rueda



Noisy 19th Sticker

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

Both can be yours for a \$5.00 donation.

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.



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



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



Parks Recreation & Community Services

SENIOR SERVICES PRESENTS:

HONORING ALL WHO SERVED

BOOTS & BRAVERY

A VETERANS COUNTRY CONCERT

JULY 27, 2026

CENTRAL PARK
(SHUTTLE & DINNER INCLUDED)

6:00 PM: SHUTTLE LEAVES UPTOWN SENIOR CENTER
6:30 PM: DINNER SERVED
7:00 PM: CONCERT STARTS

RSVP STARTS JUNE 22ND
SPACE IS LIMITED.

FAULSTINE
Rocking 40 years of classic hits

FREE FOR VETERANS (55+) ONLY AND ONE GUEST

Whittier Veteran's Concert

AMERICAN LEGION POST 184

Independence Day BBQ

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SATURDAY JULY 4th
12 Noon TO 3 PM

412 Camino Real Redondo Beach
Website: post184.com



Invitation



We cordially invite you to honor and remember the sacrifices of our Korean War Veterans at the **73rd Anniversary of the Korean War Armistice**

July 24 (Fri) 2026

10: 00 - 40th ID Museum Tour & Group Photo
11: 00 - Commemoration Ceremony at Fiddler's Green
12: 00 - Luncheon & Korean War Photo Exhibition

Joint Forces Training Base-Los Alamitos

11200 Lexington Dr. Los Alamitos, CA 90720

CPT (R) Man K (Martin) Choi, President
Republic of Korea Army Association - USA

Attire: Military - Service Uniform
Civilian - Casual

RSVP: NLT 07/18/2026
arokausw@gmail.com
310)938-8785



대한민국육군미국협회
REPUBLIC OF KOREA ARMY ASSOCIATION

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.



POSTS OF DISTRICT 19

Post 27	Arthur L Peterson	District 19 (4)
PO Box 20900, Long Beach, CA 90802 (562) 436-6182		
Post 51	Whittier	District 19 (4)
PO Box 51, Whittier, CA 90606 (562) 201-3095		
Post 61	Battleship Iowa (ALR)	District 19 (4)
250 S Harbor Blvd, San Pedro, CA 90731 28625 S Western Ave, PO Box 214, Rancho Palos Verdes, CA 90275 (310) 357-7063		
Post 134	City of Paramount (SAL)	District 19 (4)
7550 Somerset Blvd, Paramount, CA 90723 (310) 920-5545		
Post 170	Bert S Crossland (SAL) (ALA)	District 19 (4)
3309 Antonio St, Torrance, CA 90503 (310) 213-6484		
Post 184	South Bay (SAL) (ALR) (ALA)	District 19 (4)
412 S Camino Real, Redondo Beach, 90277 (310) 316-6718		
Post 270	Downey	District 19 (4)
(562) 544-0372		
Post 272	Montebello (SAL) (ALA)	District 19 (4)
616 W Cleveland Ave, Montebello, CA 90640 (323) 721-4878		
Post 314	Hawthorne (SAL) (ALA)	District 19 (4)
14124 S Prairie Ave, Hawthorne, CA 90250 (310) 675-1313		



Post 341	Leland A Cupp	(SAL) (ALA)	District 19 (4)
4900 Durfee Ave, Pico Rivera, CA 90660 (562) 641-9043			
Post 352	Gilbert Lindsay		District 19 (4)
PO Box 11171, Carson, CA 90749 (720) 840-5578			
Post 359	Norwalk	(SAL) (ALA)	District 19 (4)
11986 Front St, Norwalk, CA 90650 (562) 474-1977			
Post 411	Rivera	(ALA)	District 19 (4)
7642 Serapis Ave, Pico Rivera, CA 90660 PO Box 411, Pico Rivera, CA 90660 (562) 656-4117			
Post 465	Clyde F Hager	(SAL) (ALA)	District 19 (4)
7550 Eastern Ave, Bell Garden, CA 90201 (562) 927-6116			
Post 496	Lakewood	(SAL) (ALA)	District 19 (4)
5938 E Parkcrest St, Long Beach, CA 90808 (562) 420-1014			
Post 804	Eugene A Obregon	(SAL) (ALR)	District 19 (4)
4615 E Cesar E Chavez Ave, Los Angeles, CA 90022 (714) 360-9268			
Post 833	Lincoln Village	(SAL) (ALA)	District 19 (4)
21022 S Alameda St, Long Beach, CA 90810 (310) 518-5054			



LIST OF DISTRICT COMMANDERS

1927 to Present

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
2026	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.