

Minutes
21st District Convention
March 21-22, 2026

OPENING:

Commander Don Gray called the Convention meeting to order at 9:00 a.m. The Sgt-At-Arms Wheeler provided housekeeping and meeting rules. Rick Olivarez, Commander, Bandera Post 157, and the Convention host provided the welcome remarks.

Past Department Commander, Jeff Perkins, provided information on the April 18th Operation Home Front bicycle ride to raise funds for homeless veterans and solicited donations.

There is a national-level ride over 951 miles for PTSD in Louisville KY. There will be another ride on June 6, 2026, at San Leon to raise money for cancer research.

Barry Wall and Greg Diaz, VFBA Insurance representatives, were on site to answer questions regarding Medicare and offered to visit other Legion Posts.

Chris Holt, 4th Division Commander, provided welcome remarks and addressed the importance of the Oratorical Contest, Law Enforcement of the Year, National Legion College, Legion Plus+, and how these programs yield membership growth. The 4th Division Convention will be held in Snyder on May 2, 2026.

The search is underway for the 4th Division Bylaws at the Department. Discussion was held regarding the slow feedback to Posts after submitting their C & BL's. Commander Rogers, Post 572, suggested submission of a resolution that set a time standard for return of the C & BL to the Post. The Department Adjutant should be tracking submissions so that awards are not affected.

TRAINING:

Oratorical / Boys State: Kristie Young, Post 572, focused on the oratorical contest open to all genders and should not be considered an "elite" program. For the last two years, one candidate has represented the 21st District. Resources are available at www.texaslegion.org. Debated, FFA, and UIL are existing sources of competitors. Schools should be notified in August/September and take advantage of the teacher work week. A variety of awards can be given, including at the District level. Post 572 is committed to working on a resolution to clarify the District Oratorical Contest award. Sources of contest judges include the city council, county leadership, business owners, and

the military base. A flyer with the QR code, brochures, social media, and radio PSA's provide the publicity. Contact West, if your post can host the 2027-2029 Department contest. It will be held in San Antonio for the next two years. The suggestion was made to have the Department approach the Texas Education Association (TEA) to press for engagement. There is also another possibility to hold it in conjunction with the Department Mid-Winter meeting. (See Presentation at 21st District Website.)

Fundraising Basics: Susan Junker, Post 157, addressed the starting point, fundraising, donations, and grants as a package, tools and tips, and provided a list of resources. (See Presentation at 21st District Website.)

Publicity: Social Media Tools: Susan Junker, Post 157, provided a list of questions to help Posts set their baseline and determine what will work for their organization and community. A list of potential social media tools was provided, with the pros and cons of each. Additional resources were included. (See Presentation at 21st District Website.)

I am the Commander – What Now?: Ronni Garcia, Post 208, walked through the challenges and rewards of being a brand-new commander. She shared her assessment of her fellow officers, key leaders, and volunteers as she worked to develop a team, gather their perspectives, and make the best decisions possible. (See Presentation at 21st District Website)

LTG Michael Oates, U.S. Army, retired, was the luncheon guest speaker. His biography was provided in the Convention brochure. He began by thanking veterans for their ongoing service and recognizing just how special and important they are to our nation, given that there are 350 million citizens, with less than 1% willing to serve in the military. Veterans have a role in today's youth's decision to join the military. Veterans need to engage in the discussions of military issues and remain engaged with fellow citizens. He identified the three types of oaths for officers, enlisted, and naturalized citizens. The latter includes "I will take up arms". Told the story of George Washington's refusal to take control of the government at Trent, NJ, at the end of the war.

Guest speaker, Joan Crider, 21st District Auxiliary President, provided welcome remarks and encouraged Legion Posts to establish new Auxiliary units.

TRAINING:

990 & Reports: Dennis Birchall, Post 157, provided examples and recommendations on submitting the required IRS Form 990. Key items were as follows: 1) do not pay taxes on your maintenance bills; 2) failure to submit the 990 for 3 years will result in the loss of tax-exempt status; 3) 50% of posts do not submit their CPR each year, which significantly affects the message to Congress and the country. CPR turn-in date is May 1, 2026. A Post that does not submit these reports on time will not be eligible for the end-of-year department awards. (See Presentation at 21st District Website.)

MYLEGION.ORG: Chris Holt, Department 4th Division Vice Commander, provided the training on behalf of Danny Muth. Several key items included visiting Legion.org/action daily to send letters to Congressmen. MyLegion.org will transition to a new CRM automated program. The process for 345's and manual transfers was discussed. More information will be forthcoming regarding the 4th Division Convention.

Resolutions: Commander Gray read the resolutions for the individuals running for office and invited each them to speak.

This included Jeff Meurer, a candidate for Department Vice Commander, 4th Division, 2026-2027; Mike Wheeler, a candidate for Department Sgt-At-Arms, 2026-2027, and Justin Rogers, a candidate for Commander, 21st District in 2027-2028. (Resolutions are attached to these Minutes.)

VA Update: Mike Lauricella, Bandera County Veteran Service Officer, provided updates and addressed numerous questions from the audience. He included the following: the claims process, .25 million claims in process now, changes to the Hazlewood Act, service connection is the key, ensure service connection on death certificate, avoid Facebook/Instagram due to phishing and hacks, some C & P doctors aren't qualified, legal services, and travel pay. (See the presentation at 21st District Website.)

Resolution – Boys State: Resolution #1, initiated by Post 572, was read by Commander Gray seeking support for Boys State from the Texas University System. The cost continues to rise. Several legislators are on board to write bills to effect this change. For example, New Mexico Posts are charged \$200, and in other states, they are not charged anything. Auxiliary Girls State cost is now at \$550.

Commanders Update: Commander Gray provided the membership status, processes and education. The low number of new members is disturbing. The new goal system was explained. The meeting recessed until Sunday morning. The District Banquet, a shrimp boil with sides and cake, was served at 6:00 p.m., featuring Guest Speaker, Laura Koerner,

Chairwoman, Texas Veterans Commission Board. She shared the TVC mission, projects, and way ahead, as well as her background, and addressed audience questions.

Meeting Minutes Continued: Sunday, March 22, 2026

POST EVERLASTING: The 21st District Chaplain, George McHorse, conducted the ceremony to honor our fallen from the past year:

Ballinger: Andrew F. Lange, James A. Block

San Angelo: Rueben Silence, Coy Moses

Bandera: Wally Snyder, L.A. "Red" Weathers,

Kerrville: William Young, Arlie Lammers, Robert Liddicoat, Marvin Gast, W.T. Vaden, Robert Keidel, Calvin Lubojacky, Billy Robb, Phillip Marshall, William Vaughan, Jerry Callister, Elton Stilwell, Floyd Amburgey, James Lacoste, Elton Amburn, Jr., Jessie Montanez, Asa Jewell, III.

Brownwood: George, Canales, Jimmie Hudgins, Elxy Whitely

Lakehills: William Evans, Patricia Hall, Victor Keyes, Arthur Nicholl, Dale Rudd

OPENING: Commander Gray opened the meeting at 9:00 a.m. A quorum was established and the opening ceremonies were conducted. The Roll was called and the credentials report was provided by the Adjutant. Dennis Birchall, Post 157, moved that the Reading of the 2025 District Convention Minutes be waived as they can be read at the 21st District Website. The motion was seconded by Jeff Meurer, Post 572, and carried unanimously. The March 22, 2026, Finance Report was read by Finance Officer, Robert Garcia, and attached to these minutes. The current balance is \$6,234.53.

Remarks by Danny Muth: Danny Muth announced his candidacy for Department Commander for 2026-2027 and requested the District's support. His plan has not changed; focused on Programs, Community, and Members. He believes that programs drive membership, and the "blue hats", the Post level, is the heart of the Legion. He focused on being a part of the community. There are 267 official programs in the American Legion; find ones that fit your Post and community needs. Buddy Check is critical for a Post where quality rules over quantity. He encouraged sharing issues with the District and attending conventions.

Remarks by Department Commander, Rich Huntley:

Commander Huntley thanked the host post and District for a great time, amazing food, and the great guest speakers. With commitment, the Legion can be back up to 5% of the veteran population. 21st District is at 2.8%. He challenged attendees to

think about what our reputation would be if our Posts closed tonight. Would we be missed? What would be the impact on the community?

State of the 21st District: Commander Gray stated that the District was strong at 92% of its goal, but could be much better. Programs are going well, but we must increase our efforts next year in the Oratorical area.

POST COMMANDER REPORTS:

Ballinger: There are four schools in Runnels County. We require graduating seniors to write an essay and select one from each school: four \$750 scholarships. Sometimes, the Legion is the only scholarship provider, and we hope this encourages others to participate. We hold an annual Burger Burn to raise funds.

Kingsland: Kingsland is not an incorporated city, but run by a utility district. Students go to Llano. We conduct flag retirement ceremonies, first Easter Egg hunt, the 4th blood drive, Boys State, and cook for the community.

Leakey: We support Wreaths Across America for 655 veterans across six cemeteries, sponsor the spaghetti luncheon for Wounded Warriors to support their fundraiser which yields about \$6,000. We are members of the Chamber of Commerce, support the Food Bank for Camp Wood and Leakey, provide a color guard and an honor guard, fund scholarships for three schools, support the Livestock Association and host an Easter Egg hunt.

Lakehills: We have had sweepstakes machines for the past 5 years, making \$300-\$1000/week, so we have \$3000 to \$4000 each quarter. We give \$7000 in scholarships to along w/ the Auxiliary with half of them focused on trade school. We started the 410 Cares program that checks on members who live alone. We call once a day and escalate to family members and law enforcement as needed. We support the local church food pantry and the San Antonio Meals on Wheels program.

Bandera: Our programs include Boys State, work with Post 410 on the honor guard, have projects with community and Auxiliary partnerships, charter a Boy Scout troop, assist in starting a Cub Pack, and supporting an Eagle Scout. We are looking into restarting a Sons of the American Legion program, conduct quarterly free community breakfasts, and focused on earning the Post Excellence Award.

Kerrville: Disaster relief response began during the July 4th Flood Disaster in Kerr County. The Post became a Resource Center with the Auxiliary, Riders and Sons. The Post began receiving calls from phone calls from folks turned away for the Red Cross, upset Veterans. Calls came from across the country

asking what they could send, from Legion Posts to individuals to NPO's to companies. Volunteers picked up from USPS what they could not deliver. As things changed, we got better organized with containers designated by characteristics. So far, - \$126,950 has been given out to include \$32,350 to youth donations for stock shows in Center Point, Women's Glamping, Kerr County. We are sending six to Boys State, supporting the Tivy Golden Girls, holding a pizza party for another team, Mercy Gate Ministries, Golf Tournament participation, Turtle Creek Volunteer Fire Department, and sponsoring the Easter Egg Hunt at the VA hospital. We support the Legacy Ride, donated a refrigerator to the Veterans Center, award ROTC Medals, support to the Dietert Center, and assist veterans with rent, and host the 2nd Monday steak night. We provided meals for Texas' first fleet week in Houston.

Brownwood: Our fundraising includes an annual Clay Bird Shoot and a gun raffle. We send four to Boys State and two to Girls State. A local pizza restaurant donates a portion of its proceeds. We participate in Veterans ' Day and Memorial Day. During the Government Shutdown, we financially assisted veterans at Camp Bowie.

San Angelo: Our Post has provided \$3000 in direct veteran assistance, conducted a Vietnam Veteran Pinning ceremony, and hosted a car show. We participate in two Veterans Day parades, Pearl Harbor Day, cemetery clean-up, and bell ringing for the Salvation Army. Meeting the challenge to the Commander to wear an Elf Costume raised \$2,000. An SAL unit was started, and the officers were installed and in a new post home. Our oratorical contestant won at Division, and we are sending five to Boys State 5.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS: None

NEW BUSINESS:

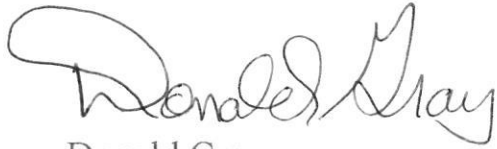
National Convention Delegate & Alternate: Justin Rogers moved to accept Jeff Meurer as a delegate to the National Convention in Louisville, KY. Kristie Young Post 572 provided the second, and the motion carried. Ronnie Garcia will be an alternate delegate. Susan Junker, Post 157, moved that expenses for delegates to the National Convention not be funded by the 21st District for their participation. Laurie Bannister, Post 410, provided the second, and the motion carried.

Candidates for District Commander & Vice Commander: Justin Rogers is a candidate for District Commander. He asked Ronni Garcia to serve again as Vice Commander, and she accepted.

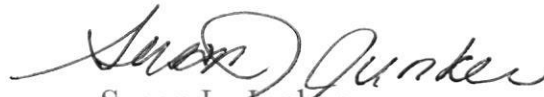
2027 Convention Site: Commander Gray identified the need for a host post. Post 157 offered to provide the agendas,

supplies, and information from their host experience.

CLOSING: There being no further business to come before the convention, George McHorse moved that the meeting adjourn, followed by a second by Ronni Garcia, with no discussion, and the motion carried unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 11:25 a.m.



Donald Gray
Commander, 21st District
District



Susan L. Junker
Adjutant, 21st

Attachments:

- 1 – Convention Brochure
- 2 – 2025 Convention Minutes
- 3 – Finance Report
- 4 – Resolutions
- 5 - Storage Device w/ 21st District Adjutant Files (located at Post 157)
- 6