



Post 552

American Legion Meeting Minutes

19 March 2026

Meeting Called to Order: 6:00 P.M.

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
Service Officer	Dave Schmidt
Sergeant-At-Arms	Jim Vander Ploeg
Public Affairs Off.	Carlos Bazua Absent
Asst. Adjutant	Bill Heard

Guests: Guillermo “Memo” Melendez, Joaquin Melendez

Other members: Corey Blount

Minutes from the February meeting: Approved

Committee Reports:

Finance Officer Kent Van Horn reported that Boys and Girls State was the Post’s biggest expense in the past month, amounting to \$1,283.94. He said net income from the Post’s raffles, to date, has reached \$384.00. Income from Bingo events, to date, amounts to \$1,141.00.

Commander Benzel requested a box be added to the finance report that would reflect upcoming Post obligations.

Membership:

Adjutant Dave Schmidt reported that membership has been flat during the past month, with the death of one member. There were no new members with one renewal. The Post stands at 85 percent of its membership goal, compared to the District's 85.6 percent.

Boys and Girls State:

In his report on Boys and Girls State, Van Horn said all delegates have been registered. The delegates are Derrick Borg from Mission Bay HS, and Lillian Mirgoli and Caden Clark from Point Loma HS. Max Flores of Mission Bay HS is the alternate. The delegates will attend mandatory virtual orientation between April 25 and May 31. Boy and Girls State will be held June 19-27.

Boy Scout Troop 271:

Troop Liaison Officer Bill Heard reported that Troop 271 has scheduled a Court of Honor for 24 March. Twelve scouts will be advanced in rank and four will receive merit badges. The Troop is planning a Pancake Breakfast in May and is considering conducting it at the VFW hall. A committee will visit the building soon to look at the main room and kitchen.

The Scouting America, Troop 271 leaders and the San Diego/Imperial Valley Council are concerned about demands made by the U.S. Defense Department to change certain Scouting policies in light of the Administration's effort to ban all Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) programs. Scouting American is taking various steps to comply with Defense Department demands. These include dropping one merit badge, adding another and waiving dues for Scouts from active-duty military families. Scouting American will have to organize fund-raising events to offset the loss of funds from the dues waiver.

2nd Vice Mike Hill, noting the Troop 271 recently presented the Post with a guidon-sized flag, made a motion for the Post to subsidize the cost of a 3' by 5' Troop 271/Post 522 flag. Dave Schmidt seconded the motion. The flag would bear the same design as the smaller flag and would be displayed on a standard with the smaller flag. The motion passed with an expenditure limit of \$300.00.

Sons of the American Legion Update:

Commander Benzel discussed the idea of a joint Post 552/SAL fundraiser, perhaps a fish fry. Mike Hill noted that the SAL has purchased many items for the Post, including an electric blower. He suggested that the two organizations could partner on various projects.

Unfinished Business:

1st Vice Bill Marsh said the most recent Bingo was fun and drew a respectable crowd. The next event is scheduled for 19 April. Jim Vanderploeg volunteered to run the event.

New Business:

Commander Benzel suggested that the Post sponsor a Junior ROTC unit and had been discussing the idea with Guillermo “Memo” Melendez at the Mission Bay High School USCG JROTC. He said that unit had 85 cadets and sponsored a Color Guard unit, among others, and hoped to have a drone program next year.

2nd Vice Hill said the VFW would want to be involved in such a program, and that both the VFW and the American Legion have JROTC medals. Van Horn noted that the American Legion had presented a medal last year to a JROTC student at Point Loma High School. He said that unit had 85 cadets and sponsored a Color Guard unit, among others, and hoped to have a drone program next year.

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Nominations:

Commander Benzel announced nominations for Post elections in May. He was nominated by Bill Marsh for a second term. Marsh was nominated for a second term as 1st Vice by Kent Van Horn. Mike Hill was nominated for a second term as 2nd Vice by Benzel. Further nominations will be made at the April meeting.

Memorial to departed member:

Members of the Post paid their respects to Vietnam Army veteran Anthony Panattiere, who died recently at the age of 88.

Good of the American Legion:

Commander Benzel announced that the District 22 Board meeting will be hosted by Post 552 at 10 a.m. on 21 March. Post 552 members are invited to attend.

2nd Vice Mike Hill advised members that Tricare for Life will not cover the cost of a new blood test for cancer. The test without the insurance coverage normally costs \$8,000.

Meeting was adjourned at 7:07 P.M.

/s/Signed April 01, 2026

Adjutant Dave Schmidt