



Department Executive Committee
Meeting Minutes
May 19, 2024



The Post Convention Department Executive Committee meeting was held on May 19, 2024, at the Doubletree Hotel, in Columbia, SC.

Dept Cmdr Bruce Donegan	
Dept Adjutant Michael Strauss	D-13 Cmdr Rick Gibson
NEC Joe Lysaght	D-14 Cmdr Terry Weeks
Imm PDC Jim Kvam	D-15 Cmdr Richard Dorman
Dept 1st Vice Cmdr Jim Rabon	D-17 Cmdr Jerome Childs
Dept 2 nd Vice Cmdr Jack Lonergan	Dept Sgt-at-Arms Kevin Joy
Dept 3 rd Vice Cmdr Russ Cantrell	Dept Asst Sgt-at-Arms Brian Colip
Dept 4 th Vice Cmdr Patricia Dandy	PDC Jim Jarvis
Department Chaplain Clarence Shuford	PDC John Britt
D-1 Cmdr Darlene Walton	PDC Bob Scherer
D-4 Cmdr Lou Morse	Alt NEC Elect Jim Hawk
D-6 Cmdr Bill Simpson	
D-7 Cmdr John Galloway	
D-8 Cmdr Harry Malpass	
D-9 Cmdr John Comins	
D-11 Cmdr Peter St. Onge	
D-12 Cmdr Annie Hough-Everage	

Absent:

Dept J/A Cody Mitchell	D-10 Cmdr Doug Dilleshaw
Dept Asst J/A Stephen Lewis	D-16 Cmdr Jim Defrehn
Alt NEC James Holland	D-20 Cmdr David Mills
D-2 Cmdr Dana Richardson	D-18 Cmdr Larry Pouncy
D-5 Cmdr Bonita Wells	D-19 Cmdr Charlie Strickland
D-3 Cmdr Kevin Brown	

Also Present:

M. May, Dept Exec. Director

Department Commander, Bruce Donegan, opened the meeting and called Chaplain Shuford for the invocation. Commander Donegan read Resolution 288, led the Pledge of Allegiance and the Preamble to The American Legion and asked for a motion to dispense with the reading of the past DEC minutes. **A motion was made by D-6 Cmdr Bill Simpson, seconded by Vice Cmdr Patricia Dandy. All present voted in favor of the motion to dispense with the reading of the minutes. Commander Donegan called on Adjutant Strauss for the roll call. Adjutant Strauss called the roll and announced that a quorum was in place.**

Dept Cmdr Donegan: Old business. VEAC, PDC Jarvis, for a short report (laughter).

PDC Jarvis: I just want to throw out some numbers to you. We just had our third, second one in Columbia, VEAC, back in March, and it was a big success. And mainly due to all the volunteers that we had. We exceeded anything we expected. We've already got on the calendar for next year in March in Columbia, for the 20th to the 22nd of March, that's the schedule for the next one. Set-up will be on the 19th, that Wednesday. I'm still trying to get one, and I need your assistance on this one. I'm still trying to get one out of Florence, kind of what we did up in Spartanburg. Spartanburg was about 355 people, we expected a little bit more, but somewhere in the neighborhood of 400, maybe 500. I need volunteer coordinators; I need one down in the low country. I want to do one at the Armory in Mt. Pleasant so I'm going to need help on that. And the big thing is the coordinator, so if you have any inclination, please put this out to your posts so I can see...I'm talking maybe 25, 30 a day. And they don't have to do it all three days or anything like that, so I just need help doing it. It's very difficult to go up to Florence and down in the low country when I'm in Columbia, so I need the help of the District Commanders and the Vices on that so we can see what we can work out. Couple numbers that we threw out, 1132 veterans took a clipboard, they took a piece of paper and sat down. We actually saw through the process, just under a thousand, that made it all the way through the process. We had, we left out, we're still trying to get this next March, is the C & P people. We had the vans there, we saw 162 people went through that, but it was almost 500 exams, some of those people had two or three different exams done. And they gave us about 25 on the spot rating decisions, were made based on that C & P. Just to kind of give you an idea, these things, well it surprised me somewhat. The race and ethnicity of this last one in March was 70% black or African American and 28% white and the rest were just partials of other things. We found, it was interesting, that word of mouth was 40%. They claim 40% was word of mouth, and that's what we expected. Veterans Affairs emails was only 18% and Veterans Organizations was only 19%, so those are a couple numbers that we need to try and bring up. We had six different states that came in. North Carolina, the ones I can think off the top of my head, Tennessee was another one, but there were five different states and pretty much five different counties were there. Richland County had 32%, Lexington County had 12% and there was Sumter, Kershaw and Florence, so it was kind of an interesting thing there. And the ones that I was looking for, when they left, not every one of them now, did a survey. But 80.5% of the people surveyed said they had a trust in the VA, which I found very interesting. I was wondering where that number would lie at. They had 80.5 % had a trust in the VA. And uh...most of what I got was thank you. There was some complaints, you're always going have that. We got inundated, when I walked in there Thursday morning and there was already a line, I said oh no. And normally were having six, seven eight come through at a time. Well, these were 20 coming in at a time, and before 11:00 was there, we had almost every seat full. So, we worked it. We had some come back the next day, on Friday morning. Then we had some on Saturday that hadn't been seen, I think it was 77 of them, and Regional invited them to come to the office on Monday. Well, 55 of them showed up on that, so, it was effective. I think we're on the right track, but I still, like I said, need help. I'd like to get it up to into the Florence area and into the low country area. That's my report. Any questions?

Vice Cmdr Lonergan: Are you going to put those stats in an email?

PDC Jarvis: As soon as I get firm ones. Most of what I just told you has changed at least three times in the last month, but I'm working on that. Thank you.

Dept Cmdr Donegan: Thank you Mr. Jarvis. On to new business, committee appointments.
Adjutant Strauss:

Department Adjutant Strauss read all Commander Donegan's appointments for the 2024-2025 year, the SAL 2024-2025 Officers and the ALR Director and Assistant Director.

Vice Cmdr Rabon: I make a motion that we accept the appointments and elections as listed.

Vice Cmdr Lonergan: I second the motion.

Dept Adj Strauss: We have a motion and a second, all in favor say aye? Any opposed? The ayes have it.

Dept Adj Strauss: I call on Rich Dorman and Darlene Walton for the membership report?

D-1 Cmdr Walton: Ok, as many of you've heard, membership is the life blood of the American Legion. Without it, we cannot grow, we cannot move forward with all the programs that we want to do. We had a very good year, but we know with all the increase now in dues, it's going to be interesting to see how those numbers will stay with us. One little thing that I would like to bring up at this time, when you talk with your members in your post, whatever, about the increase, remind them our state of the economy right now, everything, including in our homes, there's been an increase. And my post commander personally told our members, we cannot procrastinate. You've got utility bills to pay, you've got rent to pay, you've got house payments to make. Well, the thing of it is, it's the same way with the Legion. The Legion needs the money to keep itself going. So tell them when they're looking at their dues with their increase, don't procrastinate, let's get them in. But I want to thank everyone for all of their assistance this past year. Like I said, we've done well. I think we can do better. Like I said, and one of the things that was brought up was the fact of the competition. Let's see who can out do the next one coming in. And I'm proud to say that Mr. Dorman is going to be taking over as the Chairman. I will be there to help with the reports, but I'm still there if you have questions. If I don't know, I know who to send you to. Thank you.

Membership Chairman Dorman: Good morning. One of the things that I wanted to talk about, first I'll just key on something that you were talking about, about the dues going up. I belong to two professional organizations through where I work in my profession. And for each one of those, I pay \$130.00 a year, which is pretty expensive. But when we look at how much we're actually paying at the post level, in most cases it's a lot less than that. So I agree with Darlene, you know, come up with some good positives as to why the dues had to go up. Everybody should realize it's because we're paying the same thing at home or when we go out to dinner and things like that. But yesterday, Commander Donegan and I, we were talking between sessions, and the things that we were talking about, we were both in agreement with. And even without knowing what we were both going to talk about, we were talking about renewals. And I didn't know it until this morning that I guess were both in a Honda.

So, when we have our DEC meetings and when we go around and we talk about membership, one of the things that I want to talk about, especially in the beginning is go ahead and encourage our Legionnaires to renew early. We know that after December, it starts getting a little tough, because if they pay in December their dues are going to come back around again. And they need to be paid, you know, about six months later, depending on when they sign up. So let's encourage them to go ahead and when one July hits, that's the time that they can start paying. Or actually, they can start paying for next year now. But let's encourage them. You need to give them reasons why, some good reasons why. And we know, as leaders sitting in

this room, we don't want to wait 'til December and begin scrambling to try to hit our goals. Now, National's going to give us goals to hit and we're going to establish our own goals here in SC to hit. Just from a logical standpoint, if we can encourage our folks to pay early, wouldn't it be great if by the time we hit October that we were already 80 or 90% renewals? And.. and..and that's where we need to start at, really. Because these folks are already in the Legion, we need to just encourage them to just go ahead and renew. And, and then of course we're going to have to do some recruiting, of...of new folks out there. So what do we have, what did I hear, is it 500,000 in the state of South Carolina? So, there's a lot of veterans that's out there. We just have to do the work, which is basically just inviting them to come to our meetings. And we all know that our brother-in-law, we've asked him four or five times, you know, so we just to overcome that. But still, none-the-less, if we can start now and encourage those folks to renew early, it's going to help, it's going to help us out in the long run. And we're going to have some that's going to do that, because we ask them to and we're going to give them the reasons why. Darlene, how many you'd say has already renewed?

D-1 Cmdr Walton: I've already got 14.

Membership Chairman Dorman: 14's that's already renewed thus far, ok? But we're going to have those that, some of us out there are a little bit hard-headed, you know. And you know, I've paid my dues every year in November and I'm not going to pay them until November but, you know, if we continue to talk and maybe, you know, some peer pressure, eventually, hopefully they'll come around. Well, yeh, yeh, you renew in November, you have been for 20 years, how about this year, you renew in October, maybe next year in September. So if we bring the membership to change their habits, because a lot of it's habits, isn't it. So whenever we have our meetings, they'll be some homework for you to take away, right? We've all got to roll up our sleeves and do some work. But we'll give you some homework and we'll give you the whys and some tools for your toolbox to take back. So when you have your District meetings or go to the post meetings, once you disseminate that information to the post Cmdrs and Adjutants, they can go ahead and roll it out at their Ex-Com meetings and, you know, we'll communicate, communicate, communicate, disseminate on down so that we get it to the membership during their monthly meetings. And yeh, I know some don't meet on a monthly basis, I have one that meets quarterly, I have one they really didn't have meetings and that was one of the ones that went under this year, this past year. But on the other hand I've got one, I'd only been invited to their post one time, and apparently they wasn't in a Honda, because I got there and they said, we'll, we're going to let you eat but after that we're going to ask you to leave. I ate and left, and probably three weeks ago, they reached out to Maggie May, she reached out to me and we got a meeting tomorrow night, Mike and I've got a meeting with them to talk about revitalizing this post. So, at any rate, and like Chaplain Mullinax, you just plant seeds out there, you never know when they're going to come up. So that's what we got to do, we got to plant the seeds out there. I look forward to working with all of you very closely. I've got my mentor back here, she's always been my mentor, even when I was a post commander, she was a mentor. So, I feel like I'm in good shoes. I've still got a lot to learn, but I appreciate the opportunity, thank you. (applause).

Dept Adj Strauss: Alright, we're fired up to get those last 500 and something, you know. It sounds like a big number if you're just one post, yeh, that's a big number for one post, obviously. If you break that down, we have 157 posts, that's one member per week, per post. WE can do that guys, let's get Commander Kvam his hundred percent, get your posts in your district to get that one member post until the end of June to get that hundred percent. Don't let

them give up just because they got those new cards. We're going to get this guy to the hundred percent, the first time to a hundred percent in quite a few years, so let's get it done. Great job, Darlene, great job, Rich.

Alright, let's get into the Administrative updates, I know we have some new people here for the Executive Committee. There are periodically times that we do email voting, I just want to clarify how we do email voting. So the policy on email is we always have at least two questions we're going to have....when you do an email vote you have to vote whether yes or no on if we can vote on email. I'll send you an email on it. There are certain things that are kind of time sensitive in between our meetings that we would...we're just not going to vote on everything between meetings like that. But if there's something that's time sensitive and we need to do it before our next DEC meeting, we do it on email. Our policy is you have to answer the question yes or no on if we're going to vote on the email. And then whatever other question we have, we have to answer yes or no, generally, or aye or nay type questions. But each time, please don't days go by if you've read the email. If you don't like it, say no. If you like it, say yes, please. But we need to have those back so that we get the form in and have that in. Some are time sensitive, some are not, but if you have questions, please call me about it. If there's something that just, you're not sure of, just call me. Now, one thing, I mentioned in there, when I say please don't "Reply All". One of these reasons why that is, is because sometimes when you reply all, let's just say I send it to the committee, and then Russ replies all, then you might see it later and not see mine but you'll see Russ's. So when you're replying, you're replaying to Russ. Instead of replying to me. So you see how people's email may get lost to me because they responded to Russ thinking they're replying to me. Does that make sense? So that's why I ask you not to "reply all". I'll give you, if you contact me, if you want to know the results who voted what way, I'll send you that information, but generally everybody just wants to see the results. But I have nothing to hide, ok? If you want to know how every individual voted, I can send you that. But generally people don't want all that in their email but just please know that's the reason I say don't "reply all", because I don't want your vote to get lost. If it's constructive criticism, please use, you know, "reply all and I'll (inaudible) that criticism forward. And if you want to fire off after you call me, please feel free to do so. So I just kind of what to make everybody aware of how the email system works, so generally the email will say # 1, yes or no, # 2, yes or no. We don't really need a long dissertation, I need (inaudible) so I can go, ok? Thank you on that.

So Post closures, you know, we've had some good dialog on post closures, You know, Bowman just closed recently. I just want to kind of, if you're new the DEC, I also want to talk about that. We have a checklist. We have a checklist that we go by, National requires a checklist before... you know, we can, we vote at our committee or make a recommendation to the National Executive Committee on the post closure. So, but know there is a pretty large checklist that we have to do through. Somebody just can't call and say, I'm closing the post, ok. So if somebody comes to you as a District Commander and says, I want to close my post, say there's a lot to it. It's not just flipping a switch on closing the post. So we would strongly would recommend merging, because merging is a lot less cumbersome, it's a lot less steps. If you're closing a post, that's a difference. There's a lot of steps that go through that, but generally, if you've seen an email from me saying I'm asking you to close the doors of a post, there have been many steps that have been taken before that email. And Bowman is one of those posts that that does happen, so we don't just say we're going to close them just to close them, there's a lot of work that goes into it. That being said, we do have some posts, that have not reached the minimum 15 deadline that we still work to do. So, if you would like to help with those steps, like go to a post and do revitalization with us, which we did quite a few this year. Some of them,

like Russellville, we had a...that's a far drive down there if you're not from that area, it's down in the low country and it's out there in the middle of nowhere. But they were on the cusp of being very, very close to losing that charter and they finally saw the light and they were here and got their hundred percent plaque. So, those are success stories that we like to see. That they kind of, oh, you know what, this is a struggle, but we offer them help. It's not like we go in there and say, we're going to close you down, you know, you don't have your 15, you know. We offer them help, we give them advice on how to do it, we sometimes send letters for them. Ultimately the post has to show that is a system in place for them to succeed. If nobody's going to process cards, that's not a plan. I mean, so, you have to...every post is different on how they want to move forward. But generally you have to have one person there to at least keep the bobber above the water, so just kind of know that about post closures.

National convention is coming up in New Orleans, if you're thinking about it, we're getting a lot of deadlines for that so consider if you're going to the National Convention in New Orleans to get stuff in quickly.

Yes, the Southern Bloc announced the price of \$60.00, that's for the Southern Bloc tickets. That's the breakfast there at the convention.

Post 186, we had the committee recommend, being very general about this, because it was in Executive Session, but just to kind of give you an update. We are working towards a resolution with the Judge Advocate and the Post, that resolution has not happened yet but we're very close to that. And you should know something more pretty soon about 186.

So, you guys, if you have not picked up your cards, I know John, I'm going to go to headquarters and get your cards after this, if there is anybody else that needs your cards or haven't got them, we can go over to headquarters with me afterwards and we'll get your cards. So please tell your people when you're giving them the cards, there's a...well..we just to have the green bar sheet in the old cards and that had every member on there. But the blue bar sheet, I think we call it now, does not have PUFL's on there, that blue bar sheet is only the cards that are in that stack. So it doesn't have PUFL's on that roster. It's not a roster, it's just a list of the people that have cards in that stack, ok? So, people before were used to that green bar sheet, it's different. Only the people that have cards are in there. So, if somebody paid for three years, you know, we had the multi year added, so if they paid for the three years, just one years' card, 25, is in there. 26 and 27's card is not in there yet. When 26 and 27 comes, they'll be paid, so tell the post, if you have people that paid for three years, go ahead and send them their card because they've already paid, ok? So, kind of get that little explanation, and their honorary's go ahead and pay them also, they have to pay their honorary's if they made somebody an honorary member, ok?

He mentioned about you can start collecting right now for the 25 dues now that you have them in your hand, but processing them on PGO, or mylegion, doesn't start until July 1st. So you can collect now, you can't process until July 1st. So when you give them the card, say collect now, process July 1st. Don't call us and say "Why can't I process these 25's yet?" (laughter). I'm just trying to save us the headaches. Make sure you tell them July 1st is the start date for the 25 year, ok?

Anderson Boys State, if you're new the Executive Committee, they have a big veterans night, or American Legion night on Sunday night of Boys State. It's the very first night that they get there, and they have an outstanding show. If you've never been, there is an RSVP since they do have

a dinner before the show for us. And if you go up, they treat to you a great dinner and it's a great show. It's a late night, if you live far away from Anderson, you may want to consider getting a hotel, because it ends about maybe 11:00. But, it is well worth it, anybody that's been can tell you it's a really cool show. Every year, you're stunned that they put it together in that short a time, it's a great job by them. That's all I have in my notes, but I did want to recognize, we have some brand new people here on the Executive Committee. I see Terry Weeks back there if you want to stand and wave your hand, Terry took over from Mike Brandt, then back, back there, we've got Harry Malpass who took over from Mark Cannito- Annie Hough-Everage, that's her name on paper but everybody calls her Hough.

D-12 Cmdr Hough-Everage: Actually it's not Annie, it's AL

Dept Adj Strauss: Everybody calls her Hough, so if you just hear Hough, you know who we're talking about. She's been a great committee person for a lot of years so it's great to have her on board.

Jim Defrehn had an old military buddy die so he wasn't able to be here but Jim has been on the board so we look forward to seeing him again.

Dana Richardson, has she come in? Harry, I will need to see you so don't get out too fast, ok?

Alright, any other thing for me? Yes, Maggie made a good point, on the 172 list, you always have the ones that say AD on them, if you can get them to transfer now, they'll count towards your goal right now. So look at your membership, there's this couple post that's so close to 100%, give them that rah rah to get them to their goal, they still have time, you know? But those, the AD's will count towards that. And also, if you transfer somebody in now, tell them when they get their renewal, it's probably not going to have the new post on there so make sure to remind them about that. Because they transfer and then they get the renewal in the mail on July 1st and they join right back to 172 again, because that April 15 deadline, they start printing that and they transfer back in, it's a pretty common mistake for people that are transferring in. So make sure if you transfer anybody in between April 15 and July 1st, it's going to say what it was on April 15th, does that make sense? Alright, great job, let's get this Commander 100%.

D-15 Commander Dorman: When will we be taking nominations for a historian or the other vacant offices. We actually had one person bring that to my attention.

Dept Adj Strauss: I think we make those?

Dept Exec Dir: I think the Department Commander said he wanted to wait.

Dept Cmdr Donegan: Yes.

D-15 Cmdr Dorman: Because I had someone talk to me about that.

Dept Cmdr Donegan: Thank you.

Dept Cmdr Strauss: Bring it to his attention afterward.

D-6 Cmdr Simpson: For everybody's knowledge and especially mine, where to you get the RSVP for Boys State?

Dept Adj Strauss: I did send an email out on that, it was forwarded from Nygel Pearson.

Dept Cmdr Donegan: There's a blue line that you clicked on and then just you fill that out.

NEC Lysaght: I want to give you an update on membership. The three year program was accepted by the NEC on probation, it's being monitored very closely. Right now, it's actually working out extremely well across the country. As far as renewals and membership being the driving force, the finance committee is reviewing documentation on a supplemental PUFL program. It will not be called PUFL, it will be called Senior Legionnaires' for Life, or something like that. Starting at 65 at a much reduced rate than what it cost to be a PUFL. We found that the older guys, that's where we're losing people, believe it or not. We're not recruiting the young guys and we're losing on the back end, so we're trying to pull this thing together. So I was privileged the last time I was in Indianapolis to visit with the Chairman and went over some of the numbers and one of our own is very forcefully behind the effort, Jim Defrehn. And Jim sent it to me and I looked at it and I sat down with Gaither Keener with the Finance commission. . What it will do is it will allow a 65 year old on a fixed income, 65, 70, 75, 80, we actually have some 90 year old members, to make a down payment, on an agreed upon manner. For example, if we say at 65 you can be a PUFL for \$500.00. Put a hundred dollars down, and you have 12 months to pay the balance. We did a little survey and it seemed to be receptive. From a membership standpoint, it would be beneficial. And quite frankly more (inaudible)., But I just wanted to let you know that National is very cognizant if what's happening, that was one of the reasons (inaudible). Your American Legion financially, is well very off, it's got plenty of money in the bank, if you notice what I'm saying, it's in the bank, in funds and fiduciaries that we can't get to, ok? So we need that pocket change, we had no change but to approve (inaudible).

Dept Adj: Don't forget in that box also is the forms, don't forget to get your posts to sign it. So, the reason that we do that, there will be a post that somewhere down the line, they're going to call us probably in December, and say, we don't have our cards yet. And if you give it to them in May and they call us in December, you're not going to remember who signed for those. That's why we ask you to send those and we'll say, you need to go see X. Ok? Because every year, there's one post, maybe two, that call us and say, we haven't got our cards yet. Knowing darn well they got their card and they're sitting somewhere on somebody's desk, so please, please, get those forms back to us. Just to cover your butt.

Vice Cmdr Cantrell: You forget to mention Miss Pat, the new 4th Vice Cmdr?

Dept Adj Strauss: Yes! (applause), I think most people were there yesterday, and Clarence Shuford, our chaplain (applause)

Chaplain Shuford: Please, I go by shoe, so tonight when you take your shoes off, think about me (laughter). And Jimmy Hawk was elected as our Alternate (applause), so I think we've got a pretty good committee. Right now, I'll turn it over to the Commander.

Dept Cmdr Donegan: Does anyone have anything for the good of the Legion.

PDC Scherer: A couple years ago it was brought up to have this as a two day instead of three, look at the time we stop, at the last conference and convention, we stop at 3:00 or 4:00, we have plenty of time to do a DEC meeting afterward. I don't know how much it cost to have this

room and everything else afterwards but it sure costs the members more to be staying over one more night, so.

Dept Adj Strauss: Ok, for the conference, we did discuss that before we signed the five year contract, for this convention, we are locked in for three days for five years, this is our second year. For the Fall Conference, that is the one that we have been discussing to try and trim the fat off the Fall Conference and if we're going to have a meeting, have it on Saturday and boogie on out of there, that's still on the table for the Fall Conference, to maybe trim that down. Probably not this year, it would probably be next year.

Imm PDC Kvam: But on that question, the DEC, at that time, voted that it would stay a three day Fall Conference. The question was put before the DEC and it was voted, no, we would stay a three day conference, I had brought that up, I wanted a two day myself.

Dept Cmdr Donegan: Somebody else have anything for the good of the Legion? Ok, my remarks, I wanted to say a couple things, I didn't get a chance to say anything after the installation of officers, I know that everybody kind of wanted to get out and have some fun and everything. I just wanted to say a couple things I just wrote down here. First, I just wanted to thank everybody for being here and everything, and I want to thank the new officers that took over, thank you so much for wanting to be involved in the American Legion. And for the ones that are still in and for all their hard work, they take on the responsibility, same with the committee people. That was the hardest thing that I almost had to do in my whole so far, was try and get these committees going and everything, it was stuff. I started way back in the October time-frame, I had some help, Mr. Strauss and Maggie and I asked for some help on who did they think was good and all that. Yes, we had to consolidate a couple of these committees, and we might have to do a couple more maybe. My thing is efficiency and time saved and everything, if that makes our organization more efficient, that's great. It's getting harder and harder to fill some of these vacancies and committee spots. And I fully accept and understand because some people's been on it for a long time, they get tired and they want to get off of it. I appreciate their perspective and their decision and everything like that.

With that, "membership Counts" that's my pin design this year, I got the pins already, they're in my bag, we'll get them out. And we talk membership, membership, membership, I know people get tired of counting it, but guess what, we have to do it, we got to do it, that's the future of this organization. And as I go around the state there, I'm going to stress that and elaborate on that. Membership Counts.

My Commanders pin, it says "Together we Can" I've been using that slogan for 40 years of my life, when I was in politics and everything. When I took over as town supervisor, my town was almost bankrupt. My color, people have red, white and blue now. I had yellow and black, yellow for a new beginning, a new, bright sun and black, for keeping the town in black. Within a years time I turned that budget around and had a million dollar surplus that the state controllers officer had a report in the newspaper and we had an audit and they slapped my hands because we had too much surplus. But we had no tax increases for ten years, so that slogan's always helped me before and it's going to help us now by working together. The past department commanders had like "moving forward" and "serving above" and that, it all combines together for "Together we Can". Like Chaplain Mullinax said, together, yeh, more people working together makes work easier for everybody. So that's what I use, I always try and build on my successes and if it worked before, why change it, so, that's it.

My program, Veterans and Children Foundation, I'm not copying from Mr. Kvam. I've always liked that from way back when, too, so that's what we're going to do, because it's a worthy....especially in these times and everything, so that's what I want to do on.

Our CPR's, we're low for some reason, I don't know why, maybe, it's not really that hard. But if you need help, you can ask the staff, your vice cmdr, ask other adjutant's in your district, ask other Posts in your District, don't be afraid to ask. One last thing, I actually survived not taking any pictures (laughter), I was waiting for Adjutant Strauss to take that hammer and bend my hand (laughter) or something like that, so I did alright, I'm so used to taking pictures. And yesterday, And I know yesterday, Mr. Jarvis mentioned he'd never seen me with a suit on, but you won't see that too often, I'm just back to myself. Finally, I just want to thank everybody for having confidence in me.

Dept Adj Strauss: Together we can.

Dept Cmdr Donegan: Together we can. If we all work together, more hands make it easier and all that. Next thing you know, you'll be throwing something at me. (laughter).

Department Commander called on Chaplain Shuford for the benediction and closed the meeting.

For God and Country,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Michael D. Strauss". The signature is written in black ink on a light-colored background.

Michael D. Strauss
Department Adjutant

MS/mm