



## Department of New Jersey Marine Corps League

### Office of the Commandant

Marine Michael John Waluk

*Ductus Exemplos*

20 July 2024

Good afternoon, Marines, Associates, Auxiliary, Dogs of the Order, our esteemed National Jr. Vice Commandant Russ Miller and National Judge Advocate David Porter, and Executive staff of the Young Marines, welcome to the 2024 Northeast Division Conference.

This year I am especially proud to represent the Division, and Department of New Jersey. Our department consists of 34 Detachments which are grouped into eleven (11) Districts overseen by a District Vice Commandant and their Assistant District Vice Commandant.

#### **1. Recent Developments:**

This brings up a very poignant point of discussion which is staffing. To date, as a Department, three (3) of our Districts are without an Assistant District Vice Commandant, positions which we've been trying to fill since September of 2023. On the board of trustee's side of the table, this is the second consecutive year that we've had to seek out another Adjutant. We are fortunate to have found Associate member Karen Neary, who is extremely capable and on point. During my travels throughout the State, it appears that the common thread emanating from the officers is "we are having problems filling our positions, which is why many of us are wearing multiple hats".

Even though we run a Leadership School which usually accommodates twenty-five to forty attendees, it seems that once they complete the course of instruction, they are not moving up through the chairs. This causes me to think that either we are not inculcating our membership to the mission at hand, or our numbers are hitting critically low levels.

Supporting the latter hypothesis is the fact that our numbers are down 1% from this time last year and down 8.9% over the last three years.

How long this is going to be sustainable is a question that is going to plague us as we speak. In the last quarter, our department membership chairman stated we had eight new members, yet we lost seven due to death. Between 1 March and today, I've personally attended five more services, the most recent being two days ago. The position we are in is looking grim for the future if we don't turn the tide around.

Since our last congregation, the Department of New Jersey held a successful Convention in June of 2023 where a new slate of officers was elected to serve the Department, yet even here attendance was scant in comparison to previous years. Nevertheless, business moved forward with only slight issues. The department meeting venue had to be changed due to a change of command and operational procedures from DMAVA. We've managed to work through it and have been assured that access will not be inhibited in the future.

The Department was present at the 100<sup>th</sup> National Convention held in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma in August of 2023 and the Midwinter Conference held in Alexandria, VA in February of 2024. Meetings were held in September, November and January with the next Department meeting to be held on 21 April 2024 which will be followed by the Department's 96<sup>th</sup> Convention to be held on 31 May through 2 June 2024.

2. Meetings:

3. **Recent Agendas:**

Following in the footsteps of my predecessor, Commandant Cleary, I have been increasingly more involved with the NJ Veteran's Counsel meetings. These meetings are attended by commanding officers of the American Legion, VFW, DAV, Purple Hearts Association, Catholic War Veterans, Jewish War Veterans and the Marine Corps League.

To see how the entire state's Veterans Organizations work with the Department of Military and Veteran's Affairs and the Governor's office can be intimidating. The meetings are held monthly and cover a myriad of topics that affect all of us. Because of the nature of these meetings, I have appointed Marine Paul Thompson a member of the Department of New Jersey to act as our Legislative Officer. His duties are to attend these meetings with me and discuss the impact upon the Marine Corps League

as well as veteran health services and share the information with the department.

Recently, the Department of New Jersey was also tasked by Past National Commandant Johnny Baker with a fund-raising project to send thirty (30) students from the Pemberton School, for a Leadership workshop which was held at MCB Quantico. The Department, with the assistance of area personnel, was able to raise over 90% of costs providing transportation, lodging and meals for the three day event.

**3a: Administrative:** The Department of New Jersey is slowly getting all Detachments in the in compliance with their 990 and Tax Exemption status. At the present time, there are 7 Detachments who are currently completing their paperwork.

On the League side of the house, New Jersey had 100% completion of their PLM Reports.

Detachments are also reporting their funeral honors, scouting activities as required.

**3b: Fundraising**

## **Revenue**

The Department of New Jersey continues to function on limited sources of income. To that end, I have invited a Morgan Stanley representative to discuss options that would help us in the future. At the present time we survive on membership applications/renewals, PLM disbursements, MCL License plate fees, Leadership School enrollments, interest on investments and our annual raffle. Fortunately, despite our limited income, we continue to support our programs.

## **4. Concerns:**

On a secondary note, involving monetary issues, a cautionary memo has been sent to all Department/Detachment Officers regarding "Scam e-mails". The urging of Detachment Commandants to pass on this information is imperative! As it turned out, one of our members unfortunately fell prey to this.

## **5. Awards & Recognition:**

On a Detachment level, I fear that we are not recognizing the Marines and Associates who are out there promoting the League and supporting our endeavors. A goal for the Department staff will be to reach out to our detachment level leadership to see how they are recognizing their staff and members in addition to providing guidance-if needed-in order to nominate deserving persons for higher awards and improve member retention rates.

In October of 2023, The Department of New Jersey along with many of the Veteran Service Organizations also took part in the annual Governor's Pass In Review at Sea Girt, NJ.

The following month, Marine Edward Adrovich of the Cape Atlantic Detachment presented a personal account of the Korean War from a Marine's perspective to the F.B.I. Office in Newark, NJ in commemoration of the ending of the conflict and receiving recognition from the F.B.I. for his service. He was the only Marine on the panel.

## 6. **Committees:**

### a) **Membership:**

As previously mentioned, our numbers have been in decline. Only a few short years ago, NJ boasted over 3,000 members. Today, there are currently 2,468 voting members on the rolls, of this 1,678 are Life Members, 790 Regular Members and 59 Associate Members, with 31 members belonging to multiple detachments.

Over a three-year period, our total strength is at a negative -8.9% decline between 2021 and FY 2024.

District 10 Vice Commandant Gary Watson recently requested a new detachment starter kit in anticipation that the Department of NJ may have 35 Detachments in the near future.

b) **Toys for Tots:** The Department of New Jersey works in conjunction with the local Marine Corps Reserve Units throughout the state. New Jersey participated in some of the most successful campaigns to date, providing toys to over 400,000 deserving families!

### c) **Rebuilding Warriors:**

The Department of New Jersey was able to continue its efforts in promoting helping a New Jersey Marine obtain a service dog. Every year several of our detachments have made a long-standing commitment to fund this endeavor, which has been met with great success. The Department first seeks to find a Marine from NJ first. If that does not work, we expand the search for a Marine in the Division.

If we cannot find a Marine, we look for a deserving military veteran in need. Last year, we were able to provide a service dog for Marine Barbara DeAngelo.

d) **Scholarships**

The Department of New Jersey Scholarship Committee continues to do the good work that they do whereas they were able to provide thirteen students who met the criteria with \$400.00 in scholarship aid.

e) **Legislative:**

As mentioned earlier, the Department of New Jersey has recently taken an active part in the NJ Veteran's Council meeting monthly with the Deputy Director of Veteran's Affairs, members of the Governor's staff as well as Major General Hou and Lt. Col. McNamara to see how we can effect change and have an increasingly pro-active place on the counsel to corroborate efforts with the Veteran Organizations.

f) **Chapel of the Four Chaplains**

The annual Mass celebrating the Chapel of the Four Chaplains was held at St. Stephen's Church in Kearny, NJ where Fr. Washington was the Parish Priest. The event was well attended by the local and state Police/Fire Departments, Veteran's Organizations and Scouting Organizations as well. The event was held on 4 February 2024. The Department of NJ Marine Corps League was able to bestow eighteen persons-inside & outside of the League- with membership into the Legion of Honor, also held at St. Stephen's Church on 16 March 2024.

g) **Eagle Scouts:**

The Department of New Jersey appointed Marine Charles Wian as the new Eagle Scout Chairman replacing Marine Tim Daudelin who held the position for many years. Charles is doing a wonderful job in his first year and we look for more to come. To date he has reported that the Department of New Jersey has awarded 43 Scouts with awards in presented with certificates.

h) **Leadership School:**

On 6 April 2024, the Department of New Jersey our annual Leadership School. This was the twenty-second cohort to have completed the course. Twenty-Eight students were enrolled, and twenty-seven students completed the course.

i) **YPF**

Since the advent of COVID, the Department of NJ Marine Corps League has all but shut down the YPF Program. This had become a

major concern at the National levels causing the MCL to issue a directive replete with a MOU and SOP. With the assistance from the Assistant National Vice Commandant Northeast Division Robert Ziltz, the Department of New Jersey was able to attend a YPF Meet held on 2 March 2024 which was open to High School J.R.O.T.C. students. A second meet was held on 20 April 2024 in which the Department had several Marines from Detachments around the state to participate in and observe the procedures to maximize our involvement in the program. We continue to promote the League's efforts in continuing working with M.Sgt. Roberts to develop the program at hand.

In closing, I would like to thank the members and staff of the Department of New Jersey for their support and assistance. While it can appear daunting to complete all of the objectives we set for ourselves, we continue to forge ahead with great success.

Semper Fi,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Michael John Waluk".

Michael John Waluk  
Commandant, Department of New Jersey Marine Corps League