

Welcome to the American Legion  
**FIRST DIVISION**  
Newsletter



Commander  
Gigi Callaway

First Division is Online  
at

<http://www.ilfirstdivision.org>

**Newsletter for July 2021**

**First Division Commander Gigi Callaway**

The Legion year is ending. First and foremost, I want to thank you for allowing me to serve as your Commander. It was an honor and privilege.

American Legion Officers, and their membership teams, that lead in membership, a special recognition to you for a job well done. We know that a legacy of good deeds lives beyond our lifetimes as it was apparent throughout this past year and half of the pandemic. Some of the strongest values, service and sacrifices are shown when one places the needs of another above their own. We had witnessed those Post and District leaders that went above and beyond in the last few years. Most of all, it is my sincere wish is that each of you takes the time to make sure that the next generation of team players is grounded upon the same basis, as we are now. It is an awe-inspiring task, but so very well worth the time and effort.

Furthermore, it is important to show gratitude to those of you that supported me, and the initiatives that had been planned for the Division. You, our volunteers worked in a variety of ways to meet Division goals as a team. Each ensuring that we, the American Legion, which was grounded on four pillars: Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation, National Security, Americanism, and Children & Youth achieve those pillars [goals] which we have committed ourselves through our Legion membership. Each of those pillars encompasses a variety of programs that benefit our nation's veterans, its service members, their families, the youth of America and ordinary citizens.

Once again, for those at the Post, District and Division levels that have

contributed your time these past years, a heartfelt "Thank you".

I look forward to seeing you at the Department of Illinois Convention in Springfield in July.

Semper Fortis  
For God, Family, Country. Warm Regards

*Gigi Callaway*

### **First Division Vice Commander Thomas Chambers**

Close of books for this year is finally over. Congratulations to all that made over 100 % and were in the top ten. Don't forget that the new fiscal year starts in another month. Time to pay dues for next year.

Also, remember to CERTIFY YOUR POST right away so you can receive membership cards for next year.

Installation of officers makes an impressive ceremony at a post meeting. Schedule it right away.

The Department Convention is July 14th thru the 17th in Springfield. Get out of the house and come on down and enjoy some time with your friends.

The installation for the First Division will be on Sunday August 15th at the Crystal Sky Banquets, 7941 W. 47th St, Mc Cook. (Parking and entrance are on Joliet Road and Joliet Ave., just around the corner.) 11:30 a.m. officers and honor guard for quick rehearsal; 12:00 (noon) until 4:00 pm no- host bar, program, and dinner. Hope to see everyone there.

Have a great summer and have a safe 4th of July.

*Tom Chambers*

**VA&R Chairman and Service Officer of the First Division  
Raymond P. Toczek**

The Chicago Office is still closed for walk-ins but we expect to soon be able to take appointments. Dept. has been interviewing candidates for the vacant position of Service Officer but still no luck. We keep on trucking; our office had

over 400 interactions in the last 3 months, either by call, e-mail or letters. Please keep referring vets to us, and we will try and help them the best we can.

The articles I get the most feedback about is when I highlight some of the interesting or unusual cases that the American Legion VA&R Chicago office has handled. I often am asked, do you make these up or are they based on real cases? An emphatic yes, these scenarios are from real cases we have handled. Here are some more for your reading enjoyment.

1. A daughter wrote our office. She very much wanted to join the American Legion auxiliary but was unable to locate her deceased father's DD 214. Her mother had passed away in a house fire along with all the valuable papers. She did have her dad's full name and date of death. We used the online VA National Cemetery Gravesite Locator and found where he was buried. From there the cemetery office had for some reason kept a copy of his DD 214. The daughter is now a member of our Auxiliary.

2. A veteran had his case on appeal for over three years. He was being denied Agent Orange compensation benefits because he couldn't prove he actually set foot in Vietnam. He was sent there TDY from Guam to repair some aircraft but his TDY orders were missing. Turns out while in Nam, he wrote home several times and his mom had kept the letters which clearly showed an APO address from Vietnam. He won his appeal.

3. A female veteran had multiple service-connected disabled conditions but when the VA added them up using their combined rating table she ended up at 64% disabled. Rounded down to 60% she got that level of pay. We went through her file and noticed that she had extensive surgery which left several scars. Asked if these were tender or icky to the touch she said "oh yeah". If my kids accidentally touch one of them she feels pain. We put in for a tender scar, she got 10% for that and again using the VA's combined rating table she now added up to 66% and that was rounded up to the 70% pay level. Not only does she get more money but now her property taxes in Illinois will be waived entirely.

4. A veteran had been denied enrollment into the Veterans Administration hospital. She didn't have any service-connected disabilities, a purple heart, recent combat theater, etc. Her combined income including her spouses put her over the means test threshold. I explored any loopholes with her and was able to determine she had 45 days of TDY at Camp Lejeune! Due to the drinking water problem there we got her into Hines hospital.

Thank GOD for loopholes!

5. An e-mail from a brother of a veteran asked for help in getting the veteran into a State Nursing Home. We hooked him up with the Illinois Department of Veterans Affairs who oversee the 5 State homes and he was placed on the waiting list. After several months a spot opened up and he was admitted. However during this time we learned that he was suffering from ALS (Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis) and had never filed a claim. Any veteran who served at anytime and anywhere for more than 90 days and later is diagnosed with that disease can receive compensation. We filed and he was granted 100%. He now gets over \$3,400 a month from the VA. And unlike those on Medicaid, he is able to keep 2/3 of that check for himself.

**“These so-called bleak times are necessary to go through in order to get to a much, much better place.”**

**— David Lynch**

*Ray Toczek*

#### **OFFICER CONTACT INFORMATION**

**COMMANDER:  
GIGI CALLAWAY**

Phone: (224) 800 - 1177

Email: ILLfirstdivision@gmail.com

**VICE COMMANDER:  
THOMAS CHAMBERS**

Phone: (224) 800 - 1177

Email: ILLfirstdivision@gmail.com

**DIVISION ADJUTANT:  
HAROLD DILLARD**

Phone: (773) 450 - 3099

Email: ce1sgtaf@att.net

**Finance Officer & Aide to Commander  
BERNARD DARMETKO**

Phone: (708) 860 - 1897

Email: bcdarmetko@comcast.net

**SERVICE OFFICER:  
RAYMOND TOCZEK**

Phone: (312) 980 - 4264

Email: Raymond.toczek@va.gov

**Medical Officer & Aide to Commander  
DR. DON HORN**

**Historian & Special Adviser**

**WILLIAM COOPER**

*As part of my Naval Reserve requirements at Emory University Dental School, I attended a talk about proper dental procedures following nuclear warfare. Evidently, one of my classmates found the talk less than stimulating and fell asleep.*

*Unfortunately for him, our lecturer caught him. Sidling right up to the student, the speaker shouted in his ear, “What would you do for a patient in the event of a nuclear war?!” My startled classmate sat up and responded, “Place a temporary filling, sir!”*

# Featured Unit for the August 7<sup>th</sup>, 2021 Reenactment

8<sup>th</sup> Illinois Infantry (Illinois National Guard)

During World War I the African American 8th Infantry was re-designated the 370th Infantry and fought under the French. It was the only unit entirely commanded by black officers.

The 370th Infantry, served with distinction with the French 34th, 36th, and 59th Infantry Divisions, earning streamers for the battles of Lorraine and Oise-Aisne. Sectors occupied and engagements participated in were Saint Mihiel with the French in 1918, Argonne Forest, St. Gobain Forest, Bosi de Mortier, Mont des Signes, Oise-Aisne Canal, Laon, Grandlup, Soissons, and Oise-Aisne and Lorraine offensives.

For its fierce fighting in the Argonne, the regiment was given the name "Black Devils" by the Germans.

The Victory Monument, created by sculptor Leonard Crunelle, was built to honor the service of Eighth Regiment of the Illinois National Guard during World War I. It is located in the Bronzeville District in the Douglas community area of Chicago, Illinois.



*It was World War II—the front—and we were on high alert. Around midnight, I noticed movement behind a bush. Rather than fire a shot, I shouted out the first half of the password: "George!" I waited for whoever it was to prove he was an American and reply with the countersign, "Marshall." Instead, silence. "George!!" Again, no reply. I lifted up my rifle and gave it one last try: "George!!!" An angry voice finally replied, "My name ain't George!"*

*A network administrator decided to join the military, and as part of his basic training, he went out on the rifle range.*

*After taking a hundred shots and missing every one, the man's DI (drill instructor) came by to see what was wrong.*

*"What's the matter with you?" he asked. "Why can't you hit the target? What were you in civilian life?"*

*"I was a network administrator," replied the new recruit, "and I don't know why I can't hit the target. Let me see..."*

*The recruit checked his rifle, checked his rifle again, and checked his rifle a third time. He then put his finger in front of the muzzle, pulled the trigger, and blew the end of his finger off.*

*"Well," he said, writhing in pain, "the bullets are leaving here fine. The trouble must be on the other end!"*

The American Legion Department of Illinois  
102<sup>nd</sup> Annual Department Convention July 13 -18, 2021

-SPRINGFIELD, ILLINOIS (Mr. Lincoln's Hometown)-

**HOUSING RESERVATION FORM**

All reservations **MUST** be made directly with the hotel housing your Division/S.A.L. on or before June 21, 2021. You may make your reservation by completing and mailing in this form along with your credit card information or first nights deposit including tax or by following the instructions for your assigned hotel, which are listed below. NOTE: ALL cancellations must be made 24 hours prior to arrival date. Failure to cancel by that date will result in billing of one night's room rate.

**PARKING IS INCLUDED IN THE RATE AT BOTH HOTELS**

<u>HOTEL</u>	<u>DIVISION/S.A.L.</u>	<u>RATE</u>
<u>WYNDHAM SPRINGFIELD</u> City Centre 700 E. Adams Springfield, IL 62701 217/789-1530	2 <sup>nd</sup> , 3 <sup>rd</sup> , 4 <sup>th</sup> & 5 <sup>th</sup> Divisions and Sons of The American Legion	\$110.00 plus tax <i>(\$114.30 per night with tax)</i>

Reservation- Mail this form to the Wyndham Springfield or go to the internet and linking up to <http://bit.ly/amleg21> or you may also call 217/789-1530

**PRESIDENT ABRAHAM LINCOLN HOTEL SPRINGFIELD**

<u>(A Doubletree by Hilton)</u> 701 E. Adams Springfield, IL 62701 217/544-8800	1 <sup>st</sup> Division & Auxiliary	\$110.00 plus tax <i>(\$114.30 per night with tax)</i>
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Reservation- Mail this form to the President Abraham Lincoln Springfield or via internet by linking up to:

<https://doubletree.hilton.com/en/dt/groups/personalized/S/SPIASDT-AML-20210713> You may also

phone the President Abraham Lincoln Springfield directly at 1/866-788-1860 or 217/544-8800 using the Group Code of "ALM" for the Legion and "ALA" for the Auxiliary.

*Special Notes: All rooms are subject to the applicable sales tax. All reservations must be made with credit card or advanced deposit. Remember, if reserving the room with a personal check, be sure and include the rate including tax as listed above. Also, the cut-off date for ALL RESERVATIONS is Tuesday, June 21, 2021.*

If you select a hotel that your Division is not housed in, you may be moved to your Division assigned hotel.

**PLEASE PRINT OR TYPE ALL INFORMATION**

Division \_\_\_\_\_ District \_\_\_\_\_ Legion/SAL Title \_\_\_\_\_

Hotel \_\_\_\_\_ Type of room (circle) 1 Bed 2 Beds Disabled Access

Please note: All Hotel Rooms in Springfield are Non-Smoking.

(Please note room types are a request and are not guaranteed. The hotels will attempt to accommodate.)

Other Special Requests: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

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

State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip Code \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Cell \_\_\_\_\_

E-Mail \_\_\_\_\_ Fax \_\_\_\_\_

Name(s) of additional people in room: \_\_\_\_\_

Arrival Date \_\_\_\_\_ Departure Date \_\_\_\_\_

Credit Card# \_\_\_\_\_ Expiration Date \_\_\_\_\_

**FREEDOM FEST, TBD - COMMANDER'S AND PRESIDENTS DINNER, TBD**

## **2021 Convention Information**

The 102nd Annual Department of Illinois Convention  
1st Division will be at the President Abraham Lincoln Hotel Springfield  
(A Doubletree by Hilton)

701 E. Adams Springfield, IL. 62701 217/544-8800  
1st Division Hospitality Suite will remain at Wyndham Springfield  
(across the street from Abraham Lincoln Hotel Springfield)  
700 E. Adams Springfield, IL

## **National Convention**

The American Legion's 102nd National Convention will take place in Phoenix,  
Arizona, August 27 – September 2, 2021. Illinois' hotel is Hyatt (602.252.1234)  
122 North Second Street, Phoenix, AZ 85004 [www.phoenix.regency.hyatt.com](http://www.phoenix.regency.hyatt.com)

Additionally, at the 102nd Annual Department of Illinois Convention, we will be  
holding a division election for First Division JVC during Friday, Noon luncheon  
at our hospitality suite. (Rendezvous Room 1st Division in the Mezzanine Level  
Wyndham).

According to Department By-Laws the following will assume positions as  
follows: Tom Chambers, Commander and Frank Thompson III, Senior Vice  
Commander. Election for JVC will be held. (All parties were notified of the  
change)

**We are so glad you have joined your  
District's Leadership Team**

District's Leaders for the upcoming Legion year 2021 - 2022. Please forward  
the following information by July 1, 2021, via email:  
District, Position, Name, address, phone number(s) and  
email.

Congratulations in your new (or renewed role).  
Thank you.  
[illfirstdivision@gmail.com](mailto:illfirstdivision@gmail.com)

PS

If you are leaving a District position and have received this email, please kindly  
pass this along to your new District Officers



***American Legion Department of Illinois, First Division***

Cordially invites you to attend the  
***2021-2022 Installation***

Sunday, August 15, 2021

- No Host Cocktails 12:00 pm - 1:00 pm
- Program 1:00 pm • Dinner to follow program

Crystal Sky Banquets

7941 47th St, McCook, IL 60525

*Free parking is available (Main door off Joliet Road and Joliet Ave)*

*Attire:*

*Incoming & Installing Officers: Legion Dress - Blue jacket, gray pants, white shirt, tie, and cap*  
*Legion members: Legion Summer - Blue pants, white shirt, and cap (optional dress/skirt for females)*  
*Guests: Business Summer Dress (tie optional)*

Please R.S.V.P. by August 1, 2021

\$30 per person

Please remit the section below the dotted line together with your payment to:

American Legion, First Division Council,  
P.O. Box 280 Riverside, Illinois 60546-0280

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RSVP

M\_\_\_\_\_

Has reserved \_\_\_\_\_ seat(s) for  
American Legion, First Division Installation on August 15, 2021

Cost of dinner per person (pp) will be \$30.00  
postmarked by August 1, 2021

The National Twenty & Four, Honor Society of Women Legionnaires  
Cheri Stanton, National Director

**65th Annual Bivouac Banquet**



Friday, August 27, 2021

Hyatt, 122 North Second Street in Phoenix, AZ

No Host Cocktail Hour: 5:00 pm at Hyatt Barrel & Bushel Lounge  
(Located in the main Lobby)

Program & Dinner: 6:00 pm in the Hyatt Cowboy Room

(Attire: After Five or Legion equivalent)

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**RSVP**

**M** \_\_\_\_\_

Has reserved \_\_\_\_\_ seats at

The 65th Annual Bivouac Banquet on Friday, August 27, 2021

Cost of dinner per person (pp) will be \$70.00 postmarked by August 1, 2021. Please remit the section below dotted line together with your payment to: G. Callaway, PO Box 525, La Grange, IL 60525. (E:20and4echeloneight@gmail.com)

- \* Provide names if more than one person
- \* Provide email and phone if you desire confirmation of receipt
- \* Five seats per Table are due to current State's Covid policy

★ ★ ★ 1<sup>ST</sup> ANNUAL ★ ★ ★  
MILITARY REENACTMENT

**AMERICA'S MILITARY  
WHEN DUTY CALLS**

**SATURDAY, AUGUST 7TH, 2021  
9AM-7PM**

**RIVER FRONT PARK - RIVER GROVE, IL**

OUR GOAL IS TO PROVIDE A SAFE FUN, AND EDUCATIONAL  
EXPERIENCE FOR ALL FAMILIES TO ENJOY.

WE WILL SHOWCASE LIVE FIRING OF CANNONS, MORTARS, MUSKETS, AND  
OTHER FIREARMS, ALONG WITH PERIOD DEMONSTRATIONS.  
THERE WILL BE PERIOD ENTERTAINMENT,  
AND PERIOD REENACTORS SPEAKERS.





First Division, Cook County  
Council  
The American Legion,  
Department of Illinois  
828 N. Roy Ave, Melrose  
Park, IL 60164

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Bloomington, IL  
Permit No. 18

PLEASE LET OUR WEBMASTER, JOHN LOS, KNOW IF THERE ARE ANY  
CHANGES IN HALL RENTAL INFORMATION POSTED ON OUR  
WEBSITE

*Chief Editor: Gigi Callaway*

If you would have any issues or concerns about the newsletter, please feel free  
to contact: **Shepherd K. S. Bishop – Managing Editor**  
For a free copy of the 1<sup>st</sup> Division newsletter sent to you via E-Mail please send a  
request to us at

**[div1newsletter@yandex.com](mailto:div1newsletter@yandex.com)**