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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

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SDDVA SECRETARY SCHNEIDER'S JANUARY COLUMN – A NEW YEAR

Each January, as a new year begins, we're reminded that hope and renewal are powerful forces. The turning of the calendar brings reflection, gratitude, and purpose. For those who have served, supported a service member, or simply honor our nation's heroes, January is a time of remembrance and resolve.

This month also holds deep meaning in our nation's military history. On January 8, 1815, General Andrew Jackson led American forces to victory at the Battle of New Orleans during the War of 1812, a triumph that showed the courage and perseverance of the American spirit. On January 16, 1991, Operation Desert Storm began, reminding us that freedom must always be defended with resolve and unity. And on January 24, 1961, the U.S. Strategic Air Command strengthened its readiness during the Cold War.

To start the year, the Department and our partners have several key events planned to support veterans and strengthen advocacy efforts:

- January 1: State Offices Closed for New Year's Day
- January 10-11: Yellow Ribbon – HHC 109th Engineer Battalion, Camp Rapid
- January 13: South Dakota Legislative Session Opens – SD State Capitol
- January 13: Governor's State of the State Address – SD State Capitol, 1:00 p.m. (CT)
- January 14: South Dakota Veterans Council Meeting - The American Legion, Post #8, Pierre, 2:00 p.m. (CT)
- January 14: South Dakota Veterans Council Legislative Reception – The American Legion, Post #8, Pierre, 5:30 p.m. - 7:30 p.m. (CT)
- January 19: State Offices Closed for Martin Luther King Jr. Day
- January 25-26: VFW Legislative Conference, Fort Pierre

As winter settles in, take care when going outdoors. South Dakota's cold can be tough. Dress warm, protect exposed skin, and check on neighbors. A small act of kindness can mean a lot. As we welcome the new year, let's be grateful and keep our service members, veterans, and their families in our thoughts and prayers.

Our hearts are especially heavy this January as we honor the two Iowa National Guard Soldiers who were killed in action on December 13, 2025. Their courage and sacrifice remind us of the true cost of freedom. We extend our condolences to their families and comrades. Their legacy lives on in our continued pursuit of peace.

A new year brings new opportunities to serve, connect, grow, and honor those who make our freedoms possible. May we enter 2026 with renewed faith, kindness, and commitment to one another.

From all of us at the South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs, we wish you a safe and meaningful start to the new year. May God bless our troops, our veterans, their families, and the great state of South Dakota.

Jeremiah J. Schneider, Secretary
South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs