

# VETERANS OF MOUNT PROSPECT ILLINOIS



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In Remembrance Editor Emeritus Bob Fey



## Mount Prospect Veterans Lead The Way To Combat Claim Sharks

Both American Legion Post 525 and VFW Post 1337, plus their families and friends, led the charge in filling out legislative witness slips. This helped to get a historic bill SB3479 through the first stage of the process to become law. This bill being followed nationally addresses the implications of fighting fraud against veterans. This bill, if successful, will have implications for those who we call **"CLAIM SHARKS"**. It's hard to believe that there are currently NO PROPER ramifications with the exception of New Jersey. Federally we are far away from getting anything to alleviate this. You may scratch your head and ask "What is a claim shark?". Simply put a claim shark is an agent that will charge veterans to file a claim. They have no legal standing and are not VA accredited. VSO's (veteran service officers) do have accreditation with the VA and do not charge **ANYTHING** to represent veterans. VSO's go through a rigorous training process to obtain their credentials. They also have computer access to the VA system to help the veteran, including access to their medical records. The claim shark has none of these tools. In fact, a claim shark has nothing to help a veteran in earnest. Yet they have grown into businesses of monstrous proportions collecting an estimated \$440,000,000 in fees from an estimated 120,000 veterans. We suspect that some of those fees are then used as campaign contributions to congress. They use questionable tactics. One claim shark known as "Vets Guardian" lures vets to their web site with

a caution against other claim sharks by posting **"CLAIM SHARKS: WHAT THEY ARE AND HOW TO AVOID THEM."** This is a wolf in sheep's clothing doing anything they can to lure a veteran to their web site. The main groups to watch out for are Veteran Guardian, Veteran Benefits Guide, VA Claims Insider, Telemedica, Patriot Angels, VetComm, VA Claims Academy, Vet Assist, Just4Veterans, Veterans Disability Help, and National Association of Veteran Rights (NAVR), which is really just a trade group founded by Veteran Guardian and Veteran Benefits Guide. There are many others as well. The bottom line is a veteran or their family **SHOULD NEVER PAY** for the services that a VA accredited veteran service officer can provide. The only exception is a VA accredited attorney who can be helpful in extreme cases (15 years as a Post and District Service Officer I have never used or referred anyone to one).

In closing, we need to keep informed on items that matter to veterans and our families. Misinformation and scams surround us and we must be vigilant. Attending meetings where these updates are given is useful.....But don't keep it to yourself make sure to be an ambassador from our post to others. If you feel that you are being scammed contact the Attorney Generals Office. If you feel it is veteran-centric contact the Military and Veterans Rights Bureau at the Illinois Attorney Generals Helpline at 1-800-382-3000 or by email at [MVRB@ilag.gov](mailto:MVRB@ilag.gov). Illinois is the only state to have the **MVRB**.

## American Legion Post 525 Member Completes Bataan Memorial Death March



Congrats to Sergeant Daniel Keenan (left) for completing what is called the Death March in the New Mexico desert. It is a 26.2 mile march with a 2000 foot climb in elevation. He marched a couple of miles around a mountain, a few miles in soft sand with a 45 lb. rucksack on his back. The 35th Bataan Memorial Death March took place Saturday, 16 March 2024, at 0700 at White Sands Missile Range, New Mexico. It was the first time the race took place on a Saturday. The Bataan Memorial Death March is a weekend filled with commemorative events that culminate with a 26.2-mile standard route or a 14.2 honorary route, which takes the marchers through tough, hilly desert terrain and the dreaded sand pit obstacle. After the race, participants and supporters can enjoy an exclusive concert and choose from a variety of food trucks provided by local vendors. The Bataan Memorial Death March is held in honor of a group of heroes who were surrendered in the Philippines on April 9, 1942, at the outset of World War II, and forced to march in the scorching heat 65 miles over treacherous terrain. Thousands of Americans, including members of the 200th Coast Artillery, New Mexico National Guard, and Philippine Soldiers died along the route and in prisoner of war camps. Sergeant Keenan is currently stationed with the 101st Airborne (Air Assault) Division at Fort Campbell, KY

## Is The Door Open For VA Health Care? VA Is Expanding Health Care Eligibility To Millions Of Veterans

On 26 February 2024, the VA announced that all Veterans who were exposed to toxins and other hazards while serving in the military — at home or abroad — will be eligible to enroll directly in VA health care beginning 5 March 2024. Search [va.gov](https://www.va.gov) for more information.

This means that all Veterans who served in the Vietnam War, the Gulf War, Iraq, Afghanistan, the Global War on Terror, or any other combat zone after 9/11 will be eligible to enroll directly in VA health care without first applying for VA benefits. Additionally, veterans who never deployed, but were exposed to toxins or hazards while training or on active duty in the United States will also be eligible to enroll.

## Post 1337 Member Receives Award



Once again a member of VFW Post 1337 was given the honor of Illinois VFW member of the month. This award was presented in November. Wayne Kern made an especially positive impact on the VFW this summer. First, he completed and submitted a well researched and documented report that he was asked to prepare for the troubled Veterans Assistance Commission of Cook County ("VACCC"). The bulk of current membership of the VACCC consists of VFW posts located in the County. Wayne's report focused on the kinds and sources of data needed to prepare an accurate comparison of the VACCC with those in several neighboring counties. Despite the lack of uniform reporting standards used by VACs in these counties, Wayne's report was able to reach some valuable conclusions for the members of the VACCC.



Wayne is the appointed delegate of Post 1337, a member of the VACCC, and is also a member of its Board of Directors. In this position he continues to devote substantial time and energy toward increasing the funding of the VACCC to benefit the more than 200,000 veterans who live in Cook County. Additionally, one day each week, Wayne volunteers at the Retired Veterans Office located at the 85th US Army Reserve Support Command facility in Arlington Heights. There he assists veterans in need of assistance and offers information about the available benefits provided by the State of Illinois and the VA. Wayne also testified at the meeting of the Cook County Commissioners.

His well received testimony, using the information gleaned from his report, focused on the need and importance of hiring more Veteran Service Officers and the substantial under funding of the VACCC. Correcting these conditions he pointed out will enable the VACC to better serve the veterans who reside in Cook County and their families.

## VFW 1337 Honors LE Officer of the Year



At the last regular meeting of the Mount Prospect Village Board, Mount Prospect VFW Post 1337 Commander Les Durov presented a First Responder Americanism Certificate of Merit to Mount Prospect Police Department Detective Alexa Kiess. She was nominated for the honor by Chief of Police, Michael Eterno. The award was

presented to Detective Kiess by Post 1337 as part of a program developed and sponsored by the national organization of the Veterans of Foreign Wars. Attending the presentation, in addition to Mayor Paul Hoefert and all of the Trustees, were Chief Eterno, Deputy Chief of Operations Anthony Addante, Deputy Chief of Administration Bart Tweedie, Commander of Investigations Joseph Kanupke, Sergeant of Investigations William Ryan, and many of her fellow officers.

Detective Kiess' law enforcement career started soon after she graduated with Honors from Elmhurst University with a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Psychology with a primary focus in Criminal Justice and Social Work in 2013. Detective Kiess joined the Mount Prospect Police Department in December 2014, and in 2015 graduated from the Suburban Law

Enforcement Academy in Glen Ellyn. From the beginning she has demonstrated her commitment to professional policing and service to the Village of Mount Prospect.

In October, 2018, after completing the FBI's Crisis Negotiations Course, Detective Kiess was appointed as a Crisis Negotiator for the Northern Illinois Police Alarm System Emergency Response Team, a Regional Swat Team that covers over 100 communities in five counties. In March, 2020, the job of Juvenile Officer was added to her duties so she now consults in cases where children are involved. Detective Kiess achieved the rank of Detective in January, 2022, and assumed responsibilities for criminal investigations related to a wide variety of crimes. This involves gathering and analyzing evidence along with interviewing witnesses, victims and suspects.

In her tenure with the Mount Prospect Police Department Detective Kiess has earned three Commendations, was named Officer of the 4th Quarter in 2022, and was honored with the Criminal Justice Female Officer of the Year Award in 2023.

Chief Eterno said of Detective Kiess, that she is "an exemplary law enforcement officer" and is "an extremely valued member of this department".

VFW Post 1337 is honored to salute this talented, dedicated and brave woman who helps make Mount Prospect a better place to work and live by keeping it's residents and employees safe.

## Holiday Party 2023 Gala



Once again our unsung heroines did an amazing job of putting together our posts holiday party. We also thank the Loyal Order of the Moose Lodge 660 for letting us use their great facility.

# Jim "The Hammer" Parker Receives the Mount Prospect Shinning Star Award



The Mount Prospect Shinning Star Awards are always a capacity crowd

VFW 1337 member Jim Parker was raised as what is known as a military brat since his father was a career Air Force officer and WWII veteran. Jim moved constantly due to his father's service. Perhaps this was the foundation for a life of "service before self". Jim eventually joined the Air Force as a young man and was sent to Vietnam. After he finished up his active duty stateside, he achieved the almost unheard of rank of Technical Sergeant E-6 in short time. Jim also got a start on his education completing his undergraduate degree. Jim continued his education with a masters degree then completed his Doctor of Jurisprudence degree.

Jim has a lifetime of volunteerism living most of his life in our neighboring village of Palatine. While residing there, Jim became one of the mainstays of the Kiwanis Club of Palatine, volunteering countless hours and even assisting at district and national levels. It seemed any organization needing help in the area could call on Jim to help. He would do the most mundane task to organizing fund raisers and helping with any legal issues since he is an experienced seasoned attorney.

If this wasn't enough Jim volunteered his time to assist the Chicago Honor Flight. The non profit Chicago Honor Flight came into existence in 2008 to fly WWII veterans to see the memorial sights in Washington D. C. and have a special day of honor. Jim was a recruiter of veterans and also would get up and go to Midway Airport at 2AM to see the veterans off

for the one day event. It later was open to Vietnam Veterans and this is where Jim meets our Veterans of Wars Post 1337.

In 2018 Jim showed up to a VFW 1337 meeting to enlist Vietnam Veteran members for a Chicago Honor Flight trip which was successful. The only twist was the recruiter himself got recruited as a member of 1337. The rest is history. Jim is a buzz saw and takes on any and all task and committees. He writes press releases, chairs our annual day of service, edits the award winning newsletter, adds his legal advice when needed, attends school and other outreach events. During this time Jim obtained the affectionate nickname of "Jimmy The Hammer" since he is a key component of a team that has taken Post 1337 to "All American" status five years in a row. This is the highest achievement world wide that the Veterans of Foreign Wars can bestow.

Jim moved to Wisconsin some years ago and actually was traveling two hours each way to attend meetings, no matter what the weather. He chose in the last year to move back to Illinois and loved Mount Prospect so much, he made sure he relocated to our Village. Jimmy the Hammer still volunteers for all the above and has even taken on more becoming the adjutant for 1337 and serving on the centennial committee for the post for our 100th Year anniversary to be held in April 2025. Jim is the epitome of being an American and giving back to the community. We are so much better because of him.

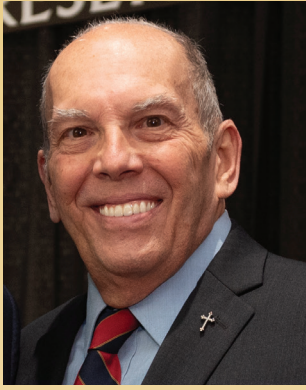


Mayor Hoefert Presents the award to Jim



Both Post Showed up in force to see Jim get his well deserved award

## Long Time 1337 Post Chaplain Once Again Requested To Give Benediction



It was no surprise to anyone when Mount Prospect Veteran Ron Willer was requested to give the benediction at the Shinning Star Awards ceremony this February. Ron's flawless renditions are legendary and Ron has been the Chaplain for VFW Post 1337 since 2001. Ron himself is no stranger to the shining star award. He was the 2022 recipient of this prestigious honor.

## Blue Star Flag Luncheon



American Legion Commander Bill Starr has initiated a community program which will give Blue Star banners to immediate family members of those serving in the military. Blue Star banners date back to World War I, and were hung in the windows of family members, to let everyone know they had a loved one in the service. The American Legion Family has brought this practice back in recent years. We are having a ceremony and complimentary lunch Sunday, 14 July 2024 at the Moose Lodge #660 (our Mount Prospect Veterans home), 602 N. Main St., Mt Prospect, IL 60056 for these military families. If you know of any family that qualifies, please contact us with the name, branch of service, and rank of the family member currently serving in the military.

**Contact Marcie Kane at [mfkane5@aol.com](mailto:mfkane5@aol.com), or call/text Marcie at (847) 704-0580.**

## VFW Post 1337 Plans Centennial Gala



On 7 April 1925 Prospect Veterans of Foreign Wars Prospect Post 1337 was chartered. To think that this post has survived and prospered for a century is truly a remarkable feat. Plans are already being made for our celebration on Saturday 5 April 2025.

The committee to date is chaired by *Ray Limbach* and includes *Les Durov, Dutch DeGroot, Tim Delaney, Bill Starr, Jim Parker, Tony Cuellar, Ray Massie, Mike Relaz, Thomas Strossner, Carol Ohrn, Chuck Ohrn, Casey Bachara, Jean Murphy, Ruth Yueill, Kylie Cerk, Brandon Simmons, and Helen Buss*. The meetings have been held once a month. It is also estimated that we will need to raise **\$25,000** to cover all the extra costs. Some of the fundraising is being done through ad books, poker nights, a food drive ((through a joint venture between the VFW and Humana). The celebration will be held at the Cotillion Banquets, 360 S Creekside Dr, Palatine, IL, starting at 18:00hrs. We are limited to 365 attendees and the price for a dinner ticket will be \$100 per person to coincide with our 100th birthday. With the limited seating, we will first offer tickets to Post 1337, Post 525, and committee members up to a specified date. Then we will open tickets to post members' family and friends & then to our Mount Prospect partners. If any tickets are left we will open tickets up to other veteran organizations and then the public. There is little doubt this will be a very hot ticket and sell out. We are still fine tuning the process.

Keynote speaker/s have been contacted. The band we have selected is called 'Out of Control' and is amazing. The menu and extras for the Cotillion are 5 different appetizers, a 5 hour open bar, Entrée Fillet, soup, salad potato, unlimited wine w/dinner, coffee/tea/soft drinks, ice cream dessert. This is the collective work of *Carol & Les*.

As you can see there is a lot of work being done by a dedicated committee and we can't thank them enough. There are many other surprises coming. *After all you're only 100 years old once.*

## Memorial Day 2024



Memorial Day on Monday, 27 May will be here in no time. Our two posts and our village partners, Mt. Prospect Park District, The Village of Mount Prospect, Loyal Order of the Moose Lodge 660, Mount Prospect Lions Club are all part of the committee and as always we can't be thankful enough. We ask that all of our members participate in the events and join us afterwards at the Moose Lodge for lunch and comradery.

Our keynote speaker this year will be Terry Prince, Master Chief USN, retired and current director of the Illinois Department of Veterans Affairs.

Director Terry Prince joined the department in April 2021, after serving as the Superintendent of the Ohio Veterans Homes where he led a team of 850 employees caring for 801 veterans. His 31-year Naval career included tours in high-profile military medical centers, including Naval Hospital Camp Lejeune, Walter Reed National Military Medical Center, the Defense Health Agency, and as the 13th Director of the U.S. Navy Hospital Corps and Force Master Chief of Navy Medicine.

As Director, Prince leads a team of 1,200 professionals, in partnership with numerous local and state organizations, to provide beneficial services for more than 650,000 veterans and their families across the state of Illinois. He and his wife, Dr. Jennifer Prince, a 12-year Navy veteran, live in Chicago.

## Legion School Award Medal Program



Legionnaires will once again be awarding the time honored and distinguished American Legion awards to junior high students graduating this spring. There are three categories of awards. Deserving students will be awarded the Citizenship Medal, the Scholastic Achievement medal and the All School Medallion award. This

year, as in the past, post officers will attend graduations at 6 schools including Lincoln Middle school, St Emily School, St Raymond, Holmes Junior high, St Alphonsus and St Paul School.

The American Legion Award Program was born and is maintained on a national level through the Americanism Commission of the American Legion. The program was conceived in the interest of preparing our youth to become patriotic, freedom preserving citizens. The faculties of these schools are challenged to select deserving students who demonstrate the qualities of **COURAGE, HONOR, LEADERSHIP, CITIZENSHIP, PATRIOTISM, SCHOLARSHIP** and **SERVICE**.

## Post 525 Girls State Representative



The American Legion was pleased to welcome at the February meeting a young lady who attended the 2023 Girls State event last June. MS. Julia Kravchuk, a senior at Elk Grove High School, asked if she could come by and share with us her experiences at Girls State. MS Kravchuk was sponsored by the post. Her presentation was professional, yet relaxed and casual. She eagerly explained her experiences with clarity and enthusiasm. Her visit left the legionnaires with a new level of appreciation for Boys and Girls State programs.

## Veterans Assistance Commission of Cook County



Posts 525 & 1337, along with Districts 9 and 4 respectively, have been strong supporters of the VACCC for the past couple. The turn around of the organization has been astounding. We thank past members **Brian Mulcrone, Brian Rush, Allan Hopfer** as well as current members **Bill Starr, and Laura Matuszak**. 26 March 2024 was another historic day for the Veterans of Cook County with the quarterly meeting of the Veterans Assistance Commission of Cook County. 41 delegates and alternates attended, representing 32 different eligible veteran organizations plus many guests. Our Superintendent Elizabeth Soto gave a detailed report of the expansion of services and workload. A herculean effort with a staff of 3 to service an estimated 200,000 veterans not to include their families. Our main concern and hope is to expand this overextended staff in the short term. Other reports were given and nominations and elections held. The 2024-2025 executive board includes: 2nd VicePresident **Dutch DeGroot**, Board Member **Wayne Kern**, Secretary **Jim Parker**.



Post 525 Has a New Website  
[mountprospectamericanlegion.org](http://mountprospectamericanlegion.org)

## Veterans Legislative Day Springfield

Illinois Senator Mike Porfirio Vice chairman Veterans Senate Committee stands with his fellow veterans representing the VFW, American Legion AMVETS, MOAA A true champion of veterans the Senator is a graduate of the U.S. Naval Academy and still serves in the Navy Reserve.



A group of about 45 veterans, most of whom were VFW comrades, took a “road trip” to Springfield on March 13, 2024 to meet with several legislators and advise them in person of our concerns about several bill that are currently pending in the Illinois Senate and the Illinois House of Representative. The trip was organized by Department Quartermaster/Adjutant, Joe Bartley, with the assistance of Commander Brett Nila and Legislative Committee Chair, Dutch DeGroot. Our vets were organized into three groups and assigned to meet with certain Representative and Senators, including the Chairman, Vice Chairman and other members of the Veterans Affairs Committees of both houses. These legislators are important because the bill we are most concerned about must be approved by their committees before they can be voted on by the full House and Senate.

Our veterans focused their discussions on two very important bills. The first is an “Anti-Shark” amendment to the Illinois Consumer Fraud and Deceptive Practices Act that requires all business that purport to be able to assist veterans with VA claims must make certain disclosures about their fees and imposes very serious economic penalties for violations. This bill recently was approved by the Senate Committee, in large part due to a very effective Witness Slip campaign orchestrated by Dutch. The second is a group of related bills that will provide veterans with service-connected disabilities substantial relief from property taxes on their homes.

Everyone involved with the trip thought it was very effective and were most pleased with the reception from the legislators.

## Mount Prospect Veterans Grave Decoration Day 2024

Mount Prospect’s American Legion Post 525 and Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 1337 will meet 23 May 2024 (rain day 24 May) to place flags of honor and remembrance on the graves of many local veterans. This year the post will have additional support from the Rolling Meadows Veterans Committee and Zurich Insurance.

**Over 300 American flags will be placed at 20 area cemeteries.**

At St. John Cemetery and St. Paul Cemetery flags will be placed on the graves of all veterans that could be identified from cemetery records. At others, including All Saints, Memory Gardens, and Wheeling Township cemeteries, the final resting places of deceased members of both Posts were honored.

The practice of decorating veteran’s graves began in America soon after the Revolutionary War. Over the next several years many towns and villages did the same and it became an annual event. After the Civil War in 1868 General (later, president) James Garfield delivered a speech about veterans to about 5,000 people gathered at Arlington National Cemetery. After the speech those in

attendance decorated graves of about 20,000 soldiers from both sides. The event became known as Decoration Day. Following WWI observers began to honor the dead of all of America’s wars and both the American Legion and the Veterans of Foreign Wars made it an annual ceremony. In 1971 the U.S. Congress officially made “Memorial Day” a national holiday to be celebrated on the last Monday of May. Long before that, however, the Village of Mt Prospect, proudly the home of a great many American veterans, began to honor its fallen heroes in a similar fashion. This has been part of the traditions of both posts since their inception. VFW Post 1337 was chartered in April 1925. American Legion Post 525 was formed in November of 1930. Post 525 and Post 1337 chose to decorate graves, not on the official Memorial Day but, rather, on a quiet weekday, like last Thursday, when they can place their flags with somber respect and remember their departed comrades. As veterans, they understand, perhaps better than most, the true meaning of Memorial Day.

## From the Commander of VFW Post 1337



VFW Post 1337 is all ready planning our Memorial Day Parade and Ceremony. Come out to the parade at downtown Mount Prospect by the train station at 9:00 AM. Then follow us to Lions Park for a great ceremony to honor our fallen Veterans. This you will not want to miss. We will be placing flags on the graves of our fallen veterans of Mount Prospect.

Poppie Day is fast arising; we will be out on several street corners and stores just before Memorial Day. Help us help our Veterans. 100% of the proceeds goes to help veterans in need.

Moving forward, our post is having our 100-year anniversary in April 2025. We are putting together a banquet for all to enjoy. This will include Hors D'oeuvres and a great 5 course meal at the Cotillion Banquets with a band, Out of Control afterwards and an open bar. Get your tickets early. It's going to be a great night. Information and surprises to follow.

It's April already and our VFW All American Post 1337 is on Its way to make this our 6 TH year in a row. We have accomplished all the qualifications except membership. If you're a veteran and would like to see what our post is all about stop by one of our meetings. We meet on the first Monday of every month. **VFW NO ONE DOSE MORE FOR VETERANS BE PART OF OUR POST**

**Les Durov, All State-All American Commander**

## From the Commander of the American Legion



Thank you to the men and women of the proud 525th for the exceptionally successful year we had in 2023. It is obvious to any and all who see us that we handle our responsibilities in the community thoroughly and with a bit of pride. Now the new spring season brings with it a whole new set of activities and challenges for the post to support in the New Year.

No surprises really but right away in May and June we have Memorial Day, Grave Decoration Day, Poppy Day and the Junior High graduation awards (see separate article). Later in the year, of course, are many other functions that we support. A bit different this year is our hosting on July 14th of the Blue Star families from our region with a luncheon and presentation of the actual Blue Star pennants. And so Legionnaires, know that I am looking forward to again proudly working with all of you to get it done in 2024!

**Bill Starr, Commander**

## From the Service Officer



It has been a busy time for me personally and I hope to slow down somewhat after the VFW state convention in June. At that time I will retire from the jobs I hold with the VFW Department of Illinois. There comes a time to choose where one can be most effective and also face the reality that no one should over extend. I will concentrate on our two posts, continuing as your service officer. My work with VFW

4th district and the American Legion 9th district will also continue. Tom McMahon the co-service officer for the 4th district makes this task more manageable. My love of being a service officer gives me satisfaction that is hard to explain. Helping a veteran or one of their family members, truly comes back to me 100 fold.

Our work with the Veterans Assistance Commission of Cook County is far from finished and has a major impact on the 200,000 Cook County Veterans. I will serve as 2nd Vice President which handles the membership, I have been doing this task for 2 years already, just the addition of a title.

Although I'm giving up the VFW department job of Legislative Chairman I will still consult if needed. The job for the last 3-4 years has been an incredible learning opportunity, making close ties with some great legislative veteran advocates. The learning curve has been steep but I had some great mentors. The success we have had with legislation has been astounding and truly a team effort. My part working with the Military Veterans Assistance Act and the Claim Shark bill SB3479, has left me fulfilled. I thank the VFW for the opportunity to serve in this capacity.

**Thank you all for the support all these years.**

## Post 525 Membership & Dues



The current goal for our membership is to equal last year's membership, which was 131 members. As of this time, we are at 121 which equates to 92.37%. The membership operates on the calendar year, so any 2024 membership will be valid through 31 Dec. 2024. The 2025 membership year will open up on 11 July 2024 and end on 31 Dec. 2025.

Our 2024 Dues are \$45.00, which is divided up with \$16.50 going to the Department of Illinois and \$18.50 going to the National organization. This leaves \$10.00 which goes to our Post 525. The National has announced that their 2025 dues will be raised an additional \$5.00, with the rest remaining the same. This means the total 2025 dues will now be \$50.00, effective July 1st.

**Ron Vlcek, Adjutant  
American Legion Post 525**

**Save Money On American Legion Dues**

**Contact Adjutant Ron Vlcek**

**Limited Time!**

**woodbutchr@aol.com**

