

Media & Communications Commission Meeting

Marriott Water Street, Florida Salon IV, Second Floor

Saturday, August 23, 2025, 9 a.m.

Chairman David F. Wallace (VA) - Call to Order and Salute to Colors at 9 a.m.

Member Celia Torres (TX) - Invocation

Member John Buckwalter (MO) - POW/MIA Ceremony

Member Mattie McIntyre (NY) - Pledge of Allegiance

Director of Media & Communications Jeff Stoffer, (SAL-MT) led roll call.

Those present:

Commission: Charles Aucoin (LA), Rodger Bennett (IL), Dan Brown (ND), John Buckwalter (MO), Albert Coughlin (IL), Jeffrey DeClerck (CT), Kim Endres (DE), Thomas Fernlund (MN), Frank Hall (PA), Patrick Keefe (KY), John Lenotte Sr. (MA), Holly Lewis (OH), Gary Schacher (NY), David Wallace (VA), David Warnken (KS), Melvin Weaver (GA)

NEC Liaison Committee: Terry Schow (UT)

Council: Theodore Balbierz (NY), David Brambila Sr. (CA), Bruce Carlson (CT), Dale Davis (WA), Angela Duncan (MS), George Duncan (MS), Michael Kerr (OK), David Lockhart (NY), Jean Launsby (TN), James May (IN), Mattie McIntyre (NY), Daniel Meyer (IN), Renee Ohler (OR), Thomasena Sanderlin (GA), Kevin Stonestreet (CA), Celia Torres (TX), William Usry (OK), Jacob Volk (ND), Kirk Williams (AR)

Other guests who identified: NEC Liaison Andres Jaime Jr. (AZ), NEC Berley Hanna Jr. (NJ), Edward Lewis (FL), Anthony L. "Tony" Gladden (NJ), Kevin Sedlak (NJ), Julie Schnitzler (NE), Dept of Indiana Commander Ron Patterson (IN), Scott Lindsey (GA), Victor I. Graulau Jr. (VA), NEC Andres "Andy" Jaime Jr. (AZ), Dana Jackson (FL), Charemoa Dunahm (SD), Susan V. Ellis (TX), Vicki Harkreader (AR), Russell Stafford (WY), Dennis Hart (LA), Cyndi Miller (TX)

Chairman Dave Wallace delivered welcome remarks.

He remarked that it is an "honor and privilege to serve as your chairman."

- He gave a shout out to Media & Communications staff. He participates in weekly meetings with staff.

- Gave a plug for the new Java House video, done at the American Legion World Series.
- He encouraged members to be sure to read the magazine and working to understand why we continue the magazine.
- Asked members to submit stories on Legiontown because it inspires others on what they can do at their posts.
 - Talk about their communities and having stories.
 - We need to go out and be talking about it.

Director Jeff Stoffer

Jeff emphasized the 250th anniversaries of service branches and the 250th anniversary of the nation. He said Legionnaires are patriotic ambassadors of our nation. It's our time to shine with all we do: civics education, service, constitution, four pillars, etc.

He urged those in Tampa to attend the Vietnam documentary – 2 and 4 p.m. showings.

He touched on the scope of M&C division:

- Strategic Planning
 - Every year we have strategic planning session in December and June.
 - “Media requires strategic planning”
 - Planning should be a part of a post's agenda. Should be asked, “How are we going to tell stories?”
 - Media does not set the agenda. Leadership sets the agenda, media responds.
- Be The One mission, which began in January 2022 – led on our team by Henry Howard.
 - Broke 20,000 people who have been trained by Columbia protocol, about 4,000 post activations.
 - BTO will be moving to VA&R, with Director Cole Lyle
- Membership media
 - Looking at the value of membership
 - SAL – broke 400,000 membership
 - Website moved to marketing responsibility
 - PLEASE sign up for Dispatch. Sign up for the Dispatch (and other newsletters) [here](#).
 - We produce a variety of tool kits including the new member welcome kit.
 - Measurable impact graphics have been produced.

- Buddy Checks also has a tool kit. Roughly 5,000 posts are doing Buddy Checks.
 - Created a Be the one Tool kit, resource page.
 - Membership – ever on the hunt for membership **success** stories from your posts/departments.
- 250th anniversary of our nation committee chaired by PNC Seehafer and vice chair PNC Rohan.
 - The goal is to “celebrate & educate” not to create new programs, but instead to elevate our programs and wrap them around the 250th theme.
 - Developing a toolkit – speeches, social media graphics, how to conduct events, offer our members a recipe.
 - Close to securing a US partner for distribution of flag kits.
 - Encouraged to promote “Rise of our Flag” graphic novel. Available at Emblem Sales [here](#).
 - Service branch anniversaries are being highlighted this year in the magazine.
 - 250 Challenge – over 1,000 registered. Patterned after 100 Miles for Hope, successful getting people outdoors and moving; National Commander suggested we do something similar for anniversary.
- Website – working with marketing to restore what has fallen off.
 - Membership documents will be housed behind membership wall in MyLegion.
- Army/Navy game
 - Last year was our first year as a sponsor. Entered late in the game so this year will run smoother.
 - Cover story and coverage, bought advertising in select marketing. December magazine – More coverage
- Helped produce the commander’s testimony at Washington Conference. Came across better than it ever has.
- Student Veterans of America
 - Their conference will be held in Colorado again this year.
 - This is a golden place to be. Many go to this conference because posts sponsor them.

- Touched on the podcast. Podcast hosts are here at convention and they participated in service project on Friday.
 - Documentary filmmaker Ken Burns is an upcoming guest to promote American Revolution documentary. Will record episode in September.
 - Henry Howard talked about working with Global War on Terror foundation
 - They wanted a podcast but didn't have staff/resources to put it together. We will produce their podcast and pay us. It will go out on our channel, which will help increase our advertising.
 - This will help build a podcast network.
 - Season 1 will launch October 1 and go for six episodes.
 - This will be an experiment. Provide a revenue stream for Tango Alpha Lima.
- Advertising – James G Elliott relationship continues to evolve.
 - Working with marketing.
 - Thank you Thursday emails have become an important revenue stream
 - The November issue will feature a holiday gift guide. It will be a print piece with an associated digital piece.
 - We want to build on these companies who reach out to veterans.
- ReadEx survey
 - Going into part two on this survey.
 - Discovering digital and podcast demographics.
 - Pharma and travel are big for this demographic.
- Magazine – published continuously since July 4, 1919.
 - #1 best read for men, #8 for women.
 - 11th largest magazine in the nation
 - Circulation depends on membership.
 - Factors at work – 5% increase in postage in July. Postage increases causes magazines to drop off. POSTAGE is killing us. Paper is steady, back to pre-covid levels.
 - The 3-5 year plan needs to look at transformation, frequency.
 - Advertising relies on 12 months of magazine for the foreseeable future.
 - We need to be planning for a new future for the TAL magazine. We know it's a valuable project.

- 2026 – dedicated to 250th anniversary.
- American Legion Baseball Centennial – finishing up the centennial year
 - TAL baseball day at NY Yankees will be held on Sept. 6 and honor TAL baseball.
 - Bookazine for baseball is available for \$10. Available on Emblem Sales [here](#).
 - New video played at the world series
 - Dugout Diamonds in magazine have been successful.
 - Produced a physical display for centennial at Shelby and Millbank.
- Operation Metrics – interdivisional team to document metrics.
Membership impact report template for posts to use.
- Our M&C division has regular meetings to accomplish our strategic planning goals.
 - We meet weekly on Mondays for content management and on Tuesdays for magazine planning.
 - Meetings are held regularly with other divisions – fund development, membership, marketing.
- He highlighted key metrics:
 - Online Update goes to 1,040,000 million. Open rate is 27%, which is well above the industry rate.
 - TAL Baseball FB page – 1.7 million view. 677% increase.
 - 42 posts had 10,000 + views
 - When ALWS announced the field of teams: 265,000 views
 - 2.3 million views in July.

Deputy Direction Henry Howard explained the USA 250 Challenge. It began with National Commander Jim LaCoursiere who reached out and wanted to do some sort of challenge similar to 100 Miles for Hope that was held during the pandemic.

- Wanted it to be more inclusive. 100 Miles was solely fitness. Broadened to three categories – fitness, wellness, community service
- Individuals or teams sign up for the challenge and complete one or more of the categories of their choosing.
- Challenge is held July 4, 2025 to July 4, 2026.
- The cost is \$30 which pays for a shirt plus VCF donation.

- Event Groove, our vendor for this challenge, created a video on how to track miles. That is the number one question we are receiving from participants.

He gave specific examples of the three challenge categories.

- Community service – flag retirements, grave cleaning, Wreaths Across America, teaching flag etiquette.
- Wellness – 250 sessions of yoga, buddy checks, video gaming, gardening
- Fitness – walking, running, cycling, pickle ball, anything that gets the body in motion.

What's next?

- 10 + more months of this so we will continue to promote. **A promotion flyer is attached to this email.**
- Our division will continue creating resources as the year goes on.
- There is a category on Legiontown. Encourage others to publish there as the challenge goes on. www.legiontown.org
- Departments/posts can challenge others. For example, right now there is a Washington vs. California challenge.
- Looking for sponsorship opportunities.

He gave an update on Be the One.

- With the retirement of Tony Cross, Be the One is now housed under VA&R. Director Cole Lyle is creating a strategy with that's next. Our job is to support.
- Be the One cyclists rode from Texas to Tampa and had an event to end the ride. It received news coverage from Tampa media.
- If you have any BTO events, let us know. We love to cover and promote. Will continue to work on resources and promote.

Chairman Dave Wallace told members that their job is to be subject matter experts on all the programs, going back and teaching how to communicate in departments.

- Media has evolved over the years.
- Are you promoting all the tool kits out there? Speeches? All the resources? We need to be doing a better job on this.
- Encouraged all to heavily promote 250 Challenge.
- Share our message, share what we do, share our why.

Salute to colors and adjournment.

