



# NEWSLETTER

**SOUTH DAKOTA DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS**

**SOUTH DAKOTA DEPARTMENT OF THE MILITARY**



## BRIDGE DEDICATED IN HONOR OF SP4 THOMAS L. ZEIGLER

The South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs proudly hosted a State Bridge Dedication Ceremony honoring U.S. Army SP4 Thomas L. Zeigler on Friday, July 18, 2025, at the American Legion Post in Winner.

The SD49 bridge over the Hamill Dam Reservoir, located just north of Hamill, was dedicated as the SP4 Thomas L. Zeigler Bridge.

Zeigler was born on December 22, 1949, in Winner, South Dakota. Thomas was drafted into the Army in 1969. He served bravely as a Specialist Fourth Class and squad leader with Company C, 5th Battalion, 46th Infantry Regiment, 198th Light Infantry Brigade during the Vietnam War. On March 22, 1971, just one month before he was due to return home, Thomas volunteered to take the point position for a fellow soldier and was killed in action during an ambush in Quang Tin Province.

This dedication brought together family, friends, and community members to honor Zeigler's sacrifice and ensure his legacy will never be forgotten.

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# **SD TO DEDICATE TWO MORE FALLEN HERO BRIDGES**

The South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs will be hosting two more State Bridge Dedication Ceremonies to honor U.S. Army PFC Mark Shields and U.S. Marine Corps Private First-Class Ronald C. Dexter.

The Shields ceremony will be held Friday, August 1, 2025, at 1:00 p.m. (CT) at the Community Center in Fort Thompson (1021 Central Circle).

The SD50 bridge over Crow Creek, about twelve miles north of Chamberlain, will be dedicated as the PFC Mark Shields Bridge.

Shields was born on February 12, 1913, in South Dakota. He answered the call to serve his country during the Korean War. Enlisting in the United States Army, he served with the 72nd Engineer Combat Battalion, attached to the 5th Infantry Regimental Combat Team. During the summer of 1950, PFC Shields and his unit were part of the United Nations (UN) forces defending the Pusan Perimeter. Shields gave his life in the line of duty on August 16, 1950, in Chingong-Ni, South Korea.

The Dexter ceremony will be held Saturday, August 2, 2025, at 11:00 a.m. (CT) at the Grant County 4-H Grounds in Milbank (517 Flynn Drive).

The HWY 15 Bridge over the North Fork Yellow Bank River, south of Milbank, will be dedicated as the PFC Ronald C. Dexter Bridge.

Dexter was born on May 21, 1947, in Graceville, Minnesota. Dexter served in the United States Marine Corps as a rifleman (0311) with D Company, 1st Battalion, 26th Marine Regiment, 3rd Marine Division. At the age of 19, Dexter was deployed to South Vietnam in 1966. On September 19, 1966, while serving in Quang Tri Province, he was killed in action by small arms fire.

"It is an honor to recognize the brave men and women who gave their lives for our freedom," said Secretary of the South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs Jeremiah Schneider. "The Fallen Hero Bridge Dedication program ensures their sacrifice is remembered every day. These dedications serve as lasting symbols of gratitude and respect, connecting our communities to the legacy of those who served."

"As we honor their memory, we also reaffirm our commitment to support veterans and their families in every way possible," continued Schneider. "Through these bridges, their stories remain a vital part of South Dakota's heritage and a constant reminder of the freedoms we cherish."

# SOUTH DAKOTA FALLEN HERO BRIDGE DEDICATION

**The State of South Dakota will  
dedicate a state bridge honoring  
U.S. Army PFC Mark Shields**

**Friday, August 1 at 1:00 pm (CT)  
Community Center  
1021 Central Circle  
Fort Thompson, SD**



# SOUTH DAKOTA FALLEN HERO BRIDGE DEDICATION

**The State of South Dakota will  
dedicate a state bridge honoring  
U.S.M.C. PFC Ronald C. Dexter**

**Saturday – August 2 at 11:00 am (CT)  
Grant County 4-H Grounds  
517 Flynn Drive  
Milbank, SD**





# VA AWARDS MORE THAN \$2M IN GRANTS TO MEMORIALIZE VETERANS

The United States Department of Veterans Affairs announced seven grants to educational and research institutions totaling \$2,195,992 to memorialize veterans interred in VA national cemeteries as part of the National Cemetery Administration's [Veterans Legacy Program](#) initiative.

The grants will support the creation of documentaries, lesson plans, instructional aids and other educational materials regarding the lives and accomplishments of veterans.

The VA established VLP in 2016 to memorialize veterans through educational outreach and to connect students, educators, and citizens with VA national cemeteries. The program has so far awarded dozens of grants and engaged with more than 15,000 students. Veteran biographies, images, and other content are also preserved on the VA's [Veterans Legacy Memorial](#) site, where individual web pages commemorate the lives and service of more than 10 million U.S. veterans interred in U.S. and overseas cemeteries.

"We are grateful for our collaborations with schools and non-profit organizations across the country to help preserve veterans' legacies," said Acting Under Secretary for Memorial Affairs Ronald Walters. "These grants will help ensure future generations continue to learn about the remarkable men and women interred in VA national cemeteries."

The grantees announced today were selected following a rigorous review process. They include:

- **National History Day, Inc., \$361,721** National History Day will identify fifty teachers who live within 90 miles of a VA or VA-funded cemetery to each select two veterans who served in the U.S. Marine Corps during World War II.
- **Loyola Marymount University, \$350,000** The LMU Digital Veterans Legacy Project is an educational initiative designed to honor U.S. veterans interred in national cemeteries through collaborative research and digital storytelling.
- **Kennesaw State University Research and Service Foundation, \$341,881** The proposed project represents a continuation and expansion of a project that curates the life histories of veterans who served in the late 1940s -1950s who participated in the Civil Rights Movement.
- **U.S. Korea Global Strategy Foundation, \$324,999** This project will increase knowledge and awareness of the "Forgotten War" by creating ten new secondary social studies instructional modules, guiding student research.
- **Research Foundation of the City University of New York, \$280,000** This project will develop a professional development seminar for 17 K-12 educators drawn from the greater New York.
- **University of Central Florida, \$274,439** The UCF project will extend the memorialization of veterans interred in National Cemeteries in Florida.
- **West Virginia Humanities Council, Inc., \$262,952** This project expands upon the geographical and academic impact of prior Veterans Legacy Grants Program awards, which have produced 30 veteran biographies in a prior year grant and are creating 26 new veteran biographies in the current grant.

# **VA, CMS PARTNER TO IDENTIFY AND RECOVER \$106M IN DUPLICATE BILLING**

The United States Department of Veterans Affairs announced a new partnership with the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services to eliminate instances in which both agencies are billed for the same health care episode.

As part of the partnership, VA and CMS reviewed medical billings for the last six years for veterans enrolled in both VA health care and Medicare and found \$106 million that was improperly spent on duplicate billings.

The VA and CMS this month will begin sending bills to overpaid providers to recover any improper payments.

Approximately 5.9 million veterans are dually enrolled in VA health care and Medicare, and both VA and CMS pay for a variety of medical care from third-party providers. Until now, however, VA and CMS had no system in place to prevent double billing.

VA and CMS have now established a data-matching agreement to identify medical providers who have submitted claims for payment to both VA and Medicare, helping eliminate overpayments and future instances of double billing.

"We are proud to implement this commonsense reform, which should have been instituted years ago," said VA Secretary Doug Collins. "The money we save as a result of this effort will be much better spent helping VA and Medicare beneficiaries get the benefits they've earned."

"For too long, government programs have operated in silos, enabling improper payments to slip through the cracks at the expense of taxpayers," said CMS Administrator Dr. Mehmet Oz.

"CMS is proud to partner with the VA to root out duplicate billing, recover taxpayer funds, and reduce redundant paperwork and waste so American veterans and seniors receive the care they deserve."

# **VA EXTENDS CAREGIVER SUPPORT PROGRAM ELIGIBILITY FOR LEGACY VETERANS CAREGIVERS**

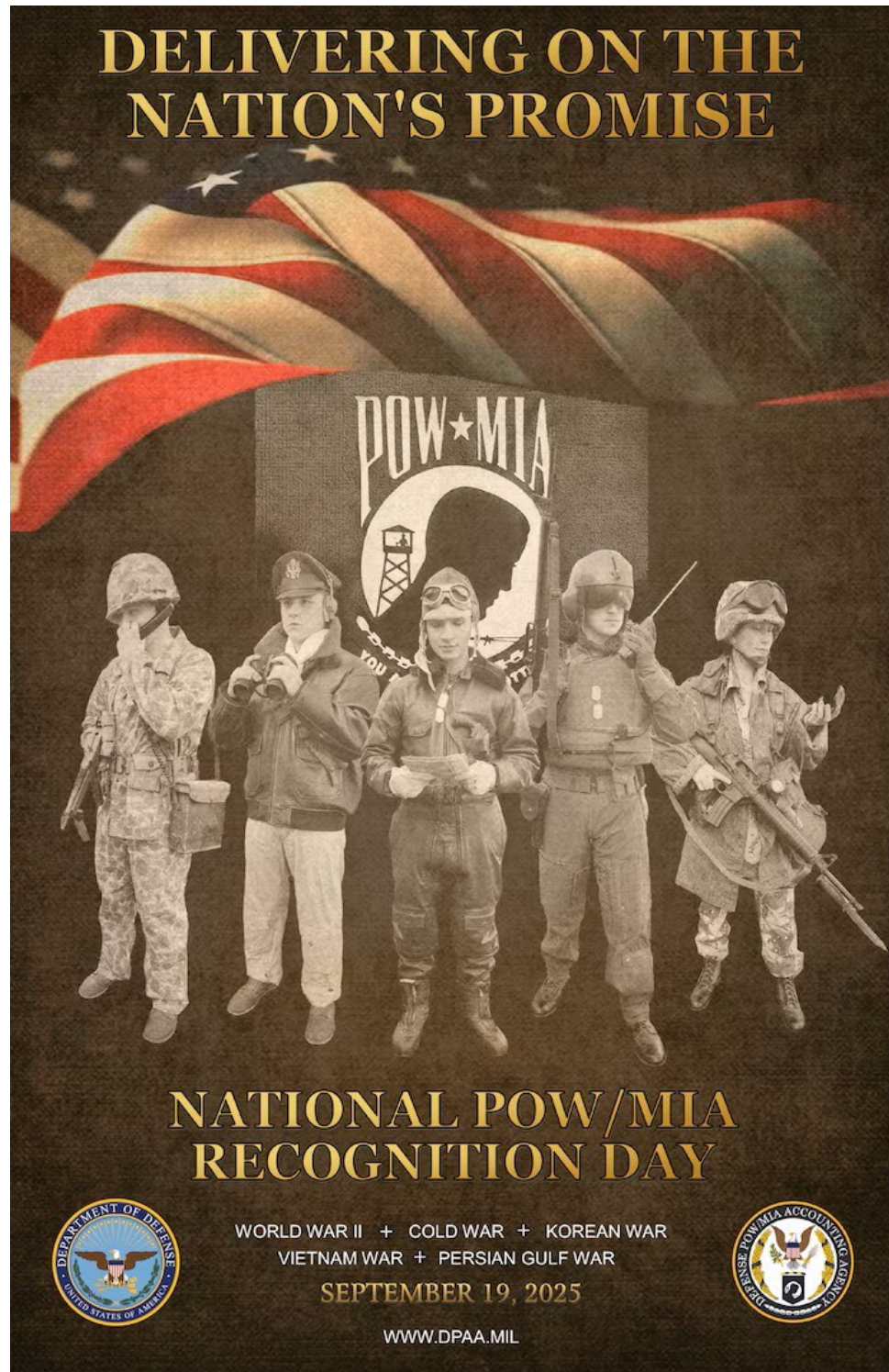
The United States Department of Veterans Affairs announced that it will soon propose a rule to extend Program of Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers eligibility for certain veterans and their family caregivers through Sept. 30, 2028.

The new rule will extend program eligibility for legacy participants, legacy applicants and their family caregivers for three years while VA continues the rulemaking process to refine the program. The extension will ensure that legacy participants and applicants can maintain their benefits and stability during this time.

Legacy participants are veterans, service members, and their family caregivers who were participating in PCAFC as of Sept. 30, 2020, and legacy applicants are Veterans, servicemembers, and their family caregivers who applied for PCAFC before Oct. 1, 2020, and were accepted into the program on or after Oct. 1, 2020.

“Legacy caregivers have helped shape VA’s Caregiver Support Program for many years,” said VA Secretary Doug Collins. “This decision underscores VA’s commitment to veterans and caregivers across the nation and will help provide consistency and stability to nearly 15,000 legacy participants for years to come.”

PCAFC is part of VA’s broader Caregiver Support Program, and offers enhanced clinical support for family caregivers of eligible Veterans who incurred or aggravated a serious injury in the line of duty, and meet other eligibility criteria. PCAFC benefits include education and training, respite care, counseling, technical support, a monthly stipend and access to health care through the Civilian Health and Medical Program of the Department of Veterans Affairs and certain travel expenses.



The Vietnam Veterans of America Chapter 959 and the Sioux Falls American Legion Post 15 will hold their annual POW/MIA Remembrance service on September 19 at 6:30 pm at the Veterans Memorial Park (1021 W. Bailey Street) in Sioux Falls. In case of rain, the program will be held at AL Post 15 (1700 W. Russell Street). Bring a lawn chair. Following the program there will be a reception at 1700 West Russell Street - use the north door.





**HUMOR FOR  
HEROES**  
**COMEDY NIGHT FUNDRAISER!**

**OCTOBER 24TH**  
1600 W RUSSELL ST. SIOUX FALLS, SD

**COMEDIANS**  
JERRY IRBY (AIR FORCE)  
TRAVIS WEBER (ARMY)  
HOSTED BY BIG JOHN SMALL

**TICKETS**  
**\$15 EACH**  
**2 FOR \$25**

**DOORS 6PM**  
**COMEDY 7PM**

**AMAZING SILENT AUCTION** FUNDRAISER FOR POST 15  
**CALL FOR TICKETS**  
**605-336-3470**

**AMERICAN  
LEGION**



COME RIDE WITH US TO RAISE MONEY FOR

**SCHOLARSHIPS FOR VETERANS**



**13<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL**

*A SCENIC JOURNEY THROUGH THE BREATHTAKING NORTHERN BLACK HILLS*  
**Spearfish Canyon • Vanocker Canyon**

**TUESDAY, AUG. 5**

**SIGN-IN**  
**8:30 AM**

**KICK STANDS UP**  
**10:00 AM**

Lunch following the ride at Wareing Motors in Stugis.

**BHSU Joy Center Parking Lot 1351 St. Joe, Spearfish**

This charity ride is led by our American Legion brothers and sisters and has law enforcement support at all major intersections. All vehicles are welcome.

100% of registration fees go directly to scholarships for Veterans.

**REGISTER NOW**  
[BHSU.edu/JacketRide](https://BHSU.edu/JacketRide)

For more information:  
call 605.642.6335 or email  
[Kanda.Guthmiller@BHSU.edu](mailto:Kanda.Guthmiller@BHSU.edu)



# WELCOME REAR ADMIRAL MICHAEL WOSJE

Monday August 4, 2025  
1600 West Russell Street, Sioux Falls

Hosted by



VETERANS STRENGTHENING AMERICA

Sioux Falls, SD Post 15

The public is invited to a reception and dinner honoring Rear Admiral Michael Wosje. Admiral Wosje is a Sioux Falls native who graduated from O'Gorman High School with the class of 1989.

Monday August 4, 2025

1700 hours / 5pm Social

1800 hours / 6pm Dinner

Program to follow

Dinner \$15 / Beef Tips

Reservations before July 29, 2025 – Call 605.336.3470

The U.S. Navy proudly announces Navy Week's return to Sioux Falls, August 4-10. As part of a nationwide outreach effort, Sioux Falls Navy Week will bring 50-75 Sailors to engage directly with the community through a week-long series of performances, educational events and service projects. Help us kick off the week on August 4 by making your reservation today.

# MJFSVH VETERANS ENJOY DELICIOUS BURGERS AT 309

This week, veterans from the Michael J. Fitzmaurice State Veterans Home enjoyed a wonderful evening out at the 309 General Restaurant and Bar. The veterans gathered for a hearty meal of delicious burgers and fries — complete with the signature branded buns that brought smiles to everyone's faces.

This special supper was made possible through 309's *Burgers for Heroes* Program, which allows generous customers to donate meals for our veterans. While they were there, the veterans were warmly thanked for their service and invited back for future meals.

Thanks to 309 and its caring patrons, our heroes will be able to return for a few more Veterans Meals each month — all thanks to the kindness and gratitude of the community.

A big thank you to 309 General Restaurant and Bar, and to everyone who contributes to *Burgers for Heroes*, for giving back to those who have given so much for us!



**Burgers for Heroes**  
Pay it forward for local Heroes!

For just \$10, you can buy a Burger or Cheeseburger Basket that will be paid forward to an active or retired military member, police officer, firefighter, EMT, or emergency dispatcher in our community.

**How It Works:**  
Purchase a \$10 burger basket for a local hero. Leave a note on our Burgers for Heroes Wall or keep it anonymous. Heroes (military, police, firefighters, EMTs, veterans, and emergency dispatchers) can redeem their free meal by showing ID.

Thank you for honoring those who serve and protect us!

**THE 309 GENERAL**







**Veterans,  
See  
What's  
Brewing!**



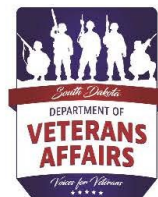
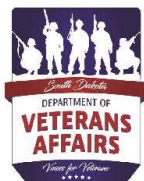
**We invite all veterans to join us for a  
“Veterans Coffee and Networking.”  
Free coffee and treats while you chat with new and old friends  
alike and learn more about veterans benefits from the South  
Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs.**

**Monday—July 28, 2025**

**10:00 am (CT)**

**The Ward's Store**

**(127 Calumet Avenue SE—De Smet SD)**







**Veterans,  
See  
What's  
Brewing!**



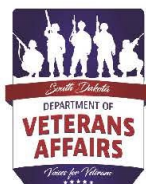
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**Tuesday—July 29, 2025**

**10:00 am (CT)**

**VFW Post 791**

**(209 Cedar Street—Yankton, SD)**







**Veterans,  
See  
What's  
Brewing!**



**We invite all veterans to join us for a  
“Veterans Coffee and Networking.”  
Free coffee and treats while you chat with new and old friends  
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Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs  
Wednesday—July 30, 2025  
10:00 am (CT)  
Jerauld County Court House Day Room  
(205 Wallace Avenue S, Wessington Springs, SD)**



# UPCOMING EVENTS

Jul 26—3rd Annual Korean War Veterans Appreciation Day—Brookings Outdoor Adventure Center—(2810 22nd Avenue S)—Brookings—9:00 am—2:00 pm (CT)

Jul 26—FHBD—S/SGT Ervin Rieck—Community Hall (11 W. Main Street)—Warner—2:00 pm (CT)

Jul 26—Homecoming for American Legion State Auxiliary President Susie Learing—Irene Community Center—(Main Street)—Irene—11:00 am (CT)

Jul 27—Homecoming for American Legion Department Commander Kevin Hempel—Chester School Gym—(102 2nd Avenue)—Chester—1:00 pm (CT)

Jul 28—SDDVA What's Brewing—The Ward's Store—(127 Calumet Avenue SE)—De Smet—10:00 am (CT)

Jul 29—SDDVA What's Brewing—VFW Post 791—(209 Cedar Street)—Yankton—10:00 am (CT)

Jul 30—Rosebud Sioux Tribe Veterans Stand Down—Sinte Gleska Multipurpose Building—(White Horse Blvd.)—Antelope—9:00 am—2:00 pm (CT)

Jul 30—SDDVA What's Brewing—Jerauld County Court House Day Room—(205 Wallace Avenue S)—Wessington Springs—10:00 am (CT)

Aug 1—FHBD—PFC Mark Shields—Community Center—(1021 Central Circle)—Fort Thompson—1:00 pm (CT)

Aug 2—FHBD—PFC Ronald Dexter—4-H Grounds (517 Flynn Drive)—Milbank—11:00 am (CT)

Aug 4—American Legion Navy Week Dinner—Sioux Falls Military Heritage Alliance—(1600 W. Russell Street)—Sioux Falls—5:00 pm (CT)

Aug 4-5—Your Journey Matters 2025 Behavioral Health Conference—Sioux Falls Sheraton Convention Center

Aug 5—BHSU Jacket Ride—BHSU Joy Center—(1351 St. Joe)—Spearfish—8:30 am (MT)

Aug 7—Purple Heart Day

Aug 9—FHBD—1LT Larry Barbee—American Legion Post 92—(612 Main Street)—Redfield—2:00 pm (CT)

Aug 9-13—National VFW Convention—Columbus, OH

Aug 11—Barrel House Day of Giving for Midwest Honor Flight—(4701 E. 54th Street)—Sioux Falls

Aug 13—DAV Golf Tournament—Prairie Green Golf Course—Sioux Falls

Aug 13—Sioux Falls VA Show and Shine Car Show—Sioux Falls VA—(2501 W. 22nd Street)—5:00—8:00 pm (CT)

Aug 14—FHBD—CPL Henry Kluess—VFW Post 2118—(520 Main Avenue)—Brookings—10:00 am (CT)

Aug 20—South Dakota Veterans Council Meeting—Virtual—1:00 pm (CT)

Aug 21—Cheyenne River Veterans Stand Down—Eagle Butte Vet Center Building—Eagle Butte—10:00 am (MT)

Aug 27-Sep 1—South Dakota State Fair

Aug 28—Veterans Day at the South Dakota State Fair

Aug 30—FHBD—SP5 Richard Miller—Plankinton School District—(404 E. Davenport)—Plankinton—1:00 pm (CT)

Sep 1—State Offices Closed—Labor Day

Sep 9-12—SDDVA Annual CTVSO Benefit School

Sep 17—SD Veterans Council Meeting—Yankton VFW Post—(209 S. Cedar Street)—Yankton—1:00 pm (CT)

Sep 17—FHBD—PVT Elmer Albertson—Harding County School—(12474 Tipperary Street)—Buffalo—2:30 pm (MT)

Sep 18—FHBD—PFC Peter Ommen—Pizza Lab—(124 US 14A)—Central City—1:00 pm (MT)

Sep 19—POW/MIA Day

Sep 19—Sioux Falls POW/MIA Remembrance Service—Veterans Memorial Park—(1021 W. Bailey Street)—Sioux Falls—6:30 pm (CT)

Sep 20—FHBD—PVT Frank Holcombe—American Legion Post 43—(921 Main Street)—Centerville—10:00 am (CT)

(continued)

# UPCOMING EVENTS

Sep 23—Midwest Honor Flight Mission 27  
Sep 25—Rapid City Veterans Stand Down—DoubleTree by Hilton Rapid City Downtown Convention Center—  
(505 N. 5th Street)—Rapid City—10:00 am (MT)  
Oct 3—FHBD—SGT Dirk Abbas—Event Center—(1203 3rd Street)—Britton—2:00 pm (CT)  
Oct 7—Midwest Honor Flight Mission 28  
Oct 8—FHBD—PVT Leroy Goosen—Sully Buttes High School—(500 S. 8th Street)—Onida—1:45 pm (CT)  
Oct 13—State Offices Closed—Native American Day  
Oct 15—SD Veterans Council Meeting—Virtual—1:00 pm (CT)  
Oct 18—Derr Gala—Monument Lacroix Hall—Rapid City—5:00 pm (MT)  
Oct 18—4th Annual Midwest Honor Flight Fundraiser—South Dakota Military Heritage Alliance—(1600 W. Russell  
Street)—Sioux Falls—7:00 pm (CT)  
Oct 24—Humor for Heroes Night—South Dakota Military Heritage Alliance—(1600 W. Russell Street)—Sioux Falls  
7:00 pm (CT)  
Nov 7—MWHF Bingo—Severance Brewing—(701 N. Phillips Avenue)—Sioux Falls—7:00—9:00 pm (CT)  
Nov 8—Northern Hills Veterans Appreciation Fair—Sturgis Community Center—(1401 Lazelle Street)—Sturgis—  
11:00 am—2:00 pm (MT)  
Nov 8—Day County Veterans Banquet—Webster Armory—5:00 pm (CT)  
Nov 10—Barrel House Day of Giving for the South Dakota Veterans Cemetery WAA—(4701 E. 54th Street)—  
Sioux Falls—11:00 am—Midnight (CT)  
Nov 11—State Offices Closed—Veterans Day  
Nov 11—Regional FHBD—SD Military Heritage Alliance—(1600 W. Russell Street)—Sioux Falls—2:00 pm (CT)  
Nov 19—SD Veterans Council Meeting—DAV Headquarters (1519 W. 51st Street)—Sioux Falls—9:00 am (CT)  
Nov 27—State Offices Closed—Thanksgiving  
Nov 29—Side by Side MWHF Poker Run—Pilot Mikes Roadhouse—(4901 N. Ellis Road)—Sioux Falls—  
11:00 am (CT)  
Dec 2—Governor's Budget Address—SD State Capitol—1:00 pm (CT)  
Dec 13—Wreaths Across America Wreath Laying Ceremony at South Dakota Veterans Cemetery—Sioux Falls—  
11:00 am (CT)  
Dec 25—State Offices Closed—Christmas Day

2026

Jan 13—South Dakota Legislative Session Opens  
Jan 13—Governor's State of the State Address—SD State Capitol—1:00 pm (CT)  
Jan 14—SD Veterans Council Meeting—American Legion Post 8—(520 S. Pierre Street)—Pierre—2:00 pm (CT)  
Jan 14—South Dakota Veterans Council Legislative Reception—American Legion Post 8—(520 S. Pierre Street)—  
Pierre—5:30 pm—7:30 pm (CT)  
June 10-14—State VFW Convention—Mitchell  
July 18-19—Sioux Falls Air Show  
Sep 15-18—SDDVA Annual CTVSO Benefit School

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