



Wisconsin American Legion First District



*Serving 60,000+ veterans from the shores
of Lake Michigan to the idyllic Sugar River*

September 2021

Greetings American Legion Family!

BLUF – September in Wisconsin. State and National conventions are in the books. Baseball season is winding down, and football season is gearing up. The leaves are starting to fall and the nights are becoming cooler. September also signals a return to regular meeting schedules for the American Legion. Counties and Posts that took the summer off are coming together again to commence work on our annual programs and pursuing membership in earnest.

I hope everyone had an enjoyable summer. With the easing of COVID restrictions we are beginning to return to our normal routines and getting on with life. I look forward to seeing all of you at the upcoming meetings and events as we move further into fall.

Our District Christmas in August party was a rousing success. Thanks again to Frank Kresen Post 24 for hosting the event. They have a beautiful facility there in Lake Geneva, and enjoyed having us. A pleasant time was had by all, as we were able to renew our friendships and enjoy each other's company with minimum Legion business being conducted. Most of those in attendance agreed that this should become an annual event, perhaps even replacing our normal Christmas party. Stay tuned for future developments on that front.

Now on to business. We have a couple of important District events coming up, which I hope most of you will be able to attend. Our annual POW/MIA Silent March will be held on Saturday, September 18, 2021, hosted by Sponholtz – Deignan Post 183 in Genoa City. Our 1st District Fall Conference will be held on Sunday, October 3, 2021 at Wells – Davis – Young – Neal Post 209 in Orfordville. Our new Department Commander, Greg Eirich, has committed to attend both events, so I'm looking for a good turn-out of 1st District Legionnaires. More details can be found further down in the newsletter.

As I reported in the last newsletter, we lost 668 members to non-renewal last year. We simply must find a way to reverse that trend. **Legionnaires, this is a serious call to action!** As I have shared in the past, if we are to have an organization to turn over to, when we can't do this anymore and need to step down, we have to keep our membership steady, and recruit new members. Do the math. If we continue to lose our members at the rate of 668 a year, the First District will cease to exist in less than **8** years. Is that an unrealistic assessment? Probably, but it does point out how fast things can slip away from us if we don't figure out a way to stop the slide. We can do this; I know we can. We had 5,196 members paid for 2021. If each of us recruited just **one** member, that would put us over 10,000 members, in just one year. Just one member! If half of us recruited just one member, we would become the largest District in the Department by about 1,000. The problem doesn't seem quite so daunting when you look at it like that. So, I'm asking each and every one of you to commit yourself to finding that one new member. Make sure we keep the members we have, but try as hard as you can to get one new one. There are 55,000+ potential Legionnaires in our District, including the 668 we lost last year. They are out there. From all war eras. We just need to ask. **GO RECRUIT THE NEXT YOU!**



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Membership Report

We received the first membership report from Department on September 1. However, it is not yet a complete report. The goals have not yet been assigned and there is a lag in reporting between the Posts, Department and National. We should have a better handle on the numbers by the October newsletter. As you may or may not know Department Membership Coordinator Chris Schmidt has taken a position with another firm. We wish Chris all the best as she moves on to her new job. New Coordinator Chet Faith started work on August 30, and is working hard to get up to speed in his new position. Please be patient with him as he has some big shoes to fill. So as not to overwhelm him, please route any issues that you are having with the new myLegion.org through me. I've taken some training recently in the new program and between me and Department Vice Commander Julie Muhle, we may be able to solve your problems or at least get you the help that you need without adding to Chet's learning curve right away.

What's News?

- 1. District Conference** – The First District Fall Conference is scheduled for Sunday October 3, 2021 at Wells – Davis – Young – Neal Post 209, 3913 S. State Rd. 213, Orfordville, WI. Registration at 8 AM, church service at 8:30 AM and Call to Order at 9 AM. Uniform of the Day is Coat and Tie and Legion cap for District Officers, business casual for delegates and guests. Please remember to bring a bottle for our bottle raffle, and the names of your deceased members for the Post Everlasting ceremony. Our guest speakers will include our Department Commander Greg Eirich and Department Vice Commander David Latimer. District Adjutant Ken Zilisch is in the process of sending out the notices to the Posts, which will contain information on each Post's delegate strength and other important registration information. This is a great opportunity to network with other First District Posts, learn about the many Legion programs and get updates on veterans' affairs and legislation. I encourage each Post to send a full delegation to this event. District Officers and Committee Chairs, please have your reports prepared in writing to allow the Adjutant to have a copy for the minutes after you present your report.
- 2. POW/MIA Silent March** – The annual POW/MIA Silent March will be held on Saturday, September 18, 2021, and is hosted by Sponholtz – Deignan Post 183 in Genoa City. Registration will be at the Broken Spoke Tavern and Eatery (Old Legion Hall), 332 Fellows Rd., Genoa City, beginning 9:00 AM, march steps off at 11:00 AM to Veteran's Park with ceremony at 11:30 AM. Department Commander Greg Eirich is scheduled to appear along with other speakers. After the ceremony, everyone is invited back to the Broken Spoke for fellowship with food & beverages available for purchase. Commemorative T-shirts and other memorabilia will also be available for purchase. For more information, call Casey Juszczuk, 847-942-0829 or Bob Miller, 262-745-1603.
- 3. Badger Football Ticket Lottery for Veterans Now Open** - You could receive two free tickets to a Badger Football Game! Get ready to ***Jump Around!*** The Wisconsin Department of Veterans Affairs is pleased to announce that we are giving away free tickets to the Wisconsin Badger Salute to Veterans football game. Join us and watch the Badgers take on the Army on Saturday, Oct. 16 at Camp Randall Stadium. Veterans and service members can register to win up to two tickets online at WisVetsSports.com.

A huge thank you to the University of Wisconsin Athletic Department for generously providing tickets each year so veterans and their guest can enjoy the game. ***Go Bucky!***

- 4. Beware of New Telephone Scam** - National Headquarters received a couple of phone calls from members who have been in contact with a gentleman by the name of Billy Newman. This guy is fishing for information and tells them he is a member of The American Legion. Some have talked to him about purchasing a life membership, and he is trying to get them to provide their bank account information. On one of them, a phone number came up and the caller ID came up unavailable. National Headquarters was given the phone number from that call, and when they called the number a voicemail message says he is Billy Newman with The American Legion. **THIS**

IS NOT A VALID NATIONAL STAFF MEMBER OR EMPLOYEE. Do not give this individual, or anyone you don't know for that matter, your banking information over the phone.

5. **Predatory Claims Companies** - The American Legion and other Veteran Service Organizations (VSOs) are quite concerned about the predatory behavior of for-profit companies offering their services to veterans. They give veterans the illusion that a paid service will yield better service and results, while most of these companies are not even able to file claims as they are not accredited; some are charging veterans as much as 10 percent of their compensation for the rest of their lives.

One example of a company that charges veterans for its services is *Veterans Disability Aid, Inc.* which states on its website: "Why rely on a Veterans Service Officer (VSO) who may not have your best interests in mind? Go with the professional advocates who are committed to you and have a vested interest in your success".

These companies have been aggressively lobbying members of the U.S. Senate, and when VSOs address this issue, many senators don't understand the harm these companies are inflicting. **Veterans should not have to pay for what they have earned.**

6. **VA processing disability claims for certain conditions related to particulate matter** - VA is now processing [disability claims](#) for asthma, rhinitis and sinusitis on a presumptive basis based on particulate matter exposures during military service in Southwest Asia and certain other areas – if these conditions manifested within 10 years of a qualifying period of military service.

This will expand benefits for Veterans who served in:

- Afghanistan, Djibouti, Syria, and Uzbekistan during the Persian Gulf War, from September 19, 2001, to the present, **or**
- The Southwest Asia theater of operations from August 2, 1990, to the present

If you have a pending claim for one or more of these conditions, you don't need to do anything. We'll send you a decision notice when we complete our review.

For more information on the new presumptive conditions, visit our website at [Airborne Hazards and Burn Pit Exposures - Public Health \(va.gov\)](#).

To apply for benefits, Veterans and survivors may visit [VA.gov](#) or call toll-free at [800-827-1000](#), or contact your local County Veterans Service Office.

7. **Access to VA Home Loans Expands** - VA [home loan eligibility requirements](#) have been updated so older Vietnam Veterans and additional National Guard members may now qualify for the no down payment home loan benefit. [Learn how these benefit updates may help you!](#)
8. **Track Your VA Claim or Appeal Status** - Do you have a VA claim or appeal under review? You can use [VA's online tool](#) to review the status of any claims or appeals related to compensation, education benefits, VA health care, and more. [Learn how to track your status online.](#)
9. **Past National Commander Denise H. Rohan** – PNC Rohan was sworn in as Wisconsin's Selective Service state director. She is the first woman to hold that title.

"I am truly honored to serve as the Wisconsin state director for the Selective Service System," said Rohan, a member of American Legion Post 385 in Verona, Wis. "Its mission is critical to national security and is an important keystone to the nation's preparedness."

Rohan's role will be to serve as liaison between the Selective Service System and the governor's office. She will represent the governor and the Selective Service regarding agency matters in Wisconsin.

Wisconsin Gov. Tony Evers nominated Rohan for the position. She was appointed by former Selective Service Director Donald M. Benton.

10. David Fuller Elected Detachment Commander - David Fuller was elected the new Detachment Commander of the Wisconsin Sons of the American Legion at the 2021 Summer Convention. David is a member of Squadron 209 located in Orfordville, WI. David follows Robert Sirovina, Jr. who was Commander from July 2019 through July 2021. Commander Fuller carries on a proud tradition being the ninth Detachment Commander from the 1st District.

One key goal Commander Fuller has set for the Detachment over the next year is more engagement with all the Squadrons within Wisconsin. A lot is changing within the Organization, the Detachment will be here to inform and supporting the Squadrons through these changes.

One other goal, through his Commander's Project, will be to help bring Closure, Gratitude, and Respect to America's senior-most Veterans by raising funds for Vets Roll. [Learn more here.](#)

11. Change to mask requirements at Madison VA – William S. Middleton VA Hospital in Madison has announced that **all Veterans and visitors** must wear a well-fitted, exam style mask to enter its hospital or clinics. The facility already requires that all staff wear a well-fitted exam mask to ensure safety against the spread of COVID-19 and all of its variants. Most community hospitals, including the UW-Madison, already have implemented similar or more strict requirements to ensure the safety of patients, staff and visitors.

When a patient arrives at one of the facilities, the screening staff will screen you for temperature and symptoms, but also check to make sure you have an appropriate, well-fitted exam style mask to wear in the facility. If you present to the facility wearing mask that is not clean, well-fitted, a gaiter or a bandana; the staff will politely offer you a facility provided exam mask at no expense and ask that you wear it throughout your visit.

This simple step will ensure consistency with mandatory face coverings across the facility and will help to make sure everyone is maintaining the safest possible environment to provide care to the Veteran patients.

12. Meet the New National Commander - Paul E. Dillard was elected national commander of The American Legion on Sept. 2, 2021, in Phoenix during the organization's 102nd national convention. His theme as national commander is "No Veteran Left Behind." He first joined The American Legion in 1969.

A native Texan, Dillard graduated from Whitesboro High School in 1965 before joining the U.S. Navy and serving in Vietnam through four campaigns including the Tet offensive. He later received an honorable discharge as a radarman second class petty officer from the Navy Reserve before attending Grayson County Junior College and East Texas State University. Read more about Commander Dillard [here](#).

13. Notes from Wisconsin American Legion Headquarters

Post Mailings – You all previously received correspondence that Post Mailings would be going virtual and bi-monthly. Post mailings can be viewed at <https://wilegion.org/post-mailing/>.

myLegion.org – Issues with the new myLegion.org persist. Things **are** getting better, and the National organization is slowly catching up with reported problems. They are now working on individual trouble tickets, as many of the system-wide bugs have been corrected. E-mail addresses continue to be a major stumbling block for users. Users must log in with the personal e-mail that was originally on file in their National record. This information can be updated after the user's account is established in the new system. To avoid delays in membership reporting while issues are being resolved, Department is urging Post officers who process membership to use myLegion if it works, and to sent transmittals by mail, if it doesn't. This will ensure timely processing of memberships.

3rd Annual Celebration of Freedom – The Wisconsin American Legion announces the 2021 *Celebration of Freedom* event. This year's gala will be held on September 24 – 25, 2021, and will again take place at Department Headquarters at 2930 American Legion Dr., Portage. In the first 2 years, this statewide community event has raised over \$70,000 for Legion Wisconsin Programs. What can we do with \$70,000? It could sponsor over 140 Veterans to Camp, help thousands of Veterans and their families meet their financial needs during hard times, annually send 54 Legion All-Stars to play at Miller Park or send over 200 Boys to Badger Boys State to name a few.

This is a STATE-WIDE LEGION FAMILY community event that will feature New York's 9/11 Never Forget Mobile Exhibit, live entertainment, food and drink, obstacle course and more.

Help is still needed. Legionnaires are urged to sign up [here](#).

For more information and a schedule of events, click [here](#).

Thank You to All Who Made The 2021 WALLECA a Success - The 2021 Wisconsin American Legion Law Enforcement Academy was held the week of July 26th at the Wisconsin State Patrol Academy. Organizers Jim Johnson, Sheri Hicks and John Wolfe thought outside the box, moved the date and scaled down the number of students to 15 for this session, but made it happen. Congratulations on a great week. Also thank you to Legionnaires Kaia Glenn and Linda Koenen for your support this past week. A big thank you to the Wisconsin State Patrol for the use of their facility, their instructors and the great hospitality.

New Legion College Courses Announced - After several months to refresh and update course materials, the Wisconsin American Legion College announces virtual offerings for both the Basic and Intermediate Courses. The Cost to attend is \$10. The Advanced Course will be held in November and December, dates will be announced at a later date.

Basic Course: [Register Here](#)

- September 22-23 from 6-9 PM or
- Sept. 25-26 from 9 AM-Noon

Intermediate Course: [Register Here](#)

- October 13-14 from 6-9 PM or
- October 23-24 from 9 AM-Noon

Information for Those Who Want to Provide Assistance to Afghan Nationals - Fort McCoy has coordinated the following resources for those who want to provide assistance to Afghan nationals now here and they have passed on the following message:

There has been an outpouring of support from the local community asking for ways to help the Afghan refugees being welcomed at Ft. McCoy. While the American Red Cross is aggressively working to meet the immediate needs of our growing population, there are many things that the local community can do to help.

(1) Catholic Charities of the Diocese of La Crosse, WI has launched a campaign to provide Afghanistan refuge assistance. They are accepting donations at 3710 East Avenue South in La Crosse and also have a gift registry set up through Amazon Smile where donors can purchase needed items and have them shipped directly. <https://cclse.org/afghanistan-refugee-assistance>

(2) Team Rubicon has also partnered with the American Red Cross to coordinate local volunteers and donors throughout the WI community to improve the wellbeing of our Afghan guests. More information about Team Rubicon and how to volunteer is available on the web at <https://teamrubiconusa.org/volunteer/>

(3) The American Red Cross has over 50 personnel on the ground at Ft. McCoy to provide critical care and help to our Afghan guests. Your financial gifts will help the American Red Cross continue to fund efforts to help the people affected by this crisis. <https://www.redcross.org/donate/donation.html/>

14. What's happening around the First District

First District Legionnaires turned out to honor the funeral escort of Evansville High Grad and Janesville native PFC Franklin Handley as the procession proceeded from General Mitchell Airport in Milwaukee to Janesville, on August 4, 2021.



(Photos Courtesy of VetsRoll.org)

Meet your new National Leadership Team
(Photos Courtesy of the American Legion)



National Commander Paul Dillard (TX)



National President Kathy Daudistel (KY)



SAL National Commander Michael Fox (CA)

Members of the Wisconsin Delegation ready to attend the National Commander's Banquet



(Photo Courtesy of Nathan Gear)

1st District Delegate Lisa Fauster of Mukwonago Post 375 proudly represents Wisconsin at her first National Convention.



(Photo Courtesy of Lisa Fauster)

15. **Training Time-out** – How well do you know the Preamble? We say it before every meeting of the Legion, but do we really know what it means? In this space each month, we will explore a clause of our Preamble. Take a few minutes at the beginning of your Post meeting and read the paragraph to the membership to better understand our Preamble.

To consecrate and sanctify our comradeship by our devotion to mutual helpfulness ... This is the most important ideal expressed in our preamble. We can hail The American Legion today as an unparalleled force in these United States for social betterment. American Legion concepts and its ideal of devotion to mutual helpfulness warmed the entire social climate of America. Today, America is extending its helpful hands all over the world through our assistance programs of foreign aid. This all came about because the veterans of World War I came home enriched with wonderful ties of friendship and gave those ties meaning by consecrating them to the ideal of mutual helpfulness.



Until next time, **recruit, retain and engage**. I hope to see you at Fall Conference!

Go recruit the next YOU!