



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>

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For more information, contact: DJ Montreal, Director of Operations and Communications at 605.204.9241 or dj.montreal@state.sd.us

SDDVA Secretary Schneider's May Column – Honoring the Foundation of Freedom

As Memorial Day approaches on May 25, we pause with heavy hearts to remember the brave men and women who gave everything in service to our country. This day is more than a holiday – it's a solemn moment of remembrance, gratitude, and deep respect. The freedoms we cherish are shaped by their ultimate sacrifice, unwavering courage, and devotion to something far greater than themselves.

Throughout May, we also honor several important observances that highlight the strength and resilience of the broader military community. Silver Star Service Banner Day (May 1) recognizes wounded, ill, and injured service members. Military Spouse Appreciation Day (May 8) honors the commitment, support, and sacrifice of military spouses. Children of Fallen Patriots Day (May 13) pays tribute to the sons and daughters of service members who died in the line of duty. Armed Forces Day (May 16) salutes all who are currently serving in the United States Armed Forces, including Guard and Reserve components. Together, these observances remind us that service and sacrifice extend far beyond the battlefield.

Across South Dakota, the different service organizations and communities are hosting events that bring veterans and communities together:

- May 5: Coffee and Camaraderie – Mobridge
- May 7: Coffee and Camaraderie – Canton
- May 11: Coffee and Camaraderie – Flandreau
- May 14: Coffee and Camaraderie – Woonsocket
- May 22-25: Salute to Valor – Hot Springs
- May 25: State Offices Closed for Memorial Day
- May 25: SDVC Memorial Day Program – Sioux Falls
- May 25: MJFSVH Memorial Day Program – Hot Springs

Memorial Day also calls us to action. Honor those who gave everything. Attend events, support military families, and learn the stories behind the names on our memorials. Make gratitude visible, demonstrate it through your actions, show up for your community, and help preserve the legacy of those who served.

We thank those who sacrificed their lives, honor their families, and encourage all South Dakotans to remember Memorial Day by coming together and reflecting on the freedoms we share.

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