Department Commander Allen Connelly
101st Convention Selection for Commander of The American Legion, Department of Indiana

Allen Connelly was elected Department Commander of Indiana state commander by delegates from the 11 districts throughout the state during the 101st annual Indiana American Legion Convention on July 13, 2019 in Indianapolis. The American Legion is comprised of military service veterans who have served honorably during times of conflict in defense of their nation and has been active within Indiana since 1919. The Indiana American Legion has supported veterans from every major conflict since World War I to Iraq and Afghanistan within its membership.

Allen is a 49-year member of LaGrange American Legion Post 215 in the Fourth District where he has served in most all offices at the Post level, including Post Commander in 1999-2000. He is currently serving as Post Service Officer as well as Hoosier Boys State and Flag Education Chairman. He was awarded an Honorary Life Membership by the Post in 2006. At the District level he has served as Public Relations Chairman, Chaplain, Finance Officer, Adjutant, Vice Commander and Commander in 2005-2006. He continues to serve the District as a member of the Finance Committee and the District Advisory Committee.

At the Department level, Allen served as Department Commander in 2011-2012. He most recently served as Chairman of all Four Commissions. He is currently serving as a member of the Strategic Plan Committee and the Centennial Celebration Committee.

Allen gained his eligibility for The American Legion through his honorable active duty service from January 2, 1964 to Dec 11, 1965 in the U.S. Army where he was separated with the rank of Sergeant. At the National level, he has served as a member of the Veterans’ Preference Committee and is currently a member of the Veteran’s Education, Other Benefits and Homelessness Committee. Allen is a member of ANAVETS, the Past District Commander’s Club, a life member of the VFW, as well as an NRA member. He was employed as the Operations Manager of The LaGrange Publishing Company, a commercial printing and newspaper publishing firm, for many years. He is currently, and has been for the past 17 years, the LaGrange County Veterans Service Officer.

Allen has served his community.

By: Rich Brown, Department Membership Chairman

Hoosier Legionnaires can now pre-pay their membership for 10 years for a one-time payment of only $350.00 or just $35.00 per year. This innovative membership program will start accepting applications September 1, 2019 and protects Legionnaires from future dues increases while providing convenience and peace of mind that they won’t see renewal notices for the next decade. Hoosier Legionnaires who have already paid their 2019-2020 membership dues are also eligible to participate in this program by paying a pro-rated payment of $315.00. This Department of Indiana program is purely voluntary for posts – those posts that participate in the 10 Year Long-Term Membership Program on the convention floor to ensure that Hoosier Legionnaires have an intermediate option to prepay their membership between the normal annual payment plan and the national organization’s costly Paid Up For Life (PUFL) program. The 10 Year Long-Term Membership Program provides Hoosier Legionnaires of all ages the peace of mind that their dues are paid for the next decade and a dues increase will have no impact on them. I strongly encourage all Hoosier Legionnaires to consider signing up for this unique membership program when it debuts on Sept. 1.

The advantages to Hoosier Legionnaires are twofold, they can pay a discounted annual rate for membership in The American Legion of only $35.00 per year (average post dues throughout Indiana are $435.00 per year) and take advantage of an opportunity to “set it and forget it” with a one-time payment with no further need to renew their membership for the next decade.

The myriad advantages to participating Hoosier American Legion posts include gaining long-term members (in addition to their PUFL members) which reduces the costs associated with membership retention and the number of members participating.
It is a real honor to have been elected to lead the Department of Indiana this year. We will continue to observe the 100th Anniversary of the founding of this great organization through the Indiana State Commander’s Day, Nov. 11, after which we will embark on the America’s Wall of Honor initiative.

Looking ahead, the first sign of the new year will be the Annual Convention Aug. 22-29, to be held right here in Indianapolis. Convention Chairman Pat Na- man will have a perfect convention that the membership will be proud to attend. The Sunday afternoon parade will be followed by an after-parade party on the Vet- eran’s Mall. We have a unique opportunity to present some of the best names in entertainment. The gallery will be filled with famous entertainers and the entertainment will be better than ever before. It is the first upgrade in many years, and I think the dele- gates of Indiana will be pleased to see the improvements before casting their vote. Alternate NEC Ed and I had attended the Convention and the delegates will be asked to approve as printed. Most of the changes are upgrades to the language and making the document gender neutral. It is the first upgrade in many years, and I think the dele- gates of Indiana will be pleased to see the improvements before casting their vote.

The Legion has many other great youth programs, but none can run without the hard work and dedication of many of our volunteers. We are very grateful to have such great people to help us. I have received word from the National Organization that the Legion Act (Let Everyone Get Involved in Opportunities for National Service) has passed both houses of Congress and awaits the president’s signature. Once the president signs the legis- lation, we will begin to sign up veterans who were not eligible before because their conflict dates were earlier than the prescribed war dates. The legislation will move the deadline for eligibility back to 1945 and will include all hon- ored discharged veterans until Congress determines all armed conflicts are over. Once it re- ceives the president’s signature, we can run without the hard work and dedication of many of our volun- teers and staff. Thanks, one and all.

The spring meetings in May will be another great year. It is such an honor to be your American Legion Auxiliary Commander for various committees. You can join us for the next 100 years. Thanks to my 10th Dis- trict for always supporting me and my Legislative Team. We have worked hard and have reached our number one goal.

The American Legion Aux- iliary is my top priority. It is very important to keep the American Legion strong.

We will continue to observe the 100th Anniversary of the founding of this great organization through the Indiana State Commander’s Day, Nov. 11, after which we will embark on the America’s Wall of Honor initiative.

Greetings to all Hoosier Le- gionnaires! My name is James Martin and I am the new Commander of the Sons of The American Legion Detachment of Indiana. In my first article this year, I would like to tell you a little about myself. I was elected Detachment Commander at the annual Detachment Convention, held July 13, 2019, by the delegates representing 38,000 members of the Sons of The American Legion for the 2019-2020 year. My eligibility is through my grandparent, William Pope (deceased), an Honorably Dis- charged Veteran who served in the U.S. Army from 1941 to 1945. I take pride in being a part of the Indiana’s Wall of Honor and consider it an honor to support our veteran’s families.

I stay extremely active at New Albany Squadron 28, where I have served as Com- mander, finance officer, Mem- bership Chairman and Vice Commander. I have also been active in the Indiana State Detachment office of Commander and Vice Commander several times. On a Detachment level, I’ve served as Membership Chairman and Command Chairman for Americanism, Children and Youth, Public Relations and various commit- tees. For my project this year, I would like to collect donations to make needed upgrades to the Indiana Veterans Home Audio- rium. The Auditorium is where a lot of activity goes on for the residents. It is where we will hold our Memorial day program on May 20, and our Big Bash Bash on Aug. 10.

The American Legion Auxiliary will be spreading the word about membership. We have had some declining years that we need to recoup. Our mem- bership is growing, and we are working hard to reach our goal of 5,000 new members. We need to grow in numbers to help support our veterans.

Thank you to our Veterans that have served and still serve, for your dedication to helping those in need. It is an honor to be a part of this year’s 2019-2020 American Legion Family as your Department President for the 2019-2020 year.

American Legion: It is an honor to have been elected to lead the Department of Indiana this year. We will continue to observe the 100th Anniversary of the founding of this great organization through the Indiana State Commander’s Day, Nov. 11, after which we will embark on the America’s Wall of Honor initiative.

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The Indiana American Legion Legacy Foundation is an innovative and forward-looking approach to perpetuating the programs of The American Legion and ensuring that the purpose for which the foundation was established—that is, to provide financial support to the Indiana American Legion—is placed on a permanent plaque to honor the men and women of the Indiana American Legion and its predecessors. The foundation has a mission statement, bylaws and a unique organizational structure that includes both a mission committee and an executive committee. The foundation also distributes a grant every year to support programs that are consistent with the mission of The American Legion. The foundation is operated as a 501(c)(3) charitable organization by the Indiana American Legion. The foundation is independent of The American Legion and its various departments, but it is aligned with The American Legion in its commitment to supporting the needs of veterans and their families. The foundation operates under the guidance of a board of directors, which is responsible for ensuring that the foundation's activities are consistent with its mission. The foundation also engages in public relations efforts to promote its mission and raise awareness of its activities. The foundation's success depends on the support of veterans, their families, and community members. The foundation is committed to ensuring that veterans and their families continue to receive the benefits of The American Legion's programs and activities.
Hoosier Boys State: “A Week to Change a Lifetime”

By Tim Sproles

A significant legislative victory for The American Legion, President Trump signed a bill July 30 that declares the United States has been in a state of war since Dec. 7, 1941. The American Legion sought the declaration as a way to honor approximately 1,600 U.S. servicemen who were killed or wounded during previously undeclared periods of war.

The American Legion Act (Leg Ev eryone Get Involved in Oppor tunities for National Service Act) also opens the door for approximately 6 million veteran and their family members to eligibility in American Legion and American Legion Auxiliary shall be established from the local, county and state levels. By week's end graduates know more about Indiana's state government than 90 percent of their fellow Hoosiers.

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Hoosier Legion donates to help preserve Ernie Pyle’s legacy

JUDGE ADVOCATE MEMO
from page 4

Throughout the 2018-2019 command year, Past Department Commander, Rodney Strong, campaigned for donations and they rolled in from every corner of the state. On Saturday, Aug. 3, PDC Strong presented the Friends of Ernie Pyle with a check for $39 thousand to go toward the preservation project. Photo by Tim Sproles.

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Cicero American Legion Post hosts “Battle Ride” to benefit OCW Program

In a significant legislative victory for The American Legion, President Trump signed a bill July 30 that declares the United States has been in a state of war since Dec. 7, 1941. The American Legion sought the declaration as a way to honor approximately 1.6 million veterans who were killed or wounded during previously undeclared periods of war.

The American Legion (Leg) Every veteran is entitled to our opportunities for National Service (Act) also opens the door for opportunities for National Service veterans to access American Legion programs and benefits for which they previously had not been eligible.

“Recognizing the service of these wartime veterans is the right thing to do and it is long overdue,” National Commander Brett Reistad said. “The families of those who were killed or wounded during these wartime acts should take pride in knowing that we recognize their sacrifice and service. Moreover, we are proud to welcome any of the six million living veterans from the previously unrecognized periods into our organization and call them ‘Legionnaires.’”

Now that the legislation has been signed, The American Legion’s eligibility criteria immediately changes from seven war eras to two: April 6, 1917, to Nov. 11, 1918, and Dec. 7, 1941 to a time later determined by the federal government. No other restrictions to American Legion membership are changed.

The law’s journey began on Feb. 14 when Sen. Kyrsten Sinema, D-Ariz., introduced S. 504, along with Sen. Thom Tillis, R-N.C. A companion measure, H.R. 1641, was introduced in the House by Reps. Lou Correa, D-Calif., and Ben Cline, R-Va. Reistad expressed gratitude to the bipartisans members of Congress for passing the legislation.

“We are grateful that President Trump fully acknowledged the importance of honoring thousands of honorable but previously ineligible veterans by signing the Legion Act in the White House today – just one week after it passed the House of Representatives,” Reistad said. “In an era of partisan gridlock, Republicans and Democrats in Congress overwhelmingly recognized the importance of allowing thousands of honorable but previously ineligible veterans the right to join the largest and most influential veterans organization in the country.”

Reistad pointed out that existing American Legion membership applications are in the process of being updated but can still be used. “In the meantime, I recommend that prospective Legionnaires and recruiters write ‘LEGION Act’ in the eligibility date section of American Legion membership applications if they fall outside the previous war eras,” Reistad said. “The larger pool of veterans now eligible for The American Legion will open their family members to eligibility in the Sons of the American Legion and American Legion Auxilary as well.”

PHOTOS FROM THE FIELD

Department of Indiana Commander Allen Connely speaking with Governor Holcomb during a ceremonial signing for House Bill 1010 on Monday in the Indiana State Fair. A newly signed law in Indiana will be a big help to military veterans and their spouses by exempting their retirement income and survivors benefits from the state income tax. Photo by John Crosby

A newly signed law in Indiana will be a big help to military veterans and their spouses by exempting their retirement income and survivors benefits from the state income tax. Photo by John Crosby

The Battle Ride started at the Cicero Post and made scheduled stops at Farmcourt Post 273, Franklin Post 469 and the Lapel American Legion Post 212. According to the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, about 20 percent of all the veterans that come to the Hoosier state understand how hard it is to fight an invisible enemy like traumatic brain injury (TBI) or post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). They do a great job setting this up each year and these Riders go all-out.” Photo by Tim Sproles.

Post National Commander of The American Legion, Jim Krutz, spent time meeting with riders during the Battle Ride as he and the Riders out here really understand how hard it is to fight an invisible enemy like traumatic brain injury (TBI) or post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). They do a great job setting this up each year and these Riders go all-out.” Photo by Tim Sproles.

Congratulations to Lowell Post 101 in celebrating their Post Cenntenial. Pictured left to right: Post Commander Pete Habath, Finance Secretary Chester Rybicki, Historian Kenneth Swett, Post Adjutant Dale Taylor, Pastor John Culver, Sergeant-At-Arms John Feredeal, 2nd Vice Commander David Hitchcock and Service Officer Kevin Mathews. Submitted photo.

Indiana veterans will soon no longer have to pay state taxes on their military retirement income. Governor Holcomb held a ceremonial signing for House Bill 1010 on Monday in the Indiana State Fair. According to the non-partisan Legislative Services Agency the exception will reduce state revenue by about $15 million a year. Indiana veterans will soon no longer have to pay state taxes on their military retirement income. Photo by John Crosby

The American Legion program Operation Comfort Warriors, which aims to provide additional comfort items to veterans in need, is proud to welcome any of the six million living veterans from the previously unrecognized periods into our organization and call them ‘Legionnaires.’”

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On June 30, a dedication celebration was held at the Department Headquarters, in Indianapolis to celebrate these achievements with the entire Legion Family and the local community. Photo by Tim Sproles.  

During the ceremony, the Department celebrated a new Department Headquarters sign, unveiling of plaque dedicating the Sons of The American Legion Detachment of Indiana's donation of the headquarters building's flagpole display, newly installed column that feature The American Legion's “Four Pillars,” and the burial of a 25-year time capsule. 

Dzieglowicz said, “When we moved our headquarters to Lawrence, we kept the sign that was left over from when the Lawrence Soccer Club had this building. We simply replaced it with a vinyl sign that said ‘The American Legion Department of Indiana. It just didn’t adequately represent who we are and what we do.’

Dzieglowicz added, “Our entire Hoosier Legion Family played a part in making this happen. It was a huge undertaking, but with the assistance of our family and Department Staff we made this beautiful sign a reality.”

The next celebration was the columns of the building. Each of these repairs columns now are labeled with each of the ‘Four Pillars of The American Legion.’

Commander Rodney Strong, said, “In 1919, The American Legion was founded on the four pillars of democracy, defense, Americanism and Citizenship. They have held the American Legion light for over 100 years. When it came time to make repairs to our columns, the decision was made to put these NEW columns on display on our new columns to act as a daily reminder to Legionnaires, veterans and fellow Hoosiers what The American Legion is all about.”

Commander Strong said, “We are humbled by this recognition and it speaks volumes about what the ‘Four Pillars’ represent for us. It’s a huge honor for Ron to be here to us.”

The display was donated by the Indiana State of The American Legion Detachment when the building was officially opened as the Department’s new headquarters on Sept. 7, 2014. On that day, Posts of The American Legion Detachment Commander Ron Sexton unveiled a plaque dedicating this flag display to the Department.

During his command year of 2014-2015, Ron made this flag display his project. He campaigned across the state and eventually raised enough money to have it purchased and installed.

Commander Strong said, “I hope the plaque will forever show both the support of our American Legion family as well as other items of historical significance. After the final items were placed hand-placed by Past National Commander of The American Legion, Jim Kozaitis, the capsule was sealed and buried outside of the entrance to headquarters. Commander Strong, “I hope this symbol that we dedicated today continues to serve as a beacon to others as to what we are all about.”

The Department time capsule is scheduled to be exhumed on June 30, 2044. 

Dzieglowicz said, “We will allow the Department to not only collect funds through donations, but it will also allow the Department to distribute funds to organizations that conduct programs and activities that the foundation has established to benefit.

This foundation is ‘Your support will allow us to make the needs of our veteran and family a priority for generations to come.”

The American Legion Department of Indiana has comprised of more than 77,000 military service for entitled Veterans Affairs veterans who have served honorably during times of conflict in defense of our country and that has been active more than 85 miles within Indiana since 1919. From this request to The Indiana American Legion, the Department has represented regardless of membership.
The American Legion Department of Indiana recently held the 101st Annual Department Convention. July 11 through 14 at the Marriott East Hotel in Indianapolis. The Department’s State Convention is held annually for Legionnaires from across the state to discuss and vote on Legion business, recognize Legionnaires and local heroes for their service and conduct elections for new department officers.

The Department held the first of three general sessions Friday, where many state leaders brought greetings to our Hoosier Legionnaires including U.S. Senator Todd Young, DAV James Vice-Commander, Bob Camagey and AMVETS Vice-Chair Roger Williams.

The newly appointed Director of Veterans’ Affairs, Dennis Wimer also addressed the convention, where he ended his remarks by presenting Commander Strong with a certificate from the Governor Eric Holcomb naming him a Distinquished Hoosier.

The Department Convention is also a time to honor local heroes in the fields of military service, law enforcement, first responders, emergency medical services, and educators every year in communities across Indiana.

In the Military Personnel of the Year category, the Indiana National Guard’s Sergeant First Class Thomas Bunnell, who was sponsored by Fortville Post 215 in the 4th District won the top post in the entire state. Chief Warrant Officer Jonathan Cherry and State Representative Bob Butz, sponsored by Broad Ripple Post 91 in the 8th District won for the Active Duty Fighter of the Year. Officer Kyle Butz, sponsored by Broad Ripple Post 3 in the 11th District, was named Law Enforcement Officer of the Year.

In the Educators of the Year Category, Connie Ingersoll, sponsored by Vevay Post 185 in the 9th District, was named the seventh and eighth grade winner, and James Wiltshire, sponsored by Lake Station Post 100 in the 1st District, was named the High School educator of the year.

The Department also honored National Executive Committee Representative Bob Cherry and State Representative Karie Mace with Distinquished Service Awards for going above and beyond to work with Indiana Veteran Service Organizations to benefit our state’s Veterin community. The Department took the opportunity to honor some of their own. 84 Legionnaires from Bloomington Post 18, with March 1, 2019 as the “Recruiter of the Year.”

The Department recognized four outstanding Legionnaires with the highest honor the Department can bestow, the Distinguished Service Award. Past Department Commander, Allen Connelly, who was sponsored by Fortville Post 991 in the 10th District brought home the National Guard award and United States Coast Guard Chief Warrant Officer Jonathan Tracy, sponsored by Floyd Knobs Post 42 in the 9th District won for the Active Duty Duty award.

The Department also honors for their service from around the state for their service to their local community. Rodney Snyder, who was sponsored by Hamilton Post 467 in the 4th District, was named the EMS of the Year, Chief Scott Olofson, sponsored by Speedway Post 500 in the 11th District, was named Firefighter of the Year. Officer Kyle Butz, sponsored by Broad Rip phle Post 3 in the 11th District, was named Law Enforcement Officer of the Year.

The American Legion Bu cy Brandon in Bloomington Post 18 finished the year with 1,269 members, which made them the top post in the entire state. Bryce Hallett from Post 64 in the 18th District, Ron Patterson from Daviess Post 446, Laurie Bowman from Post 152 in the 10th District, and Post Dep Chief James B. May from Bloomington Post 18 all re- ceived the Gold Brigade Membersh ip Award for recruiting at least 90 new members into The American Legion.

Richard Schwartz from Brownsburg Post 331 in the 11th District took home top honors as the “Recruiter of the Year.” The Department also recog- nized four outstanding Legionnaires with the highest honor the Department can bestow, the Distinguished Service Award. Past Department Commander, James May, a 47-year member from Bloomington Post 18, Step Short, a 41-year member from Lapel Post 212 in the 5th District, Charles Martin, a 54- year member from Wauah Post 60 in the 3rd District, and Jerry Maune, a 50-year mem- ber from St. Louis Post 664 in the 10th District all received the award for their service to both The American Legion and our Hoosier Veteran community.

After the awards and schol- arships were presented, it was time to elect the Department officers for the next command year. This year, the Department elected Dick Nicholas as the Department sergeant-at-arms, Erin Komanski and Dick Sexton as Northern Vice- Commanders, Bill Parks and Steve Barnett as Southern Vice Commanders. Ed Trice was re-elected as Alternate National Executive Committeeman, and Jerry Jordan was re-elected as National Executive Committee.