This past weekend South Dakota dedicated two state bridges in honor of SGT Richard Maynard and PFC Frederick Farlee.

South Dakota’s Fallen Hero Bridge program dedicates state bridges to South Dakotans who were killed in action while serving their country or classified as missing in action. And in four years we will have dedicated 30 bridges honoring 33 heroes.

SGT Richard Maynard enlisted in the U.S. Army and began his Vietnam tour of duty on April 27, 1968. On March 20, 1969, he was killed in action in South Vietnam, Quan Tin province.

PFC Frederick Farlee enlisted in the U.S. Army on August 29, 1944, and left for overseas in January of 1945 serving with the 291st Infantry Regiment, 75th Division in France, Belgium, Holland, and Germany. He was seriously wounded in action near Datelinn, Germany on April 2, 1945, and died of those injuries on April 18, 1945.

Naming the South Dakota Highway 65 bridge over the Moreau River in honor of SGT Maynard and the Little Bear Creek Bridge on US HWY 212 in honor of PFC Farlee gives us an opportunity of remembrance, reflection, respect, and gratitude.

These brave warriors who fell in battle were young and in the prime of their life. They were brimming with promise and optimism, and possessing of energy, enthusiasm, idealism, and hope. They were and are truly the strength of our country.
U.S. Senators Mike Rounds (R-S.D.), member of the United States Senate Veterans’ Affairs Committee (SVAC), and John Thune (R-S.D.), along with SVAC Chairman Jon Tester (D-Mont.), and U.S. Senators Joe Manchin (D-W. Va.), Martin Heinrich (D-N.M.), Shelley Moore Capito (R-W.Va.), Maggie Hassan (D-N.H.), Sherrod Brown (D-Ohio), Patty Murray (D-Wash.), Steve Daines (R-Mont.), Ben Ray Luján (D-N.M.) and Rob Portman (R-Ohio) released the following joint statement announcing their collective opposition to the Asset and Infrastructure Review (AIR) Commission process moving forward in the Senate.

The statement, led by Chairman Tester, Senators Manchin and Rounds signifies the end of the AIR Commission. This announcement stops the recommended reduction in services at VA facilities in Hot Springs, Sioux Falls, Sturgis, and Wagner.

“As Senators, we share a commitment to expanding and strengthening modern VA infrastructure in a way that upholds our obligations to America’s veterans. We believe the recommendations put forth to the AIR Commission are not reflective of that goal, and would put veterans in both rural and urban areas at a disadvantage, which is why we are announcing that this process does not have our support and will not move forward. The Commission is not necessary for our continued push to invest in VA health infrastructure, and together we remain dedicated to providing the Department with the resources and tools it needs to continue delivering quality care and earned services to veterans in 21st century facilities—now and into the future.”

Background:

- In 2018, Congress passed the Asset and Infrastructure Review Act as part of the VA MISSION Act.
- The VA MISSION Act established a new process for the development, review, approval, and implementation of a list of recommendations for the modernization and realignment of VHA medical facilities. The VA MISSION Act requires the VA Secretary to develop an initial list of recommendations, including the acquisition of new space, the modernization of existing space and the disposal of unneeded space. The Secretary was required to publish these recommendations in the Federal Register by January 31, 2022.
- The VA MISSION Act also established an AIR Commission, a panel comprised of nine members nominated by the president and approved by the Senate, which is meant to review the recommendations submitted by the VA Secretary.
- However, the panel does not yet exist as all of the nominees have yet to be confirmed by the Senate Veterans’ Affairs Committee and voted on by the full Senate.
- Without the Senate’s approval of the nominees, no Commission will be established and the process as outlined by the VA MISSION Act will not move forward.
FUNK JOINS PENNINGTON COUNTY VSO TEAM

Heather Funk has joined the team at the Pennington County Veterans Service Office.

Funk was born in Potosi, Missouri and after graduating from Potosi High School, she immediately enlisted in the United States Air Force as a services journeyman working in the dining facility, lodging, fitness center, mortuary, and was the Honor Guard NCOIC.

During her almost 10-year enlistment, she was stationed in New Mexico, South Korea, Italy, and Hawaii, where she separated from active duty as a SSgt. She deployed to Pakistan and Iraq and had TDY’s to Colorado, Louisiana, Florida, Texas, Japan, Africa, and England.

Heather’s husband is still serving on active duty as a MSgt in security forces in the Air Force.

“Being a VSO means a lot to me,” said Funk. “I didn't know what a VSO was when I separated from active duty and even years later. Now, I want to reach as many veterans and active duty members as possible to make sure they know we are here. The VA system is complex and I want to help them navigate through what benefits and resources are out there for them.”

Please join SDDVA in welcoming Heather to our veteran network.

19th Annual
September 14-17, 2022
BLACK HILLS VETERANS MARCH AND MARATHON

The Black Hills Veterans March and Marathon is an annual trek through the beautiful terrain of the Black Hills of South Dakota. Beginning in the morning, this event occurs along the Mickelson Trail and travels through historic Black Hills sites, ending in exciting Deadwood, South Dakota. This march and marathon pays tribute to the many sacrifices that this nation’s veterans have made in the past and continue to make today. All proceeds are used to directly support veterans.

EVENTS INCLUDED
- 110-Mile Endurance
- 26.2 Mile Walk/Run/Relay
- 16-Mile Walk/Run/Relay

DIVISIONS
- Military Team or Solo
- Civilian Team or Solo
- Heavy Pack Challenge

WE WANT YOU!

REGISTER NOW!
https://blackhillsveteranmarch.org/
FALL RIVER HOT AIR BALLOON FESTIVAL

The seventh annual Fall River Hot Air Balloon Festival will be held August 26-28, in Hot Springs. Hot air balloons will be on display throughout the community, including on the campus of the Michael J. Fitzmaurice State Veterans Home. The festival also affords live music, vendor, a farmers market, a 5k run, and more. Click here to learn more about the festival:
https://www.fallriverballoonfest.com/.

Check out the schedule for the event at:
The following leaders were recently elected to office during the South Dakota American Legion state conference held in Watertown earlier this month:

- **Department Commander**—Doug Feltman of Chamberlain
- **National Executive Committeeman**—Denny Brenden of Watertown
- **Alt NEC**—Fred Nelson of Spearfish
- **Dept Vice Commander Dist. 1-2**—Doug Harris of Rapid City, and
- **Dept Vice Commander Dist. 3-8**—Courtney Steffen of Chester.

In addition, the following were appointed by Commander Feltman:

- Kevin Hempel of Watertown as Department Adjutant for two-year term
- Rod Smith of Chester as Department Membership Chairman for one-year term
- Kevin Hempel of Watertown as Public Relations Officer for one-year term
- C.P. “Van” Van Delist of Rapid City as Legislative Committee Chairman for one-year term
- Mike Mehlhaff of Pierre for five-year term as member of Legislative Committee, and
- Fred Nelson of Spearfish for one-year term on South Dakota Veterans Council.

Commander Feltman’s homecoming will be held at the AmericInn (1981 East King Street) in Chamberlain on Saturday, July 23rd, 2022. Social will begin at 12:00 pm with meal at 1:00 and program at 2:00 pm.

The new Department Auxiliary President, Joyce Smith, will hold her homecoming Sunday, July 24, at the Chester School. Meal at noon followed by the program.

Future American Legion convention and mid-winter conference dates and locations are as follows:

- **2023 Mid-Winter Huron** Feb 10-12
- **2023 Convention Oacoma** June 8-11
- **2024 Mid-Winter Deadwood** Feb 16-18
- **2024 Convention Pierre** June 20-23
- **2025 Mid-Winter Oacoma** Feb 14-16
- **2025 Convention Huron** June 19-22.
VA ADOPTS LOG-IN.GOV FOR A UNIFIED VETERAN SIGN IN EXPERIENCE

By creating an account on Login.gov, veterans can now use the same login and password to access a growing list of federal government websites, including the United States Department of Veterans Affairs, Office of Personnel Management, and Small Business Administration to deliver a secure and streamlined identity verification experience.

Currently, veterans can login to VA.gov, My HealtheVet, and VA’s flagship Health and Benefits mobile app using Login.gov.

Operated by the General Services Administration’s Technology Transformation Services, the availability of Login.gov at VA, marks a major milestone in improving how veterans access their benefits and services.

Implementing Login.gov fulfills a key objective of the Executive Order on Transforming Federal Customer Experience.

"Login.gov is a secure digital credential designed to streamline how users access government benefits and services," said Chief Technology Officer Charles Worthington. "As part of the Department's digital transformation efforts focused on continuous improvement, we're embracing the innovative technology designed by Login.gov to provide our veterans a seamless sign-in experience to better serve, engage, and enhance the customer experience."

“This is an important example of using technology to deliver services that provide convenient access to benefits while supporting veterans as they transition into civilian life,” said Director of General Services Administration’s Technology Transformation Services Dave Zvenyach. “It’s our mission at GSA to provide a secure and seamless digital experience for veterans and those supporting them."

The launch of Login.gov follows several other digital transformations including the relaunch of VA.gov, and the launch of VA’s flagship mobile application enabling veterans to schedule and track health care appointments.

To learn more about the sign-in experience visit Login.gov.

What is Login.gov?

Signing in to government agencies should be simple — and secure.
VA SERVICES 10K LOANS IN LAST YEAR FOR VETERANS BORROWING FROM LIFE INSURANCE POLICIES

The United States Department of Veterans Affairs has paid out more than $6.7 million across 10,000 loans since mid-May 2021 through Instant Loan Approval, a feature that automates the loan approval process for veterans.

Provided through VA Insurance Service, the Instant Loan Approval process offers eligible veterans the option to borrow the cash value of their VA-administered life insurance policy by streamlining the online loan request process and offering a quick automated decision.

Loan options are available for the following VA-administered programs: National Service Life Insurance, Veterans’ Special Life Insurance, Veterans’ Reopened Insurance, and Service-Disabled Veterans Insurance.

“As the department modernizes efforts, it makes sense to include an instant loan approval feature in our approval process to improve the customer experience,” said VA Insurance Executive Director Dan Keenan. “When a veteran with an eligible life insurance policy holding cash value applies and is approved for a loan online, the payment is deposited directly into their bank account within two to five business days, which is helpful in times of need.”

VA Insurance Service also helps veterans with online application uploads and answers questions through its phone center, accessing benefits online faster and more secure than by postage mail.

This fiscal year, the VA has seen increased adoption of the online loan tool with more than 41% of requests processed using the Instant Loan Approval feature.

Learn more here about Instant Loan Approvals and other online tools and features.
UPCOMING EVENTS

Jun 29—Jul 4—Parkston’s Celebration of Freedom—City Park—Parkston
Jun 30—Veterans Community Project Groundbreaking (376 N. Willow Avenue)—Sioux Falls—11:30 am (CT)
Jul 1—Cpl John Hutchison Bridge Dedication—Casey Tibbs Rodeo Center—Fort Pierre—10:30 am (CT)
Jul 4—Independence Day
Jul 9—Sioux Falls Canaries Military Night
Jul 11—BHNC Unaccompanied Veterans Memorial Service—(20901 Pleasant Valley Dr)—Sturgis—9:00 am (MT)
Jul 16—PFC David Gatton Bridge Dedication—Capitol Lake Visitors Center—Pierre—1:00 pm (CT)
Jul 18—23—National Veterans Golden Age Games—Sioux Falls
Jul 20—SD Veterans Council Meeting—American Legion Post 17 (1412 9th Avenue SW)—Watertown—9:00 am (CT)
Jul 23—American Legion State Commander Feltman’s Homecoming—AmericInn (1981 East King Street)
   Chamberlain—social at 12:00 pm, meal at 1:00 pm, and program at 2:00 pm (CT)
Jul 24—American Legion State Auxiliary President Homecoming—Chester School—12:00 noon (CT)
Aug 6—9—DAV National Convention—Orlando, FL
Aug 6—SSG Dan Cuka Fallen Hero Bridge Dedication—Yankton High School—1:00 pm (CT)
Aug 13—James Haider Bridge Dedication—BG Ernie Edwards Readiness Center—Watertown—10:30 am (CT)
Aug 14—19—Military Order of the Purple Heart National Convention—Rapid City
Aug 15—17—SDDVA Annual CTVSO Benefit School—Ramkota—Pierre
Aug 18—23—USS Iowa Veterans Association Reunion—Ramkota Hotel and Conference Center—Rapid City
Aug 20—PVT August Otto Bridge Dedication—Claire City Community Hall—11:00 am (CT)
Aug 22—The Barrel House Day of Giving fundraiser for Midwest Honor Flight—Sioux Falls
Aug 27—Midwest Honor Flight Mission 11 Welcome Home Ceremony—Sioux Falls Convention Center Arena—
   9:30 pm (CT)
Sep 1—Veterans Day at the South Dakota State Fair—Huron
Sep 2—RED Day at the State Fair—Group Photo at the Freedom Stage—Huron at 1:45 pm (CT)
Sep 1—5—South Dakota State Fair—Huron
Sep 3—727th/DAV Poker Run—Swiftel Center (824 32nd Avenue)—Brookings—10:00 am (CT)
Sep 5—Labor Day
Sep 10—Midwest Honor Flight Mission 12 Welcome Home Ceremony—Sioux Falls Convention Center Arena—
   9:30 pm (CT)
Sep 10—Heroes Helping with Horsepower Military Appreciation Event—W. Main Street—Ethan—Festivities begin at 8:00 am (CT)
Sep 14—17—Black Hills Veterans March
Sep 17—CPL Martin Fluegel Bridge Dedication—McCook Central High School—Salem—1:00 pm (CT)
Sep 21—South Dakota Veterans Council Meeting—Rapid City
UPCOMING EVENTS

Oct 1—PVT Frederic Schroeder Bridge Dedication—VFW—Madison—1:00 pm (CT)
Oct 1—Midwest Honor Flight Mission 13 Welcome Home Ceremony—Sioux Falls Convention Center Arena—9:30 pm (CT)
Oct 3—BHNC Unaccompanied Veterans Memorial Service—(20901 Pleasant Valley Dr)—Sturgis—9:00 am (MT)
Oct 10—Native American Day
Oct 15—Midwest Honor Flight Fifth Annual Hangar Dance—SD Military Heritage Alliance—(1600 W. Russell Street)—Sioux Falls—7:00 pm (CT)
Oct 21—PVA Dueling Pianos Fundraiser—SD Military Heritage Alliance—(1600 W. Russell Street)—Sioux Falls—7:00 pm (CT)
Nov 5—We’ve Got Your Six Veterans Appreciation Fair—Sturgis Community Center—(1401 Lazelle Street)—Sturgis—11:00 am—2:00 pm (MT)
Nov 10—Veterans Day
Nov 11—Capt Tommy Callies Bridge Dedication—Howard High School—9:30 am (CT)
Nov 11—S2 Wayne Bridge Bridge Dedication—Wagner High School—2:00 pm (CT)
Nov 16—South Dakota Veterans Council Meeting—Pierre
Nov 24—Thanksgiving
Dec 6—Governor’s Budget Address
Dec 17—Wreaths Across America Wreath Laying Ceremony at South Dakota Veterans Cemetery—Sioux Falls—11:00 am (CT)
Dec 25—Christmas

2023 Events

Jan 10—Governor’s State of the State Address
Jan 11—South Dakota Veterans Council Meeting
Feb 10—12—American Legion Mid-Winter Conference—Huron
Mar 22—South Dakota Veterans Council Meeting
May 17—South Dakota Veterans Council Meeting
Jun 8—11—American Legion State Conference—Oacoma
Jul 19—South Dakota Veterans Council Meeting

2024 Events

Feb 16—18—American Legion Mid-Winter Conference—Deadwood
Jun 20—23—American Legion State Conference—Pierre

2025 Events

Feb 14—16—American Legion Mid-Winter Conference—Oacoma
Jun 19—22—American Legion State Conference—Huron