



# NEWSLETTER

**SOUTH DAKOTA DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS**

**SOUTH DAKOTA DEPARTMENT OF THE MILITARY**



## GOV RHODEN VISITS SDNG TROOPS AT SOUTHERN BORDER

Yesterday, Governor Larry Rhoden visited our South Dakota National Guard troops at the Southern Border.

"My goal is to keep our state strong, safe, and free, and I want the same for our country," said Rhoden. "The 109<sup>th</sup> Engineer Battalion is working with the Trump Administration, Secretary Kristi Noem, and Border Patrol to keep our nation safe, and I was honored to see them in action at the Southern Border."

Governor Rhoden met with the 109<sup>th</sup> Engineer Battalion in Eagle Pass, Texas, then viewed the Picnic Observation Outpost near the Rio Grande River. As Commander in Chief of the South Dakota National Guard, Governor Rhoden is committed to supporting our troops.

The Texas Department of Public Safety (DPS) hosted Rhoden for an airboat tour of the Rio Grande, which took off from Shelby Park. In 2023, under the Biden Administration, this region caught national attention with as many as 4,000 illegal aliens crossing the border at Shelby Park daily.

Texas DPS then provided a helicopter tour of the border, including the border wall that was constructed near town. A previous South Dakota National Guard deployment assisted with the construction of that wall.

"The biggest eye opener was just how vast the challenge of securing the border is. The Trump Administration, Texas DPS, and our National Guard are accomplishing the incredible feat of keeping our nation safe," continued Governor Rhoden.

Governor Rhoden ended the day by engaging in a U.S. Customs and Border Patrol briefing at the Del Rio Sector. They outlined their actions to stop drugs, human trafficking, and other illicit activities from crossing our border.

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# MEMORIAL DAY PROGRAMS

Memorial Day is more than just a long weekend—it's a time for us to pause, remember, and honor the brave men and women who made the ultimate sacrifice in service to our country. Attending a Memorial Day program in your community is a meaningful way to pay tribute to our fallen heroes and to show your support for their families and fellow veterans.

These ceremonies remind us of the cost of freedom and help ensure that future generations understand the significance of this day. Coming together as a community strengthens our shared commitment to honoring and remembering those who served and sacrificed.

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to our staff, community leaders, veterans service organizations, and volunteers who work tirelessly to organize these important events. Your dedication ensures that the legacy of our heroes lives on. Thank you for keeping the spirit of Memorial Day alive in our hometowns.

## Memorial Day Programs—May 26

- Michael J. Fitzmaurice State Veterans Home (2500 Minnekahta Avenue) in Hot Springs at 10:00 a.m. (MT).
- Black Hills National Cemetery (20901 Pleasant Valley Dr.) in Sturgis at 11:00 am (MT).
- South Dakota Veterans Cemetery (25965 477th Avenue) in Sioux Falls at 12:00 p.m. (CT).
- Black Hills National Cemetery (20901 Pleasant Valley Dr.) in Sturgis at 1:00 pm (MT).





# WHAT'S BREWING

The South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs (SDDVA), in partnership with our county veterans service officers, have hosted “Coffee and Conversation” events in Pierre, Mobridge, Piedmont, Brookings, and Sturgis. These gatherings are part of the Department’s “What’s Brewing” program—an outreach effort to connect directly with veterans, hear their stories,

and provide updates on services and benefits available to them.

SDDVA utilizes these platforms to share updates on bene-



fits, services, and resources available to veterans. Veterans issues have included: VA staff cuts, wait times for claims decisions, VSO roles, PACT Act, claims consultants, C&P exams, travel distance for exams, and veterans transportation services.

We have additional What’s Brewing events scheduled for Chamberlain, Mitchell, Spearfish, Timber Lake, Ipswich, and Buffalo.

All veterans are encouraged to attend. For those unable to make it, the SDDVA remains just a call or click away. Reach the Department at 605.333.6869 or locate their county or tribal Veterans Service Officer at: <https://vetaffairs.sd.gov/veteransserviceofficers/locatevso.aspx>



# VA MAKES IT EASIER FOR VETERANS TO USE COMMUNITY CARE

The United States Department of Veterans Affairs has announced changes that will make it easier for VA-enrolled veterans to access health care from non-VA providers at the department's expense.

Since 2019, the MISSION Act has enabled VA-enrolled veterans to access health care from non-VA providers at the department's expense when it is in their best medical interest. These decisions have been made jointly by veterans and their referring clinicians but were not considered final until they were reviewed by a second VA doctor.

Effective immediately, the VA will implement language in the Senator Elizabeth Dole 21st Century Veterans Healthcare and Benefits Improvement Act that removes this extra review step. The change will give eligible veterans faster access to community care.

"Under President Trump, VA is providing Veterans with more health care choices than ever before," said VA Secretary Doug Collins. "Now, we're making it even easier for veterans to get their health care when and where it's most convenient for them. We are putting veterans first at the department, and that means placing a premium on customer service and convenience. This important change will help us do just that."

## **Background**

Since 2019, the MISSION Act has given eligible veterans the option of seeking community care outside the VA when they meet any one of six conditions:

- When it is in the best medical interest of the veteran.
- The care required is not available at a VA medical facility.
- The veteran lives in a state or territory that does not have a full-service VA facility
- VA cannot meet wait time or distance standards:
  - VA cannot offer an appointment within 20 days for primary care, mental health or non-institutional extended care, or within 28 days for specialty care.
  - It takes more than a 30-minute drive to reach primary or mental health care, or a 60-minute drive for specialty care.
- VA service does not meet certain quality standards.
- The veteran meets the grandfathered distance and location provisions of the former Veterans Choice Program.

The new, streamlined process for determining best medical interest will be backed by training for Veterans Health Administration employees to ensure compliance with the Elizabeth Dole Act.

# SDDVA OUTREACH

Veterans from across the Black Hills region had the opportunity to attend a DAV Information Fair in Rapid City. The fair was designed as a one-stop shop for accessing a wide array of veteran services. The event brought together representatives from government agencies, non-profits, and community organizations committed to serving veterans.

Participants included the South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs (SDDVA), VA Black Hills, DAV, Upward Bound, Cornerstone Mission, Transition Assistance, Vets Honored Internment, Ellsworth Base Exchange, Wounded Warriors, and many more. Veterans were able to explore resources ranging from housing and education to healthcare and transitional support.

SDDVA Field Service Officer Will Huffmon and Michael J. Fitzmaurice State Veterans Home Veterans Service Officer Julie Schaffner were on hand to provide information about state and federal benefits, as well as services offered at the State Veterans Home.

Events like this continue to strengthen the network of care for South Dakota's veterans by promoting collaboration and making it easier for veterans to access the support they've earned.





**10AM**  
**7**  
**JUNE**

**All fitness levels welcome**

Donate directly at  
<https://www.sergeantderrfoundation.org>

# **SGT COLTON LEVI DERR FOUNDATION FUNDRAISER**

**Where:**  
**Black Hills CrossFit**  
**1848 Fountain Plaza Dr.**  
**Rapid City, SD**



**Workout:**  
6 lap run (buy in)  
100 wallballs  
100 pullups  
100 situps  
100 pushups  
100 burpees  
Finish with 1 mile "ruck march"

**ALL PROCEEDS GO DIRECTLY TO THE  
FOUNDATION**

Join us for fitness and a great cause.  
BBQ to follow



# SAPR 5K

**STEP FORWARD**  
**PREVENT. REPORT. ADVOCATE**

**SOUTH DAKOTA  
NATIONAL GUARD**



## I Run With Survivors

Date: Sunday July 13th

Time: 10:00am

Location: Memorial Park



## SUNDAY RUN DAY JULY 13TH

- ✓ 5k Fun Run
- ✓ T-Shirts for Service Members
- ✓ Scan the QR Code to Register



**Sign up today and show survivors they are valued, believed, and supported every step of the way.**





*A Day to Remember and Honor  
SDDVA Memorial Day Program  
South Dakota Veterans Cemetery  
Monday—May 26, 2025  
12:00 Noon*



*25965 477th Avenue  
Sioux Falls*





*A Day to Remember and Honor  
SDDVA Memorial Day Program  
Michael J. Fitzmaurice State  
Veterans Home*

*Monday—May 26, 2025  
10:00 am (MT)*



*2500 Minnekahta Avenue  
Hot Springs*



# TAPS ACROSS AMERICA

**Memorial Day**  
**Monday, May 26, 2025**  
**3:00 p.m. | El Riad Shrine**

## **Honor our Veterans**

Join us out front of the El Riad Shrine at 3:00 p.m. Musicians can prepare before hand in the El Riad Shrine starting at 2:30 p.m.

When finished playing Taps a short program including all Veterans sharing their names, where they served and when will take place inside. Socializing and drinks to follow.

We ask all available to please join us and encourage all Veterans to join us as well.

If you are a musician or know of someone who is and wish to play Taps that day, please contact John Bayer (605) 360-1204 or Al Zahn (605) 254-2695.







**GALLANTLY FORWARD**  
**2025 GALA**

**SATURDAY**  
**18 OCTOBER**

**THE MONUMENT**  
LACROIX HALL

**DOORS • 5PM**  
**TICKETS \$35**

**SOCIAL ★ MUSIC ★ DINNER ★ PROGRAM ★ SILENT & LIVE AUCTION**  
**#PTSD #LISTEN #BATTLEBUDDY**

**GET YOUR TICKET TO**  
**SUPPORT OUR HEROES** ★ **CALL OR GO ONLINE 605.545.2505**  
**SERGEANTDERRFOUNDATION.ORG** 

518 6TH ST. • STE 2 • RAPID CITY, SD • 57701

**BUY A TICKET FOR A VETERAN IF YOU CAN'T ATTEND!**







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

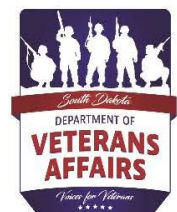
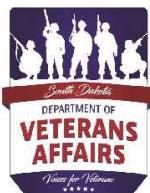


**We invite all veterans to join us for a  
“Veterans Coffee and Networking.”  
Free coffee and treats while you chat with new and old friends  
alike and learn more about veterans benefits from the South  
Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs.**

**Thursday—May 29, 2025**

**10:00 am (CT)**

**James Valley Community Center  
(300 W. 1st Avenue—Mitchell, SD)**





# UPCOMING EVENTS

May 26—State Offices Closed—Memorial Day

May 26—SDDVA Memorial Day Program at State Veterans Cemetery—12:00 noon (CT)

May 26—SDDVA Memorial Day Program at State Veterans Home—10:00 am (MT)

May 29—SDDVA What's Brewing—James Valley Community Center (300 W. 1st Avenue)—Mitchell—10:00 am (CT)

Jun 3—Mission 26 Midwest Honor Flight Operation Welcome Home—Hawthorne Aviation—(5815 Mitchell Street #1207)—Sioux City, IA —9:30 pm (Doors open at 7:30 pm) (CT)

Jun 6—Pine Ridge Veterans Stand Down—Pine Ridge Pow Wow Grounds—10:00 am (MT)

Jun 7—Rich Schild Memorial Poker Run—The Keg—Tabor—12:00 noon (CT)

Jun 7—Derr Foundation Fundraiser—Black Hills Cross Fit—(1848 Fountain Plaza Drive)—Rapid City—10:00 am (MT)

Jun 10—MWHF Day of Sweetness—Chick-Fil-A—(4005 W. 41st Street)—Sioux Falls—6:30 am—10:00 pm (CT)

Jun 13—SDDVA What's Brewing—BHSU Joy Center (1351 S. Joe Street)—Spearfish—1:00 pm (MT)

Jun 14—8th Annual MWHF Pans and Pubs—Downtown Sioux Falls—11:00 am—4:00 pm (CT)

Jun 17—SDDVA What's Brewing—Community Center (701-709 Main Street)—Timber Lake—1:00 pm (MT)

Jun 19—State Offices Closed—Juneteenth Day

Jun 19-22—VFW State Convention—Ramkota—Pierre

Jun 19-22—American Legion State Conference—Huron

Jun 26—SDDVA What's Brewing—FEM Electric (800 5th Avenue)—Ipswich—1:00 pm (CT)

Jun 29—MWHF Honor Ride—SD Military Heritage Alliance—(1600 W. Russell Street)—Sioux Falls—1:00 pm (CT)

Jul 4—State Offices Closed—Fourth of July

Jul 11—SDDVA What's Brewing—Harding County Courthouse (408 Ransland Street)—Buffalo—10:00 pm (MT)

Jul 13—SDNG SAPR 5K—Memorial Park—Rapid City—10:00 am (MT)

Jul 14—Black Hills Tee it up for the Troops Tournament—Arrowhead Country Club—Rapid City

Jul 16—SD Veterans Council Meeting—Mitchell VFW Post—(215 N. Main Street)—Mitchell—1:00 pm (CT)

Jul 19—Veterans Information Day—BG Ernie Edwards Readiness Center—(1951 N. HWY 20)—Watertown—10:00 am—2:00 pm (CT)

Jul 24—Rosebud Sioux Tribe Veterans Stand Down—Sinte Gleska Multipurpose Building—Antelope—10:00am (CT)

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)

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

Aug 7—Purple Heart Day

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 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

(continued)

# UPCOMING EVENTS

Sep 1—State Offices Closed—Labor Day  
Sep 9-12—SDDVA Annual CTVSO Benefit School  
Sep 16—SD Veterans Council Meeting—Yankton VFW Post—(209 S. Cedar Street)—Yankton—1:00 pm (CT)  
Sep 19—POW/MIA Day  
Sep 21-25—NVS Accredited Representative Skill Training—Annapolis, MD  
Sep 21-26—NVS Basic for New Accredited Representatives—Annapolis, MD  
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 13—State Offices Closed—Native American Day  
Oct 15—SD Veterans Council Meeting—Virtual—1:00 pm (CT)  
Oct 18—Derr Gala—Monument Lacroix Fall—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  
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 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 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—South Dakota 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)  
July 18-19—Sioux Falls Air Show  
Sep 15-18—SDDVA Annual CTVSO Benefit School

Audry Ricketts, Public Information Officer ([audry.ricketts@state.sd.us](mailto:audry.ricketts@state.sd.us))  
South Dakota Department of the Military <https://military.sd.gov/>  
South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs <https://vetaffairs.sd.gov>  
Soldiers and Sailors Building - 425 E Capitol Avenue—Pierre, SD 57501  
Phone: 605-773-8242

