Midwinter Conference Update

The Midwinter Conference for the Colorado American Legion was held on January 25-27 at Longmont Post #32. Approximately 100 members of The American Legion participated in the conference.

National Vice Commander Randy Edwards of Utah led two important events on Thursday and Friday of the conference. Following his training, volunteer Legionnaires participated in a Buddy Check calling session to members in Colorado. He stated that the volunteers who helped performed the best of any of the Buddy Check sessions that he had observed.

Friday afternoon, Vice Commander Edwards led a membership round table with the District Commanders present. Colorado has consistently been in the top half of the membership standing this year. Each of the District Commanders or representatives present gave a short report on membership events in their district. At the date of this writing Colorado is in 16th place with 88.45% well above the February 14 target of 85%.

On Saturday morning PNC Denise Rohan of WI presented an excellent program on anti-harassment training, discussing harassment in general but then continuing discussion with the attendees on various situations. The morning session closed with a presentation by director Norm Steen on Boys State and enrollment of teams into the Colorado Baseball program.

Path Forward

The majority of the conference dealt with the current state of The American Legion in Colorado, first dealing with the background that caused suspension of the charter and the state of the programs currently. The afternoon session seemed to carry the most interest for the attendees. PNC David Rehbein discussed the path to reinstatement of the charter and Legal Coordinator Ken George from the National staff discussed common mistakes made by Post, district and Department leadership.

The path forward contains three major steps; 1) the National Executive Committee (NEC) approves a recommendation from the reorganization committee to reinstate, 2) the Colorado Convention adopts a new Constitution and Bylaws to govern the Department, and 3) the Colorado Convention elects new officers to oversee the reinstated Department. As always though, what seems to be simple steps becomes more complex.

1. The NEC approves a recommendation to reinstate the charter. That recommendation can only happen if it contains a set of conditions by which the reinstated Department and the reorganizing committee would work together for a specified period to turn over the business of the Department from the committee to the Department. Those conditions have yet to be discussed in the committee.

2. A new Constitution and Bylaws are adopted by the Colorado convention. Approval of a new set of governing documents would best occur if a draft of those documents by Colorado Legionnaires were presented to the convention for discussion. Work on
that draft is beginning in a working group organized by the National Judge Advocate. Their work will be presented to a constitutional convention to be held in late May or early June.

The constitutional convention will be composed of two (2) delegates from each district. Those delegates must be chosen by election at the Spring 2024 District Conferences. Delegates will only be seated at the constitutional convention if they present a statement signed by the District leadership certifying their election. The draft documents produced by that constitutional convention must be approved unanimously in order to be presented to the Colorado convention for discussion and approval.

In addition to drafting the Constitution and Bylaws, the constitutional convention will be asked to make a recommendation for the method of voting at the upcoming Department Convention. That recommendation will be among the first items presented at the convention since all subsequent convention actions must be approved by vote.

3. Election of new Department officers will be accomplished at the Colorado convention following approval of the new Constitution and Bylaws. Regarding that election, it is well established that any Colorado Legionnaire can run for any Department office with no official restrictions applied.

It should be agreed however that candidates for the offices at this election should provide the maximum amount of information to the convention delegates. We are recommending that all candidates begin by preparing a resume that includes both their American Legion history as well as the personal achievements that prepares that candidate for overseeing the operation of the Department. We hope that candidates will obtain a Post endorsement and then present that endorsement at their district convention for consideration. Space on the Department website will be reserved for endorsements and resumes and notice will be sent through Constant Contact when new candidate material is posted in that section of the website.

**Required Action by All**

Much work remains to be done before the NEC spring meeting and the Colorado convention. That work requires a cooperative effort by all Colorado Legionnaires. It remains the reorganizing committee’s belief that the cause of Colorado’s problems lies mainly in the fight for control of the Department with the result being the Legionnaires on each side of that fight refusing to work toward a cooperative decision.

If the committee continues to see actions like that and refusal to work together, that may cause the committee to delay the recommendation to the NEC. That would be disappointing to all, including the committee, but the committee is ready to make that decision if Colorado is not considered ready to resume control of their own affairs.