



Sons of The American Legion Detachment of Nebraska

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MID-YEAR CONFERENCE: This year's Mid-Year Conference will remain focused on educational training. This event is being held January 16 – 18, 2026, at the Norfolk Lodge & Suites/Divots Center located at 4200 W Norfolk Ave, Norfolk, NE. The Detachment Executive Committee and Detachment Committees will meet on Friday, January 16, 2026. Please note the maximum number of nights to be reimbursed by the Detachment for call-ins will be two nights at \$75.00 per night. For reservations, please call the Norfolk Lodge & Suites (402-379-3833). Room rates are \$110 per night.

WASHINGTON CONFERENCE: The Washington Conference is scheduled for February 28 – March 4, 2026, and is open to any Legion family member wishing to attend. Housing can be made with the Washington Hilton located at 1919 Connecticut Ave NW by calling 202-483-3000. Contact Adjutant Martin for more information.

NATIONAL TARGET: The next national target date is January 14th, and our membership goal is 60%. Please have all membership renewals to headquarters no later than January 13th to be processed. Let's continue to stay ahead of these target dates. Look at your rosters and start calling those members that have not yet renewed for 2026 and encourage them to do so now. Our next renewal postcard mail date is not until February 2026, develop a plan to get in touch with your members to get their 2026 renewals completed.

VETERANS' LEGISLATIVE DAY AT THE CAPITOL: This important event is on Friday, January 30, 2026, and begins at 8:00 a.m. in the Warner Chamber just off the Rotunda. Governor Pillen and State Senators will speak about proposed veteran legislation.

DISTRICT CONVENTIONS: District Convention dates are available on our website at the following link <http://www.nebraskalegion.net/Meetings/Meetings.html>. Plan to send a delegate from each squadron to your district convention to meet with your Detachment Officers to conduct business. (*Post Everlasting Names*) Squadrons are requested to send the names of SAL members that entered Post Everlasting since the last District Convention to District Commanders so that those names may be read and recorded during the Post Everlasting ceremony at upcoming District Conventions.

CORNHUSKER BOYS' STATE: The 2026 Cornhusker Boys' State program will be held at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, May 31 – 6, 2026. Applications and brochures will be sent to all Post Adjutants in January. The Boys' State sponsor fee will be \$450 this year. There will also be a \$25 registration fee due at the time of registration for each delegate. This is the time that your Post Executive Committee and members should pass a motion that will sponsor a certain number of boys to Boys' State. This will ensure that you have funding for the program and the Post isn't waiting until March to secure funding. Letters will also be sent to all high school principals requesting their assistance in making recommendations of qualified candidates. It is the Post's responsibility to return applications to HQs by the March 15th deadline. Please select a boy who agrees to participate for the entire week. Post's may send as many boys as they wish to nominate. Please send any alternates in as well, so we can try to find them a sponsor.

JUNIOR LAW CADET PROGRAM: Applications for the 2026 session of the Junior Law Cadet Program will be mailed to the Post and schools in January. They are also available on our website under the Junior Law Cadet tab. The boy's session will be June 22 – 23 and the girl's session will be June 24 – 25 at the Nebraska State Patrol Training Center in Grand Island. The application deadline is March 1st, and the fee is \$100 per delegate. Contact Programs Director Eric Martin with questions.

EAGLE SCOUT-OF-THE-YEAR SCHOLARSHIP: Nominations for the Eagle Scout-of-the-Year scholarship program are available on our website. All nomination packets are to be submitted directly to Department HQs by March 1. The winner of the National Competition will receive a \$10,000 scholarship and the three runners-up are each awarded \$2,500 scholarships. The top three finalists in Nebraska receive a cash award of \$500, \$300, and \$200. Contact Programs Director Eric Martin with questions.

RESOLUTIONS: The means by which changes are instituted within The American Legion start in the form of a resolution. Be sure to get your proposed resolution approved through your Post and Squadron. Resolutions should be forwarded to your District Convention for endorsement or approval. Contact Adjutant Martin for a resolution template.

PURPOSE OF THE MEMBER DATA FORM: The American Legion Member Data Form (MDF) is a multipurpose form for tracking and providing accurate information on Squadron members. You can download the form online or on our website. With the exception of transferring members from one post to another, most MDF changes can be made through MyLegion.org. Note: Members can be transferred online through MyLegion.org if the member is paying their dues at the time of transfer. The MDF can be used to report deceased members, continuous years, name corrections, address changes, branch of service, war era, and others. On the MDF, always include the nine-digit member ID number, Squadron number, and Department name. The signature of the authorized Squadron officer is required at the bottom of the form. Be sure to mail part 1-3 to Department Headquarters and keep part 4 for your Squadron files. Membership transfer from one squadron to another is handled by completing the MDF. Always ask prospective members if they currently are or have been a member. If the member has a current or previous nine-digit ID number, it should be reported on the transfer. If a member signs up as a new member, a duplicate record can be created, and multiple renewal notices will be received by the member.

EASTERN NEBRASKA VETERANS HOME, GEORGE SEVICK JR/TODD KABELLA: The Eastern Nebraska Veterans Home is staying active. Benson Squadron 112 hosts "Birthday Bingo" on the 1st Thursday of each month. The Detachment continues to work through the needs list provided by the home. ENVH is always looking for volunteers to help out with various activities or with resident outings. If you are interested in volunteering, please reach out to Sarah via email at sarah.ryan@nebraska.gov or by phone 402-591-4862.

VETERANS EMPLOYMENT & EDUCATION COMMITTEE, JAMES W. KEYES: One of the most meaningful indicators of how well our nation supports those who served is veteran employment. In recent years, U.S. veterans have continued to demonstrate resilience in the civilian workforce, maintaining unemployment rates that generally remain lower than those of non-veterans.

In 2024, the annual average unemployment rate for U.S. veterans was 3.0%, a slight increase from 2.8% in 2023. As of November 2025, the monthly veteran unemployment rate stood at 3.4%, reflecting a strong overall labor market despite economic uncertainty.

During the height of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, veteran unemployment peaked at 11.9% in April, with an annual average of 6.5%. By 2021, that average had fallen to approximately 4.4%, followed by steady improvement in 2022 and 2023, when rates stabilized at 2.8%. These trends underscore the determination of veterans to adapt, retrain, and succeed.

While these figures highlight overall progress, they also remind us that economic conditions can affect veteran communities differently and shift rapidly. Behind every statistic is a veteran—and a family—seeking meaningful, stable employment.

CHILDREN & YOUTH COMMITTEE, JEFF RILEY: I hope everyone has had a Merry Christmas and a joyous holiday season! I hope all is well with you, your families and squadrons. I hope all of your squadron's efforts this holiday season have been a great success! As we head into the new year, let's keep those efforts going strong. We are going to be celebrating our great nation's 250th birthday in 2026. With this in mind, keep striving to make your efforts reach and teach as many youth as possible!

WEST AREA VICE COMMANDER, ROBERT LAWRENCE: I want to begin by wishing everyone a Happy Belated Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. As we celebrate this season, let us not forget the men and women who are fighting for our freedom and are unable to be with their families during the holidays. We must also remember those who gave all. I encourage everyone to take a moment of silence during this time to honor and respect their sacrifice.

I would also like to say that we are doing well with our membership numbers; however, there is still room for improvement. Dues need to be paid by Dec. 31st if not you will be delinquent. Let's do a better job of getting memberships turned in promptly.

I participated in Gifts for Yanks at the Western Nebraska Veterans' Home in Scottsbluff, NE, and had a great time. There was a lot of strong leadership present, but there is always room for more participation. I also took part in Wreaths Across America in Grand Island. Although it was a little chilly, it was well worth it to pay our respects to our veterans. We had a great turnout, and it was truly a meaningful event.

The 2026 Department Mid-Year Conference is coming up and will include many great educational topics. I encourage everyone to plan on attending. There are many opportunities to become better educated within our organization—we just need to take the time to show up. These events are not only informative but also a lot of fun.

Let us always remember one important thing: we are the Proud Possessors of a Priceless Heritage. Let us do everything in our power to show how grateful we are to have it.

Department Service Officer Information

American Legion Department Service Officers (DSOs) are specially trained and accredited to provide expert assistance, free of charge, to veterans and their families. While the majority of a DSO's work involves assisting with VA disability benefit applications, these dedicated professionals also provide information, referrals, and resources related to education benefits, employment and business opportunities, and death benefits.

Department Service Officers also provide guidance to Post Service Officers, who are available to assist veterans at the post level.

American Legion Claims Coach – Mobile App: The American Legion Claims Coach is a free mobile app available for both iPhone and Android users. The app provides step-by-step guidance to help veterans and their families connect with a service officer and navigate the VA claims process. Features include: • A nationwide directory of accredited American Legion service officers • Appointment, document, and deadline tracking • Helpful resources throughout the claims process • A secure personal file called "My Checklist" to organize information from initial meeting through VA decision and appeal, if necessary.

Our Department Veteran Service Officer is Levi E. Bennett (Deputy Director Nebraska Department of Veterans' Affairs) 301 Centennial Mall South, 4th Floor Lincoln, NE 68509-5083, levi.bennett@nebraska.gov or (402) 471-2448. Additional Resources • VA Medical Facilities in Nebraska • Veterans' Homes in Nebraska • VA NE–Western IA Phone Directory • American Legion Claims

SENIOR VICE COMMANDER, JAMES W. KEYES: Why We Serve: Honoring Their Sacrifice Through Our Own. Every member of the Sons of The American Legion joined for a reason—to honor a father, grandfather, or family member who answered the call to serve. No matter how we arrived, we are united by a shared legacy rooted in sacrifice and love of country.

Our forefathers left their homes and families to defend the ideals of the United States of America. Many returned changed forever, and some never returned at all. Their sacrifice is not just history—it is the foundation of The American Legion and the reason the Sons of The American Legion exist today. We did not earn our eligibility through our own military service, but through the courage and commitment of those who came before us. That legacy qualifies us, and it challenges us to live lives worthy of the freedom they preserved.

My grandfather, PFC Warren Hammonds, served in the United States Army Air Forces. Like so many of his generation, he never spoke of his service to me. In that silence, I have come to understand his humility and sense of duty. I can only imagine what it was like for him to serve in uncertain times and carry those memories quietly.

Today, my service in the Sons of The American Legion Detachment of Nebraska honors his service then. Every meeting attended, every flag raised, and every veteran supported carries their legacy forward. Let us remember why we joined. Let us remember those who made it possible. And let us continue to serve with pride, purpose, and gratitude. **For God and Country.**

DETACHMENT COMMANDER, TODD KABELLA: Happy New Year!! At the time of this writing, we are sitting close to 70% in membership renewals. This is great news and thank you to everyone that helped us to this point. Now the hard work begins as we continue to drive towards 100%. Remind your members that have not yet renewed that they need to think about who qualified them to become a member in the first place. Also, if they have not renewed yet, their membership expired and they are no longer considered members in good standing.

The mid-year conference will be held in Norfolk on January 16-18, so please make plans to attend. We will have training on Saturday afternoon and have some exciting topics planned.

Every year after your squadron holds elections, an officer report should be completed and sent to HQ - regardless of whether new officers were elected or not. It should also be completed if you have a change of squadron officers. When submitting the form, please make sure the contact information is complete to include email addresses and phone numbers. Contact info changes frequently and this is a barrier to detachment leadership assisting squadrons and disseminating information. We cannot reach out to help if we can't get in touch. When you complete the form, please mail it to HQ at 150 NW 40th St, Unit A, Lincoln NE 68528.

Suicide prevention is extremely important to our mission. Getting our members to attend "Be the One" training should be a priority. I have taken the course multiple times and have received new information each time. If you can save one veteran's life using tools you learned from this course, it is well worth the 90 minutes it takes to attend.

We still have openings on most of our committees. If anyone is interested in serving on a committee, please reach out to me at tkabella@gmail.com and we can find a place for you to help. Everyone has good ideas and can bring different perspectives to the table, so don't be afraid to step up.

District Convention Schedule

District 1	Saturday, March 28, 2026		District 8	Saturday, February 7, 2026
	9:00 a.m.			1:00 p.m.
	Valentine Post 90			Springfield Post 143
	256 N Main St, Valentine, NE			13640 Pflug Rd, Springfield
District 2	Sunday, March 15, 2026		District 9	Saturday, March 21, 2026
	1:00 p.m.			9:00 a.m.
	Elkhorn Valley Bank			Palisade Post 318
	404 S. 25th St, Norfolk			114 N. Main St, Palisade
District 3	Saturday, March 14, 2026		District 10	Saturday, February 21, 2026
	8:30 a.m.			9:00 a.m.
	Bancroft Village Hall			Clay Center Post 87
	502 Main St, Bancroft			109 N. Alexander, Clay Center
District 4	Saturday, March 21, 2026		District 11	Saturday, March 21, 2026
	10:00 a.m.			10:00 a.m.
	Sidney Post 17			Beatrice Post 27
	922 Illinois St, Sidney			701 Dorsey St, Beatrice
District 5	Saturday, March 21, 2026		District 12	Saturday, March 14, 2026
	10:00 a.m.			8:00 a.m.
	Lincoln County Fairgrounds			Seward Civic Center
	5015 Rodeo Road Ave, North Platte			616 Bradford St, Seward
District 6	Saturday, March 7, 2026		District 13	Saturday, March 7, 2026
	9:00 a.m.			9:30 a.m.
	Kearney Post 52			Falls City Post 102
	1223 Central Ave, Kearney			721 Harlan St, Falls City
District 7	Saturday, March 14, 2026		District 15	Tuesday, February 10, 2026
	10:00 a.m.			6:30 p.m.
	Valparaiso Post 371			Lincoln Elks Lodge 80
	430 W. 2nd St, Valparaiso			5910 S. 58th St, Lincoln