

Strengthening Our Future: The Case for Merging the 4th & 5th Districts

The American Legion's 4th and 5th Districts have long served veterans in the Twin Cities metro area, each with a strong history of advocacy, support, and community engagement. However, as our organization evolves, we must consider ways to ensure our continued strength and relevance. One such consideration is the proposed merger of the two districts—a move that could bring significant benefits. Here's why this consolidation is essential:

Declining Membership

Membership across both districts has been steadily declining, largely due to aging veterans and a lack of younger members joining at the same rate. By merging, we can pool our resources and maintain a stronger, more active district, ensuring that our mission continues with the same passion and dedication that has defined us for decades.

Efficiency & Resource Allocation

Operating as a single district would streamline administrative functions, reducing duplicated efforts in leadership, meetings, and event planning. Additionally, combining financial resources, volunteers, and support networks would allow us to better fund and execute vital programs such as youth initiatives, scholarships, and veteran services.

Geographic & Community Overlap

The 4th and 5th Districts already share a common geographic space in the Twin Cities metro area. Many Legion-related events and initiatives are coordinated between both districts, and merging would formalize these partnerships, creating a stronger, unified presence rather than two separate, smaller groups.

Stronger Advocacy & Influence

A unified district would carry greater influence at the state level, particularly when advocating for veteran policies, funding, and legislative initiatives. With a larger membership base, we can amplify our collective voice, ensuring that veteran issues remain a priority for policymakers.

Leadership & Volunteer Shortages

Many Legion districts nationwide are struggling to fill leadership positions, and the 4th and 5th Districts are no exception. A merger would reduce the burden on individual members by consolidating leadership roles and creating a stronger, more cohesive team. This change would also encourage greater participation and more effective governance.

Improved Communication & Collaboration

With one district instead of two, it will be easier to coordinate events, meetings, and initiatives. Members from both districts already work together in various capacities, and formalizing this relationship will enhance communication and operational efficiency, fostering a more engaged and cohesive membership.

Final Thoughts

Change is never easy, especially when it involves long-standing traditions and structures. However, if executed thoughtfully, merging the 4th and 5th Districts presents an opportunity to strengthen our organization, ensuring that we continue to serve veterans and our community effectively. By coming together, we can build a stronger, more resilient American Legion presence in the Twin Cities area—one that honors our past while securing our future.

We encourage all members to engage in this discussion, ask questions, and share their thoughts as we work toward a decision that best supports our mission and the veterans we serve.

The 4th & 5th District Ad-Hoc Merger Committee has drafted a “Pathway to Progress” document that the district adjutants will be distributing to their posts. This “Pathway to Progress” document will also be distributed to members through newsletters, email, and social media. Members of the committee are available to answer any questions about our path forward. We encourage you all to review the document with an open mind. Questions can be submitted to the 4th District Adjutant Jennifer.havlick@outlook.com or 5th District Adjutant Ray Eiden at eyden@aol.com. A final vote on the “Pathway to Progress” document will be held at each district's 2025 convention. Again, if you have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact either adjutant or a member of the committee listed below.

Merger Committee Members

Lynne Nottage, 5th District Commander
Jon Haworth, 4th District Commander
Ray Eiden Jr., 5th District Adjutant
Jennifer Havlick, 4th District Adjutant
Dennis DeLong, 5th District Finance
Mike Ash, 4th District Finance
Jamie Brooks, 4th District Membership
Daniel Bronk, 4th District Vice Commander
Tim Diamond, 4th District Finance
Randy Bastyr, 4th District

PATHWAY TO PROGRESS (PTP) BETWEEN THE 4TH AND 5TH DISTRICTS OF THE AMERICAN LEGION

PATHWAY TO PROGRESS is made and entered into by and between the 4th District and the 5th District of The American Legion, Department of Minnesota, hereinafter referred to collectively as "the Parties."

I. PURPOSE

The purpose of this PTP is to establish an agreement between the Parties to merge into a single district, herein referred to as "4th & 5th Metro District." This merger aims to enhance operational efficiency, streamline administrative functions, and strengthen the collective impact of the American Legion's mission in serving veterans, their families, and the community.

II. SCOPE OF AGREEMENT

1. The Parties agree to dissolve the current structure of the 4th and 5th Districts and form a unified district under a new name, leadership, and governance structure.
2. The New District will assume all responsibilities, assets, and obligations previously held by the separate districts.
3. The merger will be conducted in accordance with the Constitution and Bylaws of The American Legion, Department of Minnesota, and The American Legion National Organization.
4. All current posts within the 4th and 5th Districts will be integrated into the New District, ensuring continuity of operations and representation.

III. GOVERNANCE AND LEADERSHIP

1. A Transition Committee shall be formed, consisting of representatives from each district, to oversee the merger process.
2. The Transition Committee will develop and propose bylaws, leadership roles, and election procedures for the New District.
3. The first leadership election for the New District shall be conducted at the District Convention 2026.
4. Interim leadership shall be elected by mutual agreement of both districts until formal elections take place. These leaders shall be appointed during the individual district conventions in 2026

IV. FINANCIAL AND ASSET MANAGEMENT

1. A financial audit of both districts shall be conducted before the official merger to ensure transparency and accountability.
2. All assets, including funds, property, and resources, shall be consolidated under the New District's administration. Ensuring that all currently existing scholarships in both district are maintained throughout the merger and once the new district is established.
3. The New District shall establish a new bank account and financial management system in compliance with The American Legion's financial policies. (EIN# along with incorporation with the state of Minnesota.)

V. MEMBERSHIP AND POST REPRESENTATION

1. This merger shall in no way, shape, or form affect the individual posts within the 4th and 5th Districts. All posts will retain their autonomy, operations, and existing charters without any changes or disruptions.
2. All current members of the 4th and 5th Districts shall automatically become members of the New District.

3. Post representation in the New District will be structured to ensure fair and equal representation of all member posts. ***(Suggesting of two representative from each post as delegates to district meeting and Convention).***
4. Any concerns or disputes regarding representation shall be resolved by the Transition Committee.

VI. IMPLEMENTATION TIMELINE

1. This PTP shall take effect upon approval by both district executive committees and The American Legion Department of Minnesota.
2. The merger process shall be completed no later than May 2026, with all structural and administrative changes in place at the new district convention in 2026.
3. A final review of the merger process shall be conducted by May 2026 Mid-Year Meeting after completion to assess effectiveness and address any issues.
4. New district officers to be voted on at the new district convention in 2026. Location and exact date to be determined.

VII. AMENDMENTS AND TERMINATION

1. Any amendments to this PTP must be agreed upon in writing by both Parties and approved by The American Legion Department of Minnesota
2. If unforeseen circumstances prevent the completion of the merger, the Parties shall engage in good faith discussions to determine the best course of action.

VIII. SIGNATURES

By signing below, the authorized representatives of the 4th and 5th Districts of The American Legion agree to the terms and conditions of this Pathway to Progress.

4th District Representative

Name: _____

Title: District Commander

Date: _____

5th District Representative

Name: _____

Title: District Commander

Date: _____

4th & 5th District Transition Committee Members:

Lynne Nottage, 5th District Commander
Jon Haworth, 4th District Commander
Ray Eiden Jr., 5th District Adjutant
Jennifer Havlick, 4th District Adjutant – Committee Secretary
Dennis Delong, 5th District Finance
Mike Ash, 4th District Finance
Jamie Brooks, 4th District Membership
Daniel Bronk, 4th District Vice Commander
Tim Diamond, 4th District Finance
Randy Bastyr, 4th District