

**Internal Affairs & Membership Division
Weekly Report to the National Commander
February 7, 2025
Matthew Herndon, Director – (317) 630-1406**

2025 Traditional Membership:

Membership as of the February 5th report is at **83.19%** of the 1,445,882 goal with **1,202,846** current members (new recruits, renewals and encumbered DMS transfers). The 85% target date is February 12, 2025, **eight** departments have already met or exceeded this goal.

DMS New Member Acquisition:

The 2025 DMS new member acquisition program has acquired **45,023** new members since July 1. This represents about **44.02%** 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.

Conflict	Conflict Totals	Percentage:	Branch of Service	BOS Totals	Percentage:
GW_TERRORISM	20,423	29.94%	USA	32,049	46.98%
OTHER	18,750	27.49%	USN	13,386	19.62%
VIETNAM	12,594	18.46%	USAF	11,872	17.40%
PERSIAN_GULF	6,478	9.50%	USMC	8,062	11.82%
Unknown	6,156	9.02%	Unknown	1,668	2.45%
LEBANON_GRENADA	2,070	3.03%	USCG	1,074	1.57%
KOREA	814	1.19%	USSF	67	0.10%
PANAMA	767	1.12%	USMM	38	0.06%
WWII	157	0.23%	Total New Members:	68,216	
WWII MM	7	0.01%			
Total New Members:	68,216				

Multi-Year Membership:

The multi-year membership option can only be accessed on the national website at www.legion.org/renew. To date **47,501** 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 80.69% at the traditional level. There are 39,128 department headquarters post members who are paid for 2024 that have not renewed for 2025 and 365,694 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 Mid-Winter conference at the Maryland detachment, where he also participated in the polar plunge, and NVC Ray attended the Mid-Winter conference at the New Mexico detachment. Preparations are underway for the Washington Conference and the beginning stages of the Spring meetings.

2025 SAL Membership Info.

As of: February 6, 2025

2025 Goal:	401,263	
Total Actual Membership:	412,450	
% of Year-End Goal:	77.87%	
2025 Renewal Percentage:	71.22%	
Detachments at 60%:	51	
Detachments at 75%:	27	75% target date Feb 12

The National Emergency Fund (NEF):

2025 – 27 grants (21 members/6 posts) totaling \$94,492.46

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

There are numerous fires in Southern California, and we expect to see many NEF grants in the future 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

They along with NEF and TFA national staff provided important information and resources to attendees and the meeting was recorded and will be sent out to all Legion leadership. We started processing NEF grants for Florida thus far departments.

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 – 9 Grants totaling \$89,639.57

2025 – 1 Grant totaling \$10,000.00

Completed: 10

Grants to servicemembers – 2

Grants to facility – 8

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 2025 National Regional Information Conference (NRIC) in Boston was a resounding success, bringing together 67 Legionnaires from 13 departments for a day of leadership training and collaboration. Attendees engaged in sessions covering legal updates, leadership skills, post operations, and membership retention, all of which received overwhelmingly positive feedback.

Key Highlights

- ✓ High Satisfaction: Overall event rating of 4.79 out of 5
- ✓ Valuable Training: Sessions on Legal Updates, Be The One, and Membership Retention were highly rated, with requests for deeper dives in future events.
- ✓ Networking & Collaboration: Participants appreciated the opportunity to connect, but many suggested adding a structured networking event for stronger engagement.
- ✓ Future Attendance: 27 out of 28 respondents confirmed they would attend another NRIC.

So What?

The strong participation and high ratings confirm the critical need for continued leadership training. To build on this momentum, future NRICs will focus on:

- Practical application for Blue Cap Legionnaires to strengthen grassroots leadership.
- Expanded networking opportunities to foster relationships beyond structured sessions.
- Enhanced legal training, allowing more time for Q&A and real-world applications.

A meeting later this month will explore future NRIC dates and explore ways to refine and expand the program.

NALC Curriculum Updates – Strengthening Servant Leadership

The 2025 NALC Stakeholder Input Survey provided valuable insight into training needs across the organization. Based on member feedback, upcoming curriculum updates will emphasize:

- ✓ **Stronger training for district and county leaders**, including financial management and conflict resolution.
- ✓ **Clearer guidance on post operations** to ensure consistent leadership development.
- ✓ **Expanded mentorship opportunities** to create a stronger pipeline of engaged Legionnaires.

So What?

The feedback reinforces that effective leadership starts at the local level. By implementing these curriculum changes, NALC will better prepare Legionnaires to serve, mentor, and lead within their communities. A meeting will be scheduled soon to implement some of these updates.

Training Tuesday – Be the One: Suicide Prevention with the Columbia Protocol

 **Tuesday, February 25, 2025 | 7:00 PM - 8:30 PM ET**

 [Join the Training](#)

The American Legion remains committed to reducing veteran suicide through the Be the One initiative. This Training Tuesday session will focus on the Columbia Protocol (C-SSRS), an evidence-based tool for suicide risk screening.

What Participants Will Learn:

- ✓ How the Columbia Protocol helps identify suicide risk.
- ✓ How to ask the right questions and take action with confidence.
- ✓ Resources for peer-to-peer support and crisis intervention.

So What?

This training is a direct-action step-in suicide prevention. By equipping members with these skills, we empower them to be proactive, save lives, and support their fellow veterans.

This session is open to all Legionnaires, veterans, caregivers, and mental health advocates—help us spread the word and maximize participation!

21st Century Scholar Report – Strategic Planning Discussion

A strategic planning meeting later this month will evaluate the implementation of the 21st Century Scholar Report. This discussion will help ensure that our long-term goals remain aligned with the needs of the organization and that we continue adapting to modern challenges in leadership and veteran support.

So What?

By reviewing the progress and effectiveness of the strategic plan, we can identify gaps, refine strategies, and ensure The American Legion remains a leader in service and advocacy.

The Power of Effective Communication

One of the biggest challenges we face is ensuring that information is received—not just sent. It's not enough to provide training opportunities if Legionnaires don't know about them.

To improve engagement, we must:

- ◇ **Keep messages clear and direct** – Avoid information overload.
- ◇ **Share widely** – Training is for everyone, not just a select few.
- ◇ **Personally invite members** – A direct ask is often the best way to encourage participation.

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.