The Insider

American Legion Department of Illinois News

FALL/WINTER 2026







AMERICAN LEGION
DEPARTMENT OF ILLINOIS

MEMBERSHIP REPORT

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 30, 2026

TOP 5 DIVISIONS

RANKED BY % OF LAST YEAR'S TOTAL

Division	Commander	% of Last Year
3	JEFFERY R. KOSOWSKI	68.58%
4	BILL REED	66.59%
5	GARY J. FRAVEL	65.01%
2	WALDON L. GIBBS	63.31%
1	BEVERLY A. FITCH	61.93%

SUMMARY

643	28	33	63.93%
Total Posts	Posts Not Reporting	Posts Reached Goal	National Percentage

WILLARD W. ERICKSON SR
Department Sr. Vice Commander

CELESTE N. LATHAM
Department Commander

National Goal: 53,000

This Year Total = All Cards Received plus Downloaded PUFL Renews
New = New Members
% of Last Year Total / Last Year Total
Reporting: 10/30/26 12:53

Unit	Commander	Goal	This Year's Total	New	% of Goal	2910 Transfer	Net Change
17 - 4	CARROLL E. CARSON	2,372	1,753	26	73.90%	3	1,753
15 - 3	KEVIN W. JOHNSON	1,985	1,432	46	72.14%	4	1,432
9 - 1	JOSEFINA FRANCES	2,022	1,440	26	71.22%	7	1,440
16 - 3	DAN L. FRANK	2,397	1,654	23	69.00%	5	1,654
8 - 1	WALTER F. KANE	1,892	1,270	15	67.12%	4	1,270
23 - 5	DUDLEY W. MADEN	2,769	1,854	17	66.96%	3	1,854
18 - 4	SEAN E. MCNAMARA	2,473	1,653	27	66.84%	4	1,653
20 - 3	NORMAN W. FLOWERS JR	1,497	991	14	66.20%	1	991
22 - 5	DOUG C. THOMPSON	3,307	2,175	35	65.77%	10	2,175
14 - 3	LESLIE D. ARBUCKLE	1,546	1,015	19	65.65%	2	1,015
24 - 5	RICHARD T. DUNCAN	1,159	754	8	65.06%	3	754
13 - 2	KOREY R. ZIGLER	2,142	1,391	29	64.94%	6	1,391
10 - 2	DONALD R. CASTELLA	2,042	1,326	29	64.94%	6	1,326
12 - 2	JOSEPH D. KOTALIK	3,896	2,506	47	64.32%	3	2,506
19 - 4	ROBIN J. VANDIVER	3,255	2,075	38	63.75%	5	2,075
21 - 4	JEFFREY M. REGAN	2,105	1,315	15	62.47%	4	1,315
11 - 2	PATRICK M. MCLEOD	6,898	4,259	86	61.74%	9	4,259
25 - 5	GARY K. REYNOLDS	1,761	1,065	13	60.48%	1	1,065
4 - 1	ROBERT W. CLEARY	1,000	577	4	57.70%	0	577
5 - 1	EUGENE P. WEAVER	1,000	533	13	53.30%	2	533
7 - 1	PETER C. FARACI	1,005	532	4	52.94%	0	532
3 - 1	DERRICK D. STINSON SR	1,300	528	7	40.62%	2	528
2 - 1	CHEVONNE WOODARD	1,000	377	7	37.70%	4	377
	District Totals:	50,823	32,475	548	63.90%	88	32,475
	Post 2910 Totals:	1,966	1,409	2	71.67%		
	State Totals:	52,789	33,884	550	64.19%	88	



Celeste Latham

Department Commander

As we begin a new Legion year, we have an opportunity to reflect on the impact of our organization and the difference that Legionnaires make every day across Illinois.

My theme for this year is "Anchors Hold. Wings Rise. Faith Leads."

Anchors Hold reminds us to stay grounded in the values that have guided The American Legion for more than a century: service, patriotism, advocacy, and commitment to veterans and their families.

Wings Rise reminds us that we must continue moving forward—developing leaders, strengthening posts, growing our programs, and creating opportunities to serve.

Faith Leads reminds us to believe in our mission, in one another, and in the positive impact we can make in the lives of others.

During the past several weeks, I have seen that impact firsthand.

I had the privilege of participating in a ceremony honoring the Hello Girls, the bilingual telephone operators who answered our nation's call during World War I. Although they served alongside America's military forces, they spent years fighting for the recognition they deserved. The American Legion played an important role in helping secure that recognition, demonstrating our long-standing commitment to ensuring that all who served are remembered and honored. Their story reminds us that advocacy is not just something we do today—it is part of who we are.

I also had the honor of presenting a disaster assistance check to a Legion member who lost a home during the recent tornadoes. In moments of crisis, The American Legion steps forward to support veterans and communities in need. It was a powerful reminder that our organization is not just a network of posts; it is a network of people who care about one another.

At the Illinois American Legion Baseball Championship, young athletes demonstrated teamwork, sportsmanship, and leadership while competing at the highest level. Programs like Legion Baseball do more than support youth athletics—they help build confidence, character, and the future leaders of our communities. I was honored to present them with their awards along with State Auxiliary President Linda.

Most recently, I laid a wreath in honor of President Dwight D Eisenhower, at his home in Salina, Kansas. Seeing other departments, districts, and posts come together to honor our history and promote Americanism brings hope and promise for the future.

While these experiences were very different, they all demonstrated the same thing: The American Legion making a difference.

Whether we are advocating for the recognition of veterans, providing assistance during difficult times, investing in youth, supporting our communities, or mentoring the next generation of leaders, we are fulfilling the promise of service that defines our organization.

As we move forward together, let us continue strengthening our posts, supporting meaningful programs, growing the Legion Family, and finding new ways to serve. The future of The American Legion is not built by one person or one post. It is built by dedicated Legionnaires working together to make a difference every day.

When we remain grounded in our values, reach for new opportunities, and believe in the mission before us, there is no limit to what we can accomplish.

Anchors Hold. Wings Rise. Faith Leads.

For God, Country, and Family, Celeste Latham Department Commander The American Legion, Department of Illinois



W. Wayne Erickson

Department Sr. Vice Commander

My fellow comrade Legionnaires,

Thank you for allowing me to serve as your Department Sr. Vice Commander this membership year. Let us go forth under Commander Celeste's leadership and have an outstanding and fun year.

We carry a membership card that enables us to participate in the greatest programs available through any Veterans Service Organization. The card we carry lets us serve our community, state and nation, children and youth, along with serving our veterans. That card is our American Legion membership card. Your American Legion membership card is like a passport to new memories if you will. It enables you to visit American Legion posts in other cities, towns and states - even other countries - to make new friends; to meet other veterans.

If all of us who carry this card would make an effort to conduct a "Buddy Check" on a comrade we haven't seen in a while, we might discover someone who isn't doing as well as we'd hoped. Perhaps our post could offer some assistance.

If each of us could reach out to just one member who has fallen through the cracks over the past few years and encourage them to renew their membership, while also ensuring our current members remain active, we would be in pretty good shape.

RETENTION is just as important as recruitment. We certainly need new members, but we cannot afford to lose the ones we already have.

TRAINING – Consider signing up for "Training Tuesdays" on National's website and also be on the lookout for district and division or post training opportunities. This will enhance your knowledge of The American Legion and you might find that you will enjoy it.

"Be The One" is an important part of our American Legion. It relates to suicide awareness and mental wellbeing. There is training at your disposal for that as well. The "Columbia Protocol" is available through national at certain times. You can register for the online course and it only takes about an hour and a half to complete.

The Department of Illinois should lead the way. Let us be the department that shows the other 54 departments how it's done!

Anchors hold, wings rise, faith leads!

Willard Wayne Erickson

Sr Vice Commander, Dept. of IL





Linda Iberg

Department President

Hello everyone!

October brought the fall forums for each Division. Wonderful attendance at the forums and as your President enjoyed meeting and seeing everyone. Thank you all for attending and bringing your questions and concerns. I am hoping you went home with a few new ideas for your Units!

November brought Election Day on November 3. Hoping you all voted!! I was an election judge in my county. I am sure many of you volunteer for the same in your locations. We can continue to help our Veterans throughout the year by registering for the Grassroots Action /Voter's Voice. An online option that comes weekly and brings updates on the bills regarding benefits for our veterans! Please check this out and sign up for weekly updates! More information on this on our website under Legislative.

The Auxiliary is proud to announce we have a new Unit in Naperville. There are photos in this issue on the Charter presentation! Congratulations Naperville Unit 43 and President Mary Ellen Hollis! On another note, please keep your members dues turned in and current. This will keep them current for Auxiliary benefits. ALAMIS is an excellent option to handle your Unit online and dues can be paid online. More information on this under Membership on our website.

Thank you for invite to your installations, district & division meetings, quarter auctions, and Veteran's Day events. I enjoyed attending and being a part of your unit! I am seeing the world – the world dfllinois!!! The southern part of Illinois is having the "The Haven Jamboree", November 20-22. Many of you attended this year and in the past. The Egyptian Past Commanders Club and the Egyptian Past Presidents Cub thank you for coming and sponsoring the Haven Veterans Retreat on Crab Orchard Lake between Marion and Carbondale, IL. This area is called "Little Egypt".

Every day we give thanks for the blessings bestowed upon us. However, Thanksgiving Day in November is a special day to give thanks and celebrate with family and friends. I wish you all many blessings and a wonderful year ahead. Enjoy your time with family and fiends and remember your Legion family with "buddy checks".

"Brave Hearts, Strong Families, a Blue-Ribbon Celebration of Service" reach out with kindness and your support!! Happy Thanksgiving!

AMERICAN LEGION AUXILIARY
Illini Girls State

The American Legion Auxiliary Illini Girls State committee extends its deepest thanks to the American Legion Posts for the donations throughout the year. The contributions help empower the young women of Illinois to become responsible and confident leaders. The ALA Illini Girls State committee truly appreciates your commitment to our mission of fostering patriotism and civic education. We are looking forward to a great session in 2027!



John Nemanich

Detachment Commander

Greetings from the SAL Detachment of Illinois to the Legion Department of Illinois members.

As we move forward into this Legion year promoting and organizing our various programs. We want to care for and honor our remarkable men and women, who have served in the United States Armed Services. We reflect on their courage, resilience and dedication.

It is important to remember that a veteran's service does not end when they return home. The transition from military service to civilian life can be challenging. Many veterans carry the physical and emotional scars of their service time and need our help.

We need to support our veterans and their families; through mental health challenges, healthcare, educational opportunities and housing. If we love our freedom, let's continue to work hard at our American Legion programs and fundraisers.

A task we sometimes forget is we need to work at membership to keep our great organization functioning. We need to retain our membership, along with keeping members involved. As a final idea, let's work on recruiting new and younger members.

On several occasions I have mentioned, my theme for this year is "Climb on Board". It is more than a slogan; it is an invitation. The theme is a reminder that every member of the American Legion Family has a place, a purpose and a responsibility. Remember action is supporting, volunteering, mentoring, recruiting, and stepping forward to lead when leadership is needed.

So, let's roll up our sleeves and get to work!

May God bless the USA and the American Legion Family!



District & Division Meeting Dates

American Legion Department of Illinois | 2026-2027

DATE	DISTRICT / DIVISION	TIME	VENUE / DETAILS
Nov. 4	1st Division	7:30 PM	17423 67th Court
Nov. 18	7th District	7:30 PM	Morton Grove Post 134; 6144 Dempster Street
Nov. 18	9th District	7:30 PM	Palatine Post 690; 122 W. Palatine Road, Palatine, IL 60067
Nov. 20	8th District	7:00 PM	Edward Schultz Post 697; 18255 Grant Street
Dec. 12	8th District	TBD	Holiday Hop; Post 398, 17034 Page Street, Hazel Crest, IL
Dec. 13	9th District	7:00 PM	Holiday meeting; Franklin Park Post 974, 9757 Pacific, Franklin Park, IL 60131
Jan. 17	25th District	TBD	DuQuoin Post 647
Jan. 20	7th District	7:30 PM	Morton Grove Post 134; 6144 Dempster Street, Morton Grove, IL 60053
Jan. 27	9th District	7:30 PM	Schiller Park Post 104; 4501 N. 25th St., Schiller Park, IL 60176
Jan. 28	8th District	7:00 PM	Post 474; 3539 W. 214th Street, Matteson, IL 60443
Feb. 3	1st Division	7:30 PM	Morton Grove Post 134; 6144 Dempster Street
Feb. 7	21st District	TBD	Legion Post 1922, Springfield
Feb. 17	7th District	7:30 PM	Hellenic Post 343 at Morton Grove Post 134; 6144 Dempster Street
Feb. 21	17th District	TBD	Eureka Post 466
Feb. 24	9th District	7:30 PM	Americanism; Billy Caldwell Post 806, 9757 Pacific, Franklin Park, IL 60131
Feb. 25	8th District	7:00 PM	Post 1160; 10739 S. Ridgeland Ave.
Mar. 7	18th District	TBD	Location TBD
Mar. 13	3rd Division	Lunch noon; meeting 1 PM	Spring meeting; Dunlap Post 1078
Mar. 21	4th Division	TBD	Danville Post 210
Mar. 21	15th District	Lunch noon; meeting to follow	Post 749; 749 Henderson Rd., Knoxville, IL 61448
Mar. 21	16th District	Lunch noon; meeting 1 PM	Post 125; 1549 W. Peru St., Princeton, IL 61356
Mar. 21	25th District	TBD	Benton Post 280
Mar. 24	9th District	7:30 PM	Post Everlasting; Mount Prospect Post 525, 601 N. Main St., Mt. Prospect, IL 60056; Moose Lodge
Apr. 7	1st Division	7:30 PM	Franklin Park Post 974; 9757 Pacific Avenue, Franklin Park, IL 60131
Apr. 11	21st District	TBD	Post 1922, Springfield
Apr. 21	7th District	7:30 PM	Evanston Post 42; 1030 Central Street, Evanston, IL 60201
Apr. 22	8th District	7:00 PM	Post 398; 17034 Page Street, Hazel Crest, IL
Apr. 25	17th District	TBD	Gibson City Post 568
Apr. 28	9th District	7:30 PM	Howard Rohde Post 888; 241 E. North Ave., Northlake, IL 60164

District & Division Meeting Dates

American Legion Department of Illinois | 2026-2027

DATE	DISTRICT / DIVISION	TIME	VENUE / DETAILS
May. 16	18th District	TBD	Watseka Post 23
May. 23	16th District	Lunch noon; meeting 1 PM	Post 1276; 31473 American Legion Rd., Deer Creek, IL 61733
May. 26	9th District	7:30 PM	Merle Guild Post 208; 121 N. Douglas Ave., Arlington Heights, IL 60004
May. 29	4th Division	TBD	Rail Splitters Dinner; Taylorville Post 73
May. 30	4th Division	TBD	Taylorville Post 73
Jun. 5	1st Division	9:00 AM	Evergreen Park Post 854; 9701 S. Kedzie Avenue, Evergreen Park, IL 60805
Jun. 5	3rd Division	Meeting 10 AM; lunch noon	Source labels as spring meeting; Mason City Post 496
Jun. 12	25th District	TBD	Prairie du Rocher Post 622
Jun. 16	7th District	7:30 PM	Lincolnwood Post 1226; 4170 Morse Avenue, Lincolnwood, IL 60712
Jun. 23	9th District	7:30 PM	Portage Park Post 183; TBD, awaiting confirmation from Veterans Home
Jun. 24	8th District	7:00 PM	Location TBD
Jul. 19	16th District	Lunch noon; meeting 1 PM	Post 323; 303 Main St., Henry, IL 61537
Jul. 25	3rd Division	Lunch noon; meeting 1 PM	Organizational meeting; Aledo Post 121
Jul. 26	15th District	10 AM; lunch follows	Quincy Veterans Home
Aug. 27	8th District	7:00 PM	2427 Grove Street

MARK YOUR CALENDAR

NOVEMBER

1	**Utica Parade**
11	**Veterans Day — Office closed** Piatt County Parade Monticello
13	**Chicago Military Ball** Alsip
15–20	**National American** Legion College — Indy
20–22	**Haven Jamboree / EPCC** Marion
26–27	**Office closed** Thanksgiving

DECEMBER

5	**Big 4 Meeting** HQ
12	**SAL DEC** HQ
24	**Office closed** Christmas Eve
25	**Office closed** Christmas Day
28–31	**Headquarters office closed**



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89th ANNUAL

HAVEN JAMBOREE

November 20–22, 2026 | Marion, Illinois

Egyptian Past Commanders ' Club

Sponsored by the
EGYPTIAN PAST COMMANDERS AND PAST PRESIDENT'S CLUBS

PLEASE NOTE: WEEKEND LOCATIONS HAVE CHANGED

There will be some changes in the locations of the weekend activities. The Haven will be closed from September 1, 2026, through September 1, 2027, due to major work being done on Highway 13, which runs in front of The Haven.

LODGING & RESERVATIONS

We will again enjoy accommodations at the Country Inn and Suites, 1306 Halfway Road, Marion, IL, 62959. Please make your own reservations by calling 1-618-997-2444. Be sure to mention The American Legion block of rooms coded AMERICAN LEGION HAVEN JAMBOREE for the weekend of 11/20 through 11/22/2026. Your reservations must be received by October 19, 2026. The rate for the rooms will be: standard king $110.00 plus tax.

FRIDAY / NOVEMBER 20

1:00 P.M. Tour of the Marion Veterans Administration Medical Center. (possible limit in attendees)

5:00–8:00 P.M. Steak Fry at the Marion Post 147, 11720 Longstreet Rd., Marion. COST $20.00 per person. Due to large turnout for the steak fry, we appreciate your patience and consideration in seating and serving.

SATURDAY / NOVEMBER 21

5:00–6:30 P.M. Cocktail Hour (Courtesy 5th Div. Am. Leg.)
Country Inn & Suites

7:00 P.M. Buffet Style Banquet at the Knights of Columbus Hall, 1601 W. White St., Marion. The Menu will be: Pork Loin, Chicken Au Vin, Mashed Potatoes, Caesar Salad, Vegetable Medley, rolls w/butter, dessert (cheesecake), coffee, tea, water. Directions to the Knights of Columbus Hall will be available at hotel. Cost: $35.00 a person. Cash bar available.

SUNDAY / NOVEMBER 22

9:00 A.M. Egyptian Past Presidents Club Meeting, Country Inn and Suites
9:30 A.M. Annual Meeting of the Egyptian Past Commanders Club at Marion Legion Post 147

SUPPORT THE HAVEN

Raffle, donations & reservation forms

The E.P. C.C. has as its main responsibility, the support and maintenance of THE HAVEN, located on beautiful Crab Orchard Lake, Route #13, Carbondale, Illinois. This is an important phase of the rehabilitation work in the 5th Division. Our main sources of income are: Donations, Annual Dues, Annual Post Per Capita Assessment, Annual Jamboree Raffle, Special Projects, and Poppy Money.

JAMBOREE RAFFLE & DONATIONS

The operation of THE HAVEN is no small undertaking. With your help, the E.P.C.C. has been able to maintain THE HAVEN since 1950. Participation in the Annual Jamboree Raffle will help support THE HAVEN for another year. Please assist by purchasing or selling the enclosed raffle tickets. We will gladly mail extra tickets! Please mail stubs and money to:

William J. Flanagan, Secretary/Treasurer, 409 East Oak Street, New Baden, IL 62265.
If not received by me in the mail by 11/13/2026, please bring them with you.

IMPORTANT PAYMENT INSTRUCTIONS

Make one check for Past Commanders dues, steak fry, banquet and raffle tickets payable to: **THE EGYPTIAN PAST COMMANDERS CLUB.**

Checks for Past Presidents dues payable to: **EGYPTIAN PAST PRESIDENTS CLUB.**

PAST PRESIDENTS

Individual Membership Renewal

Dues: **$5.00 per year**
Detach & mail to: Judy Zimmerman
5531 Oak Street, Highland, IL 62249

Name _____
Dist. _____ Unit _____
Address _____
_____

PAST COMMANDERS

Individual Membership Renewal

Dues: **$5.00 per year**
Detach & mail to: William Flanagan
409 E. Oak, New Baden, IL 62265

Name _____
Dist. ____ Post ____ Squadron _____
Address _____
_____

STEAK FRY RESERVATIONS / FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 20

5–8 P.M. • $20 per person • Reservations due 11/13/2026
Detach & mail to: William Flanagan, 409 E. Oak, New Baden, IL 62265

Enclosed is my check for $_____ Steak reservations _____
Name _____

BANQUET RESERVATIONS / SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 21

Knights of Columbus Hall, Marion • $35 per person • Reservations due 11/13/2026
Detach & mail to: William Flanagan, 409 E. Oak, New Baden, IL 62265
Tickets may be picked up at the door. Please include all names for reservations.

Enclosed is my check for $_____ for the E.P.C.C. Buffet Banquet.
Name(s) _____

93rd Annual National American Legion Pilgrimage

To the Tomb of President Abraham Lincoln

February 11–12, 2027

The American Legion, Springfield Post 32 — Home of & Originator of the National American Legion Pilgrimage

HEADQUARTERS HOTEL

President Abraham Lincoln DoubleTree Hotel
701 East Adams Street (at 7th & Adams) • Springfield, Illinois 62701 • Phone: 217-544-8800
Room Rate: $121.00 + tax per night, single or double occupancy, including parking.
To Reserve Your Room:

- **By Phone:** Call 217-544-8800 and press 0. You **MUST** identify yourself as part of "The American Legion Lincoln Pilgrimage" to receive the conference rate.
- **Online (Preferred — room auto-linked to Pilgrimage):** https://www.hilton.com/en/attend-my-event/americanlegionpilgrimage/

Reservation Deadline: Monday, January 20, 2027. After this date, room availability at the conference rate cannot be guaranteed.

EVENT SCHEDULE

Thursday, FEBRUARY 11, 2027		
Time	**Event**	**Location / Details**
4:30–6:00 PM	**American Legion Family Leadership Reception**	Headquarters Hotel — Keynote: Thom Skelley, SAL National Commander
4:00 PM–1:00 AM	**FREE Continuous Shuttle Service**	Between DoubleTree Hotel and American Legion Post 32
4:00–9:00 PM	**Dinner at Post 32 (Open House)**	American Legion Post 32 — See Dinner Menu on reverse
4:00 PM–1:00 AM	**Open House at Post 32**	American Legion Post 32
8:00 PM–Midnight	**Free Juke Box**	American Legion Post 32

Friday, FEBRUARY 12, 2027		
Time	**Event**	**Location / Details**
8:00 AM	**American Legion Family Breakfast**	Headquarters Hotel — Keynote: Coral May Grout, National President, American Legion Auxiliary — $35.00/person
10:00 AM	**Pilgrimage to the Tomb**	Depart for Oak Ridge Cemetery
10:30 AM	**Placing of Wreaths & Tomb Ceremony**	Mr. Lincoln's Tomb, Oak Ridge Cemetery
12:30 PM	**Lincoln Commemoration Luncheon**	Headquarters Hotel — Keynote: Jay Bowen, National Commander, The American Legion — $40.00/person

POST 32 OPEN HOUSE DINNER MENU

Feb. 11, 2027 | 4:00–9:00 PM | Served by Our Mess Hall Restaurant

Category	Items
Dinner	½ Fried Chicken ¼ Fried Chicken
Served with	Choice of Potato, Vegetable and Roll. Salads are also available
Also Available	½ lb. Livers or Gizzards ¼ lb. Hamburger with chips or fries.

Dinner Reservations Suggested.
Call 217-523-3415 or email spfldpost32@outlook.com

For questions about the Post 32 Open House, American Legion Family Breakfast, or Lincoln Commemoration Luncheon, please contact Pilgrimage General Chairman, Jim Peters by phone at 217-416-1533 or email at jpeters.ilsal@yahool.com

BREAKFAST & LUNCHEON TICKET RESERVATION FORM

Deadline: January 30, 2027. No tickets will be mailed. Specify quantity for both events.

TICKET ORDER FORM — 93rd Annual National American Legion Pilgrimage

American Legion Family Breakfast (Fri., Feb. 12 | 8:00 AM)
# of Tickets: _____ @ $35.00 each = $_____
Lincoln Commemoration Luncheon (Fri., Feb. 12 | 12:30 PM)
# of Tickets: _____ @ $40.00 each = $_____
TOTAL ENCLOSED: $_____

Name: _____

Address: _____

City, State, Zip: _____

Department: _____

Title: _____

Make check payable to: **American Legion Post 32**
Mail form & check to:
American Legion Springfield Post 32
Attn: Ticket Chair, Barb Lush
1120 Sangamon Avenue, Springfield, IL 62702

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WHAT YOU'LL LEARN

- ★ Leadership Development
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- ★ Required Annual Forms
- ★ Award Opportunities
- ★ Open Q&A Session

TRAINING DATES & LOCATIONS

December 5, 2026 — Des Plaines Post 36

December 6, 2026 — Sterling Post 296

December 19, 2026 — Bartonville Post 979

December 20, 2026 — Springfield Post 32

January 9, 2027 — Mattoon Post 88

January 10, 2027 — Benton Post 280

EVENT INFORMATION

10:00 AM - 2:00 PM | Lunch Provided | All Regadrons Encouraged to Send At Least One Representative

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Scan the QR Code

Or Register Online:

https://makeform.ai/f/IZjhTXLs

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DON'T MISS IMPORTANT *Legion Updates!*



WE'RE CHANGING THE WAY WE STAY CONNECTED.

The American Legion Department of Illinois will be using email more frequently to share important **information** directly with our members, Posts, Districts, and Divisions.

YOU'LL RECEIVE INFORMATION ABOUT:

- Department News & Announcements
- Programs & Events
- Membership Updates
- Veterans Resources & Benefits
- Sweepstakes & Fundraising Information
- Deadlines, Reminders & More

NOT SEEING OUR EMAILS?

Because these messages are sent through our email communication system, your email provider may occasionally send them to your Spam, Junk, Promotions, or Other folder.

HELP MAKE SURE YOU DON'T MISS ANYTHING:

1 CHECK YOUR SPAM OR JUNK FOLDER

Look for messages from **joshua.thielen@americanlegiondeptofil.ccsend.com** or the American Legion Department of Illinois.

2 MARK OUR MESSAGES AS "NOT SPAM" OR "NOT JUNK"

This helps teach your email provider that you want to receive Department communications.

3 ADD US TO YOUR CONTACTS OR SAFE SENDER LIST

Saving the **Department** as a trusted sender can help future messages reach your inbox.

SEE SOMETHING FROM US? DON'T SEND IT TO THE SPAM PILE!

Important Department information will increasingly be delivered by email, so keep an eye on your inbox—and help us stay connected.

AMERICAN LEGION
DEPARTMENT OF ILLINOIS
Veterans Strengthening America

Following major reforms, over 300K new Veterans enroll in VA healthcare in 2026

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

October 21, 2026 10:00 am

WASHINGTON — More than 300,000 new Veterans have enrolled in VA healthcare so far in 2026, a testament to the landmark improvements VA has made during the second Trump Administration.

Under President Trump, VA is improving its outreach to Veterans who aren't enrolled in VA care and benefits, which can save Veterans and their families thousands of dollars each year. This effort has already led to more than 1.8 million completed or scheduled medical appointments with Veterans who joined in 2026. That includes more than 420,000 mental health appointments and more than 16,000 emergency care visits.

"Under the leadership of President Trump, VA is improving its service to Veterans at a record pace, and the more than 300,000 new Veterans who have enrolled in VA healthcare this year underscore the success of our reforms," said **VA Secretary Doug Collins**. "From expanding access to care, to reducing backlogs and wait times, and rebuilding VA facilities, President Trump's VA is putting Veterans first in all that we do."

Veterans can learn more about VA here or call VA 24/7 at 800-698-2411. or call VA 24/7 at 800-698-2411.

Under the second Trump Administration, VA is putting Veterans first by relentlessly focusing on customer service and convenience. We're making VA benefits better, faster and easier to use than ever before:

- VA has opened 43 new healthcare clinics since January 2025, expanding access for Veterans around the country.
- The backlog of Veterans waiting for VA benefits is down more than 70% since Jan. 20, 2025, after it increased 24% during the Biden Administration.
- VA's average disability claims processing time is down 46% since Jan. 20, 2025.
- VA completed a record high 82,083,918 direct care appointments in FY 2025, up 4.1% from FY 2024.
- VA completed a record high 59,989,662 community care appointments in FY 2025, up 12% from FY 2024.
- VA approved nearly $5 billion in FY 2026 to modernize, repair and improve health care facilities, the largest non-recurring maintenance investment in VA's history.
- Since Jan. 20, 2025, VA has offered Veterans more than 3.4 million appointments outside of normal operating hours. These early-morning, evening, and weekend appointments are giving Veterans more timely and convenient options for care.
- VA permanently housed 51,936 homeless Veterans across the country in FY25, the highest total in seven years.



BLINDED VETERANS ASSOCIATION
SERVING BLINDED VETERANS SINCE WORLD WAR II

Meta
IN PARTNERSHIP WITH META

FREE RAY-BAN META AI GLASSES

FOR EVERY BLIND VETERAN IN AMERICA

Meta has announced that it is donating Ray-Ban Meta AI glasses to 130,000 blinded veterans across the country.

This donation will be paired with training created by BVA to ensure that all recipients can use these glasses to their fullest potential.



READ DOCUMENTS

IDENTIFY OBJECTS

LIVE MORE INDEPENDENTLY

Ray-Ban Meta AI glasses are a transformative technology for blind and low-vision veterans — helping them read documents, identify objects, and live more independently.



BVA member and Veterans Care Review Coordinator Richard Lane sporting Ray-Ban Meta AI Glasses.

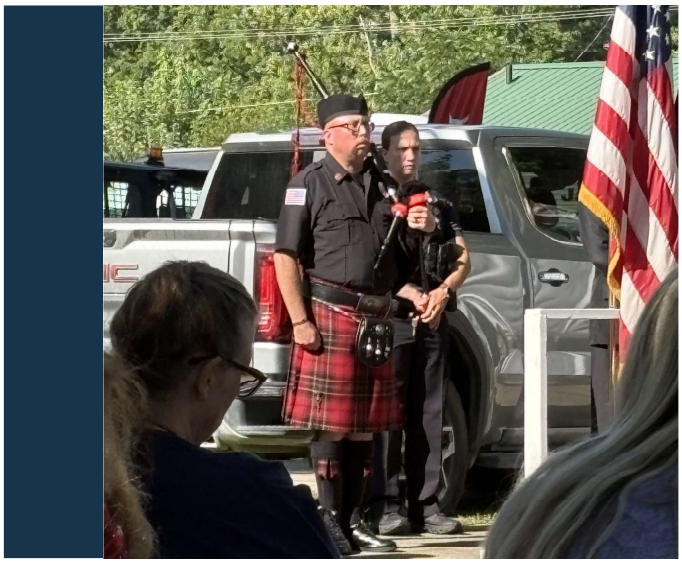
ABOUT THE PROGRAM

BVA, alongside other distribution partners, is proud to partner with Meta to ensure every veteran who receives glasses also gets the hands-on training they need to feel confident using them.

This initiative is one of the many benefits available to BVA members and is designed to support blind and low-vision veterans across the country.

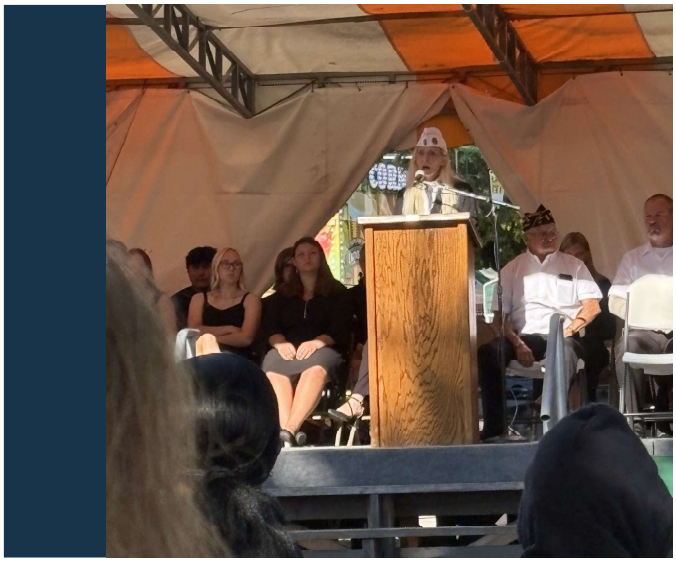
VISIT BVA.ORG/GLASSES/

TO LEARN MORE ABOUT THE RAY-BAN META AI GLASSES PROGRAM.



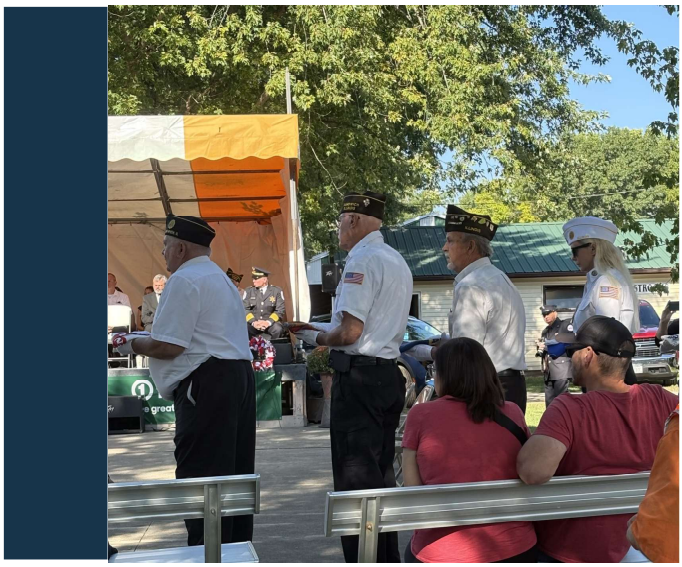
Sandwich, IL remembers September 11

Members of the community gathered in Sandwich, Illinois, for a ceremony honoring the lives lost and forever changed by the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. Local veterans and members of the Color Guard joined the observance, helping ensure the sacrifices of that day—and those who answered the call in the years that followed—are never forgotten.



A community comes together

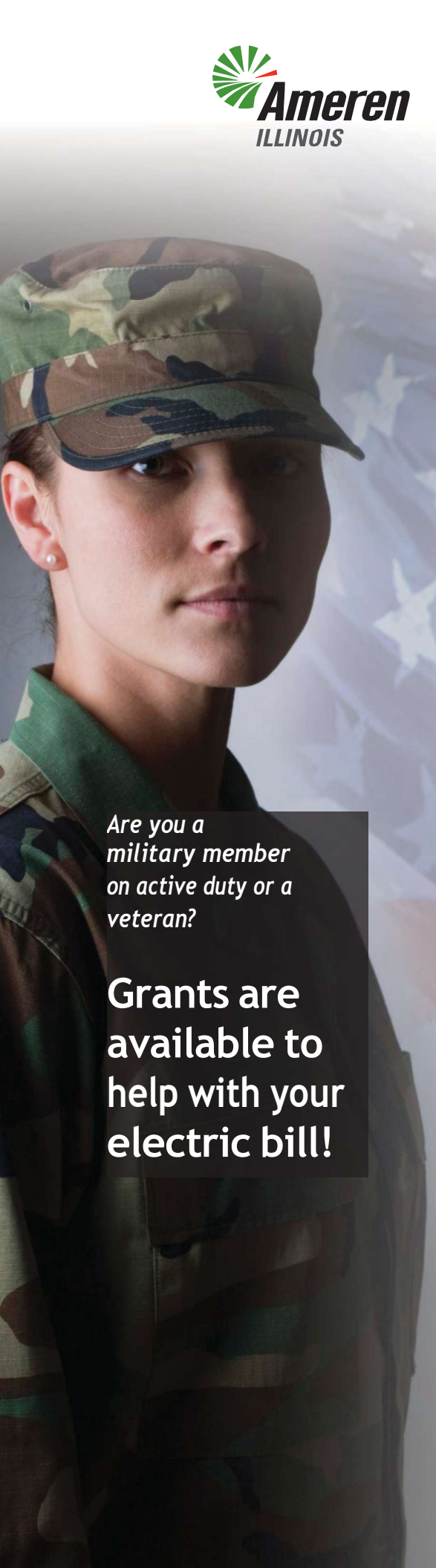
The American Legion Department of Illinois was represented by Department Commander Celeste N. Latham, who attended the observance alongside husband Todd Latham, who serves as Department Sr. Special Aide to Commander, 12th District Finance Officer, Post 181 Commander, and Dekalb County Commander.



We will never forget

More than two decades later, September 11 remains a day to pause, remember and honor. Community ceremonies like the one held in Sandwich carry forward a simple promise: to remember those we lost, recognize those who served and sacrificed, and ensure future generations understand the significance of that day.

Photos submitted by George "Don" Horn, who currently serves as Department Medical Officer, 1st Division Adjutant, and Post 974 Adjutant.



Are you a military member on active duty or a veteran?

Grants are available to help with your electric bill!

The Ameren Illinois Military Support Program:

Serving Those Who Serve Our Country

To help those who serve our country, the Ameren Illinois Military Support (AIMS) program provides energy grants of up to $400 to help pay energy bills for qualifying active members of the military and veterans.

Am I eligible?

You are eligible to receive a grant of up to $400 if you meet the following requirements:

1. You are an active residential Ameren Illinois customer.
2. The Ameren Illinois account is listed in your name or both your name and your spouse's name.
3. The address listed on your Ameren Illinois account is your primary residence.
4. You are a member of the military on active duty or a veteran.

There is a limit of one grant per household per calendar year.

How do I apply for an AIMS grant?

Complete the application form on the back of this flyer and provide the required documentation. You may also download an application at AmerenIllinois.com.

How will I know if my application has been approved?

Ameren Illinois will contact you after your application has been reviewed.

Can funds be applied to a final account?

No, the grant can only be applied to an active account.

Are there other benefits for active-duty servicemembers?

Yes. Eligible active-duty servicemembers will automatically receive additional protections under the Servicemembers Civil Relief Act (SCRA), including access to multiple payment agreements and the waiver of deposits and future late payment fees.

Want to learn more?

Visit **AmerenIllinois.com/assistance**

Call **1.800.755.5000**

FOCUSED ENERGY. For Life.

Ameren ILLINOIS

APPLICATION

Ameren Illinois Military Support (AIMS) Program

To qualify for assistance through the AIMS program, you must be a military member on active-duty or a veteran and have an active Ameren Illinois account. You will be contacted after your application has been reviewed. Only one grant is allowed per household per calendar year.

**Please complete the required fields below:*

*Mark the appropriate box: ☐ Active-Duty ☐ Veteran

*Account Number _____ - _____

*Applicant Name _____

Name listed on the account, if different from above _____

*Address _____ * City _____

*Phone Number __ __ __ - __ __ __ - __ __ __ __

*Email: _____

Can this email address be added to your Ameren Illinois account and used to communicate important account messages? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Mailing Address, if different from above:

Street/P.O.Box: _____

City _____ State _____ Zip Code _____

Directions:

1. Complete this form entirely and make a copy for your records.
2. Active duty military members, please attach one of the following:
   - » A copy of your official proof of service letter **or**
   - » A copy of your current LES (Leave and Earnings Statement). You may mark out any financial information on the statement.
3. Veterans, please include a copy of your Department of Defense 214 (DD-214) form or discharge letter (must be honorably discharged).
4. Send the completed and signed application, along with the documentation noted above, to Ameren Illinois. You may email, fax or mail this information to us, as noted below:

Mailing Address: **Ameren Illinois**
Attn: Energy Assistance A-10
AIMS Program
PO Box 2543
Decatur, IL 62525

Fax: **1.217.424.6496**
Email: ILEnergyAssistanceTeam@Ameren.com

***Signature** _____ **Date** ____ / ____ / ___

By signing this document, I do hereby attest that the information provided is true, accurate, and complete to the best of my knowledge. I understand that any falsification of material will cause the denial of my application for assistance through the AIMS program. I further understand that completion of this application does not guarantee a grant approval from the AIMS program and the program will continue as long as funds are available.

OT 3004

AMERICAN LEGION

DEPARTMENT OF ILLINOIS

Veterans ★ Service ★ Community

Join us for a night of hockey!

DOORS OPEN AT 6PM

VS

Komets

PUCK DROP AT 7PM

BLOOMINGTON BISON
VS
FORT WAYNE COMETS

JANUARY 2, 2027

GROSSINGER MOTORS ARENA - BLOOMINGTON, IL

THE AMERICAN LEGION DEPARTMENT OF ILLINOIS IS THE NONPROFIT OF THE NIGHT

★ ★ ★

COMMANDER CELESTE LATHAM WILL DO THE OFFICIAL PUCK DROP

★

TICKETS $20

CAN BE PURCHASED THROUGH DEPARTMENT HEADQUARTERS

The American Legion Department of Illinois
PO Box 2910
Bloomington, IL 61702
Phone: 309-663-0361
Fax: 309-663-5783
Email: hdq@illegion.org
Web: www.illegion.org

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