

Military Heroes Banner Project

By Brenda S. Bear,
City of Vanceburg

When this project began in 2022, none of us imagined how far it would go. What started as a simple tribute has grown into something remarkable. This Fourth of July weekend, 308 veteran banners will proudly line the streets of downtown Vanceburg, a powerful symbol of our community's deep respect and gratitude for those who have served.

It all began when the Kentucky Traveling Vietnam Wall came to Vanceburg in 2022. That visit sparked a mission: to honor the Lewis County veterans who gave their lives in the Vietnam War. Local veteran Howard McCann stepped up to lead the effort, researching and recognizing 14 brave men who made the ultimate sacrifice: Dale Eugene Griffith, Charles M. Bradford, Ira C. Boggs, Jr., Monte Lewis Stamm, Richard Allen Carver, Robert Lee Rose, Roger Dale Polley, Timothy Ray, William Andrew Fitch, William Douglas Sparks, William E. Perry, and Woot Watkins.

Of the 308 banners, they represent veterans from 17 different wars and conflicts. Among them are 17 soldiers killed in action, 3 prisoners of war, 4 Pearl Harbor survivors, 4 Civil War veterans, and 2 extraordinary individuals who served in three different wars.

The Cooper Family: A Father and Four Sons

Among the many powerful tributes, one stands tall on Fairlane Drive, honoring a family whose dedication to our nation spans two world wars and beyond. At the top of this tribute is the father, Plez Cooper, a U.S. Army Private who served honorably during World War I from 1917 to 1919. His example inspired a legacy of service that continued through all four of his sons:

PFC Cecil Franklin Cooper, U.S. Army, served with distinction in World War II (1941–1945)

Pvt. Douglas Johnson Cooper, U.S. Army, honorably served in World War II (1942–1945)

Pvt. Wilford Jennings Cooper, U.S. Army, served during the final year of World War II (1945–1946)

PFC Alfred Cooper, U.S. Army, continued the tradition during the Cold War (1950–1952)

Together, the Cooper family represents a remarkable legacy of sacrifice, courage, and patriotism that spans generations.

Senior Master Sergeant James Rival Reis

Another extraordinary story comes from Senior Master Sergeant James Rival Reis, whose military career spanned over three decades and three major conflicts: World War II, the Korean War, and the Vietnam War (1943–1973). His banner hangs on Second Street. His daughter, Wanda Sullivan, shared a powerful memory. In 1948, as a young Corporal, Reis was deployed to Berlin in the aftermath of WWII. At that time, the Soviet Union had blockaded the city in an attempt to starve its population of over two million. Reis recounted the heartbreaking sight of starving children, an image that stayed with him for throughout rest of his life.

That same year, the U.S. launched Operation Vittles, a massive airlift effort to supply Berlin with food and fuel. On April 16, 1949, the U.S. Air Force and Navy delivered a record-breaking 12,941 tons of coal and food in a single day, a feat of extraordinary coordination and compassion.

Wanda reflected on the often-overlooked sacrifices made by military families. Her father missed many important moments because he was always deployed, yet he never complained. "He was doing his job," he would say. Wanda graduated from high school in 1967, while her fa-



LEWIS COUNTY HERALD

The Cooper Family Military Heroes Banners.

ther was serving in Vietnam. He missed that milestone, and five years later, he also missed her brother's graduation.

She vividly remembers him carrying a small Bible tucked inside his uniform, along with cherished photos of his family. Despite the distance, he stayed connected, writing individual letters to each family member and sending photographs, a sincere effort to remain close even while far from home. Wanda still treasures those letters and photos, along with the memory of her father, who passed away at age 94 in 2017.

SP4 Douglas Applegate

Lewis County veteran Douglas E. Applegate's story doesn't begin with medals or fanfare; it begins on a Greyhound bus leaving downtown Vanceburg in 1955. A recent college graduate with a business degree and no job prospects, he decided to enlist in the U.S. Army rather than wait to be drafted. That decision, he said, changed everything.

"I remember boarding that bus like it was yesterday," he recalled. "Two of us left that day, me and Don Edington. I didn't know Don then, but we stepped onto that bus as strangers and came back as lifelong friends. Don turned out to be one of the best friends I ever had."

Mr. Applegate became emotional recalling the moment he told his father he was joining the Army. His dad didn't offer a long speech, just one simple piece of advice: "Whatever they ask you to do, do it the best you can." Applegate repeated that line several times during our conversation. It was clear the words had become a guiding principle.

Having already earned a degree, Mr. Applegate stood out among the other recruits, but that didn't mean he had it easy. "The Army didn't test you with paper as much as they did with your actions," he explained. Early on, someone asked, "Can anyone type?" Thanks to his business training, he could. They tested his skills in a cold, empty room. "At the time, I didn't think much of it," he said. "But that test came back around in a big way."

His first assignment was at Fort Knox, where the training was unconventional. "They had us pull grass, one blade at a time," he said, laughing softly. "They wanted to see if you'd follow orders or complain. A lot of guys got in trouble trying to shortcut or talk back. I just kept pulling the grass."

Eventually, Mr. Applegate was sent to Fort Stewart, Georgia. The men were gathered to hear where they'd be shipped next. Many were headed to Korea. When the sergeant called Applegate's

name, "It scared me to death," he admitted. But instead of the front lines, they asked him again about his typing skills. That test in the cold room had paid off. He was assigned to Battalion Headquarters as the personal secretary to a sergeant.

He later served as the bookkeeper at the Officers' Club. Though the Army offered him a promotion and a chance to reenlist, he declined. "I was ready to come home," he said.

Just four days after returning to Vanceburg, Mr. Applegate heard that Lewis County High School needed a business teacher. He took the job and stayed in the school system for over 53 years. He served as a teacher, assistant principal, principal and even after retirement, as a school bus driver. "The Army made me a person," he said. "It gave me ideas that were right. That experience shaped everything I became after." Through it all, he carried the lessons of his youth and time in uniform: Do your duty. Don't complain. Show up and do your best. Simple lessons. Lifelong impact.

Vanceburg Mayor Dane Blankenship

I am filled with deep gratitude as we reflect on how far the Military Heroes Banner Project has come. This project represents more than just banners on poles; it's a living tribute to our veterans. To men like Howard McCann, who continue to lead with dedication. To families like the Cooper and the Reis families, whose legacies show us what true patriotism looks like. And to quiet heroes like Mr. Applegate, who took the lessons of service and spent a lifetime giving back to our youth.

And this year, we proudly celebrate a milestone, our 300th banner. It honors Navy veteran Electrician's Mate Fireman John R. Silvey, Sr., who served during the Cold War from 1966 to 1968. His story reminds us that service comes in many forms and across many eras—but every contribution is part of the same noble legacy.

Vanceburg stands tall today not only because of our veterans' service, but because our community continues to honor and remember them with such sincerity and heart. We are proud of our past, grateful in the present, and committed to carrying these legacies into the future.

NOTICE OF SPECIAL ELECTION

To all registered voters residing in the Garrison Volunteer Fire Department Taxing District.

The Garrison Volunteer Fire Department will be holding an election to fill a (4) four year position on the fire taxing district board. The election will be held at the Garrison fire station, 9344 E KY 8, on Saturday, July 5, 2025. The polls will be open between the hours of 11:00 a.m. and 2:00 p.m. Registered voters who reside inside the boundaries of the Garrison Fire District are eligible to vote in this election. The candidate being voted on in this election is Steve Arnold, 5585 Kinney Rd., Garrison.

Please show your support to the department by turning out to cast your ballot.

Thank you,
Garrison Volunteer Fire Department

Public Notice 25.26c

Legislative Update

State Representative Patrick Flannery



Week in review: Child Safety, Disaster Prevention, and Veterans Centers

LThe legislative interim continued this week with a full agenda of interim joint committees (IJC), statutory committees, and task forces meeting to discuss a wide variety of topics in preparation for the 2026 Regular Session. These discussions ranged from the digitalization of land records to the preparation of our commonwealth for future natural disasters. I have included summaries of the meetings here, but you can also watch them yourself on the legislature's YouTube page, @KYLR Committee Meetings.

IJC on Families and Children:

Members discussed the Center for Courageous Children discussed their summer camp programs and spoke about how they have been able to serve more than 22,000 Kentucky children with disabilities and chronic illnesses since 2008. Next, the panel discussed state guardianship and awareness initiatives being pursued by Adult Protective Services. Finally, the committee discussed the annual report of the External Child Fatality and Near Fatality Review Panel, which found a decline in firearm related child injuries and fatalities but also an increase in drug related child overdose and ingestion cases.

IJC on Local Government:

Lawmakers met with the Kentucky County Clerk's Association about electronic reporting for land records. Although nearly all counties are now engaging in electronic reporting and scanning historical documents, the verification process for older records is time-consuming. The committee also discussed Area Development Districts. They serve as crucial councils of governments, unifying city and county administrations to collaboratively address regional needs. Additionally, members heard from the Kentucky Association of Counties and Kentucky League of Cities about local taxing sources.

IJC on State Government:

Legislators first heard from the Kentucky Center for Statistics, an agency that collects and links data to evaluate education and workforce efforts in the commonwealth. The presentation covered the agency's history, mission, products, funding sources, and the Kentucky Longitudinal Data System. Next, the Kentucky Department for Libraries and Archives provided members with a general overview of its organizational, operational, and budgetary structure and functions. Finally, members heard from the Kentucky Library Association about the structure and funding mechanisms of public libraries, as well as some of the work public libraries are doing to support communities.

IJC on Veterans, Military Affairs, and Public Protection:

Members heard testimony from the Kentucky Department of Veterans Affairs as well as the Finance and Administration Cabinet regarding consistent and ongoing issues with the HVAC system at the Radcliff Veterans Center, a long-term care facility. Specifically, members questioned officials why it has taken so long to be addressed, to what extent has the delay affected the facility's capacity, and when residents can expect results. Officials stated many factors contributed to delays, and the project is scheduled to be complete by March 2027. Members also heard testimony about a proposed measure to exempt veterans from the

motor vehicle usage tax.

Medicaid Oversight and Advisory Board:

Legislators held their first meeting of the legislative interim this week where lawmakers received an overview of the purpose and goals of the advisory board, discussed the committee's priorities moving forward, and the guiding of policy-development over the coming months. Members also received an update on the state's Medicaid Program, reviewed recent changes under House Bill 695, and discussed the ongoing changes regarding Medicaid eligibility.

Capital Projects and Bond Oversight:

Lawmakers met to receive an update from the Finance and Administration Cabinet on projects to enhance clean water access across the commonwealth and renovate multiple public schools in Kentucky. They approved a new lease for the UK HealthCare Speech Language Pathology Clinic and authorized renovations to the Louisville Detention Center. Members also heard from the Kentucky Communications Network Authority, and discussed efforts to safeguard continuous access to communications infrastructure statewide.

Commission on Race and Access to Opportunity:

Members examined barriers faced by minority-owned businesses in Kentucky and explored practical solutions. A variety of business officials addressed key systemic challenges faced by minority owned businesses such as access to capital, discrimination, and lack of financial literacy. Commission members also heard about initiatives that have helped mitigate these bar-

riers with competitive loan programs and networking opportunities. Emphasis was placed on building partnerships, encouraging entrepreneurship, and creating a level playing field that allows all Kentuckians to succeed through their hard work and innovation.

Artificial Intelligence Task Force:

Members of convened to begin the task force's second year of work, focusing on AI's growing and evolving role in Kentucky. The Kentucky Chamber of Commerce provided testimony on the status of federal and state legislation regarding AI and discussed benefits and risks of AI adoption. Members then heard from the Commonwealth Office of Technology regarding the current status of this year's Senate Bill 4, which introduced some of Kentucky's first regulatory frameworks for AI. Members discussed the importance of a consistent federal approach, data privacy concerns, and the role of AI in education.

Disaster Prevention and Resiliency Task Force:

Members received an update on the state's response to catastrophic flooding in April from the Division of Emergency Management. The task force also discussed how other states prepare and address natural and manmade disaster planning and how communities may better prepare for flooding.

As always, I can be reached anytime through the toll-free message line in Frankfort at 1-800-372-7181. You can also contact me via email at Patrick.Flannery@kylegislature.gov and keep track through the Kentucky legislature's website at legislature.ky.gov.

Poetry from our readers

Happy Fourth of July

By David P. Carroll

On the fourth of July our
Independence day and
Every year we all gather
round
With hope and love deep
Inside our hearts and we'll
stop and
Remember the struggles we
fought
For this very special land and
Our loved ones who sacrificed
Their hopes and dreams for
us today
And united in our quest for
liberty
Brave men and women who
stood strong and proud
and the price of freedom
we remember with care
and
With every voice and every
beating heart
We'll sing the songs of country
brave and free and
everyone stands together
With pride that swells within
our shared embrace
And fireworks ignite the velvet
sky and
Each burst a vision bright a
tale of light
Reminding us of all that we
hold dear
Of freedom's flame enduring
in our souls
And the American flag flies
high up in the clear blue

Sky and little children's
laughter
Fills the air a
Symbol of hope of a future so
bright and
Together we stand and we
whisper a sigh
In gratitude for those who
fought for our rights on the
fourth of July
And we'll celebrate freedom
For the land of the brave and
the hope
On Independence day standing
strong and proud today
But most of all we'll stop and
pray for our loved ones on
this very special Independence
day and we love you
all and miss you so much
every day and every
American flag waving a
symbol so bright
With gratitude flowing and
love as our guide
And we'll honor our past
And we'll never to forget
Our loved ones on this very
Special Independence day so
God
Bless you all and may every
American around the world
have
A beautiful and peaceful
Independence day
And forever in every American's
heart
Independence day shall
bloom
A legacy for all eternity.

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