



**2025-2026**

## **Area Training Guide**



## **Chain of Command**

### **❖ Post Officers**

The responsibility given to the individual Post is the source of our strength and growth. The Post is to a large degree autonomous, restricted only by broad general guidelines made clear in the National or Department Constitution and By-Laws. Post officers, Executive Committee, and membership work together to establish the rules and guidelines of the Post as outlined in the Post Constitution and By-Laws. In most cases, issues involving Post operations need to be addressed at the Post level. If an issue involves the upper echelon of the Post leadership or is not being properly addressed at the Post, you are encouraged to contact your District Commander for assistance.

### **❖ District Commanders**

The Post is a separate and distinct unit, which functions independently. But the work of the Post can be more effective if it is joined by a tight link to the Department and National organization. The District and your District Officers provide that link.

The District Commander is normally the elected representative of the Posts in the District, but an obligation to provide guidance and supervision is also implied. Posts are charged with carrying out the objectives and programs of the Legion and to comply fully with the obligations assumed under the Post, Department, and National Constitutions. But, if your Post becomes inactive or begins to falter, you can expect your District Commander to start giving advice.

The District Commander should visit your Post at least once per year. If you haven't received a visit from your District commander in a while, reach out to them with a personal invitation. *The District Commander is also expected to complete a Post Visitation Report when they visit. Please work with the commander to answer all the questions, work out a plan for any issues that need to be addressed and sign the form showing that they visited and that you both understand the content of the report.*

### **❖ Area Commanders**

The Area Commander serves as the official representative of the Department Commander in their Area ensuring the aims and goals of the Department are carried out. The Area Commander speaks with the authority of the Department and provides supervision for the Districts located in their Area. If the Area Commander visits your Post, they should be shown the respect and dignity due to the office they hold.

### **❖ Department Officers**

Department Officers are our "show" people. A visit from one of them usually provides an opportunity for excellent media coverage, and the type of Legion function that will attract your members and community leaders. These Officers are your elected leaders and deserving of every respect. Not every Post will receive annual visits from a Department Commander, but if your invitation is accepted, or there is occasion to visit you, make the most of it.

Department Officers include:

- Department Commander
- Department 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice Commanders
- National Executive Committee Member
- Alternative National Executive Committee Member
- Department Finance Officer
- Department Adjutant
- Department Judge Advocate
- Department Assistant Judge Advocate
- Department Chaplain
- Department Historian

- Department Sergeant-At-Arms
- Department Service Officer

#### ❖ **Department Headquarters**

The American Legion is organized in Departments for every state, District of Columbia, territorial possessions, and several foreign countries. Each Department Headquarters exercises general supervision over the local Posts within its jurisdiction. It is urged that close communication and cooperation be maintained between the Post and its Department Headquarters.

The Department Headquarters constitutes the link between the community Post of The American Legion and the National organization. The Post will deal directly with the Department Adjutant. Routine business should be transacted through Department Headquarters. Department Headquarters is familiar with the issues and conditions of state affairs. The Post should refer questions of policy and organization to the Department Headquarters. Any information desired by the Post can be secured through Department Headquarters.

The Commander should keep in close touch with Department affairs, know what statewide activities are carried on, and see that the Post has its full share of them. They should study all instructions from Department Headquarters and see that they are passed on to the proper officer or committee for action. Also, the membership of the Post needs to be informed of any new activities that may be initiated by the Department. A library of resources and information can be found on the Department membership website at [www.floridalegion.org/membership/](http://www.floridalegion.org/membership/).

#### ❖ **National Headquarters**

Practically all of your contacts with National Headquarters are rightfully carried through your Department Headquarters. There is, however, one publication that should be faithfully read and kept, issue-by-issue. This is *The American Legion DISPATCH* published by National Headquarters; a digital version can be found online at [www.legion.org/dispatch](http://www.legion.org/dispatch). The *DISPATCH* gives you up-to-date information on which to base your programs, the proper timing for programs, and suggested news releases. The American Legion Online Update is another publication that helps keep Legionnaires informed. This is a free publication that is sent to email subscribers on a weekly basis.

## **POST OFFICER RESPONSIBILITIES**

#### ❖ **Commander**

That you have ability is recognized by your election to the office of Post Commander. Now you must draw on your ability and experience while developing new skills so that you will succeed in helping the Post prosper.

The charge you accepted, Commander, is broad and difficult. How you respond will determine to a large degree that standing of The American Legion among your associates and within the community. Your own ability, the help you obtain from District and Department Officers, the information contained in this guide, and the help you will get from the Post Officers who form your team, all combine to make the performance of your job possible. As you look to the overall operation of the Post, you realize that you have reached another level. You may feel that the step is too high, but as you proceed, following the guidelines suggested, you will develop organization and leadership among others that will make your year as Commander the most rewarding of your life.

#### **Important things you should know:**

##### ✓ Does your Post have insurance?

It's important to make sure your Post has adequate insurance to protect your Post's assets. If an incident occurs at a Post and a lawsuit is brought against the Post without the Post having insurance, the Post may lose everything including their property!

- ✓ Is your Post incorporated?  
Each Post in Florida is required to be incorporated under the laws of the State of Florida (*Department Constitution, Article X, Section 18*). This is required not only to protect the Post but also the membership of the Post. If a Post is not incorporated and a lawsuit is brought against the Post, the Post, its Officers, and its members may be held financially liable. Information on incorporating or validating a corporation status can be done at [dos.myflorida.com/sunbiz/](https://dos.myflorida.com/sunbiz/).
- ✓ Are your Post Officers bonded?  
All Post Officials handling American Legion monies are required to be properly bonded by a bonding and surety company for double the average amount of money handled in a year.
- ✓ Does your Post file tax returns?  
All Posts are required to file a tax return (Form 990) each year regardless of income or tax-exempt status. Failure to submit the required form will result in the loss of the Post's tax-exempt status.
- ✓ Does your Post participate in at least one Legion program each year?  
Each Post in Florida is required to participate in at least one recognized program of The American Legion in order to maintain its charter (*Department Constitution, Article X, Section 9c*).
- ✓ Are your Post's By-Laws up to date?  
A Post's By-Laws provide direction on the operation of the Post. As time passes, updates may be needed to coincide with the operation of the Post. *It's recommended that Post By-Laws are updated at least every three (3) years and reviewed at least once per year.*
- ✓ Does your Post membership receive a monthly finance report?  
Every Post is required to make a report to the membership at least once per month concerning the status of all financial activities and all facilities of the Post. The report shall include, but not be limited to, *Total Income, Cost of Sales, Expenses, Accounts Receivable, Accounts Payable, Inventory, a Profit and Loss Statement, any agreement concerning the use of facilities and any other information necessary to provide the membership with sufficient information to make decisions concerning these activities and facilities (Department Constitution, Article X, Section 20).*

#### ❖ **Adjutant**

The Adjutant holds the same relative position as the "First Sergeant" of the company. Post activities revolve around the Adjutant. Most Posts find it wise to retain a good Adjutant in office over a period of years. The Adjutant may be regarded as the "continuity person" and the Commander's right hand in the Post. While the Commander's duties are largely inspirational and executive, an Adjutant's duties are administrative. The Commander navigates the ship, but the Adjutant is the engineer who runs the ship's machinery.

The Adjutant is the Personnel Officer, the intimate contact with the individual Post member. Duties include but are not limited to:

- Maintaining membership records.
- Creating an agenda and taking meeting minutes.
- Oversees and assists in the work of the other Officers and Committees.
- Publishes official orders, announcements, and instructions.
- Develops a comprehensive and secure filing system for all Post records and quick access to resources.

The Adjutant is primarily concerned with ways and means and, by virtue of a key position, can add effectiveness to all Post activities. The only indispensable qualifications are honesty and willingness. The Adjutant should get a set of Post Account books from the Emblem Sales Division, National Headquarters. They require no special knowledge of bookkeeping.

The Adjutant should go through all the Post records at the first opportunity. The Constitution, minutes of meetings, and reports of Officers and Committees will give an insight into the Post's policies and traditions. Communications from Department Headquarters shall keep the Adjutant up to date on instructions.

### **Consolidated Post Report (CPR)**

Post Adjutants are the key to how well The American Legion as a whole will be able to report to the American people its actual accomplishments for the past year. Each Post is sent a CPR form as the reporting year comes to a close. This is a three-part, snap-out form. The third copy is to be retained by the Post for its files, and the first two copies go to Department Headquarters.

### **CPR forms are due to Department Headquarters no later than May 11th.**

A Post will not be allowed to seat their delegates at the Department Convention without a submitted CPR.

The CPR form covers participation in the basic programs – Americanism, Children & Youth, Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation, Economic, and National Security. But the Report goes further than the major program areas, asking for information such as Post involvement in community service, legislative endeavors, public relations efforts, etc. The Report also inquires whether the Post sponsors a uniformed group, or distributes a regular publication to the membership and the number of funeral honors for deceased members.

Information from CPR is frequently shared with members of Congress. This information provides members of Congress with a snapshot of the valuable community service provided by The American Legion family. This Report demonstrates community involvement that has been the hallmark of The American Legion's commitment and service to our Country.

Don't be discouraged if your Post doesn't have something to report in every blank on the report form. Very few Posts carry on every Legion Program. Many outstanding American Legion Posts devote their energies and resources to just two or three programs or activities, which more than justify their existence.

### **❖ First Vice Commander**

In the majority of Posts, a First, Second, and Third Vice Commander is elected, with membership being the primary concern of the First Vice Commander. Frequently the success or failure of the membership record during his/her year determines the chances of advancing to the office of Commander the following year.

While each Post is different, any membership campaign should cover certain fundamentals. Look at the methods used in the past. Were they successful? Do they need updating? Have new procedures been developed that would improve the plans now being used?

A new Post Commander will contact the Post Officers and Committee Chairs right after being elected, individually or at a special meeting. In this meeting, the First Vice Commander will lay out a general plan of operation and membership plan for the entire year. The First Vice Commander will work closely with the Adjutant and Program Chairs on these plans to ensure a Post's success.

### **❖ Second Vice Commander**

The Second Vice Commander is responsible for building the morale of their Post to ensure Legionnaires have fun while still doing the work of the Legion. Their responsibilities include but are not limited to:

- Taking charge of Post activities.
- All building and grounds maintenance.
- Providing programs that spice up meetings and attract attendance.
- Keep the social calendar filled several months in advance with activities that will bring out the active members as well as card-carrying Legionnaires.
- Contact other Veteran/Civic groups so patriotic holidays and observances receive proper attention.
- Involvement in traditional Legion pageantry.
- Promote the Color Guard and Firing Squad.
- Ensure an initiation team is functioning.

- Be actively involved with the welfare of fellow veterans and Veteran's Affairs and Rehabilitation Committee.
- Ensure that Economic Committee is functioning.
- Maintains a dual role of fun and seriousness, typical of the leadership atmosphere of The American Legion.

#### ❖ **Finance Officer**

The Finance Officer must be a person of proven integrity and experience in handling financial affairs. The Post is dependent on finance, just as any other organization, and will do well to accept expert advice in formulating and administering its financial policy.

The Finance Officer usually serves as the chair of the Finance Committee and is in charge of all receiving and disbursing of Post funds and, therefore, should be familiar with the various forms involved. The Post Adjutant, in all matters relating to finance, should carry on the work in close correlation with the Finance Officer. Because of their simplicity, The Post Account books sold by National Emblem Sales require no special knowledge of bookkeeping or accounting.

Every Post Adjutant and Finance Officer should insist upon being provided with a set of forms, including the latest tax forms. They will save time, reduce expenses, and save money for the Post.

Be prompt in remitting National and Department Dues, along with Department Record Cards, to Department Headquarters. Not all payments and other transactions on your Post Membership Register.

#### ❖ **Service Officer**

Through the Service Officer, the Post can provide your community with a unique service. The duties of the Post Service Officer call for a competent and dedicated person, preferably one who can serve indefinitely and should have a deep interest in fellow veterans, the Post, and the community. If the Service Officer is readily available to those needing assistance, it will be helpful. Electing someone that works and lives close by will likely improve effectiveness.

A good Service Officer should be retained. The value of a Post Service Officer increases with the length of service. As the Service Officer's reputation grows, so will the prestige of the organization in your community.

The *Post Service Officer Guide* prepared by the National Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Division provides the Service Officer with basic information. The purpose of Veteran's Affairs and Rehabilitation is to assist veterans in obtaining needed hospitalization, the pursuit of claims and in obtaining other veterans' rights and benefits. They visit veterans who are ill or disabled and visit their families during bereavement.

Necessary claims forms can be secured from the Department Service Officer. Information will come through Department publications, *National Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Bulletins*, memorandums, and VA pamphlets. Training schools for Post Service Officers are held periodically in many Departments to increase their knowledge and contacts.

The Post Service Officer is responsible for bringing to the attention of all veterans and their dependents the rights and benefits granted them by law – laws for which The American Legion can accept a major share of credit. The Service Officer must know how to utilize the expert services available through Legion channels, as well as those of other agencies in his/her community. It takes a dedicated person to get the information to the full-time professionals to make certain that ever veterans and dependents are adequately represented.

It is important to know that there are five parts of a VA Claim. Each part has sub steps that can determine the speed of processing your claim. Ensure that you have a Veteran Service Officer to assist in every step of the process.

The Veterans Service Officer is responsible for:

- Duty to assist – to provide guidance and assistance of general information, claims preparation, and claims development and appeals.

The veteran is responsible for:

- Their own well-rounded claim.
- Steps 1, 2, and 3 of the five steps below.

The VA is responsible for:

- Steps 4 and 5 of the five steps to a VA Claim.

**Step 1. Must be service-connected:**

An injury, disease, or illness that occurred or was aggravated while on active duty. Must have been treated on active duty and records in your medical file.

**Step 2: Must have an existing disability:**

You must provide VA medical proof of a diagnosis of an existing disability that was an injury, disease, or illness that occurred or was aggravated while on active duty.

**Step 3. Must prove the bridge between Step 1 and Step 2.**

In-service medical records, DD Form 214, civilian health care records, VA health care records, and/or buddy statements (witness) to the event that occurred on active duty.

**Step 4. VA develops the claim.**

- A) Orders files/records.
- B) Orders necessary examinations.
- C) Follows the law set forth by Congress for claims development.
- D) Requests any additional information from the claimant.

**Step 5. Adjudication of the claim.**

- A) Awards benefits.
- B) Denies benefits.

The American Legion has supported and actively participated in the Department of Veterans Affairs Voluntary Service (VAVS) program since it began in 1946. Today, nearly 7,000 volunteers serve 900,000 hours annually at various VA medical centers, community-based outpatient centers, Vet Centers, nursing homes, state veterans' homes, and other facilities that support hospitalized veterans. In every VA medical center, Legion VAVS representatives and deputy representatives attend quarterly hospital meetings and coordinate volunteers and donation needs lists with their local Posts.

For information concerning individual or Post participation, contact the chief of voluntary service at your nearest VA medical center. He or she will arrange an initial screening and help you choose the program that best fits your time and interests. Information is also available at [www.volunteer.va.gov/](http://www.volunteer.va.gov/).

❖ **Chaplain**

The Chaplain need not necessarily be a clergyman but must be a person capable of moral and intellectual leadership and one who gives dignity and respect to the office. The Chaplain should be in close touch with the Commander and other Officers of the Post and should attend all meetings of the Post and Executive Committee. The leadership in many of the Post's activities belongs of right to the Chaplain, and when this office is filled by the right kind of person, the usefulness of the Post to the community will be greatly increased.

The *Officers Guide and Manual of Ceremonies* gives an important place of the Chaplain in the conduct of meetings, in the observance of patriotic occasions, funeral services, and dedication ceremonies. On these occasions, the Chaplain is the moral leader. The Chaplain should cooperate with the Post Historian on graves registration work and inspire the Post to its full duty in seeing that graves are decorated on Memorial Day. Besides officiating when requested at funerals of members, the Chaplain can be of service to bereaved families of Post members.

The Legion's Religious Emphasis Program, The Graves Registration and Memorial Committee, and Veteran's Affairs Volunteer Services (VAVS) is in place to assist the Chaplain in his/her duties and it is recommended that the Chaplain be Chair of VAVS. It is also recommended that all Post members share in this vital function by taking their turn as Committee Members. The purpose of the Committee is to record, mark and decorate the graves of deceased Veterans; to render service to and comfort grieving families and to provide American Legion funeral services when requested.

#### ❖ **Sergeant-At-Arms**

The Sergeant-at Arms should know how to arrange the meeting hall and should assist the Post Commander and Adjutant in the preliminary arrangements for the meeting, including Custodian of the Colors, and is in charge of the Color detail during the presentation and retirement ceremonies of the Colors. The Sergeant-at-Arms is the flag etiquette person and should be well informed on proper flag display and procedures used in operating a meeting and should play a leading part in the Post Color Guard, burial detail, and the other pageantry that is a part of The American Legion. The purpose of the Uniformed Groups Committee is to organize, train, promote, and supervise a uniformed group such as a burial detail, color guard, chorus, firing squad, etc.

The Sergeant-at-Arms must make certain that new members are welcomed, introduced, and made to feel they are important to the post. A Welcoming Committee should be standard for every Post. The Sergeant-at-Arms is the logical person to chair such a committee. The members of this committee must welcome new members and guests, make sure they are introduced, and keep the Commander advised as to who should be acknowledged. This committee can also be used to encourage present members to attend meetings.

#### ❖ **Historian**

The work of Post Historian is cumulative. It is well to leave it in the hands of one person as long as it's being handled well. The Post Historian should keep in touch with the Department Historian and should be prompt in answering inquiries. An annual report should be made to the Department Historian just before the Department Convention.

Copies of whatever is printed concerning the Post should be deposited in the local and state libraries, as well as in the Post files. This is important and will prevent the complete loss of valuable records through fire or other calamity, as well as provide material for those who are looking for information about The American Legion. Copies should also be deposited in Department archives.

The Post Historian should make a point of knowing what Historians of neighboring Posts are doing. The Historian should attend Department Conventions and keep in touch with other Post Historians. The Department Historian can advise Post Historians on Department and National Post history contests, Historians' Associations, and material available from the Department Historian that will assist in doing a better job.

#### ❖ **Judge Advocate**

The primary duty of the Judge Advocate is to supply professional advice in the conduct of the Post business or to procure proper counsel and is the guardian of the constitutional form of Post government. Your Judge Advocate can supply valuable assistance to other Post committees and Officers. That Officer should be

available to go to the Service Officer for legal advice and to the Americanism Committee on matters relating to education and naturalization laws. Any Post Committee can benefit from the Judge Advocate's contacts with the office holders of local government.

The Judge Advocate and Legal Committee are charged by the suggested Post Constitution with the duty of auditing Post financial accounts. This should be done annually just before the election of Officers or more frequently at their discretion.

## **POST ADMINISTRATION**

### **❖ Executive Committee**

In the suggested Post Constitution and By-Laws provided in the National *Officer's Guide and Manual of Ceremonies*, the government and management of the Post are entrusted to the Executive Committee. Meetings of the Executive Committee are set for regular intervals upon the call of the Commander or as often as the Commander may deem necessary.

The Post Executive Committee is further charged with hiring such employees as may be necessary; authorizing and approving all expenditures; requiring adequate bonds from all persons having the custody of Post funds; hearing reports of Post Committee Chairs; and generally having charge of and being responsible for the management of the affairs of the Post.

Delegation of these functions to the Executive Committee is in no way intended to usurp the powers of the membership through regular Post meetings. Rather, this allows the dull, routine, operational affairs of the Post to be resolved without distracting from Post meetings. Committee reports of general interest to members should be given at Post meetings.

### **❖ Standing Committee**

Listed below are Committees found in most American Legion Posts. Your Post Constitution and/or your Department Constitution may require additional Committees or may have other names for some of the Committees, and the following list is not intended to be mandatory or complete for every American Legion Post.

- Americanism
- Children & Youth
- Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation
- National Security
- Membership & Post Activities
- Public Relations
- Legislative
- Finance
- Economic
- Service

New programs are often needed, while old programs should be changed, revitalized, and in some cases, dropped. Officers should take time to review the programs and activities, which have been carried on in the past, and decide on desirable changes or additions. The activities that are to be carried on determine the Committees that are needed. The next task is to review the membership of the Post and even eligible nonmembers. From this review, a list can be set up of potential Committee heads and members. Each Committee Chair needs to know how the work of the committee fits into the overall program of the Post and he/she needs to know what is expected, and when.

## House Committee

If Post members decide they want a clubroom and/or bar, it must have the best possible operation.

### ❖ Post Constitution and By-Laws Submission Procedures

**Pursuant to Article X, Section 10 of the Department's Constitution** – *“Each Post in the Department of Florida shall have its own Constitution and By-Laws, provided that it shall not conflict with the National Constitution and By-Laws and the Constitution and By-Laws of the Department of Florida. The Post Constitution and By-Laws, together with any subsequent Amendments, shall be approved by the Department Judge Advocate or Department Assistant Judge Advocate, such approval confirmed by the Department Commander, and a copy filed with the Department Adjutant's office, with Certification of Approval issued to the Post before becoming effective.”*

The following is utilized to have Post Constitution and By-Laws approved at the Department level:

1. Posts must forward one (1) copy of the entire Constitution and By-Laws, with incorporated amendments, to the Department Adjutant. This can be accomplished by mail or email.
2. All amendments must be annotated. Examples of annotation are as follows;
  - a. Additions to the original text are shown by **bold underline**. Deletions to the original text are shown by ~~strikethrough~~.
  - b. **Highlight** the changed text. If this is the case, please also send an original copy (without changes) for comparison purposes.
  - c. List the changes by Article(s) and Section(s) with the old and new text within the cover letter.
  - d. In the case of a total rewrite, please address that in your cover letter and include a copy of the original for comparison.
3. All amendments must be voted on by the membership at a meeting at which a quorum has been met. The minutes of the said meeting must either clearly state the amendments or attach a copy of the amendments read to the membership for a vote. Also, the vote of the membership must be recorded in the minutes. A copy of these minutes must be sent with the amendments.
4. The signature page of the Constitution and By-Laws must include the following:
  - a. Date of the meeting the Post membership voted on the amendments.
  - b. States that the members of the Post approved the amendments at said meeting.
  - c. Signed by two Post Officers attesting to the membership's approval.
5. Once the Constitution and By-Laws are received with all required documentation, the Department Adjutant will forward them to the Department Judge Advocate for review.
6. The Department Judge Advocate will send their written response to the Department Adjutant after their review where;
  - a. Upon receiving written approval from the Judge Advocate, the Department Adjutant will send the original Judge Advocate's approval letter and cover letter to the Post Commander.
  - b. Upon receiving written disapproval from Judge Advocate, the Department Adjutant will correspond via letter to Post Commander. If not approved, Post may resubmit, with changes, to the Department Adjutant. The Department Adjutant will forward Constitution and By-Laws with written authorization to the Department Judge Advocate for approval. The process begins again with step 1.

### ❖ Creating Resolutions & Amendments

If you have an idea that will improve The American Legion at any level, put that idea into words in the form of a resolution. A resolution will need to be approved by the membership of a Post before being submitted to

the Department Headquarters for consideration at the next Department Convention. At the Department Convention, a representative of the Post should attend the Internal Affairs meeting to speak on behalf of the resolution and be prepared to speak for its passage on the floor of the Department Convention. All resolutions pertaining to the National organization that are passed by the Department are forwarded to the National Convention.

Guidance on writing a resolution can be found in the National *Officer's Guide and Manual of Ceremonies*. The Department Headquarters can also provide examples upon request. An editable Proposal of Resolution form can be found on the Department's website at [www.floridalegion.org/resources/legion-post-documents/department/](http://www.floridalegion.org/resources/legion-post-documents/department/).

The Department Constitution and By-Laws can be amended at any Department Convention by a vote of two-thirds of the total authorized representation thereat. A Post, the Department Executive Committee, or the Department Standing Committee on Constitution and By-Laws must submit a proposed amendment.

A proposed amendment must be submitted on the appropriate Department form. The amendment shall contain the reference of the article and section being amended, the exact verbiage of the section being amended with a strikethrough any words being removed, and added words are to be bold and underlined. The Department Headquarters can provide assistance and examples upon request. An editable Proposal to Amend Constitution form can be found on the Department website at [www.floridalegion.org/resources/legion-post-documents/department/](http://www.floridalegion.org/resources/legion-post-documents/department/).

*Both resolutions and amendments must be submitted to the Department Headquarters no less than forty (40) days prior to the date of the annual Department Convention.* The Department Headquarters will send a copy of each proposed amendment to the Post at least thirty (30) days prior to the Department Convention. Proposed resolutions will not be sent to Posts in advance.

#### ❖ Elections

If the work of the Post has done well and the present Officers have been effective, there should be a lack of competition for the elective Post Offices. But there may come a time when someone must be approached and urged to run for Post Commander or the other elective officers. This is particularly true in some smaller Posts where many of the members have already served. This situation should be anticipated, and long-range plans made. The present Post Officers and the active Legionnaires must always be on the alert toward developing future Officer material. A Legionnaire showing ability and interest should be encouraged to seek a higher office.

The Post Constitution and By-Laws will spell out the dates for nomination and election of Officers. If these dates do not agree with the Department's Constitution and By-Laws, the Post's dates should be changed.

*"All Officers of Posts, except the Post Adjutant, Post Service Officer, and Post Judge Advocate, shall be elected and certified to the Department Adjutant, not more than ninety (90) days, nor less than ten (10) days prior to the Annual Department Convention...." (Department Constitution, Article X, Section 12).*

#### ❖ Installation of Officers

All Officers shall, after their election and at the earliest opportunity thereafter, be installed by the District Commander or their designated representative. Post Officers shall take office and enter upon their duties at a date to be fixed by the Post, which date shall be subsequent to, but not later than sixty (60) days after the adjournment of the Annual Department Convention, unless waived in writing by the incoming District Commander. No Post Officer shall assume office prior to providing the Post Adjutant with proof of eligibility for membership in The American Legion. (Department Constitution, Article X, Section 12).

*A step-by-step instruction for Installations is provided in the Officer's Guide and Manual of Ceremonies.*

The installation of a new group of Officers provides the first occasion of the new Legion year for an impressive ceremony and reason for one of the top social events in the Post's calendar. If new Officers are casually installed, their attitude toward their obligation will be casual. If the installation is accompanied by a banquet, visits from the Department and District Officers, and the type of social entertainment that draws a crowd, the new Officers are going to be fully aware of the responsibilities they have assumed.

## **PROTOCOL AND PARLIAMENTARY PROCEDURE**

### **❖ American Legion Event Protocol**

Although "protocol" is a term used primarily in setting the rules of etiquette which govern diplomatic functions, there is a certain amount of protocol, which applies to American Legion meetings and social functions, especially those to which dignitaries have been invited. Protocol for these events is the responsibility of the Post Commander, who should be aware of certain guidelines that begin with the planning of the event.

#### **Inviting the Department Commander**

To invite the Department Commander, submit a request through the online form at:

<https://www.floridalegion.org/department/commanders-corner/request-a-visit/>

Alternatively, you may send the invitation via email to [Commander@floridalegion.org](mailto:Commander@floridalegion.org) or by mail to the Department Headquarters. It is advisable to include an alternate date in case the Commander is unavailable on the preferred date. The invitation should contain important details such as the date, time, and location of the event, the type of function (e.g., dinner, ceremony), the significance of the event, whether it is a joint Legion–Auxiliary event, and whether any non-Legion dignitaries will be present.

#### **Dinner Event Protocol**

If the event includes a dinner, guests who will be seated at the head table should be notified of this beforehand. They should be escorted to their seats to avoid confusion. Place cards identifying each guest should be used. The presiding or host officer is seated to the right of the podium, while the Master of Ceremonies is seated to the left.

Introductions are made after the meal. The presiding officer stands at the center of the head table and begins the introductions from the extreme left, continuing to the center, and then proceeds from the extreme right back to the center. The guest of honor or main speaker is always introduced last.

#### **Officer Introduction Order**

American Legion officers are introduced in the order in which they are installed: Sergeant-At-Arms, Service Officer, Historian, Judge Advocate, Chaplain, Finance Officer, Adjutant, Vice Commanders, and finally, the Commander. In joint functions with The American Legion Auxiliary, Auxiliary officers and dignitaries are introduced first. A National Executive Committeeman or Alternate NEC should be introduced immediately before the Department Commander.

### **❖ Parliamentary Procedures**

Parliamentary procedure is the application of parliamentary law to the conduct of an organization. It is wise for all leaders to familiarize themselves with the accustomed technique of conducting a meeting. While it is important that the members understand the fundamental rules of parliamentary procedure, this knowledge should be used only to ensure order, to expedite business, and to develop an organization that will cleave to the objects for which it was organized. For a member constantly to raise points of order and to insist upon the strict observance of every rule in a peaceable assembly where there are members ignorant of these rules and customs is but to defeat the opportunity of gradually accustoming the membership of the proper observance

of parliamentary procedure.

Detailed guidance regarding the order of business, motions, amendments, nominations and elections, courtesies in the assembly, parliamentarian and authorized business can be found in the National's *Officers Guide and Manual of Ceremonies*.

#### ❖ **How to Run a Meeting**

Follow these steps to ensure your meeting runs smoothly:

- ✓ Prepare your agenda in advance. Be sure to include the roll call, reading of the minutes, introduction of guests and new members, committee reports., old business, new business, and the opening and closing ceremonies.
- ✓ Have the minutes of the previous meeting prepared and ready for presentation.
- ✓ Communicate with your Post Officers before and during the meeting to make sure they're familiar with their duties.

The order of business for Post meetings shall be:

- 1) Roll Call to determine if a quorum is present.
- 2) Reading of minutes of the previous meeting.
- 3) Introduction of guests and prospective and new members.
- 4) Committee reports.
- 5) Balloting on applications.
- 6) Sick call, relief, and employment.
- 7) Post Service Officer's report.
- 8) Unfinished business.
- 9) Initiation of candidates.
- 10) New business (and correspondence.)
- 11) Memorial to a departed Post member.
- 12) The good of The American Legion.

*The membership shall be permitted to make suggestions of any kind, character, or description, save of religion or partisan politics.*

#### ❖ **AGENDA – General/Executive Board Meeting**

AMERICAN LEGION - \_\_\_\_\_ POST # \_\_\_\_\_ SOMEWHERE, FL

Opening Ceremony

All Officers should be in uniform, each wearing the official American Legion cap and the official badge of office. American Legion meetings shall be conducted in the following manner:

1. **COMMANDER:** "The meeting is about to open. All Officers take their stations."
2. **COMMANDER:** (1 gavel drop) "Sergeant-At-Arms. Close the doors of the meeting hall."
3. **COMMANDER:** (3 gavel drops) Everyone stands at attention.
4. **COMMANDER:** "With the colors of our Country in place..." OR "Post the colors."; "Hand Salute." "Two."
5. **COMMANDER:** "Uncover."
6. **COMMANDER:** "The Chaplain will offer prayer."
7. **CHAPLAIN:** "Almighty God, ... Amen."
8. **COMMANDER:** "Resolution 288, adopted at the 67th National Convention, calls for designating a POW/MIA Empty Chair at all official meetings of The American Legion as a physical symbol of the thousands of American POW/MIAs still unaccounted for from all the wars and conflicts involving the United States of American. Accordingly, at this time the Vice Commander (or Commander's Designee) will

place the POW/MIA flag on the Empty Chair as a reminder for all of us to spare no effort to secure the release of any American Prisoners from captivity, the repatriation of the remains of those who died bravely in defense of liberty, and a full accounting of the missing. Let us rededicate ourselves for this vital endeavor.”

*Place POW/MIA flag on the Empty Chair.*

“Please observe a moment of silence for those who are serving and who served in defending our country from all wars and conflicts.”

*Full 60 seconds of silence.*

9. **COMMANDER:** “Please follow me in the reciting the “Pledge of Allegiance.”
10. **COMMANDER:** “I pledge allegiance to the flag of the United States of America and to the Republic for which it stands, one Nation, under God, with liberty and justice for all.”
11. **COMMANDER:** “Everyone will recover.”
12. **COMMANDER:** “The Vice Commander (*or Commander’s Designee*) will lead us with the preamble.”
13. **VICE COMMANDER OR DESIGNEE:** “For God and Country...”
14. **COMMANDER:** (*1 gavel drop*) “I now declare this General/Executive Board Meeting of The American Legion Post \_\_\_\_\_ of the Department of Florida regularly convened.”  
*Ceremony for draping American Legion Charter is done at General Meeting.*
15. **COMMANDER:** “Sergeant-At-Arms, do we have any guests?” (*Or Commander will announce guests.*)
16. **SERGEANT-AT-ARMS:** “Commander, we have guests.”  
*Always introduce past Officers, then lowest to highest office last. The highest office should always receive the respect as prior to announcing their name/office – 3 gavel drops and announce that person.*
17. **COMMANDER:** *Calls for Adjutant to take Roll Call, Reading of the Minutes, and Correspondence Review.*
18. **ADJUTANT:**
  - a. Roll Call (*determines if a quorum is present*): “ \_\_\_\_\_ members for Executive Board Meeting” OR “ \_\_\_\_\_ members for General Meeting.”
  - b. Reading of the Minutes – General Meeting: “Motion by \_\_\_\_\_ to approve the General Meeting Minutes as read.”; “Seconded by \_\_\_\_\_.”; “Motion Passed.”
  - c. Reading of the Minutes – Executive Board Meeting: “Motion by \_\_\_\_\_ to approve the Executive Board Meeting Minutes as read.”; “Seconded by \_\_\_\_\_.”; “Motion Passed.”
  - d. Correspondence Review – Officer Reports: *Remember, for any report that requires an audit in the Post Constitution and By-Laws, the proper motion should be “I move to file the Finance Report for Audit (Finance, Kitchen, Lounge or any other report).”; “Seconded.”; “Motion Passed.”*
  - e. Correspondence Review – Committee Reports.
19. **COMMANDER:** “Is there any old business to come before this meeting?”
20. **COMMANDER:** “Is there any new business to come before this meeting?”
21. **COMMANDER:** “Is there any further business to come before this meeting?”
22. **COMMANDER** (*3 gavel drops*): “Uncover.”; “The Vice Commander (*or Designee*) will retrieve the POW/MIA flag from the Empty Chair.”  
*Vice Commander or Designee removes POW/MIA flag from the Empty Chair.*
23. **COMMANDER:** “The Chaplain will lead us with a closing prayer.”
24. **CHAPLAIN:** “Our heavenly Father, ... Amen.”
25. **COMMANDER:** “Cover.”
26. **COMMANDER:** “Til we meet again, let us remember our obligation to our Country can be fulfilled only by the faithful performance of all duties of citizenship. Let service to the community, state, and nation be ever a main objective of The American Legion and its members. Let us be ever watchful of the honor of our Country, our organization and ourselves, that nothing shall deter us from the path of Justice, Freedom, and Democracy.”
27. **COMMANDER:** “With the colors of our Country in place...” OR “Retrieve the colors.”; “Hand Salute.”; “Two.”

28. **COMMANDER:** "I now declare this General/Executive Board Meeting of Post \_\_\_\_\_, The American Legion, Department of Florida, adjourned." (1 gavel drop)

❖ **Complaints/Investigation Procedure**

Often times conflicts of personalities or different opinions on management styles will result in conflicts within the Post. In most cases, these conflicts involve the Post lounge, financial concerns, or other issues involving Post operations. These matters should be resolved by the Post leadership whenever possible.

If the concern involves the upper echelon of the Post leadership or is not properly addressed at the Post level, contact the District Commander for assistance.

If the District Commander is unable to easily resolve the matter and further investigation is recommended, a member of the Post must submit a letter to the Department Headquarters providing a detailed outline of the concern, violations of National, Department, and/or Post By-Laws, actions already taken (e.g., Contacted Post leadership. and/or District Commander) and evidence if possible. A current paid member of the Post must sign the letter. Once received, the Department Commander will review the request and determine if an investigation is warranted.

Department By-Laws Article VI, Section 1 states: The Department Commander may initiate actions to ensure that improper management, dishonesty, conflicts of personalities, malfeasance, misfeasance, nonfeasance, or any other factors do not jeopardize the continued existence of any Post in the Department of Florida. These actions may include but are not limited to, the following:

(a) Directing the District Commander in which a Post is located to conduct a preliminary investigation into the affairs of the Post and to act, if possible, as a mediator if they determine that the problem is primarily one of a conflict in personalities. Should the Department Commander decide that there may be some cogent reason to use some other individual to conduct the initial investigation/mediation, they shall, in consultation with the Area Commander in which the Post is located, detail some other member of the Department to conduct the initial investigation/mediation. A report of such investigation, including recommendations for further actions by officials of the Department, shall be rendered to the Department Commander.

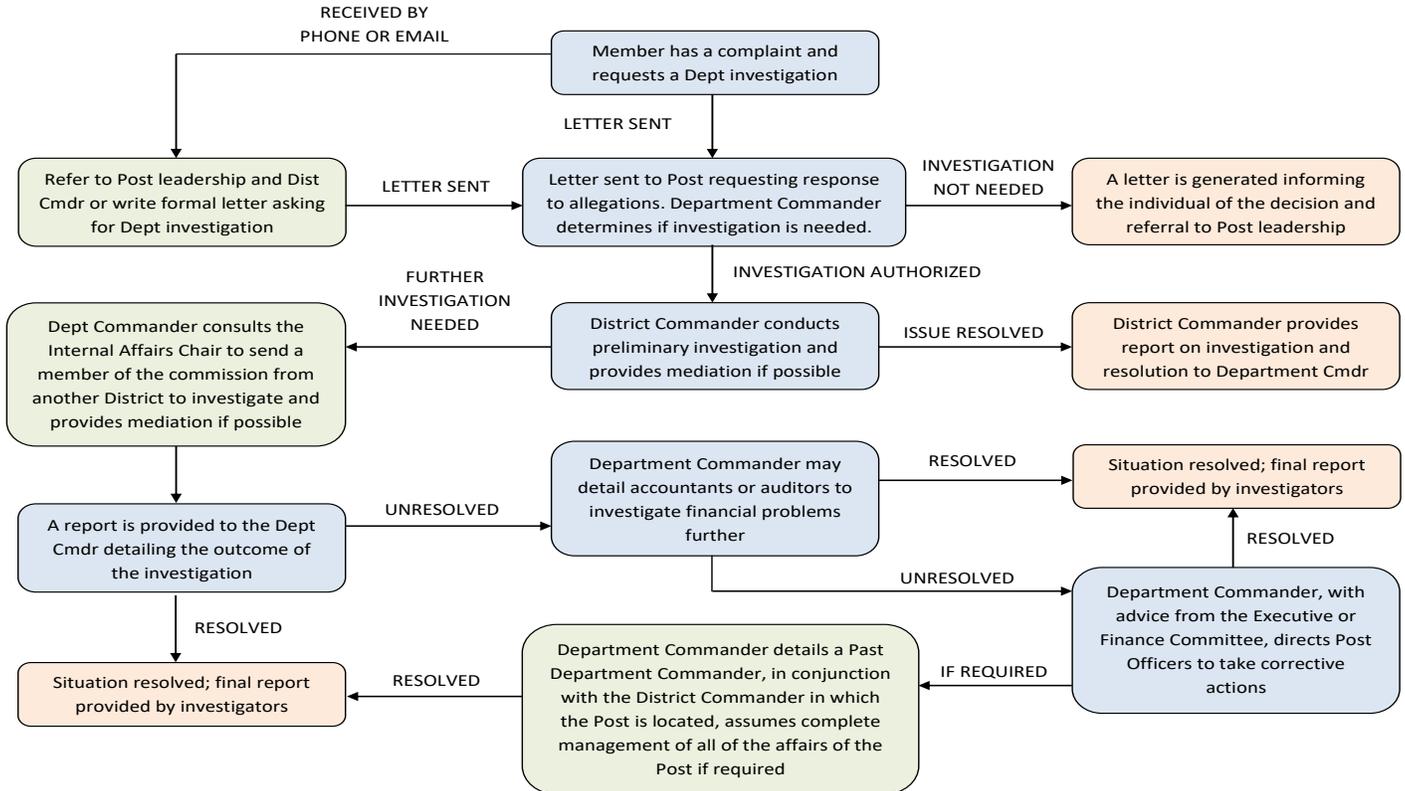
(b) If the initial investigation/mediation does not result in a solution to the problem, the Department Commander, after consultation with the Chairperson of the Internal Affairs Commission, shall appoint a member of that Commission not from the same District as the Post involved, to conduct a further investigation into the affairs of the Post and to act, if possible, as a mediator if they should feel that mediation could be successful. A report of such investigation, including recommendations for further actions by the Department, shall be rendered to the Department Commander as soon as practicable.

(c) Based on this report, the Department Commander may detail accountants or auditors to investigate financial problems further. Should such further investigations reveal conditions that could jeopardize the continued existence of the Post, the Department Commander, with the advice of the Department Executive Committee or the Finance Committee when the Department Executive Committee is not in session, shall advise the Post officers to take actions to ensure these conditions are alleviated, and if the Post officers are unable or refuse to comply with these directions, shall detail a Past Department Commander, in conjunction with the District Commander in which the Post is located, to take these actions providing specific detailed guidance for management of all of the affairs of the Post if required. In this event, every effort shall be made by the Past Department Commander and the District Commander to return complete control to the regular officers of the Post at the earliest opportunity if it is determined that such return of control is in the best interest of the Post and Department.

(d) The Post involved shall be responsible for the cost of the investigations detailed above, including travel expenses, lodging, and other expenses for the investigator(s), auditor(s), accountant(s) or other personnel.

# Post Investigation Flowchart

## By-Laws Article VI, Section 1



### ❖ Trials & Appeals

Per Article X, Section 13 of the Department Constitution:

*“Members or Post Officers may be reprimanded, removed from office, suspended or expelled from The American Legion only upon proper showing or cause. Charges shall be based upon disloyalty, neglect of duty, dishonesty and/or conduct unbecoming a member of The American Legion. Charges must be made under oath in writing by the accuser(s), and no member or Post Officer shall lose his membership or office until given a fair trial.....”*

It’s important to remember that installed Post Officers cannot be removed from their position unless they are found guilty through a fair trial or resign their office.

A set of rules established to govern trials and appeals can be found in this section of the guide. These rules must be followed precisely when conducting a trial. If the rules are not followed, the accused may appeal the decision of the trial and have the verdict overturned. If you have any questions or need assistance in conducting a trial, please contact the Department Headquarters.

### ❖ Rules Governing Trials

*These rules shall govern all trials held by any Post within The American Legion, Department of Florida.*

1. Any disciplinary action against any Member or Officer where the potential punishment is suspension or expulsion from The American Legion, or in the case of an Officer, the removal from office, shall be upon sworn or verified written charges by the accuser(s).
2. Said sworn or verified written charges shall be filed with the Adjutant of the Convening Authority.

3. A copy of the sworn or verified written charges shall be served upon the Accused, either in person or by certified mail with proof thereof by a return receipt.

4. The Adjutant of the Convening Authority shall cause to be served upon the Accused, in the same manner as above mentioned, a Summons for the Accused to appear on a specified date, time, and location for a trial. The trial shall be held as set forth below.

5. The accuser(s) must be a member(s) of the same Post as the Accused and shall set forth the charges of disloyalty, neglect of duty, dishonesty, and/or conduct unbecoming a Member of The American Legion in terms whereby the Accused shall be able to determine what conduct is being complained of, which shall at a minimum, include the date, time, place, and the details of the offensive conduct, in order that the Accused may properly prepare a defense.

6. The Accused may appear at the trial in person, through written answer, or with counsel. Counsel may be a member of The American Legion or a Florida licensed attorney.

7. Either the Convening Authority or the Accused may apply for a continuance before the day of the trial. However, such a request must be in writing, show just cause for said request, and be sworn to by the moving party. The presiding Judge Advocate shall rule on any such motion filed.

8. The Judge Advocate of the Convening Authority shall preside at the trial and shall have the power and authority to pass upon the materiality and relevancy of any evidence presented, and shall have general power to prescribe the necessary and reasonable rules and regulations for the orderly procedure of said trial.

9. In the event that the Judge Advocate of the Convening Authority is unable to preside at the trial, the Department Commander shall be noticed of said inability, and the Department Commander will then appoint a Judge Advocate from within the physical jurisdiction of The American Legion, Department of Florida, to preside over the trial. The Post shall bear the expense of any Judge Advocate so appointed.

10. At any time before the trial commences, the charges may be amended. However, if the charges are amended the Accused must be served with the amended charges and allowed fourteen (14) days before the trial can commence.

11. The entire trial including all votes taken, will be conducted by the Post Judge Advocate or a Judge Advocate appointed by the Department Commander.

12. The procedure of the trial shall be as follows:

A. Within fifteen (15) days of the charges being served on the Accused, the Judge Advocate shall conduct an arraignment.

1) The Judge Advocate will read to, and assure that the Accused understands the charges being brought against the Accused, and that the Accused understands that they have a right to plead not guilty and to the assistance of representation at trial from another willing Legionnaire or a Florida licensed attorney at the Accused's expense.

2) The Judge Advocate will ask the Accused whether they plead not guilty or guilty and enter the plea into the record.

B. At the next regularly scheduled meeting of the Post, the first order of business will be to select a jury. A jury will consist of no less than five (5) Legion members of the Post. The Judge Advocate may allow up to eleven (11) jurors if the Post has sufficient membership to warrant a larger jury. A jury must consist of an odd number of members.

1) A jury shall be selected using the following procedure:

a) The Judge Advocate will announce the date, time, and location (Post Home) of the trial.

b) The Judge Advocate will inquire if any Post members will be unavailable for the trial or if there is a reason they can not or should not serve on the jury.

c) All available Legionnaires will randomly be given a piece of paper/flash card with a number of 1 through \_\_\_\_ (number of perspective jurors).

d) After the Judge Advocate has set the number of Legionnaires to serve on the jury, the jurors will present in order of the number they were randomly given.

e) Both the Prosecution and the Accused will then have an opportunity to question each prospective juror.

- f) The Prosecutor and Accused shall each have the right to strike at least one (1) prospective juror. Additional strikes may be permitted by the Judge Advocate depending upon the size of the jury pool.
- g) Once the allotted strikes are spent, or the Plaintiff or Accused does not wish to use a strike, the first \_\_\_\_ (number of jurors) will be the jury.
- h) The Judge Advocate may allow two (2) additional jurors to be seated as alternate jurors. These jurors will be used in the event a selected juror is unable to serve at the time of the trial.

2) The Judge Advocate will assure that each juror and the Accused is given written notice of the time, date, and location of the trial.

13. The start of the trial shall be the reading of the charges in front of the jury.

14. All testimony of witnesses must be taken under oath. The Accused shall have the right to confront and cross examine any witnesses against him or her. No written statements, whether sworn or not, shall be admitted into evidence if the person who wrote the statement is not present to confront and be cross examined by the Accused or counsel. The Accused shall be allowed to testify in his/her own defense, if he/she so desires.

15. Either the Convening Authority or the Accused shall have the right to have the trial and associated proceedings recorded by tape, video, or court reporter. The Post which arranges for the recording/reporting of the trial shall be responsible for any cost associated therewith.

16. Once the witnesses have been heard and the Accused has been heard (if desired), all persons other than the individuals sitting as jury shall retire from the meeting room and the jury shall commence to deliberate, taking a separate vote on each charge as to whether the Accused is guilty or not guilty. There must be a majority vote of guilty, on each charge, for the Accused to be found guilty of that particular charge.

17. If the Accused is found guilty, a second vote will be taken to determine if the Accused will be permanently expelled from The American Legion, suspended from The American Legion or a lesser punishment as determined by a majority vote. Expulsion means no longer eligible to be a member of The American Legion (requires a 67% affirmative vote from the jury). Suspension means suspended from The American Legion for a maximum of the remainder of the current membership year and one additional membership year. A not guilty verdict dictates no punishment.

18. The verdict and a brief summary of the evidence heard at the trial shall be presented at the next general membership meeting of the Post. The Post membership shall act on the verdict by ratifying same, or reducing the conviction or sentence awarded by the jury. In no event can the membership increase the punishment, or act on or change any not guilty verdict.

19. Such decision at the general membership meeting of the Post shall be binding upon the Accused and the Post unless the Accused, within forty-five (45) days from such decision, appeals to The American Legion, Department of Florida. Any appeal, including filing deadlines, shall be governed by those rules enacted by the Department Executive Committee entitled "Rules Governing Appeals."

20. The Post must inform the Accused of their right to appeal the outcome of the trial to The American Legion, Department of Florida.

21. If the Accused is expelled from The American Legion, the Post must submit to the Department Headquarters a complete copy of the following: (1) the sworn or verified written charge(s), (2) the Summons served to the Accused, and (3) the transcription or summary of the trial proceedings. These documents are necessary for the Department to initiate the process of recording the expulsion in the National membership system.

22. In the event of a conflict between these Rules and either the Constitution or By-Laws of The American Legion, Department of Florida, the Constitution and/or By-Laws shall be controlling.

#### ❖ **Rules Governing Appeals**

*Any appeal taken from a trial held at a Post within the jurisdiction of The American Legion, Department of Florida shall be governed by these rules.*

1. A Notice of Appeal, in accordance with the attached form entitled "Notice of Appeal" must be received within forty-five (45) days of the final action of the Convening Authority or any appeal is waived.
2. The Notice of Appeal shall contain the following:

- a. The date, location, participants (Accused, Judge Advocate, witness(es), counsel(s), accuser(s), and jurors) and verdict.
  - b. A concise and specific statement of why the accused believes he or she did not receive a fair trial.
  - c. A brief summary of the testimony of each and every witness.
  - d. A concise statement of the final disciplinary action taken by the Convening Authority.
  - e. Attached to the Notice of Appeal shall be a copy of the charge(s) against the Accused, the Summons, and any evidentiary materials such as papers or photographs used during the trial. If no such documents were used, then this shall be so stated.
3. The entity that brought the charge(s) shall have a right to respond to any allegations or statements in the accused's Notice of Appeal. Said response shall be in writing and filed with the Department Adjutant within sixty (60) days from the Convening Authority's decision.
  4. The Department Adjutant shall schedule the appeal at the next regular meeting of the Department Executive Committee.
  5. At the hearing on the appeal before the Department Executive committee, both the accused, either in person or through counsel, and the Convening Authority's commander or counsel, shall have five (5) minutes to argue their points on appeal. The points on appeal are limited to whether the accused received a fair trial.
  6. Any member of the Department Executive Committee may question either party.
  7. The Department Judge Advocate will preside over any such appeal.
  8. Upon the Department Executive Committee rendering a decision on the appeal, the Department Judge Advocate shall reduce said decision to writing and direct said opinion to be distributed to each member of the Department Executive Committee, the accused, and the Convening Authority.

#### ❖ **Post Property**

One of the requirements set forth in the Department Constitution is that every Post in the state of Florida must obtain written consent from the Department Commander before selling or disposing of any real estate. This is required to protect the Post and its members from one or two individuals selling the property without the knowledge of the membership.

Department Constitution, Article X, Section 19 reads as follows:

*"(a) No Post of the Department of Florida shall sell or otherwise dispose of any real property (real estate) without first obtaining the written consent of the Department Commander. The request to dispose of Post real property must be presented to The American Legion, Department of Florida, NOT LESS than thirty (30) days prior to such sale or disposal and must state that all members of the Post have been given written notice, of the proposed sale/disposal via certified mail, return receipt requested, or other verifiable correspondence. Written notice must include the place, date and time of meeting where the proposed sale of Post property will be discussed and voted upon. Notice must be sent to all active current and previous year Post members no less than thirty (30) days prior to the meeting. If a Post is financially unable to contact each member through verifiable correspondence, the Department will assist in contacting the Post members. Each Post shall provide The American Legion, Department of Florida with the minutes from the meeting in which the Post membership voted to sell the property, duly executed by the Post Commander and Adjutant, and in a form suitable to the Department. The Department Adjutant shall cause the written consent of the Department Commander to be recorded in the official records of the County wherein the real property is located.*

*(b) Upon a Post purchasing a parcel of real property the Post shall cause the following language to be inserted into the deed for the real property before the deed is recorded into the public records: Article X Section 19 of the Constitution of The American Legion, Department of Florida requires all American Legion Posts within the State of Florida, prior to transferring a parcel of real property, to 1. Provide written notice to all members of the Post who are in good standing, and 2. Obtain written consent for the transfer of the real property from the Department Commander."*

To find out if your Post already has a Restriction of Post Property form on file, contact the Executive Assistant Rach Castleberry at 407-295-2631 ext. 239 or by email at [rcastleberry@floridalegion.org](mailto:rcastleberry@floridalegion.org).

#### ❖ Documents and Certificates

There are certain items that a Post MUST HAVE to exist and other items that a Post MUST HAVE if they do certain things. It is important for the protection of your Post that each of the following be filed with State and local governments with copies to the Department:

##### ✓ Incorporation Papers

Department Constitution, Article X, Section 18 states: *"All Posts shall be incorporated under the laws of the State of Florida. Articles of Incorporation must be filed with the State of Florida, copy to the Department."* Your application will be as a 501c (19), which identifies your Post as a non-profit, veteran service organization that is chartered by Congress.

An Annual report must be filed yearly to maintain "active" status. The report must be filed electronically online between January 1st and March 1st. The fee for the Annual Report is \$61.26. "Annual Report reminder notices" are sent to the email address you provide to the State of Florida when filing an Articles of Incorporation or filing an Annual Report. There is a \$400.00 penalty for filing after March 31st. To file any time after January 1st, go to

[dos.myflorida.com/sunbiz/](https://dos.myflorida.com/sunbiz/)

##### ✓ Supplemental Charter

When a Post becomes incorporated, it is necessary to apply for a supplemental charter. When a Post incorporates and changes its name, the change is usually enough for it to be considered by the government as a new entity, thereby requiring another Employer Identification Number (EIN). The old one is normally invalid. Play it safe, get a new one. This number is obtained through the IRS by submitting an SS-4 form.

The incorporation of a Post modifies the information sent in on the earliest inclusion letter reporting your EIN with National Headquarters. The legal name off the Post will appear on the incorporation papers or corporate charter with the state. A change in the name, even just adding "Inc." to the name, will be reported to the IRS in September. National Headquarters needs to maintain your correct, legal, and accurate Post name on this report for the IRS exactly as it appears upon the corporate charter from the state. Any changes are to be sent to the National Headquarters office so the IRS records will remain up to date and the Post can avoid IRS issues.

When requesting a supplemental charter, please fill the form out in triplicate. A copy of your State issued Articles of Incorporation is required attachment to the supplemental charter application that is available from Department Headquarters. If the name of the Legion charter changes while a supplemental charter is in place, the supplemental charter will be null and void. A new supplemental charter application and Articles of Incorporation will need to be submitted to reflect the new name of the Legion Charter.

For further information call JoAnn Collins at 407-295-2631 ext. 228 or by email at [jcollins@floridalgion.org](mailto:jcollins@floridalgion.org).

##### ✓ Return of Organization Exempt from Income Tax (Form 990)

A Form 990 must be filed by the 15th day of the fifth month after the end of the Post's annual accounting period. For example, if a Post tax period ends on December 31st, the form is due May 15th. Posts with gross receipts normally less than or equal to \$50,000 use Form 990-N. Posts with gross receipts greater than \$50,000 and less than \$200,000 and total assets less than \$500,000 can use Form 990EZ or Form 990. For all inquiries on filling your Post's Income Tax Return (Form 990),

please check with a licensed tax preparer, your Department Headquarters, and the IRS website [www.irs.gov/](http://www.irs.gov/).

✓ Employer Identification Number (EIN) & Tax-Exempt Status (Form SS-4)

The American Legion is tax exempt under Section 501c (19) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1954 as amended. Therefore, Federal tax regulations require every subordinate Post that maintains a bank account and is obligated to file an Annual Tax Return (Form 990) to have an EIN.

All newly chartered Posts receive an SS-4 form in their new Post kit, prepared and sent by National Headquarters. The instructions should be closely followed in completing and submitting this form. When you receive the Post EIN, send a copy of the number and the Inclusion Letter (also in the packet) to National Headquarters so the Post may be listed as a tax-exempt charter of The American Legion. A listing of all new Posts, plus updates, is sent to the IRS by September 30th each year. Your bank and various vendors will also need this number. Protect it.

✓ Consumer's Certificate of Exemption for Sales & Use Tax (Form DR-5)

Application for consumer's Certificate of Exemption (Form DR-5) must be filed with the Florida Department of Revenue in order to enjoy tax-exempt purchases and leases when carrying on Post activities. A copy of the application and Certificate is to be sent to Department Headquarters.

✓ Change of Address/Responsible Party (IRS Form 8822-B)

IRS Form 8822-B must be completed within sixty (60) days of a change of identity of the Post's "Responsible Party" (after Elections) or change of address. The Responsible Party could be the Post Commander, Adjutant, Finance Officer or whoever has control over the funds.

✓ Post Constitution and By-Laws

Each Post in the Department of Florida shall have its own Constitution and By-Laws, provided that it shall not conflict with the Constitution and By-Laws of The American Legion and the Department of Florida (*Department Constitution, Article X, Section 10*).

It is strongly recommended that Post Constitution and By-Laws be updated every three (3) years.

✓ If Your Post Has Employees and/or Serves Alcohol:

1. Wage & Tax Statement (W-2).
2. Transmittal of Wage & Tax Statement (W-3).
3. Employee's Withholding Allowance Certificate (W-4).
4. Miscellaneous Income (1099).
5. Employer's Annual Federal Unemployment Tax Return (FUTA) (940).
6. Employer's Quarterly Federal Tax Return (941).
7. Employer's Quarterly Report (UTC-6).
8. Monthly Sales & Use Tax Return (DR-15).
9. Any other Federal or State forms that may apply to your Post.

✓ Items to be safeguarded:

1. Property Deeds for all real property.
2. Post's insurance.
3. Seven (7) years prior tax returns.
4. Checking and Savings accounts – authorized signatures as per your Post's Constitution & By-Laws.

5. If your Post requires copies of members' DD-214 to be on file, they should remain secure, with lock, in a locked office and limited access to by Officers of the Post.
6. Any papers or information that your membership feels is worth safeguarding.

## **MEMBERSHIP**

### **❖ Online Membership Renewals**

Legionnaires can renew their membership online at [www.myLegion.org/renew](http://www.myLegion.org/renew). Upon renewal, a member can print a temporary membership card to send to his/her Post to receive a permanent membership card. Posts using [www.myLegion.org](http://www.myLegion.org) can see which Post members have renewed online. Otherwise, Posts will be notified through the Department so they can send membership cards.

### **❖ MyLegion.org**

National Headquarters has a secure website to assist Post Officers in their day-to-day membership processing duties. To register, the Post Adjutant must first complete and submit an authorization form at [www.myLegion.org](http://www.myLegion.org).

- View member information for Post and Squadron data.
- Track members who have renewed online.
- Submit Member Data Form changes electronically.
- Excluding the following abilities: adding new members, processing renewals, and transferring members – those three processes must continue to be transmitted to the Department.
- All member data changes submitted electronically through [www.myLegion.org](http://www.myLegion.org) are submitted to Department Headquarters in a weekly file from National Headquarters, eliminating the need to complete or mail paper forms for address changes, telephone number updates, deceased notifications, etc.
- General rosters for current, expired, deceased, and undeliverable members.
- Data is also available in CVS file format, allowing users to work with the data in other applications.
- Submit Consolidated Post Report (CPR) online.
- Search for Headquarters' Post and expired members in a specified area to help grow your Post membership.

### **❖ Paid-Up-For-Life (PUFL) Membership**

These members pay a one-time fee or can utilize a time payment plan option to gain lifetime membership in The American Legion. These Legionnaires have voluntarily chosen to become Paid-Up-For-Life members under the National Plan. A Legionnaire must be in good standing to become a PUFL member. To be in good standing, the member must have a valid membership card for the current Legion year. Obtain PUFL application forms from Department Headquarters, National Headquarters, or [www.legion.org/join/pufl](http://www.legion.org/join/pufl).

### **❖ Eligibility Dates & Requirements**

National policy requires that eligibility inquiries be submitted through the Department. There is only one class of membership; honorary memberships are NOT authorized.

All who served in the Air Force, Army, Navy, Marine Corps, or Coast Guard of the United States and served at least one day on active duty during the periods of eligibility are eligible for membership in The American Legion provided, however, that such service shall have been terminated by honorable discharge or honorable separation or continued honorably after any of said periods. No person shall be entitled to membership who, being in such service during any of said periods, refused on conscientious, political, or other grounds to subject him/herself to military discipline or unqualified service.

### **❖ American Legion Eligibility Dates**

- World War I – April 6, 1917 – November 11, 1918
- December 7, 1941 – Present \*

\* U.S. Merchant Marine eligible only from December 7, 1941 to December 31, 1946 (WWII).

Because eligibility dates remain open, all active duty members of the U.S. Armed Forces are eligible to join The American Legion at the time, until the date of the end of hostilities as determined by the government of the United States.

❖ **National Guard and Reserve Eligibility**

Veterans of the National Guard and Reserves must meet the same eligibility requirements as full-time Federal active veterans. To be eligible, they must have served at least one day on Federal Active Duty during any of the eligible periods and have an honorable discharge or still be serving in the Guard, Reserve, or on Federal Active Duty. A DD-214 will be issued for the time on Federal Active Duty, or a DA-1059 for completion of a school will be issued with a character type of discharge.

	Eligible	Non-Eligible
National Guard	Title 10, SS 672 or 12301	Title 32
Reserves	Title 10, SS 672 or 12301	Title 10, SS 270

*Please contact Department Headquarters with any questions regarding eligibility requirements.*

❖ **Initiations**

The initiation of candidates for membership in The American Legion is an important function of each Post. The new members need to be shown, officially and formally, that they’re indeed a part of the organization. They deserve the courtesy of being introduced to the organization that has accepted their membership application and dues payment. This is the purpose of the initiation ceremony.

Whether performed by the Officers of the Post or an established ritual team, the initiation ceremony should be conducted at least one a year. Each officer should learn his/her respective portion of the ceremony in order to be able to deliver it without reference to the printed text. Each initiation officer should wear the regulation American Legion cap and badge of office.

A step-by-step instruction for initiations is provided in the National *Officers Guide and Manual of Ceremonies*.

❖ **Sample Dues Reminder**

It’s recommended that a Post send written correspondence to members whose dues have lapsed to try to bring them back to the Post. Please use the following template to create your own letter to your members.

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[DATE]

Dear member,

We miss you! I’ve noticed that you are on the list of members who have not paid their 20XX membership dues yet. I know that in this busy world we live in we sometimes forget things like paying our American Legion dues and need a reminder from time to time.

Your membership is very important to us, but we know that sometimes life changes can also change priorities. If you don’t wish to renew your dues, please let us know why so we can make changes and improvements and possibly assist you if needed.

I've included the form below to assist you with paying your dues or letting us know why you're not able to pay your dues and if we can provide assistance. Please take the time to complete the form and return it to us at your earliest convenience. Of course, if you simply missed paying your dues, we understand and have included an envelope with this mailing for your convenience.

Thank you for your continued support and dedication for our Nation and The American Legion.

For God and Country,

//signature//  
Post Commander

//signature//  
Post Adjutant

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Membership #: \_\_\_\_\_

Commander,

- \_\_\_\_\_ I've enclosed [dues amount] for my [year] Legion membership dues.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Due to financial difficulties, I'm not able to pay my dues but it's important to me to remain a member of The American Legion.
- \_\_\_\_\_ My life situation has changed, and I've decided I no longer wish to be a member of The American Legion.
- \_\_\_\_\_ I have transferred to Post \_\_\_\_\_ in the state of \_\_\_\_\_.
- \_\_\_\_\_ The member is deceased. Please remove from your records.

Please return this form in the provided envelope. Thank you for your assistance.

## **THE LEGION FAMILY**

Members of The American Legion, American Legion Auxiliary, Sons of The American Legion, and American Legion Riders comprise the Legion Family, which has a combined membership of nearly 4.2 million.

For nearly a century, The American Legion Family has influenced considerable social change in America, won hundreds of benefits for veterans, helped military families through transition and produced many important programs for our country's youth.

### **❖ American Legion Auxiliary**

Founded in 1919, The American Legion Auxiliary is the world's largest patriotic service organization. With a membership of nearly 800,000, local American Legion Auxiliary Units have a strong presence in more than 9,000 communities nationwide. The American Legion Auxiliary's mission is to support The American Legion and to honor the sacrifice of those who serve by enhancing the lives of our veterans, military, and their families, both at home and abroad.

Membership in The American Legion Auxiliary shall be limited to the:

(1) grandmothers, mothers, sisters, spouses, and direct and adopted female descendants of members of The American Legion; and

(2) grandmothers, mothers, sisters, spouses, and direct and adopted female descendants of all men and

women who served in either of the following periods: April 6, 1917, to November 11, 1918 and any time after December 7, 1941 who, being a citizen of the United States at the time of their entry therein served on active duty in the Armed Forces of any of the governments associated with the United States during either eligibility periods and died in the line of duty or after honorable discharge;

(3) grandmothers, mothers, sisters, spouses, and direct and adopted female descendants of all men and women who were in the Armed Forces of the United States during either of the following periods: April 6, 1917, to November 11, 1918; and any time after December 7, 1941 who served on active duty in the Armed Forces of the United States during either eligibility periods and died in the line of duty or after honorable discharge; and

(4) to those women who of their own right are eligible for membership in The American Legion.\*

\* A woman who is eligible for American Legion membership is eligible to join the American Legion Auxiliary regardless of whether or not she is a member of The American Legion. However, eligibility of her female relatives (sister, mother, direct descendants) and/or spouse depends upon her membership in The American Legion.

#### ❖ **Sons of The American Legion**

Sons of The American Legion (SAL), founded in 1932, exists to honor the service and sacrifice of Legionnaires. Since 1988, SAL has raised more than \$5.8 million for The American Legion Child Welfare Foundation. SAL members have volunteered over 500,000 hours at veterans' hospitals and raised over \$1,000,000 for VA hospitals and VA homes. The Sons also support the Citizens Flag Alliance, a coalition dedicated to protecting the U.S. flag from desecration through a constitutional amendment.

All male descendants adopted sons, and stepsons of members of The American Legion, and such male descendants of veterans who died in service during the period of April 6, 1917, through November 11, 1918, or any time from December 7, 1941, to date, who served honorably, as set forth in Article IV, Section 1, of the National Constitution of The American Legion, or who died subsequent to their honorable discharge from such service, shall be eligible for membership in the Sons of The American Legion.

#### ❖ **American Legion Riders**

American Legion Riders Chapters are well known for their charitable work, which has raised hundreds of thousands of dollars for local children's hospitals, schools, veteran's homes, severely wounded service members, and scholarships. Since 2006, Riders nationwide have participated in the annual Legion Legacy Run to raise money for the Legacy Scholarship Fund, established to provide scholarships to children of U.S. military personnel killed since 11 September 2001.

Members of The American Legion Riders shall establish and maintain membership by owning either individually or through marriage, a motorcycle, trike, or auto-cycle licensed and insured by the American Legion Rider member's state law, and the operator must have a license with proper endorsement.

## **PROGRAMS**

#### ❖ **Americanism**

Americanism is love of America, loyalty to her institutions as the best yet devised by man to secure life, liberty, individual dignity, and happiness; the willingness to defend our country and flag against all enemies,

foreign and domestic. It is a vital, active, living force.

Americanism means peace, strength, the will and the courage to live freely in a free land. It means a friendly hand to people everywhere who respect our institutions and our thinking. It is not a word; it is a cause, a way of life – the best of way of life ever known – a challenge and hope for the world.

Americanism is an ideal of loyal patriotism, religious tolerance, righteous freedom, fearless courage, honest integrity, abiding faith in the commanding destiny of the United States, and fathomless love for the principles that led our forefathers to found this country.

#### ❖ **Baseball**

American Legion Baseball enjoys a reputation as one of the most successful and tradition-rich, amateur athletic leagues. Today, the program registers more than 5,400 teams in all 50 states, including Canada and Puerto Rico.

American Legion Baseball strives to teach practical lessons of good sportsmanship and citizenship. Loyalty, respect for rules and decisions rendered, fair play, courage and physical fitness are emphasized in this program.

#### ❖ **Blood Donor Program**

The American Legion Blood Donor program has existed officially since 1942. Each year – especially since 9/11 – Legionnaires have donated in spades, and Departments have coordinated efforts at the Post level.

The Blood Donor program honors those Departments that best participate in blood donation efforts, recognizing Departments in two areas: for Post participation and individual Legionnaire participation. Post participation awards are given to Departments with the highest number of participating Posts. Individual participation awards are given to Departments with the highest percentage of individuals giving blood to the program.

Legionnaires participate by giving blood and reporting it to their Posts, which mark the donation on their annual Consolidated Post Reports. Similarly, Posts that host blood drives mark their participation on the Consolidated Post Reports, listing number of drives held and total pints donated (for Legionnaires and non-Legionnaires).

#### ❖ **Boys State**

American Legion Boys State is one of the most respected and selective educational programs of government instruction for 11th grad high school students in the nation. It is a participatory program where each young man learns about the operation of his local, county, and state governments.

American Legion Posts interview and select participants for their Boys State program after receiving recommendations from school officials. All costs are paid by the American Legion Posts.

At Boys State, young men are exposed to the rights, privileges, duties and responsibilities of a franchised citizen. The training is objective and practical with city, county, and state governments operated by elected and appointed officials duly placed in office by citizens of their respective Boys State. Activities include legislative sessions, court proceedings, law enforcement presentations, assemblies, bands, chorus, and recreational programs. Through the Florida American Legion Boys State program, each Boys Stater has the opportunity to earn one of several scholarship offered.

Boys State has been a program of the National Americanism Commission since 1935. Forty-nine states conduct this program serving more than 20,000 young men each year. The American Legion Auxiliary sponsors a similar

program for young women called Girls State.

#### ❖ **Children and Youth**

Purpose: To ensure that any child of a veteran in need of care and protection shall receive proper and timely service and aid; to strengthen the family unit; extend support to sound organizations and facilities that provide services for children and youth; and to maintain a well-rounded program that meets the needs of the young people in their respective communities.

#### ❖ **Civil Air Patrol Cadet**

To help America meet its needs, the Civil Air Patrol provides a youth-scaled, Air Force-themed extracurricular activity. Cadet life is fun and meaningful. The Civil Air Patrol offers a safe, positive place to develop leadership skills while exploring aviation and STEM careers.

**The Mission:** Transform youth into dynamic Americans and aerospace leaders

**Content Areas:** Leadership, Aerospace, Fitness, Character

#### ❖ **Employment**

The first American Legion Award was established in 1947 and recognized employers across the country who had established outstanding records in the employment and retention of workers with disabilities. Later, other award categories were added to recognize outstanding employers of older workers and veterans in general, and in 1992, the Employment Service Awards were established to recognize outstanding individuals and local offices within the State Employment Services Agencies. These awards benefit everyone involved. They bring recognition to outstanding employers and job service personnel, they help expand employment opportunities for veterans, and they bring favorable publicity for The American Legion and its Posts.

#### ❖ **Flag Education**

The American Legion's Flag Education program is designed to build patriotism in our youth and all Americans and to develop a thorough understanding of proper flag display and courtesy. Flag Education has been a major activity of The American Legion since its inception, with thousands of flag education programs presented each year in classrooms across the country.

#### ❖ **Get Out the Vote**

Elections are important to our Republic. As citizens of this great nation, it is our duty and responsibility to exercise this right of franchise by casting our ballots on Election Day and to encourage others to do so as well. It was on this premise that The American Legion's Get Out the Vote program was initiated shortly after the organization's inception. Today it is as important as it was in elections past.

The Legion's Get Out the Vote program encourages all Americans to register and vote in all elections. In addition, Legionnaires, Posts, Districts, and Departments are encouraged to fully involve themselves in the electoral process by serving as Poll volunteers, Poll workers, and by encouraging and assisting others to register and vote.

#### ❖ **JROTC**

The American Legion is a strong supporter of Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps (JROTC) and Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC) programs across the country.

Legion Posts are urged to present medals available through The American Legion Emblem Sales to the top JROTC and ROTC students in their area. During the 2000 Spring Meetings, the Legion's National Executive Committee passed Resolution No. 20, which encourages Legion Departments to establish Outstanding JROTC Cadet of the Year programs. And Resolution No. 11, passed during the 2006 Spring NEC Meetings, urges Legion Departments, Districts, and Posts to present American Legion medals to requesting colleges and high schools in their state.

❖ **Homeless Veterans**

The American Legion and the National Coalition for Homeless Veterans (NCHV), represent more than 2,100 community and faith-based organizations nationwide that serve veterans and their families in crisis, and offers an unprecedented opportunity to equip Legionnaires with the tools they need to assist homeless veterans. Additionally, the Legion supports legislative proposals to provide medical, rehabilitative and employment assistance to homeless veterans and their families.

❖ **Law and Order**

The Department encourages each Post to hold an awards ceremony (and dinner, if possible) to honor Law Enforcement, Firefighter, EMT and Paramedic personnel, and their families, who live and work in your community. These professionals may be paid employees or volunteers. If there are several Posts in your area, consider having a joint ceremony. You can give a certificate to each honoree or ask the Chief or co-workers of each agency to select their outstanding professional to receive your certificate, plaque or other award. Posts are also encouraged to nominate these men and women for the Department's Law Enforcement Officer, Firefighter, and EMT/Paramedic of the Year awards.

❖ **Legislative**

Purpose: to promote the official legislative mandates of The American Legion; disseminate monthly legislative updates; establish, maintain, and promote proactive grassroots lobbying activities; and establish and maintain liaison with elected officials and their staff. All activities must be in compliance with Section 2, Article II of the Constitution of The American Legion: "The American Legion shall be absolutely nonpolitical and shall not be used for the dissemination of partisan principles nor for the promotion of the candidacy of any person seeking public office or preferment."

However, voter education is a critical element of the electoral process. This does not prohibit your Post from holding town hall meetings, "Meet the Candidate Nights," or allowing candidates to address Post meetings, District Conferences, or State Conventions. Candidates may be allowed to participate, as long as an invitation is extended to all candidates affording them an equal opportunity to participate. The American Legion cannot endorse or oppose any candidate, even if the candidate is a Legionnaire and Post member. A Post home should be free of any political materials that would appear to be an endorsement of a particular candidate. If the position of one candidate is posted, the position of all candidates must be posted. Every effort must be made to remain nonpartisan. If in doubt, contact the Department Judge Advocate for clarification, before proceeding.

❖ **National Security**

The purpose of the National Security program is to organize the Post membership in support of national or civilian defense projects in the community; to organize the Post and to assist in organizing the community for readiness to meet any emergency.

❖ **Operation Comfort Warriors**

This program is dedicated to meet the needs of wounded, injured, or ill military personnel by providing them with comfort items not usually supplied by the government.

❖ **Oratorical**

The Oratorical Scholarship Contest presents participants with an academic speaking challenge that teaches important leadership qualities, the history of our Nation's laws, and the ability to think and speak clearly, and an understanding of the duties, responsibilities, rights and privileges of American citizenship.

❖ **Project: VetRelief (PVR)**

Project: VetRelief supports veterans, active duty military and their families with immediate financial assistance when dealing with a life emergency. By providing this temporary relief, it's possible to keep food on the table or the lights on while a family works through a trying time in their lives. Applicants must be classified as having an honorable discharge or honorable separation, or general under honorable conditions. Additionally, the applicant must show income sustainability and be a Florida resident for at least 120 days.

Funding can only be provided to offset necessities for:

1. Shelter
2. Utilities
3. Food
4. Emergency transportation
5. Critical health expenses

#### ❖ **Public Relations**

Purpose: to increase awareness among the veterans' community and the community at large of The American Legion's advocacy of veteran's issues, national security and foreign relations, Americanism, and Children & Youth. The goal is to define The American Legion in the public eye by the values for which it stands.

#### ❖ **Scholarships**

The American Legion offers a number of scholarships and other resources to assist young people in their pursuit of higher education. There are opportunities for everyone, including kin of wartime veterans and participants in Legion programs. Please go to [www.legion.org/scholarships](http://www.legion.org/scholarships) for scholarships offered by the National organization or [www.floridalegion.org/programs-services/scholarships/](http://www.floridalegion.org/programs-services/scholarships/) for those offered by the Department of Florida.

#### ❖ **United States Naval Sea Cadet Corps (Sea Cadets)**

Sea Cadets was formed in 1958 by the Navy League to create a favorable image of the US Navy with America's youth. In 1962, Sea Cadets gained their federal charter, and that was amended in 1976 to allow women to enroll in the program. Sea Cadets consists of hundreds of local units across the United States, Hawaii, Alaska, and U.S. Territories. Florida consists of 40 Units in 7 Regions.

During the 103<sup>RD</sup> Convention, The American Legion, Department of Florida voted to accept the Sea Cadets as a program. This is to build the relationships between our Posts and the Sea Cadet Units in the State of Florida in order to mentor the future leaders of our state and nation.

**The mission of the Sea Cadets is to build leaders of character.** The culture stresses self-discipline, service to others, accountability, and patriotism. At young ages, cadets are given leadership opportunities by staffing summer training events, planning unit drill sessions, and teaching others.

Sea Cadets gain unique and valuable experiences that incorporate hands on learning and teamwork. Our diverse program includes seamanship, sailing, aviation, security, building robots, medical, STEM, SCUBA, submarines, photography, culinary, special forces training, and an International Exchange Program.

#### ❖ **School Medals**

This medal is the highest honor awarded to American youth by The American Legion. It is a medal that proclaims to the world that this boy and girl is the kind of young person we believe worthy of such an honor. The recipients (one boy and one girl) are selected from the graduating class of elementary, middle, high-school, or college. In schools where there are many graduates or where students are grouped (such as six grade centers or special interest schools), special arrangements may be made to cover the situation. This is up to the discretion of the Post Committee in conjunction with the school authorities.

❖ **Scouting**

American Legion Posts sponsor more than 2,500 Scouting Units across the country. This is natural for Legionnaires, who bring their service-learned skills and experiences as veterans to help build character and positive traits in our country's youth.

❖ **Shooting Sports**

The American Legion's Junior Shooting Sports program is a gun safety education and marksmanship program that encompasses the basic elements of safety, education, enjoyment, and competition.

❖ **Temporary Financial Assistance (TFA)**

TFA is specifically designed to assist minor children of eligible veterans through cash grants. In order to maintain a stable home environment for the child or children, one-time emergency grants are awarded to help families meet the costs of shelter, utilities, food, and medical expense. The grant requester must be a member of The American Legion, provide written explanation of their current situation and a plan of action demonstrating their situation will be relieved by their own doing.

Grants may be used for:

1. Shelter
2. Utilities
3. Food
4. Clothing
5. Healthcare expenses

Grants may be used for:

1. Prevent disconnection of utilities
2. Prevent eviction or disclosure

❖ **Youth Cadet Law Enforcement**

The American Legion, Department of Florida and the Florida Highway Patrol have teamed together to create the Florida Youth Cadet Law Enforcement Academy. This is a week-long program that provides hands-on learning experience with insight into the operations of law enforcement agencies. The program allows these highly motivated young people the opportunity to consider law enforcement as a potential career choice.

Recruitment of high school students, both male and female, representing all communities and backgrounds of the state of Florida, is one of the main goals of this program. Once these young people have been selected to attend the program, the law enforcement community is challenged to present a program that will instill an understanding and respect for law enforcement professionals and their techniques. During the program, cadets will participate in the following activities: Exercises, Sports, Defense Tactics, Driving, and Firearms.

❖ **Volunteering**

The American Legion is dedicated to improving support for active duty service members and veterans during their time of transition and rehabilitation and will continue to provide members with volunteer opportunities.

## **Important Dates / Events**

❖ **Program and Event Calendar**

**January** – Initiation ceremonies are good membership stabilizers. Keep working membership campaign, especially by contacting those who became delinquent January 1st. A community service survey can reveal

areas where additional effort is needed. The beginning of the year is the time to plan and implement initiatives and projects, so your Post is ready for the spring. Give your Post's Boys State delegates and alternates their registration packets. Baseball teams can begin registering. This is a good time to present flags, and flag codes or Let's be Right on Flag Etiquette books to schools. Check dates for Post, District, Area, and Department Oratorical Contest – Post level contests should be held now.

**February** – Americanism Month. Plan School Medal Awards with school officials for the end of the school year and discuss nominations for Teacher of the Year Award. Sponsor Religious Emphasis activities and hold a Four Chaplains Service on or around February 3rd. The veteran's employment chair will make a good speaker for a Post meeting. Remember observances of Abraham Lincoln and George Washington's birthdays. Plan a big American Legion birthday program for March. Honor local Law Enforcement Officers, Firefighters, and EMT/Paramedics by holding a banquet and award ceremony. Begin sending in Youth Law Cadet applications and fees. Legion Riders should plan to attend the Legion Riders Summit for training classes. District and Area Oratorical contests take place.

**March** – Community Service Month. March 15-17 is the recognized anniversary period of the founding of The American Legion. Close out membership campaign and mail dues and cards to Department before birthday party. Post leadership is encouraged to form a committee to host an Open House. Plans should be made for election of new Officers. Show support for your Area Oratorical winner by attending the Department contest. Boys State chairs should ensure their delegates and alternates have completed the registration process before the deadline. General Scholarship, JROTC Cadet of the Year, and Eagle Scout of the Year scholarship applications are due to Department Headquarters.

**April** – Children & Youth Month. Coordinate with The American Legion Auxiliary to hold Children & Youth events. Community service events will elevate your Post's standing in the community. American Legion Child Welfare Foundation Week is a great time to raise funds for the grant. Start planning Scouting activities for the summer. Check Boys State Orientation dates for your district. Posts should send in their Teacher of the Year, Law Enforcement Officer of the Year, Firefighter of the Year, and EMT/Paramedic of the Year nominations to Department Headquarters. American Legion Riders begin their In-State Unity Ride to raise money for Project: VetRelief. General Scholarship, JROTC Cadet of the Year, and Eagle Scout of the Year scholarship winners are announced. National Oratorical Contest takes place in Indianapolis, Indiana.

**May** – 08-10 May is the anniversary of the St. Louis Caucus, which completed original organization of the Legion in 1919. 08 May is also VE Day. Armed Forces Day, Mother's Day, and Memorial Day form the basis for good Post programs, events, and outreach to military personnel in the community. It's also an excellent time to create a Blue Star Banner Program in the community. Deadline for submitting Consolidated Post Report, Department Addendum, and End of Year Awards is mid-May. Present School Medal and ROTC Awards at the end of the school year. Contact school officials now to get Legion programs and activities on the calendar for next year – Oratorical Contest, Boys State, School Medal Awards, American Education Week, etc. Post Historians should complete their Post History books for the year.

**June** – Make sure the Post Officer Report and Post Officer Certification form has been turned in and all monies owed to Department are in prior to the Department Convention. Post Officers should be elected and certified with Department no less than 10 days prior to Convention. Start planning membership drive for next year. Call on past Officers for assistance and guidance and decide how you are going to contact new veterans. 14 June is Flag Day. Contact other veterans' organizations in the community and start planning your Posts 4th of July party. Youth Law Cadet fees and applications are due.

**July** – Hold a 4th of July celebration. Make it a community project and membership recruiting event. Installation of officers makes an impressive ceremony at Post meeting, especially for new members. Continue efforts on behalf of summer youth programs. Make plans to attend The American Legion Baseball Junior and

Senior State Tournaments. Invite your Boys State delegates and Youth Law Cadets to the Post to discuss their experiences with the Post members.

**August** – Well planned programs produce the best results. Recruit members to be program chairs and send in the Post Program Chair form to Department Headquarters. You should have received next year’s membership cards from Department. Start reaching out to school officials to remind them of upcoming Legion programs and events, giving them program brochures and scholarship information. Make plans for Veterans Day.

**September** – National Disaster Preparedness Month. Ask churches to ring the bells in celebration of VJ day on the 2nd. Work with the community to recognize Patriot Day, 11 September. Celebrate the anniversary of Congress approving The American Legion Charter on 16 September. Create a local event to involve civic leaders in celebrating the anniversary. The 17th is Constitution Day, a good time to hold a Citizenship Day program. Hold a POW/MIA Remembrance Day Service on the third Friday of the month. Follow through on membership drive planning. Discuss sponsoring Boys State delegates, Youth Law Cadets, and/or a baseball team with Post’s membership. Junior Shooting Sports registration opens.

**October** – Launch all-out membership campaign. Remember, dues for next year are payable by 20 October. Participate in Halloween Safety programs. Posts can start sending the Boys State Registration Fee to Department Headquarters. Contact schools and youth groups to assist in finding Boys State delegates and Oratorical contestants. American Legion Riders being Merry-Go-Round to raise funds for Children & Youth programs. Work with local JRTOC units to sponsor a Junior Shooting Sports team.

**November** – Continue full speed membership campaign by conducting membership roundups in order to get memberships in before 31 December. Veterans Day, National Family Week, and Thanksgiving are all great reasons to hold community events at your Post. Co-op ad materials available from National for Veterans Day. Remind members they need next year’s card number when paying American Legion Life Insurance premiums. Deadline for payment is 31 December. Plan on attending the Fall Conference for training classes.

**December** – Hold a Pearl Harbor Day observance on 7 December. Work toward an all-time high in Post membership. Keep plugging away for renewals and new members. Send Homeless Veteran and Employment Awards to Department Headquarters. December is also the holiday season, so hold events and activities that bring cheer to needy families. Plan visits to fellow veterans in hospitals and nursing homes.

## **RESOURCES**

### **❖ Resource Documents**

Guides and manuals on Post operations and a variety of other important subjects are developed by National Headquarters and provided to Legion Posts each year. Most of the information found in this guide can also be found in greater detail in the following manuals:

- *Officers Guide and Manual of Ceremonies*
- *Post Adjutant’s Manual*
- *Leadership, Protocol and Parliamentary Procedure Guidebook*

These manuals can also be downloaded in electronic format from the National Headquarters publication website [www.legion.org/publications](http://www.legion.org/publications) or the Department’s website [www.floridalegion.org/resources/legion-post-documents/department/](http://www.floridalegion.org/resources/legion-post-documents/department/).

❖ **Resources on the Web**

The Department Headquarter’s website has a library of electronic resource documents available for download at no cost. These resources include:

<b>Official Documents</b>		
Department Constitution & By-Laws	National Constitution & By-Laws	Rules Governing Trials & Appeals
<b>Award Forms</b>		
Employer of Older Workers Award	Employer of the Disabled Award	Employer of Veterans Award
Employment Service Awards	EMT/Paramedic of the Year	End of Year Awards
Firefighter of the Year Award	LEO of the Year Award	Teacher of the Year Award
Gold Brigade 5 Year Award	Gold Brigade 6 Year Award	Gold Brigade Award
Membership Recruiter Pin	New Post Development Pin	Pioneer Award
Post Revitalization Award	Silver Brigade Award	Tank Crew Award
Top New Member Recruiter Award	One-Year Post Narrative Contest Form	One-Year Post Yearbook Contest Form

<b>Post &amp; Program Manuals</b>		
A Day to Remember Planning Guide	ALR Road Captain Manual	ALR SOP
ALR Start-Up Letter Sample	ALR Starting a Chapter Procedures	Area & District Map
Area & District Map	Area Training Guide	Americanism Chair Manual
Blood Donor Chair Manual	Blue Star Salute Guide	Boys State Chair Manual
Buddy Check Toolkit	Chaplain Handbook	Chaplain Manual & Four Chaplain Guidelines
Charges Template	Children & Youth Manual	Constitution & By-Laws Sample
Department Email Listing	Department Endorsement Policy Guidelines	Department Membership Manual
Disaster Preparedness Chair Manual	Finance Officer Guide	Flag Code
Florida Clean Air Act FAQ	Historian Manual	Honor Guard Handbook
How to Write a Resolution Guide	Jr. Shooting Sports Three-Position Air Rifle Rules	JROTC/Jr. Shooting Sports Manual
Judge Advocate Manual	National Membership Awards Points Manual	Oratorical Chair Manual
Post Adjutant’s Guide	Post Administrative Manual	Post Constitution & By-Laws Submission Procedure
Post Filings for Protection & Security Checklist	Post Officer’s Guide and Manual of Ceremonies	Post Regular Meeting Agenda Example
Post Revitalization Manual	Post Training Guide	POW/MIA Manual
School Medals Information Packet	Sea Cadet Chair Guide	Sergeant At Arms Manual
Summons Template	Trial Procedure Guide	Trophies, Awards & Ceremonials Manual
Women Veterans Brochure	Youth Awards Medals Programs Manual	Youth Law Cadet Manual

<b>Forms</b>		
Authorization for Direct Deposit Form	Authorization Form to Name Post	Annual Post Data Report
Back Dues Continuous Years Form	Ceremonial Rifle Request	Certification of Post Officers
Department Chair Interest Form	Department Commander Shirt Order Form	Eligibility Determination for Burial in a VA National Cemetery
Family Membership Application	Florida Legion College Application	Halloween Coloring Book Order Form

Membership Application	Membership Card Verification Form	Member Data Form
Member Data Instructions	Membership Promotional Supplies Request Form	Membership Renewal Notice
Membership Renewal 2nd Notice	National Emergency Fund Application	National Legion College Application
National Request Use of Name or Emblem Form	Notice of Appeal Form	Notification of Post Changes
Post Location Change Form	Post Charter Name Change Form	Post Charter Name-Location Change Guidelines
Post Commanders & Adjutants Change Form	Post Information & Officer Report	Post Permanent Charter Application
Post Permanent Charter Guidelines	Post Program Chair	Post Supplemental Charter Application
Post Supplemental Charter Guidelines	Understanding the Post Supplemental Charter Application	Post Temporary Charter Application
Post Temporary Charter Guidelines	Proposed Amendment to Department By-Laws Form	Proposed Amendment to Department Constitution Form
Proposal Resolution Form	Report Honorary Life Membership Award Form	Request to Exclude Members from Renewal Notice Mailings
Request Legion Supplies Form	SAL Back Dues Form	SAL Member Data Form
SAL Membership Application	SAL Membership Transmittal Form	Shipping Instructions for Membership Cards
Squadron Charter Application	Squadron Charter Guidelines	

These resources can be downloaded at [www.floridalegion.org/resources/legion-post-documents/department/](http://www.floridalegion.org/resources/legion-post-documents/department/).

#### ❖ Post Locator

Department Headquarters has developed a virtual Post Locator that is available on the Department website. A tutorial is also available on the same page: [www.floridalegion.org/resources/post-locator/](http://www.floridalegion.org/resources/post-locator/).

Individuals can search for Posts in their local area through an interactive map of Florida that shows the exact location of every Post in the state. The Post Locator also provides detailed information on each Post including address, phone number, email, website, meeting time/date, and states if the Post has a Service Officer, lounge, smoking, food, camper accommodations, an Auxiliary Unit, SAL Squadron, and Legion Riders Chapter.

To ensure the information provided in the Post Locator stays current, please check back frequently and provide updated information to Department Headquarters by email at [mail@floridalegion.org](mailto:mail@floridalegion.org).

National American Legion Post Locator: [www.legion.org/membership](http://www.legion.org/membership).

American Legion Riders Chapter Locator: [www.legion.org/riders](http://www.legion.org/riders)

#### ❖ Important Contact Information

##### Department Headquarters

1912A Lee Road, Orlando, Florida 32810-5704

P.O. Box 547859, Orlando, Florida 32854-7859

(p) 407-295-2631 [mail@floridalegion.org](mailto:mail@floridalegion.org)

(p) 800-393-3378 [www.floridalegion.org](http://www.floridalegion.org)

(f) 407-299-0901

Florida American Legion Auxiliary

(p) 407-293-7411      [secretary@alafli.org](mailto:secretary@alafli.org)

National Headquarters

P.O. Box 1055, Indianapolis, IN 46206

(p) 317-630-1200      membership: 800-433-3318

(f) 317-630-1223      Emblem Sales: 888-453-4466

**RECOMMENDATIONS?**

Is there anything you think we missed? What items would you add to the book? Send us your recommendations and we'll consider them for inclusion in the next training manual.

Send your recommendations to [mail@floridalegion.org](mailto:mail@floridalegion.org)

