

THE BLUE HATTER



The Official Newsletter of The American Legion Department of Utah

September 2022

VOICES OF VETERANS

utlegion.org

Veteran voices help muscle PACT into law



The Honoring Our Promise to Address Comprehensive Toxics Act, or PACT Act, will ease access to \$280 billion in aid for men and women suffering from cancer, respiratory and cardiovascular conditions, and other illnesses related to their exposure to waste incinerated in open-air pits in Iraq and Afghanistan.

The PACT Act is perhaps the largest health care and benefit expansion in VA history. The full name of the law is The Sergeant First Class (SFC) Heath Robinson Honoring our Promise to Address Comprehensive Toxics (PACT) Act.

Comedian Jon Stewart joins a veterans rally for PACT passage

The PACT Act will bring these changes:

- Expands and extends eligibility for VA health care for Veterans with toxic exposures and Veterans of the Vietnam, Gulf War, and post-9/11 eras
- Adds more than 20 new presumptive conditions for burn pits and other toxic exposures
- Adds more presumptive-exposure locations for Agent Orange and radiation
- Requires VA to provide a toxic exposure screening to every Veteran enrolled in VA health care
- Helps us improve research, staff education, and treatment related to toxic exposures

If you're a Veteran or survivor, you can file claims now to apply for PACT Act-related benefits.

Some members of Congress were sluggish in allowing the bill to pass. Pressure from more than 60 veterans' groups, including The American Legion, were instrumental in helping the unmoving law makers to realize passage.

THE BLUE HATTER IS YOUR NEWSLETTER

Beginning with this issue, we'll do our level best to bring you the most up-to-date news and information about **The American Legion**. We'll also include articles of interest on a variety of subjects, reports from a host of posts, news you can use and even a cartoon for a chuckle or two. We're always eager to hear from you about what you liked, didn't like, would like to see or not see in the newsletter, comment, complaints and/or suggestions. Our door is always open. Please send submissions to: kenthansen7@gmail.com. We're looking forward to hearing from you.

COMMANDER'S CALL

Now is your time. Embrace the Family

Our common bond is the veteran connection. When we ask ourselves, why we're here, the obvious answer is, here is where we're supposed to be. If not us, then who? If not now, when?

It is our time to step forward, not step back. It is our challenge to demand more of ourselves, lean in against the tide of complacency and lethargy, lead by example. Now is the time to be bold and aggressive, stand tall, command your space, and demonstrate those leadership traits and principles inherent in military veterans.

Every veteran that's ever served in uniform, under the Flag of the United State of America deserves our profound respect, dignity, and a committed effort, not only to preserve the memories and incidents of our association in all wars, but to preserve, defend and improve upon the support programs that are so essential. Helping veterans begins by us helping each other, mutual helpfulness. Be the one to reach out, be the one to listen, be the one to take action to help a veteran in need. I believe in the power of numbers.

I'm proud to count you all among the dedicated number of The American Legion Department of Utah members standing up, advocating for hard fought and well-earned benefits, earned many times over by selfless sacrifice. We must not allow the sacrifice to be fore not, the greater our numbers, the harder it is for our benefits to be silently diminished over time. It's not enough for me to thump my chest and say I'm counting on your support, scores of veterans from every era are counting on and in fact depend on us and our support. Keep up the good work! God bless and keep you safe.



Doug Case

DEPARTMENT VICE COMMANDER



We have had a busy year so far! For membership, we now have a Department membership goal of 7,035 for the 2022-2023 year (July 1, 2022 – June 30, 2022). That being said, our work is not over. I encourage all of us to rise to the occasion to meet Department Commander Doug Case's assertive goal of meeting 100% membership in 100 days (July 1, 2022 – October 8, 2022). We still have time to gain strength in our membership this year.

I encourage Post Commanders and Adjutants to reach out to their District Commander and/or Area Commander for any needed assistance with MyLegion.org to process membership. There is very helpful and valuable information for you within MyLegion. If you have challenges with accessing MyLegion, please request assistance from your District or Area Commander.

Ninzel Rasmuson I want to congratulate those posts that have already achieved 50%+ so far. Keep up the great work! You make a difference!

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.

Legion Leaders

Department of Utah Area Commanders

Area 1: Paula Stephenson

Area 3: David Jelin

Area 2: Hayes Stromness

Area 4: Marti Bigbie

Department of Utah District Commanders

District 1: John McClellan

District 6: David Simmons

District 2: Scott Sparks

District 7: Vacant

District 3: Steve Anderson

District 8: Gene Cottrell

District 4: Shiela Heindel

District 9: Austin Kendall

District 5: David Jelin

NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEEMAN

Our longtime Adjutant and Vietnam Veteran Randy Knight passed away and was given an outstanding graveside service by local Legionnaires at the Talmage Cemetery in Duchesne County (thanks PDC Lee Engelbrecht for coordinating the Honor Guard). Randy was also given a Memorial tribute at the State Convention in Price.

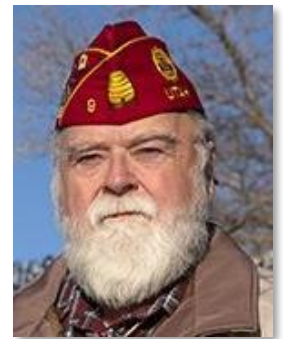
Byron Lewis PDC and former Department Chaplain passed away as well. Both gave years of service to the Legion and will be missed.

Thanks to America First Credit Union for agreeing to cover the bill for hosting Boys State at Weber State University starting next year.

The PACT act has been signed by the president will offer healthcare and other benefits to Veterans exposed to burn pits and additional Agent Orange coverage areas to Vietnam Veterans. Information can be found at: va.gov/pact act.

The Utah Legislature has approved funds for a new Veterans Home in SW Salt Lake County and design/startup costs for a new State Veterans Cemetery in South Ogden. Both will be a year or so out before completion.

The Legion has hired a new Service Officer Gregg Popp gregory.popp@va.gov Office phone: 801-326-2382. (Wayne Jackson and I will continue to assist) Wayne Jackson (Fillmore) nolen.jackson@va.gov 801-326-2381, Terry Schow (Ogden) tschow48@gmail.com 801-644-2058. Encourage your members to contact us if they have Veterans benefits questions.



Terry Schow

From the Adjutant's Desk:



Richard Fisher

With the passing of our Department Adjutant Randy Knight, I was asked by the DEC to be the acting Adjutant for the Department until one was hired. I had worked with Randy when he became Adjutant. I only helped him with a few things. I have found out there is a lot more to the job of Department Adjutant than a Post Adjutant. I am still learning and would like to thank you for your patience.

Many of you don't know that I have spent some time in the hospital and am on oxygen and if I travel have to take a tank with me. For that reason, I am working from home. Virginia and I are working to get checks out for the post members who have paid on line she has sure been a big help. I have been working with members, Posts and District officers helping them with MyLegion. I would encourage all Posts to get on MyLegion. I have used this

program as a Post Adjutant and would like to say it has been a big help for me to work with membership. If I can help anyone, please let me know at adjutant@utlegion.org.

MyLegion.org is one of the most valuable tools in any Legionnaire's tool kit. Setting up an account is easy. Here's how:

MyLegion.org accounts are to be registered with the email address on your individual membership record that National Headquarters has on file. Using a different email address will not provide access to membership details, leadership resources or permissions. Only one email can be registered because all MyLegion.org accounts are individual member accounts.

To register an account:

1. Go to www.MyLegion.org and select "Register."
 2. Enter your email in the Register Window and click "Next." Register with the email address on your membership record.
 3. Enter your last name, first name and check consents and click "Next."
 4. Create your password in the welcome window.
 5. The email entered must be verified. This is done in one of two ways.
 - a. Enter the one-time password (OTP) sent to your email and click "Finish Registration." This is sent after step 2.
 - b. Do not enter OTP and click "Finish Registration." An email will be sent with a link to confirm and then returns to the login page.
 6. Click "My Account" from your MyLegion.org home page to view your membership information. Officers registering for post and squadron access will find that information on the My Account window.
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Kent Hansen
Executive Director

Utah Boys State has undergone some profound changes building upon the strong foundation produced by those who have preceded us, namely Utah Boys State Corporation President Bob Jones and Executive Director Ken Hoyal. Beginning with the Class of 2022, Boys State citizens arrived and began their adventure on Sunday, which provided more time to teach the principles of freedom and democracy. As opposed to writing essays, the citizens wrote bills that were then debated in an exciting legislative session. The always-popular mock trial was updated for a 21st Century audience. The number of carefully selected speakers was reduced. Only those who could teach about the particular level of government that the citizens were learning at the time were invited. For instance, a mayor spoke on city government, a county commissioner on county government and a state senator on state government. The boys learned about Americanism and love of country and flag from Lt. Col. Jay Hess, a former POW.

In addition, everyone on the staff was thoroughly vetted with a background check and child abuse training. And as has become tradition, Boys State citizens earned three hours of college credit and more than \$1 million in scholarships. This means that those posts and high schools that do not participate are depriving the next generation of opportunities to fully understand how to become better citizens.

From now, we are looking to increase our numbers from the approximately 150 boys who attended this year to a goal of 300 for the Class of 2023. If posts throughout the state can catch the vision of this premier American Legion youth program, this is a goal that can easily be met and surpassed.



Next year's program is scheduled to begin June 11-16, 2023 but it's not too soon to start spreading the word to the high schools in your area. Home school students are welcome, too. In fact, this year, Utah Boys State hosted boys from Alaska, Hawaii, Idaho, California, Florida and South Carolina.

For more details, please contact President Doug Case at (435) 790-4782 or Executive Director Kent Hansen at (801) 589-7667.



SPOTLIGHT ON POST 68

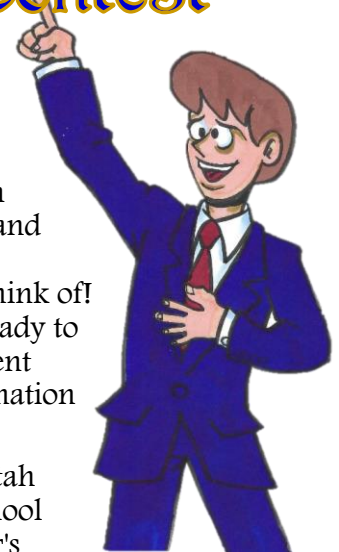
I want to thank some great people for all the time and effort they put into honoring local veterans during the Salem Days Parade, Renelle and Steve McEwan and Julie Barnes and her husband. (Sorry, but old age has caused me to come up with a blank for his name.) We were fed and pampered every step of the way on Saturday, August 13. Homemade breakfast burritos, fresh fruit, salsa, guacamole, juice for a pre-parade breakfast. Water misters, cooling neck wraps, individual snack bags, flags to wave for the parade route along with plenty of bottled water. They are truly great citizens of the community. If you know them tell them thanks from the veterans of the Salem/Spanish Fork area. What a great country!"

Becki Knepper, Post 68 Post Commander, District 4

High School Constitution Oratory Contest

Even though our contests at the Post, District and Department levels will not take place until early next year, it's a good idea to start planning now. Think about going to County/City Fairs and other venues to recruit. Spread the word about the scholarships available. Think about this as a Community Program not just a School Program. Plug the opportunity to learn more about the Constitution and our duty as citizens to uphold it. Start contacting school counselors, debate and speech teachers, FFA teachers, political science teachers, history teachers, your homeschool groups, the charter schools in your area, and anyone else you can think of! Think about those teachers as potential judges, too. After your Post contest, be ready to send your winner to the District Competition in January. This year the Department contest will be March 4, 2023. The Department sends winner's name and information to National. Then in April, the National Scholarship contest takes place.

Start looking for next year's contestants. Tell your community who went from Utah to the National contest and what school they attended. Don't forget to attend School Awards Ceremonies to find contestants. Talk to school personnel about next year's contest. Look at the Chairman's Guide for a checklist to use for the contest. Find lots of great information and videos on how to conduct a contest online at <http://legion.org/oratorical>. Get the rules and topics there as well.



In future editions of **The Blue Hatter**, we hope to include news from The American Legion Auxiliary, the Sons of The American Legion and the Legion Riders.

LEGION BASEBALL



America’s pastime, American Legion form of the regional junior tournament.

Baseball came to Utah August 4 -9, 2022, in the Eight teams hosted by Vernal Post 11.

Participating teams: Vernal UT, (Utah State Champions 2022) Butte MT, Cody Redmond OR.

Ridgeline Wolverines, Millville UT, (Utah State WY, Casper WY, Minico ID, Anchorage AK and

Activities were kicked off with a welcoming barbeque where players, coaches and administrators mingled together, ate well and told stories, some of them about baseball, some about other exploits and some were even true. Once play got underway on Friday August 5, most joking took a backseat as the young men representing their hometowns and states demonstrated why they were in the tournament. From the onset, play was first-rate, every participant personified outstanding good conduct and sportsmanship.

In the end, Team Vernal received the outstanding sportsmanship award and Butte, MT proved to be the dominant team, taking the final game against Idaho, 4 – 0, clinching the regional championship.

**Victorious
Butte
Montana
Baseball
Team**



News You Can Use

For Legionnaires

AUTO RENEW

- Sign up for auto renew. We have fewer than 100,000 people on this easy and efficient service. Let’s try hard at least to double this number!
- The more people who check that box on MyLegion, the fewer renewal notices we have to distribute each year.
- We could save as much as \$1.3 million if we could automate renewals. Imagine what \$1.3 million could do to help our fellow veterans in need.

MYLEGION ACCOUNTS

- It is critical that we move away from paper and take advantage of technology to provide faster service to our members – while saving millions in printing and postage.

A New Brand



Please encourage posts and departments to use the new logos and the brand-approved red, white and blue color scheme.

Details are available at legion.org/brand

- Encourage all posts and members to have an online account on [MyLegion.org](https://www.mylegion.org).
- Some of our corporate partners have expressed interest in providing new benefits and discounts in 2023 but those may only be available via email. Make sure you are opted in to the national email database so you don't miss the fun surprises.

For Prospective Members

NATIONAL ADVOCACY

- The American Legion employs legislative and policy professionals who advocate for veterans each day in Washington, D.C.
- The American Legion has a history of solving the biggest problems facing veterans. This would include something as significant as the GI Bill or fighting for better health care benefits. Today, it means fighting to lower veteran suicide rates.
- Thousands of veterans service officers around the country provide free service to help veterans receive VA benefits. In 2020, The Legion helped secure more than \$14 BILLION in health-care benefits and assistance – all free of charge.
- More than 12,000 posts across the country do the grassroots work of helping local communities and veterans.

MEMBERSHIP MATTERS

- Membership is open to anyone who has served or is serving in the United States Armed Forces.
- **More members = more influence at the local, state and national levels as we fight to improve the lives of all veterans.**
- Volunteering at the local level is optional. We recognize that some people have time to devote to local post activities, but some veterans aren't able to do that at this point in their lives. That's OK.
- On average, membership is only \$45 a year and joining us is as simple as going to [legion.org/join](https://www.legion.org/join). **Remember to select auto renew.**
- Members are eligible for a variety of benefits, such as the potential to get up to \$3,000 in relief funds if your home is damaged during a natural disaster.

 AMERICAN
LEGION

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](https://www.betheone.org).

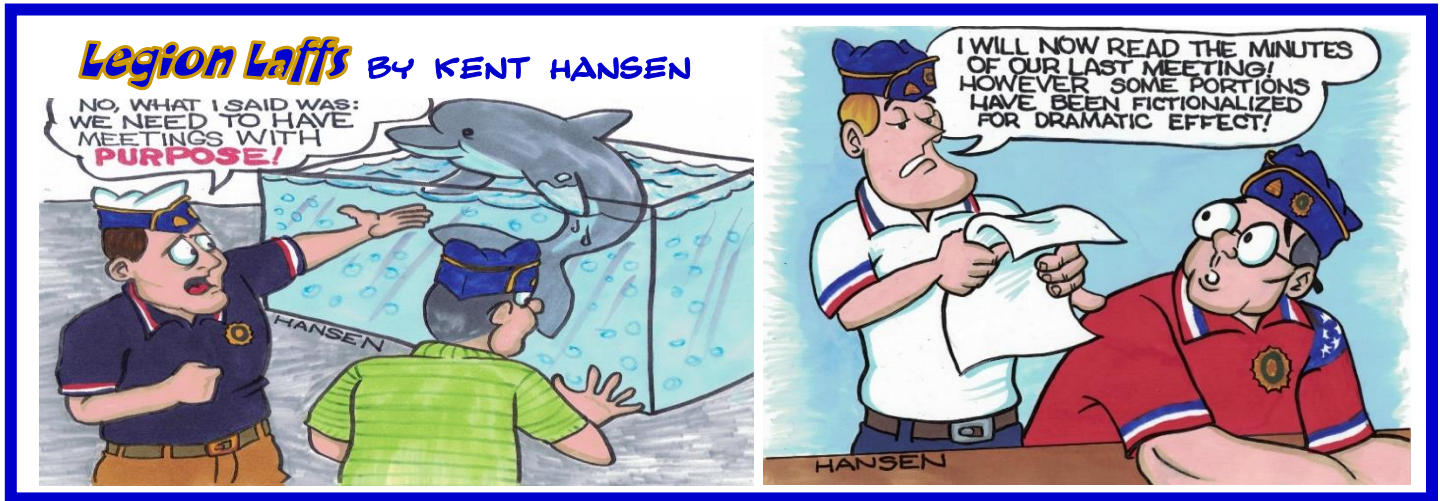
VETERAN

Be the One to:

- **Talk** to others about how you are feeling.
- **Ask** for help when you know you need it.

If you are a veteran in crisis:

- **Call 988** and press 1.
- www.veteranscrisisline.net



The Last Word

Not A Man To Mess With

Everyone in the neighborhood knew it. Each morning, the old man would putter out to the 21-foot flagpole in front of his Virginia home and reverently raise the American flag to the top of the staff and each evening, he would retrieve it, folding it, according the U.S. flag code, into a star-spangled triangle. What could be more right? What could be more American?

Well, it seems that the members of the old man's home owner's association took exception and decided that the pole diminished the neighborhood curb appeal and directed him to take it down. Now, in the history of bad group decisions, this one easily leaps into the top ten.

What the HOA saw was a feeble 90-year-old man. What they didn't see was that this old man was retired Col. Van T. Barfoot, Medal of Honor recipient and veteran of World War II, Korea and Vietnam. So, after refusing to surrender to the demands, the HOA brought in their law firm to enforce compliance. Had the lawyers done their homework, they might have thought better of trying to flex their legal muscle on this tough, old Texan.

Even before the start of WW II, Barfoot joined the Army Infantry and by 1944, he was in Italy taking on a machine gun nest, all alone. His buddies were under a hail of fire and the only way to save them was to hot-foot it through a mine field and destroy the machine gun. So, he did. And since he was there, he took out two more machine guns and captured 17 Nazi prisoners. When three German tanks took exception to Barfoot's actions and attempted to retake the field, he knocked them out, too, justifiably earning him the Medal of Honor. But he would store away the pale blue-ribboned medal to climb back into olive drab to fight in Korea and Vietnam before retiring in 1974.

If mines, machine guns and Nazi tanks didn't scare him, what chance does a suburban HOA have? Barfoot quietly explained to the reporters, "In the time I have left, I plan to fly the flag without interference." Then came the letter of intimidation from the HOA's law firm. He would either remove the flagpole or be sued for violating the neighborhood's restrictive covenants. This time though, Barfoot didn't have to face the enemy alone. His story had hit the media and had gone viral. A powerhouse Virginia law firm offered to take Barfoot's case *pro bono*. Virginia Senator Mark Warner weighed in to help and even his old unit, the 157th Infantry rallied around him.

Everyone loves a good Hollywood happy ending, so here's one. The homeowner's association lost the lawsuit (no surprise) and because of the attention brought on by the story, the Virginia legislature introduced a bill that would prevent HOAs from banning flagpoles unless they could prove they caused harm. Good luck with that. Col. Barfoot quietly continued to raise his precious flag every day until his death in 2012, just two years after his victory in the Battle of the Flag Pole.

