

Charles E. Schmidt, National Commander of The American Legion

Charles E. Schmidt was elected national commander of the 2.2 million-member American Legion on Sept. 1, 2016, in Cincinnati during the 98th national convention of America's largest veteran's organization.

Schmidt enlisted in the U.S. Air Force in 1965 and served on active duty until his retirement in 1993. During that time he advanced from an administrative clerk to a distinguished graduate of the Air Force Officer Training School, earning a commission and assignments to Executive Support Officer Positions at major headquarters. His Air Force assignments took him to Oregon, California, Montana, Nebraska, Colorado, England, Germany, Philippines and Vietnam.

As an active-duty service member, Schmidt joined Story-Hardin Post 164 in Craig, Mo., in 1984. After his military retirement as a major, he was employed by the Air Force Total Quality Management Program at Lowry Technical Training Center in Denver.

He transferred his American Legion membership to Harney County Post 63 in Burns, Ore., when he moved to Oregon for a 15-year career at the Greater Oregon Federal Credit Union. He retired from the credit union as the executive vice president.

An American Legion Paid Up For Life member, Schmidt served as the Department of Oregon commander from 2004-2005, and he's served at every level of the Legion, including National Executive Committeeman from 2005-2016.

While serving in the Air Force, Schmidt earned a Bronze Star, a Defense Meritorious Service Medal, a Meritorious Service Medal with two oak leaf clusters, a Joint Service Commendation Medal, an Air Force Commendation Medal with one oak leaf cluster, an Air Force Outstanding Unit Award with Valor device and two oak leaf clusters, the Air Force Good Conduct Medal with three oak leaf clusters, a National Defense Service Medal with a bronze star, a Vietnam Service Medal, an Air Force Overseas Short Tour Ribbon, an Air Force Overseas Long Tour Ribbon with two oak leaf clusters, an Air Force Longevity Service Award Ribbon with one silver oak leaf cluster, an NCO Professional Military Education Graduate Ribbon with oak leaf cluster, a Small Arms Expert Marksmanship with bronze star, an Air Force Training Ribbon with oak leaf cluster, a Republic of Vietnam Gallantry Cross with Palm, and a Republic of Vietnam Campaign Medal with four bronze stars.

Schmidt resides in Hines, Ore., with his wife, Linda. They have two daughters, Andria and Cori, and two sons-in-law, Peter and Anthony. They also have six grandchildren: Madeline, Alex, Adam, Raymond, Nicholas and Thomas.

The national commander is the chief executive officer and official spokesman of The American Legion, with full power to enforce provisions of the organization's constitution, bylaws and resolutions. Each national commander serves a one-year term, after which a new leader is elected at the national convention. Five national vice commanders who serve different regions are also elected at the national convention each year.