

**Internal Affairs & Membership Division  
Weekly Report to the National Commander  
February 14, 2025  
Matthew Herndon, Director – (317) 630-1406**

**2025 Traditional Membership:**

Membership as of the February 12<sup>th</sup> – target date report is at **84.30%** of the 1,445,882 goal with **1,218,823** current members (new recruits, renewals and encumbered DMS transfers), **nineteen** departments met or exceeded this goal. The 90% target date is March 12, 2025.

**DMS New Member Acquisition:**

The 2025 DMS new member acquisition program has acquired **45,168** new members since July 1. This represents about **45.16%** of the projected 100,000 for 2025.

**New Members by Branch of Service and Conflict:**

This chart shows the branch of service and war era for new members brought in at the post level and DMS for 2025.

<b>Conflict</b>	<b>Conflict Totals</b>	<b>Percentage:</b>	<b>Branch of Service</b>	<b>BOS Totals</b>	<b>Percentage:</b>
GW_TERRORISM	21,060	29.71%	USA	33,337	47.03%
OTHER	19,861	28.02%	USN	13,901	19.61%
VIETNAM	12,971	18.30%	USAF	12,311	17.37%
PERSIAN_GULF	6,664	9.40%	USMC	8,376	11.82%
Unknown	6,395	9.02%	Unknown	1,728	2.44%
LEBANON_GRENADA	2,120	2.99%	USCG	1,114	1.57%
KOREA	849	1.20%	USSF	71	0.10%
PANAMA	785	1.11%	USMM	40	0.06%
WWII	166	0.23%	<b>Total New Members:</b>	<b>70,878</b>	
WWII MM	7	0.01%			
<b>Total New Members:</b>	<b>70,878</b>				

**Multi-Year Membership:**

The multi-year membership option can only be accessed on the national website at [www.legion.org/renew](http://www.legion.org/renew). To date **47,770** members have taken advantage of this option. We encourage departments to put information out in emails and newsletters informing and encouraging members to use this option.

**National Commander LaCoursiere’s Membership Goals:**

Commander LaCoursiere’s focus is on retaining members. He worked with the M&PA Committee on creating the Department Retention Award. His expectation is to engage current members on a regular basis. Whether it is through Buddy Checks or contacting members about their membership dues, members need to feel wanted and valued.

**Retention:**

As an organization, Commander LaCoursiere set a goal of 90% for retention. A column has been added to the daily, weekly, and target date membership reports for each department.

**Our current retention rate is 81.72% at the traditional level. There are 45,428 department headquarters post members who are paid for 2024 that have not renewed for 2025 and 352,371 at the post level and who have not renewed for 2025.**

As we see from above, there is a large pool of members within the posts and departments. There is the capability to immediately identify and start the engagement process to contact the member to renew their membership.

### **Recruiting:**

National Commander LaCoursiere set a goal of 75,000 new traditional members for the 2025 membership year. **To date we have recruited 43,952 new members into the organization at the local post level.**

### **New Member Video:**

Former American Legion Membership & Post Activities Committee Chairman Matt Jabaut hosted a new-member orientation video that provides a clear understanding of the nation's largest veterans organization and what the Legion does to strengthen America.

The video is ideal for new member orientations at local posts or to show to potential members. You can also email it to new members. You can find the video at this link on the Legion's Vimeo channel <https://vimeo.com/americanlegion>.

### **Membership Excellence "Be the One" Dog Tag Coin:**

To qualify one will need to recruit three new members into The American Legion. A new member is defined as any eligible veteran joining for the 2025 membership year who was not a member during the 2024 membership year. You can find the form at:

<https://www.legion.org/about/leadership/national-commander/national-commanders-incentive-program>

### **Sons of The American Legion (SAL)**

National Commander Navarreté attended the Lincoln Pilgrimage and was joined by NVC Ray from Illinois and NVC Monserud from Iowa. Preparations are underway for the Washington Conference and the beginning stages of the Spring meetings.

### **2025 SAL Membership Info.**

**As of: February 13, 2025**

2025 Goal:	<b>401,263</b>
Total Actual Membership:	<b>319,262</b>
% of Year-End Goal:	<b>79.56%</b>
2025 Renewal Percentage:	<b>72.65%</b>
Detachments at 60%:	<b>53</b>
Detachments at 75%:	<b>33</b>

### **The National Emergency Fund (NEF):**

**2025 – 35 grants (29 members/6 posts) totaling \$116,530.64**

California (Wildfires) – 8 members/0 posts

Florida (Hurricanes Helene & Milton) – 21 members/6 posts

There are numerous fires in Southern California, and we have started to receive NEF grants from the Department of California due to these fires. We have been advised that as many as approximately 100 TAL and SAL members may have been affected. Fueled by powerful winds

and dry conditions, a series of ferocious wildfires erupted on Jan. 7 and roared across the Los Angeles area, killing at least 29 people, including some who died trying to prevent the fires from engulfing their homes, and destroying thousands of structures.

- **The Palisades Fire** erupted the morning of Jan. 7 in Pacific Palisades, a Los Angeles neighborhood east of Malibu, as a brush fire. The blaze grew to 23,448 acres before it was declared 100% contained on Friday, according to the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection, known as Cal Fire. Cal Fire said the fire damaged or destroyed more than 6,800 structures.
- **The Eaton Fire** ignited hours after the Palisades Fire near a canyon in the sprawling national forest lands north of downtown Los Angeles. It had exploded to 14,021 acres and was 100% contained Friday, according to Cal Fire. The agency has reported that 10,491 structures were damaged or destroyed in the blaze.
- As firefighters were battling the largest blazes, additional fires broke out in the Los Angeles area. Crews were able to stop the forward spread and contain the blazes.
- Those blazes, which included the Lidia, Archer, Woodley, Sunset, Kenneth, Hurst and Auto fires, have been 100% contained and are no longer considered active, according to Cal Fire. Between them, the fires scorched 2,399 acres.
- Two weeks after the initial fires, the Hughes Fire began near Castaic Lake in northern Los Angeles County on Jan. 22 and quickly grew to over 10,000 acres. It was fully contained Thursday after covering 10,425 acres.

Southern California is expected to continue to face an increased risk of wildfires for a decent chunk of the year as an intensifying drought and episodes of Santa Ana winds combine to threaten more dangerous infernos.

A webinar was conducted by Florida staff after Hurricane Helene and every department was invited. This webinar provided best practices on how the Florida American Legion Disaster Management Team reacts in the aftermath of natural disasters. This meeting was recorded, and you can find it at this link (fast forward to the 24:15 minute mark for the start of the meeting):

[https://us02web.zoom.us/rec/share/R1ZqkXs39Wq9EG65YUnACWVmNOjHcFJBrSNSAGJuaFNIQZ\\_eUZYSRtwaofO3AjHL.iXcq8ZM1JNDKbGcT?startTime=1727886943000](https://us02web.zoom.us/rec/share/R1ZqkXs39Wq9EG65YUnACWVmNOjHcFJBrSNSAGJuaFNIQZ_eUZYSRtwaofO3AjHL.iXcq8ZM1JNDKbGcT?startTime=1727886943000)

They along with NEF and TFA national staff provided important information and resources to attendees and the meeting was recorded and was sent out to all Legion leadership.

The below link is past Illinois Department Adjutant and PNC Marty Conatser on how they set up disaster teams within Illinois following a massive tornado disaster a few years ago and which could help other departments with setting up their own disaster relief teams.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x5ZlecXviD8>

The two links below provide important information about NEF. First is the instructional PowerPoint of how to complete an NEF application:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aYTPVnmrsh0>

This link is to the national website about NEF, grants, and donations:

[Request Assistance | The American Legion](#)

It's been a grim couple of year of deadly hurricanes, wildfires, flooding, tornadoes, and other severe weather events facing our country. We are engaging with those departments affected and

Internal Affairs staff routinely sends out an e-mail to all national and department leadership regarding the NEF Program.

### **Operation Comfort Warriors (OCW):**

Nearly 2,000 servicemembers, Veterans, and their families were directly impacted by Operation Comfort Warriors in 2024, either by participating in an OCW-sponsored event or receiving care at a grant-receiving facility.

#### **2024 – 10 Grants totaling \$89,639.57**

*Completed: 10*

*Grants to servicemembers – 2*

*Grants to facility – 8*

#### **2025 – 1 Grant totaling \$10,000.00**

*Completed: 1*

*Grants to facility - 1*

*Grants pending – 1 (Veterans Creative Arts Festival)*

With the passage of Resolution 20 during last month's Fall Meetings, Operation Comfort Warriors has an updated policy manual to address grant requests. Additionally, the OCW landing pages on the National Website have been updated to reflect the changes that were made. It will be incumbent upon the Requestor to provide the information necessary to facilitate grant approval.

### **Training**

#### **The Power of Effective Communication**

One of the biggest challenges we continue to face is ensuring that information is received—not just sent. We provide incredible training opportunities, but if Legionnaires don't know about them, they can't take advantage. Information doesn't mean anything if it's not reaching the people who need it.

#### **So, how do we fix that?**

- ◆ Keep messages clear and direct – Avoid information overload; get to the point.
- ◆ Share widely – This isn't just for a select few. Every Legionnaire should have access.
- ◆ Personally invite members – A direct ask makes all the difference. People engage when they feel included.

#### **So What?**

By improving communication, we ensure that every Legionnaire has access to the tools they need to lead, grow, and strengthen our organization. Leadership starts with awareness—let's make sure no one misses out on opportunities to serve.

The American Legion provides free training and resources to help members build their knowledge and leadership skills. If you haven't already, check out these opportunities:

✔ **Basic Training** – A self-paced online course that walks through The American Legion's history, structure, programs, and values. *Plus, you get a certificate of completion!*

🔗 [Register for Basic Training](#)

✔ **Training Tuesdays** – Monthly virtual sessions covering leadership, operations, and best practices.

🔗 [Training Tuesdays Information](#)

Take advantage of these resources, share them with others, and invite more Legionnaires to learn and grow with us. Let's stop saying, "I didn't know about that," and start making sure everyone does.