



**Department of  
South Carolina  
The American Legion**

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## **SOUTH CAROLINA NEWS LINE**

**Not admitting a mistake is a bigger mistake.**

### **Commanders “Project 94”**

Commander Collins' Commanders Project 94 is doing great. His project this year is to honor the 94 men and women who have given their lives for us and our country since 9-11. He had some pins made up and is handing them out to anyone who wants one to wear either on their jacket, Legion cap, wherever. He is not selling these pins but will accept donations of any size that will go to the National program called Operation Comfort Warriors where The American Legion obtains comfort items for those returning from war that need items. The Commander is hoping to raise \$100.00 for each of the 94 who have paid the ultimate sacrifice. If you desire to donate, please send a check to the Department Headquarters and earmark the check Project 94. Those funds will go into a special account and will be sent to National for O.C.W.

### **2014 Fall Conference**

At this point in time, plans for the 2014 Fall Conference at the Marriott in Columbia are being made. The hotel has notified us that the block of rooms is still available and that not many have made reservations to attend. If you plan on attending, please call the hotel and make your appropriate reservations as soon as possible. The tentative agenda is published on the Department website for review, however, it is subject to changing as programs require. Let's make this one a good conference and see how many we can get to attend. It promises to be a learning one this year. Cut-off date is September 1 for reservations at the rate of \$89.00 per night plus tax making sure you state you are with **The American Legion**. Contact the hotel at 803-771-7000 or 800-543-6465.

**National Convention  
News**

[The Home Depot](#) Foundation dedicated \$1 million to [American Legion](#) projects.

During the past three years, the foundation and Team Depot, which is composed of 350,000 The Home Depot Inc. (NYSE: HD) employees and volunteers, have helped renovate more than 13,000 homes for veterans, Home Depot Foundation Executive Director [Gaven Gregory](#) told the crowd at the 96th National Convention of The American Legion, in Charlotte, N.C.

Gregory presented examples at the convention of American Legion projects in Alpharetta, Ga.; Tybee Island, Ga.; Stickney, Ill.; and Phoenix. Many of the projects have included improvements at American Legion posts, themselves, according to the American Legion.

The Home Depot Foundation grants have grown from \$140,000 in 2011, to more than \$450,000 in 2012 and nearly double that in 2013, Gregory said.

“We have developed a powerful alliance with The American Legion over the years,” Gregory said in a statement. “We’ve worked together across the country to improve the lives of our veterans, from touching up posts to repairing homes for Legion members in need.”

Gregory told Legionnaires they can get assistance with grant applications by contacting their local Home Depot stores and asking for a Team Depot captain. They can also visit <http://homedepotfoundation.org/>.

**New National  
Officers**

Michael D. Helm was elected national commander of the 2.4 million-member American Legion on Aug. 28, 2014 in Charlotte, N.C., during the 96th national convention of the nation’s largest veterans organization.

A U.S. Army veteran during the Vietnam War, he served with the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne Division in Fort Bragg, N.C., and earned his Ranger tab in 1972. He has been a member of Jack Helt American Legion Post 313 at Lebanon, Neb., since 1972. Born in McCook, Neb., he grew up in Norcatur, Kansas, where he currently resides. He is a retired U.S. Postal Service rural mail carrier with more than 33 years of service.

Helm served as commander of the Department of Nebraska from 1987 to 1988 and as a national vice commander from 2003 to 2004. He also served as the national commander’s representative to the National Legislative Commission, the chairman of the National Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Commission and the chairman of the Foreign Relations Commission.

He was Nebraska’s first Vietnam era veteran elected as department commander. Mike takes great pride in having been selected to serve as Nebraska’s official American Legion representative at the dedication of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in 1982.

Mike’s wife Debbie is active in The American Legion Auxiliary having served as District 9 president and as the Department Junior Activities Chairwoman. They are the parents of five young Legion family members. Aaron and his wife Robie, both graduates of the United States Military Academy at West Point, N.Y.; Rebecca

and her husband Jaron Cox, both graduates of Kansas State University; Jacob, a senior cadet at the U.S. Air Force Academy; Matthew, an Army ROTC cadet at Kansas State University and Timothy, a student at Decatur Community High School in Oberlin, Kansas.

Helm took the oath of office along with five other national officers. Serving as national vice commanders are Doug Haggan, Department of France; Paul O. Sanford, Department of Kansas; Richard W. Neville, Department of North Carolina; William R. Bryant, Department of Virginia; and Gerald L. Jacobs, of Wyoming. They each represent regions that cover the 50 states, District of Columbia and overseas departments of The American Legion.

National Historian Sue Mason, Long Beach, Calif.; National Sergeant-at-Arms Leon Hagan, of Beatrice, Neb.; and National Chaplain Randy Cash, Columbia, S.C., were appointed to their positions by Cmdr. Helm following the close of the national convention.



### **LIT Information**

The Legionnaire Insurance Trust is pleased to announce that online enrollment is now available for the LegionCare No Cost Accidental Death benefit. Please be sure to let your Department know about this one-of-a-kind benefit offered exclusively to Legionnaires.

LegionCare provides all Legionnaires with:

- \$5,000 in Accidental Death Coverage for covered accidents that occur if you are traveling on official Legion business.
- \$1,000 for all other covered accidents.
- 24/7 protection that covers Legionnaires at home, at work and while they are travelling away from home available for all Legionnaires in your Department.

To learn more or to sign up, please visit <http://www.thelit.com/no-cost-legioncare>.

### **New VA Burial Rule**

An announcement dated July 7, 2014 regarding New Burial Compensation Rules, new regulations effective on 7/7/2014 will now allow the Department of Veterans Affairs, (VA) to automatically pay the maximum amount allowable under law to most eligible surviving spouses more quickly and efficiently, without the need for a written application. Under former regulations, VA paid burial benefits on a reimbursement basis, which required survivors to submit receipts for relatively small one-time payments that VA generally paid at the maximum amount permitted by law. “VA is committed to improving the speed and ease of delivery of monetary burial benefits to Veterans’ survivors during their time of need,” said Acting VA Secretary Sloan Gibson. “The recent

changes allow VA to help these survivors bear the cost of funerals by changing regulations to get them the benefits more quickly.”

This automation enables VA to pay a non-service-connected or service-connected burial allowance to an estimated 62,000 eligible surviving spouses out of a projected 140,000 claimants for burial benefits in 2014. Surviving spouses will be paid upon notice of the Veteran’s death using information already in VA systems. The burial allowance for a non-service-connected death is \$300, and \$2,000 for a death connected to military service. This revised regulation will further expedite the delivery of these benefits to surviving spouses, reduce the volume of claims requiring manual processing, and potentially make available resources for other activities that benefit Veterans and their survivors.

For more information on monetary burial benefits, visit [www.benefits.va.gov/compensation/claims-special-burial.asp](http://www.benefits.va.gov/compensation/claims-special-burial.asp)

**Pro Bono Info**

Lawyers4Vets - Monthly Pro Bono Veterans Legal Clinic

**Introduction:** As a service to area Veterans, the South Carolina Appleseed Legal Justice Center has partnered with the Wm. Jennings Bryan Dorn VA Medical Center and members of the private bar to establish Lawyers 4 Vets, a Pro Bono Veterans Legal Clinic.

**Purpose:**

Lawyers 4 Vets connects low income and homeless Veterans with attorneys who provide legal advice and representation on certain issues.

**Legal Issues and Services:** The clinic will ONLY address the following topics:

- Obtaining identification (Social Security, South Carolina State ID, birth certificates)
- Child support and visitation issues (in South Carolina)
- Expungements and pardons (for convictions from South Carolina courts)
- Consumer protection
- Simple wills and healthcare power of attorney

**Eligibility:**

Veterans will be screened for eligibility, and if eligible will be given an appointment at the clinic. Lawyers 4 Vets will assist eligible Veterans regardless of military discharge status.

**Appointments:** Veterans who would like to be screened for eligibility should call the number listed below and leave a message including their name, phone number, and legal issue. The Veteran will be contacted within 2 business days by an intake volunteer who will ask the veteran a number of questions to determine if they are eligible. If the Veteran is eligible and has a qualifying legal issue, they will be given the next available appointment at the legal clinic. Appointments are required for a Veteran to receive a face-to-face meeting with a lawyer. Walk-ins will not be seen and will be directed to contact the telephone intake.

**Number to call:** Toll Free 1-877-289-6000

**Clinic Dates:** The Clinic will be held from 9 a.m. to 12 p.m. on the third Thursday of each month. The 2014 Clinic dates are:

- |                      |                    |
|----------------------|--------------------|
| * May 15, 2014       | *June 19, 2014     |
| * July 17, 2014      | *August 21, 2014   |
| * September 18, 2014 | *October 16, 2014  |
| * November 20, 2014  | *December 18, 2014 |

**Where:** (BY APPROVED APPOINTMENT ONLY AND SPECIFIC LOCATION PROVIDED UPON

**CONFIRMATION):** Wm. Jennings Bryan Dorn VA Medical Center, 6439 Garners Ferry Road, Columbia SC 29209.

**What's Happening**

**September 13, Saturday** – District #1 meeting Post #193 Chapin 9:30 refreshments 10:00 meeting

**September 16, Tuesday** – District #15 Post #212 Aiken 6:30 p.m.

**September 19-20-21 Friday-Saturday-Sunday** – Fall Conference, Columbia Marriott Hotel

**September 28, Sunday** – Gold Star Family Day. Light a luminary at dusk. See [luminaryinitiative.com](http://luminaryinitiative.com) website to honor, support and remember the families of our fallen heroes.

**Post Officer Listings**

**District and Post Commanders Please Note:** Even though you may have the same officers in the same positions for the 2014-2015 year, you should also submit a listing to department. Also, for those that have email addresses, please indicate that on the listing. Your assistance and attention to this matter will be greatly appreciated.

Proud To Serve

Lloyd H. Woods  
Department Adjutant