

# THE BLUE HATTER



The Official Newsletter of The American Legion Department of Utah

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VOICES OF VETERANS

utlegion.org

## Tell Congress: Pass the Afghan Adjustment Act

In the summer of 2021, our soldiers and Marines heroically evacuated tens of thousands of Afghan allies who fought with us against the Taliban. Now it's time for Congress to honor this nation's promise to our Afghan allies with real and lasting safety through the bipartisan Afghan Adjustment Act.

Since July 2021, more than 70,000 at-risk Afghans have been relocated to the United States and have entered on what is called, "humanitarian parole" - allowing them to temporarily stay and work in the U.S. for up to two years. Despite fleeing from the Taliban, there is currently no direct pathway for lawful permanent residency and stability in the U.S. for most of our new Afghan neighbors. Without an adjustment act that creates this path, most Afghans would be forced to navigate the backlogged, complex and paperwork-intensive asylum process. Access to qualified and affordable legal representation, loss of critical documentation and required evidence during the hurried evacuation, the impact of trauma, and backlogs in processing create significant barriers that make the immigration process seem insurmountable.



The only viable pathway to protection for Afghans is the passage of the recently introduced Afghan Adjustment Act (H.R.8685/S.4787) which would provide our new Afghan neighbors with access to a more streamlined and efficient lawful permanent residency process. This legislation echoes adjustment acts that Congress historically passed for every other generation of U.S. wartime evacuees.

Act Now! Tell Congress they MUST pass this critical legislation and ensure that this country keeps its promise to those who served our country's military.

### LEGION INKS MOU ON CAMP LEJEUNE JUSTICE ACT



The American Legion and Bergmann & Moore have entered into a memorandum of understanding which the legal firm that provides veterans benefits consultation for accredited Legion service officers can help potential plaintiffs understand the Camp Lejeune Justice Act (CLJA). The Sergeant First Class Heath Robinson Honoring Our Promise to Address Comprehensive Toxics Act of 2022 – better known as the PACT Act, signed into law Aug. 10, 2022 – opens the door for certain individuals to file lawsuits and collect damages from the federal government due to their exposure to contaminated water on the Marine Corps base. Qualified claimants had to have served at least 30

days at Camp Lejeune, N.C., between Aug. 1, 1953, and Dec. 31, 1987.

# COMMANDER'S CALL

## A veteran is a veteran, is a veteran, Happy Veterans Day!

In the eyes of a Legionnaire “veteran” is the universal, common denominator; it represents an unspoken understanding and a loyalty between brothers and sisters; *I know what you've been through, I've got your back.*

American Legion members along with all veterans' honor veterans every day of the year. The 11th of November is especially significant as the day the Nation takes pause to reflect on and celebrate all the men and women that have worn the uniform.

Veterans come from every corner of our great Nation and in fact the world. We represent every social, economic, religious, and ethnic segment of society, and we're bound together by a purpose larger than life, our commitment to defend America with our lives if called upon.

While we gratefully accept a well-meant, well-deserved “*thanks for your service*” from family, friends, neighbors, and often strangers, we know in our hearts, it takes a veteran to understand a veteran. We understand the harsh reality of long separations from family and loved ones. The often-times arduous conditions we've endured. The loss of comrades, the weight of their lives cut short forever etched in our minds; we appreciate the hole in the hearts and the vacuum in the lives of the loved ones they left behind. We understand.

In 1918, on the 11th hour of the 11th day of the 11th month, an armistice, or temporary cessation of hostilities, was declared between the Allied nations and Germany in World War I, then known as “the Great War.” The end of the Great War ushered into existence The American Legion. Since 1919 veterans from every generation have joined our ranks to advocate for hard-earned, well-deserved benefits. The month of November is National Veterans and Military Families month. Please join me in this month of heightened awareness by reaching out to all-hands let them know we have their backs and encourage them to join us in our noble, life sustaining, life changing and lifesaving efforts. God Bless each of you and thanks to you and your loved ones for your service.



Doug Case

## DEPARTMENT VICE COMMANDER



Welcome to November, Legionnaires! As I have been preparing for November activities and events, I have contemplated why I became a member of the oldest veterans' organization, The American Legion. I became a member because I wanted to continue to have the comradery with other fellow veterans and to be a part of the greater good within my community through service. Becoming a Legionnaire as a Paid-Up-For-Life (PUFL) member has certainly exceeded my expectations as I have an amazing Legion Family and I have had great experiences as a member. I am grateful that you are part of my Legion Family and all that you do in service to veterans and their families.

I want to congratulate those who worked diligently on membership the past couple of months as we achieved meeting the goal of 55% by October 19. Thank you for forging ahead with completing paperwork and contacting members. Please continue to keep up the great work and take time, especially at this time of year, to do Buddy Checks.

### Ninzel Rasmuson

I am excited about the training opportunities that began in October 2022, starting with encouraging all members to take the Basic Training course offered for free through National at <https://www.legion.org/alei>. Training will resume in 2023. If you have not completed this training, please do so as it will help you understand the foundations of the organization you need to know. Starting November 3, 2022, additional training sessions will occur once a month through May 2023 on the first Thursday of the month at 6pm, lasting only 45 minutes via Zoom. If you have additional questions, please email me directly at [ninzel9@gmail.com](mailto:ninzel9@gmail.com).

As you are aware, The Blue Hatter newsletter is our newest endeavor to get information to all Legionnaires in our Department. We encourage you to share this information with not only your posts members and veterans who may not be members yet, but all those in your community so important information gets to those who care about veterans and their families. Please don't hesitate to contact me if you have questions about membership, training, or marketing as I serve as your Chair for all three areas. Thank you for your services as veterans. Have a wonderful and safe Thanksgiving holiday!

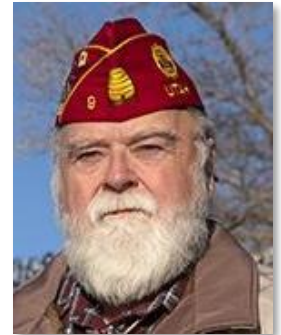
## THE BLUE HATTER

is an American Legion Department of Utah publication intended for American Legionnaires, Sons of The American Legion, American Legion Auxiliary, Legion Riders and friends of The American Legion.

It is published bi-monthly. Submissions, comments and suggestions are welcome.

## NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEEMAN

Congratulations to **PDC Randy Edwards** who will be the Western National Vice Commander next year. Earlier this year, Randy was selected as the Daughters of The American Revolution National Veterans Volunteer of the Year and was recognized at their National meeting in Washington a most well-deserved honor.



**Terry Schow**

- Planning work continues on the new State Veterans Cemetery in South Ogden and should take approximately 18 months to complete.
- Remind your members that the Legion has a Service Officer in Salt Lake City Greg Popp 801-326-2380.
- Several of you have expressed concern about the Disabled Veterans Property Tax Exemption and the increased property values not keeping pace with the exemption. The Veterans and Military Commission had this item on our October meeting agenda and Representative Lisonbee is filing a bill next session to help alleviate this. Please contact your State House and Senate members and urge their support.
- The American Legion Legislative Division is urging all members to sign up for their action alerts, which you can sign up for alerts by visiting our Grassroots Action Center at [www.legion.org/action](http://www.legion.org/action).
- Thanks for your great work for the Legion.

## From the Adjutant's Desk:



**Richard Fisher**

### TEMPORARY FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

Since its establishment in 1925, The American Legion Temporary Financial Assistance (TFA) program has awarded cash grants to minor children of current active duty or American Legion members. These grants help families in need meet the cost of shelter, food, utilities, and health expenses, thereby keeping the child or children in a more stable environment.

#### Who is eligible for a grant?

The minor child must be under the age of 18 and still in high school, however TFA may be extended until the completion of high school provided the child has not reached the age of 21. The minor child must be the biological child, stepchild, or in the legal custody of, a qualifying veteran. A qualifying veteran is defined as a member of the United States Armed Forces serving on federal orders current under Title 10 of the United States Code, inclusive of all

components, OR any veteran possessing an up-to-date membership in The American Legion. Active-duty applicants can be considered without being a member of The American Legion. A single onetime non-repayable Temporary Financial Assistance grant of up to \$1,500 will be permitted for the minor child(ren) of a qualifying veteran.

No child is considered eligible for Temporary Financial Assistance until a complete investigation is conducted at the post or department level, a legitimate family need is determined, and all other available assistance resources have been utilized or exhausted. Additionally, the TFA application must originate and be filled out by someone at the local level. **Posts are responsible for completing the paperwork and sending it to Richard Fisher, Alt NEC/Acting Adjutant, through Department. If there are questions, contact Richard directly.**



AMERICAN LEGION Utah Boys State



Kent Hansen Executive Director

It has long been acknowledged that Boys State is the Legion's premier youth program and the crown jewel of the Children and Youth pillar. By extension, Utah Boys State has rightfully earned a stellar reputation for excellence. That said, the horrific pandemic all but shut down Boys State programs across the country. Indeed, in 2020, only two states, Texas and Utah, ran a Boys State program, albeit virtually. But COVID not only infected our nation but also depleted our roster of volunteers.

Today, Utah Boys State has assembled a small cadre of volunteers who work year-round to run the program. Sadly, the number of volunteers is woefully insufficient to improve or even operate one of the Legion's most important programs. I'll be blunt: Utah Boys State needs your help. We are seeking those who can act as counselors, mentors and exemplars to the coming generation that will inherit the country for which all of us have fought.

When I attended the National Americanism Commission Boys State Conference in Indianapolis recently, I learned that in many states, Legionnaires are lining up to be counselors – some even on waiting lists. Sadly, this is not the case in Utah. I know that Utah Legionnaires are no less valiant than those of other states. But we call upon you to stand up and show it. If you can carve out a week in June to lend a much-needed hand, please make your wishes known to Department Commander Doug Case ([utahboysstate@utlegion.org](mailto:utahboysstate@utlegion.org)), Department Vice Commander Ninzal Rasmuson ([ninzel9@gmail.com](mailto:ninzel9@gmail.com)) or Utah Boys State Director Kent Hansen ([kenthansen7@gmail.com](mailto:kenthansen7@gmail.com)).



WE WANT YOU! FOR UTAH BOYS STATE!

So, what's in it for you? It'll cost you only the time you spend. Your lodging, meals and apparel are all paid for. And as the Boys State week changes the boys' lives forever, it will change yours as well. Just as you served our country in uniform, you will be serving our country's future.

On Sept. 27, Evans Family Media, one of our Eastern Utah radio stations, celebrated their 75th year in broadcasting and the theme was "American Patriotism." For their concert, they booked singer, songwriter and Grammy Award winner, Mr. Lee Greenwood.



SPOTLIGHT ON POST 11

American Legion Witbeck-Gardner Post 11 in Vernal was asked by Evans Family Media to open the program with the posting of the colors, along with bugle and a rifle volley and lead the audience in the "Pledge of Allegiance." Prior to the show, Mr. Greenwood took the time for photos.



# High School Constitution Oratorical Contest

## Promote your Oratorical Contest with these tips

During the American Legion Oratorical Conference with department program chairmen in September, Department of North Carolina Oratorical Chairman Joseph Reale Sr., shared a few ways to promote the Legion's Constitutional speech contest among high school students.

"We need to reach out to all the various school systems that are out there. And try to get in the door with all of them," he said. For homeschool students, Reale said each county should have a homeschool point of contact. "You can reach out to that individual and they have the rosters of all the homeschool students in that county. We need to use every means available to get into every type of school system that's out there."

Reale shared the following ways that can help promote the program:

- Visit high schools at the beginning of the year and bring Oratorical Contest flyers or brochures (available on [legion.org/publications](http://legion.org/publications)) to history, English and speech educators. And discuss the scholarship money that students can earn through the program to help with college education – scholarships are available at the post, district and department level. The national competition awards more than \$203,000.
- Introduce yourself to the school principal, counselors and JROTC instructors.
- Invite educators to your post oratorical competition. "They get to see it live, hopefully feel good about it, and they will then become your spokesperson at the high school level and get more interested in it," Reale said.
- Advertise in the school newspaper and the local paper and radio.
- Attend PTA meetings to share with parents the scholarship benefits of the oratorical program.
- Invite oratorical winners to speak at your post about their experience with the program. "Use them as your best sales representatives at the schools that they come from," Reale said. "No one is going to be more enthusiastic than they are to tell their friends and other students what this meant to them."
- Invite other civic organizations to your post to meet oratorical winners and disseminate program information. Or take your oratorical winner to other organizations to speak, such as the Kiwanis.



### EMBRACE THE FAMILY

Our family is no different than any other, we have internal feuds, disagreements incited and defused by lots of pride, an occasional over-bearing uncle, a cousin that frequently offers too much and a grandpa that, - - - well we all know Grandpa 😊. In the end, even with all the diversity, the crafty characters and windy

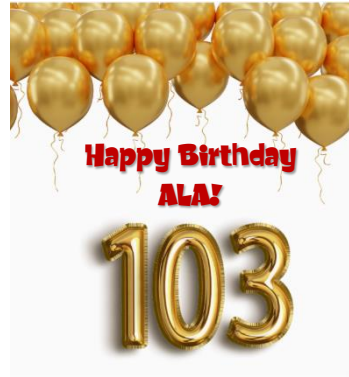
## The American Legion Family

pontificators we're all united by our common connection, the veteran. Time and again, we hear "we love our veterans", a well-deserved accolade, but let's never forget the extreme sacrifice and the contributions made by all the veterans' loved ones.

Every Post that sponsors an SAL Squadron and/or an Auxiliary Unit that embraces the sons, daughters, and wives of veterans, many of whom are members in honor of their parent, grandparent, husband, or wife veteran. This sponsorship is a weighty commitment of being the caretaker, mentor, and conduit through which their experience and engagement in The American Legion is nurtured and developed. A positive, rewarding, and hopefully lifelong journey under the welcoming arms of a group of veterans is the clear signal that our promise to veterans past and present is something we honestly do live up to, to welcome all those eligible into the fold.

Let us make a pre-New Year resolution to double down, make a concerted effort to make our Post environments inviting and welcoming. Extend buddy checks to all members of our family, help our family grow, and provide the essential tools they need to be successful. For the good of the Legion.

# AMERICAN LEGION AUXILIARY



Silvana Watanabe  
President

We have a couple of upcoming events for our Utah community, giving our Veterans in need the **Gift of Christmas**.

**Christoffersen Veterans Home** - Volunteers are needed Saturday Nov 26 from 9:00 am-1:00 pm to wrap the gifts that have been preordered by the Veteran residents.

**VA Gift shop at the VAMC** - this year is *Nov. 27 - Nov. 29. It is only for 2 days only.* It will be held in Bldg. 9 (it's the Auditorium). The gift shop will be open for both Monday & Tuesday from 9:00 am-3:00 pm. Volunteers are needed to help setup on Sunday Nov. 27 at 10:00 am. Also, volunteers are needed Monday, Nov. 28 and Tuesday, Nov. 29 from 9:00 am to 3:00 pm each day to shop with the Veterans. Contact is Judy Daybell (801) 633-7730. Oh, we will have a special guest: Eva Wallace the ALA Western Division VP.

**Ivins** - Volunteers are needed Saturday Dec. 3 from 9:00 am-1:00 pm to wrap the gifts that have been preordered by the Veteran residents. Contact is Ellen Nathan (435) 862-6087

For the Utah American Legion & Auxiliary 2023 Convention the temporary dates are June 23, 24, and 25. Contact is Randy Edwards (801) 224-6168.

## NEWS *You Can* USE

This situation requires our immediate ACTION!



# BE THE ONE

- Today, the #1 issue facing those who served is **veteran suicide**.
  - **Let's stop talking about how many veterans we are losing and start talking about The One we can save.**
- **The stigma associated with mental health issues is a barrier to veterans seeking assistance.** They fear loss of their job, think they can handle their situation themselves, or don't think others can understand their situation.
  - The American Legion is activating a national ad campaign to **destigmatize** mental health issues. Make it okay for veterans to ask for help.
- **Family members may be the first to recognize the signs that their veteran needs help, but they may lack the knowledge of how to approach the situation.**
  - The American Legion will increase **peer-to-peer education and resources** for local communities. (Example: *Buddy Check*)
- **There are several innovative programs** either funded by the government or private non-governmental organizations that help veterans in crisis, but they often lack funding or broad-based visibility. (Example: *Digital Therapeutics, One More Day*)
  - The American Legion has begun exploring ways to help these organizations amplify their efforts, in turn helping save more veterans.

**PUBLIC**

The American Legion needs your help in ending veteran suicide.

Be the One to:

- *Ask* veterans in your life how they are doing.
- *Listen* when a veteran needs to talk.
- *Reach out* when a veteran is struggling.
- *Sign up* for email updates: [betheone.org](http://betheone.org).

**VETERAN**

Be the One to:

- *Talk* to others about how you are feeling.
- *Ask* for help when you know you need it.
- *Get* more information: [www.legion.org](http://www.legion.org)

If you are a veteran in crisis:

- *Call 988 and press 1.*
- [www.veteranscrisisline.net](http://www.veteranscrisisline.net)

**Remember: 988+1. 24-hour help is available.**

**Next Department Executive Committee (DEC) January 21, 2023. Time and Place TBD**

**DID YOU KNOW?**

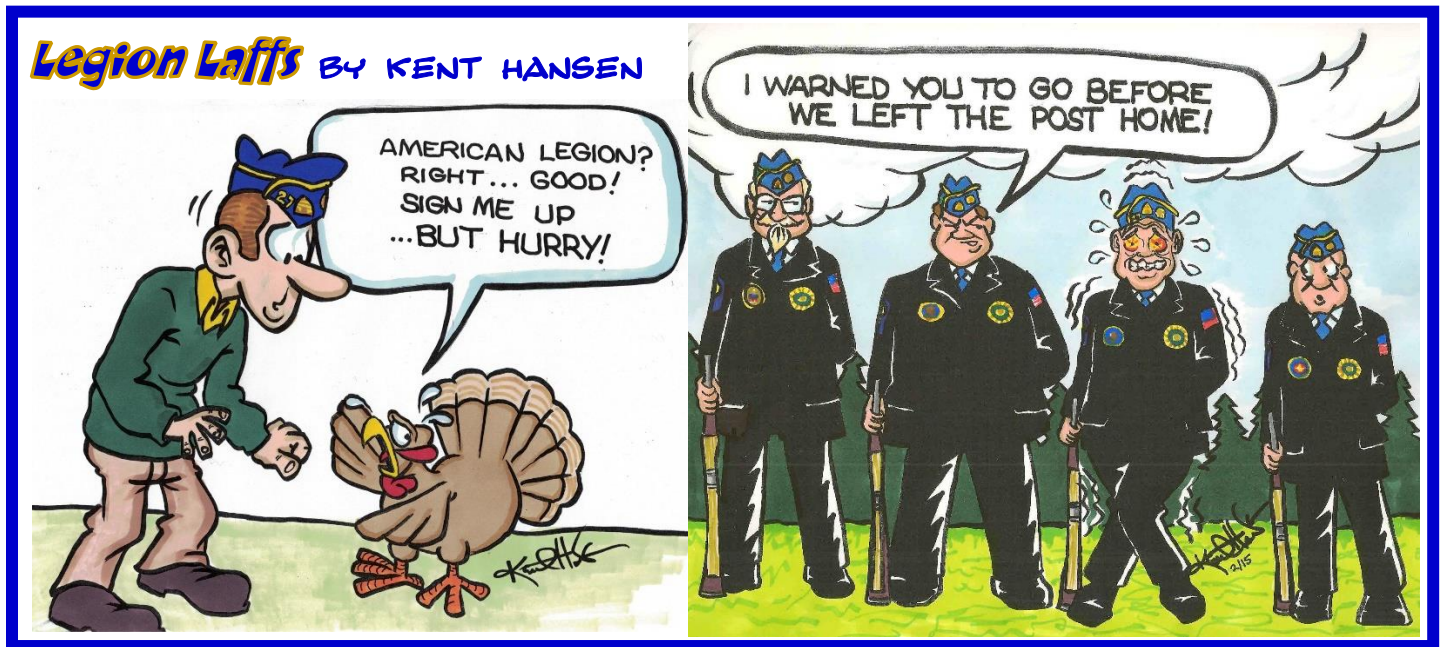
- Stepping up is easier on your conscience than stepping back?
- Your membership dues paid equals lives saved?
- American Legion Entities registered with the IRS as 501c(19) (Tax Exempt Veterans Organization) are part of a “Group” (925).
  - If you want change (name, address, phone, email) or other words update your information on your IRS tax records you must submit the changes to National Headquarters, they are the only avenue that can affect changes for entities within the group.
  - **How?** Email. Start with the name of your entity and your Employer Identification Number (EIN) then the information, as it is currently reflected and what should be changed. Email to: Ms. Julie Campbell, [jcampbell@legion.org](mailto:jcampbell@legion.org)

**Note:** 501c (3) organizations are individually recognized, not part of a group.

- DOD Early bird, Monday – Friday: Subscribe at [www.defensenews.com/ebb](http://www.defensenews.com/ebb) you can also sign up to listen to the podcast as well.
- Legislative alerts, sign up to receive actionable topics at [www.legion.org/action](http://www.legion.org/action). Note, while you’re on the site, check out, and maybe sign up to help represent the departments legislative agenda with our elected officials while on this website. (National Legislative Counsel Member Application)
- According to the data base, Alan Smith Post 31 has 81 years of continuous membership!  
8 members with over 70 years,  
7 members with over 60 years, and  
85 members with over 50 years. That’s 101 positive examples.  
Congratulations to all you Great Americans!
- **Flag Etiquette:** Pledge of Allegiance-when in uniform and covered, render a hand salute and remain silent. If joining in the pledge, remove cover, place over your heart, and recite the pledge. Short answer: you don’t recite the pledge while saluting.

**JOB OPPORTUNITY**

The Department of Utah is actively searching for a new adjutant. The position is immediately available, full-time, no benefits. Great job for a dedicated and knowledgeable Legionnaire perhaps retired and looking for supplemental income. Interested, want more information? Send a text to Chuck Stephenson, the new hiring committee chairman at 801-698-7750 or email at [stphnsnc@aol.com](mailto:stphnsnc@aol.com).



## The Last Word



During the 2003 invasion of Iraq, Marine platoon leader Brian Chontosh (then a lieutenant) was riding shotgun in a Humvee as part of a convoy when he spotted a huge berm on the horizon. As they approached it, Chontosh and the line of vehicles came under fire from Iraqi soldiers, who rained down machine gun fire, mortars and grenades, killing a medic damaging a tank.

The prudent move in the minds of most would be a hasty retreat but that wasn't the way Chontosh saw it. He ordered his driver, Cpl. Armand McCormick, to plow right through the berm. With the pedal to the metal and while bullets and other explosives engulfed them, the Humvee slammed through the berm and into a trench on the other side. All the while, Cpl. Thomas Franklin fired the Humvee's 50-caliber machine gun into the Iraqi positions.

As Iraqi soldiers surrounded the vehicle, Chontosh leaped out of it, firing both rifle and pistol simultaneously. Some Iraqis dropped back; others dropped dead as Chontosh continued to fire until his rifle jammed. Undaunted, he grabbed an AK-47 off a dead Iraqi and kept firing until he had emptied the weapon. Then, he grabbed another AK and renewed his onslaught, killing almost two dozen of the enemy by the end of the battle.

Drained physically and mentally, Chontosh went back to his vehicle and his men. One of them spotted an Iraqi soldier playing dead but with a grenade in his hand. There was a scramble for weapons but all of them were empty. Well, leave it to Chontosh who noticed some live M-16 rounds in the dirt. He grabbed one of the bullets, loaded it and dispatched the one playing possum with a single shot to the head, saving his men and himself.

For his courage, Chontosh was awarded the Navy Cross and two Bronze Stars and retired as a Major.

## Some Useful Contacts

Name	Position	Phone	Email
<b>The National American Legion website</b>			www.legion.org
<b>The Department of Utah American Legion website</b>			www.utlegion.org
Terry Schow	National Executive Committeeman	801-644-2058	tschow48@gmail.com
Richard Fisher	Alt. NEC	801-539-1013	rfisher590@centurylink.net
Doug Case	Department Commander	435-790-4782	neutahvet@stratnet.com
Ninzel Rasmuson	Dept. Vice Commander	530-515-7511	Ninzel9@gmail.com
Richard Fisher	Acting Adjutant	801-539-1013	rfisher590@centurylink.net
Greg Popp	Primary Service Officer	801-326-2380	gjpoppp@comcast.net
Silvana Watanabe	Auxiliary President	801-718-6688	silvanaw@comcast.net
Ron Craig	SAL Det. Commander	801-682-1908	racraig15@gmail.com
Paula Stephenson	Area 1 Commander	801-589-2871	stphnsnc@aol.com
Hayes Stromness	Area 2 Commander	801-573-4440	ghayes112@outlook.com
David Jelin	Area 3 Commander	435 609-8765	veterandavidjelin@outlook.com
Marti Bigbie	Area 4 Commander		martibigbie@gmail.com
John McClellan	District 1 Commander	435-279-0074	jmcclellan528@gmail.com
Scott Sparks	District 2 Commander	801-430-6544	blackhawk069@msn.com
Steve Anderson	District 3 Commander	435-513-3202	stevenaandersono@gmail.com
Shiela Heindel	District 4 Commander	801-768-4527	seheindel@gmail.com
David Jelin	District 5 Commander	435-609-8765	district5@utlegion.org
David Simmons	District 6 Commander	435-851-0679	davidssimmons1631@yahoo.com
Vacant	District 7 Commander	-	
Gene Cottrell	District 8 Commander	435-830-9518	genecottrell1967@gmail.com
Auston Kendall	District 9 Commander	435-790-5159	ajkendall01@gmail.com
Kent Hansen	Boys State Director	801-589-7667	kenthansen7@gmail.com
Shiela Heindel	Oratorical Chair	801-768-4527	seheindel@gmail.com
Chuck Stephenson	Baseball	801-444-7189	stphnsnc@aol.com
Dale Crockett	Scouts	801-560-2186	dalescrockett@yahoo.com
John Shepherd	Legion Riders	801-360-6373	pmd400.js@gmail.com
Terry Schow	Volunteer Service Officer	801-644-2058	tschow48@gmail.com
Wayne Jackson	Volunteer Service Officer	435-830-3594	Nolen.Jackson@va.gov