



AMERICAN LEGION AUXILIARY
Department of California
The Roarin' 20th District

CHATTERBOX

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February 2025



Mission Statement

In the Spirit of Service, Not Self, the mission of the American Legion Auxiliary is to support [The American Legion](#) and to honor the sacrifice of those who serve by enhancing the lives of our veterans, military, and their families, both at home and abroad. For God and Country, we advocate for veterans, educate our citizens, mentor youth, and promote patriotism, good citizenship, peace and security.

Our Impact

We are one of the nation's most prominent supporters of veterans, military and their families. We help to advance the mission of The American Legion. From helping to draft the GI Bill in 1944 to advocating for veterans on Capitol Hill, the nonpartisan American Legion Family is instrumental in advancing legislation that improves the quality of the life for our nation's veterans and Service members.

2024—2025 DISTRICT OFFICERS



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2024—2025 UNIT PRESIDENTS

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Enjoying DEC (from top): Laura Kellgreen, Krista Young, Sheila Lindsey and Annette Sevigny

* = vacant

OFFICER REPORTS

DEPARTMENT PRESIDENT

Linda Hayes

Thank you to our members who attended the Department Executive Committee (DEC) meeting in January. I hope you enjoyed your time away from home. Wasn't the Program Fair awesome!

Thank you again for all the wonderful donations for the fire victims, which include the cash and checks you donated. It just proves that our organization is extremely generous and giving when the need to help others arrives. There are 120 Legion Family members who we know lost their homes, and there are probably more. Donations will still be needed in the months to come. Your donations are deeply appreciated.

The National President's visit will be March 10-14, 2024. Plans are being finalized and will be sent out soon.

Department Commander Nick Rosa is planning an American Legion Family Day on April 26 to celebrate American Legion Baseball's 100-year birthday. It will be held at the W.O. Hart Park in Orange. All Family members, past, present, and future are invited. More information will be forth coming soon.

I hope to see you at Mission Training on February 1.



The poster features a background of a house on fire. Two inset photos show firefighters at a scene and a person in a damaged home. The text reads: 'AMERICAN LEGION AUXILIARY 2025 CALIFORNIA FIRES. In the aftermath of devastating fires, our members are left in need of urgent assistance. How You Can Help. Donate: Every dollar donated goes to help our fellow Auxiliary members and Veterans who are impacted by the fires. Share: Spread the word. The more who donate the more relief we can provide. YOUR SUPPORT CAN MAKE ALL THE DIFFERENCE. We're calling on you to lend a hand and bring hope back to those affected. Donations should be earmarked "CA Fires" and sent to: ALA, Department of California Treasurer 10400 Twin Cities Rd., Ste 20, #107, Galt, CA 95632 www.calegionaux.org. It takes a Village. We help our ALA Family Members.'

Prayer for Fire Victims

Let's join together in prayer for those affected by the wild fires consuming so many acres, homes, businesses and lives. The destruction, devastation and heartbreak is unimaginable.

Let us pray for their recovery and resiliency as well as for those firefighters, first responders, military personnel and others who continue their battle to extinguish the blazes.

American Legion Chaplain Post 793

DISTRICT PRESIDENT

Liz Tungate



Greetings from your President!

ALA District 20 encourages and supports participation in activities that reflect our mission. The following are some December/January highlights and important information.

California Disaster Relief Grant

It's very sad that the New Year began with all of these wildfires here in Southern California. Our hearts go out to those affected and I would like to share with you information on how members in need may get assistance. The American Legion has opened the California Disaster Relief Grant to all American Legion family members. Auxiliary and SALs can apply for one grant per household. They are offering \$1000 for Legionnaire's and \$500 for Auxiliary and SALs. A link to the grant information and application may be found at calegion.org/california-disaster-relief-grant/.

AEF Disaster Assistance

Remember that the ALA has the Auxiliary Emergency Fund (AEF) for disaster assistance. Eligible ALA members in areas devastated by a natural disaster, such as fire, flood, hurricane, tornado, earthquake and other severe weather may apply for these grants. My understanding is that they have lifted the three-year continuous membership requirement due to the severity of the recent wildfires. Visit legion-aux.org/aeaf to learn more.

Hollywood Post 43

Post 43 in Hollywood has been collecting donations daily, including blankets, sheets, toiletries, hygiene products, paper towels, paper plates, cutlery, bottled water, pet food, gift cards and small appliances. They have also been feeding firefighters battling the fires. Thank you to all who donated and continue to be a part of this valiant

Pete Knight Xmas Party

December was also a very busy month in District 20 that started out with our annual Pete Knight Christmas Party. We honored thirty-nine veterans at Pete Knight veterans home with specially prepared gift bags that were made possible by donations from Units and members in District 20. Thank you to those that contributed to this very special event and also to those members that were able to attend.

Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Month

December is recognized by the ALA as Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation month. Every month we should recognize and support our veterans, but December is specifically set aside to work this program. What did your Unit do to assist our veterans and work this Program in December?



ALA Department President Linda Hayes Official Visit

We were honored to have our official visit to District 20 by the ALA Department President Linda Hayes. We honored Madame President during our monthly meeting with a social hour, followed by a Chinese dinner and a variety of desserts.

Thanks to those of you that attended this very special evening.

December at Sepulveda Veterans Center

There was a coffee and donuts event for veterans at the Sepulveda Veterans Center in December attended by some of our units in District 20. Post 348 and Unit 348 members are consistently putting on events like this throughout the year. Please try to attend these with them, if you possibly can. We are thankful for donations received from Soldiers Angels to make these events possible for our veterans.

DISTRICT PRESIDENT (continued) Liz Tungate

Unit 377 Participated in Wreaths Across America

Unit 377 is a big supporter of Wreaths Across America. On December 14, they participated in the annual placement of wreaths at their local cemetery, Verdugo Hills of Peace Pioneer Cemetery.

The Unit first began their wreath placement three years ago with only 25 known veterans being buried there. The historian from the local Bolton Hall museum has been doing research over the past year. They have subsequently discovered approximately another 200 soldiers buried there for a known total of 225 veterans. She is still continuing her research.

There is a memorial garden at this cemetery where 174 of these veterans' names are because their gravesites have not yet been

discovered. They honored these veterans with a huge 46 inch wreath, which was donated by Monica Rodriguez, councilwoman. The remaining 51 veterans each had a wreath placed by attendees at their markers. The picture shown is of the wreaths which represent each branch of the Armed Forces, including POW/MIA and the National Guard.



WREATHS
ACROSS
AMERICA

Focus on Legislative Program in January

The month of January was Legislative program month. Did you know that California Assembly Bill 2736: Veterans, benefits was vetoed in Fall 2024 by the Governor? Please get behind this bill in the future. This bill expands access to the California college fee waiver program. It eliminates a prohibition that prevents a dependent of a veteran from receiving state benefits, while the dependent is entitled to receive specified federal education, benefits, or duplicate assistance from any other government source.

January DEC Successful

January was dark for District 20 but Mid-year DEC kept us busy with preparations.

Thank you to Chairman Bonnie Christner and Co-Chairman Marcy Velador for all their hard work putting this Mid-year DEC together. It was a big success thanks to both of you!

Laura Collins (shown below) staffed the table at Mid-year DEC with Madame President Linda's new ALA America the Beautiful shirts. Also, thank you to those Units that contributed raffle baskets and items



for the ditty bags. We had 17 members representing District 20 at the DEC. Thank you all for being there.

I would also like to give special thanks to Unit 520 President Eva Miles (shown below) and her officers (Kathy Gosling, Annette Sevigny, and Sheila Lindsey) for stepping up to collect items and assemble the ditty bags.





Celebrate Americanism in Month of February


**STAR-SPANGLED KIDS KITS
1ST - AMERICANISM CHALLENGE**



*Who will win this challenge?
The Central Division?
The Eastern Division?
The Northwestern Division?
The Southern Division?
The Western Division?*

*The Division that reports the most Star Spangled Kids Kits Promoted in schools by May 15, 2025, will receive a Trophy at their Division Caucus at the 2025 National Convention. Your National Americanism Chairman will surprise the Division that won, the winner will not be announced until National Convention
"So Who Will It Be?"*

Do not forget to include your numbers in your year-end report to your Division Americanism Chairman.

February is Americanism program month. Did your Unit participate in the National ALA division-wide contest? The Division that reports the most Star Spangled Kids (SSK) Kits promoted in schools by May 15, 2025, will receive a Trophy at the Division Caucus at the 2025 National Convention. SSK is the American Legion Auxiliary initiative to educate our youth about United States history, Americanism, and the U.S. Constitution.

You can find out more about Star Spangled Kids kits here:
<https://calegionaux.org/resources/americanism/amer-star-spangled-intro-letter.pdf>

Chair Positions Open

Due to some unfortunate circumstances, some of our program chairs have had to step away from their chairmanships. I am looking for members to fill those chairs for the last half of this year. Vacancies include Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms, Constitution, Girls State, Junior Activities, and Leadership.

Thank you for considering stepping up to chair one of these programs.

Unit 507 Begins Recycling Program

ALA Unit 507 is taking recycling seriously by encouraging members to donate unwanted articles for repurposing rather than simply trashing them. The Unit will be participating in the Trashie and Terracycle recycling programs. Details of both programs may be found online.

The Unit is also collecting gently used professional clothing for women in the Santa Clarita Valley who wish to re-enter the workforce but lack proper clothing.

2024 Poppy Guide Details Poppy Usage

Check out how Poppy Funds can be used per the new 2024 Poppy Guide. ALA also authorizes Poppy Funds to support mission outreach activities, such as the National Veterans Creative Arts Festival, the Armed Services YMCA food pantry locations, and Honor Flights

ALA Department President Linda's Shirts!



Shirts are \$ 40 each. Details on how to order will be on the department website soon.

CHAPLAIN

Carol McChesney

Christmas, what a joyful beautiful holiday spending with family and friends celebrating! Hoping all had a wonderful day remembering our Savior's birth.

My wish for us all that the special occasions in 2025 will be spent celebrating anniversaries, graduations, births and birthdays.

May 2025 be full of good health and happiness from me and District 20.

Happy New Year to all!



HISTORIAN

Krista Young



ALA District 20 hosted a successful DEC January 17-19 in Palmdale. Some distinguished guests were American Legion Department of California Commander Nick Rosa and Western Division National Vice President Beverly Eads.

One of the highlights was Richard Hayes and Marcy Velador (shown above) recalling their time on the Kern County 50th Honor Flight. Marcy then presented Richard with a picture scrapbook of their experience which had Madam President responding, "That was more awesome than I expected".

All Historians: please note that end of year reports are due to me by April 12, 2025.

CHAIRMEN REPORTS

AEF

COMMUNITY SERVICE

Bonnie Christner

Hello, ladies! I hope you don't mind but I am reporting on the Auxiliary Emergency Fund and the Community Service program together this month because right now our members need both.

What an amazing time we had at the Department Executive Committee meeting this past weekend in Palmdale. About 140 members showed up this year and a great time was had by all.

Our Auxiliary Emergency fund, Community Service, Children & Youth and our VA&R Chairmen all had great information and applications for our members to take back to their communities to help the victims of the Cal Fires. Everyone was notified that if your unit or district or even a member wanted to the Cal Fires to please bring your donations to Mid-Year. Well, you know when it comes to the ALA we are always ready to donate. My Unit Antelope Valley 311 donated \$300 cash to help with the fire victims, and all together we collected over \$7,000 at DEC. All I can say is that each and every one of you out there who donated are so AMAZING! Thank you all for your support. If some of you would still like to donate you can send your donation to ALA Department of California Treasurer, 10400 Twin Cities Rd., Ste. 20, #107 Galt, CA 95643. Unfortunately, these members will need our help for a long time, so please don't think because you haven't donated yet that it's too late, they still need our help.



From the Community Service Chairman Rebecca Glenny: As we reflect on the challenges faced by our members, let us also be reminded of the strength and resilience of our Auxiliary Family. Together, we can face these trials and come out even stronger. Thank you for your unwavering dedication to our mission. Let's continue to show the power of our communities by standing with our fellow members during this difficult time. Thank you.

CHILDREN AND YOUTH

Marlena Tungate

National has changed the name of The American Legion Child **welfare fund** to The American Legion Child **well being fund**.

Remember to get your nominations in for the Good Deed and Youth Hero Awards. Details are available on the department website.

EDITOR

Nancy Heinisch



Canva is a free-to-use online graphic design tool. Use it to create social media posts, presentations, posters, videos, logos and more. It is available online at canva.com.

MEMBERSHIP

ALA District 20 (Area 6)		
Membership January 22, 2025		
Unit #	Unit Name	Total
176	San Fernando	66
311	Antelope Valley	73
348	Palmdale	42
377	Sunland-Tujunga	38
507	Newhall-Saugus	59
520	Sun Valley	15
817	Panorama City	60
Total		353

LEGISLATIVE

Kathy Faulconer

With the new 119th Congress sworn in, a number of bills that could widely expand veterans access to the private health care system, setting up the latest battle over Veterans Administration's (VA) reliance on what's known as community care.

Some voters argue that VA is a bloated bureaucracy that is making a concerted effort to prevent veterans from accessing community care and forcing them to stick with the VA system to curb costs. Supporters of expanded care say their goal is not to completely wipe out VA, but rather shrink the massive bureaucracy, perhaps scale back VA's direct care, and let veterans skip the VA authorization process and choose their providers and specialists, an argument that appeals to many in the veteran population who are aging and increasingly in rural areas.

Meanwhile, fear that the proposed legislation would strip VA of its ability to provide direct care, disrupting coordination and quality. Some veteran advocates want to see more money funneled toward improving VA's hospitals, clinics, scheduling systems, and health records, rather than continue to pour funds into the private sector. Joy Ilem, National Legislative Director for Disabled American Veterans, says diverting more and more care away from VA risk weakening a health care system that's made for veterans, many of whom have complex and layered health issues, like toxic exposures, high blood pressure, anxiety, and other ailments that she says are better served by clinicians and specialists under one umbrella. But a handful of bills that Republicans revived before the holiday is a shift in the opposite direction. Those bills include: **Securing Community Care's Availability,-- Health Savings Account,--No VA preapproval required,--Opening up Tricare.**

Also, if you have not signed up for Grassroots, please do so now. <https://www.voterve.net/AmericanLegion/Register>.

Don't forget we are in a National Legislative contest between Departments and Divisions. The goal is to have the most responses to the grassroots alerts, which we should be seeing more of soon in our E-mail every Friday. Year end Department and Division winners will be calculated by combining the total Department correspondence numbers for the year divided by membership entered in ALAMIS July 26, 2025.



MUSIC

Rebecca Valdivia

Happy New Year everyone! As previously promised, I'll get back to sharing some history about our official military songs. These songs not only promote pride, unity, and motivation for our citizens, but they stir patriotism and loyalty and remind service members of their duty to defend our nation.

Here's a brief look at the song for the U.S. Marines, "The Marine Hymn."

Jacques Offenbach (1819-1880) lived in Paris, France where he wrote and conducted comic and opera. Most believe the melody of the Marines' Hymn was taken from an aria in "Genevieve de Brabant" which was composed by Offenbach. An officer on duty in the Mexican War (1846-1848) wrote the first verse of the Hymn and added it to Offenbach's melody. The famous lines "From the Halls of Montezuma To the Shores of Tripoli" were meant to highlight the various campaigns of the Marines. The first use of the Marines' official anthem was in 1929. Introduced by the first director of the USMC Band, Francesco Maria Scala. The Marines Hymn is typically sung at attention as a gesture of respect. The third verse is also used as a toast during formal events such as the Marines birthday ball. The Marine Hymn is the oldest official song in the United States Armed Forces.

PUBLIC RELATIONS

Carol McChesney



In order to provide support to The American Legion Auxiliary family, we must be well thought of in the community. The Auxiliary must have a reputation for worthwhile community endeavors. This can only be accomplished by telling the public about the work of the Auxiliary and its value to the community.

Public Relations covers every kind of communication from personal contact in casual conversation, to speakers, and to carefully prepared news releases for the media.

Implement these thoughts that I'm sharing and go forth with any other ideas concerning Public Relations.

NATIONAL SECURITY

Mahala Beery

February is upon us; the Holiday season flew by. National Security is all about being prepared for what may come. January brought fires. I hope you all were prepared. I cannot imagine being amid the fires! It has made me re-think what I need to have Ready-To-Go.

Here's what I have ready: All important documents in an emergency binder categorized with \$500.00 in small bills. Family trust papers in separate binders all in a bag together. Photos in special photo boxes that can be taken in case of evacuation. My "real" jewelry altogether in a bag ready to be grabbed.

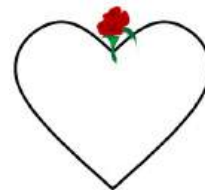


Sounds good right? What about it's the middle of the night someone is banging loudly on your door to tell you to go now!!!! Do you have your pets, food, prescription, crates, collars and leashes ready? Do you have a plan of where your pets will go? Lots of shelters do not accept pets. Do you have your prescriptions, over the counter meds, extra clothing, and snacks ready to go, a plan of where to go?

Seriously, a go bag needs to be packed and ready at a moment's notice. I realized I am not ready, how about you? Some people started packing the minute they heard about the fires, ready to go. What do you need? Get 3 layered outfits together for anything from warm sunshine days to cold and wet. A sturdy pair of walking shoes and socks. An all-weather coat with hat and gloves packed in a bag. Extra personal care items, a toothbrush & paste, skin lotion, deodorant, wet wipes, sunscreen, hairbrush, comb, scarf, bandana, face masks, small sewing kit, small flashlight, whistle, emergency blanket, multi tool.

Go to the ALA Department of California website and look at the National Security Program, there is information there and a link to FEMA which gives information on any type of disaster to be prepared for.

The recent fires really brought home the urgency of being prepared. My heart goes out to those families who lost loved ones and lost their homes. We probably all know someone who lost their home. I urge you to prepare for the worst. Stay vigilant see something, say something. Now it's time to help where you can and get ready for the next time.



VA&R
Barbara Garrison

Please keep track of your volunteer hours/donations and poppies distributed.

Below is Question #5 in the year-end report, the VA&R Chairman has to report this information to District.



Service for Veterans/Military:

Total hours Unit members have volunteered this year

Total dollars spend?

\$ _____

Total number of veterans/military assisted by you Unit this year

Total number of "Veterans in Community Schools" presentations facilitated by your Unit

Total value of in-kind donations received by your Unit for veterans/military this year \$

Total number of poppies or poppy items distributed by you Unit this year

Total dollar raised by your Unit for poppies or poppy items this year?

\$ _____



**AUXILIARY ALA
ACADEMY
Live Virtual Webinars**

The following courses are free but are offered live and you will need to register in advance.

Celebrating Women of Service

Noon ET, Thursday, February 6

The goal of this presentation is to familiarize ALA members with the ALA Foundation, how it supports the ALA's programs and ALA entities nationwide, and how to get involved in the Celebrating Women of Service Day on March 8.

**NFP Insurance Information for
ALA Girl State programs**

8 PM ET. Thursday, February 11

Speaker Information: Chris Phillips is a vice president at NFP Insurance and holds multi state property/casualty, personal lines and life/health licenses. Chris received his Bachelor of Science degree in Industrial Engineering from Central Missouri State University and went on to start his career with Chubb Insurance from 1993-2002 as a risk engineer. In 2002, Chris transitioned to an insurance advisor working for MJ Insurance 2002- 2004. Mr. Phillips has been with City Securities who sold to NFP an Aon Company, where he has worked from 2004. Presentation will discuss the insurance requirements for the Americanism program.

**How to Apply for an Auxiliary
Emergency Grant**

Noon ET, Wednesday, February 19

The goal of this presentation is to familiarize ALA members with the Auxiliary Emergency Fund application process and demonstrate how to complete and submit an application for consideration.

legion-aux.org

