Most importantly, thank you all for electing me as your Commander of The American Legion Department of Virginia. It is an honor and I am extremely humble and proud to be your representative.

Our theme this year is **Visibility**! We are proud veterans! We conduct ourselves in a positive, professional manner. What do we do? The four pillars identify our foundation of what we do ... Americanism, Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation, National Security, and Children & Youth. Our programs within these pillars are performed mostly at post level. Therefore, it is important we spread to our respective community the value of who we are and what we do. Our growth is based on this concept.

When others see who we are and what we do, they will want to be part of us. This results in membership growth. **Visibility** is the link. **Be Visible!**

**Membership 2019-2020 Year’s Theme: Visibility**

By A.B. Brown, Department Commander

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**Department Membership Standings (as of Oct 24th)**

- **Western Region**: 66.246%
- **Northern Region**: 64.030%
- **Western Region**: 58.803%
National Commander Bill Oxford Visits Department of Virginia

By Doug Osborn

In an early push during his tenure as National Commander of the American Legion, James W. (Bill) Oxford has been blazing new trails getting out to the military veteran community - throughout the region and specifically Virginia. In a recent visit to the commonwealth, Oxford completed a whirlwind tour visiting six cities throughout Virginia - along with an excursion to Rocky Mount, NC for Hurricane Dorian relief efforts. Throughout his visit though, his message and intent remained consistent: connect with today's veterans in order to build a foundation for the future.

Escorted by A.B. Brown, Commander, Department of Virginia, and a team of American Legion Riders from Post 284, Oxford traveled from Richmond to Bedford, Virginia for a visit to the National D-Day Memorial. Hosted by Post 54, Oxford toured the memorial, and visited Green's Drug Store, home of the "Bedford Boys" memorial. Following a visit with veterans in Lynchburg, Oxford toured Hunter Holmes McGuire VA Medical Center in Richmond. After meeting hospital administrators, Oxford stopped by a session with recovering veterans learning how to properly handle service dogs they've been given by the VA. Late afternoon brought Oxford and the Department’s leadership to Post 284 for a dinner with Colonial Heights Legionnaires. In anticipation of his arrival, the post organized a collection of non-perishables to be delivered to families affected by Hurricane Dorian. Once again escorted by the Legion Riders of Post 284, Commander Oxford delivered countless clothing items, children’s toys, books, and nonperishable food to North Carolinians affected by the hurricane - proving his leadership not just in words, but also his deeds.

James W. (Bill) Oxford was elected National Commander of The American Legion on Aug. 29, 2019, during the organization’s 101st national convention. A veteran of the US Marine Corps, Oxford served in Vietnam during his initial enlistment. Following the war he transferred to the US Army Reserve, where he ultimately retired as a Colonel after more than 34 years of service. A former mayor and city council member of Cajah's Mountain, NC, Oxford is an active volunteer with several organizations. His theme as National Commander of The American Legion is, "A Foundation for the Future," as the organization enters its second century of service.

Get Out the Vote

The American Legion encourages Legionnaires to not only exercise their constitutional responsibility to vote on Election Day, Nov. 5, but also to encourage others to do the same.

To help accomplish this message visit: www.legion.org/vote to download The American Legion’s “Get Out the Vote” brochure.
Greetings American Legion Family,

As we enter The ALA Centennial year, we want to continue the momentum generated during The American Legion Centennial. The Department theme this year is intentionally focused on our 100th Anniversary – 100 Years of Honoring Service.

A major focus this year is to employ multiple avenues of communication to reach more members in order to share program updates, ideas, tools and success stories, to encourage increased engagement in our organization’s mission. We want to maximize the impact of our efforts through collaboration with TAL and SAL members and include our youth members in meaningful ways to promote a foundation for the future of our organizations.

This has been a hallmark year for The American Legion with the signing of the LEGION Act into Law, and this should likewise be a hallmark year for the ALA as it enhances potential for increased ALA membership. We are now able to welcome spouses of women veterans into the ALA under their wives’ membership in the American Legion, which allows greater diversity and further augments membership, and ultimately the strength of our collective voice.

The ALA must remain an action-oriented, mission-driven organization in order to fulfill our pledge and promise to veterans, the military and their families. Without risk there is no possibility of success, so implementation of new ideas in addition to those that have proven effective is encouraged. Our goal is not merely numbers, it is mission delivery, and mission delivery is how we can continue to Honor Service.

As The ALA preamble states, our purpose is “to participate in and contribute to the accomplishment of the aims and purposes of The American Legion”. The American Legion Family is stronger together and our part of the Family stands ready.

For God and Country,

Dr. Lisa Chaplin
President, The American Legion Auxiliary Department of Virginia
HIGH SCHOOL ORATORICAL CONTEST

Eligible participants must be citizens of or lawful permanent residents of the United States. All contestants must be bona fide students herein described as any student under the age of 20 years on the date of the national contest who is presently enrolled in a high school or junior high school (public, parochial, military, private or home school). The curriculum of the school must be considered to be of high school level, commencing with grade 9 and terminating with grade 12. Students must be enrolled in high school or junior high school during the time of participation at any level of The American Legion National High School Oratorical Contest. Contestants must either be legally domiciled within or attend an educational institution within the department that they enter competition. Contestants can enter competition through only one department.

High school students vie for college scholarships awarded by The American Legion by demonstrating their knowledge of the United States Constitution in public speaking contests on local, regional and national levels. For more information contact Program Chairman Greg Mueller mail to: vaoratorical@yahoo.com.

American Legion Baseball 2019 Recap

By James Grenier, Department American Legion Baseball Chair

The 2019 baseball season seemed to end as soon as it started. The season passes quickly. But, the planning and participation of Legionnaires is year round. We had 27 Junior teams and 35 Senior teams participate across 6 leagues. The Department of Virginia continues to field very competitive baseball teams. Many thanks to Post 16 Lynchburg for hosting the Senior tournament and to Post 290 for hosting the Junior tournament.

We continue to emphasize and demand our players and coaches display respect for the Legionnaires, their Post, their communities and their opponents, coaches, and umpires.

The Department of Virginia Baseball Committee will look to improve the level of competitiveness for our teams and to balance the participation across the leagues. We are looking at implementing a few strategic thrusts over the next few years:

Ensuring the best teams advance: teams that play a limited number of games and who play a limited few opponents must compete against the best teams to quality to play in Department tournaments; The six leagues will play in 3 conferences where each team will be required to play a minimum number of games to earn a path to the Department championship through participation in league and conference play.

Seek funding sources: Tournament funding remains a weakness; our baseball program is funded from team registration fees; and our tournament expenses exceed funds available. This puts too much pressure on a single host Post to make up the difference of upwards of $6 to $16 thousand.

Need for greater participation in teams and Posts submitting scholarship packages

Recognition for our best players: Creation of All-Conference and All-State teams.

Involve more Legionnaires and baseball coaches in our planning and in execution of some strategic objectives through Baseball Coach Advisory Committee and Legionnaire stakeholder participation.

Partnership with Virginia Baseball Coaches Association, Baseball Factory, and USA Baseball.

You can find information about the Department of Virginia Baseball Program at our website: www.valegionbaseball.com
Jonathan attended William Monroe High School where he was an honor-roll student all four years and involved in the FFA. Jonathan has volunteered in his community with special needs baseball players as well as coaching and umpiring at the local youth center. He was a four-year varsity baseball starter and two-year captain at William Monroe where he earned all-district (4 years, 2018 PoY), all-conference (3 years), all-region (2 years), and all-state (1 year) as well as all-Central Virginia (2 years) honors and will be continuing his academic and baseball career at Bridgewater College this fall, 2019. Jonathan was also a member of the Albemarle Post 74 Virginia state championship team in 2017 where he was honored with the Sportsmanship Award.

Law and Order/YCLE Sub-Committee Report
By Bill Feasenmyer, Law and Order/YCLE Chair

A recap/update for the completed Youth Cadet Law Enforcement Academy is available on the Department website, however, I had to thank all the posts again that participated in this great program. The posts are getting better at preparing their candidates for the week at the Virginia State Police Training Academy which is critical to the success and enjoyment by those you submit. More information and updates for the 2020 session will hopefully be available at the Department Fall Conference. I will have a limited number of DVD’s covering the 2019 academy so please make plans to attend our meeting to get those details. It is usually at 10am on Saturday, however, check the schedule when it becomes available on the Department website to be sure you do not miss it.

As a Department, our posts do an outstanding job recognizing all first responders. Whether it is pizza and wings on Patriots day or a full blown recognition dinner and awards ceremony, individual posts have been contributing volunteer hours and monetary donations to support and recognize those that are in the line of fire on a routine basis. We sometimes forget that the infamous day that created our recognition of those that bravely went into harms way on 09/11 was also the day that began our more invigorating fight against terrorism and those that would do America harm. Don’t forget our volunteer military who are still taking on that fight across the globe. Patriotism was at its highest immediately after 9/11 and that enthusiasm needs to continue and be reinvigorated every day.

A way to further recognize our first responders is by submitting an application packet for Law Enforcement Officer of the Year and Firefighter/EMT of the Year to the Department. It should reach us by February 15 to qualify for the Department Award. The application and some hints as to the necessary criteria can be found on the Law and Order web page. I encourage you to start now talking to your local agencies as they are a big part of gathering the needed information.

Thank you in advance for all you do to support Americanism and National Security.
**VETERANS EMPLOYMENT AND EDUCATION AWARDS DEADLINE**

To be considered for the National Award, the deadline for submittals to the Veterans Employment and Education Commission in Washington, DC is January 15, of the following year. Example: To be nominated for the 2019 awards the nomination must be in by January 15, 2020.

That being said, all nominations must be received by Department NLT January 4th for consideration.

The National Veterans Employment and Education Commission Awards Forms can be found on the Department of Virginia’s website at: https://valegion.org/organization/veterans-affairs-rehabilitation/veteran-employment-and-education-committee/

For more information please contact the Department’s Veterans Employment and Education Chair Adam Martinez at: a_martinez1@outlook.com.

**SPRING 2020 CONFERENCE REGISTRATION**

The 2020 Spring Conference will be held on February 28 – March 1, 2020 at the Renaissance Portsmouth-Norfolk Waterfront Hotel $105 + $5 per day Parking.

Hotel registration can be completed online at: https://www.marriott.com/hotels/travel/orfpt-renaissance-portsmouth-norfolk-waterfront-hotel/.

*Continue to check back on the Department’s website and Facebook page for updates and Conference Registration information.*

**NALC REPRESENTATIVES SELECTED**

The American Legion National College enhances knowledge and appreciation of The American Legion, and teaches the core values and contributions of the organization, its Auxiliary, Sons of The American Legion and many subordinate programs. The National American Legion College (NALC) prepares Legionnaires for leadership positions in posts, districts, counties, and departments through education, development, and motivation. The curriculum challenges student leaders to think critically and creatively about issues confronting the Legion.

Congratulations to this year’s Department of Virginia selectees:

**Makea Barton**, Post 29; **Guillermo Guillen**, Post 180
Riders from across the Department of Virginia recently completed a two-day event known as the Virginia In-State Legacy Scholarship Run. As you know, the American Legion Riders (ALR) ride to fulfill an obligation to the Veterans who have given their lives, or have been significantly disabled (more than 50%), safeguarding our freedoms. The mission is simple; they ride so the children of those Veterans will be able to secure a college education.

Despite the harsh conditions, the spirits of the riders were buoyed at each stop along the way as they received donations for the cause. While water was essential to keeping the riders hydrated, their biggest boost came from the most unlikely sources. While all the donations received were important, Rider Lester Brewer highlighted one particularly memorable event that occurred at one of the gas stops. After explaining the purpose of the bikes and the ride to some parents at the gas stop, the young man that was with them gave Lester one dollar.

“While the dollar amount pales in comparison to the total collected,” said Lester, “it was most likely significant to the young man who donated.” That dollar was presented to Randy Gunn, ALR Virginia Assistant Director Eastern Region.

On Friday, July 19, 2020 the ride started at 8:00 AM at Highland Springs Post 144 in Sandston, VA. As they passed through Crewe, VA, they stopped for fuel at the Citgo Gas Station on Virginia Avenue. They were greeted by Councilwoman Wendy Bowen who had a proclamation from town Mayor Greg Eanes to be presented to Legionnaire Jim Althouse, Chairman of the Virginia American Legion Riders. The proclamation declared the 19th of July 2019 as American Legion Rider Day in the town of Crewe.

The Riders continued on to American Legion Post 74 in Charlottesville, VA after completing the first 189 miles of the first day. There they were met by many well-wishers and were provided Lunch at the Post. They were greeted by Department of Virginia Commander A.B. Brown.

On Saturday, 20 July they started by travelling to Barnett Memorial Park in Winchester, VA. Here the Riders had a dual wreath laying ceremony at both Korean War Memorial and the POW/MIA Memorial. The wreaths were made and donated by Kim Grobarcik, Adjutant, Post 2 Riders.

After the ceremony at Barnett Memorial Park in Winchester, VA the Riders proceeded to Veteran’s Memorial Park in Harrisonburg, VA (at James Madison University). Here they again held a memorial event presenting a wreath at the Veterans Memorial.

After the Harrisonburg memorial event the Riders headed to Post 156 in Orange, VA. Here they stopped for lunch to get fueled up for the final leg of their journey. They then proceeded to Post 320 in Spotsylvania, VA where the ride officially ended.

A special thanks goes out to the all of the American Legion Riders who participated and made this a success. Special plaques were presented to Highland Springs Posts 144, Charlottesville Post 74, Winchester Post 21, Orange Post 156, and Spotsylvania Post 320 for their superior support of this year’s Virginia In State Legacy Scholarship Run.

There are too many people to list individually who participated in making this such a terrific event. Through the hard efforts of many Legionnaires the Ride was a total success surpassing the $25,000 donated last year for the National American Legion-Legacy Scholarship Fund.

There was a special wreath laying at the Lee County Veterans Memorial Wall in Cumberland Bowl Park on August 21, 2019 that is part of the National American Legion Legacy Scholarship run stopover at Jonesville, VA. At the conclusion of the ceremony the Virginia American Legion Riders group presented a check for the funds raised to the National Commander.
DEPARTMENT ADJUTANT: REFLECTIONS

Recently I was going through some of my older files that I keep memorable letters and speeches in. I came across a speech delivered by Past Department Commander Eddie Dentz. The year was 1997 and the event was for a 4th of July celebration in Danville, VA. Remember this was in 1997 and I am going to take excerpts from his speech to show how relevant they are to today’s climate.

He stated: “To most folks today, “P.C.” stands for personal computer. To me it stands for my Pet Peeve and a creeping danger to our Freedoms – “Political Correctness.” Sensitivity to the feelings of others is a noble aspiration, so long as it doesn’t result in rewriting history, or thrashing some of our most sacred institutions. It is inconceivable that the founding fathers could ever envision for one moment that we would be debating: The burning of the U.S. Flag; Single Sex Marriage; Potential surrender of our sovereignty to the United Nations; (George Washington cautioned us to beware of foreign entanglements) or that the military has become too masculine.

Who in his wildest dreams would have thought in December 1941 that the venerable Smithsonian Institution in its descriptions of the Enola Gay Exhibit would accuse the United States of aggression against Japan? Who, sitting in a 5th grade history class 40 years ago could foresee the day when Christopher Columbus would be depicted as a ruthless marauder preying upon Native Americans, rather than the adventurous discoverer of America. Or a day when students would be subjected to the glorification of a parade of little known social reformers, while revered patriots, inventors and military heroes are virtually ignored in modern textbooks.

When we criticized and sometimes laughed at the effrontery of the late Soviet Union for shamelessly claiming credit for inventing the radio, the automobile, and for all I know sliced bread, we called it “Revisionism.” When we do it, we call it PC.”

PC appears to be humorless. We have lost the ability (or the freedom) to laugh at ourselves. When as a young man, I would tell an Irish joke to my first generation American mother, she would say: “Oh, Edwin, that’s terrible, then turn aside, hide her face with her hand and giggle. I thought it was kind of neat, albeit the pot calling the kettle black, when in basic training a guy named “Beanie” Albacher called me “Dutch.” Today, we might both be sent to sensitivity training for having uttered an ethnic slur. “Sensitivity Training”, in my view, is an arrogant exercise in which a self-anointed superior being endeavors to help me in my woe-ful lack of the finer sensibilities. I find that demeaning and condescending.

Now we are told that we should not give Ds and Fs, fail children regardless of their academic standing or even correct mistakes because to do so destroys self-esteem. The latest is to do away with class rank and spelling bees because they cause stress. For spelling bees, some have substituted scrabble (Honest!). The result, as you might expect, is the dumbing down to the lowest common denominator of our kids.

There is hope, however, on entering the site of our recent American Legion Boys State at Liberty University, I was greeted by a banner proclaiming in big letters: “This is a politically incorrect University.” Maybe one solution to PC is to reduce it to an absurdity.

If God is looking down on this gathering this evening, I hope that he or she has a sense of humor. God Bless You! God Bless our peacekeepers in Bosnia and elsewhere! And God Bless these United States!
AROUND THE DEPARTMENT

Pictured (left to right) Amy Blumenthal, Rick Oertel, Chairman, Department of Virginia Legislative Committee & JLC Representative; Skip Klaas, Commander Post 284; Jim Althouse, Commander, 11th District; and John Woyansky. (Photo by Doug Osborn)

Pictured (Left to Right): Director of MVAMC Tim Cooke, SAL National Commander Clint Bolt, Department Sgt-at-Arms Loretta Lockhart, Terry Stotler, Chief of Voluntary Service at MVAMC and Women’s Outreach Chair Joyce Miller. Visit by SAL National Bolt to drop off items for the veterans baby shower. (Photo by Unknown)

Riders participating in the In-State Legacy Scholarship Ride saluting during presentation of the Wreath Laying Ceremony at Veteran’s Memorial Park in Harrisonburg, VA, on James Madison University. (Photo by Ziggy Levison.)

Then Department Commander Tom Queck congratulating Alex Butler who was awarded the Department of Virginia’s Eagle Scout of the Year for 2019, along with Boy Scout Chair Lowell Badgley during the Department Convention. (Photo by Dave Wallace)

Then Department Commander Tom Queck presenting Corporal David Lee Ramsey from the Buena Vista Police Department the 2019 Department of Virginia Law Enforcement Officer of the Year award along with Department Law and Order Chair Bill Feasenmyer during the Department Convention. (Photo by Dave Wallace)
AROUND THE DEPARTMENT

Post 180 Legionnaire and Top 25 Finalist for Ms. Veteran America, Ashley Gorbulja-Maldonado, embarked on a journey to raise awareness of the fastest growing demographic of homelessness… women veterans, plus, representing Final Salute Inc. in these efforts.

On September 21st, 2019, she led a “Ruck a Mile in Her Boots” fund-raising campaign where she, and her supporters, completed a 10 mile loop on Washington, DC’s National Mall, welcoming four Honor Flights, including the third All-Women’s Veteran Honor Flight out of Philadelphia, PA.

Her efforts raised a total of $865 dollars towards safe and suitable housing for homeless women veterans and their children. To date, Ashley is just shy of $8,000 dollars that will provide 320 days of housing and programing for Final Salute Inc.

(Photo by Robert Maldonado)

PNC Reistad’s Aide Kenneth Knight having some fun and proving he CAN “stay awake” during the National Convention’s Parade.

(Photoby Dave Wallace)

NEC Mike Mitrione providing direction to the Department of Virginia participants for the National Convention Parade in Indianapolis, Indiana.

(Photoby Dave Wallace)

On September 1st, the American Legion Auxiliary changed its membership eligibility wording from "wife" to "spouse" allowing males to join the Auxiliary for the first time ever.

Nate Fontaine, became the first male member of Lovettsville American Legion Auxiliary Unit 1836! What an amazing moment, not only for their Unit, but for their Legion Family as a whole. Congrats to Nate and to all four of their new members who are pictured above.

(Photoby Lizzy Fontaine)

Department Membership Chair John Ward addresses the “Visibility” theme to the 2019-2020 Membership Committee and District representatives at Department Headquarters in August.

(Photoby Dave Wallace)
If you are interested in joining the Virginia American Legion Media Association (VALMA), please reach out to Department Media and Communications Chair at:
David.f.wallace09@gmail.com

VALMA Applications will be available during the Fall Conference at the Media and Communications table.

VALMA will be holding elections for 2019-2020 officers and 2020 VALMA Media Awards during the Media and Communications Meeting at Fall Conference.

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**Thank You for Your Service**

**Past National Commander Brett Reistad!!!**

I wish to express my thanks and the thanks of all the Virginia Legionnaires and Virginia Legion Family members for your contributions to our great organization this past year.

You served with great distinction and represented all Veterans in a most commendable way. I know this was a year that you will never forget and the year that your Virginia Family will fondly remember as they supported your fundraising projects, the many hospitality rooms that were totally amazing and presented at the various functions where a tasteful presentation was needed.

Welcome home Brett!!

For God and Country,

**Dale Chapman**

Adjutant, Department of Virginia