



## VOICES

*"Among our agenda items this year is a call for Congress to fight the sharks. We are calling for criminal penalties against any company that skirts the VA accreditation process in order to charge veterans and families outrageous fees to process claims and appeals. In fact, it's against the law to engage in these practices, and those who do should be prosecuted."*

*- American Legion National Commander Daniel J. Seehafer at the Feb. 26 Commander's Call during the 64th Washington Conference, attended by hundreds of Legionnaires who took the organization's legislative agenda to their congressional delegations*



# 159

Meetings conducted by Legionnaires Feb. 26-29 with elected officials and congressional staff during the 64th Washington Conference.



# 40%

Increase, year over year, in VA disability claims filed in 2023, amounting to a record 2.6 million cases, according to VA leaders who spoke at a Feb. 26 panel discussion hosted by The American Legion Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation Commission during the Legion's Washington Conference.



# \$4,500

Cap since 2002 on the Department of Defense's Tuition Assistance Program for servicemembers pursuing college degrees, an amount American Legion Veterans Employment & Education Director Joe Sharpe said does not reflect reality, during a Feb. 3 policy briefing on Capitol Hill. That deficiency was reiterated in a Feb. 26 panel discussion at the Legion's Washington Conference, put on by the national Veterans Employment & Education Commission.



# 29

American Legion service officers who received national accreditation in February to represent veterans with their VA claims, free of charge.



# 150+

Accredited American Legion service officers who participated in a Feb. 8 virtual meeting – the first of four to be conducted quarterly – to learn about policy changes, new technology and other issues related to VA benefits processing.



# 33

Hampton, Va., VA Medical Center patients and staff who enjoyed a Feb. 11 luncheon, followed by music, dancing and distribution of goody bags, hosted by Smithfield, Va., American Legion Post 49, to kick off National Salute to Hospitalized Veterans Week.



# 5

New Sons of The American Legion squadrons chartered in February, three in Iowa, one in Indiana and another in Arizona.



# 12,179

Tango Alpha Lima podcast downloads during February, the first time the number of downloads has eclipsed 10,000 in back-to-back months.



# \$6,923

Amount in American Legion national youth scholarships disbursed in February.

 **\$11,000**

Approximate amount raised to assist homeless veterans after a Feb. 10 Freezing for a Reason awareness event – an outdoor overnigher in 20-degree weather – coordinated by the American Legion Family of Trier-Puddy Post 75 in Fond du Loc, Wis.

 **3**

New American Legion posts chartered in February, representing 63 members.

 **105**

Eagle Scout certificates presented by The American Legion in February.

## VOICES

*"I happened to be on the computer and saw something called Be the One. Being a former nurse, I said, 'Oh, that's for me.' I'm a nurse, and I know suicide."*

- Alexandria, Ky., American Legion Post 219 member Vyneta Barnett, who organized a VA S.A.V.E. training session for local veterans and now looks to expand it, under the Legion's Be the One mission, to other areas of the state

**BE THE ONE**

 **\$24,000**

Approximate amount raised by Maryland American Legion Family members for Special Olympics after the annual State Police Polar Bear Plunge into the icy waters of Chesapeake Bay Feb. 2. Out of that, \$16,000 was raised by Maryland American Legion Special Olympics Chairman Bill Ganz, who was the top individual fundraiser in the military and first-responder division of the event this year.



# 10

Minimum number of years that the Davenport, Iowa, American Legion Family of Post 26 has conducted annual stand-downs (through Feb. 15) to provide services, clothing, food and support for veterans who are homeless or in need.



# \$1,000

Amount of one American Legion National Emergency fund grant to a Tennessee Legionnaire who suffered losses and damage from tornados there.



# 18

Elementary schools visited by members of American Legion Post 221 in Massillon, Ohio, in mid-February to thank teachers and to share information about the Legion's national Be the One mission to prevent veteran suicide.



# 10

American Legion Samsung Scholarship recipients who were honored by the American Legion Family for their achievements with a Feb. 24-27 visit to Washington D.C., where they met with their senators, had a special recognition dinner with American Legion Family leadership and participated in remembrance ceremonies at memorial sites.



# 9,799

Veterans who took advantage of the new multi-year American Legion membership option through February, 430 of whom were first-time joiners.



# \$92,225

Amount in American Legion Child Welfare Foundation grants disbursed in February to three youth-serving organizations.



# 18,600

Rounds of ceremonial ammunition distributed to 26 posts and 16 departments through The American Legion Military Surplus Program in February.



# 25

Cadets who received American Legion ROTC and Junior ROTC awards in February.



# 15

Number of American military heroes whose remains were identified in February by the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency.



# 736

Informal Hearing Presentations prepared in February free of charge by American Legion VA appeals representatives assisting veterans disputing their VA claims decisions.