



The Legion-Air

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**AMERICAN
LEGION**

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Commander's Message:

It's been a cold and snowy winter this year. I had to cancel the January meeting due to the terrible winter conditions.

The EC Staff and I attended the Mid-Winter Conference in Albany Jan. 16-18. We attended the legislative, membership, compliance, Boy's State meeting and more. Lots of new information was put out by the committees. I wish more people would go to this conference. It was extremely educational.

On Feb. 1st. the 8th District meeting was held at the Donovan Post. The meeting was well attended and informative. I want to thank the Donovan team who put together a luncheon for all District members.

The big event of February was the visitation of the Dept. of NY Leadership Team. Dept. Cmdr. John Miga, Auxiliary President Maureen Morgan, and Cmdr. Joe Guidice of the Son's of the Legion. We started with a tour of the Connecticut St. Armory, organized by PCC Paul Wackowski. Followed by lunch at the Donovan Post. Wrapping up the day at the Lamm Post for our E.C.A.L. Family Testimonial dinner. We had a good turnout of Posts from Erie County. The Post decorations and dinner were outstanding. Thank you, Cmdr. Phil English and your staff.

The next day Gary Kruger and I went to Dansville for the Zone 5 Oratorical Contest. Our candidate Caitlin Sinclair took 2nd place. Thank you to Oratorical Chairman Wayne Sorrentino.

At this time of the year, let's remember to make a donation to the Telethon fund coming up March 22. Make a donation to EC Scholarship fund. Let's get in to the EC office any applications for the Red, White and Blue Awards. To date we have only a few boys signed up for Boy's State so far. Let's get the applications sent in. Lastly, remember to update the Post Data Report.

I would like to visit your Post. Please contact me at 716 – 681 - 7169.

Membership: VC Howard Patton III

Membership remains the foundation of the American Legion. At this point in 2026, our overall membership should be at or above 90 percent, and 14 Posts are currently on track to meet their respective membership goals for the month of March. As we approach April, our objective is to reach 95 percent of our annual target.

We also extend special recognition to three Posts that have achieved 100 percent or more of their membership goal:

Jesse Clipper Post 430 – 101.64%

Frank H. Brink Post 607 – 103.70%

Iroquois Post 1587 – 104.76%

Their commitment and diligence set a strong example for the entire organization.

Last month, our focus was on Checking Post 1 for prospective members and conducting Buddy Checks. This month, we will continue strengthening those efforts while placing added emphasis on member retention. By intentionally reaching out to members we have not heard from recently, as well as those with outstanding dues, we can reconnect, provide support where needed, and strengthen our overall membership roster.

Legionnaire of the Year – Kathleen Garvey

It's the time of year to submit the resume for your Post's Legionnaire of the Year for consideration as the 2026 Erie County Legionnaire of the Year. Resumes are due on April 3, 2026. The Guidelines and Information are available the Erie County American Legion Web page: <http://www.eriecountyal.org/Legionnaire%20of%20the%20year%20page.html>. You all have worthy candidates in your Post. Please submit the resume of your candidate to Kathleen Garvey, 5792 Main Street, Williamsville NY 14221, NO LATER THAN APRIL 3, 2026.

Americanism – VC Pat Murphy

I usually look for a military, police, fire or EMS to make my point about Americanism but even though the following men were none of these things, I feel they deserve recognition.

Heroes come in all shapes and sizes. Most do not know that their actions will make them stand out from the rest of their generation. Three names that should be remembered are James Chaney 21 years old, Andrew Goodman 20 years old, and Micheal Schwerner 24 years old. Their actions and deaths will cause this nation to look hard and long at its laws, and what we stand for.

Chaney was African American, Goodman and Schwerner were both white and Jewish. All these men were Americans. All were in Mississippi to help register and get the vote for blacks in that state with the CORE ORGANIZATION. They were stopped by the local police arrested for a traffic infraction, released and later kidnapped and killed. Their vehicle was found burnt out, and later their bodies found buried under an earthen dam. They had been hunted down and murdered by the local Kul Klux Klan, and other hate filled men, IN JUNE OF 1964. This is all public record and a movie was made about it in 1988 called Mississippi Burning. I must admit I have never watched it.

Their actions and deaths would cause the country to look at itself and what we stand for. Their deaths would be a driving force for the VOTING RIGHTS ACT OF 1965. If you are interested in their lives and actions, please research them for yourselves.

We see a lot of investigations and people talking about elections in past and present. I for one feel that voting is an American right, and duty. We should look at any person, group, or organization that would attempt to stop anyone from voting, and ask the reason, why?

We have laws to stop fraudulent voting, but it turns out most of these allegations have no or little merit. But we as a country, must protect the right to vote, we will never, I hope, have to give as much as those young men in 1964.

This was a quick overview of the above incident, please look it up and make your own decision.

Essay – VC Pat Murphy

The Office has mailed out the 2026 Essay Contest to all 6th Grade Schools in Erie County. Due date is 5/1/26. Topic is "Celebrating America's 250th Birthday and the Veterans who fought for our Freedom".



Special Activities – VC Paul Wackowski

Greetings Legionnaires

At this time, I am still not able to provide any updated information as to number of calendars sold. This due to returns and calendars still out. Therefore, any Post or individuals that has any unsold calendars, kindly get them in. On the other side, any post or individual that requires more to sell, there are plenty of calendars available. My contact number is: 716 - 262 - 5245. In closing, Everyone stay safe.

Service Officer – Bill Siegel

Surviving spouses of Veterans who died of their service-connected disability, regardless of the Veteran's percentage rating, may be eligible to receive a service-connected death benefit, formally known as Dependency Indemnity Compensation (DIC). If the Veteran was rated 100% service connected for 10 years or more, his/her death does not need to be related to his/her service-connected disability. The current benefit is not a percentage of what the Veteran may have been receiving while he was alive, but rather a set amount that is adjusted annually based on the Cost-of-Living Allowance. This year the base monthly rate is \$1,699.36. This rate may be adjusted based on a number of factors e.g. 1) if the Veteran was rated 100% for eight years or more; 2) if the surviving spouse is in need of Aid and Attendance; 3) if there are surviving minor children; 4) and several other situations. For more specific information, it is suggested to contact your Veteran Service Officer, or the VA's website at va.gov.

Buffalo Telethon Oktoberfest – Ted Balbierz

Thanks go out to everyone who supported this effort over the past three years! The Variety Club Kids Telethon will be held March 21 & 22. We plan to make our American Legion Family donation sometime on Sunday 3/22. There is still time to receive additional donations thru our County Office at 609 Buffalo City Hall.

Boys State Chairman - Bernie Romanowski

As of today, we only have two candidates registered at Department. One from Matthew Glab and one from Orchard Park. All candidates must register with Dept by April 12th, 2026. I have been trying to solicit funds from outside our Legion family but have not had any success. Feedback has started to improve. The following Posts have been active in the program Brounshidle, Hamburg, Orchard Park, George Lamm, Adam Plewacki, Clarence, Niagara Frontier, Springville, and Donovan are working to complete interviews. If you are conducting interviews remember you must designate a boy as a Delegate or Alternate. We can use funds from Post that cannot find delegates but are willing to sponsor a boy.

A reminder from Ann Brown Dept of NY Boys State Coordinator. "American Legion Posts/Counties should not be charging the child or their Family a registration fee or any other fee for a young man to attend Boys' State. The sponsoring Post is responsible for the total cost to send the young man to the program."

The original Boys State information letter was mailed to Post Commanders in January, but unfortunately some have not reached the Post Boys State Chairman, If you need help or any information I can be reached at glabpost@aol.com or 716-796-5341.

Oratorical – Wayne Sorrentino

The ZONE 5 Oratorical Contest was held 2/14/26 at Dansville High School. Chair Jean Williams had two candidates, one each from District 7 & 8. Congratulations to the winner from the 7th District Lucas Christopher who will compete in the Department Contest in Albany on March 7, 2026. Lucas is from Hilton, NY and a homeschooled junior. He received a Department prize check of \$1,000.

The 8th District/Erie County runner up is Caitlin Sinclair, a junior from Lancaster High School. She received a Department check for \$800. Caitlin is currently making preparations to attend Girls State this summer. We wish her well. Several members from Erie County attended, including Erie County Commander, Jerry Kowalski, Erie County Oratorical Chairman & Past County Commander, Wayne Sorrentino and Gary Kruger, Erie County Children and Youth Chairman. CDR Jerry, thank you for my appointment.



Regular County Meetings at 7 PM

The next Regular Meeting of the Erie County Committee will be held on Thursday 3/26 at the David McKeever Post #64 located at 1770 South Park, Buffalo, NY 14220. Food Service will be available at 6 PM. Menu TBD.

Thanks go out to the 19 Posts that were in attendance for the February County Meeting at the Milton J. Brounshidle Post #205. Posts in attendance were; 64, 205, 362, 430, 527, 607, 622, 799, 1041, 1346, 1477, 1528, 1586, 1587, 1626, 1672, 1780, & 1928. Hopefully we can see representatives from all the 35 Posts in Erie County on 3/26.

Future County Meetings;

April 30, East Aurora Post #362

May 21, Concord Post #431

Saturday June 6, Erie County Convention at the Francis J. Donovan Post #1626



**Erie County
Commander
Jerry
Kowalski with
Erie County
Oratorical
Contestant
Caitlin
Sinclair.**



**SUBMISSIONS
For the April
"The Legion-Air"
Due March 27
thelegionair@gmail.com**

Law & Order – VC Pat Murphy

We can see by watching the news there is a lot of concern over police activity in our country. I having been a Police Officer, so I have a biased view on the subject. I will always try and give the officers a reason for their actions. But as to these latest actions I would state, these agents, are not, Police Officers.

Who are vetted psychologically, and socially. Trained in confrontation with citizens and how to de-escalate situations, Officers never unholster a weapon or point it, unless in fear of their lives or others. The use of chemical agents or physical contact with any citizen will have to be explained and justified to superiors. Cuffing a citizen and taking them in an unmarked vehicle, and then releasing them is unheard of, and a crime.

But I will admit that the information we are getting from the press and media seem to be slanted to those companies' views, one way or another. What has been going on in some states seems to be of concern to all Americans, Humans, Americans, have a history of being lazy, they will not get involved till a problem is at our doorstep. But seeing so many people out in the streets in different states protesting the actions of our law enforcement departments seems to beg questions about what is going on. It Looks like the war protests of the 1960s-70s.

So, I will task each member of our organization to investigate the matters, try to get different views, Peaceful protesting is an American right. I would say duty. Because if any agency is violating the rights of one citizen, they are violating all our rights.

And rights not protected and fought for are lost, and once gone, they are hard, if not impossible to get back. As always please look at your local, fire, police and EMS personnel who deserve to be acknowledged for their actions, length of service, or some special project achieved. Please remember these people choose their field of work, but they also live in a bubble where any, and all actions will be examined. By armchair quarterbacks, who somehow always, after the fact, in the safety of their home , or with friends know what should have been done.

Please nominate a candidate for law-and-order awards. It will make you feel good and help your community.

Education Awards - Scholarship applications have been mailed out to all High Schools in Erie County for our program and all High Schools in the 8th District for the PNC Michael J. Kogutek Scholarship. Donations for both programs are now being accepted.



Erie County Commander Jerry Kowalski presents a 60 Year Membership Pin to Depew Post 1528 member Wally Weiss along with Post Commander Tom Johnston.

Depew Post 1528 also recently presented the VA with \$200 worth of gift cards for



Niagara Frontier Post 1041 Commander Thomas O'Connell presents the keys to the Post Pavilion to Steve Cormelle on the Left. Steve will be opening his second restaurant featuring American Food and Jamaican Food at the Post. Opening April 1, 2026



Department Commander John R. Miga on the Left presents the George F. Lamm Post 622 Commander Phil English with his picture and a license plate for his hosting of the Department Leadership Dinner on Friday February 13, 2026.

Saturday March 14, Corned Beef Dinner and Rubeen's, 3:30 pm- 6:30 pm. at Concord American Legion Post 431, 109 Zoar Valley Rd. , Springville NY 14141. Dinners: Corned beef, potatoes, carrots, cabbage, rye bread, dessert, coffee and tea. Is \$15. Rubeen dinners: Rubeen, pickle, dessert, coffee and tea is \$10. Eat in or take outs. Sponsored by Concord ALA Unit 431

Sunday March 15, ALL YOU CAN EAT Pancake Breakfast at A. J. Jurek Post #1672, 655 New Rd. Swormville, 14051. From 8 AM to 12:30 PM. Fresh, hot, buttermilk pancakes, "Egglands Best" eggs, link & patty sausage, juice & coffee or tea. Adults \$10, children under 12 \$4, children < 5 free.

Sunday March 29, Pancake Breakfast at Milton J. Brounshidle Post #205, 3354 Delaware Ave, Kenmore, 9 AM to Noon. \$10.

Orchard Park Post #567, 5784 Ellis Rd., Orchard Park, Dinners at the Post are from 4 – 6:30 PM (or until sold out). Monday: Beef on Weck, Tuesday: Tacos: Tacos, choice of beef or chicken, Hard shell or Soft. Thursday: Pasta Night! Comes with Salad, 2 meatballs and garlic bread. Friday: From the Grill.

Newell Faulkner Post #880, 2912 Legion Drive, Eden, NY 14057. Normal Hours: Tues., Wed., & Thurs. 3 to 9 PM, Fri. 11 am to 9 PM & Sat. 11:30 am to 9 PM. DINE - IN OR TAKE OUT, Tuesday Taco Night, Wednesday 10 for \$8.50 Wings special, dine in only, Thursday Steak Night, Friday Fish Fry & Specials, Saturday Pizza & Wings and Sandwiches. www.post880.com

Matthew Glab Post #1477, 1965 Abbott Road, Lackawanna, NY 14218, serving Wed and Friday 2-8 PM, Fish Fry's, Seafood, Burgers and weekly specials, Wednesday 75 cent wings, Taco's \$4.

Francis J. Donovan Post #1626, 3210 Genesee Street, Cheektowaga, Come enjoy the food from The Polish Villa 2U! We are their new home and serve dinners every Friday from 4-8 PM. We have live musical entertainment, bringing in new acts and performers weekly. Music starts at 7 PM and goes till 10 PM every Friday. And yes, of course we have the best Fish Fry and Bar prices in the area!

Send in your articles for the Legion-Air to thelegionair@gmail.com by 3/27 for the April edition.
PCC Jim Bojanowski Editor

Erie County Website – eriecountyal.org
Phone: (716) 852 – 6500 Veteran14202@verizon.net
Office Hours, M,W,F – 7:30 AM to 12:30 PM
DNY website - <https://nylegion.net>
National American Legion website - <https://www.legion.org>