

Report of the Committee on Future Strategic Direction

April 29, 2006

J. Richard Greene, Commander
Department of Michigan
Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War
117th Encampment, Grand Rapids, Michigan

Commander Greene, Delegates & Brothers:

Last year, this committee was appointed with the task of developing a statement focusing on goals and ideals for the Department of Michigan. Your committee submits the following for the consideration of the Encampment:

Strategic Imperatives Statement

The Department of Michigan's strategic direction is directly aligned with the National Organization, Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War, in achieving the goal of perpetuating the memory of the Grand Army of the Republic, and the soldiers, sailors and marines who fought to preserve the Union during the American Civil War of 1861 to 1865. The strategic imperatives are:

Service Excellence: The department must continue to focus on supporting the camps and its membership in the various programs and projects undertaken to carry out the goals of the Order.

Officers must be dedicated to the position they are elected and appointed to, and be willing and able to do the work.

Innovation: To develop assistance in the form of information and tools for the camps to meet the goals of the Order.

The work of the Order happens in the Camps. The Department's function is to make available the tools necessary for the success of the camp. The ultimate success of the camp, and ultimately the Order, lies with the members of the camp.

Well-Run Organization: To operate the Department efficiently, using its financial resources in the most prudent, yet effective, manner.

The Department Council is charged with the financial and material prosperity of the Department. It must see to the investment of the financial resources to ensure security for the future. Likewise the Department Commander is also charged with overseeing the management of funds by his officers and staff.

Guiding Principles: Fraternity – To promote the culture of brotherhood throughout the Department; Charity – To encourage Camps to network with each other in activities from supporting each others programs, to assisting a brother or his family in need; Loyalty – To stand together as one Department in a united front, to face the many challenges presented as we move the organization forward.

Organizational Priorities

Promote Growth by concentrating on organizing new camps in counties not currently served by the Order.

Within five years, there will be an increase of five new camps in Michigan, bringing the total number of camps to 30.

Develop the talents of Brothers in the several camps, thereby ensuring a source of leadership for the future the Department.

The membership must be engaged in the mission and the work of the Order. Members who are not lose interest, and fall by the wayside. The camps must promote those brothers who demonstrate leadership and dedication to the Order. Likewise, the department must recognize and encourage these brothers.

Invest in the tools needed to carry on the work of the Order.

The Department must avail itself of the latest technology, while remaining fiscally prudent.

Recruit new members, who bring with them new perspectives on how to achieve our goals.

Within five years, the membership of the department will stand at 700 members.

Expand our relationships with other veteran’s organizations, local governments and historical societies throughout Michigan.

It is the duty of each camp to make itself known within its respective community, through participation with other like-minded organizations, and sharing the mission of the Order with others.

Foster and maintain a reputation as a strong, viable organization within Michigan, and be recognized as such by the general public throughout the state.

We must use every opportunity afforded us to promote the Order. When we place a headstone and dedicate it, or restore a monument and celebrate it, we will say “it was accomplished by the Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War.” Everything we do should be for the good of the Order, not for an individual.

Now, what usually happens, is that we sit here year after year and say, “yes, this is what we need to do!” Then, we get back to our camps and we forget all about it until the next year. We cannot do this. We must constantly remind ourselves and the brothers of our camps, that we have set goals for ourselves. These goals are attainable.

Our parent organization, the Grand Army of the Republic, left us more than a legacy. They left us two examples. Both of which are important lessons that we must keep in mind as we move forward.

When the Grand Army of the Republic was organized, it, in effect, secured its own demise. It was destined to die. Its life span was limited to only however long the last member would live. This lesson is that, if you do not grow in membership, you will die as an organization. It is as simple as that. Secondly, and as important as the first, the Grand Army left us an example of how to “be” an organization. Past Commander-in-Chief Keith Harrison said it best many years ago. He said, “ we are called to emulate the Grand Army of the Republic. Not as tired, old men in their declining years, but the strong, vibrant organization that it was when it was at its zenith.” We need to remember that the GAR was, in its day, a young, strong organization, that was universally recognized and influential in the culture of its day. We must work to change the image not only in the public’s mind, but ours as well. When we start thinking and acting like a strong, organization, then we can be one. Our own perception of ourselves is what we must change. As we see ourselves, so will our communities see us. A new attitude is the first step.

Augustus P. Davis, the founder of the Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War, said on August 25th, 1890:

“The Order is stronger, healthier and in better condition today than ever, and another year will show progress greater than any other year in the past. The Order will go on and increase until I am unable to see when the flood tide will be reached. There was a time when it was an experiment, and a good many did not agree with me. I had a great deal to discourage me and cast me down, but I never had a fear of its ultimate success.”

Brothers, we cannot be afraid of success.

For the Committee:

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Charles Worley, Camp 20
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