



GRAND LODGE Convention News

WEDNESDAY JULY 8, 2026

Delegates pass four resolutions in legislative session

By Tom Scudder

Convention News Reporter

On the second day of the Grand Lodge Session, in one of the lightest legislative sessions in recent memory, delegates passed four resolutions to amend the Statutes of the Order. Delegates also heard from several Grand Lodge committees and commissions concerning their activities over the previous year and their plans for the future and congratulated the All American Lodge winners and the champions of the Ritual Contest.

The resolutions, all of which passed with more than 95 percent of the vote, included one clarifying that the Elks National Drug Awareness Commission's members were to be appointed in the same manner as other national commissions; one specifying that the Grand Forum did not have jurisdiction over a matter if an appellant fails to appeal in a timely manner and pay the required fees; and two similar resolutions that provided for appeals to the decisions of a Lodge's managing body and hearings for requests for pardons and commutations to be held at special meetings of the Lodge, in addition to regular meetings of the Lodge.

Prior to the legislative session, Grand Trustee Chairman Joseph C. Cooper, in his final report, indicated that the 2027-2028 dues would be fixed at \$6.50 for the Grand Lodge, \$5.50 for The Elks Magazine, and between \$17 and \$25 for the insurance assessment for most Lodges. Members of Lodges with a history of extraordinary claims would be required to pay between \$26 and \$30 for the insurance assessment.

While the results of the voting were being tabulated, Grand Secretary Carl T. Seibert gave a report on his first year in office. To begin with, he reported that the Disaster Relief Fund was only



During Tuesday's Legislative Session, Grand Secretary Carl T. Seibert reported that in 2025-26 Disaster Relief Fund provided \$25,000 in assistance in recovery efforts from flooding in Texas. Photo: Laz Suarez

required to respond to one disaster, the flooding in Kerrville, Texas, in early July; the fund provided \$25,000 in assistance to the Texas Elks State Association to assist with recovery efforts from the flood. Seibert noted that his first year in office included adjusting to winter in Chicago and helping the Grand Lodge staff prepare the headquarters building for several thousand visiting Elks during the current convention. He praised his staff for working together to improve communications and resource sharing between various groups within the staff and for becoming "One Office, One Team, and One Voice" seeking to become a best-in-class support center for Elks nationwide. To help lead this process of continuous improvement, he announced that Jim O'Kelley, the longtime Director of the Elks National Foundation, had accepted a position as the Senior Director of Operations

for Grand Lodge Elks USA, and that Debbie Doles, the former Assistant Director of the foundation, would become the new ENF Director.

Government Relations Committee Chairman Robert E. Wambach reported that the total national giving by the Order in time, money, and in-kind donations had been extremely generous in the 2025-2026 fiscal year. The total reported charitable giving in cash, kind, volunteer time, and mileage was \$544,678,484.13, which included 12,708,325 hours of time and 48,776,582 miles of travel. Next up was Harley R. Eckert Jr., chairman of the Auditing and Accounting Committee. He announced that more than 11% of Lodges have failed to submit the appropriate financial documents and stressed the necessity of Lodges doing so in order to avoid problems with the IRS.

Please see **SESSION**, Page 9

Registration Final Tally

On this last day of the convention, the grand total number of Elks, Spouses and Guests is:

Grand Exalted Ruler	1
Past Grand Exalted Rulers	19
Grand Lodge Officers	8
Grand Trustees	8
Grand Forum	5
Grand Lodge Committeemen	79
District Deputies-Designate	231
Special Deputies	30
Representatives to Grand Lodge & Alternates	1,486
State Presidents	45
State Secretaries	33
Grand Lodge Members	1,850
Non-Voting Members	2,256
Guests	1,019
Vendors	33

Combined Totals: 7,103

3RD DAY BUSINESS SESSION

08:00	Call to Order	Bryan R. Klatt, GER
	— Invocation	Rev. Christopher J. Ford, Grand Chaplain
	— Pledge of Allegiance	All
	Memorial Service	Paul R. Ryan, PGER
	PR & Membership Marketing Report	Richard F. Gathen, Director
	Installation of 2026-2027 Grand Lodge Officers	Randy P. Shook, PGER
	Grand Exalted Ruler Remarks	Timothy F. Jaeger, GER
	Installation of DDGERS	Timothy F. Jaeger, GER
	Announcements	Frank Sommer, Grand Esquire
	Special Resolution	F. Louis Sulsberger, PGER
	Presentation PGER	Carl T. Seibert, Grand Secretary
	Presentation of Jewels to outgoing G/L Officers	Bryan R. Klatt, PGER
	Presentation	Carl T. Seibert, Grand Secretary
	Special Presentation	“GER Badge”, Carl T. Seibert, Grand Secretary
	Special Presentation	Minnesota “Ring”, gift from State Ass’n
	Appointments	Timothy F. Jaeger, GER
	Presentation of G/L Officers & Committee Chairmen	Timothy F. Jaeger, GER
	Closing Ceremony	Grand Lodge Officers
	Benediction	Michael Martine, Grand Chaplain
	Grand Lodge Closed	

ERs: Chicago Convention Reports due in October!

Exalted Rulers (or alternate delegates) should be reminded that they are required to attend the Annual Session and submit a Report to their Lodge no later than the first regular meeting in October. [GLS §12.120]

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G/L FRATERNAL COMMITTEE

All American Lodge winners 2025-26

Please join us in congratulating:

Division I (1-150 Members)

First: Duarte, CA Lodge No. 1427
Second: Pendleton, SC Lodge No. 2861
Third: Elmwood Park-Paterson, NJ Lodge No. 60

Division II (151-225 Members)

First: Cedar Grove, NJ Lodge No. 2237
Second: Kearny-Belleville, NJ Lodge No. 1050
Third: Golden, CO Lodge No. 2740

Division III (226-300 Members)

First: Arcadia, CA Lodge No. 2025
Second: Bridgeport, PA Lodge No. 714
Third: Loudoun, VA Lodge No. 2406

Division IV (301-450 Members)

First: Homer, AK Lodge No. 2127
Second: Middletown, NJ Lodge No. 2179
Third: Rutherford, NJ Lodge No. 547

Division V (451-700 Members)

First: Chandler, AZ Lodge No. 2429
Second: Hickory, NC Lodge No. 1654
Third: Lynnwood, WA Lodge No. 2171

Division VI (701+ Members)

First: Orange, CA Lodge No. 1475
Second: Phoenix, AZ Lodge No. 335
Third: Blue Springs, MO Lodge No. 2509

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ELKS NATIONAL FOUNDATION

Investing in local communities helps Elks to build stronger ties

By Patrick Roelofs

ENF Communications Coordinator

The mission of the Elks National Foundation is to help Elks build stronger communities. But how does the ENF do this?

By investing in the communities where Elks live and work.

In the 2026-27 fiscal year, the ENF is allocating \$49.6 million to programs that improve the quality of life in local Elks communities, help the State Associations accomplish their charitable objectives, meet the needs of today's veterans, and provide our youth with lifelong skills.

The largest of these programs is the Community Investments Program. Established in 2005, the CIP has grown from a modest budget of \$350,000 to \$18.8 million, allowing each Lodge the opportunity to receive up to \$11,500 in grants, thanks to an increase to the Spotlight Grant in celebration of America's 250th birthday. Spotlight Grants increased from \$2,000 to \$2,500 this year.

CIP grants allow Elks to identify the unique needs of their communities, form a plan, and address the needs through Elks-led, volunteer-based projects. Similarly, State Associations tackle needs through charitable programs. The ENF will contribute \$11.7 million to State Grants this year, making it the second largest appropriation in the budget.

The Elks National Veterans Service Commission provides aid and comfort to America's veterans in need. To ensure that the sacrifices of these veterans are never forgotten, the ENF allocation to the ENVSC will increase by more than 14% this year to \$7.3 million, which will allow Elks to provide even more Welcome Home Kits.

Additionally, to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the Elks National Memorial, the ENF is provid-

ing the Memorial with an additional \$10 million grant on top of the annual funding to the Elks National Memorial Building and Special Reserve Fund, which has nearly tripled over last year to \$3.1 million.

While the Elks National Memorial honors the past and the ENVSC provides for those who have served, ENF scholarships build relationships with the leaders of tomorrow. Nearly \$5.8 million will be awarded to some of the brightest young minds as they pursue their academic dreams and build connections with the Elks in their communities.

This year, Legacy Award scholarships, available only to the children and grandchildren of Elks, increased in both quantity and amount awarded; 400 Legacy scholars received \$6,000 scholarships, whereas only 350 Legacy scholars received \$4,000 scholarships last year.

Scholarships aren't the only way the ENF provides for the next generation. Through the Hoop Shoot, the ENF is unleashing gritty kids who understand the importance of hard work, determination, and perseverance. This year, nearly \$1.6 million will be allocated to this national free throw program. The ENF also allocated more than \$1 million for the Drug Awareness Program, so we can continue to promote constructive and collaborative solutions for our youth.

Through these programs, the ENF continues its mission of helping Elks build stronger communities. To see the full breakdown of grants and appropriations, visit enf.elks.org/appropriations.

A 501(c)(3) public charity, the Elks National Foundation helps Elks build stronger communities through programs that support youth, serve veterans, and meet needs in areas where Elks live and work. For more information on the ENF, visit elks.org/enf.

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MONKEY BUSINESS: WHO IS GENE DALE?

GER-Elect Timothy F. Jaeger's special mascot for the year is Gene Dale, the gorilla! A stuffed animal version of Gene Dale had a prominent spot at the podium during Tuesday's session.



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FRONT: TIMOTHY F. JAEGER, 2026, GRAND EXALTED RULER
BACK: READY ELKS - LET'S GO!, CHICAGO, ILLINOIS - JULY 2026

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TUESDAY'S RESOLUTIONS BALLOTING RESULTS

2026-01—To clarify that members of the Elks National Drug Awareness Commission are to be appointed in the same or similar manner as other national foundation boards and commissions.

2,585 YES, 30 NO. PASSED.

2026-02—To clarify the Grand Forum does not have jurisdiction over a matter if the Appellant does not timely appeal and pay the required fees.

2,533 YES, 70 NO. PASSED.

2026-03—To allow appeals of decisions of the Lodge's supervising or managing body to also be heard at a special meeting of the Lodge.

2,505 YES, 104 NO. PASSED.

2026-04—To allow a hearing on a request for a pardon or commutation to also be heard at a special meeting of the Lodge.

2,496 YES, 105 NO. PASSED.

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Michael Miller, Exalted Ruler, Ocala Lodge No. 286, Ocala, FL

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Congratulations to 2025-26 Ritual Contest Winners



First Place — Brick, NJ No. 2151 (95.2400)

Exalted Ruler Lisa Manetta; Leading Knight Christina Bradley; Loyal Knight Angelina Williams; Lecturing Knight Donna Crerand; Esquire Katie Wisniewski. *Standing, from left:* Chaplain Martin Bradley; Inner Guard Charles Crerand; Marguerite A. Berry, Grand Lodge Ritual Committee Member (Area 2); Candidate Sheri Maydan; Coach Martin Crerand; Coach Donald Batiato.



Second Place — Santa Clarita, CA No. 2379 (94.6164)

Exalted Ruler James McKenna; Leading Knight Danise Davis; Loyal Knight Scott Bickle; Lecturing Knight Larry Finley; Esquire Jeanette Fisher. *Standing, from left:* Chaplain Rob Forsberg; Inner Guard/Coach Jay Larkins; Candidate Michael Fisher; Coach Wayne Edwards; Coach Linda Edwards. *Not pictured:* Coach Kelvin Swanson; Coach Roger Lowe; Coach Marice Haminton



Third Place — Kenton, OH No. 157 (94.9314)

Exalted Ruler Chad Spencer; Leading Knight Stacey Hamilton-Davis; Loyal Knight Kristin Osborn-Grimshaw; Lecturing Knight Dylan Menard; Esquire Derryck Menard. *Standing, from left:* Chaplain Sue Fox Buroker; Inner Guard Amanda Frazier; Candidate Kent Kelly; Coach D. Jack Buroker; Coach John Hines; Coach Ignatius Todd Daquino.



Fourth Place — Yuma, AZ No. 476 (94.1346)

Exalted Ruler Dan Schoenborn; Leading Knight Christine Higgins; Loyal Knight Jody Brandt; Lecturing Knight Will Payne; Esquire Stewart Johnson. *Standing, from left:* Chaplain Jim Thompson; Inner Guard Bill Ogram; Candidate Yvonne Thompson; Coach Pat Riley; Coach Bob Clark.

2026 CALLICOTT 11 O'CLOCK TOAST CONTEST



Winner: Wendy Gauthier, Traverse City, MI No. 323

Second: Molly Brewer, Nashville-Franklin, TN No. 72

Third: Sean Brennen, Reno, NV No. 597

Fourth: Norman Jackson, Casper, WY No. 1353

2026 MULHOLLAND FLAG CHARGE CONTEST



Winner: Ronald Rockwood, Carthage, NY No. 1762

Second: Rachael Drake, Reno, NV No. 597

Third: Wm. Dean Shafer, Grand Island, NE No. 604

Fourth: Sue Fox Buroker, Kenton, OH No. 157



Scenes from Convention: Tuesday's legislative session included balloting (left), ritual awards (below), song performances by Ragan Sullivan (above), speeches, and more.

Photos: Laz Suarez and Marcus Oania

JAEGER from Page 1

He also noted that this figure was down from 13% last year, which is an encouraging trend.

GER-Elect Timothy F. Jaeger then took the podium and spoke about his program for the coming year, which he has titled *"Ready Elks—Let's Go!"* Jaeger began by congratulating the Elks on growing for a fifth straight year, exhorting everyone to achieve six straight years of growth. He emphasized the importance of communicating about the good work that the Elks do to every Lodge's Members, arguing that when they see their Lodge doing good work, Members truly become Elks. He also took note of the many important milestones being observed this year, including the 250th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence, the 100th anniversary of the Elks National Memorial, and, on a more somber note, the 25th anniversary of the September 11 attacks. He encouraged the Elks present to use these and other public occasions to spread the work of the Elks' many positive impacts on the community, repeatedly invoking his theme of *"Ready Elks"* to a reply from the crowd of *"Let's Go!"*

Activities Committee Chairman Terence P. Ford gave his committee's report and announced the results of the Community Projects Contest, of which the first-place winners were Hackettstown, NJ Lodge No. 2331 (Division One), Waukesha, WI Lodge No. 400



(Division Two), Gallatin, TN Lodge No. 2547 (Division Three), Goldsboro, NC Lodge No. 139 (Division Four), Hickory, NC Lodge No. 1654 (Division Five), and Middleboro, MA Lodge No. 1274 (Division Six). He noted that the Soccer Shoot had conducted its virtual national championship, with participation by 29,702 children in 35 states, and congratulated the five boys and five girls who were national champions in their respective age-groups. In reviewing other Activities Committee projects, he noted that the US military now recognized the Elks Junior ROTC medal and allowed Junior ROTC officers to display the medal on their uniforms.

Next, Fraternal Committee Chair Gwendolyn B. Parker congratulated the winners of the Americanism Essay Contest, which was held in four divisions with the theme, *"What Does Service to Your Country Mean?"* The four top winners, each of whom received a

\$1,000 prize, were fifth grader Maico Swartz, who was sponsored by Cambridge, OH Lodge No. 448; sixth grader Theo Dursih, who was sponsored by South Kingstown, RI Lodge No. 1899; seventh grader Blessing Harvier, who was sponsored by Coolidge-Florence, AZ Lodge No. 2350; and eighth grader Chloe Booth, who was sponsored by Nashville-Franklin, TN Lodge No. 72. She announced that the 2026-2027 contest theme will be *"Explain a Constitutional Right or Privilege and How It Affects You and Your Family."* Next, she announced the 18 winners, including the six first-place winners, of the All American Lodge contest (Page 4).

Ritual Committee chairman Frank P. Malatesta closed the session by announcing the final results and recognizing the winners of the national Ritual Contest, the Eleven O'Clock Toast Contest, and the Flag Charge Contest (Page 8). ★