



The 1889 Land Run

Department of Oklahoma

American Legion Newsletter

37th Edition, August 1, 2025

Fellow Oklahoma American Legion Family,

I come to you with an overwhelming amount of gratitude for the faith and trust you have all placed in me. Two weeks ago, you elected me to represent you as the Department Commander of this great State, and it took a little time for the whirlwind to settle in as we had so much to accomplish right out of the gates. We all know all too well how much work we all must do over the next year to make this Organization a success in our mission to lift our fellow Brothers and Sisters up.

I did not step in to this role lightly as the preparation for this administrative year started back in February when I announced my candidacy and worked through the Spring District Conferences to fill a team around me to try and breathe fresh air and motivation into our mission. Once we fine-tuned a few positions after the elections I submitted my nominees for Committee Chairs and other positions to your elected Department Executive Committee as quickly as possible because everyone on this team was eager to get to work. We have several familiar faces across the State who will be stepping into new jobs that they are passionate about and with everyone working as a true team we will usher in a bright new direction of success and pride in our Oklahoma Legion. Yesterday (Saturday, 26 July), your Finance Commission from across the state met for several hours at Headquarters in Warr Acres to try and get our financial situation in a brighter place, we made great strides and will meet again shortly so we can provide you all with a brighter forecast.

Our Membership on the Legion side of the family has struggled for several years and none of us from headquarters have a magic wand but I do believe we have the right members with the ability to guide us back to growth. At the end of the day, it takes every single member as a foundation to build on. As the saying goes, you can not build on sand, you need a solid foundation. As of now we have already reached 40% of all last year's numbers. That looks positive but as I challenged everyone on the Convention Floor to bring in one fellow Veteran this year, we got a lot of work to do. However, don't forget when bringing in that Veteran to include their spouse, children or even grandchildren. At the end of the day, we are a family. Carry your head high, be proud of the work we are doing, wear your Legion brand with pride, lift your fellow Legionnaires, Veterans and citizens up and people will want to join naturally. If you have an issue with a brother or sister, take it to them in private, celebrate them in public for their achievements. We can all do better.

I have received probably 75 calls, texts or emails in the last two weeks and no one has gone without a response. I promised you open communication and will do my best to live up to that. I only have one year here to leave this organization better than I found it which means listening to you all, implementing great ideas where we can or getting them to the group that can, sharing ideas that work from all four corners of the state and working as a team. Several members have asked me what “my” plans are for this year. I have been searching for the answer to that question for a while. I realize now, that is the wrong question! As a sports coach of twenty years and owner of companies for fifteen, my plan is simply to put the right players in the right positions to let the team go out and succeed. Yes, we will have growing pains, and some may disagree with some of the calls at times, but I assure you every decision will be discussed, dissected and researched with the goal of improving this organization for every member.

What I want to see the next Commander take over next July is an organization with positivity within its membership towards one another, a positive membership report and a budget that is manageable. Yes, in that order, because in that order one will help solve two, two will help solve three and then we can solve much more not stressing over the past.

In closing, again it is my honor and privilege to serve this Department and I look forward to an amazing year. To every member that has any desire to serve in a higher office, decide early, announce early and don’t wait to start working until after you are elected but when you decide you want to serve. Lastly, every member is valuable in their own ability and every member is a recruiter.

Thank you,

Steve Thomas II
The American Legion
Department of Oklahoma
Department Commander



American Legion Department Senior Vice Commander

Greetings Legion Members,

Thank you for your recent vote of confidence at the State Convention. I will do my best to keep you informed. I am still waiting for access from National, so that I can give you current numbers. I will be in Indianapolis in early August to find out what this year's goals will be for each Post.

I have seen some early numbers, and you are doing "GREAT" for the first month. We have already hit approximately 32% of our final membership numbers from last year, in less than 4 weeks. Also, CONGRATULATIONS to approximately 55 Posts who have reached 50% of last year's membership numbers.

Looking forward to all the great things you will do this year. Again, as soon as I receive access, more accurate numbers and goals will be given to you.

As we move into August, please watch out for children returning to school.

Respectfully,

Shirley May

Senior Vice Commander

Department Vice Commander – East Karen Cruice

Hello everyone,

I'm excited and honored to step into the role of Vice Commander East for The American Legion Department of Oklahoma. As I get to know our members and communities better, I want to share my focus for the year ahead and the direction I'd like to take for our area.

First, I believe in the power of recognition. Our members give so much to the Legion and to their communities, and I want to make sure that dedication doesn't go unnoticed. Whether it's volunteering at local events, supporting veterans, or simply showing up, every effort counts, and it's important we acknowledge those who make it happen.

My goal is also to cultivate a culture of excellence. We've got a lot of talented individuals in our Posts, and I want to help foster an environment where everyone feels supported in doing their best. This could be through training, sharing best practices, or encouraging new ideas that can help us grow stronger as an organization.

Most importantly, I want to inspire a sense of empowerment in all our members. Whether you've been in the Legion for years or you're just starting out, your voice matters. Each of us can make a positive impact, and I'm here to help ensure everyone feels they have the support and resources they need to do just that.

Looking forward to working alongside all of you as we continue to serve our veterans and our communities.

Be The One!

Karen Cruice
Vice Commander East
American Legion Department of Oklahoma

Department Vice Commander – West Lance Larson

Hello Legionnaires,

First and foremost, thank you all for your continued support in my role as Vice-Commander West.

As of July, we are approximately 550 members away from reaching the halfway point to last year's total. Membership is one of our top priorities — and an area we must focus on to be successful.

Second, Veteran Service Officers (VSOs) — particularly in the Northwest — are in short supply. We need volunteers. Without them, we'll need to request assistance from ODVA. Frankly, the VSO system needs to be torn down at the top and rebuilt from the ground up. We can't serve veterans effectively without the right infrastructure.

Third is communication. In my first week, I sent out several emails, and I want to continue encouraging open communication across the West. If we stay in contact, we can get things done faster and more efficiently. Your District Commanders have valuable knowledge — use them. Together, we can accomplish so much more.

To our Posts — I'm not here to throw out unrealistic membership expectations. Asking for 1 new member for every current one would mean growing from 13,800 to 27,600. That's not practical. Last year's goal was never truly within reach; we ended at 11,200 and some change.

That said, 33 posts in the West are already over 50% renewed, and that's something to build on. Let's work toward a realistic and achievable goal of 90% by the end of the grace period: January 31, 2026. After that, we'll be soaking up gravy with a biscuit.

Upcoming VSO Training:

- Fletcher, OK (Post 306) – September 5, 2025
- Bristow, OK (Post 126) – October 15, 2025

I hope everyone has a productive and safe August. Let's continue to do what we can for The American Legion — but always remember: Family First, then The American Legion.

For God, Country, and Service,
Vice-Commander West
Lance E. Larson

National Executive (NEC) Committeeman - Charlie O'Leary





The American Legion National Commander James LaCoursiere and Aid Butch Hansen visited the Department of Oklahoma July 6-9, 2025. We managed to visit six Posts or events during that time including linking up with the American Legion Auxiliary National Present Trish Ward who

lives in Grove [but is from DPT KS]. This is the first time our State has had a Legion National Commander and Auxiliary National President at the same time in the same place in history!

The National Commander arrived in OKC and was taken to Bricktown Park for a OKC Comets baseball game and got to throw out the first pitch [actually made it to home plate].

The next day we traveled to Post 111 in Edmond for light breakfast and presented awards to outstanding Post members. Next was a relaxing drive on the Turner Turnpike [the National Commander is from Connecticut, so he is used to traffic] to Post 50 in Tahlequah and visited NSU Campus Veterans memorial and Cherokee National Job Fair that featured Vietnam Veterans. This was followed by a drive in a bodacious rainstorm to Post 17 in Sand Springs at the Vet Center to meet with City Council members and Post members.

The next day we had a leisurely drive to Post 178 in Grove to link up with the Auxiliary National President, tour the F-4 Phantom Park in Grove, internment site for late SVC Lee Cathey and Award Presentation at the Post for the National Commander from Department and Post 178. Had a leisurely drive to Claremore to visit the site of OKBS at RSU campus and Oklahoma Military Academy War Memorial and Post 2020.

Unfortunately, the National Commander's flight was delayed the following day due to weather conditions and flooding in Texas, his next destination, but they eventually made it.

Department of Oklahoma received many compliments from the National Commander during his visit here.

Alternate National Executive (ANEC) Committeeman - Michael Taylor

American Legion Riders



CALLING ALL VETERAN RIDERS!

If you're a veteran who rides, there's a place for you in the American Legion Riders.

Join a chapter at your local American Legion post and ride with purpose—honoring our nation's heroes, supporting our communities, and living the values of God, Country, and Service.

If your post doesn't yet have a chapter, email 1forgodandcountry@gmail.com and I'll help you get one started or connect you to the closest chapter near you.

Together, Riders, we are stronger. Together, we serve. Together, we ride.

Let's roll under the proud banner of the American Legion Riders.

For GOD, Country, and Service,

Brett

Past Department Commander's Corner

Department Adjutant - Rick Redden

Oklahoma Veterans Commission – Brett Martin

Sons of the American Legion

Women Veterans Outreach

For all who attended the Women Veteran's Meeting at the Summer Conference, I hope you were able to benefit from the subject of discussion. Discrimination isn't an easy subject to talk about in almost any setting, we were able to peacefully discuss and hear other opinions. What would you like to hear about or talk about at the next meeting?

Contact Karen Ritter at RitterK4505@gmail.com or Tina Kilmer at TKilmer2003@gmail.com for suggestions. Also, the transcript of the last meeting should be out soon.

American Legion Auxilliary

Together in Service, United as Family

By Kim McInnis, President, American Legion Auxiliary Department of Oklahoma

It is an honor to introduce myself as the incoming President of the American Legion Auxiliary Department of Oklahoma. My name is Kim McInnis, and I am both humbled and excited to lead this remarkable organization of dedicated volunteers who serve veterans, military, and their families.

My theme for the year is *Together in Service, United as Family*. I chose this because I truly believe that our greatest strength lies in our unity—not just within the Auxiliary, but across the entire Legion Family. When the American Legion, the Sons of The American Legion, and the Auxiliary work hand in hand, we create a force of support and service that is unstoppable.

One of my primary goals this year is to bring our Legion Family closer together. The programs we each support—veterans' advocacy, youth education, patriotic service—are the shared foundation that connects us. By embracing and strengthening those programs together, we amplify our impact and inspire others to join our mission.

Another major goal for this year is reaching **100% membership**. It's ambitious, yes—but it's also possible. The Sons of The American Legion reached that milestone last year, and I believe with teamwork, commitment, and encouragement across our family, we can do it too.

When we show up together—at events, in our communities, and for each other—we show prospective members the heart and purpose of who we are.

This year, let's support one another's efforts, celebrate each other's victories, and face challenges side by side. We are stronger together, and by uniting as one Legion Family, we can ensure that our organization not only grows, but thrives—for our veterans and for generations to come.

Let's make this a year of connection, collaboration, and shared success.

Together in Service, United as Family.

Kim McInnis
President
Dept of Oklahoma
American Legion Auxiliary

BE THE ONE

Legion News

District 1--September 13-Post 110 Broken Bow

District 2--September 6 maybe Tahlequah

District 3--September 20- TBD

District 4--October 18--Post 260 Tecumseh

District 5--November 15--TBD

District 6--October 25 Post 34 El Reno

District 7--November 8--Post 146 Sayer

District 8--September 27--Post 53 Perry

If you have any updates to this list, please contact Adjutant Rick Redden.

Post Everlasting is placed after 8B, please forward me your obituaries.

District 1A

Post 147



American Legion Post 147 in Miami celebrated the grand opening of the expansion at the Military Museum Friday morning, July 25. A packed house of veterans, their families, city officials, community members, and local business leaders joined Legion post members in

commemorating the years of hard work that went into making the Military Museum the impressive and vital trove of history that it has become.

“This museum was started years back by a man named Glen Pitts, and I want to say something special about him,” said John Mayes. “Yesterday we were sitting here talking and his name came up and we started mentioning our WWII veterans. Well, a few years ago I did a school program and at that time we had only around 190,000 WWII veterans. When I looked this up yesterday, we are now down to approximately 66,000 WWII veterans. And losing them at a rate of 130 per day. That means that within a year and a half we’re going to lose the end of an era.”

Located at 2129 Denver Harner Dr. in Miami, the museum hosts an impressive collection of exhibits and photos from across America’s armed forces’ history, with an emphasis on ties to local veterans. A hidden gem for local history buffs, the Military Museum received a major upgrade this summer. The American Legion broke ground on the expansion in March. Mayes said he hopes it will attract more local youth to the museum. The expansion includes three new rooms, including a theatre room to show documentaries that will provide a more immersive experience of the tours.

“This museum is not just for WWII, it is dedicated to all our veterans, for the things they did. Because of them, it is one of the reasons we’re here today. Not just doing this, but everything we can do today, steps back to them. If you look back, that’s what they did for us,” said Mayes. “Glen Pitts turns 100 this year on Oct. 7. As far as I know, he is our last Ottawa County WWII veteran. He’s the one who started this, I’m just fortunate to get to follow in his footsteps.”

District 1B

Post 227



Liam Miller (pictured) with the Bartlesville, Oklahoma Boy Scout Troop 2000 is working with District 1B, Webster Schrack American Legion Post 227 in Barnsdall, Oklahoma for a portion of his Eagle Scout Badge project. He is in the process of removing the 600 plus veterans flag holders from the two Ethel Reece Cemeteries just northeast of Barnsdall. He is cleaning each flag holder, re-taping them with the Red, White and Blue tape and then replacing each one at a veterans burial location. Post 227 is so proud of Liam who has participated with Post 227 in various Post activities such as Flag Retirement Ceremonies, Parade Color Guards, Dinners, etc. Liam is the grandson of former Post 227 Commander Mike Ray and son or Webster Schrack American Legion Auxiliary member Deborah Miller.



District 1B Webster Schrack American Legion Post 227 and Webster Schrack American Legion Auxiliary Post 227 once again led the Bigheart Day Parade with the Post Color Guard. Pictured from left to right are Ivan Winger, Paula Widener, J. D. Cole, Claud Rosendale and Kent Davis



District 1B Webster Schrack American Legion Post 227 in Barnsdall, Oklahoma provides an excellent Memorial Day Program every year on Memorial Day at Ethel Reece Cemetery West just northeast of Barnsdall. This year's program consisted of the singing of the National Anthem by Tina Kelley, America the Beautiful and Amazing Grace played on the violin by Deborah Miller, a prayer conducted by Barnsdall Christian Church Youth Minister Gary Cunningham, laying of the wreath by Eleanor Allison, Speech by William Lynch and then the 21 Gun Salute by the Webster Schrack American Legion Post 227 Honor Guard. Pawhuska, Oklahoma Boy Scout Troop 33, also pictured, supported the Memorial Day Program.

District 2A

District 2B

District 3A

District 3B

District 4

District 5A

Fellow Legionnaires,

Now that we have our summer convention behind us and we start a new year for our membership and retention. Let me start by saying I am proud to have been chosen to represent District 5A for another year as your District Commander. I know we all have faced some tough odds this past year with the membership goals. Let's try to look at this coming year as a retention year. Let's all work together to get our retention up and reach out to the ones that have not renewed in a year or two. Let's work together on retention as one of our goals this year. I believe if we get our retention rate up, we will also recruit the veterans in our community that have not been members yet. Working together I know we can achieve our goals and even surpass them this coming year. I have mentioned this in the past; if there is anything I do to help or assist you and your individual Post's do not hesitate to reach out to me.

For God & Country.

Mike Harris

Commander, District 5A

District 5B

Post 301



Post 301 hosts a free breakfast compliments of the local Walmart prior to our regular monthly meeting. Our meetings were moved to the third Saturday morning each month. Breakfast starts at 9:30 am with the meeting at 10 am. Everyone is pleased with the change from the evening schedule and look forward to the meal and meeting. All veterans and friends are invited to join us.

District 6A

Post 160



James Albert Wheatley American Legion Post 160 was honored to welcome the first Oklahoma Boy's State student for 2026. The Yukon post has been working hard getting the word out for high school juniors. Students that wish to be selected for a service academy know that attending Boy's or Girl's State is a must and the post has been successful getting the message out to high students. The post is hoping for many more in the coming months. Pictured: Delegate Ayden Huffman and Michael H. Devenitch

Yukon Legion Visit to Hospitalized Veterans

James Albert Wheatley American Legion Post 160

📅 Wednesday, August 6

HONOR OUR COMRADES

Join fellow Legionnaires, families, and friends as we visit hospitalized veterans at the Oklahoma City VA Medical Center. Your presence means a lot to those who served.

Schedule

🍕 FREE LUNCH - 11:00 a.m.

Papa Dino's Pizza
728 Culbertson Drive
Oklahoma City, OK 73105
Lunch provided by Post 160.

🏥 VA HOSPITAL VISIT - 12:15 p.m.

(Arrive by noon to park and gather)
Oklahoma City VA Medical Center
921 Northeast 13th Street
Oklahoma City, OK 73104

Post 5



Post 5 Kingfisher made a video highlighting their Flag Retirement and Flag Plaza.

<https://www.facebook.com/s hare/r/15nQvtsAz1/?>



District 6B

Post 55



Dobbs-Adams Post 55 had an eventful July. We were honored to be able to participate in the Marlow 4th of July parade and festivities thereafter.

Post 55 was happy to participate in the Department Summer Convention from July 10-13th, where we won the category of 100% Plus Membership for 2024-2025.



With heavy hearts, we were honored to hold our Post Everlasting Ceremony for Robert Fulton on July 15th.



-On July 26th we were able to participate in the annual Duncan Dehydrator bike race again this year. Post 55 had a booth set up along the route to pass out refreshments and cheers for motivation to any riders passing through.

District 7

I am proud to announce that we are working on getting Post 30 started up in the Oklahoma State Reformatory in Granite. This will be the second prison post in Oklahoma.

Post 146 is continuing to work on their building.

I want to say congratulations to all new officers that were elected at the summer conference.

Elmo May

District 8A

Post 53



Fire Department Chief Ben Treiner spoke about how they have had 669 runs as of the 1st, and they annually have 1100-1200 runs. They have been able to remodel the training room above the bays, with grants so there has been very little cost to the City of Perry, once completed they will be able to hold more training classes. Since Covid the availability of paramedics has been down 60%, so they are always looking for Call-Firefighters. Please contact Perry Fire Department if interested.

Post 190



Fourth of July BBQ Brings Community Together

This year's Fourth of July celebration was one to remember as we hosted our first-ever fireworks fundraiser and community BBQ—and we're proud to say, it won't be the last.

Thanks to a generous donation from the Covington Lions Club, we were given a fully stocked fireworks trailer, which we put to good use leading up to Independence Day. Though we weren't able to provide a full-scale fireworks display this year, the community still showed up in great spirits, and we're hopeful that with continued support, we'll be able to raise enough funds to purchase the artillery needed for a full show next summer.

The day's festivities included a delicious BBQ with pulled pork sandwiches, baked beans, chips, desserts, and cold drinks. We served around 100 guests, many of whom stayed to enjoy good company and conversation.

We also held a flag retirement ceremony, honoring the American flag with the dignity it deserves. It was a meaningful moment that resonated with many in attendance, and it helped us connect with a few new veterans in our area—relationships we look forward to building on in the months ahead.

All in all, the event was a strong first step in what we hope will become a new tradition for Covington. We're grateful for the community's support and excited about what's ahead. Stay tuned and thank you to everyone who came out and pitched in!

District 8B

Post 273



4th of July Flag Retirement and Parade Laverne.



Post 19



Adjutant Jack Day, Mooreland Public School Teacher of the Year Julie Eilers presented with certificate and \$250 check, Vice Commander John Cole



Adjutant Jack Day, Fort Supply Public School Teacher of the Year Katelyn Denney, presented with certificate and \$250 check Vice Commander John Cole



Commander Bill Grice, Woodward High School Student Drake Roberts presented with certificate and \$500 check.



Commander Bill Grice, Woodward Public Schools Teacher of the Year Ellie Pryor presented with certificate and \$250 check.



Commander Bill Grice, Fort Supply High School Student Paisley Kelso presented with certificate and \$500 check.

PLEASE SEND ALL SUBMISSIONS TO TALOK1889@GMAIL.COM

POST EVERLASTING





<https://www.collinsvillefh.com/obituary/sherree-lamb>



<https://www.parksbrothers.net/obituaries/lawrence-ring>