

Update – May 14th

ANEC Berley Hanna is home and breathing on his own. He is taking calls and doing much better. He is receiving physical therapy a couple times a week. Thank you for all your thoughts during this time.

April 6

Comrades:

I hope this email finds all of you well. As many of you have already heard, American Legion Department of New Jersey "Alternate National Executive Committeeman" Berley Hanna Jr. has been stricken with the COVID-19 Virus and is in critical condition at Princeton Medical Center in Plainsboro, NJ, where he has been since March 27.

I have been communicating with Berley's wife Janet every few days, and I can tell you that Berley is on a ventilator, has a feeding tube in him, is heavily sedated, and being treated with the best of care possible. This is an extremely difficult time for Berley and Janet as you all can imagine. This update on Berley is as of 9am today April 6.

As I am receiving many phone calls and texts, I want everyone to know that news of Berley's being stricken with this horrible virus was never meant to be a secret or hidden from anyone, but more so respect to the privacy of Berley, Janet and their family. Janet greatly appreciates everyone's care, concern, and well wishes, and asks only for your prayers for Berley. I do not have to tell you what a great Legionnaire and leader Berley is, besides being a great husband, father, and friend to us all. If anyone wants to send any cards or well wishes I would so to their home address.

As we do not know and cannot be sure where Berley contacted the virus, whether it was at the Washington Conference, the March 14th Legion Family Birthday Luncheon, or wherever, I strongly suggest any rumors out there stop immediately as well as any finger pointing as to how he came down with this. As each day goes by we learn more and more about this virus, whereas just 3-4 weeks ago we were all just learning. A decision was made to move forward with the National Commander/National Presidents visit to NJ by your NJ Legion Family leadership and the National Commander and National President themselves after much discussion. It was an extremely tough call to make for all of us. Anyone attending the Luncheon or National Security Committee visit to the Joint Base and Battleship NJ had an option to stay home and many did. I, nor should anyone who made these decisions have to tolerate any false accusations, bad mouthing, or rumors. All of us took and did our best to put preventive measures in place with the safety of everyone involved in moving forward with everything involved in the NC/NP visit. This to include Toms River Post 129 where the Luncheon was held.

Everyone should know this virus has hit our NJ Legion Family hard, including Department Adjutant John, and others to include members of the Auxiliary and SAL, so I ask you also keep them in your prayers. I wonder how many are stricken we do not know about?

Everyone should rest assured that your leadership in our Department feels we are on top of everything we should be, and are ensuring daily operations get done, and our Post's needs and concerns as well as our fellow veterans in need of help are being taken care of as best we can do should the need arise. I urge everyone to check the Department's web site, our Social Media page, as well as National's web site for any important updates or notices. Everyone should also know we are in constant touch with the National Organization, keeping them abreast of what we are doing and seeking advice when needed.

My hat goes off to Commander Newell, Adjutant John, the Trenton and Newark Office Staffs, JA Mike Wilson, Finance Chairman Gene O'Grady, our many Committee Chairman, and many others for their incredible leadership and help not only to me but all of you during this difficult time. I also thank all of you for the many great things you and your Posts are doing during this difficult time helping so many. So much good positive stuff, during an incredible negative time!

As many programs and events have been cancelled everyone should know we are doing our best to keep you all in the loop on everything and have some very tough decisions to make soon regarding Boys State, our Legion Baseball Season our Department Convention, and some other important events. More to follow on these in the next few weeks but for now please assume they are still on. Again, please check our Department web site for updates.

In closing, please know I am trying my best to always do the right thing for our Department, our members, and our vets. Like all of you, the past month has been a busy and quite challenging one for me and though the future right now is uncertain, I ask you please keep the prayers coming for Berley, John, Commander Newell who also has been sick with a bad flu bug and everyone affected by the virus and of course our great country. Take care of your family and yourself first, follow and do all that is being asked of us by Governor Murphy and President Trump, and join me in continuing our great "Buddy Checks"! Anyone can call or text me anytime, should I not answer it means I'm busy with work or someone else, but promise I will get back to you.

As I've said many times, "be proud your a member of the greatest Veterans Service Organization out there, The American Legion." Thank you for all you do and have done. We will get through this and we will persevere!

Chuck Robbins - NEC