

COMMANDER'S MESSAGE 2025-2026

As I reflect on my term as Commander, traveling throughout this great state, I had the privilege of meeting truly outstanding Legionnaires, visiting places and being involved in things I might never have experienced had I not been serving as Commander of this great organization. President Dwight D. Eisenhower once said, *"The supreme quality of leadership is unquestionably integrity."* Leadership is about how we show up for one another and the values we demonstrate every single day.

On June 12, 2025, at the 106th Wildwood Convention, I stood before you with humility, asking for your support to strengthen and grow the Department of New Jersey's Legion Family. At that moment, I hoped I was the right Commander at the right time.

This past year brought some intense growing pains and required some tough decisions. We raised dues, reduced departmental costs, and saw the retirement of longtime Department Service Officer—and my friend—Ken Connors. Thank you, Ken, for your dedication and continued service to the Department.

To NEC Gene O'Grady, ANEC Mike Wilson, and Adjutant John Baker — thank you for making my job easier during our official visits and throughout the year.

To my Vice Commanders, thank you for all your help during the year representing the department on my behalf and adding valuable and unique perspectives to our approach to push membership. To the office staff — Lois, Tricia, and Tammie — thank you for making this year both productive and enjoyable. We worked well together (and yes, the chocolate helped!). It was truly a pleasure spending time in the office.

To Judith Morales, despite the curves Pennsylvania and New York threw at us, your dedication as the Department Service Officer is truly commendable. Thank you.

In closing, as you may or may not know, I also carried a personal mission: to honor and preserve the legacy of the Tuskegee Airmen. My tie, lapel pin, and challenge coin were all designed to pay tribute to those who rose above adversity and aimed high.

A special thank you to my wife, Dawne, and my Union County Legion family for your unwavering support from day one. I hope I have made you proud.

The New Jersey American Legion Family is the Real Deal.

Better Together as we continue to Be the One.

For God and Country,
Dan Channel
Commander 2025-2026