

## 2026 NASS IDEAS AWARD NOMINATION

"West Virginia Centurion Chamber of Commerce Program"



Submitted by:

Kris Warner

WV Secretary of State

### Brief Description of the Program:

Centurions are West Virginia businesses that have withstood the test of time. World Wars, depressions, recessions, and pandemics are just some of the major challenges West Virginia Centurions have endured and survived. These longstanding businesses have been driving the economy of West Virginia for generations. More than a recognition effort, the West Virginia Centurion Chamber of Commerce Program is a strategic initiative which builds community relationships using sustainable methods to honor West Virginia's history while developing its future.

*"Centurion businesses are involved in just about every major event, activity, or fundraiser in the communities they serve. These businesses are deeply rooted in their communities and the West Virginia economy. For that reason and many others, we're excited for the continued growth and success of this Program." - WV Secretary of State Kris Warner*

### Project Lead:

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### General Subject Area of Nomination:

Business Services

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

**HISTORY** (including length of time in operation) – Describe the factors that led to the development of the program, including program goals and problems it sought to address.

The West Virginia Centurion Chamber of Commerce consists of businesses in the Mountain State that have been in continuous operation for 100 years or more. Among the businesses withstanding the test of time include a college, law firm, restaurant, newspaper, dry cleaner and hospital.

The WV Centurion Chamber of Commerce Program was developed to address the following objectives:

- convert state data into useful public information.
- deliver results in an innovative and low-cost manner.
- promote public transparency, data accuracy and community involvement.
- enhance economic growth while promoting historical significance throughout the entire state.

Businesses must be active and in good standing with the WVSOS Office. Since the Program's origination in 2019, 336 businesses have been welcomed in the WV Centurion Chamber of Commerce. A true testament to their legacy, resilience, and generations of hard work.

Each business entity eligible for this honor receives a certificate recognizing them as a member of the WV Centurion Chamber of Commerce. The certificate includes the entity's founding date. Below is a grid that identifies the number of businesses entered in the WV Centurion Chamber of Commerce since the program's inception.

|  |             |
|--|-------------|
| <b>Inaugural Class</b><br>Businesses were founded before December 31, 1919 | 261 members |
| <b>Class of 2020</b><br>Businesses were founded in 1920.                   | 14 members  |
| <b>Class of 2021</b><br>Businesses were founded in 1921.                   | 7 members   |
| <b>Class of 2022</b><br>Businesses were founded in 1922.                   | 12 members  |
| <b>Class of 2023</b><br>Businesses were founded in 1923.                   | 16 members  |
| <b>Class of 2024</b><br>Businesses were founded in 1924.                   | 7 members   |
| <b>Class of 2025</b><br>Businesses were founded in 1925.                   | 19 members  |

Businesses are identified using data from the WVSOS Business Statistics Database, research and the help of local chambers of commerce. Because not all business types are required to register with the Secretary of State's Office and some may have existed but not registered with the office until a later date, more businesses may be added at any time.

If someone believes their business is eligible for the award but is not on the list, they are encouraged to contact the WVSOS Office with the name, address and founding date of the business in question, as well as some type of proof of its 100-year-old-plus existence. As an example, some businesses have provided dated photographs, news articles or receipts.

**SIGNIFICANCE** *(Discuss how the program exemplifies best practices in state government, including its unique, innovative or cost-effective aspects. Please consider how it supports the public policy goals of your office and assists your state office in executing its responsibilities.)*

The WV Centurion Chamber of Commerce Program is a model of Public Value, Innovation and Data Stewardship. The Program supports state economic development targets, enhances business climate perception, and builds stronger community relationships.

The Program celebrates companies that have been in operation for 100 years or more to show that West Virginia supports businesses throughout their journey. The WVSOS Business Division developed this cost-effective Program through existing systems without requiring additional funding or new legislation. The Office achieved this accomplishment through expanding use of the Business Statistics Database, historical research, and community outreach networks such as working with the local chambers of commerce.

The Centurion Program helps West Virginia bolster its business-friendly reputation, recognize business longevity and loyalty to the state, and highlight the ability of Mountain State businesses to overcome changes in technology, customer service needs, and government regulations.

The Program enhances both public record transparency and historical accuracy through its process of verifying business origins, gathering historical materials, and maintaining a public digital database. Citizens can access much of the data online 24x7x365 days a year.

The Centurion Chamber of Commerce Program supports the Secretary of State's mission to enhance commerce, preserve historical documents and provide prompt, quality service to the businesses of West Virginia.

**IMPACTS/RESULTS** *(Explain how this program has contributed to the improved functioning of state government (you may highlight both financial and administrative/pragmatic impacts), including its benefits to citizens and other stakeholders, including other government agencies/units.)*

**Growing Community Participation in the Program:** Businesses in the WV Centurion Chamber of Commerce are from all industry sectors and located across the state everywhere from the capital city to rural communities. Recognizing that the Mountain State is positioned to help businesses start, grow, and thrive regardless of location. In 2026, WVSOS Business Division expects 18 new businesses to be presented with their exclusive membership to the prestigious WV Centurion Chamber of Commerce.

**Supporting Better Compliance with Business Filing Requirements:** Businesses registered with the WVSOS Office are required to file an Annual Report to keep company information current. Centurions are recognized for their many accomplishments, including consistently filing their Annual Report each year. Centurion recipients are ambassadors for promoting timely compliance and accuracy. This Program supports and strengthens communication with business owners and WVSOS Business Division. It also encourages compliance among all business owners. Since 2024, the rate of non-compliant businesses has been reduced by more than ten percent.

**Implementing a Replicable Model Other States Can Adopt:** The WV Centurion Chamber of Commerce Program uses existing data, local partnerships, and business longevity celebrations to enhance economic development efforts and business engagement. This sustainable model can be adopted by other states to augment business initiatives.

More than a recognition effort, the WV Centurion Chamber of Commerce Program is a strategic initiative which builds community relationships using sustainable methods to honor West Virginia's history while developing its future. This Program strengthens public institutional trust while fostering civic participation and collaborative efforts between citizens and public institutions.

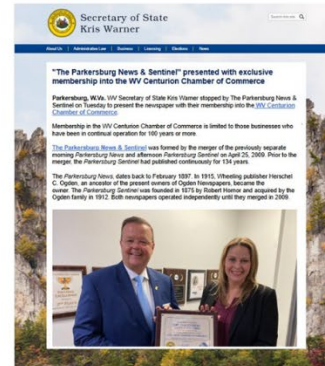
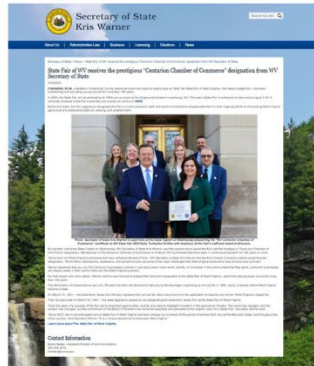
### Supporting Materials (A) – Photo Gallery



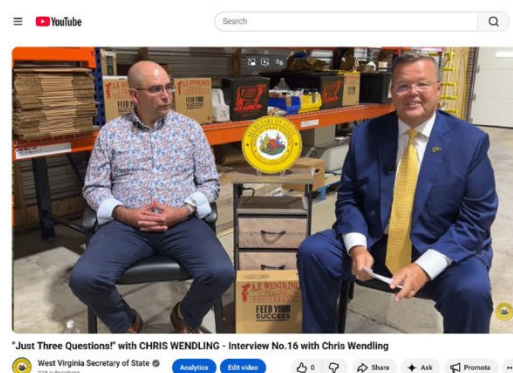


## Supporting Materials (B) – Outreach

### Press Releases



### Social Media Posts



### Earned Media



### Supporting Materials (C) – Links to News Coverage

- [Leonoro's Restaurant Centurion Chamber Award](#)
- [State Fair of West Virginia receives 'Centurion Chamber of Commerce' designation - Real WV](#)
- [Morgantown business receives Centurion Chamber of Commerce Award - WV MetroNews](#)
- [Picture This: More Than a Century in Circulation | News, Sports, Jobs - News and Sentinel](#)
- [Shepherd Recognized For More Than A Century Of Service - West Virginia Public Broadcasting : West Virginia Public Broadcasting](#)
- [PAUL WISSMACH GLASS COMPANY HONORED AS WEST VIRGINIA CENTURION FOR 121 YEARS OF EXCELLENCE | News, Sports, Jobs - Wetzel Chronicle](#)
- [Withstanding the test of time: A.F. Wendling's Foodservice honored with prestigious Centurion Award](#)

