

Western Caucus Spring Meeting 2025

1600: Colors and Invocation.

1605: Past National Commander and Western Caucus Chair Charles Schmidt:

Welcome everybody to the spring caucus meeting of the Western states. Glad to have you all here. Hope you've had some great meetings thus far. Mr. Secretary, would you do the roll call please?

1610: Secretary Cunningham: Thank you Mr. Chairman. Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, Hawaii, Idaho, Montana, Oregon, Utah. Washington, Wyoming – Present. Latin America, New Mexico, Philippines - Absent

1615: Western Caucus Chairman Schmidt: Thank you. We're going to deviate from our schedule a little bit because we've got some very important people here that want to bring us some words. So at this time, I would like to invite our National Commander of the American Legion to come forward, James A. LaCoursiere Jr of Connecticut.

1620: National Commander James A. LaCoursiere: “Go ahead, sit. I'm going to be very brief and everything. Western Caucus, it truly is an honor to be here, and I want to thank you. I want to thank you for your leadership and everything that you all do for our great organization, and especially what you do back home, sharing the principles and values of the American Legion family, sharing that beyond the four walls of your post. embedding that in your community. But I also ask you to please continue maintaining the forefront of your minds and your heart, our number one mission of Be the One. God bless each and every one of you. God bless the American Legion family, and may God bless the great United States of America. Thank you, everybody. I think we have the leading candidate for National Commander in the room, do we not? All the way from Kansas, let's hear it for Dan Wiley.” Applause

1630: Leading Candidate Daniel Wiley: “Sit down, please. Thank you. It is great to be here. You know, I'm going to start off because I almost messed up the last time I spoke. I'm going to start off by introducing the most important person in the room. And Past Commander Bock, that is my wife. My wife, Sonia. Thank you.

And I also want to introduce what hopefully, if we are elected, will be the National Commander's aide, and that's Doug Hensley, also in the back of the room. I'm going to start off by telling you what a difference two years or 20 months make. When I look around the room, I don't see a face, really that I haven't met, shook hands with, or that I don't know. Even the people from Ohio, Denise. So, it's been an awesome journey. I can't tell you how much. Number one, I enjoy your friendship and talking to you and these last two years.

I can't tell you how much I appreciate those departments I've had the opportunity to visit and also those that have donated to our campaign. I just simply say thank you. I'm looking

forward to the opportunity, hopefully, to visit you this next year. I do want to recognize a couple more people, and I know one of them is going to speak here in a moment, but there are a couple of people in the room, and I don't know how long has it been since...The Western Caucus has had a national commander, Charlie Schmidt."

"Who was that guy? I don't know, but I think he might have been from Oregon. He might have been from Oregon. And before that, was it Tom Bach? Did we have somebody before then, Tom? Do you remember? I don't think he ever was. He never was national commander, or he never was from the Western Caucus. So, think about this for a moment. I mean, in 20 years, you've had two in the Western Caucus. Am I right? I try to do my math and homework. Not bad."

"So, you got...Jay Bowen from, well he's from Colorado, who's obviously going to hopefully be next. And those of you that don't know, the person that got the nod today, and it'll be official at post-NEC if he keeps his nose clean, from Arizona is Matt Schumann. So, you guys are going to have two back-to-backs. So that's awesome. I only want to tell you briefly, because you already know this, but our priority next year is going to continue to be, Be The One."

"Obviously, the single biggest crisis facing our veterans and their families. And the only thing I'm going to tell you is if you get the opportunity, go to legion.org and take the Columbia protocol training. If you've not done that, please do that. And the only other thing I'm going to tell you is if you've seen the membership shirt, who likes the purple membership shirts? Alright, there's a few hands that are on up. Who didn't raise their hand? Alright, I need your name. So, but the purple membership shirts are purple for a bunch of reasons, but one of them is it's a sign of family. And the other thing is on this sleeve you're going to see Better Together. And it's a family theme; it's really kind of patterned after in large degree Commander Rohan and her family theme of family first in the purple shirt."

"But I'm a big believer in the American Legion family. When I say American Legion family, I am talking about post-unit squadrons and chapters. But I'm also talking about the Legion itself because we are family. You know, we use sayings like, I got your six or I got your back. And those aren't just sayings, okay? Those are heartfelt, serious sayings. Things we say to one another. We know. We got you. When you need somebody to catch you. And you're falling. We got you. Okay. And that's why we do buddy checks. And we're going to continue to do the buddy checks because that's part of be the one. But that's a family thing because we are a family both within the Legion and the American Legion family. So, with that, I just want to tell you I am looking so much forward to next year. We're going to do a lot of hard work, and we're going to have some fun, right? So, with that, God bless you. God bless the American Legion family. God bless our troops, and God bless the United States of America. Thank you so very much".

1645: Western Caucus Chairman Schmidt: "Thank you for those words, Dan. We're looking forward to your year. I'm waiting for the next introduction. I'm tired of getting up and down. Okay. Well, just for you, we have a second leading candidate, or second candidate, from the West, all the way from Colorado. Jay Bowen, come on down".

1647: Second Leading Candidate Jay Bowen: “Thank you, thank you, thank you. Please sit down. Tom, have a seat. You know, Dan, I'm so glad that you remembered to introduce Sonia this time because that helps me remember to introduce my lovely wife, Jackie. And to continue on with the tradition, the guy that's going to make sure that I get where I'm supposed to be and do what I'm supposed to do when I get there, Marvin Weaver Jr. ”

“You know, Dan talked about family, and it's so true. In Colorado, I'm going to share something with you that not very many people know. We currently don't have a charter in Colorado. I know it comes as a big shock, I know, to everybody. But you know what? Colorado's getting it done. Our posts are still working. Our posts are still out in the community, and they're doing things. Our districts are getting it done. They're out in the community and they're doing things and they're working membership. So yeah, we don't have a department headquarters, but we have a department full of Legionnaires and Legion family members that are getting the job done. And that's what really counts and that's what's really important at the end of the day. So, I would love to get our charter back, but you know what? It's not stopping us. It ain't stopping us from doing anything”.

“I've been traveling for about six months now and I've had the opportunity to visit about a dozen departments, and I've just had an absolute ball. Now there's still a few departments, especially out in the West that I'd love to visit. I haven't had an opportunity to get on your calendar yet, but please, please, let's get me out there. Because the ones that I have gone to, they've just been so thrilling and enlightening.”

“You know, and people when I travel, it's kind of funny. They, probably the most... The biggest question I get when I travel is, it's a multifaceted question. They say, okay, so you're running for national commander. Well, that's more of a walk, but yeah, I'm in line. And you're running against who? Well, I'm not really running against anybody, I don't think. Okay, so you're running for national commander. You're not running against anybody. And it costs you a lot of money to do this, right? Oh yeah, it costs a lot of money because we don't get subsidized from national. This is all out of our campaign, out of our war chest. All these travelers and they're not cheap. So, they look at me and go, okay, make sure I understand. You're not running against anybody. You're doing all this travel. You're spending all this money. Why? Why?”

“And it's a valid question. Why? Why are we doing this? Why do we do all these things? Well, there's a couple reasons. One, well actually about three reasons. One, you need to get to know me because I am going to represent you. I will serve in that position representing you to Congress, to the White House. And they're going to want to know what's going on across the country. What are veterans, what's keeping veterans awake at night?”

“Now I can talk all day about what's happening in Colorado, but I don't know what's going on in Washington or Oregon. I'm going to find out in Oregon in just about a month. The only way I'm going to know this is to visit and talk to the Legionnaires, talk to the veterans when I visit. And that's going to help me represent you when I get those opportunities. That's why we do it. So, it kind of puts things in perspective.”

“But I've been having a ball. I love it. My theme for my year is going to be a tag along to Be the One. You know, Be the One has been a great, great theme for the last four years. And I'm glad to see that Dan's going to continue with that. But folks, let me tell you something. It is so important to the American Legion that it's no longer a theme. It's a mission. It is the number one mission, as Dan stated earlier, in the American Legion right now and it needs to stay there. It needs to stay on the forefront and be the one wheel for many, many years, I believe”.

“But my theme is going to be bee pots. Now, if I've had a chance to visit with you, you probably already know what that is. Bee pots. Be part of the solution. And what I tell people when I travel is I know you've heard most of your life that you're either part of the problem or your part of the solution. Well, folks, here's the rest of the story. If you can be part of the solution, and you choose not to be, then your part of the problem. It's just that simple. So, we need to all work together and be part of the solution. And we're doing it. The fact that you're here today is a testimony that you strive to be part of the solution. And I applaud you for that. You know, we got to work together. Be part of the solution and be the one. Be part of the solution and be the one to help prevent veteran suicide. Be part of the solution and be the one to take care of our veterans and their families. Be part of the solution and be the one to get out there and wave that flag and show our true Americanism spirit, patriotic spirit. We've got to be part of the solution and be the one to educate and mentor our youth. And we've got to be part of the solution and be the one to advocate for strong national security. That's what we're all about. And I know we'll continue to do that. And oh, by the way, folks, I just learned all I need is one vote.”

“So, y'all keep that in mind. Show up at National next year in Louisville, Kentucky and cast that one vote. I would appreciate it. I thank you for the opportunity, Mr. Chairman, to speak. May God bless each and every one of you. May God bless America and may God bless this great American Legion that we have. Thank you.”

1705: Western Caucus Chairman Schmidt: “I'd like to introduce some folks that are here, part of our caucus. Past National Commander Tom Bock. Tom, you don't have to stand up. And former First Lady Elaine. Tom, we're glad to have you back. And Elaine, thank you for taking care of him. You've been a great nurse. Also, we got our National Vice Commander from the West, Gary Leach from California. Gary, welcome. Thank you.”

“At this time, I'd ask the Secretary to read the minutes of our last meeting.”

1707: Secretary Cunningham: “Mr. Chairman. The last meeting was Fall Meetings in Sheridan in Indianapolis, 8 October 2024. Call to order at 4:00 p.m. Roll call was conducted. Quorum was established. Previous meeting minutes were read and accepted. Moved on to new business. Chairman Schmidt presides, gives opening remarks. The leading and trailing candidates for national commander came in and gave a rousing speech. The finance report was read and a motion to file for audit was made and approved. A pass the hat was conducted for NEF due to recent natural disasters. And \$1,742.18 was raised and sent to NEF from the Department of Arizona on behalf of the Western Caucus.

“Nominations for the new secretary were made, and a single motion was made approved to accept Duane Cunningham of Montana as the new secretary. Chairman Schmidt established a Constitution Bylaws Committee and selected past National Vice Commander James Pisa as chair with Paul Espinoza, Jesse Clark, Steve Spurl, and Sarah Logan, committee members.”

“Past National Vice Commander Espinosa reported on the selection of the 2025-26 candidate for National Vice Commander Western Region, and Benjamin Heaton was selected. Next meeting was set for 6 May 2025 at the Sheridan Indianapolis during the spring meetings. Motion to close was made and passed. Meeting ended at 5:25 p.m. That is all.”

1710: Western Caucus Chairman Schmidt: “You've heard the minutes. Is there a motion to accept the minutes as read? So made, Got a motion, do we have a second? Okay, looks like we got several seconds in there. Is there any discussion? If not, all in favor say aye. Opposed, nay. The ayes have it. Passed. Mr. Secretary, do you have a financial report? Which probably will sound very similar.”

1711: Secretary Cunningham: Yes, a very simple report. We did find a check. The check we've got on paper anyway, \$4,626.46. There is a check to the Department of Arizona adjutant dated 6-6-2022. I am working currently with National to either... The advice I got today was try to cash it. I don't know if that's going to work or not, but we'll see and go from there. But that is the finance report.”

1712: Western Caucus Chairman Schmidt: “A motion to accept the financial report. Second. Point of clarification, is it to Arizona or from Arizona? “It's to the Department of Arizona adjutant that Jack had written to. It's from Colorado, isn't it? From the Department of Colorado Restricted Funds Account. Oh, yeah, we'll take your money. A motion to accept the financial report. Do I hear a second? Second. Is there any other discussion? Hearing none, all in favor say aye. Opposed? Nay. The Ayes have it.”

“I guess next on the agenda is the chairman's remarks. Dan Wiley mentioned that our own Matt got the nod today. Congratulations, Matt. I'll tell you what, you've done a lot of great work for this organization on Capitol Hill. I remember in February 2017 when we were going to deliver our report to Congress, you and I spent a lot of time together. and we had, I think, had a great testimony. But we're looking for bigger and better things from you in the future. And at the end of this convention, you'll probably be, you become a candidate. And when he becomes a candidate, get on his schedule. Invite him out to your department. The candidates, as Jay was saying, they want to learn about you. A candidate comes to see and be seen. Come to see, to learn and get the feeling of what's going on in your department. It also gives your members an opportunity to see who's in the lineup and who's going to be our national commander. You know, it's a two-fold benefit. So, get on his schedule. He's going to be travelling for two years before maybe you get nominated on the stage. So, get on his schedule early. And, of course, a campaign, a National Commander campaign, as Jaysaid, does take some resources. So, let's help our own out, okay?”

“At this time, I'd like to call on our National Vice Commander, Gary Leach. Gary, you got any good words for us?”

1715: Western Vice Commander Gary Leach: “Yes, sir. For once, they don't have to stand up here and complain about us being in last place in membership. Hey! Hey! Wednesday, we passed the Midwest. Thursday, we retired with the Midwest. Friday, we're back in fourth place. So, you guys have been really working membership hard and got us out of the basement. I don't see us going back again. So, congratulations. We're no longer in the cellar, and I love it. I want to say thanks to all the departments that I've visited this year. You guys have been amazing. The hospitality and just the way I've been treated has really been fantastic. So, thank you all.”

“The best news, Hawaii, I don't remember if Hawaii answered up. I didn't hear it. We got a hell of a nerve. If you haven't been looking at the membership report, Hawaii hit 100%. Hawaii, the first out of all our 55 departments to make 100% of their membership goal for 2025. And I brought them a little gift. But since they're not here, I'll have to figure something else out to do with it. I guess I could track them down and give it to them. It would have been a whole lot nicer to be able to give it to them here in front of the Western region.”

“That's really all I wanted to say. Thank you for your work on membership but still have a few revitalizations coming up. So that's why I think we're going to keep... By the way, the Northeast is only 600 members ahead of us. We have 15 departments to make up 600 members. That's in reach. We can do that. So, let's not quit while we're in fourth place, because third place is in reach. And I'll address that again tomorrow because I'm proud of what we've all done. So, yeah, I guess I can track down Hawaii on my own. But, oh, well. All right. Thanks, Commander. That's really all I had to say. All right. Well, that's good enough. Oh, yeah. That's good news. Good news. Thank you.”

1718: Western Caucus Chairman Schmidt: Well, congratulations, Western Caucus. You know, if you get the national membership stats from National just about every other day, you know, you look on the front page and see where your department is. But you flip on the back page, and you see where your region is. And far too long, far too long, we were in fifth place. Of course, there's only five places, you know. And I always thought, we've got to do something better because...national vice commander's name is above our caucus. We have to support whoever our national vice commander is. And I know we got the pride that we can keep going up. We're the West, right? And what's the West? The West. The what? The West. There you go. So, Commander Gary, hopefully we're going to keep you pushing up there.”

“We got a special guest today. Anybody going to Tampa Bay in August? No. Okay. Well, we got some of the organizers of that here. Miss Bridget, would you come on down and give us a little verbiage about Tampa Bay and the National Convention? Come on, Bridget! Woo! What's up? Take it away.”

1720: National Convention & Meetings Committee Bridget Robinson: “Thank you, Commander. I want to introduce my chairman for the Convention Commission. This is

Mike Walton. Well, I think I heard Commander said what? The West is the best? Well, I only saw, I think, five hands raised that are going to Tampa. So, I'm going to ask again. Who is going to Tampa? I thought so. All right, very good. That's correct. So, we have a great lineup for Tampa for everyone. One, have your friends to come. It's called FOMO, "fear of missing out." So, your friends are missing out if they are not coming.

With that great lineup, Friday we have the Color Guard Contest. If any of your Departments desire to be included in those contests, please reach out to your department adjutant and they can assist in that effort. The Color Guard Contest starts at 4:00 p.m. on that Friday night. Obviously, Saturday and Sunday, commission, committee meetings, But Sunday, the Tampa Bay Rays are in town, and we are working with them to have some discounted tickets, as well as hopefully a Legion family day. Now that game is at 1210. So we may have to rush from the Patriotic Memorial Service to the game, but at least it's a very short commute. So further information will be forthcoming about that game. But there's other information, which is on our website, and we'll go through that in just a second."

"But then Monday, there's obviously many department activities. So please make sure you're consulting with your department adjutant on what to attend and where to attend. Tuesday. I don't know if I... What's your name, sir? Jerry. Jerry? Jerry, can you stand up? Can you turn around? So, Jerry...wearing something that could be a representation of what Tuesday night's National Commander's banquet could represent. Thank you, Jerry. You may sit. Good job, Jerry. So, if that doesn't entice you to possibly what's coming down the pipeline, then I don't know what will, but reach out to your department adjutants, purchase your banquet tickets if you haven't already, because the Landsharks Band, which is a Jimmy Buffett-style review band, will be playing that night, Tuesday night."

"So, we have many things in the works. Go to the website. If you have any other questions or that, just contact the convention office. I will recommend that everyone, before you get to Tampa, the app will be ready to download and everything. So, make sure you are always downloading the app. That will be your latest and greatest information. You're good. Mr. Chairman? No, you're good. You got it. We can entertain any questions, Commander, if you desire. We've got, of course, next year we're heading to Louisville, which is a great city, by the way. And then we've recommended for 2031, we've recommended Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania for 2031 to the NEC. And we have four cities that have indicated interest: Spokane, Washington in 2032, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, Reno, Nevada, and Charlotte, North Carolina. So, at our fall meetings, we'll cut that down to three because we will only visit three cities. You check out the national website. It's got all the dates and locations for it. So, we're trying to do the best we can. We're trying to do best for the blue cappers, which has been our journey since I've been on that commission. We appreciate everyone and everybody's hard work at this caucus also, because I know what a good caucus this is. I've heard so many good things about it from my friend Jimmy Higuera and others. So, thank you for allowing us to be here today. And we can answer any questions that anybody might have regarding convention."

"Hey, where's the convention 2030 going to be? "

Salt Lake City, Utah. That's in the West. Yes, it is. They tell me Spokane's in the West, too. Is there any truth to that? No. Yeah, that's not said yet, but no. Yeah, Salt Lake City. So, we're looking forward to all these conventions because it's a great reunion and it's a great time to share a lot between our American Legion family. Thank you all for having us today."

1730: Western Caucus Chairman Schmidt: "Thank you, Bridget, and thank you, Mike. Yes, Bridget's staff, they do a lot of great work for us, not only working with the convention commission about our future conventions, but Bridget and her staff take care of us while we're up here. We follow our meetings, set it up, so they're part of the great headquarters team here."

"I want to mention, just remind you all, that we also, at our last meeting, as the minutes reflected, selected a candidate for the next National Vice Commander from the West. And of course, that person is from Arizona, Ben Headon. So, at our next meeting in Tampa Bay, which is going to be on Tuesday following opening session, I can't give you the exact time, but we already have the room set up. But at that meeting, we will endorse him to be a candidate and will be nominated. So, you won't want to miss that. But you may not even want to miss the convention at all. I remember the first time I went to my first national convention; it was in 2003 in St. Louis. And I'm out in eastern Oregon trying to get help build a post that was dormant for we don't know how long, just a number on paper. And, you know, and of course, in that process, there's always discouragements, you know, and how we do this and how we do that and how we get membership. And, you know, I just got a lot of challenges. I went to St. Louis not knowing what to expect. But there, when I walked in that convention center, I saw a lot of people from a lot of places. And how did I know they were from a lot of places? I was looking for the caps, what they said. And after a while, I got to talking to several of them off and on. And come to find out, I wasn't alone out there in eastern Oregon, in the outback of Oregon, with Legion problems. Because some of them from other places had the same problem. But you know what? In some of those discussions, I got a few ideas. So, you never know. We learn from one another. So, if you can make it to Tampa Bay, I don't think you'll be disappointed."

"Speaking of Ben, though, his job, the National Vice Commander, as is Gary's, they get two visits to your department. Compliments of National. That's kind of what maybe some of our membership dues go to. So, take advantage. They come one visit for membership, and the other time is an official visit. Get on Ben's schedule before you leave today or certainly when we have our annual meeting in Tampa Bay. And if you're not going to Tampa Bay, maybe today would be a good time. But get on his schedule. Get him out here and visit your departments. So, we can keep the vice commander from the West up on that back page of that membership roster. Other than that, that's all the comments I got. We'll go into old business."

"I'd like to call on our NEC man from Alaska. Jim, you got any comments about the recommendations or proposals that you're working on, on our Western Caucus Constitution and bylaws?"

1737: Past Western Vice Commander James Pisa: “ I have been working on it at pretty much a leisurely pace. I haven't gotten very far on it. I apologize to all the rest of the committee members for me not getting in contact with them. A few changes in it. I am working on it, and I will get copies out to everybody so they can view it, and hopefully Tampa Bay will have it ready to go for the rest to look at and approve.”

Okay. All right, we'll look forward for your recommendations and emails and share them with the NEC and the commander and the agents of each department. We'll get those fine-tuned. Thanks, Jim.

1740: Western Caucus Chairman Schmidt: “Also, we have a webpage. Anybody check in on the webpage lately? No? TALWEST.ORG. We're going to, if you take a look at that, it needs a little work. So, the Department of Arizona...has agreed to keep that updated. If you have some information that needs to be posted applicable to all of us, email it, send it, phone it, or whatever to the caucus secretary.” Duane, do you want to give your contact information out? “Sure, certainly. Email address. Anybody got a pen? Because you're going to want it.”

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“Okay. Any other old business? How about some new business? Well, Jim. Chairman Charlie and comrades, today we were informed that we are going to be celebrating come July the American Legion baseball, which is going to be placed in South Dakota.”

“Four teams from the original group have been invited to that tournament that's gonna take place. However, the thing is, we need to house those young men, we need to feed those young men a good show to showcase the American League that we've been doing, American League of Baseball for over 100 years. We are asking the departments if they have the generosity to send a check to defray some of the costs.”

“At this current time, I believe we're about what, 20,000 short of meeting the goal to put on this program. Now there's a number of options we can do. Number one, we can ask the departments to make their contribution amongst ourselves here. Number three, we can make a motion because I understand we got money in the bank somewhere.”

“Whether it's accessible yet. And the last one is, your permission to collect here, if you pass the hat, that the coffers match that amount. So, it's up to the delegation of the Western Departments. I won't make the motion. I want somebody else to take the lead on that. If the motion is in the apartments, send a check.”

“Are you making a motion?”

Mr. Chairman? The chair recognizes Matt of Arizona. Mr. Chairman”

1745: Matt Schuman – Department of Arizona

"I motion that...sorry, I move, thank you, I move that the Western Caucus match whatever is raised today in the hat. You got that money? We'll have the big bucks out there. You have over \$4,000 that was announced, I didn't think you'd get that check or cash. I would motion, I move, that the Western Caucus match whatever is collected in this man's hat if he leaves all the money in there to take it for himself. I'm sticking that motion. Oh, sure. Thank you, sir."

1747: Western Caucus Chairman Schmidt: "All right, you heard the motion. We've got a first and we've got a second. Is there any discussion regarding that, the caucus, match, whatever's in the hat, to help American Legion Baseball? That game is going to be played in July of this summer to give some young men and maybe a couple of young women that play American Legion Baseball an opportunity on a centennial occasion. Our baseball program. And if the departments would like to make a contribution when they get home. Okay, you can do that. So, the motion is to match whatever's in the hat out of the Western Caucus funds. And, of course, we'll have to figure that out, since the check hasn't been cashed, but I guess Arizona would probably write the check, right? Yeah, well, I think we must figure that out. Okay. Okay, you've heard all the discussions so all in favor say aye. Opposed say nay. The ayes have it. Thank you."

Chair recognizes NEC from Alaska.

"I would send them to the national headquarters and earmark them for American Legion baseball 100th anniversary game, which is going to be in July in Milbank, South Dakota, where American Legion Baseball started."

1749: Matt Schuman – Department of Arizona

"I was informed today that it should be written to American Legion Charities and then write in your memo line that it's for the Centennial of the American Legion."

1750: Western Caucus Chairman Schmidt:

"That's better yet. That's better yet. Thanks, Matt."

"So other new business. You know, every year we get the opportunity to recommend to the national organization nominee for National Vice Commander of the American Legion from the West. We do that every year. We may have that selection during the fall NEC meetings. However, according to our Constitution & Bylaws of the West, we have groups, and we are in group three this coming year for 2026-2027. That person will follow Ben of Arizona."

"So, departments that need to heed the message. Alaska, New Mexico, Oregon, Philippines, and Utah. You may submit your nominations according to the guidelines on the Western Caucus webpage, the Bylaws. It defines what's to be in that package. You need to bring them to Tampa Bay with five copies."

"We will have at Tampa Bay, we will select our selection committee, and in accordance with the bylaws, and they will meet during the Western Caucuses meeting in the fall in Indy right here in October. Any questions? Comments? So, you know, before we used to, we used to have a 13-department rotation, so every 13 years, your department got an opportunity to submit a recommendation for National Vice Commander, but now

departments every three years get an opportunity. So, I think that was a great change and hopefully we get more opportunities for more people. So, any other questions about that? I don't have a question about that. Okay. Do you have a question at all?"

Yeah, I just wanted to be a friend of the Department of Hawaii. I just want to apologize for being late. He's here. That's okay. You're here.

"At this time, I'd ask the secretary to go down the roll and invite the NECs to tell us who they have here and also maybe what's going on in your department. And before he does that, I'd like to say the NEC from the Department of Washington is here. They got their charter back on March 1st, but they're still working. Thank you. They got their charter back, and there's just a little bit of probationary period to follow. However, a memorandum of understanding was worked out between the national headquarters and the Department of Washington of some things that both parties have to do. And hopefully, they'll get done soon. But Washington has been working as a team effort to fill all those squares. And you know what? Working together, you can get wonders done. So, congratulations to you, Bob, and your department, and tell them we're proud of you. Okay? Mr. Secretary, please call the roll."

Alaska NEC. "Good evening, we have two people with us tonight. We have our two past department commanders, Terry Huseman, our newly passed department commander. Membership is going pretty good. We're almost at 91%. We're at 95%. It's been a long, hard road. As everybody knows, membership is a 24/7 job. We're working on it and hopefully we get a little bit more going. Bring our numbers up a little bit. Spring is right around the corner and the fissures start to run. That's all I got.

Arizona NEC. "Mr. Chairman, my name is Andy Hymie. I'm from the Western Caucus. I'd like to introduce our Department Commander, Manny Beltran. In the name of our next candidate for National Commander, Matthew Schuman. Our candidate for Western Region Vice Commander, Ben Hayden. And past Department Commander, Steve Spurl. Our Department Adjutant, Matt Finzer. And the Secretary of the White House. I'd like to take just a moment to privilege. I want to talk a little bit about Arizona. We are currently 95% on membership. And also I'd like to put out some kudos for our department commander. Not very many people know this, but besides doing his commander duties in the Department of Arizona, he's also been voted in to assist the Secretary of State in Arizona as the vice chair of the 250th birthday of America. He's been on it as well as doing all the other stuff so I congratulate our commander for that.

California NEC. "Thank you, Commander. He knows I'm getting over pneumonia. I want to make sure someone's sneaking in the back. There's six of us here at present, but of course everybody knows our Gary Reach, our Western Region Vice Commander, Western Region National Vice Commander Jim Carra, Mike Portman. I ultimately see Aaron Mops. Wes Sheree is our leadership, permission. So, he's also a member of our National Defense Council. We're really struggling to get back from the fires."

"Anybody knows anything that's counted on the Los Angeles area and you have a whole metropolitan there's 10 million of us that live in Los Angeles county just the county and

so you have Palestinians that was wiped out 75 percent from the Palestinian fire you had the Eaton fire that wiped out 80 percent of that community up front of Altadena we had the hearse fire so the thing is that I was really blessed I know back in 2007 when I wanted to retire to Texas, She's right in front of my wife, right in front of Ramona. Yeah. California raised him. We gathered 13,000 pounds of supplies and took them to Houston for Hurricane Harvey. And so, we're really skilled in Los Angeles on getting those items out to communities that need it. We are very blessed."

"There's a number of departments here in the Western Caucus that sent us resources, gift cards, things like that. So, on behalf of the Commander for four years, thank you to that community. Thank you to everybody in the Caucus for giving us those gift cards and supplies. Arizona, somebody brought a horse trailer complete with gear. My folks, I'm now the adjunct of Post 43. It was incredible to see them come in. If you see images online, our theater, which hosts foreign EDCs, was completely packed with supplies. And we got it down to an Amazon shipping style. We were getting orders out to people. As soon as they came in, we were getting shipped out. I know for a fact we have over 400 families with children in the Altadena fire. That all came from the American Legion. So, Comrade Commander, that is my report. And thank you again to every player that participated."

Colorado NEC. "Tom Flores, Colorado. I'd like to thank you for being here today. I'd like to thank Tom Bach, our National Commander, and the rest of the White House. Speaking of Colorado, we're family oriented. We're here. There's a group of us here. We are supporting our candidate, and it is Mrs. Jay and Jackie Bowen. We enjoy it. We're here to serve Jay and work with him, and we support all the candidates for the West. I think Colorado has a pretty good district there. So, I'd like to invite you to our hospitality room, Jay's hospitality and Jackie's hospitality room this evening, and we kick it off about 6. So, thank you very much. Thank you, Mr. President."

Hawaii NEC. "We're doing pretty good membership-wise. We did really well this year, so over 100% now. Just other than that, we're not having a lot else going on. Thank you."

Idaho NEC. "That's me. Bob Skinner, NEC Idaho. There's just two of us here. Our third one developed a lump full of water and couldn't fly. So, it's just the two of us. Sandy Crossman here is with me. I know we've had a few major bumps, but as the commander says, the department's working to get things back where they need to be. But all of our posts are alive and well and doing the nation's business. So, there we are. Thank you."

Montana NEC. "We're doing good. Montana, like all of us, we're surprised for some memberships, we're sure various. We did have one new post last year. There've been a few on the chopping block for several years and finally just have a leg of hope. But overall, our youth programs are going well. I was talking to the shooting sports lady here at headquarters this morning. One of the main teams we had last year but the names haven't been released yet. But there's going to be a couple people going, moving out. The youth programs overall, a lot of people, are doing very well."

And I think that's the secret to get young veterans into the legion is to show them what programs we can do for them. You know, they, uh, young people that don't want, you know, they get really interested when they find out, hey, my daughter got a \$25,000 scholarship. That's what I think. It, uh, it's important. Thank you."

Nevada NEC. "Jim Stewart, M.C. for Nevada. There's only two of us here. One on the Mona, our department adjutant, who is actually retiring after 25 years from being our department adjutant. From my understanding, that is the most significant thing we've had going on in Nevada. But he's ready to travel. But that's pretty much what we have right now.

Washington NEC. "Bob Clark, NEC for the great state of Washington. I have two individuals here and I just want to throw a personal thing out. Darryl is the first time ever being in Indianapolis, the first time he's ever seen the national headquarters. He takes care of a lot of our Americanism programs on the east side of the state. And so, I'm glad he's been able to come and experience stuff like this. Carol Reed. Carol Reed's been here a few times, but she is our...she is our rock when it comes to boy state and oratorical contests and by the way you all know who won last year right it was the department of Washington won the oratorical contest. It's a new department but no uh we're working on membership as you know we got our charter back it's been a long struggle."

"Most of our membership right now is around 90% that's on the SAL and on the Legion side. So we're doing what we can, but it's gonna be a long struggle for a while, but we'll get there little by little. And I appreciate all the support that you all have given us while we have tried to get out there, make mends of some of the past and now we can just move forward. Thank you."

Wyoming NEC. "Keith Davis, NAC from Wyoming. Wyoming's kind of been the improvised overcome and adapt department for this year. We elected Bill Barnes as our commander in June. In November he got sick, and he resigned. Two weeks later he passed away. And so, we kind of moved people up. That's kind of gone on. And promptly at 7:15 one morning, our adjutant resigned effectively immediately. So, we had to go over those bumps in the road."

"In spite of that, we're doing well, I do believe. And today we have with us our new adjutant, Vanessa Stewart. Mike Cook, who was selected as Department Commander He is now the Chairman of the MMPA Committee on the national level. And thirdly, we have a big fan of ours, was second vice, now first vice, in part of the membership. We've done real well the way we've gone around. Well, you know, Wyoming's always out for a challenge, and we've been teasing Nevada a little bit about getting ahead of last week, and then a couple days later they were back in front of us but now I'm told by our adjutant that we took the lead again so it's always good to have a healthy competition to help the western caucus get moved up or western region get moved up but it's an honor to be here I've got a lot of great people and come to Wyoming to visit me please."

1810: Western Caucus Chairman Schmidt: "Thanks to all for sharing information about your department. By the way, has it been easier for you to hear? Yes. With the

microphone. Yes. We had a courteous microphone at our last caucus, and we got another microphone, but it's not courtesy.

"So therefore, I would entertain a motion that the Western Caucus reimburse the National Headquarters \$120 for the use of this sound system. Who was the first? Arizona. Arizona. And who was the second? Wyoming. Any discussion on that motion? It was a shock to me, too, but times have changed. Hearing no more discussions, all in favor say aye. Opposed, nay. The ayes have it."

"Any other thing to come before this body? Eric. I think you'd like to know what the tally is. Yes. It's generous, the body and hearing aids. That is \$608. All right. So based on our previous motion, \$608 that whoever's going to write the check from Arizona will get it sorted out."

"So we'll send about approximately 1200 to the American Legion anniversary baseball game I tell you the west is the best you know we the west need to tell the rest need to prove to the rest that we are the best all right hearing that come back yes you may absolutely, oh crap, wait a minute. 120 bucks, I don't want to drop it. Hey, Hawaii, would you come on up here please?"

1815: Western Vice Commander Gary Leach: "Hey, I appreciate the hell out of you guys getting 100%. Because, I said earlier, we've been in a cellar all year and you guys make 100% of just one of the many that helped us get out of there. So, I've got a new gift that says congratulations. You can open it. You're only one, aren't you? Hey, so everybody else, now you've got to compete and try to catch up with Hawaii. That's the challenge. We're proud of you. Be careful. Thank you."

1817: Western Caucus Chairman Schmidt: "Okay, we had a good time today. Andy, go ahead. Mr. Chairman, I apologize. I neglected one of our members. His name is Jerry Brickman. He's District 3 commander. Okay, let's go home. again. Who's the best?"

"Yes. Okay. If the chaplain would lead us in prayer as we all uncover."

Chaplain: Heavenly Father, thank you for bringing us all together here in the great city of Indianapolis. Thank you also for bringing our national leaders together and inspiring all the western states to do well and keep up the fight and keep us rolling. I ask you now that you bless us and continue to protect us as we all journey back home to our homes throughout the western region. There's a snowstorm out there growing in three of the western states, so please ensure that you give a little extra effort to protect our folks traveling in those three states. In Jesus' name we pray, amen. Amen.

1820: Western Caucus Chairman Schmidt: Cover. The colors of our nation in place by the numbers. One, two. This concludes our meeting. Journey's blessings to everyone.