indivisible, with liberty and justice for all. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for the opportunity to join together with fellow engineers to share our knowledge and our understanding, our ideas, and direction for the Department of Homeland Security and the American people. We ask your blessing before we begin.

We thank you for your service today. In Christ's name, amen. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Please have a seat. I just want to say that this meeting is being recorded, so if you need to speak, make sure to come forward, give your name, your first number, whatever, so that we all know who it is that's talking. We do have a couple of individuals on Zoom meeting with us as they are unable to be here today.

So I'm going to start with future Senior Leader Meetings will be the third Tuesday of every month. I plan on doing them at 10 o'clock, unless something unforeseen changes that, and I do want to try to continue to rotate them through the Oklahoma City area, so we're going to try to keep the schedule for the other folks involved. This way, everybody can ask you some of the different folks also.

District Conferences are coming up. We've already had the first one. It was held out in Clinton, Oklahoma, District 7. The next one is, next weekend, it is District 6, and that will be at the Mustang Community Center.

District 2 is on September 26th in Muskogee. District 3 is October 3rd in Perry. DTC 2 is October 10th, and I anticipate that will be at post 12th.

Legion College is the 16th through the 18th of October, held in Spiro, Oklahoma. District 3 will be in Durant on October 24th. District 1 is November 7th.

I do not have an infection yet for that. District 5 is on the 14th of November in Moore, Oklahoma, and District 4 is the 21st of November in Bristow, Oklahoma. So, for those that are interested in attending those conferences, hopefully you wrote that down and have questions, please let me know.

So, I briefly mentioned DTC 2. If you have something of importance that needs to be on that agenda, please hit Restart so we can get it on there. We're already starting to put our agenda together. I do not know what we need.

On the 10th of October, and I believe we're going to start it at 1 o'clock, there is an event that morning that a few people have expressed an interest in attending that we may go later in the day. Mike, did you have a question? Odom Texas. A football game.

At 2.30. On the 10th? Yes. Who has to be the one? I have already decided on the 3rd, yeah. Who has to be the one walk? What time is your walk? 9 a.m. Okay, well, we may just have to split.

I don't understand any more about the Odom Texas game. Okay, 10 o'clock. I'm totally offended.

10 o'clock, October 10th, the EC2 at post 12. And the next thing I want to talk about briefly is Oklahoma Legion College. It is open for applications right now.

It is $50 a person. It will be held in Spiro, Oklahoma. I have not looked up the list of hotels yet.

We can get that information put together for them. Half of them are coming from across the state for that. I'm working with Hayden.

We're trying to change up some of the instructions this year to see if we can bring it back a little more to life. Went to sleep last night. National Legion College.

Last time we told you we had some applicants and they had to release the names. Well, we had three applicants. They were all qualified.

National has decided to go with Mike Kerr as their primary. They did not choose an alternate for Oklahoma. There were any number of reasons why they did not give us an alternate position.

However, we do have an alternate available. If they run, if they find people that are dropping out, they want to fill the spot. The other two applicants were Karen Ritter and Terry Law.

For those that went to National Convention, we have had a change in the auxiliary membership. The new eligibility resolution expands the membership in the auxiliary to include male family members. So they changed the resolution and Mike can help me out if I stumble through this.

They changed their membership guidelines to say grandparents instead of grandmother or grandfather. It's parents, siblings. So if you happen to be the father who has no previous descendants who have served in the military but you have a child serving.

The father is not eligible to join the auxiliary. So they're anticipating the numbers to go up. But that means, you might say, that we included a group that was previously felt like they were left out.

Any questions on that? If you look on our Facebook social media, you'll find that we posted those. And are they on the website? I think so. So they're on the website and they're on the social media.

So if you need further guidance, you can ask us or you can look there as well. Any questions on that? I'm going to let Patricia Mathis Kerr talk a little bit about our membership and how we're doing with that. Good morning.

It's good to see you guys today. Good morning, Patricia. Thank you.

I know that some of us have a little bit of trouble hearing if we're in the back. So you guys in the back, but you hear me just fine. Okay.

I did not forget how to talk to my troops in formation, just saying. Membership. We actually were given the goal of 11,775 by nationals.

We, as a team, decided we could probably make 12,000. But national left us with 11,775 with 12,000 plus being the ceiling breaker. We are over 6,000 so far.

We're at 6,200, a little over. We are at, the last time I looked, we've got some new numbers. I need to look again this week.

But we were up to 24th in the nation. And we go up and then another state does something. We go up and then we go down and we go back up and we go down.

Well, this is going to be a roller coaster ride. So I expect that. But what matters when we get close to June is where we fall.

And we're putting the survey together now on finding out the data behind our members that are going in the front door and leaving the back door. So we're getting that ready. We do have a membership committee put together.

We have our first meeting, what is today, Tuesday, tomorrow. We also have fundraising committee put together. We have our first meeting tomorrow.

We've already been doing activities for membership. We have a competition that's out. If you go on the website or social media, you will see exactly how that's laid out.

We want to obliterate the east versus west mentality. And we want to bring the teams together. So what we've done is we have four coaches.

That would be Commander May, Bicel, Vice Command East, and Vice Command West. And each coach was assigned an even amount of large posts, medium posts, and small posts, all separated across the floor. Certainly got more of the large posts, though.

So we're going to have to be hard. But we put it together in teams. So we can coach and encourage and inspire.

And it is starting to work. And what we did is I give all the credit to Karen Cruz on this one. The girl is a membership phenom.

So she helped me work the numbers, and she came out to where all of our percentages were spread evenly from large to small posts so that each post knows how many folks they need to get

as a minimum. That way, like a small post that may have, like, five people to 15 that are operating, they may only have one or two, maybe three folks. Your larger post that has more veteran population around them may have more of like a nine or ten-member increase to hit the hundred.

So we separated it out accordingly so it's realistic and that we can meet those goals. And we're meeting those goals right now. We're actually at our 50%.

We were at 50.1% or two at the time we needed to be. So we're meeting our goals at the national goal time as well. And that's how our times for this membership competition are running.

National is interested in seeing our team events and how we're doing this, and there will be prizes. So there's going to be weekly acknowledgments. There's going to be post recognition, all levels, so that you get to know your smaller posts as well, not just your big ones.

And then we're also going to have major awards at the end. On top of the already present membership awards for small, medium, and large posts. So we will have all of that to encourage at reaching out for the membership.

And we're also educating. So the education piece behind it is continuing to show that it's not just numbers. It is about the relationship.

But if we don't have those numbers, we don't get the year of promise either. So having those opens the door for us. But it's not just about that.

At our level, we're interested in the relationship too. I mean, either one exists for a reason. And that's it for the relationship.

Are there any questions about membership? I'll take that as a no. Thank you very much. Okay, next.

Dale. We've had a few issues come up since the last meeting. I think we need to make some changes, again, to our constitution.

This will need to be done, of course, through the resolution. It will need to be done by the convention. But my purpose in bringing it up at this meeting is just to give people who attend the senior leader meeting a heads up and see what you think about it.

I think the two of them will probably not be controversial. The third one might be a little more controversial. We had a situation here a while back where a person was barred from attending the post facility according to article 12 of the bylaw.

This can be done without a hearing. However, the constitution doesn't really go into a whole lot more detail. Let me back up just a little bit and say it's important whenever we're talking about a

post, and every time we talk about it, it's going to be about a post.

When we're talking about a post, it's whether or not the post is following the constitution. Well, right now, the post probably follows the constitution, but the constitution doesn't say it at all. Okay? What I am thinking we need to do is in article 12, when we're talking about either suspending or barring a person from a facility, is that we add a section in there that says that the post will notify the person in writing as to the reason and also a prior member of what their appeal rights are.

So, basically, the members don't really understand this stuff. A lot of the post people and a lot of the department offices don't understand it, so we can't really expect the members to come up with a problem and go find it on their own. So, simply stated, I'd like to see it add something to article 12.

In that particular section, I think it's next page, or seven or eight, I forget now, but in that particular section, it just says that when they do, when they bar a person or suspend a person, that they will take and notify that person in writing what the reason was. The constitution says they have 10 days to appeal that and request a post meeting. Okay? But most of the members don't know that.

Some of their offices don't know. Okay? That particular section, by the way, is normally for somebody who has been disruptive or causing problems in the post. The one that I need to thank, guys, is somebody standing up and always being argumentative and causing problems and not following the rules.

Somebody in a bar that gets loud, cranky, first of all, thank you. Anyway, I just want to throw that out. Does anybody have any comments or anything on that? What I would do on this, on things like this, is go ahead and prepare a resolution from the DEC, let the DEC look at it and see what they think and so forth.

But I just wanted to give everybody else a chance. If somebody wants to say I'm missing something or something else needs to be said about it, this is an opportunity to provide some informal comment. The second one, going back the same way, kind of the same way, is, oh, this is my phone's out.

I don't know how to do this. What was the second majority? Okay. The second one, I want to, oh, I know what it was.

It's come to me now. At the last meeting, in every meeting we've had, we've talked about the fact that the department is limited on what we can actually say against the public. This is something that came up under the new judge advocate's ruling, and a lot of people don't understand that.

I get called on a regular basis. We've got a problem at a post. You need to go down and investigate.

You need to go down and do something. You need to go down and fix it, okay? National has told us in their constitution by law that the public is the one that is responsible for managing their positions, okay? And that's what our constitution says, and that's the way the legislation is presented. Most people are very uncomfortable with that, okay? We also challenge the district commanders to work with these folks, okay? Now, our constitution doesn't really say who can file a charge at the post level.

The national judge advocate in the officer's manual has said it should be a post member, okay? Ours doesn't say that. My interpretation of what it says is it probably should be, because in order to take an action, you're going to have to have a two-thirds majority to do it. So if you can't find one person to file the charge, then it's probably going to be hard to find two-thirds of the people to vote for.

So the bottom line on it, we have a lot of problems at the post level. We'll come up. Nobody is willing to file a charge at the post.

Basically, what happens at the post level is people just quit. They just move out, okay? They decide they don't want to be a part of it. The district commander works with us.

Whenever we have a problem come up, normally what I have to do is ask the post commander, perhaps the district commander, what's going on? Maybe the district commander gets involved. That's interesting. What I'm suggesting is perhaps we need to go back and look at article 10 and say that the district commander can file a charge at the post level if something is brought to their attention that needs the post's attention.

Now, they would not be involved in the resolution. The post would still be the one that would be the one that does the resolution, that resolves it. But what happens is you've got a problem at a post, and most of the post members don't know anything about it.

Sometimes the executive committee don't know anything about it. So this would just give us an opportunity for the district commander to put a little input in the post activity by filing a charge. That would make the post have to take some action on it.

They could still decide anything. It's dismissive. We'll take the action.

We're not going to say anything else. And I think we would still be in compliance with the National Constitution of Violence. But I think this would also help the people who feel like the department is not doing anything.

We're not taking problems as a posterior. So what we need to do, whenever we get somebody that complains about a problem, I ask one simple question. And this simple question comes out of the Uniform Code of Procedures, and that is, what section in the article of the Constitution and bylaws would be invalid? Okay? Anybody have any comments or questions about that particular

solution? Yes, sir.

Okay. Bob Marshall, 6th Degree Commander. Is there any chance, because this is something near and dear to Post 55's heart, having our recent history of dealing with trials and stuff, is there any chance that we could have also an addition on there that provided the personnel being tried or anything like that is one of the officers of the post that we could have, like, the district commanders sit in as a facilitator for the trial? You know, they're not making the decision.

They're just trying to make sure everything's being followed. That way, because the members are still going to have to vote. They're still going to determine their guilt or innocence.

They'll determine the punishment. But if it would allow the post to have somebody outside watching to make sure things are going right, is there any way we could do something like that if we're going to be able to expand it to have them bring up the charge? Off the cuff, I think it's appropriate for the district commander to attend. As far as involvement in it, I would be reluctant to get too involved in it because National is pretty clear on the fact that it's up to the post to make these decisions.

It's up to the post to handle their business. So, firstly, when I was district commander, I did not like the word commander. You've heard me say this in the past.

I consider myself to be the district counsel. And I think that the district commander would be appropriate for him to attend. It would be appropriate for him to, you know, ask the questions if they come up.

But as far as getting involved in it, I'd like to keep an arm's length away from it to make sure that we're still consistent with the National Constitution of Violence. John, did you have a comment? When I do assistance, the justice system will give us the call to do an assistance. If you don't take the action, you have to figure out what their problem is.

And they take whatever action they want. And I'll use Post 36 as an example. They had embezzlement.

They weren't able to find it on their own. They had a brand new service office. The post commander was embezzled with $65,000.

They asked for an assistance. Got an investigation. It went down.

We did an assistance. It showed them what was wrong or what could be wrong. And sat down with the executive committee after that.

Said, here's what I see. Did you authorize it? No. Yes.

Well, what are you going to do about that? I'm not going to do anything about it because it's not

my problem. No worries. You need to take action.

But they were never found it on their own. By asking for assistance, the department directed someone to go down and help the people. They discovered it.

They took the program. Jeff? My understanding that a district commander's job is to facilitate and assist the post at any level that they need. Not as a decision maker, but laying out the courses of action for them to take.

I think that goes right with what John said. And that's the duty prescription of the district commander in the national turnout law. I'm not seeing a word of ambiguity in this.

There will be a case that comes up where even the district commander is not going to be able to solve the problem. When you have a post commander who got ejected from any of his posts, they're not going to take any action. Jeff, I come up recommending that they actually be able to follow the charge, which would then pull it back into the fact that they would need to go in and have notification, have hearings, and actually the post should have hearings.

Now, that's not necessarily going to do it because quite often you can't get post members to show up no matter what you do. But anyway, like I say, what I'm trying to do is close the gap where it feels like the department is not doing anything. But at the same time, it's been the purview of the national constitution bylaws.

And right now, it doesn't, our constitution does not say who can follow the charge. National judges have been recommended to be a post member. So a lot of times the post members are not going to do anything.

They don't know what to do. So that was the recommendation. If anybody can see any real strong opposition to that, then the next one will be one that you probably will not like.

Okay? The problem we've got, in my opinion, is quite often the district manager is also a post member. He's not going to go in and recommend the charge against him. He's supposed to be the district manager.

We've also got post commanders who are department commanders. We've even had department commanders who are still post commanders. In my way of thinking, the chain of command could be that you're assisting, helping, and guiding the lower people.

You're not going to be able to help, provide, and guide yourself. Okay? I also see a conflict of interest there. Okay? If I've got a post commander, if I have a problem in a post, and the post commander is also the vice commander, the department, the district commander may be a little bit intimidated to say anything.

So the vice commander, he's the vice commander with, is the commander, or is the department

commander. So therefore, if I start bringing up problems for a post, I can see that I'll be a little bit intimidated on that. Now, simply stated, what I'm proposing is that we only have command levels at one place.

In other words, if you want to be a post commander, be the post commander. If you want to be the district commander, be a district commander. If you want to be the junior vice commander, be a junior vice commander.

But you only have one position. The opposition to that is, if my administration can't fill our positions now, well, we keep talking about getting younger people. We're talking about more people being involved.

So that would be my suggestion. I know that's the one that has some opposition to it. How many posts do we want for no commanders? How many districts do we want for no district commanders? I tell you what, District 7, there's no way I'm going to take districts, and I don't have any of my fellows who want to take post commanders.

I can tell you that now. I can try this next election, but what happens here, what happens here, if somebody says, no, I don't want to do this, and we have no post commander or district commander, what do we do then? Well, it's something that we need to address. You know, we can say, well, goodness, the people at the table, members run everybody.

That's basically what we're doing. We've got a lot of posts. I know in my district, we had a lot of posts whose post commander was also the adjutant.

That's another step you might want to take. What happens in the district down there, you've got a person whose post commander had the adjutant, and they died. Now, what happened? That's what I want to figure out real quick.

Did you know what happened? Somebody else stepped up. Somebody else took the job. Somebody else straightened them out.

Both of those posts, as far as I know, now that that one person has been sitting on both jobs, left, died, they straightened them out. And I'll tell you another story real quick, John, when I was working at Dinklage, I was a machinist, running the machines, the fueling machines. And I got bored, really, so the supervisor let me do all the hard work, the good work, okay? We had people who didn't do hardly anything.

Later on, I moved to a personnel, had to go down and do all this. I went down to that same shop, and I found out that people like me moved on. Some of the people who were just sitting around not doing anything, we had to cover a lot of their work because they were given the opportunity.

Go ahead, John. That all sounds real good. But I have half of the district that has not had a district commander doing its job in over five years.

I have a half a district, six of them, that's been merged into the A side, the B side. Of the six posts on the B side, four of them could have died at fifth. And the fifth one is doing its very best to die, by choice, because no one looked at it.

That's the cost you're going to pay when you start telling me that I can't be the adjutant of a post and the adjutant of the district at the same time. I didn't say I was a district commander, I didn't say I had the same difference. Can I interrupt, Commander? Yes, Trustee.

Past Department Commander Steve Thomas. I'm obviously the most recent to deal with this. I served my entire year as Department Commander, as also the post commander at 178.

We did not have anybody that, due to a normal mentorship, that kind of got expedited at our post level when we lost our dear past commander a couple of years ago. So at the time we were not, basically did not have anybody with the knowledge or the experience to lead a post of our, the amount of business that we have going through our post with all the different programs and bingo and everything else. So to hand string, I mean, you're going to have people that are going to get into positions, whether they're one position or multiple positions, they're going to do right.

And you're going to have people who stick with one position or multiple positions who are going to do wrong. Limiting somebody who can handle multiple facets just by technicality of saying, well, somebody shouldn't be in multiple positions. Well, if it's somebody who's going to do the right thing and try and move this department forward or these posts forward or these programs, it makes no sense to hand string.

Because as we know, getting people into leadership is not always the easiest thing. We do have people that have goals of being in leadership, but is it for the right reason or the wrong reason? That's a whole nother argument. But to go out on a plank and say, well, nobody should serve multiple facets at multiple different levels.

I think you are absolutely tying yourself down, putting that in any kind of a required format, such as a constitution and bylaws is a disaster waiting to happen. Because you're going to have these posts that only have limited leadership positions. Well, now you're going to tell them, well, you're a great leader, but you have to stay at your post because your post has nobody else.

So you can't move up in your legion career. I just, I totally disagree with that. Thank you, Steve.

A few years ago, when I was department commander, 2017 to 2018, I had a post in the department. The commander of the post lady decided she was going to start an auxiliary. She was going to be the commander of the, or the president of the auxiliary in St. Louis.

Went to National and asked, what's the ruling? She said, I just did this for Florida. You cannot be the commander of a two independent organizations. I cannot command the legion and the son or

the commander, the legion and the auxiliary have to be separate people.

That's a national agreement. So I don't see the difference. I can't command two different organizations because it does become a conflict of interest.

I'm the commander of the legion and I tell the auxiliary, you can't be in my building. And she says, she shouldn't have met him. It's the same person.

So it's a conflict of interest. I'm confused. Are you talking against or for? Pardon? I'm confused.

Are you talking against or for the struggle that you can't have two different commanders or two different levels? I'm for it. For not having a commander of two related organizations. Two different levels.

Related. If I'm a district commander, I'm not related to any of those folks. So I can be a commander at district level and a commander at department level.

But it doesn't affect anything. She's not going to sue me because I'm a middle man working for her. Or she's not going to sue herself.

What's the difference? It fills the position with a skilled person that can do the job and give the mentorship that needs to be done or I go without a district commander, which is more important. Okay, once again, I'm confused. So you say that you support the fact that a person is a post commander and a district commander but Nashville has a rule that says they cannot be the commander of the auxiliary organization.

But I'm not a commander of a district. I'm not commanding anything. I'm advising.

But that ain't what we have to set up as a benefits commander. What authority do I have over any post in my district? None. What authority does the department commander have over any post in this department? None.

I'm an independent organization that loosely follows the guidance of the district commander, the department commander, and Nashville. The only person that I'm really allied to is the Nashville commander and he passes his authority to the department. So they supervise me.

They do not command me. We are not in the military. I don't disagree with what you're saying which is why I would consider myself to be the councilman instead of the commander.

Because quite honestly, you've heard me say before, the only place we can command or push anything in this organization is out the door. That's right. The second that I tell a post, you must do this, there's the door.

You didn't elect me. You didn't charter my organization. Thank you for your service, but your services are no longer needed.

Then what are you going to do? You can't do that. But I also know that I've got posts with four members. Three of them are dead.

There's still a post. It still has a member. But he doesn't even live in the town.

He lives a hundred miles away. Is that a post? No. Whose responsibility is it? Whose find out that it is that post? It should be either the vice commander of the district or the district commander to work it and bring the problem to the DEC.

The DEC must make a decision to begin the process. Once the decision is made, then I as the district commander or the vice commander that brought the problem to the floor needs to set out and do the work. And it is not simple.

You don't do it overnight. It may take you up to a year. The whole point is we can talk about the lack of role of the district commander.

According to the Uniform Code of Procedures, the district commander at the intermediate level between the department and the post is the one that initiates charge which will end up getting the post to possibly closed. So they have a little more clout than what we think you should be able to provide. You can only recommend.

And it's not a resolution. Even the department can only recommend. We do not vote.

You're right. We do not. But we have to recommend.

The district commander should bring it to the DEC. The DEC votes yes or no that I can begin the process as a district commander. And there is a written set of guides step by step that you have to follow.

You put a packet together and you present it to the DEC and they say, okay, close it. The advocate then takes that packet and forms it in the correct format. There is form provided by National with the supporting documentation from National.

They need twice a year to determine whether a post is closed or not. The DEC could say, don't close it, merge it. Well, that's another problem.

And there is National guidance on that. But it is time consuming. It's a lot of work.

It's not hard work, but it takes time. I don't know. I see no question on that.

There are some pretty hard questions on that. Oh, absolutely. Can we switch topics? Anything else? Last question.

Go ahead. Bobby Stewart, post 41, my question on leadership may not be just this particular

situation, but in a local post, if you have leadership from your commander down to starting their arms, not necessarily then becoming district officers, but can they be officers in another organization such as the VFW or VAB? Yes, they can. In leadership positions, the only thing I know of that prevents that is the Legion Riders Constitution bylaws that prevents that.

I don't know of any other hopeful of it. And basically, I think, I'm going to speak for National, what you're going to find for National is to say that this is a free organization, we have free speech, and we have the rights. We can't have anybody else have the rights.

The Legion Riders have done that in their Constitution bylaws, and that has caused some problems. People will be Legion Riders because of that. And I probably don't have a problem with that other than the fact that if you have a leader in another organization that is higher in that organization than the position they hold in our local post, then their allegiance is to that other organization more than it is the American Legion.

And we lose a semblance of leadership because their devotion or their commitment is more to another organization than they are to ours. I don't know if it's in our Constitution bylaws, but when you take the position of a leader in a local post or the district or the department, should you not take it with the indication or the commitment that you're going to do the best you can in that position for the American Legion? Because we have, I hate to say this, but we have members in our local post that are in leadership that haven't been to two meetings already this fiscal year because they're committed to another organization. And it takes away from our leadership.

You know, maybe you put them all back in, but once you put them in that position to begin with, they volunteer and put their name on the ballot and everyone thought it was a good thing and we voted to win. But I just wonder if there's something that we can do to encourage our leaders today to remember that we're the American Legion first. And that's why I won't be a member of another organization.

I want my commitment to be to the American Legion. I'm the department chaplain. I want to be able to work across the department.

But I'm also the post chaplain this year, got put back in that. But commitment, I think should be a big word whenever an individual accepts a position in leadership from the post level up to the department level. Put commitment on that and ask them, are you willing to commit to the American Legion? Thank you, sir.

Okay. I think we probably beat this source pretty well then. Does anybody else have something else to say? Tom, if you don't mind, after we leave, give me some references on this department of not being a commander of two different places, because I know at least one post is also the post commander and also the president of the military.

I'd like to see it. And I kind of like to read that stuff because I've never seen that. Let me just close

by saying this.

I think there's enough concern about it that the fact we need to go ahead and get stable with it. So I don't have any problem doing that. I know it's going to be controversial.

Certainly it's always going to be controversial. I will close by saying this. I know of another organization, such as what you just talked about, which does have a rule that you can only be in one elected position and one appointed position, and they survive pretty well.

I contend that, yes, this could be a problem, but I think it's symbolic of another problem we've got. It's symptomatic of another problem we've got, and that is the readership of UFOs and the way we're developing our people and the way we're working on it. And by covering it up, by putting two people in one, I do not think it's causing a problem.

So with that, I will thank you for that. Can I close with one more comment to that? Go ahead, Steve. Yes, Steve Thomas, past department commander.

Hey, so there was a comment made, and I'm sorry I couldn't tell who made the comment about there being national regulations against people holding different positions across different programs. We have three in our organization currently who serve as a national executive committeeman for the American Legion, and they also serve simultaneously as a national executive committeeman for the Sons of the American Legion. So national, to my understanding, does not have anything barring multiple different positions, and those are both elected.

So I'll leave that there. Thank you, Steve. I appreciate what you just said.

That's kind of my answer to the citation, because I talked to the national liaison from Judge Abbott a while back about dual positions, and his question was, why would you want to? Do you not have anybody else to stand up and fill that position? Well, they did not indicate there was a point either. That's kind of what I was asking for the citation. So the national judge advocate basically supported what Steve just said.

But they're like every other organization. They change up there, and I named the Judge Abbott underdog was the one who retired, and it was two commander positions only that he did as a concept of entry. He gave us a Florida person.

We asked a question. He forwarded us a copy of the letter he sent to them. Do I still have it 10 years later? I doubt it, but I'll look for it when I get it back.

All right. Thank you all. Next, I would like to ask Bobby Stewart if he would like to say anything.

Thank you, Commander. The only thing I really want to emphasize is please give me the information on deceased members throughout this next year. We're going to try and put together a very impressive post-everlasting ceremony at summer conference this coming year, and we

want to be able to recognize all the past department commanders, post commanders, district commanders.

Don't make any plans. District commanders of leadership in the American Legion coming up at the summer conference. For those that haven't heard, our past post commander, Don Miller, Clinton, passed away.

His service will be Thursday in Clinton at 10 o'clock at First United Methodist Church. Just remember his family in your prayers. He has a daughter that lives in Chicago and only one child.

Anyway, please give me the names of all those. Try and give me the position they served in and terms they served, what have you. We really want to do a good post-everlasting service at the summer conference.

Thank you. Thank you, Bobby. Charlie, do you have anything you'd like to say? The big thing that National is doing now is to try and get passage of the Take Care of Veterans Act.

Congress is in session now but won't be in session for maybe a couple of weeks or so. Then they're going to adjourn before the midterms for one particular reason or whatever. We just had a memo from the new National Vice Commander from South Dakota for the Midwest Legion asking us to have all members please go to Legion.org slash action or grassroots at Legion.org Those two sites and you can get direct contact with Senator Lankford and Senator, I cannot recall his name from Tulsa, Tennessee.

Armstrong. Armstrong, yes, that's him. The Governor appointed and for each of our representatives from both states and counties we have Frank Lucas and there's a friend of hers from Tulsa Christine from the eastern part Tom Cole from the southwest part and again the Stephanie from Hillsborough, Virginia.

Please contact please ask all of your post members and from the district to please do that. The VA has allocated disability for new applicants for tinnitus and please have that money between $58 million and $19 million into the coffers and once the disability is passed that money will be used for the Richard Starr Act and 53 other acts that will help veterans. The Richard Starr Act has been diluted watered down some from what the original one was but some Richard Starrs will help some veterans better than none at all.

When we go back into the coffers we're right back where we started six years ago. This is our best chance to help these fellow veterans because it is a cost so please spread the word. Thank you.

Thank you, Charlie. Stark, would you like to Thank you. I'll share a few things.

I did not bring my hat today so please forgive me for that. I just want to share a couple things real quick. I think most of you all know that we've been filling the spot for our district assistant.

Katie Henson found something else so we were able to hire Crystal Scrooge over the last 30 days and not that we were in a massive rush but we got some really good candidates so I'm so grateful for this group. They've been nimble and responsive and active in trying to help us through that and 77% of the DDC has approved that and that's thanks to you all and thanks to the committee that got together and did a huge check up. So if you have any more information on that let me know but Crystal is working as we speak in the office and I think she'll be able to help us especially to get to the next level as a bookkeeper and help us put books together at the finance so I think you're going to see improvement in that area.

So anyway, I just wanted to remind you about that. Also, a couple quick things have come through. You may have seen an email on this, I don't know, but post-22, I sent an announcement that they're doing a preventative veteran suicide on December 22nd.

Maybe I've done this before, I don't know if that's Ardmore or 7am to 7pm in Central Park Ardmore. They have a cast with the flag on it and they'll be rotating from two minutes shift because 22 veterans die each year, I mean each day from suicide. So anyway, I just wanted to remind you that that's coming up on December 22nd.

Another quick element, the national security topic, which Charlene was good to mention with what they have and things that come up. We had a pretty good kind of update from our national security folks that included what's going on for example now in the east with Washington and Iran and those conflicts. I just encourage us as bookkeepers to keep vigilant on these national topics.

Whatever they mention, it's not to be a, you know, it's so important to also have security. So please be sharp on those topics and if you've got inputs for our members of Congress or other elected officials, I know a lot of you have strong opinions about that probably, about our military's involvement internationally right now. So that's, there's some good message trapped on there.

I'm trying to keep Michael, he might have some other stuff to keep in. But that's just a reminder that that information is active within the American Legion. Also, this came through, Oklahoma, OU is going to have an American Legion and Military Appreciation Day on the game against Ole Miss on November 14th.

They're giving us a lower rate of tickets to rent for veterans. And I've asked the one that contacted me from OU if we could have a free table out here somewhere, I don't know why in the end, just to give information about the American Legion. I'm absolutely down with the people around.

It's a good day, we'll be honored to go. It might be an opportunity to get some more interest and membership for all of our family. So anyway, I've got some flyers for that you might want to share with your folks.

What's the date for that? It's November 14th. And it is down by me, I know, so I'll probably get to

this after the meeting. So I think it would be a great opportunity to get some military What time is the game? Is it an evening game? I don't know the time yet.

Anyway, that's something coming up, and I know some of you have mentioned that in others, but it might be an opportunity for American Legion. So that's all I've got. Unless there's questions for me.

Thank you. Is there anybody that has a comment that they would like to make right now? Yes, the media person, Mike wants to talk. Hi everybody.

So what I'm handing out is a sample of the new Legion magazine. This is going to come out in February. This is the new format for the Legion magazine.

It is not smaller, it is more compact. I'll leave you back a bit. It's more compact.

The new size will save on mailing from a periodical to a marketing piece, which will save us $2 million. A lot of the other organizations are going to every other month publication. They're also cutting down their size.

This is still a monthly magazine, and we're pretty proud about that. The font size will not change. The formatting is going to increase.

You're going to have the traditional formatting of the longer articles, but you will also have a lot more articles that are QR code that you can only get online. We've ran it through a bunch of test groups of different demographics. So the younger people like some of the bubble charts that are in there and things like that, but that's coming out in February, so look for that.

Legionnaire Insurance Trust. If you're an officer in the Department of Oklahoma, you should have LIT. You can sign up for free.

If you're on Legion Business, because I carry my hat in the car all the time, you can get $5,000 for your family or whoever. If not, it's $1,000 if you're not on Legion Business. That part's free.

The other thing, two more things I want to talk about is other than LIT, and the department gets a little stipend based on every membership we sell in Oklahoma. The department helps you. Did I mention it's free? About $30,000 last year.

$30,000? $30,000. Pretty substantial for us. The next thing is the website.

We keep updating the website. If you go on committees, historian, you will see three new tabs. One is for past department commanders, one is for Anabicus, and one is for Legion College.

I'm getting with the good chaplain we're going to put the post everlasting on there as well. Those have all been updated of people who have attended those courses or PDCs. It's a pretty good deal for history.

It's not for you, it's for your kids and grandkids to be proud of you. That's the way that works. Lastly, the VSOs.

The beginner level course, 215 people went through 101, through the American Legion. 220 went through the 201, 72 went through the 202 course. This was around the country.

Because of effort Jackie's done, Oklahoma is a lot of those numbers. Get on your people about VSO training, VSO certification. The number one thing in the American Legion is be the one.

The number two is VSOs. Those are the two biggest things. The department needs to make it our two biggest things.

Unless you have any other questions, that's it for me. Anybody else have anything they'd like to say real quick? Commander, past department commander, Steve Thomas. Stark just brought up something during his remarks and I wanted to let you guys know.

As you know, we hosted the 22 a day event up here in Grove on November 22nd last year and it was an absolute phenomenal event where we had people come in that just wanted to talk because they had been personally touched. By the end of the week, you guys will be seeing that we will be putting out the information on our second annual on November 22nd again. Again, much like the other one Stark had mentioned, it will last 22 hours through the night starting at 2 o'clock on the 22nd going through the 23rd.

If you have some time available around that time, mark it on your calendar. Obviously, Mr. Kerr stayed there for the entire 24 hours with me last year as did several other members around the department. For those of you that might have some availability and want to come up and spend some time with us, obviously, weather is unpredictable.

It was really warm in the beginning of the day and about 2 o'clock in the morning, we were all huddled around the furnace. Plan your attire accordingly. That's all I got.

Stark, we did one of these up here in Grove last year for 22 hours. The Department of Kansas has actually reached out to Oklahoma for their or reached out to me for my SOP basically on how we did everything. Kansas is actually doing one on the exact same day as us on the 22nd of November.

There's actually two other departments that are trying to put it together as well. It started in Oklahoma and is spreading rapidly. Thank you, Steve.

Commander Scott Hillenburg District 3A, can you hear me? Yeah. Something real quick for the group. I've sent an email to Stark and Dale in reference to confirmation of procedures for post-mergers and closing.

I've got two posts that we're going to close slash merge that are going to come before the next month's DEC. What I'm seeking is some additional guidance and confirmation on the procedures that are in place. I've reviewed both the Constitution of Bylaws as well as the rules for the DEC.

Like I said, the email is in their inbox. I've CC'd Senior Vice as well as Vice East in this as well. We need some confirmation on that so I can make sure that I get you the correct information, the correct paperwork in enough time to make sure that gets attached to the agenda for the DEC.

Over. They came through at 9.30, yes. Yep.

All right. Thank you. Senior Vice Commander Patricia Mathis-Kerr, I want to give you just a moment about what's going on with our fundraising committee.

We have our first meeting tomorrow as well. We've gotten off to a good start. We have a good committee built.

We have lots of ideas and we also have a fundraiser currently running. At this time, he doesn't know it yet, but I want to punt to my co-chair, Elmo Meigs. Okay, Elmo Meigs, Senior Commander, Fundraiser Committee.

As you all know, we have the Free 250 going on. It's going to have 25 tickets to the book. You will sign for the ticket and when it's all sent down, we'll send the money.

Any tickets that you did not sell, send those back in also. The drawing's going to be mid-January at the mid-winter conference in January. Please, if you have not got tickets, see me.

Let's make this a big thing. It's big for the department. It's big for your post.

You keep $5 out of every ticket you sell, $5 goes to the department. The top prize is $3,000. The lowest prize, I think, is $250.

I'm going to go from $3,000 down to $250. What is it? The $500 last one. $500, okay.

I don't have my sheet of paper to look at. Anyway, $500. That's $500 of money there.

What we can't do without you all helping out. You have to sell these tickets. You can give some to your post and have your members go out and sell a ticket for you.

I do have a sheet that you can also sign out. Your tickets that you get to your post members, you keep track of those also. We know where all the tickets are at.

Bobby's got some back there that he's already bought or whatever. I have tickets out in color. Please, let's make this a big deal.

Let's make it work. You figure there's 7,500 tickets printed. That's $75,000 if we can sell all these

tickets.

Tell them about Zephy a few moments. Zephy. Also, there's a Zephy account set up on the department website where you can go in and buy these tickets on Zephy on department.

It's a whole $10 unless you put down your post number, the whole $10 can go to department. If you put your post on there, it'll still go to you by department. Zephy's the way to go.

It's a great thing. Really, so please, let's sell these tickets. Let's make some money and let's get this department up and running where we can do things like we need to do.

It's up to you all to help us. Yes, sir. Have these tickets been passed out to the district members? What it is, I've got tickets and I know Chris Sherborn got tickets on the east side.

Patricia has had some. Let me know. I wrote all the way to we went to a funeral and I got a phone call that individual wanted to know how he got tickets.

I asked, well, where are you at? He called me. He's right over in that area. It's Pomona.

He needs tickets. I happened to be in the area. I said, when's your meeting? He said, tonight.

Great. I'll bring you some tickets. If you need tickets, I'll drive I don't care where to get you some tickets.

I want this to be big. I want the department to come together and do something good for all of us. So, if you need tickets, I'll get them to you.

Everybody's had an opportunity to get them. Pass them over to them and give them to the district commander. We're not giving them.

They're signing for them. That's why I'm going to be at every district conference. Get them to Zephy.

Zephy on the website. Charles, if you don't give them to your district commander, I can give you one example where it's going to create problems. We have Tulsa Fair starting the 1st of October.

It runs for 11 days. Unless you plan on living in Tulsa for 11 days, there are no spare tickets in that booth. In the past, I would take a thousand tickets and put them in the booth so when they ran out, there was someone there.

I'm not signing for all those tickets. We have to have accountability. I'm sorry.

I hope you don't have to drive a lot. I'll drive. I'm a ferret.

I'll be in the booth so they can call you. I can sign for those tickets and I can trust you. No problem.

Because I've worked with you for how long? I don't go to the fair every day. I may not have to. I fix the people you bring in.

If you want those, I'll work with you. Here we go. Okay.

We will get you tickets. All you have to do is let us know. How many do you want? I don't want any.

How many does the table want? I'll have whatever we give you. I've got a hundred. If we sell a hundred, great.

Okay. Okay. We got that, right? Any other questions? Thank you.

On the fundraising, I will say that the tickets were available at summer conference. We ran out, so we had to get some more. We have tried to get district commanders to pick them up and say they want them.

We'll bring them to them, whatever. However, because we've had people in the past who took tickets, may have sold them, may not have sold them, didn't turn the money in. Maybe they did turn it in.

I don't know. But there were tickets that were not properly processed. So this is why they came up with, we're going to sign them out.

I understand you don't want to sign out a thousand tickets. You're not going to be there every day. That's fine.

But if your district commander is not going to sign for them, we have to go out to the individual folks. And that's what we've been doing so far, is hitting some of the individual folks. So if you know somebody that wants tickets, let us know and we'll get it to them.

There's three or four others that are out and about all the time. From the entire committee that's willing to move around. Yeah.

Patricia's got four or five other people on the committee besides the chairs. What's the next one, Patricia? The next one. That's what we're going to talk about tomorrow night in our first meeting.

It's the next one. I'll have an answer after that for you. All right.

The last thing I have is midwinter conference. We do have the National Guard Center down at Norman. We're just trying to get them to stay either this day or this day.

Trying to stay away from any drills they might have going on that weekend. I can tell you right now, it will either be the weekend of the 9th of January or the 16th. You can sort of tentatively

block those two days and once we find out the exact date that we have it, we will send that information out.

If there's nothing else today, I would yes, Jackie. Jackie. Hi, guys.

I'm Fred Chancellor Martin. Let me tell you a little bit about the VSO thing from National. If our membership and our veterans is our priority, nobody on the National team is accredited VSO.

That's a fact. All the people that are in the VA and our committee are not VSOs. When we ask the question from the Department to National, National says, well, I don't know.

Let me run it by the judge. Let me run it by our lawyers. Let me run it by this.

And it's where does the paddle stop at? That's the answer you get. Go another quarter turn and you get a different answer. National is aware that the guy that is currently in charge of the VA and our committee has asked me to be on our National team to go around and work with the other states.

May or may not happen. Can't answer that. I think Dave helped me on this.

We're at 153 people in the state that are signed up to be VSOs. Folks, we don't need hat wearers. We need workers.

There's a ton out there that are fully accredited by the VA. They have yet to do a single claim in the state of Oklahoma. This guy, National, wants to know that.

He wants to cut the dead weight. Here lies the problem. If it were only Oklahoma, wouldn't be a problem.

We could carry the extra. Our names, our numbers, goes out on international, not national, international lists. If somebody calls you from Panama and you say, well, I don't know, Muskogee's not helping right now, you have just pissed that person off.

If you're not interested in taking calls 24-7, and I'm being a little exaggerate on that, but we get calls all the time from Germany, from Panama, the Delta boys that are working down south, they're all coming through Muskogee. Muskogee's calling me saying, Jack, you've got to know. I'm not working that many veterans today as we speak.

I'm working trying to get the VSOs qualified. If I can get one or two VSOs to work, that doubles the effort that I could have done individually. Training is huge.

I'm not trying to be a butthole about this. We have guidelines that we have to follow, meaning VA standards. Oh, and then we've got these guys that are writing all these policies at National, they can't spell VSO.

Work with me. I'm glad to work with anybody. Dave is doing a heck of a job.

He really needs to be, the state really needs two department service officers, John. One for each side of the state, because look, I've been out of town. I come in from Arkansas this morning.

I've been gone all week. Who the hell has been handling? Dave has. Dave and Joanne are cogs in the wheel, and without them, the VSO program would be waiting on somebody to come back into town.

Support us. We're here to support you. We need our veterans.

The big sell point we have is we help the veterans free. I'm also a certified VSO. Who the hell is it? DAV.

Folks, that doesn't amount to anything. Here's where the rubber meets the road. DAV, VFW, Purple Hearts of America, they all have VSOs.

None of them, none of them can do what we as American Legion VSOs can do. Dave, you've got your crazy little card in the back of the house. But we have these cards that we go into the VA system as VA employees.

We're not paid to do these squats, but we go through their ritual of accreditation and certification. We can go immediately into the VA records right now that Dave can pull the records up and tell you exactly where you're at. All accredited VSOs can do that.

That's what we're striving for is everybody in the accredited. Yes, ma'am. You have to be a veteran to be a VSO.

According to these people at National, the VA and our committee, the answer is yes. According to Steve Thomas, our past commander, Jack, you get them in the door and we'll work with them. Shirley and I haven't had that discussion yet, but I think we don't want to put our leadership in a position against National.

National says they must be a veteran. We have currently as we speak, plug your ears, Shirley. We have VSOs that aren't veterans.

They're doing a hell of a job for us. Again, National suggests they don't dictate. National suggests they don't dictate.

Give us enough rope to hang ourselves. Any other questions? Yes, sir. Jack, what do we have to do to get a VSO certified in our post that is probably one of the most dedicated VSO type people that there is in West Oklahoma.

He loves helping veterans get their benefits, but he's not certified, and we need to get him

certified. He wants to go to work. Certified or accredited? No, no, Bobby, that's not true.

Let me clarify. Certified is what DAV and DFW VSOs are. They do not have the cards and cannot go into the system, but they are certified.

I am a certified DAV VSO. I'm an accredited American Legion VSO. Accreditation means you go into VA's system, you have reading capabilities of it, you immediately pull the records up and share it with the veteran.

You can't really share it with all of his property in the VA, that's another class that you have to go through, but that's the access that an accredited VSO has. Okay? So what this individual needs to do is meet state requirements and VA requirements. VA has got a training program that's called TRIP T-R-I-P.

That's to ensure proper representation for your claim. After you do the TRIP training, which you have four weeks, Dave? Is that four weeks? It's a time stated course. You have to complete TRIP before you get TMS.

TMS is the management system, which is four categories for PII, HIPAA, rules and responsibilities of VA employees. If you can believe that, we're considered VA employees. Not paid, but we still have to go through the minutiae of getting the accreditation.

Then there's one other rules and behaviors for a VSO. So those are four courses that the VA puts on. We have no control on.

We have no visibility on. You can call Jack and say, check with Joanna. Joanna says, I submitted it.

It's up in the air. We can't tell you where it's at in the process. We can make a phone call saying, hey VA, get off your butts.

I know you're overworked, but I need this person in this class. Well, I send them an email and they fail to respond. Short answer, Jack.

Yes, ma'am. Short answer. Have them get a hold of Jack.

The problem with that is once you're put into the system, if you don't meet their guidelines, which we have no visibility on, you become dormant. That means you've got to start the whole damn process all over again. They have to be willing to jump the hoops to become accredited.

Have them get a hold of Jack. Okay? The background investigation, Jack. Okay? Does that help? Thank you so much.

You're welcome. Eric, did you have something? Eric Grubbs. Post as you did, don't get mad at me.

I'm district vice commander, too. I have three things I just wanted to bring up to you. Thank you all for coming and letting me know what I did wrong and how we can do it better next time.

Number one, the post, the person in our post that got up there and decided that they were going to submit and get the brand new Norman Seabock named for a Medal of Honor winner that lives here or lived here at one time, we thought he was deceased. He is not deceased. They will not name anybody but that's living.

We are working on the admiral for the USS Indianapolis shortly to get his name added to Seabock. They found out that there's a lot of Seabocks in the state that have, so you may be hearing from our post wanting information and support in your area if you have a Seabock which is the VA outreach post. The second thing was I got my election ballot for the general election in the mail yesterday.

I filled it out three times, mailed it out, but they're out. Make sure you all go. And the third thing is, and then I'll be done, any fundraising tickets you sell on my ground, I get it all.

Laughter Laughter Alright, thank you. Anybody else? Alright. With that being said, the next meeting will be October 1 at 10 o'clock.

We will put it out on the website and everything, where the location is once I establish that. So, having said that, October 3rd Tuesday, October 21st. The reason the 3rd is because there are second Tuesdays that fall after a national holiday and I don't want to take away from your holiday weekend, so 3rd Tuesday you can go on out.

Alright, please try. Bobby, will you offer a prayer? Well, we're thankful for all the information that's been shared today. Now, help us take it and put it to use, improve on what we have, and come to the October meeting better prepared as legionnaires.

Now, grant us time and mercy as we go to our homes, we pray in Christ's name. Amen. Please recover.

The colors of our nation in place, sergeant at arms. Salute. To our distinguished Thank you for founding us.

Thank you.