



Post 552

American Legion Meeting Minutes

19 February 2026

Meeting Called to Order: 6:00 pm

Officers Present: (Note absences)

Commander	Doug Benzel	
1 st Vice	Bill Marsh	
2 nd Vice	Mike Hill	
Adjutant	Dave Schmidt	
Finance Officer	Kent Van Horn	
Chaplain	Bill Bartle	Absent
Service Officer	Dave Schmidt	
Sergeant-At-Arms	Jim Vander Ploeg (Acting Chaplain)	
Public Affairs Off.	Carlos Bazua	
Asst. Adjutant	Bill Heard	

Guests: Troop 271 Scout Master Guido Klap, Committee Chair Sarah Knoke, Activities Chair Tina Monji, Committee Member Calvin Kuo, Life Scout Matthew Beaton, Second Class Scout Tor Farnaes and Tenderfoot Scout Wyatt Quach.

Other members: Brian Compton, Corey Blount

Minutes from the January meeting: Approved

Introduction of Troop 271 Leaders and Scouts:

Scout Liaison Bill Heard introduced Troop 271 leaders and Scouts (as above) noting that he has been very impressed with the hard work the leaders and a dedicated group of parents do in planning and staffing troop activities. He attends monthly staff meetings and has attended a Court of Honor and the troop Christmas Party.

Committee Chair Sarah Knoke described Troop 271's activities in 2025, noting that 23 Scouts had advanced in rank, and 73 merit badges were awarded. The troop took 6 backpacking trips over 10 nights, hiked 192 miles, and biked 366 miles. She said the troop engaged in 6 service projects over 345 hours, and that Eagle Scout projects amassed 174 service hours. Over the past 5 years, the troop has accredited 20 Eagle Scouts.

Scout Master Guido Klap described Troop 271 as a "high adventure troop" involved in many outdoor activities (as above). He said the troop's mission is to "provide young people with responsible fun and adventure, installing strong values and prepare them to make ethical choices, assume leadership roles as adults, and reach their full potential."

Following this presentation, Scouts Beaton, Farnaes and Quach presented a special red and white flag with the names of the Troop and American Legion Post 552, and Scouting America emblems. The flag, which will be displayed in the meeting room, honors the Post's commitment to the Troop.

Committee Reports:

Finance Report:

Finance Officer Kent Van Horn reported the Post's finances. He said net income from the Post's raffles, to date, has reached \$304.00. Income from Bingo events, to date, amounts to \$896.00.

Boys and Girls State:

In his report on Boys and Girls State, Kent Van Horn said the Post has nominated three delegates (1 from Mission Bay High School and 2 from Point Loma High School) and an alternate to Boys and Girls State, he said the total amount paid out for delegate fees and transportation was \$2,580.00 with \$2,630.00 budgeted. The VFW contributed \$860.00 toward the fees.

Membership:

Adjutant Dave Schmidt said that as of 13 February, the Post had reached 82.86 percent of its membership, against the District average of 82.96 percent. The Post numbers 116

members against its goal of 140. He said 29 members from 2025 still have not renewed for 2026, and that the Post “is moving in the right direction.”

Sick Call: None reported. Commander Benzel asked if we are conducting Buddy Checks. He recommends we incorporate Buddy Checks during our membership canvassing.

Unfinished Business:

1st Vice Bill Marsh said the Bingo events have been “very successful.” The last event drew 23 people. He will be out of state during April and asked that someone volunteer to run the next event. Commander Benzel recommended that the PB woman’s club and the Auxiliary be added to the mailing list.

New Business:

Bingo Funds: Commander Benzel recommended that the funds raised from the Bingo events be distributed to three organizations:

- STEP (Support the enlisted Project) which provides financial support and funds to junior active duty personnel.
- Shelter to Soldier, which provides service dogs for Veterans with trauma.
- Honor Flight San Diego, which flies Veterans for a weekend in Washington, D.C, in the Spring and Fall.
- Kent Van Horn made a motion to distribute the \$1200 from bingo and raffle proceeds equally between the three organizations. Brian Compton seconded. Motion carried.

Leadership Nominations: The Commander announced that nominations will be made during the March and April meeting for Post 522 offices of Commander, 1st Vice Commander and 2nd Vice Commander.

Good of the American Legion:

1st Vice Marsh described the Helmets for Heroes program which provides funds for American Legion Service Officers. The symbol of the program is a battle helmet “piggy bank.” The helmet bank will be left in the building to encourage members to donate money for the program.

Commander Benzel announced that the District 22 Board meeting will be hosted by Post 552 at 10 a.m. on 21 March. He asked for volunteers to set up the room for the 16 Board members who will attend the meeting. Post 552 members also are invited to attend.

The Commander noted that Governor Newsom signed Senate Bill 694 into law this month. The law protects Veterans from “claim sharks” who attempt to charge outrageous fees to help Veterans receive their VA benefits. It bans fraudulent practices, protects personal data, and voids unlawful contracts as of 1 January 2026.

Dave Schmidt spoke about the American Legion’s Temporary Financial Assistance program that was started in 1926. It is for Legion members and current active duty living with a minor dependent child. They can receive a one-time non-repayment grant of \$2500.

Mike Hill warned about Legion or VFW members that may seek hardship money from the post. Some have been known to go from post to post asking for handouts.

Meeting was adjourned at 7:13 p.m.

/s/Signed (date)

Adjutant