



Butch's Bullet Points – May 2026

Every year the Sons of the American Legion Spring National Executive Committee Meeting falls on the same weekend as the Iconic Kentucky Derby!

“Start strong, Stay strong, and Finish Strong by remembering why you started in the first place!” -

Professional Football Player Ralph Marston

They call the Kentucky Derby “the most exciting two minutes in sports,” but anyone in the Sons of The American Legion knows the real race lasts all year—and the finish line this year is a number: 409,244.

Right now, we're rounding the final turn.

The crowd is on its feet. The bugle is sounding. And somewhere in the distance, you can almost hear a voice saying, “And they're Off!”

Because this isn't just a race just for numbers—it's a race for our legacy.

Down the Stretch We Come

Our May 7th membership report shows it all! We are sitting at 94.71% of our goal with a retention rate of 84.87%! Nine of our detachments are at or over 100%, and 36 are at or over the 90% mark! Taken as a whole, 82% of our detachments are certainly heading down the home stretch in good form!

In the Derby, no horse wins by standing still, grazing comfortably in the infield. Champions surge forward. They dig in. They find another gear when it matters most.

That's where we are as Sons of The American Legion.

We've trained. We've organized. We've carried the baton from those who came before us. Now, with Memorial Day on the horizon, it's time to kick into that final stride.

Because every membership we bring in is more than a statistic—it's a salute.

A salute to the fathers, grandfathers, mothers, grandmothers, and ancestors who wore the uniform. A salute to those who never made it home. A salute to those whose names are etched in stone and whose stories live through us. Every time we pay our dues, we honor our eligibility, their service and their memory!

As the old saying goes, “Freedom isn't free—but it is remembered.”

And we are the ones doing the remembering.

The Derby Hat Isn't the Only Tradition

Sure, the Derby has its traditions—big hats, mint juleps, and photo finishes. But we have traditions, too.

Ours are quieter, but far more powerful.

We place flags. We march in parades. We stand in silence when taps play. We teach our children why that silence matters.

That's Americanism!

“Americanism is an unfailing love of country. Loyalty to its institutions and ideas. Eagerness to defend it against all enemies. Undivided allegiance to the flag. And a desire to secure the blessings of liberty to ourselves and posterity.”

That's not just a definition—it's our playbook.

And just like any winning horse needs a strong rider, Americanism needs strong Sons to carry it forward.

Entrepreneur and author Gary Ryan Blair once said... ***“One way or the other you're going to finish... so why not finish strong and make yourself immensely proud of your effort!”***

A Photo Finish Worth Fighting For

Let's be honest—409,244 might sound like a big number.

But so did 13 colonies once.

So did 56 signers of the Declaration.

So did every generation that stood up and said, “We'll take it from here.”

As we approach America's 250th anniversary, the stakes feel even higher. This isn't just about looking back—it's about charging forward.

Because if we don't pass this legacy on, who will?

If we don't teach our youth what liberty costs, how will they know its value?

If we don't reach that finish line, what message does that send about our commitment?

We're not just chasing a number—we're carrying a torch.

Saddle Up, Sons

Here's the truth: nobody accidentally wins the Derby.

And nobody accidentally reaches 409,244.

It takes effort. It takes teamwork. It takes every post, every squadron, every member saying, “I'll do my part.”

So, recruit one more. Renew one more then one more after that.

Call a friend. Bring a son. Invite a neighbor. Tell them why this matters—not just to you, but to the country we all share.

Because somewhere, someone is waiting to be part of something bigger than themselves.

And we're holding the invitation.

“No one has a problem with the first mile of a journey..., But it isn't the start that matters; it's the finish line!” - Author Julien Smith

Crossing the Finish Line

When that final number comes in—when we hit 409,244—don't think of it as the end of the race.

Think of it as crossing a finish line lined with the generations who came before us.

They're not asking how fast we ran.

They're asking if we carried the mission forward.

And when we do, we'll hear something better than applause.

We'll hear pride.

Because in this race, the real prize isn't a trophy.

It's knowing that we honored the past, strengthened the present, and secured the future.

Now, my brothers - down the stretch we come.

Let's finish strong!

Yours in Service,

Butch Ray, Chairman

SAL Nat'l Membership & Squadron Activities

“I'm the ONE, You're the ONE, BE the ONE!”