



*The*  
FOUR PILLARS  
*of*  
THE AMERICAN LEGION



# PREAMBLE

## TO THE AMERICAN LEGION CONSTITUTION

FOR GOD AND COUNTRY WE ASSOCIATE OURSELVES  
TOGETHER FOR THE FOLLOWING PURPOSES:

To uphold and defend the Constitution  
of the United States of America

To maintain law and order

To foster and perpetuate a  
one hundred percent Americanism

To preserve the memories and incidents  
of our associations in the Great Wars

To inculcate a sense of individual obligation  
to the community, state and nation

To combat the autocracy of both the classes and the masses

To make right the master of might

To promote peace and goodwill on earth

To safeguard and transmit to posterity the principles of  
justice, freedom and democracy

To consecrate and sanctify our comradeship  
by our devotion to mutual helpfulness.



## STILL SERVING: IT'S WHO WE ARE

In 1919, The American Legion was founded on four pillars: Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation, National Security, Americanism, and Children & Youth. Each of these pillars encompasses a variety of programs that benefit our nation's veterans, its servicemembers, their families, the youth of America and ordinary citizens. These programs make a difference in hundreds of thousands of lives each year.

Our organization's positions and programs are guided by resolutions passed by American Legion National Convention delegates, and by committee and commission members who represent 2.5 million wartime veterans and their families. These programs, and the men and women who take the time to perform them allow The American Legion to make a difference on the local, state and national levels.

It's who we are and what we do.

To join: [www.legion.org/join](http://www.legion.org/join)

## THE FOUR PILLARS

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## PILLAR I: VETERANS AFFAIRS & REHABILITATION



### A 'System Worth Saving'

American Legion Field Service representatives research and conduct site visits to VA medical facilities throughout the nation each year and produce a comprehensive assessment. The "System Worth Saving" report provides in-depth analyses of VA health-care performance in all 21 Veterans Integrated Service Networks.

The project, launched in 2002, continues under the guidance of the Legion's "System Worth Saving" Task Force and the Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation Commission.

For more than 90 years, The American Legion has acted as the nation's leading advocate for proper health care, economic opportunity and legal benefits for U.S. military veterans. The Legion was instrumental in the creation of the Veterans Administration in 1930, and an ardent supporter of its elevation to cabinet status when it became the Department of Veterans Affairs in 1989. The relationship between VA and The American Legion continues to evolve today.

As it has for decades, The American Legion continues to aggressively lobby for adequate funding of VA health care, timely access to facilities, fair rulings on benefit claims, and economic opportunities for those who have come home changed by their military experiences. A nationwide network of American Legion department service officers works diligently to assist veterans as they pursue benefits and care they earned and deserve. At the local, state and national levels, thousands of Legionnaires provide countless hours to help veterans obtain their benefits. The American Legion provides professional representation in claims appeals, discharge disputes and transition assistance from active-duty to civilian status throughout the country.

Today, as the number of discharged veterans from the global war on terrorism has surpassed 500,000, the Legion's federally chartered role to support them could not be more profound. The Legion strongly believes that a veteran is a veteran, no matter the war era, nature or location of service. In that light, The American Legion is the only organization that works on behalf of all 24.5 million U.S. veterans and all who will follow.

The American Legion stands on the front line of change in the pillar of service known as "Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation."

It is a complex and vital part of the organization's mission – particularly now, as a new generation of wartime veterans enters the civilian and VA worlds.

Following are Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation issues of high priority to The American Legion:

### VA CLAIMS BACKLOG

The backlog of unresolved VA claims – from undecided initial applications to cases many years into the appeals process – has been estimated at upward of 1 million nationwide. The American Legion has strongly urged VA and Congress to reduce the amount of time it takes to decide a veteran's claim, without reducing the quality of the decision. Each claim is a separate, unique situation involving a human life and deserves careful analysis to assure the veteran receives all due benefits.

The Legion supports careful implementation of new technology to better track medical records from enlistment through discharge and then on to VA, in order to improve the process. The era of paper-based claims processing, where folders of records and documents



are stacked in VA regional offices, is not conducive to effective, efficient claims adjudication in today's era of electronic data management.

Further, The American Legion strongly supports the shifting of focus from quantity to quality when adjudicating claims. Currently, a rapid movement of claims known as "churning" allows claims to be processed several times to correct errors. The American Legion believes that working a claim correctly the first time may take longer individually, but will in the long term reduce the backlog because the claim will only be handled once. The American Legion is working closely with VA and Congress to bring VA claims processing into the 21st century.

## ACCESS TO VA HEALTH CARE

VA has undergone a well-documented evolution in the past 25 years, dramatically increasing its quality of care beyond that of the private or public sectors. An equally well-documented problem, however, is access to that high-quality care. Access to VA care continues to be restricted in many ways, including:

- **The adverse effect on veterans** as a result of the budget-driven suspension of Priority Group 8 veterans from new enrollment in the VA health-care system, which was in opposition to the Veterans Health Care Eligibility Reform Act of 1996. Last year, VA reopened its doors to more than 250,000 veterans who fit the Priority Group 8 definition, but the nation's top veteran health-care services are still not available to all veterans. The American Legion continues to advocate for the elimination of priority groups and to open access to the VA health-care system to all veterans.
- **Care for female veterans.** The American Legion agrees with recent reports stating that primary-care settings should promote routine care within primary care, or be linked with specialized women's clinics to enhance coordination and comprehensiveness and, thus, reduce fragmentation of care or potential overuse of care across health systems. However, due to that fragmentation of care, it is reported that 49 percent of women veterans have been pushed back to seek comprehensive care outside the VA health-care system.
- **Long waiting times** for appointments drive away veterans in overburdened VA markets. Waiting times for VA doctor appointments can stretch into months. At one point in recent years, more than 300,000 veterans were waiting 30 days or more for primary-care appointments. The waiting time to see a VA specialist is typically even more frustrating, often taking months.
- **Construction.** Although construction has begun in many areas, more VA facilities await in areas where veteran populations have grown and where the structures no longer meet today's medical-services environment. The Capital Asset Realignment for Enhanced Services (CARES) decision of 2004 identified urgent needs across the country for new VA hospitals and clinics in growth areas. While facilities are now under construction in Orlando, Fla., New Orleans and Las Vegas, many other underserved areas are in need. The average VA medical facility is over 50 years old and was not built with the proper infrastructure to support today's health-care technology.
- **Adequate staffing.** VA health-care facilities must be adequately staffed with health-care providers who receive competitive compensation. In too many markets across the country, doctor, nurse and technician shortages lead VA to seek more expensive and less efficient services from outside providers. Inadequate staffing prevents VA from keeping timely appointment schedules, and drives veteran patients away in many markets.
- **Contractor dependence.** Restricted access unnecessarily sends veterans to private contractors for health care formerly available to them in VA facilities. Particularly for long-term care and mental-health services, VA increasingly relies on outside contractors who do not understand the unique needs of veterans consistently suffering from such conditions as combat-related post-traumatic stress disorder, traumatic brain injury, Agent Orange exposure and other service-connected problems.
- **Rural health care.** Veterans in rural areas are often denied access by the sheer distance between their homes and the VA medical centers equipped to serve them. Many



## The Legion's network of service officers

The American Legion maintains a network of 2,000 professional, accredited representatives – known as service officers – who are officially recognized by VA to provide representation and assistance to veterans and their dependents. The service is free to all veterans.

The Legion also maintains fully-staffed offices of professional appeals representatives at VA's Board of Veterans' Appeals (BVA) and Appeals Management Center (AMC). National appeals representatives at the BVA and AMC provide direct representation to veterans and survivors whose claims are denied at the regional-office level and then appealed.

The Legion has expanded national staffing to provide professional service officers at VA's three Pension Management Centers (PMCs), centralized locations where VA processes all claims for pension, a non-service connected benefit for wartime veterans hardest hit financially. The Legion also has national service officers assigned to VA's two Benefits Delivery at Discharge (BDD) rating activity sites in Winston-Salem, N.C., and Salt Lake City. They provide direct representation and other assistance to separating servicemembers filing VA disability claims prior to release from active duty.

The American Legion works with the National Veterans Legal Services Program and the Veterans Consortium in court cases involving claims-decision appeals.



## Legion supports VA Vet Centers

The American Legion strongly supports the Department of Veterans Affairs' Vet Centers, community-based facilities with VA programs that provide readjustment counseling to veterans who have served in combat, or who have been victims of military sexual trauma or harassment. All services are free and also available to spouses and children of veterans.

Vet Centers provide a wide range of services that include individual, group, marriage, family and bereavement counseling. They also refer veterans to other services when appropriate, and can help with problems concerning a veteran's discharge status.

Veterans are not required to be enrolled in VA health care in order to get Vet Center services.

To learn more about Vet Centers and watch a video about their effectiveness, visit [www.legion.org](http://www.legion.org) and click on LegionTV.

plans have been piloted to enhance care for rural veterans, but significant improvement – aside from recent mileage-reimbursement increases – has yet to be realized. Without greater VA clinical presence in many areas of the country, access is denied to these veterans.

## A BETTER FUNDING FORMULA FOR VA HEALTH CARE

The discretionary process of funding the Veterans Health Administration is flawed because it fails to match actual dollars with actual demand. This breakdown has led to numerous emergency funding actions by Congress. While advance appropriations, which The American Legion strongly supported for VA health-care funding, can avoid budget delays in the future, VA must be funded on the basis of real cost, without burdening veterans on fixed incomes by doubling deductibles and installing new enrollment fees that do not guarantee timely access to care.

The Legion strongly opposes the imposition of enrollment fees for veterans. The Legion is of the opinion that enrollment fees are paid through honorable military service, not out of veterans' pockets as a hedge against a miscalculated discretionary budget.

The American Legion supports:

- Funding reform for the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) health-care system that will ensure sufficient, timely and predictable funding.
- The authorization of VA to collect Medicare reimbursements for services provided to enrolled, Medicare-qualified, non-service-connected veterans, similar to the authorization granted to Indian Health Services and TRICARE For Life.
- The full reinstatement of Priority Group 8 veterans and improved performance standards in collections from their insurance companies.
- Protection from a doubling of prescription co-payments and/or the introduction of annual VA health-care enrollment fees.

## VETERANS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

The American Legion supports efforts to improve services, advance research and deliver compassionate treatment to veterans with special needs, such as:

- Those who have become homeless since discharge from the service.
- Those who suffer from traumatic brain injuries and/or mental illness.
- Those who have suffered multiple combat injuries, defined as polytrauma.
- Those who battle conditions related to Agent Orange exposure, Gulf War illness, radiation exposure due to atomic testing, mustard-gas exposure, and other medical problems linked, or presumably linked, to military service.

The Legion specifically urges VA and Congress to fund and adequately staff more Vet Centers, which provide mental-health and occupational outreach to thousands of veterans who otherwise look to the VA medical system for help, or end up on the street.

The Legion also supports recommendations from the president's Commission on Care for America's Returning Wounded Warriors to enhance the focus on traumatic brain injury and PTSD among veterans of Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom. The Legion also supports new VA polytrauma centers across the country, to manage unique problems faced by OIF and OEF combat veterans.

## VOLUNTEERING

In fiscal 2009, 6,307 American Legion members volunteered 916,598 hours of service to hospitalized veterans in their communities. Based on an independent-sector rate of \$20.25 per volunteer hour in 2010, this is a total cost savings of \$18.4 million to VA. The American Legion added 202 new volunteers in 2009 and had an increase of 7,118 hours.

In addition, The American Legion recently partnered with volunteer organizations such as Habitat for Humanity and Rebuilding Together to ensure that veterans are able to live in quality housing. The American Legion developed a Suicide Prevention and Referral Program to help connect a servicemember or veteran experiencing a mental-health crisis with VA's National Suicide Prevention Hotline.



The American Legion also strongly supported the Ride 2 Recovery program, a weeklong cycling event in several locations across the United States that helps injured veterans speed up their recovery and rehabilitation process.

The American Legion is committed to volunteering and serving veterans in the community. To join our volunteer ranks, or learn more about programs in your community, go to [www.legion.org/volunteers](http://www.legion.org/volunteers).

### FINAL RESPECTS

The American Legion works closely with the National Cemetery Administration, Arlington National Cemetery, and other federal and state governments and entities to ensure a proper burial for all veterans, as well as honorable burial services for the veteran, the family of the veteran and other loved ones. The Legion also serves as a major coordinator of the Missing in America Project, which ensures that cremated remains of veterans, long forgotten in funeral homes, hospitals and other establishments, are respectfully laid to rest. The American Legion provides a large portion of the Missing in America Project's volunteers. The American Legion also provides all U.S. flags for veterans' graves in cemeteries overseen in Europe by the American Battle Monuments Commission.



## HEROES TO HOMETOWNS

The American Legion's Heroes to Hometowns program, under the Economic Division, helps severely-injured servicemembers transition back into their communities and civilian lives.

Heroes to Hometowns cannot work without the grass-roots efforts of American Legion posts. The Legion works with DoD and VA to identify veterans in need and provide readjustment help and mentoring. In 2008, The American Legion entered into a pilot program with VA to create H2H VA Voluntary Service (VAVS) coordinators at 10 sites: Boston; Dayton, Ohio; Louisville, Ky.; Phoenix; Providence, R.I.; Richmond, Va.; St. Louis; San Diego; Washington; and West Haven, Conn. Coordinators work with the VA medical centers to identify transitioning servicemember needs and make connections for community support and assistance.

## Backlog of Pending VBA Claims Creates Veteran Job Opportunities

The backlog of pending Veterans Benefits Administration claims, as of March 21, 2009, had reached 700,917. Of these, 403,197 were rating cases. Since the end of 2004, when 321,458 rating cases were pending, the backlog has grown significantly.

Between 2006 and 2007, the number of pending ratings cases increased by about 14,000. Over 25 percent of the cases were pending for longer than 180 days. At the end of fiscal 2008, the average number of days to complete a claim from date of receipt was 179, down 3.5 from the previous year.

Inadequate staffing levels, lack of continuing education, and increased pressure to make quick decisions result in an overall decrease in the quality of work. These are among the most common complaints raised by regional office employees interviewed by American Legion staff during regional office quality checks. It is unrealistic to expect VA, at its current staffing levels, to continue to process an ever-increasing workload while maintaining quality and timeliness.

The current wartime situation provides an excellent opportunity for VA to actively seek out returning veterans from Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom, especially those with service-connected disabilities, for employment opportunities within VBA.



### Careers for veterans

The American Legion Economic Commission and the Legion's Veterans Small Business Task Force actively pursue new career opportunities for veterans through job fairs and business workshops across the country. The American Legion has formal relationships with Recruit-Military, LLC; Avue Technologies; and Military.com, a subsidiary of Monster.com, to participate in a robust schedule of career fairs throughout the year.

The Legion has aggressively lobbied for improved compliance with laws requiring that no less than 3 percent of federal contracts be awarded to businesses owned by service-disabled veterans, along with other opportunities for veteran entrepreneurs.

- [www.vetjobs.us](http://www.vetjobs.us)
- [www.military.com](http://www.military.com)
- [www.recruitmilitary.com](http://www.recruitmilitary.com)
- [www.legion.org/careers](http://www.legion.org/careers)
- (202) 861-2700



## TRANSITION ASSISTANCE

The American Legion's Economic Commission operates a number of programs, provides outreach and testifies before Congress in order to help veterans make the transition from military to civilian life. This important arm of service has a place upon the Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation pillar but stands as an independent division of the organization. The work of the division can be divided into three main parts: jobs for veterans, business opportunities and education. Support for homeless veterans also fits into the division's portfolio of service.



## HOMELESSNESS

The American Legion works with VA and numerous local posts and organizations to provide relief for veterans who have found themselves homeless. As veteran unemployment runs higher than that of the general population, so too does veteran homelessness. The Legion builds, manages or supports homeless shelters for veterans across the country and actively advocates for programs to put roofs over their heads.



### Help with financial planning

The National Executive Committee of The American Legion recently passed a resolution to establish a relationship with VeteransPlus, a nonprofit financial-education and counseling company.

VeteransPlus provides financial education and counseling to veterans, servicemembers, Reserve and National Guard members, and all their family members. Licensed financial counselors from VeteransPlus conduct seminars at American Legion posts across the country, aimed at addressing a host of financial issues: basic budgeting, debt management, credit counseling, identity theft, credit-score awareness, and housing and mortgage counseling.

VeteransPlus, founded by veterans, hosts returning-warrior workshops, yellow-ribbon events, association meetings, educational seminars, Web-site engagements, veterans-benefit fairs and other outreach initiatives.

“Given The American Legion’s unique perspective as the nation’s largest veterans service organization, we believe that they are in a position to identify with our mission of serving those who have served us,” said VeteransPlus Executive Director John Pickens. “(But) without a basic financial education, the men and women who have borne the battle may not be able to afford the life they have fought to defend for themselves and their families.”

[www.veteransplus.org](http://www.veteransplus.org)

## GI BILL BENEFITS

The American Legion has maintained a strong connection to the GI Bill since 1944, when Past National Commander Harry Colmery crafted it on stationery at the Mayflower Hotel in Washington. Since then, the GI Bill – considered the most significant social legislation of the 20th century – has educated millions of Americans, and gave birth to a half-century of economic prosperity.

The Legion provides assistance for veterans trying to decide which of today’s multiple GI Bill programs is the best fit for them as individuals, and also lobbies Congress and works with VA to strengthen the benefits. [www.legion.org/mygibill](http://www.legion.org/mygibill)



## EMPLOYMENT, BUSINESS AND EDUCATION

The American Legion actively participates in numerous outreach efforts for veterans seeking employment or business opportunities after military service. The Legion aggressively lobbies for veterans-preference laws and compliance with laws designed to provide incentives for disabled-veteran entrepreneurship. Similarly, the Legion’s Economic Commission assists in job and career fairs throughout the country and works to protect the careers and benefits of reservists and National Guardsmen during military deployments.

The Legion’s Business Task Force is composed of veteran entrepreneurs who give regular workshops and conferences to help veterans draft business plans, learn about their benefits and help them compete for government contracts.



## PILLAR II: NATIONAL SECURITY



### Support for the troops

The American Legion has always lobbied for quality-of-life improvements for U.S. servicemembers. But when it comes to troop support, the organization puts its money where its mouth is, thanks to volunteers and contributors at every level.

Case in point: the COP Keating Relief Fund. Last fall, when U.S. soldiers were ambushed at a combat outpost in a remote region of Afghanistan, they were forced to turn artillery on their own position. They destroyed all of their personal belongings, including cameras, videos, computers, games, books and other items. They escaped with their weapons and the uniforms on their backs.

The American Legion blog site The Burn Pit reported the story and asked for support. Within days, more than \$50,000 in cash, \$50,000 in gift cards donated by Target Corp., and more than \$60,000 in laptop computers from Computer Sciences Corp. were contributed to the COP Keating Relief Fund. By Christmas, the soldiers had had many of their personal items replaced through the effort.

That is just one example of hundreds of grass-roots troop-support efforts by Legionnaires around the country.

The National Security Division of The American Legion represents the organization's positions on national defense, homeland security and quality of life for our servicemembers and their families. Since its inception, The American Legion has steadfastly supported a strong national defense. The American Legion closely monitors issues that are most relevant to our nation's vital security interests. The American Legion works closely with each branch of the U.S. Armed Forces in an effort to stay well informed about issues that affect our troops and our military families. As such, The American Legion continues to make troop strength and military quality of life a top priority.

The American Legion's national-security position is multifaceted. Key aspects include:

- A well-funded, well-equipped and well-trained military.
- Awareness and surveillance of rogue nations, terrorist groups and global threats to U.S. security around the world.
- Support for the Department of Homeland Security and urging protection of U.S. borders, ports and other points of access.
- Comprehensive disaster preparedness.
- Decent quality of life for troops and their families – active-duty and reserve components alike – that includes reasonable compensation, benefits, health care, child care and family-support programs; and an efficient and compassionate healing and transition program for wounded and ill warriors.
- Matters such as transition to civilian life and using the VA health-care system, TRICARE or TRICARE For Life also fall within the realm of national security. The American Legion represents military members during the medical-discharge process and assists in their pursuit of education benefits, employment counseling, training and health care.
- The American Legion works as an advocate for an improved disability-evaluation system within the Department of Defense by providing counseling, guidance and representation for servicemembers through the proceedings of the medical-evaluation and physical-evaluation boards. Staff regularly meets with military personnel one-on-one and in group settings to alert them about the resources and opportunities available as they prepare to return home.

Based on current conflicts and their residual effects on U.S. military servicemembers and their families, The American Legion's National Security Division has made the following issues legislative priorities.

### INCREASE THE SIZE OF THE ARMED FORCES

The American Legion recognizes that a strain exists on many servicemembers in the



active-duty, National Guard and Reserve components, as well as equipment and training needs caused by continuing overseas contingencies conducted against global terrorism. The American Legion urges Congress to fully fund the armed forces; to re-set units with new equipment and replacement parts; and to provide training for specific skills required for critical mission performance across the full spectrum of conflict. The American Legion urges an increase in military personnel end strengths to levels that reduce the frequency of deployments on servicemembers, the stress on families, and the risk to national security that results from conventional warfare missions being relegated to a lower priority for training, planning and resourcing purposes.

### QUALITY OF LIFE FOR SERVICEMEMBERS, RETIREES AND MILITARY FAMILIES

Qualified disabled military retirees earned and deserve full concurrent receipt of their DoD retirement pay and VA disability compensation, which come from separate budgets for separate purposes. Today, most disabled military retirees are forced to choose one or the other in what has become known as the “disabled veterans’ tax.”

Military health-care programs must also be fully funded, without additional enrollment fees or co-payment increases for beneficiaries. TRICARE coverage should be made permanent for members of the Reserve components, as well. Military personnel who sustain injuries or illnesses while on duty must be given fair and timely discharge processing, and their transition to civilian life and/or VA health care made seamless and effective for rejoining civilian society and the work force. The American Legion strongly supports a continuum of care for disabled veterans after they re-integrate.

### HOMELAND SECURITY

The threat of terrorist attacks or other catastrophic disasters in the United States came painfully to light on Sept. 11, 2001, and following the devastating hurricane season of 2005. The American Legion works closely with government at all levels to improve disaster readiness in local communities and, at the national level, to ensure that a well-funded and efficient Department of Homeland Security (DHS) is prepared for any contingency. Since the DHS’ creation after the terrorist attacks of 2001, The American Legion has supported its intent, purpose and arrangement: to harmonize myriad agencies, offices, businesses, community groups and others with readiness responsibilities and quick-response capabilities. The Legion concurs with DHS’ mission to coordinate domestic security, including effective customs operations, increased security of the border and improved drug interdiction. To help with that effort, the Legion supports funding for the U.S. Coast Guard’s “Deepwater” initiatives to rebuild its fleet and modernize assets.

### FOREIGN RELATIONS

Also within the Legion’s national-security pillar is a Foreign Relations Commission that works closely with the Department of State to seek peaceful solutions to various world conflicts and to advance U.S. foreign policy. The American Legion supports policies and legislation that enhance funding for the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), and seeks use of that funding toward targeted states whose failure to provide for their people could result in the expansion of international terrorism.

The American Legion encourages increased federal funding for foreign relations and international affairs and for the Department of State’s continuous efforts to seek peaceful and diplomatic solutions to world conflicts, as well as its initiative for the creation of the Civilian Response Corps for deployment before, during or after military campaigns.

### FULL ACCOUNTING OF POW/MIAS

A sacred value of The American Legion is the full accounting and repatriation of fallen U.S. service personnel. The American Legion is dedicated to keep this cause in the forefront of the minds of elected officials and America at large. The Legion supports Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command activities to locate and repatriate all recoverable remains of U.S. military personnel who have died in captivity or are missing in action.



### Operation Comfort Warriors

Operation Comfort Warriors has raised more than \$500,000 to provide comfort items for wounded U.S. troops in military hospitals around the world. In February 2010, the program received first-place honors in the Pepsi Refresh Everything grant competition and raised \$250,000 thanks to online voting by Legionnaires and their friends.

All donated dollars are used to purchase items. None of the money is used for administrative or promotional expenses.

The National Security/Foreign Relations staff at the Legion’s Washington office works with the American Red Cross and various military hospitals to coordinate the program.

Comfort items provided include sweatsuits, puzzles, video games, DVDs, iTunes gift cards, hats, gloves, portable electronics, laptops, and a biofeedback system for the Madigan Army Hospital at Fort Lewis, Wash.

The American Legion has delivered comfort items to Walter Reed; Bethesda; Fort Hood, Texas; Fort Bragg, N.C.; Camp Lejeune, N.C.; Portsmouth, Va.; Fort Carson, Colo.; Fort Drum, N.Y.; Fort Stewart, Ga.; Twentynine Palms, Calif.; Camp Pendleton, Calif.; Fort Campbell, Ky.; Fort Riley, Kan.; Fort Gordon, Ga.; Fort Knox, Ky.; Schofield Barracks, Hawaii; Fort Bliss, Texas; Fort Dix, N.J.; Fort Belvoir, Va.; Fort Lee, Va.; and Landstuhl, Germany, among others.

[www.legion.org/donate](http://www.legion.org/donate)



## A LEGACY OF AMERICAN LEGION SERVICE



The American Legion, today comprising 2.5 million wartime veterans, was chartered by Congress in 1919, and was founded by men and women who served in the Armed Forces of the United States during World War I.

Among the first to be exposed to modern warfare with its poisonous gases, overlaying fields of machine-gun fire, trench warfare, tanks and artillery, these soldiers, sailors and Marines suffered both the mental and physical wounds of war.

When the armistice was announced on Nov. 11, 1918, they came home to parades, but little else. There was no comprehensive medical care, disability compensation, vocational training, effective treatment for shell shock, or pensions for widows and orphans.

The men and women who had won the Great War were expected to come home as if nothing had happened and pick up where they had left off. They were expected to get on with their lives with little or no assistance from the government whose call they had answered.

This fledgling American Legion, conceived primarily by Theodore Roosevelt Jr., took on the mission to follow Lincoln's postbellum call for America to "care for him who shall have borne the battle, and for his widow, and his orphan." Working through a fast-multiplying network of community posts, The American Legion became the nation's largest self-help organization. The Legion established tuberculosis hospitals, found employment for veterans, launched a pro-

gram of monetary grants to assist widows and orphans, and assisted those suffering from the mental wounds of war.

In 1923, The American Legion conducted a nationwide survey to ascertain how World War I veterans were readjusting to civilian life. What the Legion survey revealed shocked the nation.

Some veterans of the Great War were homeless; many suffered from what we know today as PTSD; not a few were housed in jails, mental institutions and county homes. Too many had given up on life, had no hope and no future. It was not uncommon to see former doughboys, without arms or legs, selling apples and pencils on the street corners of our nation, just trying to survive.

The public outcry was loud and clear. The result was the creation of the Veterans Bureau, an entity that consolidated under one roof the services of many government agencies that had a small piece of the rehabilitation pie. Today, that bureau has grown to become the Department of Veterans Affairs.

Federal and state laws were enacted, based on the Legion's advice, that had been gathered from thousands of service officers who were working with veterans and their families, one-on-one, in the communities where they lived.

Those laws brought compensation for veterans who had suffered service-connected disabilities. They built a nationwide system of veterans hospitals and clinics and established veterans homes, veterans cemeter-



ies, and pensions for the surviving spouses of those who had given their lives for our country.

Thanks in no small part to the diligence and vision of The American Legion, shell shock has been re-diagnosed as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD); exposure to Agent Orange is now a recognized service-connected disability due to a study conducted by The American Legion and Columbia University; veterans suffering from mesothelioma, a cancer resulting from exposure to asbestos, and illness due to exposure to ionizing radiation and its resulting cancers, are both now recognized service-connected disabilities. This list is long and grows longer each year.

Most, if not all, of these conditions were called to the attention of our government due to the Legion's work with veterans through its Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation Commission.

The American Legion's founders envisioned a future of honor, respect and prosperity for military veterans and the nation they vowed to protect and defend. That vision brought into existence the Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944, today known as the GI Bill. The American Legion is recognized as the organization that wrote and created the bill. Ironically, it passed the conference committee of the House and Senate by only one vote, and yet has come to be known as the greatest piece of social legislation ever conceived, triggering a half-century of American economic prosperity.

The American Legion still believes in the vision of our founders, a vision for a strong America – freedom and opportunity. And The American Legion firmly believes that veterans and their families have earned every benefit awarded to them by a grateful nation because of their selfless service. Indeed, this basic principle was succinctly written into law when the Supreme Court stated in 1983:

*“It is ... not irrational for Congress to decide that, even though it will not subsidize substantial lobbying by charities generally, it will subsidize lobbying by veterans’ organizations. Veterans have ‘been obliged to drop their own affairs and take up the burdens of the nation, subjecting themselves to the mental and physical hazards as well as the economic and family detriments which are peculiar to military service and which do not exist in normal civil life.’ Our country has a long-standing policy of compensating veterans for their past contributions by providing them numerous advantages. This policy has ‘always been deemed to be legitimate.’”*

This guide to the Four Pillars of The American Legion was produced on behalf of our membership, the wartime veterans of the 20th and 21st centuries, who can be found in more than 14,000 posts and nearly every community across our great nation.

***This is their vision for a strong America.***

### Nearly a century of service

1. Legionnaires have been at the bedsides of wounded and sick veterans since the end of World War I, when disabled veterans were often institutionalized in asylums. The Legion helped create the Veterans Administration.
2. President Franklin D. Roosevelt signs the Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944, commonly regarded as the most significant piece of social legislation in the 20th century.
3. Legionnaires for decades have coordinated and promoted job and career fairs for veterans.
4. American Legion members today spend time on active military bases or reach out to returning servicemembers, re-connecting with the new generation of veterans.



## PILLAR III: AMERICANISM



Many cultural, moral and patriotic values have come under serious attack in the United States in recent years. Prayer has been removed from schools. The U.S. flag is no longer protected from anarchists. Boy Scouts of America faces serious legal duels in the communities it serves. The institution of marriage is under siege. Immigration laws are defied. References to God have been challenged on U.S. currency, in the Pledge of Allegiance and in the public square, all by a minority of voices whose vision for America is far different from that of our Founding Fathers. Our nation's very identity is at stake as more and more values are driven toward extinction. As an organization dedicated to God and country, with a membership of military veterans that takes deep pride in the U.S. flag and all it means, The American Legion has always been a stalwart champion of patriotism, morality and citizenship. Upon the pillar of Americanism is The American Legion's devotion to law and order, the raising of wholesome youth, respectful observance of patriotic holidays and remembrances, education and law-abiding citizenship. Among The American Legion's highest Americanism priorities are:

### U.S. FLAG PROTECTION

The U.S. Constitution should be amended to add the following: "The Congress shall have power to prohibit the physical desecration of the flag of the United States." The American Legion joins all the states and an overwhelming majority of citizens in its position that the American flag deserves legal protection from acts of intentional public physical desecration. In 1989, the U.S. Supreme Court declared flag desecration to be a "right" protected by the First Amendment of the Constitution. The American Legion disagreed then, and reaffirms now, that flag desecration is a form of conduct – not speech – that can and should be regulated by law. All 50 state legislatures have petitioned Congress for a constitutional amendment that would give power to Congress to prohibit such conduct. Poll after poll show that upward of 80 percent of Americans support flag protection. Lopsided majorities in both chambers of Congress have supported a flag amendment. The House of Representatives has passed such a proposed amendment in six consecutive votes; the measure has fallen just slightly short of achieving supermajority in the Senate, leaving it just one vote short of passing in the 109th Congress. As a symbol of our nation, the U.S. flag belongs to the people, who should be given the power to protect it. The American Legion's position on its protection is inviolate.

### ILLEGAL IMMIGRATION

The American Legion supports manageable, legal immigration. By multiple resolutions that determine policy, the Legion adamantly opposes illegal immigration, amnesty for those who illegally enter the United States, and ineffective measures to prevent illegal border-crossing, particularly during a time of war. The Legion's strategy to combat illegal



immigration calls for strong border security, including physical barriers and high-tech surveillance methods; the elimination of economic and social-services benefits for illegal immigrants; employer sanctions against those who knowingly hire illegal immigrants; and the enforcement of existing immigration laws. The Legion also supports new laws that deny illegal immigrants driver's licenses, establish parameters for non-criminal deportation, and designate English as the official language of the U.S. government. The Legion's position on illegal immigration seeks the elimination of the visa lottery program, the creation of new visa categories for temporary agricultural workers to replace those working illegally, and the authority to track foreign visitors, to include college students, press, and members of any foreign diplomatic corps. Illegal immigration stands as one of the most serious problems facing America, with as many as 20 million illegal immigrants inside our borders and billions of dollars spent providing social services, education and jobs for them. The American Legion supports the law on this matter and strongly urges the U.S. government to enforce it. Providing assistance and instruction to immigrants following the legal path to U.S. citizenship has been a long-standing and proud tradition upheld by The American Legion since its founding in 1919. Helping legal immigrants prepare for their naturalization test and assimilation into American society is in the best interest of our nation. For decades, many Legionnaires and Legion posts throughout the country have hosted naturalization-orientation sessions to help teach proficiency of the English language and lessons in U.S. history and civics.

#### **VOTER REGISTRATION AND PARTICIPATION**

The American Legion connects good government with active citizen participation in the electoral process. Legion posts throughout the country offer their services and facilities to stimulate registration and turnout at the polls. Posts also provide facilities and opportunities for nonpartisan voter-education forums and debates. Under the provisions of its federal charter, it is important to note that The American Legion is prohibited from supporting, opposing or providing aid to any political party or candidate for public office.

#### **BOY SCOUTS OF AMERICA**

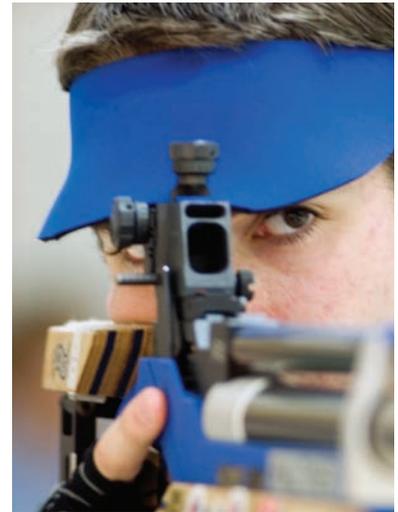
The American Legion vigorously opposes attempts to strip the Boy Scouts of public support, sponsorship and facility space due to the organization's membership or leadership criteria. The Scouts teach skills, build character, and provide a healthy and wholesome outlet for young Americans. The organization should not be punished or persecuted for acknowledging God in its oath or for setting leadership restrictions based on a moral code that the majority of Americans endorse.

#### **THE PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

Recitation of the Pledge of Allegiance by students and teachers in our nation's schools should be a regular part of school activities and events. In support of keeping "under God" in the pledge, The American Legion affirms that pledging allegiance to the flag is the voluntary offering of a patriotic oath to the nation, that no one should be denied this opportunity, and that the removal of these words will set a precedent that questions the propriety of numerous references to a supreme being in historical documents, on currency and on many of our government buildings, including the U.S. Supreme Court.

#### **ESTABLISHMENT-CLAUSE LAWSUITS**

The American Legion is dedicated to combating the secular cleansing of our American heritage, performed by lawsuits that attack the Boy Scouts, the public display of the Ten Commandments and other symbols of America's religious history. The authority given by Congress to the courts to impose damages, or attorney fees, in establishment-clause cases is being used by the American Civil Liberties Union and others to compel municipalities, state and federal agencies, along with private groups, to cast off religious associations, often in pursuit of tax-funded attorney fees.



#### **Junior Shooting Sports**

The American Legion's Junior Shooting Sports Programs provide gun safety and marksmanship training for young people. The program, conducted at local posts and shooting facilities nationwide, culminates each year with a national championship competition at the U.S. Olympic Training Center in Colorado Springs, Colo.



### THE AMERICAN LEGION LEGACY RUN

*“My dad had an impact on my life that no one else could have on me. He was so many things to me; he was my support, my guide, my confidant and my comfort. Losing him was the worst thing that I have ever had happen in my life. I would like to honor him and would like to make him and my family proud by achieving my goals. Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to make this happen.”*

The words of a college student whose military father lost his life after the tragic terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001, demonstrate just how important it is to live up to one of The American Legion’s – and our nation’s – most important obligations.

Within weeks of the attacks, The American Legion Legacy Scholarship was established to help young people whose parents have lost their lives serving in the armed forces in the years following 9/11. Children of U.S. military personnel killed in the line of duty are entitled to receive federal money toward their college educations, but these funds do not cover the entire cost, and the gap widens as college tuitions and expenses continue to climb. It is especially difficult for a single parent to afford.

The goal of The American Legion Legacy Scholarship Fund is \$20 million, enough to fund college educations for young people for years through earnings on the principal. To reach that goal, The American Legion relies heavily on one of its most popular and fast-growing programs: The American Legion Riders. Motorcycle-riding veterans from across the country have joined the Legion Riders for annual cross-country treks, raising funds while riding from Indianapolis to national conventions in Salt Lake City, Reno, Nev., Phoenix and Louisville, Ky. Another is planned for the 2010 National Convention in Milwaukee. The rides have raised more than \$1 million for the scholarship program, which is already distributing scholarship dollars while simultaneously building up the principal.

Legion Riders chapters have flourished in recent years and became an official program of the organization in 2007. It has since expanded to more than 1,000 chapters.

**[www.legion.org/riders/legacy](http://www.legion.org/riders/legacy)**

**[www.legion.org/riders](http://www.legion.org/riders)**



## AMERICAN LEGION BOYS NATION

Presidents, governors, members of Congress and local community servants are among the thousands of young men who learned the way the U.S. government works by participating in American Legion Boys Nation. Boys Nation participants are selected from Boys State programs across the country. Each delegate represents his state as a senator. An intense week of training and education in the legislative process also includes tours of Washington monuments and memorials, along with an occasional visit from the president. Boys Nation began in 1946 at American University in Washington. Boys State began in 1935 in Illinois as an effort to counter fascist youth camps springing up around the country at the time. At Boys State, high-school juniors learn the rights, privileges and responsibilities of a franchised citizen.



## AMERICAN LEGION BASEBALL

Many of the greatest names in the sport spent their teenage summers in American Legion Baseball uniforms. Hall of Famers such as Dave Winfield, Rollie Fingers, Reggie Jackson and Stan Musial still speak of the influence Legion ball had on their lives and careers. Each year, nearly 100,000 athletes participate in American Legion Baseball, the nation's oldest and most respected amateur baseball program. Posts sponsor teams in all 50 states and Puerto Rico, giving young men wholesome, healthy activity and lessons in sportsmanship, loyalty, and respect for rules and fair play.

"I was proud to wear The American Legion uniform because it was the first uniform I had," remembered Stan "The Man" Musial, the former St. Louis Cardinals great and member of the National Baseball Hall of Fame. "The American Legion has supported baseball for many years, and it has an outstanding program for our young players."

[www.legion.org/baseball](http://www.legion.org/baseball)



## Oratorical Program

The American Legion High School Oratorical Scholarship Program teaches appreciation of the U.S. Constitution. Finalists come to Indianapolis in April of each year to compete for \$138,000 in college scholarships.



## PILLAR IV: CHILDREN & YOUTH



The American Legion's Commission on Children & Youth manages a pillar of service guided by three main objectives: to strengthen the family unit, to support quality organizations that provide services for children and youth, and to provide communities with well-rounded programs that meet the physical, educational, emotional and spiritual needs of young people. The commission works to provide hope for children who face health, safety, discipline or home-life challenges, and provides opportunities for young people to succeed. The American Legion Child Welfare Foundation provides more than \$500,000 in grants each year to nonprofit organizations that work to improve the lives of young people. These grants have aided organ-donor campaigns, supported efforts to help military children cope with deployment or the loss of a parent, and funded projects that increased public awareness of Huntington's disease, autism, Reye's syndrome, meningitis, spina bifida, diabetes, cancer and other conditions.

The Commission on Children & Youth has focused recent attention on several important national programs, including the Children's Miracle Network, Ronald McDonald House Charities, Special Olympics, youth-suicide prevention, Halloween safety, the Family Support Network, Temporary Financial Assistance, Operation: Military Kids, and others. The American Legion has been a staunch supporter of the children and youth of our nation since its founding in 1919. The commitment continues today for the National Commission on Children & Youth as it seeks to improve the well-being of all children. Every generation of veterans knows that the key to the future of a free and prosperous country is held by the children and youth of today. The Legion strongly supports traditional family values, assistance for at-risk children, and activities that promote their healthy and wholesome development. While there is no way of knowing what issues will face our youth tomorrow, our survival may well depend on the quality of care, education and training that we, as parents and citizens, provide for young people today.

The American Legion's Children & Youth pillar includes positions on:

**Child Pornography.** The Legion opposes any attempts to weaken U.S. laws governing the production, sale and distribution of pornographic materials.

**Catastrophic Illness.** The American Legion supports enacting legislation to financially assist families facing the catastrophic illness of a child.

**Intellectual Disabilities.** The American Legion supports continuing research and early-intervention efforts to prevent intellectual disabilities, including research on the development and function of the nervous system; fetal treatments and gene therapy to correct



abnormalities produced by defective genes; and early-intervention programs for high-risk infants and children.

**Immunization for Needy Children.** The Legion urges federal funding for state and local health agencies to ensure that indigent children are afforded the opportunity to receive needed vaccines and treatments.

**Family Integrity.** The Legion promotes the family as the cornerstone of society and supports National Family Week in November. The Legion further recognizes that the natural family is the fundamental unit, inscribed in human nature and centered on the voluntary union of a man and woman in a lifelong covenant of marriage.

**Media Violence.** The American Legion supports appropriate state and federal legislation to restrict the excessive use of violence, vulgarity and immoral expressions in movies, television programs, news, video games and the Internet.

**Drug Abuse.** The American Legion fully supports adequate funding for all border, state, federal and military drug-trafficking prevention programs to keep illegal substances from reaching our nation's young people.

**Child Sexual Exploitation.** The American Legion supports appropriate legislation aimed at the prevention, investigation and prosecution of child sexual exploitation, and seeks to empower the public to take immediate and direct action to enforce a zero-tolerance policy on the problem.

#### FAMILY SUPPORT NETWORK

An e-mail recently sent to The American Legion's Family Support Network read, "I am currently in Afghanistan, and I am worried about my children's safety." A Massachusetts National Guardsman and father of five learned that a section of his backyard fence had fallen down. With a busy highway only a few feet away, the children's only play area became a safety concern. The local post responded by repairing the fence at no cost to the family.

The Family Support Network is ready to provide immediate assistance to U.S. military personnel and their families whose lives have been directly affected by the war on terrorism. As National Guard and Reserve units are mobilized in record numbers, the families of these men and women often find themselves unable to meet normal monthly expenses and needing assistance for a variety of everyday chores like grocery shopping, child care, mowing the grass, fixing the car and other routine household jobs.

To address these issues, The American Legion has a nationwide toll-free telephone number for servicemembers and their families to call for assistance. Requests can also be made online. All inquiries are referred to the department in which the call originated. Departments relay the collected information to a local American Legion post. The local post then contacts the military servicemember or family to see how assistance can be provided. Since the creation of the Family Support Network during the Gulf War, thousands of American Legion posts have responded to meet these families' needs. Posts are reminded that families in financial need with minor children are encouraged to call on the Temporary Financial Assistance program at National Headquarters to assist. Otherwise, it is up to local posts to provide or develop the resources necessary to meet the need.

Nearly 3,000 requests through the Family Support Network came to National Headquarters in 2009. Most cases are handled locally, without notification or involvement from the national organization. Creating an ongoing and active relationship with local military units allows posts to respond immediately when needs arise.

[www.legion.org/fsn](http://www.legion.org/fsn)  
(800) 504-4098

#### Help without hesitation

When a fire last year at an apartment complex near Portsmouth Naval Shipyard impacted five families of active-duty servicemembers, the Department of New Hampshire American Legion family quickly stepped up and delivered help.

Within six days of the blaze, the department delivered \$250 gift cards to all six families; another \$500 to each family was provided through The American Legion Temporary Financial Assistance program.

The five families included six children between the ages of two weeks and 3 years; one of the mothers also was two weeks away from giving birth. Two of the families lost everything, while the apartments of the other three families suffered either smoke or water damage.

Gary Wayman, who was serving as New Hampshire's department service officer at the time, took part in a meeting between the families, the shipyard's chaplain, New Hampshire's then-department commander, and a New Hampshire department vice commander. "I asked (the families) to tell me what they needed, whether it was grocery cards or something else," Wayman said. "They said they needed diapers and clothing for their children. The chaplain and I then drove to Wal-Mart, bought the cards and then back to present them to the families."

Wayman said there was never any hesitation when it came to delivering help. "I called. We went up to meet with the families. We provided them with the gift cards. It was that fast."



### TEMPORARY FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

*Diana, a Lebanon/Grenada-era veteran and single mother of three, bought her first home when she was able to secure a favorable variable interest rate. With the decline of the housing market and increased interest rates, Diana's monthly payment doubled overnight. No longer able to afford her payment and suddenly in default, Diana discovered the mortgage company would not refinance the loan until she caught up on payments. Temporary Financial Assistance was able to bring her mortgage current, allowing the veteran to refinance her mortgage to an affordable monthly payment.*

The American Legion's Temporary Financial Assistance program helps military and veteran families with minor children at home. Through TFA, a local American Legion post can call upon the national organization for cash assistance to help meet the basic needs of veterans' children. Funding for TFA comes through The American Legion Endowment Fund. In a record-setting 2008, nearly 1,500 children were helped by the fund, amounting to more than \$705,700 in disbursements from National Headquarters.



### THE SAMSUNG AMERICAN LEGION SCHOLARSHIP

After researching dozens of veterans organizations, Samsung – a worldwide leader in electronics – chose The American Legion in 1995 to administer an endowed scholarship fund of \$5 million. The endowment was established to show appreciation to U.S. veterans who came to the aid of Korea during its struggle against communist forces during the Korean War. The scholarship is for undergraduate study only and may be used for tuition, books, fees, and room and board. Seven to 10 students are chosen each year for the \$20,000 scholarships, which are awarded to direct descendants of U.S. wartime veterans.

### CHILD WELFARE FOUNDATION

Not all American children grow up with the same opportunities. Some face physical disabilities, parenting problems and even homelessness. For thousands, each day is a challenge marked by pain, prayer and perseverance. Many require specialized care. That is why The American Legion Child Welfare Foundation exists. Established in 1954, the foundation was developed to collect donations from individuals who wished to contribute to the betterment of children in this country. To date, nearly \$10 million has been awarded to organizations to support worthwhile projects through the dissemination of information to both the general public and specific target groups.

In 2009, the foundation awarded grants totaling \$636,869 to 19 nonprofit organizations. Among those grants was \$41,000 for the The American Legion Children's Home of Ponca City, Okla., one of few children's homes of its kind in the country, established to support the children of U.S. military veterans. Other 2009 grants went to such groups as the Childhood Leukemia Foundation of Brick, N.J., the Junior Diabetes Research Foundation, Students Against Destructive Decisions, and the National Center for Learning Disabilities in New York.

[www.legion.org/childwelfare](http://www.legion.org/childwelfare)



## Child Welfare Foundation

The American Legion Child Welfare Foundation awarded \$636,869 to 19 nonprofit organizations for 2010.

**The American Legion Children's Home of Ponca City, Okla.,** received \$41,000 to increase awareness of the home, established to support the children of veterans' families in need.

**The American Legion of Nevada** received \$3,037 for a project titled "Hear Today – Learn Tomorrow," to develop and distribute letters requesting discount services from medical providers and hearing-aid manufacturers for HT-LT participants; produce information sheets about the availability of support to families of hearing-impaired children; and produce public-service announcements related to HT-LT.

**Boy Scouts of America Exploring Program of Denver** received \$35,717 for a project titled "Experience 9 to 5," to produce 12,000 course catalogs, 31,200 flyers and 90 posters associated with the program.

**Childhood Leukemia Foundation of Brick, N.J.,** received \$48,000 to print and ship 1,600 Hope Binders to 160 hospitals nationwide for families facing the diagnosis of childhood cancer.

**Children's Hospital of the King's Daughters of Norfolk, Va.,** received \$30,050 to develop and distribute "A Guide to Chest Wall Deformities in Children: Information For Parents, Patients and Primary-Care Physicians," a CD-ROM intended to better educate families and physicians.

**Children's Institute, Inc.,** of Rochester, N.Y., received \$30,500 to develop and provide the DVD "Possibilities of Play: Building Connections through Play" to schools and community agencies that work with military families and their children.

**Cornelia de Lange Syndrome Foundation of Avon, Conn.,** received \$16,744 to develop a syndrome-screening checklist for medical professionals, and distribute it nationally to 16,000 pediatric offices.

**Diabetes Education and Camping Association of Huntsville, Ala.,** received \$25,000 for a project titled "Ready, View, Go' – Diabetes Camp Web Training Project," which will produce training videos instructing camp directors and staff on how to handle diabetes issues in a camp setting.

**Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation of New York** received \$39,500 for a project titled "I'm Aaron and I'm Bionic," which will produce 4,000 DVDs about the history of treatment for Type 1 diabetes and the newest innovation, the artificial pancreas.

**Mercy Medical Airlift of Virginia Beach, Va.,** received \$45,700 to develop five updated Web sites and a full social-media presence to provide information to the public and pediatric medical world regarding available charitable child-patient long-distance medical air transportation.

**The MY HERO Project of Laguna Beach, Calif.,** received \$28,872 to research, produce and distribute training videos for students to tell their own hero stories through video and filmmaking.

**National Center for Learning Disabilities of New York** received \$45,500 to revise and enhance NCLD's Web site to make parents of children with learning disabilities aware of their children's rights, and inform parents that they can advocate for them.

**National Exchange Club Foundation of Toledo, Ohio,** received \$25,000 to produce, print and distribute 1,000 child-abuse prevention kits, expand and enhance its Web site, and purchase promotional items.

**National Reye's Syndrome Foundation of Bryan, Ohio,** received \$38,200 to mail postcards to 131,377 U.S. schools, directing school nurses and health-care givers to its Web site to download handouts, brochures, bookmarks, literature, a list of products containing aspirin and wellness information; and to distribute information for students to take home to parents and caregivers.

**PKS Kids of Florissant, Mo.,** received \$29,500 for a direct-mail campaign to raise awareness of Pallister-Killian syndrome among 50,000 pediatric doctors.

**Students Against Destructive Decisions (SADD), Inc., of Marlborough, Mass.,** received \$54,549 to redesign its Web site and integrate a new feature called the Parents' Corner, which will offer practical advice, tips and information to parents, teachers, school staff, coaches, summer-camp professionals and other caring adults to enhance adult/teen communication.

**Spina Bifida Association of Washington** received \$40,000 to produce "Faces of Spina Bifida," a social network for children with spina bifida designed to facilitate peer-to-peer support.

**Tourette Syndrome Association, Inc., of Bayside, N.Y.,** received \$25,000 to create and produce presentation kits to help Tourette syndrome sufferers educate children about what Tourette syndrome is and is not.

**Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors (TAPS), Inc., of Washington** received \$35,000 to produce 5,000 Caisson Horse/Comfort Book packages and a Web site to help children who have lost a parent serving in the U.S. military to understand and deal with their grief.

## MEDIA OF THE AMERICAN LEGION



### Publications

National Headquarters publishes dozens of brochures and booklets, including:

- The American Legion School Award Medal Program
  - Boys State Program
  - Employment Service Awards
  - National High School Oratorical Rules
  - Nursing Scholarship
  - Teen Suicide Prevention
  - Get Out the Vote
  - Strategy to Address Illegal Immigration in the United States
  - VA Home Loans Brochure
  - Health Care for the Homeless
  - Active-Duty Legal Rights
  - VA Voluntary Service Handbook
  - System Worth Saving Report
  - Post Service Officers Guide
- [www.legion.org/publications](http://www.legion.org/publications)

### THE AMERICAN LEGION MAGAZINE

Consistently ranked among the best-read national magazines, according to independent studies, *The American Legion Magazine* is filled with features, interviews, analyses, commentaries, photos and other items directly tied to the Four Pillars of the organization. Top national writers, as well as leaders of government, business and the military are showcased monthly for an audience of more than 3.5 million. [www.legion.org/magazine](http://www.legion.org/magazine)

### LEGION.ORG AND ELECTRONIC MEDIA

The American Legion National Headquarters offers dynamic and fast-growing electronic media channels, including a national Web site that includes frequently-changing news stories, features, interviews, history and general information and reaches more than 300,000 unique visitors per month; a weekly e-newsletter, The American Legion Online Update, which has more than 220,000 subscribers; and The Burn Pit blog site, along with strong followings on Facebook and Twitter. The Legion Web presence continues to expand and improve, offering a wide variety of fun and interesting features for new members, loyal members and those who just want to learn more. [www.legion.org](http://www.legion.org)

### THE AMERICAN LEGION DISPATCH

The monthly *American Legion Dispatch* provides information about programs, legislative issues, membership and veterans affairs to the department, district and post levels. Geared to inform leaders in the organization, the *Dispatch* frequently spotlights programs and events at the state and local levels that can be used as a model of success for anyone in the organization. It is also available as an electronic publication, with live links and flash video. [www.legion.org/dispatch](http://www.legion.org/dispatch)

# AMERICAN LEGION NATIONAL CONTACTS

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var@legion.org

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econ@legion.org

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leg@legion.org

## **National Security/Foreign Relations**

(202) 861-2700  
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(317) 630-1203  
acy@legion.org

## **Membership**

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## **Public Relations**

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## **The American Legion Magazine**

(317) 630-1298  
magazine@legion.org





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