



South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs
Soldiers and Sailors Building
425 E. Capitol Avenue
Pierre, SD 57501
Phone: 605-773-3269
<https://vetaffairs.sd.gov>

For Immediate Release

Contact: [DJ Montreal](#), Operations & Communications Director, 605.204.9241

SDDVA Secretary Schneider's July Column – Celebrating America's 250 Years

As our nation marks the 250th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence, we pause to reflect on the people who have carried America forward for two and a half centuries.

America's story is one of resilience. It is shaped by ordinary people who stepped up when it mattered, by neighbors supporting neighbors, by families making sacrifices, and by generations of service members defending the freedoms we often take for granted. That story is also South Dakota's story.

For generations, South Dakotans have answered the call to serve. They have left their homes, jobs, and communities to wear the uniform. They have served in every branch of the military, in times of war and peace, and around the world. Wherever they served, they carried the values that define our state: hard work, humility, integrity, and a deep commitment to others.

From the earliest conflicts in our nation's history to more recent missions in Iraq and Afghanistan, their service helped build the foundation we stand on today. That foundation did not appear all at once. It grew over time through countless acts of courage, sacrifice, and dedication.

We also recognize the quiet strength of military families. They hold things together during long separations, face uncertainty with courage, and continue serving in their own way every day. Their sacrifices are an essential part of our military story.

That legacy of service continues. We see it in the men and women serving at Ellsworth Air Force Base, in the South Dakota National Guard and Reserve, and in communities across our state. We see it in veterans who still lead, mentor, and give back, and in young people just beginning their journey of service to something larger than themselves.

As we celebrate 250 years as a nation, we remember that the freedoms we enjoy were earned by those who came before us. It is now our responsibility to carry that legacy forward by supporting our veterans, listening to their stories, strengthening our communities, and teaching the next generation what service really means.

Throughout July, communities across South Dakota will host events to honor our nation, our military, and our veterans. A full list of events and observances is available at <https://vetaffairs.sd.gov/>.

As you celebrate, enjoy time with family and friends, but also look out for one another. Check in on neighbors, be mindful of those who may be affected by large gatherings or fireworks and help ensure everyone has a safe and meaningful holiday.

America's first 250 years have given us much to be proud of. What comes next is up to all of us. Let us move forward with gratitude, a strong sense of community, and a renewed commitment to serving one another, and to build the next 250 years together.

Happy 250th birthday, America.

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