



# DISTRICT COMMANDER GUIDE

Prepared by:  
Detachment of Florida  
Membership Training & Development Committee  
Updated June 2024

## WELCOME!

Congratulations on being elected to the Office of District Commander within the Detachment of Florida. Your election to this office shows that the members within your district have trusted you to represent them during this membership year. As District Commander there are some things that you will need to know to help you perform your duties properly, and it is our hope that this guide can assist you.

## INTRODUCTION

The Detachment of Florida Constitution, Article 9, provides the authority of the District Organization. There are currently 16 Districts within the Detachment of Florida with the combination of the 10th and 14th Districts in 2010 by the Department of Florida Executive Committee.

As a District Commander, you are now part of the leadership structure within the Detachment of Florida. As such, you will be called upon to do many things from the Squadrons in your District, from the Detachment & the American Legion Family. Good luck to you and accept the best wishes of our Detachment Commander for a very productive and fun year.

## DISTRICT ORGANIZATION

Now that you have been elected, you need to assemble your staff. At your District Constitutional Conference, only 2 officers are elected: the **District Commander** and the **District Vice Commander**. Both of you are now members of the Detachment of Florida Executive Committee and are entitled to a voice and vote during these meetings.

As District Commander you have the power to appoint additional officers to assist you during the year. Here are some examples of other officers that you can appoint:

District Vice Commander\*  
District Historian  
District Sgt-At-Arms

District Adjutant  
District Judge Advocate  
District Asst Sgt-At-Arms

District Chaplain  
District Finance Officer  
District Committee Reps

*\*Note – Only the **elected** District Vice Commander serves on the Detachment Executive Committee*

The district level serves as an intermediate body of leadership between the Detachment level and the Squadron level.

# MEETINGS

## DISTRICT MEETINGS

It is recommended that you hold regular district meetings. It is preferred by the Detachment of Florida that you hold at least 3 meetings a year in addition to your District Constitutional Conference (DCC). These meetings are necessary to keep your Squadrons up to date on programs, events & new issues going on within the Detachment.

The format is basically the same as the Squadron meeting, and a brief outline will be found in this guide.

Set the dates and locations for your desired District Meetings far enough in advance so as not to coincide with other meetings or events. Most Districts plan these dates at their first District Meeting. Publish those dates to all your Squadrons and in the Detachment newsletter 'The Source' so that everyone can be aware of your meetings. Include the date and location of the next District Constitutional Convention (DCC). Invite your Area Vice Commander, and the Detachment Commander to your meetings. It is recommended that you send a list of your meeting dates to the Detachment Adjutant.

## DISTRICT CONSTITUTIONAL CONFERENCE (DCC)

You are required to set up and run your DCC in May, so that you are in line with Detachment requirements. Remind your Squadrons to send endorsement letters for their choice for District Commander or Vice Commander to the Detachment Adjutant either by mail or through email. The Detachment Adjutant's email address is [adjutant@floridasons.org](mailto:adjutant@floridasons.org). Guidelines for endorsement letters can be found at <https://floridasons.org/detachment-officer-endorsements/>.

At this meeting you will be electing the District Officers. Unless you are running for re-election, you may chair the election. If, however, you are running for re-election, it is recommended that you appoint a chair (Judge Advocate, etc.) for the election process.

**IMPORTANT:** After your DCC has been completed and the new District Officers have been elected, you must immediately fill out the District Officers Report and send it to the Detachment Adjutant. The form can be found as a fillable PDF on our website at <https://floridasons.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/district-officers-rev-7-2022.pdf>. It is also included in the addendums of this guide.

*Invitations to your District Constitutional Conferences should be sent to SAL Detachment Officers, American Legion Department Officers and other District Commanders.*

## IMPORTANT THINGS TO KNOW

- 1) Order your District Cover through the Emblem Sales as quickly as possible. <https://emblem.legion.org/> The SAL District Cap has a French Blue bottom and a white top with red, white & blue piping (see figure). As pictured, the left side should have the district number and FL. You should have the insignia (orange) on the front, your Squadron Number on the right. Once you get it, wear it to all meetings, visitations, Detachment Events.
- 2) It's recommended to order a pocket slip on name tag to use when wearing a suit, and a magnetic back name tag for all other times.
- 3) Dress appropriately when attending functions. Check in advance to see what the dress code is for the function and location (sports coat & tie, polo and slacks or suit and tie). Remember you are representing the District. If you don't have a coat & tie, go buy one. You will wear it several times during our year. When you arrive at a function look around, if The American Legion Department officers SAL Detachment officers, and The American Legion & SAL District officers are in coat & tie, but you are not then you could be considered as being out of uniform. Remember, you are the District Commander, so you need to look the part. You never know who will be watching.
- 4) It is recommended by the Detachment of Florida that District and Detachment officers do not drink alcoholic beverages while wearing their uniform caps, even if the Legionnaires are. The nature of membership within the Sons of The American Legion means that we could be in proximity of our younger members who look up to us and it could set a bad example. For this same reason, it is imperative that you watch your language.
- 5) Remember, anyone that attends a function or event with you is your responsibility. Their actions will reflect directly back to you and the organization, and you are responsible for their behavior.
- 6) Make it a point to be early when you are expected somewhere.
- 7) Be polite and friendly to all members of The American Legion family. It is OK to greet the other Department / Detachment Officers, but **don't forget the blue cap members** as they are the backbone of our organization. Without them we would not be in the positions we are in.
- 8) Be prepared for the function you are attending. Make sure that you have the items you will need - for example, your speech, handbook with ceremonies, gifts or awards.
- 9) DO NOT get caught up in disputes (Posts, Squadrons or Individual). This is an easy trap to fall into. You are **NOT** the judge or the jury. You may be called upon to assist with resolving some issues and this is fine, just don't get in too deep. Always ask for assistance if you need to and that is what the Detachment is for. Do not overstep your bounds.
- 10) You are required to visit the Squadrons under your jurisdiction twice each year, and to complete the appropriate paperwork for the Detachment. A copy of the Squadron Visitation Report is found in the addendums of this manual. You can also find a fillable PDF version on



*Example of a District Cap and how it should be worded.*

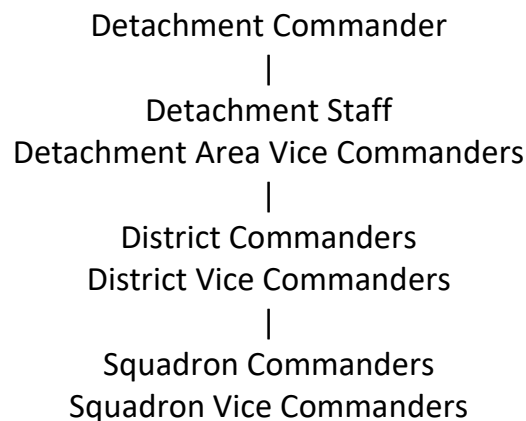


*An example of a name badge and how it should be worded.*

our website at <https://floridasons.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/svr-rev-7-2022.pdf>. These forms must be submitted to the Detachment Adjutant.

- 11) Attend all Detachment Meetings (Fall Conference, Detachment Convention, and Detachment Executive Committee Meetings). Prepare a District Report for Fall Conference & the Detachment Convention.
- 12) In addition to your Detachment Travel Allowance, your District **may** provide an expense account. Be assured it will not cover all your expenses. Maintain your records as your tax preparer may be able to assist you in writing off some of the out-of-pocket expenses. Be aware that alcoholic beverages are NEVER to be included for reimbursement.
- 13) When attending Events, you may be asked to sit at the head table and may be recognized. You should expect the following:
  - a. Proper attire (check with your event hosts and determine dress code)
  - b. Be prepared to bring “greetings” on behalf of the Detachment
  - c. Be prepared to address the audience (know the reason for the event and prepare your remarks accordingly) unless specifically advised otherwise.
- 14) If you commit to something, follow through with it.
- 15) Become familiar with the Detachment Outline and chain of command. **Always follow it.**
- 16) You have a staff. If you cannot make an event from time to time, have your Vice Commander represent the district.
- 17) Know your role as Commander and the roles of the other Officers it's not a one man show. **You can't do it alone.**
- 18) Finally, you represent the district first, and your home Squadron second. **You must always maintain impartiality.**

## DETACHMENT OUTLINE: CHAIN OF COMMAND



Please be sure to follow this hierarchy when dealing with any problems or needs.

## FUNCTIONS THAT YOU SHOULD ATTEND

You should be attending as many functions as possible throughout your District and the Detachment of Florida. If you cannot attend a function, you should send another District Officer or Past District Commander in your stead. Here are a few functions that you should plan on attending:

- 1) Any District Legion Family Meetings or Events
- 2) Detachment Fall Conference
- 3) Have a district Report prepared for the Detachment Executive Committee Meeting and for the General session.
- 4) Attend Membership and Squadron Activities Meetings (if possible).
- 5) District Constitutional Conferences
- 6) Detachment Convention
- 7) Have a district Report prepared for the Detachment Executive Committee Meeting and for the General session.
- 8) Attend Membership and Squadron Activities Meetings (if possible).

**NOTE:** *As District Commander you are a member of the Detachment Executive Committee. You are **expected** to attend Fall Conference and Annual Convention. If you cannot be in attendance, you must let the Detachment Adjutant know prior to the Conference/Convention.*

## OTHER FUNCTIONS TO ATTEND

If your schedule permits, you should be attending other functions throughout your District, Area and Detachment. Other events you should try to attend:

- 1) Department Commander's Homecoming
- 2) Department Auxiliary President's Homecoming
- 3) Detachment Commander's Homecoming
- 4) Program Events for both the District and Detachment such as Boys' State, Special Olympics, Children & Youth, Oratorical, etc.
- 5) Funeral / Memorial Services

**Remember:** *You are your District's Ambassador – Be visible all year!*

## OFFICE SUPPLIES YOU WILL NEED:

- Business Cards
- Calendar or Date Book
- Computer with email capability
- Cell Phone for your communication & contacts

## INSTALLING SQUADRON OFFICERS

Once the Convention is over, you will begin your duties almost immediately by installing Squadron Officers throughout your district. You will need to communicate with your counterpart, ***the American Legion District Commander***, to get the schedule of Installation Ceremonies in your district.

Familiarize yourself with your district Constitution & By-Laws so that you know what needs to be done, and by whom. In some districts the SAL District Officer must install Squadron Officers, while in others, the Legion District Officer will perform those duties. However, you will, at the very least, charge the Squadron Commander and other officers with their official duties. The Installation Program and the Charging of Official Duties is contained in the Addendums.

One item you may wish to add to the Installation Ceremony is reviewing the Squadron Officers ID Cards. At the time of swearing in, those Officers should have in their possession the current ID Card. If they do not have the new cards, set a date when you may review them and then follow up. This will help eliminate Zero Squadrons.

## DISTRICT MEETINGS & DISTRICT CONSTITUTIONAL CONVENTION GUIDELINES

- District Commander establishes the registration requirements for the DCC unless provided within the Constitution & ByLaws of the district.
- During the meetings there is no smoking and no alcoholic beverages allowed.
- SAL Uniform Covers should be worn, or no other headcovers are to be worn. Dress code should, at the minimum, be business casual for officers. Shorts should not be worn.
- DCC voting is performed by the registered Delegate Chairman for the Squadrons. The number of votes is determined from the most recent delegate list. You can check with the Detachment Adjutant if you do not have the list. If only one name is proposed for a District position, the Adjutant may be instructed by motion (& second) to cast one ballot and that person is elected by affirmation. If there are more than 1 name for a position, the Chairman will perform a roll call vote citing the number of ballots cast for the individuals running.
- When saluting the Colors, members wearing an SAL Uniform Cover will offer a right-hand salute. Those NOT under cover will place their right hands over their hearts.
- Never Break Colors - There is an invisible line between or Flags and this is considered "Hallowed Ground"
  - This is usually where the head table/podium is located.
  - When going up to the podium to speak or receive an award be sure and salute the Colors on the way up, and on the way back.

## AFTER THE ELECTIONS:

- Officer Appointments are completed by the incoming District Commander following the election.
- The District Adjutant will complete the District Officer Report and forward it to the Detachment Adjutant.

- A discussion of the District Goals should be written into the meeting minutes thereby establishing the new year goals.

***Always Remember: Your family & your job come first, but you need to be and remain flexible, as well as committed to the Detachment Goals. You need to have the ability to address a large body of people, be willing to travel and be willing to work with others. It's your year, but you will need a lot of help to have a successful year. You cannot do it on your own.***

## DISTRICT GOALS

- **MEMBERSHIP**
  - Eliminate Zero Squadrons. Push low producing Squadrons to strive to reach their 100% Goal throughout the year. Lead by example (be sure your house is in order). Lead the district to make its goals at the proper interval
- **PROJECTS**
  - Promote the Detachment Commander's Project(s). Promote the Legion Projects: Child Welfare, National Emergency Fund, VA & R and Americanism.
- **NEW SQUADRONS:**
  - Seek out Posts within your District that do not have Squadrons.
- **END OF YEAR REPORTS:**
  - Begin early talking up the End of Year Reports and their importance. At District Meetings, ask about the Reports and how they are coming. Squadron Data Report (SDR) is a mandatory report that MUST be completed and turned in each May. Do not wait until the last minute on any of the End of Year Reports.
- **TRAINING OF YOUR SQUADRONS:**
  - Seek to establish training sessions with the district. Feel free to contact the Chairman of the Membership Training & Development Committee (MT&D). The Commission Chairman of Internal Affairs can also be a resource.
- **WORKING WITH OTHERS:**
  - Get together with your Legion District Commander, the Auxiliary District President, and Legion Rider District Chairperson. Find out how working together you can all help each other raise funds and meet goals.

**ENJOY YOUR YEAR AS DISTRICT COMMANDER!  
YOU HAVE EARNED IT!**





# DETACHMENT OF FLORIDA DISTRICT COMMANDER GUIDE

## ADDENDUMS

# MEETINGS

## PROPER WAYS TO OPEN, CONDUCT AND CLOSE

### OPENING CEREMONY

- Sgt-At-Arms secures the room, advises to silence cellphones.
- [3 raps of gavel] **ALL RISE**
- Advancement of Colors or Commander calls for a right-hand salute.
- All uncover as Chaplain gives an invocation, and a moment of silence in memory of departed comrades. In lieu of the moment of silence, a Squadron Everlasting Ceremony may be substituted for DCC.
- POW-MIA Empty Chair Ceremony:

Resolution 288, adopted at the 67<sup>th</sup> National convention of The American Legion and Resolution NC 2-94, adopted at the 23<sup>rd</sup> National Convention of the Sons of the American Legion calls for designating a POW/MIA Empty Chair at all official meetings of the Sons of the American Legion, as a physical symbol of the thousands of American POW/MIAs still unaccounted for from all wars and conflicts involving the United States of America. This is a reminder for all of us to spare no effort to secure the release of any American prisoners from captivity, the repatriation of the remains of those who died bravely in defense of liberty, and a full accounting of those missing. Let us rededicate ourselves to this vital endeavor.

- Pledge of Allegiance (uncover-right hand over your heart) & cover
- Recite the Preamble
- 1 gavel rap to seat attendees

### COMMANDER CONVENES THE MEETING

- Adjutant takes Roll Call of Officers & Squadrons for Quorum purposes.
- Commander introduces any guests in attendance.
- Adjutant reads minutes of previous meeting for acceptance.
- Finance Report (if applicable) – Finance Officer gives report for acceptance
  - Officer Reports: Commander's Report, Vice Commander's Report
- Committee Reports
- Sick Call & Relief
- Unfinished Business
- Correspondence
- New Business
- Report of Squadrons & Good of the District
- Training (if any or if DCC, Election of Officers for coming year.
- Commander calls for any other District business. If no other business, closing ceremony begins.
- 3 gavel raps of gavel - all rise and remain uncovered

## CLOSING CEREMONY

- Commander calls for Sgt-At-Arms to retrieve POW/MIA Flag or Chair Cover
- Commander calls for all in attendance to uncover for Benediction
- Chaplain gives Benediction
- Commander calls for all to recover
- Commander gives final obligation to members:

Till we meet again, let us remember that our obligation to our country can be fulfilled only by the faithful performance of all duties of citizenship. Let service to the community state and nation be ever a main objective of the Sons of the American Legion. Let us be ever watchful of the honor of our Country, the American legion, our organization and ourselves, that nothing shall swerve us from the path of justice, freedom, loyalty and democracy.

- With the colors of our nation in place, Hand Salute – Two
- **I now declare this meeting of the Sons of the American Legion, District XX , Detachment of Florida adjourned**

[One rap of gavel]

# TIMELINE OF EVENTS THROUGHOUT THE YEAR

## **BETWEEN CONVENTION & FALL CONFERENCE**

- Install all Squadron Officers & show importance of Membership by checking their ID Cards.
- Begin your first round of visitations. Contact your Area Vice Commander and arrange a meeting to discuss any assistance you may need, or just to inform him of how your district is doing. Be prepared to answer questions from the Vice Commander regarding any Zero Squadrons, or problems encountered.
- Prepare your District Report for the Fall Conference. Make your arrangements for the Conference and be prepared to attend the entire time.

## **BETWEEN FALL CONFERENCE & DCC**

- Hold a District Meeting to bring information to those Squadrons who were unable to attend the Conference.
- Continue Squadron visitations – *remember you are required to officially visit your Squadrons at least twice a year.*
- If not already done, set the date, time & place for the DCC. Publicize this Event throughout the Detachment.

Throughout the second half of the year, work with your Squadron Commanders, & Area Vice Commander to ensure the district is meeting its goals and obligations. If it is not, prepare a plan to correct the situation.

**Always Remember you have committed to serve as District Commander and are therefore responsible for any shortcomings of the district. Likewise, success should be shared with your Squadrons reaching the goals and obligations. If you came up through the ranks of your Squadron, use your knowledge and experience to assist those new Officers. Realize that those you pass on the way up, will be there when you are on your way down.**

**LISTEN TO EVERYONE FIRST. You have 2 ears for listening but only 1 mouth for speaking. Listen twice as much as you speak. Praise in public & admonish in private.**

***REMEMBER YOU ARE NOT ALONE ... DO NOT BE AFRAID TO ASK FOR HELP.***

*This guide is available on our website at [www.floridasons.org/downloads/district-commander-guide.pdf](http://www.floridasons.org/downloads/district-commander-guide.pdf)*



To: All Detachment Officers, District Commanders  
Committee and Commission Chairmen

From: Ed Sheubrooks, Finance Committee Chairman

Subject: Detachment Travel Allowance

Gentlemen,

Your 20 \_\_\_\_\_ - 20 \_\_\_\_\_ Detachment Travel Allowance for your Office is \$ \_\_\_\_\_ .

Your allowance includes any travel to an American Legion and/or Sons of The American Legion function. You will be reimbursed for your fuel, hotel if necessary, and any tolls incurred during your travels for the Sons of The American Legion. You may also deduct the cost of your Detachment or District Cap from your allowance.

No Officer and/or Chairman may spend more than 50% of his allotted allowance prior to the Annual Fall Conference.

*Only those who have submitted the **OFFICIAL SONS OF THE AMERICAN LEGION EXPENSE VOUCHER** with **VALID RECEIPTS** attached will be reimbursed by the Detachment.* Please send all Expense Vouchers and Receipts to the address listed on the bottom of the Voucher.

Please note that you **MUST** submit your vouchers and receipts **in the month that they incur** for payment. Otherwise they may get rejected for payment.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me and I will help you with them.

Have a good year and safe travels throughout the Detachment!

**NOTES:**

Ed Sheubrooks, Chairman  
Finance Committee  
Sons of The American Legion  
Detachment of Florida

SONS OF THE AMERICAN LEGION  
DETACHMENT OF FLORIDA  
EXPENSE VOUCHER



No monies will be paid to any Detachment Officer, District Commander, Commission or Committee Chairman without this form being completed and **supported** by paid receipts. Please state the purpose for the expense.

*This form will then be forwarded to the Department Finance Officer for payment.*

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Office \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_ City \_\_\_\_\_

Zip Code \_\_\_\_\_

<b>EXPENDITURES FOR:</b>	<b>AMOUNT:</b>

**I CERTIFY THAT I HAVE SPENT THE FOLLOWING AMOUNT FOR THE ABOVE LISTED PROGRAMS OF THE SONS OF THE AMERICAN LEGION.**

**MAIL TO:** Ed Sheubrooks, Finance Officer  
Sons of The American Legion  
Detachment of Florida  
800 S Brocksmith Rd  
Fort Pierce, FL 34945

**TOTAL** \_\_\_\_\_

**SIGNED** \_\_\_\_\_

*Alternately, you can complete this document, scan it and your receipts and email them to **finance@floridasons.org**.*

\_\_\_\_\_  
**APPROVED** | **DISAPPROVED**