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### Volume 2, Issue 3 **"FOR GOD AND COUNTRY!**” 1 March 2025

35TH DISTRICT – COMMANDER – AL LOTT – 334-441-6580

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SGT. AT ARMS

TBD

MEMBERSHIP

Bruce Williamson

UPCOMING POST EVENTS

*MONTHLY MEETINGS*

0800 hrs, 12 Apr 25

0800 hrs, 03 May 25

0800 hrs, 07 Jun 25

*DISTRICT MEETING*

18 May 25

## **Department Conventions**

## ​​June 19 - June 22, 2025 Renaissance Mobile, Al Room Rates $149.00 - Reservation Deadline May 22, 2025. Call 800-468-3571

POST FACEBOOK SITE

<https://www.facebook.com/Post82OzarkAL>

POST WEBSITE

<https://schroorty-fliouwn-gnuect.yolasite.com/>

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Post 82

DISTRICT 35th

3rd DIVISION

DEPARTMENT

ALABAMA

Please mark your calendar and plan to attend Veteran’s Supper every Friday 5:30 pm to 7:30 pm at the fellowship hall, Westgate United Methodist Church, 512 Camilla Ave, in Ozark, Alabama.

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**Be the One App now available for download to**

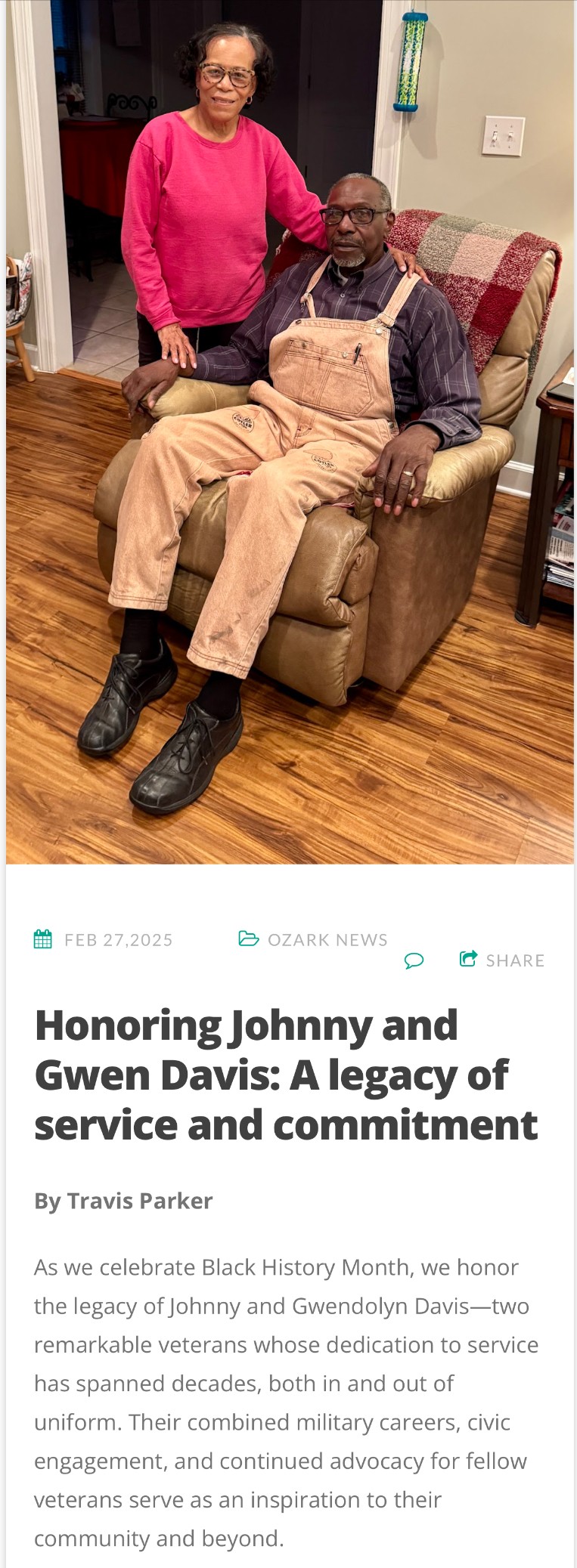
**assist Veterans in crises and those around them.**

For both veterans in crisis and those around them, an app exists that can help provide the necessary resources in their area.

The Be the One app, developed by Columbia University and tailored to The American Legion’s [Be the One](https://www.legion.org/information-center/news/be-the-one/2025/february/betheone.org) veteran suicide prevention mission, is available via both [Apple](https://apps.apple.com/us/app/be-the-one-columbia-protocol/id6479808157) and [Google](https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=net.pssolutions.lighthouseamericanlegion&utm_source=na_Med). The app used the Columbia-Suicide Severity Rating Scale (C-SSRS), the most evidence-supported tool of its kind. It asks a simple series of questions that anyone can use anywhere to help prevent suicide.

Columbia Lighthouse Project's Wendy Lakso, who provides Be the One training,

encouraged Legion Family members to download the app but said it is a work in progress. “We’re going to refine this a little bit more. We can change these questions,” she said. “We may drill down a little bit more and say, ‘Are you a spouse, are you whatever?’ (Continue on Page 4)



# [Honoring Johnny and Gwen Davis: A legacy of service and commitment](https://www.ozarkal.news/honoring-johnny-and-gwen-davis-legacy-service-and-commitment)

**By Travis Parker**

As we celebrate Black History Month, we honor the legacy of Johnny and Gwendolyn Davis—two remarkable veterans whose dedication to service has spanned decades, both in and out of uniform. Their combined military careers, civic engagement, and continued advocacy for fellow veterans serve as an inspiration to their community and beyond.

**LTC Gwendolyn L. Davis: A Trailblazing Career in Military Medicine**

**WELCOME TO A**

**NEW YEAR OF SERVICE**

**Greeting Y’all,**

**With just a little over two months to go in the year, we need just 2 new member to reach our goals. Below are the remaining percentage goals and date, so let’s get busy.**

**100% Goal        Apr 30, 2025**

**103% Goal        May 31, 2025**

**--------------------------------------------------------------**

**There has been a change at the Department (State Level). See below**

## **​2024-2025 Department Officers**

**Commander – Willie Rogers**

-  commander@legional.org

**Sr. Vice Commander**- James Bryant - srvice.commander@legional.org

**Jr. Vice Commander** - Paul Gonthier - [jrvice.commander@legional.org](mailto:jrvice.commander@legional.org)

**Adjutant** - Ryan Marshall - adjutant@legional.org​

**Judge Advocate -**Tom Long - [judge.advocate@legional.org](mailto:judge.advocate@legional.org)

**The officers above, will finish the year, new officers will be elected at the State Convention in June.**

**The June Convention will be held on during the period June 19 - June 22, 2025 at the Renaissance Mobile, Alabama - Room Rates $149.00. The Reservation Deadline May 22, 2025.**

**In May we will be holding a “Be The One” training session. What does The American Legion be the one mean?**

**The mission of The American Legion's “Be The One” initiative is to reduce the rate of veteran suicide. We're actively working on lessening the stigma associated with mental health treatment and empowering everyone to take appropriate action when a veteran or service member may be at risk – one life at a time.**

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The issue is we don’t want to ask too many questions. Because if you’re in a situation where you need to get someone help immediately, you’re not going to sit and answer 10 questions. We have to try to streamline as best as we can.”

Lakso said one of the key aspects of the app is its privacy. “I don’t know who you are. I don’t have your phone number. I don’t know any of that on this app,” she said. “That’s important to you for you to know as a veteran. I can’t track you. All I can know is what location you’re in by ZIP code.”

The app also provides links to local resources, facts about suicide and hints to talking about suicide.

Tony Cross, the Legion’s Be the One program manager, stressed the value of the first resource. “What’s really helpful about that app is wherever you’re at, it will give you some details about the area you probably don’t even know,” Cross said. “A lot of times I’ll ask a (Legion) post, ‘Do you know what’s around you?’ People don’t. That is an incredible app.”



*Commander's Comments*

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

STATEMENT FROM Department Commander Willie Rogers REGARDING SENATE BILL

     Primarily, I want to address the misinformation that has been circulating. I have never, nor will I ever, conspired behind closed doors or made agreements without full transparency with my membership. Every decision, amendment, or update has been communicated through our weekly updates, ensuring that our members are always informed.

     The notion that I sought to conspire with anyone as the Commander of the American Legion Department of Alabama or any other entity behind my membership is categorically false. I will no longer entertain such baseless accusations.

     When Senate Bill 67 (SB67) was first introduced, me and the leadership of our department as well as the leadership within the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) were among the first to respond within 12 hours of its introduction. From the outset, we opposed the bill's original foundation. However, we recognized that we were facing an uphill battle, not only against the bill itself but also against the spread of misinformation and division among our ranks.

**Despite our disagreements, we engaged with our elected officials to advocate for a compromise one that would ensure the State Board of Veterans Affairs (SBVA) remained intact and that Veterans Service Organizations (VSOs) maintained a voice and a vote in the process.**

Whether we personally supported the bill or not, we understood that some form of it would pass through the Senate and House. Our responsibility as leaders was to navigate these challenges and secure the best possible outcome for the organizations that founded the Alabama Department of Veterans Affairs (ADVA) and SBVA, ensuring their continued representation.

    Our duty extends beyond individual bills. We do not just speak for our respective organizations; we speak for all veterans. Our mission is to ensure that every veteran’s voice is heard, and their rights are protected. While disagreements will always exist, we must learn to stand together rather than tear each other apart over differing opinions.

After two weeks of tireless advocacy through direct engagement at the State Capitol, letter-writing campaigns, and petitions, our concerns were heard. The Senate responded by amending SB67, and on February 18, 2025, the revised bill passed.

 Key Provisions of SB67 as Passed by the Senate on February 18:

                              Commissioner Appointment:

The Alabama Department of Veterans Affairs will become a cabinet agency, with the Commissioner appointed directly by the Governor and serving at the Governor discretion.

The current eligibility requirements for the Commissioner remain unchanged: • They must be a resident of Alabama.

• Must be a veteran who served at least 60 days on active duty and was honorably discharged.

• Must be appointed based on education, experience, and ability in veterans’ affairs, without political bias.

                                        Board Structure:

• The SBVA structure remains unchanged, with the Governor serving as Chair.

• The following VSOs may nominate members for appointment to the Board:

o Alabama Alliance of the Military Officers Association of America

o American Ex-Prisoners of War

o American Legion

o AMVETS

o Disabled American Veterans

o Marine Corps League

o Military Order of the Purple Heart

o Veterans of Foreign Wars

o Vietnam Veterans of America

o Each VSO is allotted one board seat per 7,500 members, with additional seats for additional membership thresholds.

• Board members will serve four-year terms, with a maximum of one reappointment.

• VSOs must submit nominations within 90 days of a term ending or a vacancy occurring. Failure to do so allows the Governor to appoint a veteran of their choosing.

Board Role & Responsibilities: • The SBVA retains control over the State Veterans Assistance Fund and approves all expenditures for veterans’ programs.

• The Board will oversee the ADVA and work to:

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| |  | | --- | | • Advise the Commissioner on veterans’ issues. • Develop policy recommendations for veterans’ welfare. • Recommend initiatives to support veterans and their families. • Assist in managing state veterans’ cemeteries and homes. • Review and provide input on the ADVA budget and operations.       While this process has been challenging, it has reaffirmed our commitment to standing up for all veterans. We remain steadfast in our mission to protect the rights and interests of those who have served.       We encourage all veterans and supporters to stay informed, engaged, and united as we continue our advocacy efforts.  Willie Rogers Department Commander American Legion Department of Alabama | |



PAGE 4 CONTINUE-----

Lieutenant Colonel (LTC) Gwendolyn L. Davis’ distinguished Army career has spanned over 23 years, building upon an already successful 18-year career as a civilian Registered Nurse. A native of Augusta, Georgia, she joined the U.S. Army Nurse Corps as a First Lieutenant in March 1992 and quickly rose through the ranks, serving in a variety of clinical, leadership, and public health roles across the globe.

Throughout her military tenure, LTC Davis provided critical medical leadership in assignments ranging from Fort Gordon, Georgia, to Tripler Army Medical Center in Hawaii, and overseas in Belgium, Germany, and Honduras. Her expertise in preventive medicine and public health made her a key figure in military healthcare operations, where she played an essential role in ensuring the well-being of soldiers and their families.

A lifelong learner, LTC Davis earned multiple degrees, including an Associate of Science in Nursing from Augusta State University, a Bachelor of Science in Nursing from the Medical College of Georgia, and a Master of Science in Human Relations from the University of Oklahoma. Her extensive military education included courses in leadership, preventive medicine, occupational health, and combat service support.



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Her decorated career is reflected in the numerous awards and commendations she has received, including the Meritorious Service Medal (three times), the Army Commendation Medal, the Army Achievement Medal, and the National Defense Service Medal. Her service left a lasting impact on military healthcare, ensuring the highest standards of medical care for service members at home and abroad.

After she got out of the army in 2015, she worked as a volunteer with the Red Cross and once a week volunteers at the Dale Medical Center.

First Sergeant (Ret.) Johnny L. Davis: A Lifetime of Military and Civil Service

1SG (Ret.) Johnny L. Davis dedicated 24 years to the U.S. Army with a specialty in electrical engineering, serving in key leadership roles within the Engineer Corps from 1969 to 1993. His extensive experience spanned from Vietnam to Germany, Korea, and multiple stateside assignments. Whether as a squad leader in Vietnam or an instructor teaching electrical interior wiring along with some of what he had done in Vietnam, which included working with explosives such as mine detection, mine discovery, and mine recovery, or as an instructor at Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri, or a First Sergeant in Hawaii, he was known for his strong leadership and mentorship of young soldiers.

After retiring from active duty in 1993, Johnny transitioned to working with TWA Airlines before they closed down. Then on to civil service, ensuring he could support his wife’s military career while continuing to contribute to the military community. His work allowed him to accompany her on her various deployments and assignments, demonstrating a partnership rooted in shared service and commitment.

A Love Forged in Service

Johnny and Gwen’s story is one of dedication not only to their country but to each other. They met while both were stationed in Hawaii, him on his second tour there, and their marriage became a testament to the strength and resilience required of military families. While Gwen was actively serving, Johnny’s civil service career allowed them to navigate deployments together, ensuring their family remained strong despite the demands of military life.

Continuing the Mission: Advocates for Veterans and Community Service

Even after retiring from military service, the Davises have remained deeply committed to supporting veterans and their community. They are active members of the American Legion and the DAV and play a crucial role in organizing and participating in veteran outreach initiatives. One of their most cherished activities is the Friday night veterans’ social night, where they provide a space for former service members to connect, share stories, and find support. They also spend a lot of their time going back and forth to church activities with the Pleasant Grove Church.

Through their volunteer work, they continue to embody the Army values of selfless service and duty. Their unwavering commitment to supporting fellow veterans ensures that those who served continue to receive the respect, care, and community they deserve.

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A Legacy of Service and Sacrifice

As we honor Black history and the contributions of African Americans in the military, the story of Johnny and Gwen Davis stands as a shining example of courage, resilience, and lifelong dedication to service. Their journey—from the battlefields of Vietnam to the hospitals of Belgium and the leadership halls of Fort Rucker—demonstrates the profound impact Black service members have had on the nation’s history.

Concerning being black and in the military, Johnny said that you just learn to live with it because there’s not a lot that you can do about it. He could tell a gradual improvement in race relations through the 60s, 70s and 80s and most of the issues were more on a personal basis, for some individuals may have been prejudiced. He said the choice was “either stay and work with it or you could pack your bags and go home, but then whose loss would that be?” He remembers sometimes when promotions would come up, somebody else would be selected rather than him because of the prejudice of a specific leader who was a “redneck that you’d never forget.” He would call white soldiers by their names, but would always refer to the black soldiers as “you boys.” This made Johnny work harder and smarter to earn the promotions that he felt, he deserved. When he was transitioning from one place to another, he would keep the words of his father in mind, “Do what you hafta do, but get the job done, never quit.”

When Gwen joined the military in the 90s, there was still some racism, but not nearly as much during her tenure. She joined the Army when she was 38 with a special waiver signed because of her age, but in the medical services, there were personnel older than most soldiers.

Johnny spoke of the teamwork he learned in the Army while they were putting together portable bridges, and how that helped him later in life to get jobs. Overall, his experience in the army was good for him, otherwise, he wouldn’t have stayed 24 years. He said the army truly made him “be all that he could be,” which was their recruiting slogan for several years.

The legacy of Johnny and Gwendolyn Davis is not just one of military achievements, but of unwavering commitment to uplifting others, ensuring that the sacrifices of past and present service members are never forgotten.