



BUTCH'S BULLET POINTS - OCTOBER 2026

EVERY MEMBER MATTERS!

Show Up! — Serve Boldly!

Let's make this a year of teamwork, service, and renewed commitment!

Fellow Sons,

A new administrative year is underway, and it's time to get moving! Cue the *Top Gun* music, fire up those engines, and get this mission airborne!

Our theme this year is **"Every Member Matters."** It's a simple message, but an important one. Whether you're a Squadron Commander, a longtime member, a new Son, or the person who makes sure the room is ready before the meeting, you have a place on this team.

Let's face it: We don't always need another committee, another meeting, or another report. Sometimes, we just need people willing to roll up their sleeves and get the job done!

Our success depends on members who care enough to take part, leaders who are willing to listen, and Squadrons that understand why we belong in the first place.

We're here to support The American Legion's mission and serve veterans, our communities, our youth, and our nation. Let's make sure everything we do moves that mission forward.

BULLET POINT #1: SHOW UP! — SERVE BOLDLY!

We've all attended a meeting where the coffee outnumbered the members. It's funny until you realize that the same handful of people are doing most of the work!

Being a member means more than having your name on a roster. It means finding ways to contribute, whether that's helping with a fundraiser, visiting a veteran, welcoming a new member, or lending a hand at a community event.

You don't need a title to make a difference. You just need to be willing to help.

Show Up! — Serve Boldly! Don't wait for someone to ask you three times. If you see a need, step forward. If you have an idea, share it. If a fellow member needs help, make the call.

As the saying goes, “**Many hands make light work.**” And in our organization, many willing hands also make a stronger Squadron!

BULLET POINT #2: MAKE YOUR PASSION GREATER THAN YOUR FEAR OF FAILURE

How many good ideas never get off the ground because someone worries they might not work?

Maybe it's a new fundraiser, a youth activity, a community service project, or a different way to recruit members. We sometimes spend more time explaining why something won't work than we would spend giving it a try!

Here's a thought: **You don't have to be perfect to make progress. You just have to be willing to begin.**

Try something new. Learn from the experience. Make adjustments and try again.

Not every project will be a roaring success, and that's okay. If we never take a chance, we'll never discover what we're capable of accomplishing.

Growth comes when we move beyond fear and become willing to learn. And that brings us to one of my favorite reminders:

Your comfort zone is the danger zone!

Yes, that's right—cue the *Top Gun* music again!

If your Squadron has done things the same way for 20 years, there's probably a good reason some traditions have lasted. But that doesn't mean every old idea is still our best idea.

Try inviting a younger member to lead a project. Partner with the Auxiliary or American Legion on a community event. Ask members what activities they'd like to see. Give someone new a chance to contribute.

We don't need to abandon what works. We need the courage to discover what could work even better.

BULLET POINT #3: RETENTION IS EVERYBODY'S BUSINESS

We put a lot of effort into recruiting new members, and we should celebrate every person who joins our ranks. But here's the question we need to ask ourselves: **Are we giving those members a reason to stay?**

Recruitment opens the door. What happens after someone walks through it is just as important.

Think about a new member attending his first meeting. Does anyone introduce themselves? Does someone explain our programs? Is he invited to participate, or does he spend the evening wondering when the meeting will end?

We've all seen organizations where the same people do everything. They become tired, new members feel left out, and eventually everyone wonders why participation is declining.

We can do better.

- Make new members feel welcome.
- Give members meaningful ways to participate.
- Thank volunteers for their time and effort.
- Check on members who haven't been around lately.
- Listen when members share concerns or suggestions.

A phone call can make all the difference. Sometimes, all a member needs to hear is, "We haven't seen you in a while. Is everything okay? We'd love to have you back."

Remember, **listening builds loyalty, and involvement builds belonging.**

Experienced members have a wealth of knowledge to share. Newer members bring fresh ideas and energy. Put them together through mentorship and the principle of ***Each One — Teach One***, and we build a stronger organization.

Don't just recruit a member. Help that member become part of the team.

BULLET POINT #4: DECEMBER 31ST IS THE DEADLINE—NOT A NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTION!

Let's talk about membership renewals.

We all know someone who waits until the last possible minute to take care of business. Maybe that person is sitting right next to you. Maybe it's the person writing this article!

But when it comes to our dues, let's make this year different.

Our goal is to have dues paid no later than December 31st.

Not January 2nd. Not after the holiday decorations come down. And certainly not when somebody finally finds the renewal notice under a stack of catalogs and last year's Christmas cards!

Squadron leaders, start early. Communicate clearly, follow up personally, and make it easy for members to understand how to renew.

Members, take care of your dues before the deadline. Don't wait for your Commander to become a full-time detective!

Paying dues is part of keeping our organization strong and supporting the programs we carry out through The American Legion Family. Our four pillars—Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation, National Security, Americanism, and Children & Youth—remind us of the broad mission we support.

Every renewal helps keep our members connected to that mission. Let's finish the calendar year knowing we've done our part.

BULLET POINT #5: A PRACTICAL PLAN FOR EVERY SQUADRON

Motivation is great, but it only goes so far. At some point, we must turn good intentions into action.

Here's a simple checklist your Squadron can put to work right now. You don't need a special committee or a six-month planning session. Start with a conversation and a commitment to follow through.

THE “EVERY MEMBER MATTERS” SQUADRON CHECKLIST

- **Contact every member.** Make personal contact with members who haven't renewed or taken part recently. Ask how they're doing and whether they need help.
- **Get renewals moving.** Review your membership roster, identify unpaid dues, and set up a follow-up plan to meet the December 31 deadline.
- **Welcome every new member.** Assign someone to introduce new Sons to the Squadron, explain its activities, and invite them to join in.
- **Give everyone a job to do.** Ask members about their interests and match them with manageable tasks. Don't assume the same volunteers must do everything.
- **Choose one meaningful service project.** Find a need involving veterans, youth, Americanism, National Security, or your local community—and put a date on the calendar.
- **Pair experience with fresh ideas.** Encourage longtime members to mentor newer Sons and invite newer members to suggest improvements.
- **Thank your volunteers.** Recognize the people who show up, lend a hand, and quietly keep things running.
- **Review progress monthly.** At each meeting, spend a few minutes checking renewals, participation, upcoming activities, and members who may need someone to reach out to them.

Commander's challenge: Pick three items from this list to carry out in the next 30 days. Put someone in charge of each one, set a target date, and report back at the next meeting.

Small steps, consistently taken, can produce remarkable results.

THE BOTTOM LINE

Fellow Sons, we don't have to have the biggest Squadron, have the largest budget, or run the fanciest programs to make a difference. We need members who care, leaders who listen, and a team willing to work together.

Let's make this the year we step outside our comfort zones, try a few new ideas, look after our members, and get those dues paid by December 31st.

Above all, let's remember why we joined: to support The American Legion and continue serving veterans, our communities, our youth, and our country.

So, check your flight instruments, fasten your seat belts, and prepare for takeoff!

Every Member Matters. Show Up! — Serve Boldly!

Let's make this a great year for the Sons of The American Legion.

For God and Country,

Butch Ray – Past SAL National Vice Commander