

## **Candidate Announcement for National Executive Committeeman**

### **Michael Westergren**

I am announcing my candidacy to serve as your National Executive Committeeman representing the Department of Arkansas at the National level. It is important to have the right person as your NEC, and I have worked diligently over the last several years to be that person. The NEC represents Arkansas in all matters outside of the National Convention. Not only do they serve as the emissary of our Legionnaires in the National Organization, but they are responsible for reporting back to the Department all actions by National and finding the Arkansas ambassadors to serve at the National level.

Preparing for this roll takes time, experience, and sacrifice. As your Alternate NEC, I have sat next to NEC Mary Erdman over the past two years at all National Meetings. I know the system and formalities expected of each Department NEC. I have attended every National Convention since 2016, every Fall and Spring National meeting since 2017, and every Washington Conference since 2018. Additionally, I served on the Americanism Council from 2013 to 2017 and continue serving on the Americanism Commission since 2018 as the National Chairman of the Committee on Youth Education. This committee is responsible for handling the two largest scholarships awarded through our National Organization: the Samsung American Legion Scholarship and the Legacy Scholarship. This year we awarded \$1.74 million in Legacy Scholarships to 559 deserving children across our Nation.

In preparing to serve as your NEC representative, I have established both contacts and strong connections within all the divisions of our National Headquarters. I also know and have gained the trust of the other Department NECs. Our Department has gained a lot of respect over the last 10 years of Mary's NEC tenure, and I have built the necessary relations to continue this momentum. Because of her, Arkansas has been receiving some premium appointments on National Commissions and Committees. The relationships I have established will allow this trend to continue.

I have spent my time in the trenches, and I am ready to serve as your NEC. I am asking for your vote and support. Let's continue this trend that has placed Arkansas in the limelight at the National level.

Michael Westergren

Garner Brothers Post 91

Beebe, Arkansas

**Greetings to Department of Arkansas Legionnaires,**

**At the Department Convention next month, in addition to the Department Officers, we must elect a National Executive Committeeman and an alternate National Executive Committeeman. I am asking for your vote to become the next NEC for Arkansas.**

**The NEC serves as the Legion's board of directors, the same as the DEC serve as the board of directors for the Department of Arkansas. The primary responsibility of the National Executive Committeeman is to represent you, the Legionnaires of Arkansas at the National Executive Committee meetings. To communicate the outcomes of National meetings to the members of the Department of Arkansas, and to ensure that any issues affecting the Department of Arkansas are presented to the National Executive Committee.**

**My eligibility for The American Legion was earned by serving Honorably for 20 continuous years in the USAF. My current Legion membership began in 2005 when I was initiated into Siloam Post 29. Since that period, I have earned the eligibility for becoming the Arkansas NEC by serving in most of the leadership positions within our department. At the Post level; Executive Committeeman - Finance Officer - Adjutant - Commander. At the District Level; Vice Commander - Finance Officer - Executive Committeeman. At the Department Level; Judge Advocate - Commander - District Executive Committeeman. Department Level Committees; Convention - Membership - Resolutions Committee - Constitution & By-Laws - Policy Committee - plus several Ad Hoc Committees. National Level Committee/Commissions; Americanism Council - Constitution and By-Laws Committee - Internal Affairs Commission.**

**Thank you for your consideration and support.**

**J.W.  
Department  
District One Executive Committeeman**

**Smith  
2016-2017**



My name is Marie Wilbanks and I am seeking the position of Alternate National Executive Committeeperson (NEC), Department of Arkansas for 2025-2026.

- Department Commander 2023-2024
- Northwest Area Vice Commander 2022-2023
- Appointed to the Department of Arkansas Children and Youth committee in 2017 and currently serve as Chair
- Serve(d) as Post Commander, Adjutant, and Finance Officer as well as Unit President at post, unit and district levels
- Instructor for Arkansas Legion College
- Department trainer
- Retired from the United States Air Force. Served at squadron and command level (USAFE and AFSPACECOM).

Success always starts with communication from individual posts, districts and the Department. I aim to ensure that posts and districts within the state are kept “in the loop” at all times while working closely with you, our state officers, and National. I look forward to serving you, our veterans, your post, the districts and the Department in the coming year.

# CANDIDATE FOR SW AREA VICE COMMANDER JERRY ASHBY

Announcing my candidacy for 2025/2026 Department of Arkansas SW Area Vice Commander. Active Nine-year American Legion Membership, currently finishing my third year as Post 39 Commander. Provided leadership to resurrect our broke, failing post transforming it into a 100% membership growing vibrant part of our community. We have developed many events and projects with emphasis on our Four Pillars. Served as post trustee, Post Commander, District 15 Chaplain, currently serving as District 15 Commander and member of the SW Area membership committee. Graduate of the Basic and Department of Arkansas Legion College.



Motivation comes from a deep burning desire to help facilitate Legion growth, through increased membership and mentorship. Simply put, I want all Veterans to enjoy the benefits of direct post involvement and fellowship by participating in the greatest Veteran Service Organization on the planet.

Previous leadership rolls include: Race relations committee member during the South Conway County School District desegregation case – Founder and leader of the Conway County Angel Tree Toy Run with an 8 year run – Served 11 ½ years in the Arkansas Patriot Guard Riders in all leadership positions including State Captain for my final 2 ½ years – Organized the Arkansas Run for The Fallen State Capitol Flag Line – Founder and Location Coordinator of the Wreaths Across America at Elmwood Cemetery, Morrilton 2024 event with 100% coverage of 598 Veteran headstones requiring over \$10,100.00.

Under my leadership, Post 39 has developed or continues the following: Membership in the Morrilton Area Chamber of Commerce – Monthly Veteran food box distribution in Conway and Perry Counties serving 175 Veterans – Perryville City Park Veteran Flag Field (100 Flags) – Wreaths Across America at Elmwood Cemetery 598 graves – Boy Scout sponsor – Legion baseball sponsor – Boys State sponsorship – School Veterans Day programs – Conduct Veterans Day Parade and Ceremony, Pow/MIA Remembrance Ceremony, Arkansas Run For the Fallen support, - Arkansas Patriot Guard Riders Museum Curator and support, - Participation in all local parades and events.

Recognized as “Citizen of The Year” by the Morrilton Area Chamber of Commerce for community contributions – Lifetime memberships, American Legion, DAV, VFW, PTA.

Retired from the U.S. Navy (1964 – 1981) with 11 years, 6 months of active service including 3 tours in the Vietnam War, 1966, 1967, 1968. Medals: National Defense Service Medal – Vietnam Campaign Medal (With Device 1960-) – Vietnam Service Medal (3rd Award) – Navy Unit Commendation (2nd Award) – Good Conduct Award (2nd Award).

Married to my wonderful wife Barbara for over 57 years...who serves as Auxiliary Unit 39 secretary/treasurer, and District 15 Auxiliary Vice President, one son Shane, Post 39 Member & USAF (Ret.), our daughter Christine works in research and currently serves as Auxiliary Unit 39 president and District 15 Auxiliary president. In addition, I’m a 32-year Leukemia survivor!

*Jerry*

Candidate for SW Area Vice Commander  
**Brian Burdine**



### **Dedicated Leadership and Service**

**My name is Brian Burdine, and I am honored to announce my candidacy for SW Area Vice Commander. As a proud member of Post 10 in El Dorado, AR, I have served numerous leadership roles, including Post Commander, Adjutant, and Finance Officer for Post 10, as well as District Commander.**

**My extensive experience within the organization has equipped me with the skills and insights necessary to lead effectively and foster a sense of community among our members. Throughout my tenure, I have dedicated myself to promoting the values and mission of our organization, ensuring that we continue to support and honor those who have served.**

**In 2009, I retired from the Army after a commendable 30-year career. My military service has instilled in me the principles of discipline, commitment, and integrity, which I carry into my work with Post 10. I am passionate about advocating for veterans' rights and providing resources to those who have sacrificed for our country. As Vice Commander, I will strive to enhance communication between posts, support initiatives that benefit our members, and uphold the traditions that make our organization strong. I am committed to serving with dedication and excellence, and I humbly ask for your support in this endeavor. Together, we can continue to build a bright future for our community and honor the legacy of our veterans. Thank you for considering my candidacy.**

## **Candidate Announcement for Southeast Area Vice Commander**

### **Charles W. "Chuck" Eick**

After a great deal of soul searching and prayer, I am announcing my desire to be the American Legion, Department of Arkansas, Southeast Area Vice Commander. I do this understanding that I have a vision of improving the efforts of fellow legionnaires in the southeast to get back to the main mission of the American Legion. That main mission is defined for us in the very Congressional act that established us as a federally chartered corporation. The preamble is our purpose.

We as an organization have been totally focused on membership numbers. While I fully understand the need to have good membership numbers, I submit to you that the numbers often will take care of themselves if we take care of our fellow members, veterans and communities. A past state commander has made the comment: "Would your city know if your post closed?" Ponder that thought for a while. Ponder this thought also, have you ever seen a person wash and wax a car that they rented? I seriously doubt you have but it begs the question, why not? It is simple, they don't have ownership of the car. I truly believe that if we will empower our fellow legionnaires in every post to take ownership of their post and activities, we will have stronger and more active posts.

My qualifications for vice commander are that I have been commander and adjutant of Post 71 in Cabot for the past three years. We are deeply involved in our community and are the largest membership post in Arkansas. We have established stable finances, modernized much of our post office, been active in our high school Junior ROTC program, held an annual golf tournament to fund our Americanism and Children and Youth programs, and provided, with the help of AARP Foundation TaxAide, totally free federal and state income tax filing services for not only our veterans but for our community. I submit to you that Post 71 members have made an impact on the Cabot community. We routinely have our mayor visit our post.

I have been the department finance officer for the past three years and in many ways establish a more accountable and accurate financial management of membership funds.

I have been an adjutant at the district level and am currently the DEC representative for the 8<sup>th</sup> District.

I am a retired US Air Force veteran with 26 years of service and retired as a First Sergeant. I have a bachelor degree in business administration (BBA) and a master degree in business administration (MBA).

I am a life member both the American Legion and the Veteran's of Foreign Wars.

I am asking for your support in becoming the Southeast Area Vice Commander and fulfilling the duties of the position to make our Arkansas American Legion a more responsive organization to help our fellow veterans and our communities.

Charles W. "Chuck" Eick  
Criswell-Robinson Post 71  
Cabot Arkansas



## Dennis Mayher

### Seeking Reelection for S.E. Area Vice Commander



Rollie Crowder Post 133 in Carlisle proudly endorses Dennis Mayher for his reelection of Southeast Area Vice Commander for the year 2025–2026. Dennis gained his eligibility in the American Legion by serving in the U.S. Army from 1970 to 1973 where he was a squad leader for his Air Defense Artillery Unit in Giebelstadt Germany. He has served as the Family Readiness Leader for the 39<sup>th</sup> National Guard Unit out of Hazen. He served 8 years as the Minute Man Counselor on Camp Robinson, where he received the Adjutant General Minute Man award for volunteerism. He served as the post 1<sup>st</sup> vice for 6 years and has served as the Veterans Affairs Committee Chair for 8 years. He has served as the District 8 Commander for the 22–23 year, has been the District 1<sup>st</sup> vice, and currently serving as the 2<sup>nd</sup> vice. He is a graduate of the Department American Legion College in 2022. He also serves as the Chairman of the Department of Arkansas Emergency Management.

Michael McConaughy  
Commander Post 133



My name is Dave Benson and I was appointed a couple of months ago by Commander Gordon to fill position of Northwest Area Vice-Commander. The position was left vacant with the resignation of former NWA Vice-Commander Koyt Kidd. I am announcing that I will officially be a candidate for that position at the convention in June.

Prior to my appointment to the position, I served as Commander for Post 27 in Fayetteville for seven years and was serving as District One Commander at the time of my appointment.

I would appreciate your support at the convention in my quest for the NWA Vice-Commander and hope to see you in June in Little Rock.



## Resolution

WHEREAS, Dustin Rowland earned his membership in The American Legion with faithful service in The United States Air Force serving as F-16 crew chief, and

WHEREAS, he is a 3-year member of The American Legion belonging to Adams-Jackson Post 17, Paragould, Arkansas: previously serving as District 4 Commander and Post 17 finance officer. And,

WHEREAS, Dustin Rowland is a 2024 graduate of The American Legion Collage, Department of Arkansas, and

WHEREAS, Post 17 and District 4, Department of Arkansas recognizes him as an upcoming leader within our organization, now therefore be it

RESOLVED, by The American Legion, Post 17 and District 4 in a scheduled meeting, assembled in Paragould, Arkansas on March 8, 2025, that we endorse Dustin Rowland for the position of Northeast Area Vice Commander for the Department of Arkansas for Legion membership year 2025-2026.

Jim Largent  
Commander

Joy Hendricks  
Adjutant

**To the Esteemed Members of The American Legion, Department of Arkansas,  
John A. Mercer, Jr**

I'm John A. Mercer, Jr., a **U.S. Navy Retired veteran** with over 20 years of active service, and a dedicated Legionnaire with 28 years of membership and **Paid Up for Life (PUFL)** status. As a proud member of American Legion Armstrong Caldwell, Bo Baker Post 106 in Searcy, AR, where I currently serve as **Post 106 Treasurer and Resource Officer**, I'm asking for your vote for **North East Area Commander**. My extensive experience, proven accomplishments, and unwavering commitment make me the ideal candidate to lead our North East Area to new heights.

### **My Qualifications & Experience**

- **Vice Commander** in a new Post (formed by combining two posts due to loss of members).
- **Acting Commander** a month after the new post was rechartered.
- **Elected Post Commander**.
- **Elected District Commander** (as requested by District 6 Posts when I was a candidate for District Vice Commander).
- **D.E.C. - Acting Department Executive Committee member** (simultaneously as District Commander).
- **Membership Committee Person**.
- **Appointed Temporary Committee Chair** for April 2025 revitalization.
- **District Foundation Board Member** (representing the Sixth District on the Department Foundation Committee).
- **Assistant Adjutant** for both post and district.
- **Post 106 Treasurer and Resource Officer** (current).

### **My Accomplishments & Impact**

- Took **Post 106** to over **500 percent** in membership.
- Achieved **Gold Brigade** in **American Legion** with over 50 new members in less than a year.
- Took **District 6** over **103 percent** in membership during the 2023-2024 membership year—a first-ever for the district.
- The **only District Commander in Arkansas** to receive the **Gold Brigade award in 2024**.
- Believe in and actively support the **"Be the One" campaign**, knocking on doors checking on Veterans, Posts, and Districts.
- **Saved, regrouped, and revitalized Bradford Post 144 and Augusta Post 166** from losing their charters.
  - As District Commander, I was the **spark** that got them to understand and embrace revitalization at the Post level, providing coaching and advising Post commanders, and getting new members.
  - Both posts are now **over 100% in membership**.
- Influenced schools to send students to **Boys State and Girls State**.
- Received the **"Keys to the City"** from my community of Searcy.
- Spoke at Augusta Day, sharing my desire to save Augusta Post 166, which was a success.

### **My Mission as North East Area Commander: Unifying for Impact**

My mission is to **ignite a transformative movement focused on robust membership growth, sustainable retention, and active veteran engagement throughout the North East Area**. I will achieve this by:

- **Prioritizing Membership Growth & Retention:** Implementing innovative strategies to attract new members, especially younger veterans, and redoubling efforts to retain existing Legionnaires through proactive outreach and welcoming environments.
- **Empowering Post Revitalization:** Continuing to be a catalyst for post revitalization, providing guidance, resources, and mentorship to ensure every post in the North East Area is vibrant and sustainable.
- **Championing "Be the One" & Veteran Support:** Leading by example in promoting awareness and active participation in suicide prevention. We will actively identify and address the evolving needs of our veterans, connecting them with vital resources.
- **Fostering Training & Leadership Development:** Investing in our members by promoting opportunities for leadership development and training, ensuring strong, knowledgeable leaders across our posts and districts.

I don't seek this position for a "pin" or a title; I seek it to serve. My track record clearly demonstrates my commitment to going where I'm needed and filling the roles that best serve The American Legion.

I humbly ask for your vote and the opportunity to serve as your **North East Area Commander**, working together to build a stronger, more impactful American Legion for the veterans of Arkansas.

For God and Country,

Sincerely,

**John A. Mercer, Jr.** U.S. Navy, Retired