

The Alaska Legionnaire

Alaska Department of the
American Legion

Janauary, February,
March 2026



Department Officers 2025-2026

Commander - Joe Sullivan
 First Vice Commander - Charlene Martin
 Second Vice Commander - Chuck Russell
 Sergeant-At-Arms - Justin Mills
 Judge Advocate - Ken Jacobus
 Chaplain - Clare Sullivan
 Historian - Chris Bedel
 Executive Committee
 Robert Fullerton
 Amanda Jones
 Henry Pagan
 Department Adjutant - Sharon Cherrette
 Department Service Officer - Phil Templin
 National Executive Committee
 Jim Pisa
 Alt. National Executive Committee
 Mike Hayward

2025-2026 Department Officers



SONS OF THE AMERICAN LEGION DEPARTMENT OF ALASKA OFFICERS 2025 - 2026

Commander - Bill Bolling - Joe Craig Sqd 3
 First Vice Commander - Vince Winter - Henry Burton Sr., Sqd 13
 Second Vice Commander - Ken Michener - George Plimley Sqd 20
 Finace Officer - Kevin Collier - Jack Henry Sqd 1
 Chaplain - Aubrey Hendrix - CR Huber Sqd 57
 Historian - Leon Fleming - Susitna Valley Sqd 35
 Sergeant--At-Arms - Kevin Robinson - Peters Creek Sqd 33

National Executive Committee - Dale Toenis - CR Huber Sqd 57
 Alt. National Executive Committee - John Whitlock - Muldoon Sqd 29
 Executive Committee -
 Mike Estrada - Susitna Valley Sqd 35
 Nicholas Johnson - Robert Blair Sqd 17
 Scott Walker - Susitna Valley Sqd 35

DEPARTMENT OF ALASKA LEGION RIDERS OFFICERS 2025 - 2026

Director - Larry Block - Matanuska Valley Chapter 15
 Assistant Director - Jodi Gardner - Matanuska Valley Chapter 15
 Secretary - Deborah Davis - Joe Craig Chapter 3
 Treasurer - Diana Estrada - Susitna Valley Chapter 35

Run Coordinator - Cher'i Smith-Berg - Jack Henry Chapter 1
 Historian - Joe Sullivan - Joe Craig - Joe Craig Chapter 3
 Chaplain - Carrie Hintz - Susitna Valley Chapter 35
 Webmaster - Lisa Williamson - Con Miller Chapter 30

DEPARTMENT OF ALASKA AUXILIARY OFFICERS 2025 - 2026

President - Annette Gwalthney-Jones - Jack Henry Unit 1
 First Vice President - Nina Ketelsen - Susitna Valley Unit 35
 Second Vice President - Charlene Martin - Muldoon Unit 29
 Secretary - Ann Robinson - Peters Creek Unit 33
 Treasurer - Pam Cawley - Jack Henry Unit 1
 Historian - Chrysti Leigh - Spenard Unit 28
 Chaplain - Valerie Rose - Seward Unit 5

Sergeant-At-Arms - Sabrina Schmidt - Muldoon Unit 29
 Executive Committeewoman -
 Robyn Downs - Jack Henry Unit 1
 Brenda Fiddick - CR Huber Unit 57
 National Executive Committee - Penny Mazonna
 Susitna Valley Unit 35
 Alt. National Executive Committee - April Sinclair
 CR Huber Unit 57

From the desk of Adjutant Sharon

Happy New Year 2026! I can't believe 2025 is behind us, the year zipped by.

Get your **2026 calendar** out and start marking dates:

First Call election of Post Officers to be held in January. **Post elections are required to be completed prior to April 1st** (per Department's Constitution).

Steak Feed Detachment's (SAL) Annual Steak Feed (proceeds split between Girls State and Boys State) is **Saturday, 31 January 2026**, Susitna Valley Post 35 Wasilla; \$30 for 32-ounce steak – split or whole, cooked or uncooked. Come and support our programs and thank the Sons.

Oratorical contest **Saturday, 7 March 2026**, Mountain City Academy on Northern Lights, Anchorage (previously Anchorage Baptist Temple). Volunteers needed – timekeepers (2), Room Monitors, and Judges; please contact John Whitlock, Department Chair Member for more information, igroverwhitlock@gmail.com. Topics and information about the Contest can be found at www.legion.org/oratorical. Open to ALL high school students.

Department Convention Wednesday afternoon through Saturday evening, **22-25 April 2026**, Susitna Valley Post 35, Wasilla; (registration, Riders, and other events start on Wednesday).

Convention information packets will be **mailed** by the host post (Post 35) to the posts around mid-January. The packet will also be **emailed** to Department Officers, Past Department Commanders, Post Commanders and Adjutants, Department Secretary, and Detachment Adjutant. For planning purposes adult **early registration fee** is **\$160** (information will be provided in the Convention packet with cut-off dates of advertisements, early registration, and hotels).

If you are interested in running for a **Department Officer** position, you must complete the Legion's online Basic Training Course www.legion.org/training within 15 days after the election (if you haven't already done so). **Required** candidate package documents include 1) Post endorsement letter for the position you are considering-only one position can be listed (on Post letterhead), 2) 5-inch by 7-inch colour photo with Legion cover (cap), 3) proof of military service document (DD214-long form or VA proof of service letter.) if not on file at Department Headquarters, and 4) resume of your American Legion career. If you have completed the Training Course, please include your certificate in your package.

Boys State 07-13 June, Alaska's Healing Hearts Warrior Family Camp (previously All Elks Camp), Sutton. Applications need to be turned in to Department no later than **1 April 2026**. Volunteers are needed; please contact Kevin Collier, Department Chair Member for more information, kcollier@alaska.net.

National Convention will be in Louisville, Kentucky, *28 August through 3 September 2026*. Should receive hotel room rate in April from National Headquarters.

Training Tuesdays -held the last Tuesday of each month 3 PM Alaska Time/7 PM ET; sessions are recorded and placed on the website under www.legion.org/training/training-tuesdays. There are many publications on the Legion's website available for download to include the Officer's Guide www.legion.org/publications.

The American Legion's success depends entirely on membership, participation, and volunteerism. The organization belongs to us (the people it serves) and the communities in which it thrives.

If Department Headquarters Office (Kelly) is processing your Post's membership dues, the post must send \$45 for each member no matter what year(s) the dues cover.

- 1 and 2 January** Happy New Year's (Department Headquarters and Service Offices CLOSED)
- 19 January** Martin Luther King Jr Day (Department Headquarters and Service Offices CLOSED)
- 3 February** Four Chaplains (some Posts do a ceremony the first Sunday closest to 3 Feb)
- 16 February** Presidents' Day (Department Headquarters and Service Offices CLOSED)
- 17 March** Saint Patrick's Day
- 3 April** Good Friday (Department Headquarters and Service Offices CLOSED)



Ron Siebels, past National Commander of the Military Order of the Purple Heart (MOPH) receives the Governor's Veterans Advocacy Award for 2025 from Verdie Bowen, Commissioner of the Department of Military Veterans Affairs. Ron, who was wounded in Viet Nam, helped organize the Anchorage chapter of MOPH, which meets every fourth Thursday at 7pm at American Legion Muldoon Post 29, 1467 Muldoon Road.



Upcoming Events

January

- 1/1 Legacy Scholarship Application Opens
- 1/1 Legion Baseball Registration Opens
- 1/9 Samsung Scholarship Application Opens
- 1/19 Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Day
(Service Office/Department Closed)

March

- 3/1 Eagle Scout of the year Applications Due
- 3/8 DAYLIGHT SAVINGS TIME BEGINS
- 3/15 American Legion Birthday (107 yrs)
- 3/16 Remember Buddy Checks
- 3/17 ST. PATRICKS DAY
- 3/20 Spring Begins
- 3/25 Congressional Medal of Honor Day
- 3/29 National Vietnam War Veterans Day
Palm Sunday

February (Americanism Month)

- 2/1 Submission for National Law Officer/Firefighter of the year Awards
- 2/1 Four Chaplains Sunday
- 2/2 Groundhog Day
- 2/14 VALENTINE'S DAY
- 2/16 Presidents Day (Service Office/Department Closed)

APRIL (Children & Youth Month)

- 4/1 April Fools Day
- 4/3 Good Friday
- 4/5 EASTER
- 4/23-4/25 Department Convention
- 4/25 American Legion Family Day

From the desk of SAL Commander, Bill Bolling

American Legion Family and Friends,

As we look ahead to a new year of service, camaraderie, and dedication to our veterans and communities, I want to take a moment to reflect on the impactful work we accomplished together over the past year. The Sons of the American Legion in Alaska continue to demonstrate what it means to honor our veterans through action, unity, and a commitment to service.

State Convention – Palmer, Alaska – Post 15

Our year began with a strong showing at the State Convention in Palmer. Delegates from across the state gathered to share ideas, highlight unit achievements, and set goals for the coming year. The discussions were thoughtful, constructive, and fueled by a shared passion for our mission. I want to thank all who traveled to attend, as well as the volunteers in Palmer who made the event run smoothly. Your hard work ensured that our convention was not only productive but truly memorable.

National Convention – Tampa, Florida

Later in the summer, Alaska was well represented at the National Convention in Tampa, Florida. It was inspiring to stand alongside SAL members from across the country and witness the national impact of our organization. Workshops, strategy sessions, and national committee meetings provided valuable insights that we have already begun implementing here at home. The unity and energy displayed at the national level reaffirmed that the Sons of the American Legion remain a powerful force for good nationwide.

Fall Meetings – Fairbanks, Post 57

This fall, we gathered in Fairbanks for our seasonal meetings, and once again, the turnout and engagement were exceptional. We covered important updates, planned future events, and continued discussions on expanding our youth programs and community outreach initiatives. Fairbanks Post members were gracious hosts, and the collaboration between the local post and visiting members made the weekend both productive and enjoyable. During our fall meetings event, we had the pleasure of visitations from our SAL National Commander, Bill Clancy and also attending the fall meetings was the American Legion National Commander, Dan Wiley. Thank you to everyone who joined us for the meetings and to those who continue working behind the scenes to keep our programs strong.

Upcoming Event – SAL Steak Feed, Wasilla Post 35

As we kick off the new year, please remember the **SAL Steak Feed at Post 35 in Wasilla**, which takes place on Saturday, January 31st, 2026. This event is always a fantastic opportunity to bring together members, families, veterans, and the community for a night of great food and fellowship. The Steak Feed is not only a fun tradition but also an important fundraiser that helps support our Boys and Girls State program. I encourage all members to attend—and if you're able, please consider volunteering. Your participation makes all the difference.

Looking Forward

The past year was filled with accomplishments, but we're just getting started. As we move forward, I ask each SAL member to continue representing the values of the Sons of the American Legion with pride. Whether through volunteering, attending meetings, supporting veterans, or helping with local events, every action strengthens our organization and honors those who served before us.

Thank you for your dedication, your time, and your continued support.

From the desk of SAL 1st Vice Commander, Vince Winter

I would like to talk today to reflect on a remarkable year of growth, dedication, and achievement for our organization here in Alaska. As members of the Sons of the American Legion, we are entrusted with a mission that transcends mere camaraderie; we are stewards of patriotism, service, and the legacy of those who fought for our freedoms.

This year has truly been a milestone in our journey across the Last Frontier. We've witnessed notable successes that underscore our collective commitment to strengthening our organization and supporting our communities. Allow me to highlight some of this year's most significant accomplishments thus far.

First and foremost, we proudly celebrated the chartering of a new Squadron—Squadron 99—part of the Interior AK American Legion. This achievement isn't just a number; it symbolizes our expanding reach and influence within Alaska. Establishing Squadron 99 is a testament to our ongoing efforts to build a stronger network of young leaders who uphold our core values of patriotism, service, and camaraderie. It provides an exciting opportunity for more young men to engage actively in programs that benefit both our veterans and our communities at large. Let us extend our congratulations to those who worked diligently to bring this Squadron to life, and renew our commitment to supporting it in its mission.

In addition, to better connect and communicate within our organization, we have introduced the **Sons of the American Legion, Detachment of Alaska Facebook page**. (www.facebook.com/SALDetachmentofAlaska) This platform offers us a dynamic space to share news, upcoming events, achievements, and opportunities for service. It's an important tool to foster engagement, maintain transparency, and strengthen our network statewide. I encourage each of you to like, follow, and contribute to our social media presence. Our stories and achievements should inspire others, ignite enthusiasm, and remind everyone of the meaningful impact we can make together.

Looking ahead, I am particularly excited about our upcoming **Alaska Boys State program**. This is a cornerstone of our commitment to developing the next generation of leaders. Boys State is more than an event; it's an investment in our future—an opportunity to empower young men with knowledge about government, inspire leadership, and nurture civic responsibility. The upcoming session promises to be impactful, engaging, and transformative for all who participate. I urge each of us to promote this program passionately, recruit outstanding young men, and support them through mentorship and encouragement. Our involvement will shape lives and strengthen our communities for years to come.

We need to continue to focus on membership, we need more young men to step forward to carry on the torch of patriotism and service. Every new member brings fresh energy, new ideas, and a renewed sense of purpose that invigorates our entire organization. Their enthusiasm reaffirms our belief that the Sons of the American Legion continues to be a vital and vitalizing force in our local communities and beyond. I encourage each of us to continue welcoming new members, fostering a spirit of inclusion, and mentoring those eager to contribute.

In closing, I want to express my sincere gratitude to each of you. Your dedication, your commitment to our core values and to one another, is what drives our success. The milestones we celebrate today are a collective achievement, made possible through your hard work, enthusiasm, and unwavering support.

With the holidays here please enjoy and celebrate family and friends, while remembering those that have defended our freedom. It is a time to come together and fellowship. Be safe and look out for each other.

Thank you for your service, your fellowship, and your unwavering patriotism.



POST EVERLASTING



POST 1

Richard W Kotsch - Vietnam

Raymond Lee - Korea

POST 3

Dick Allen - Vietnam

Thomas W Stevenson - Vietnam

POST 15

Arnold G Link - Korea

SQUADRON 16

William Duggan

POST 17

Clifford L Selig - Vietnam

POST 27

Lee R Adler - Korea

POST 28

Ray R Rodgers - Vietnam

POST 30

John J Gallentine - Vietnam

Earl R Holmes - Vietnam

POST 33

Robert A Perry - Vietnam

POST 34

Mayfield Evans - Lebanon-Grenada

POST 35

Kenneth Clark - Vietnam

J. B. Henley - Vietnam

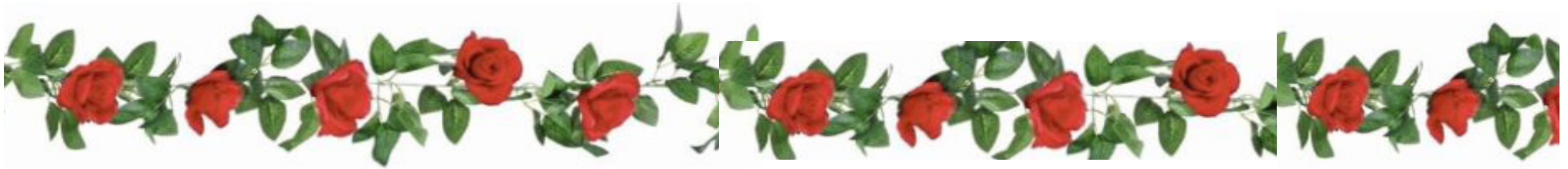
POST 57

Gerald A Bennett - Korea

POST 77

Ole N Nordgren - Vietnam

Jeffery Ellison



In my research for this quarter's article I wanted something to get us started for the New Year and I was inspired by several articles on-line from a variety of religious viewpoints and I have come up with a good summary (I believe) of them with the hope that it succinct yet meaningful; so here we go.....

As the final celebratory (and exhausting) days of December fade, a fresh year lays ahead. We are enthusiastic for what is before us but that enthusiasm is also mingled with anxiety. What will the New Year hold for us? How can we navigate the unknown with genuine purpose? The answer lies not in casual resolutions, but in the enduring Judeo-Christian virtues of **Faith, Hope and Charity**.

The New Year isn't considered a religious holiday as it is nothing like many of our Judeo-Christian holidays. And still, it is a significant occasion marked with thanksgiving and anticipation. We acknowledge the passage of time, as we all get older and reflecting on the past year with gratitude for the blessings received; and seeking forgiveness for shortcomings. We also look ahead with a hopeful heart, praying for God's guidance and grace in the year to come.

Faith

Our faith in God's unfailing love is the comfort we receive that helps us through the unknown events of the New Year. In more ways than one, faith is, in the end, all we have. We trust that even in times of uncertainty, when we need to *fly blind*, God will be with us, leading us through darkness and uncertainty and toward goodness and light. This faith strengthens our resolve to face challenges with courage and compassion keeping his will foremost in our hearts and minds.

Hope

The kind of hopes we should bring into the new year are not just personal, but for the world we all live in. We pray for peace, for justice, for healing and for cultures to come together for the benefit of all who share in the wonders of this planet God has graced us with. As we remember God's promise of a renewed creation, this hope fuels our commitment to working toward a better future. Hope is not just some fleeting thought or wish, but a firm resolution to be good stewards of all he has given us, and to follow his will toward building the Kingdom of God.

cont. on page 5



Charity

Charity is not just about donating money or tithing. It requires compassion and actively building bridges of love and understanding in the world. In the spirit of the New Year, we must commit ourselves to serving those in need, to reach out with kindness and empathy, and to make a positive difference in the lives of others.

As Legionnaires, we step into the New Year not just with resolutions, but with a renewed sense of purpose, guided by the light of Faith, Hope and Charity. We pray for a year filled with God's grace, where we can be instruments of his love and build a brighter future for ourselves and the world around us. The New Year is a time for both reflection and anticipation, and an opportunity to deepen our faith, strengthen our hope, and to let our love shine brightly in the world.

from the desk of Charlene Martin, Department 1st Vice

Until veterans truly know us and see us in action, they will never fully understand who the American Legion is or why our mission matters. Our organization is not defined by buildings, meetings, or tenure. It is defined by service, mentorship, and leadership rooted in purpose. The American Legion is for veterans who are currently serving, Guard, Reserve, recently transitioned, and those still finding their place after active duty. If we do not make our mission visible, they will never know what we can become together.

Servant leadership must be the foundation of our future. Leadership in the American Legion is not about titles or time served, it is about being willing to listen, teach, guide, and serve others. Those of us who carry experience and institutional knowledge have a responsibility to share it. Mentorship is not optional, it is essential. If we do not invest in developing the next generation of leaders, we risk losing them, not because they lack commitment, but because we did not cultivate their growth.

We need change, we need growth, we need new ideas, new perspectives, and new energy within our ranks. This does not mean abandoning our traditions, it means strengthening them by allowing innovation to stand alongside experience. The generation we have not fully engaged brings valuable insight shaped by today's military service and transition. When they understand our Four Pillars, Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation, National Security, Americanism, and Children and Youth, they will see their own values reflected in the mission of the American Legion.

In Alaska, servant leadership is not optional, it is necessary. Distance, isolation, long winters, and frequent PCS moves create real barriers to connection across our expansive landscape. Many of us remember moving every two to three years during active duty; those transitions challenged us, but they also renewed our energy and prevented complacency. The American Legion must reflect that same adaptability, becoming a constant source of mentorship, continuity, and purpose for veterans navigating change across our vast geography.

Our future is bright. Growth is not only possible, it is certain when we actively ignite connection with our veterans. When we lead through service, mentor with purpose, and welcome new voices, the American Legion thrives. By building strong relationships and empowering the next generation of leaders, we ensure this organization remains relevant, united, and ready. When they truly know us and stand beside us, they will understand our mission and carry it forward with confidence, energy, and unwavering commitment for generations to come. As members of the American Legion, we are called to be servant leaders, sharing our knowledge, lifting others, and guiding the next generation so that our mission, our values, and our legacy continue to grow stronger every day.

November 2025 The Department of Alaska sent two members to the National American Legion College

