



NEWSLETTER

SOUTH DAKOTA DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS
SOUTH DAKOTA DEPARTMENT OF THE MILITARY



MION NAMED VABHHCS DIRECTOR

The United States Department of Veterans Affairs has announced the appointment of Spencer Mion, as the Medical Center Director of the VA Black Hills Health Care System, effective June 17, 2024. Mion is currently serving as the associate director.

“Mion has extensive experience and is an outstanding choice to fill this role as the new director for the VABHHCS,” said Robert McDivitt, VA Midwest Health Care Network Executive Director. “I am certain that the experience he has received as associate director has prepared him to provide the leadership and guide the employees, volunteers, our healthcare partners, the community, and the veterans we are honored to serve.”

Mion has been with the VA for 11 years and has held multiple leadership positions across VISN 23.

He holds a Master of Business Administration, a Master of Health Care Administration, a Bachelor Certificate in prosthetics, and a Bachelor’s Degree in business administration.



VA  U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
Spencer Mion, MHA, MBA, FACHE, CPO
Director

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VFW STATE CONVENTION

Staff members of the South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs attended and participated in the South Dakota Veterans of Foreign Wars State Convention held in Spearfish earlier this month.



Collier

Newly elected officers are as follows:
 Commander, Glynis Collier
 Sr Vice Commander, Dr Martin Christensen
 Jr Vice Commander, Rick VandenHoek
 Quarter Master/Adjutant Anna Arnold
 Chaplain, Russel Dramstad
 Judge Advocate, Dale Greefield
 Surgeon, Katherine Pyka
 Inspector, Allan Ochsner
 Chief of Staff, Rick Williamson
 Past State Commander, Dave Baumiller
 District 1 Commander, Dan Klimisch
 District 4 Commander, Troy Foster
 District 6 Commander, Sean Johnson
 District 7 Commander, Dennis Pense
 District 10 Commander, Dwight Griffiee.

Cabinet Secretary Greg Whitlock addressed the membership on Friday afternoon, June 7, and provided an update on SDDVA accomplishments.

SDDVA's Appeals and Training Manager David Huntimer and SDDVA Southeast Field Service Officer DJ Montreal addressed the VFW members on the PACT Act and state and federal benefits.



Secretary Greg Whitlock



David Huntimer



DJ Montreal

"RIDING TO KEEP THEM FLYING"



HONOR RIDE
MIDWEST HONOR FLIGHT



Sunday, June 30, 2024 | 2:30 PM

Registration begins at 1:00 PM at the South Dakota Military Heritage Alliance (they will be open for lunch at 12:00 PM). Honor a Veteran you know and ride to raise funds for Midwest Honor Flight. Ride includes a slow salute past the Sioux Falls VA Hospital before a ceremony at the South Dakota Veterans Cemetery. A meal is included after the ride.

MORE INFORMATION:

MIDWESTHONORFLIGHT.ORG/RIDE

All proceeds from this event go directly towards future Honor Flights and more importantly, our local Veterans.

VA EXTENDS PRESUMPTIONS OF SERVICE CONNECTION FOR THREE NEW CANCER TYPES

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs is including three new cancer types in the list of presumed service-connected disabilities due to military environmental exposure under the PACT Act.

Through a sub-regulatory policy letter published to the [Federal Register](#), the following three cancer types have been included in the list of presumptive diseases:

- Male breast cancer
- Urethral cancer
- Cancer of the paraurethral glands.

This policy establishes presumptions of service connection for eligible Gulf War and post-9/11 Veterans who deployed to Afghanistan, Somalia, Djibouti, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, Yemen, Uzbekistan, and the entire [Southwest Asia theater of operations](#), which includes Iraq. Presumptive service connection means the VA automatically assumes service connection for the disease and provides benefits to eligible veterans who have submitted claims with evidence of a diagnosis.

“We are working with urgency to deliver on the promise of the PACT Act to provide health care and benefits to as many toxic-exposed veterans as possible,” said VA Secretary Denis McDonough. “The VA is working with one goal in mind: getting today and tomorrow’s veterans and their families the benefits they deserve as fast as possible.”

Any veteran who currently has or previously had one of the listed cancers at any time during military service or after separation may be entitled to disability compensation benefits dated back to Aug. 10, 2022, the date the PACT Act was signed into law. The VA will review all claims from impacted veterans and survivors who previously filed and were denied for these three conditions on or after Aug. 10, 2022, to determine if benefits can now be granted. Veterans enrolled in VA health care can obtain cancer screening and treatment at the VA, which recently announced expansion of cancer care services closer to where veterans are.

The VA has granted its one millionth PACT Act-related disability compensation claim and awarded over \$5.7 billion to veterans and survivors since the bill was signed into law.

MJFSVH UPDATE

A special “thank you” to members of the Hot Springs Elks Lodge 1751 for the great Flag Day program they provided for the residents at the Michael J. Fitzmaurice State Veterans Home.

For our residents at the Home, the flag represents perseverance, patriotism, justice, and freedom. It holds a unique and revered place in their hearts and minds and is a source of pride and unity.



SOUTH DAKOTA FALLEN HERO BRIDGE DEDICATION

**State of South Dakota to
dedicate state bridge honoring
U.S. Army SGT Fred H. Harms and
LT Donald R. Harms**

**Saturday – June 29 at 2:00 pm (CT)
Jelkin-Harms American Legion Post 142
Tripp, SD
(102 S. Main Street)**



SOUTH DAKOTA FALLEN HERO BRIDGE DEDICATION

**State of South Dakota to
dedicate state bridge honoring
U.S. Army SGT Lelund M. Kahler**

**Wednesday – July 3 at 2:00 pm (MT)
REC Center– Belle Fourche, SD
(1111 National Street)**



UPCOMING EVENTS

- Jun 20—23—American Legion State Conference—Pierre
- Jun 29—LT Donald R. and SGT Fred H. Harms Fallen Hero Bridge Dedication—American Legion Post 142—(102 S. Main Street)—Tripp— 2:00 pm (CT)
- Jun 30—Midwest Honor Flight Honor Ride—SD Military Heritage Alliance—(1600 W. Russell St)—Sioux Falls—Registration—1:00 pm/Ride Begins at 2:30 pm (CT)
- Jul 3—SGT Lelund M. Kahler Fallen Hero Bridge Dedication—Rec Center—(1111 National Street)—Belle Fourche—2:00 pm (MT)
- Jul 10—T/5 Harald Haraldsen Fallen Hero Bridge Dedication—Lions Civic Center—(210 State Road 20)—Buffalo - 2:00 pm (MT)
- Jul 15—6th Annual Tee it up for the Troops Midwest Honor Flight Fundraiser—Arrowhead Country Club—(3675 Sheridan Lake Road)—Rapid City—7:15 am (MT)
- Jul 17—SD Veterans Council Meeting—VFW Post 17—(802 S. Main St)—Aberdeen
- Jul 19—CPL Russell N. Ferdig Fallen Hero Bridge Dedication—United Parish—(2102 E. Main Street)—Elk Point—2:00 pm (CT)
- Jul 24—CPL John C. McDowell Fallen Hero Bridge Dedication—Travel Plaza—(HWY 281 and Main Street)—Corsica—11:00 am (CT)
- Aug 1—2—South Dakota Suicide Prevention Conference—Convention Center—(1201 N. West Ave)—Sioux Falls
- Aug 2—PFC John Tuin Fallen Hero Bridge Dedication—American Legion Post 184—(222 Main Street)—Estelline—1:30 pm (CT)
- Aug 5—RM2 Eugene L., RM2 Ordien F., and LT LeRoy M. Herr Fallen Hero Bridge Dedication—High School Gym—(500 S. 3rd Street) Bristol— 1:30 pm (CT)
- Aug 10—SGT Terry G. Rada Fallen Hero Bridge Dedication—Multi Purpose Center—(409 Michigan Avenue)—Geddes—12:00 noon (CT)
- Aug 17—SGT Dennis D. Lawver Fallen Hero Bridge Dedication—American Legion Post—(402 S. Broadway Avenue)—Miller—2:00 pm (CT)
- Aug 18—PFC Gunnar D. Becker Fallen Hero Bridge Dedication—Sanborn County 4-H Building—(23237 405th Avenue)—Forestburg—2:00 pm (CT)
- Aug 21—SD Veterans Council Meeting—VFW Post 791—(209 S. Cedar)—Yankton
- Aug 21—1LT Daniel J. Kirchgessler Fallen Hero Bridge Dedication—St Thomas More High School—(300 Fairmont Blvd)—Rapid City—2:00 pm (MT)
- Aug 26—Midwest Honor Flight Fundraiser—The Barrel House—(4701 E. 54th St)—Sioux Falls—11:00 am—8:00 pm (CT)
- Aug 28—Sep 2—SD State Fair—Huron
- Aug 29—Veterans Day at the SD State Fair—Northwest Energy Freedom Stage—Huron—10:30 am
- Sep 3—5—SDDVA Annual CTVSO Benefit School—SD Military Heritage Alliance—(1600 W. Russell St)—Sioux Falls
- Sep 18—SD Veterans Council Meeting—Rapid City
- Sep 25—Midwest Honor Flight Mission 21—Welcome Home Ceremony—Sioux Falls Convention Center—(1201 N. West Ave)—Sioux Falls—9:30 pm (CT)

(Continued)

UPCOMING EVENTS

- Oct 8—Midwest Honor Flight Mission 22—Welcome Home Ceremony—Sioux Falls Convention Center—(1201 N. West Ave)—Sioux Falls—9:30 pm (CT)
- Oct 12—Midwest Honor Flight “Shake Rattle and Roll” fundraiser—SD Military Heritage Alliance—(1600 W. Russell St)—Sioux Falls
- Oct 15—Midwest Honor Flight Mission 23—Welcome Home Ceremony—Sioux Falls Convention Center—(1201 N. West Ave)—Sioux Falls—9:30 pm (CT)
- Oct 16—SD Veterans Council Meeting—American Legion Post—(1229 Western Ave)—Brookings
- Nov 9—Fifth Annual Northern Hills Veterans Appreciation Fair We’ve Got Your Six—Sturgis Community Center—(1401 Lazelle Street)—Sturgis—11:00 am—2:00 pm (MT)
- Nov 9—Third Annual Day County Veterans Banquet—Webster Armory—5:00 pm (CT)
- Nov 11—1LT Josef Thorne Fallen Hero Bridge Dedication—Beresford High School Gym—(301 W. Maple Street) —Beresford—1:30 pm (CT)
- Nov 18—Wreaths Across America Fundraiser—The Barrel House—(4701 E. 54th St)—Sioux Falls—11:00 am—8:00 pm (CT)
- Nov 20—SD Veterans Council Meeting—DAV—(1519 W. 51st St)—Sioux Falls
- Nov 20—SD Veterans Council Legislative Round Table—Sioux Falls
- Nov 21—SD Veterans Council Legislative Round Table—Watertown
- Nov 22—SD Veterans Council Legislative Round Table—Rapid City
- Nov 23—SD Veterans Council Legislative Round Table—Pierre
- Dec 3—Governor’s Budget Address—1:00 pm
- Dec 14—Wreaths Across America Wreath Laying Ceremony at South Dakota Veterans Cemetery—Sioux Falls—11:00 am (CT)

2025 Events

- Jan 14—Governor’s State of the State Address—1:00 pm
- Jan 14—Legislative Session starts
- Jan 15—SD Veterans Council Meeting—Pierre
- Feb 14—16—American Legion Mid-Winter Conference—Oacoma
- Jun 12—15—VFW State Convention—Ramkota—Pierre
- Jun 19—22—American Legion State Conference—Huron
- Dec 13—Wreaths Across America Wreath Laying Ceremony at South Dakota Veterans Cemetery—Sioux Falls—11:00 am (CT)

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