

PREAMBLE TO THE CONSTITUTION OF THE AMERICAN LEGION

For God and Country we associate ourselves together for the following purposes: To uphold and defend the Constitution of the United States of America; to maintain law and order; to foster and perpetuate a one hundred percent Americanism; to preserve the memories and incidents of our associations in the great wars; to inculcate a sense of individual obligation to the community, state and nation; to combat the autocracy of both the classes and the masses; to make right the master of might; to promote peace and good will on earth; to safeguard and transmit to posterity the principles of justice, freedom and democracy; to consecrate and sanctify our comradeship by our devotion to mutual helpfulness.

THE AMERICAN LEGION – WHO WE ARE

The American Legion was chartered by Congress in 1919 as a patriotic, mutual-help, and community-service organization which now numbers 2.4 million – men and women – in more than 14,000 American Legion Posts worldwide. These Posts are organized into 55 Departments – one each for the 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, France, Mexico, and the Philippines.

The American Legion has its headquarters in Indianapolis, Indiana, with offices in Washington, D.C. In addition to thousands of volunteers, serving in leadership and program implementation capacities from the communities to the Legion's standing national commissions and committees, the national organization has a professional staff of about 250 employees.

Membership eligibility in The American Legion is based on honorable service within the U.S. Armed Forces between April 6, 1917 and November 11, 1918 (World War I); December 7, 1941, and December 31, 1946 (World War II); June 25, 1950, and January 31, 1955 (Korean war); December 22, 1961, and May 7, 1975 (Vietnam War); August 24, 1982, and July 31, 1984 (Lebanon/Grenada); December 20, 1989, and January 31, 1990 (Operation Just Cause – Panama); or August 2, 1990, until the date of the end of hostilities as determined by the government of the United States.

COMMUNITY SERVICE

Through the initiative of its posts, The American Legion consistently contributes to the nation's quality of life through a variety of programs and endeavors to make American communities better places in which to live. Responding to specific local needs, American Legion posts will be found placing special emphasis on the organization of safety-first campaigns, the elimination of fire hazards, the establishment of playgrounds, the building of living memorials, etc.

The most recent American Legion activities report (55 percent of the posts reporting) shows that in one year's time the value of community service activities by American Legion posts topped \$6.6 million.

Here are some other results taken from the most recent report as of August, 2010..

Hours giving to Community Service	3,817,878
Cash aid given to needy children	\$3,121,454
Goods given to children & youth	\$2,304,390
Volunteer hours at VA Hospitals (VAVS)	996,804
Cash contributions to VAVS	\$2,224,286
Pints of blood given	84,073
Rehabilitation cases handled	\$141,149
Cost of community service	\$6,627,119
Cost of scholarships given	\$4,396,835

Contributions

United Fund	\$241,851
Red Cross	\$335,834
Cancer Research	\$696,291
Handicapped children	\$408,840
All other charities	\$9,454,515

AMERICAN LEGION LEGACY SCHOLARSHIP FUND

Many children of active-duty, National Guard or Reserve members are now members of single-parent families, an unfortunate consequence of Operation Iraqi Freedom, Operation Enduring Freedom and America's war on terror. In many cases, this also means their chances to attend college are greatly diminished. Children of military personnel who die on active duty are entitled to receive money toward a college education. Those children may be entitled to the Survivors & Dependents Education Benefits or the Marine Gunnery Sergeant John David Fry Scholarship (part of the Post 9/11 GI Bill). But it's not enough.

In today's dollars, the Survivors & Dependents Education Benefits will pay little more than half of what a college education costs in the most affordable situation. The Fry Scholarship leaves gaps in payment for books, fees and supplies, and additionally, the Fry Scholarship is subject to yearly appropriations by Congress. The gap widens when considering the cost of a college education in the future. The most conservative estimate is that costs will increase by 5 percent per year, meaning that in 16 years, the most affordable college education will be \$106,300. Military compensation will not keep up with these dramatic increases.

The American Legion's Legacy Scholarship Fund is designed to help fill the gap for these children. Providing for the children whose parent dies while serving our country is a civic duty. An education is a powerful way to show our thanks. That is why The American Legion established this scholarship. All monies donated to the fund go directly to endow the fund for future needs. The American Legion absorbs all administrative costs for the American Legion Legacy Scholarship. All contributions are tax deductible.

SCOUTING AND THE AMERICAN LEGION

At the 1st National Convention of The American Legion in 1919, the Boy Scouts of America program was adopted to help achieve patriotic attitudes in youth. The American Legion believed then, as it does now, that Scouting is a valuable program for developing boys into men of high moral character.

The American Legion and the Boy Scouts of America have developed a cooperative relationship to promote the organization and sponsorship of Scout units by posts of The American Legion. The American Legion believes this excellent program is another way to provide the youth of America with the opportunity to participate in worthwhile activities fostering good character, citizenship, and fitness.

American Legion posts, Auxiliary units and SAL squadrons charter over 2,700 Scout units serving some 71,500 young people.

The American Legion and Scouting Square Knot award recognizes members of The American Legion, the American Legion Auxiliary or the Sons of The American Legion who are actively involved in the Scouting program.

The American Legion Eagle Scout of the Year

The American Legion provides a national scholarship annually to the Eagle Scout who is selected as The American Legion Eagle Scout of the Year. The winner receives a \$10,000 scholarship awarded during a four-year period. Three runners-up receive a scholarship of \$2,500 each.

NATIONAL SECURITY

The deep-rooted interest of The American Legion in the security of the nation was born in the hearts and minds of its founders of World War I. The bitter experience of seeing comrades wounded and killed through lack of proper training instilled in these veterans the determination to fight for an adequate defense establishment capable of protecting the sovereignty of the United States.

Today this same philosophy endures. With the evolution of space technology and scientific advancement of both conventional and nuclear weapons, The American Legion continues to support an adequate arsenal and a properly trained and ready fighting armed force as prime deterrents to aggressors. The Legion also advocates for a strong homeland defense capability.

Believing that a strong emergency management program is needed to protect this nation's citizens, The American Legion supports disaster preparedness programs that would prepare the civilian population to function efficiently in times of grave national emergency.

As an adjunct to this effort, The American Legion's Blood Donor Program provides a vital community service, not only in meeting the blood requirements of the community, but also as a ready reserve to serve the nation should the need arise.

The American Legion also supports ROTC and law-and-order programs. Through its awards program, The American Legion recognizes outstanding ROTC cadets at both the high school and college levels and our nation's first responders.

FOREIGN RELATIONS

The American Legion Foreign Relations Commission meets periodically throughout the year to hear speakers, exchange information and develop the Legion's Foreign Relations policies. Currently the Legion supports and advocates a U.S. foreign policy of "democratic activism," which we define as: promoting democratic values, maintaining adequate military strength to deter and defeat aggression, cooperating with allies, encouraging free and fair trade, and assisting developing nations. The Legion also advocates for the complete recovery of U.S. POW/MIA.

VETERANS AFFAIRS AND REHABILITATION

The American Legion has maintained an ongoing commitment to disabled veterans and their families since the founding of the organization in 1919. The American Legion in the 1920s was instrumental in creating the U.S. Veterans Bureau, forerunner of the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). The American Legion has continued to be a watchdog as well as an advocate of veterans programs and benefits. The mission of The American Legion Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation (VA&R) Commission is to ensure veterans, survivors and eligible dependents receive appropriate health care, education and training, and delivery of benefits.

The goal of the VA&R Commission is to develop policy on all VA health care, benefits and national cemetery issues that come before The American Legion.

The VA&R division breaks down into four separate branches: Health Care, Field Service, Insurance & Debt Management, and Veterans Claims and Appeals.

The Health Care branch staff is involved with testimony before Congress. Specific issues of concern include the 22 VA Networks, the VA Budget, Long Term Care, Persian Gulf Illnesses, Agent Orange and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. Committees follow minority and women's health care issues.

The volunteer program is the most important aspect of VA&R since it involves veterans helping veterans. Legionnaires log more than one million hours each year volunteering at VA hospitals and in the community. The VA could not survive without the endless hours provided by these volunteers.

Field Service staff makes site visits to each of the VA hospitals around the country, reporting on the quality of care, patient accessibility, and patient satisfaction. The reports are sent to VA Central Office, Network directors, hospital directors, and local members of Congress. The Field Service unit has been influential in identifying and solving various problems that veterans encounter when they seek treatment from a VA facility. It also provides valuable data for The American Legion in support of resolutions and testimony.

The Insurance and Debt Management offices, located in Philadelphia and St. Paul, Minnesota, handle overpayment issues and insurance contracts and claims for The American Legion.

The largest unit of VA&R deals with Veterans Claims and Appeals, Its primary tasks to provide veterans with counseling, assist veterans with the filing of claims for benefits, represent veterans in claims on appeal, and provide representation before the military/naval reviews and corrections boards, and case reviews on behalf of the Pro Bono Consortium, before the U.S. Courts of Veterans Appeals.

In addition to the Washington, D.C. staff, there is an extensive network of Department Service Officers (DSOs) in each state who assist veterans, dependents and survivors in the filing and representation of their claims at 58 VA regional offices nationwide and San Juan, Puerto Rico and Manila, Philippine Islands.

AMERICANISM

This pillar of The American Legion is dedicated to the preservation and enhancement of basic American concepts and principles. Much of The American Legion's effort in this area is devoted to education programs and a wide range of citizenship-participatory activities for our nation's youth.

The annual American Legion High School Oratorical Scholarship Program "A Constitutional Speech Contest" provides thousands of young people an opportunity to gain a greater understanding of the U.S. Constitution while competing for valuable college scholarships. Each state champion travels to Indianapolis in April for the National Finals.

The American Legion publishes a financial aid guide entitled "Need A Lift?" that provides information on scholarships, grants and loans, plus a "road map" to a source of education financial assistance. It is available as an interactive CD-ROM and online.

The Samsung-American Legion Scholarship Program annually awards college scholarships to ninety-eight high school seniors who are descendants of wartime veterans.

Each year American Legion Boys State programs give nearly 20,000 high school juniors a better understanding of good citizenship and civic responsibilities during summer workshops in governmental operations. The two most outstanding leaders from each of these programs are selected to gain greater insight to federal government operations at the annual American Legion Boys Nation program held in Washington, D.C., American Legion Auxiliary sponsors a similar program for girls.

The American Legion has sponsored a nationwide youth baseball program for more than 85 years and has provided millions of young players with the opportunity to enjoy our nation's pastime. Legion volunteers raise millions of dollars annually for the program that teaches players the importance of teamwork, discipline, leadership and good sportsmanship.

American Legion School Awards are presented annually to 25,000 boys and girls in graduating classes of elementary and secondary schools and junior colleges. These awards recognize outstanding accomplishments in areas of service, honor, courage, leadership, patriotism and scholarship.

Through the Junior Shooting Sports Program, The American Legion provides instruction in gun safety and marksmanship training for youngsters up to age 18, while offering a wholesome recreational activity through organized competition that culminates in The American Legion Air Rifle National Championship held each summer at the U.S. Olympic Training Center in Colorado Springs.

The preservation and enhancement of basic American concepts and principles require an understanding of those forces that would undermine and destroy them. The American Legion is an active leader in the fight against opponent international terrorism and similar forces.

The American Legion is opposed to illegal immigration and amnesty, by any form or name, for any person(s) in this country illegally, regardless of race, sex, creed, color or national origin. We believe the current laws governing immigration should be enforced impartially and equally. Helping prepare those immigrants who enter our country legally for naturalized citizenship and assimilation into American society is in the best interest of our nation. Providing assistance and instruction to immigrants following the legal path to citizenship has been a long-standing and proud tradition of The American Legion since its founding.

Although The American Legion is a nonpartisan organization and does not endorse any political candidate, it strongly urges all American citizens to exercise their right and duty in our democracy – the right to vote. Through its "Get Out The Vote" program, the Legion emphasizes the importance of each citizen supporting the candidates of his/her choice.

AMERICAN LEGION BASEBALL

Since its beginning in 1925, thousands of baseball players have enjoyed the competition in The American Legion program. Fifty-Three former players are enshrined in the Baseball Hall of Fame in Cooperstown, New York.

During the 2010 baseball season The American Legion sponsored 4,500 baseball teams, with 95,000 players and 15,000 coaches.

The American Legion National Americanism Commission annual awards thousands of dollars in scholarships to deserving players.

The American Legion baseball program is a ripe training ground for future college and professional players. More than 70 percent of college players have experience in Legion baseball. On the professional baseball scene more than 50 percent played Legion baseball.

Major League Baseball recognizes the quality of play and players in The American Legion baseball program and honors the national championship team at the Major League World Series. The National Baseball Hall of Fame also recognizes the American Legion Player of the year annually at the Hall of Fame game in Cooperstown, NY.

The annual American Legion Baseball National Tournament highlights the best young talent each season. State champions advance to one of eight regional tournaments. Regional champions advance to the finals – The American Legion World Series.

The American Legion Baseball program is the only youth baseball program that pays 100 percent of all the teams' expense that participates at a national tournament. These expenses include transportation, meals, hotels, umpires, baseballs etc.

History reveals The American Legion baseball program provides young players a thorough understanding of sportsmanship, teamwork, and good citizenship – valued traits for America's future leaders

CHILDREN & YOUTH PROGRAMS

The American Legion is dedicated to our citizens of tomorrow, and remains committed to ensuring that every child has a safe home, a quality environment and the opportunity to make their dreams come true. Among The American Legion Children & Youth programs are:

Temporary Financial Assistance

Since this program began in 1925, it has provided cash assistance for needy children of eligible veterans. These grants afford family's food, clothing and shelter, to help preserve the integrity of the family home. Eligible veterans and their families can apply through a local American Legion post or state headquarters.

Children's Miracle Network

The American Legion alliance with the Children's Miracle Network Hospitals underscores The American Legion's mission and reputation as a caretaker of America's future – its children. Children's Miracle Network Hospitals is a nonprofit organization dedicated to raising funds and awareness for 170 affiliated children's hospitals. Annually, these hospitals benefit 17 million children nationwide, treating the whole child and rendering care regardless of the family's ability to pay. The American Legion's 55 departments and 14,000 local posts are encouraged to work with and support their local Children's Miracle Network Hospitals to benefit the health and well being of our nation's children.

Family Emphasis

The family is the cornerstone of our American heritage. One of the guiding principles in The American Legion's Children & Youth program is to maintain the integrity of the family home. We advocate the passage of federal legislation designating the week of Thanksgiving as National Family Week.

Teenage Suicide Prevention

Teen suicides continue to shock communities throughout this country. The American Legion actively supports programs of prevention and awareness and publishes the brochure "Warning Signs: Teenage Suicide Prevention."

Drug Abuse Prevention

The American Legion has been involved in the war on drugs since 1950, believing that cooperative volunteer efforts at the community level have a greater chance for effectiveness and survival. Drug prevention literature is distributed through our posts to schools and other community-based organizations.

Halloween Safety

Our Halloween Safety Program is in its third decade. Throughout our nation posts of The American Legion conduct activities at the community level to reduce the risk of children being harmed by providing a safe and fun-filled party experience.

The American Legion Child Welfare Foundation was created in 1954 with two major objectives:

To contribute to the physical, mental, emotional and spiritual welfare of children and youth through the dissemination of knowledge about new and innovative organizations and/or their programs designed to benefit youth.

To contribute to the physical, mental, emotional and spiritual welfare of children and youth through the dissemination of knowledge already possessed by well-established organizations, to the end that such information can be more adequately used by society.

The American Legion Child Welfare Foundation Inc. is a separate organization governed by a board of directors consisting of nine Legionnaires – three from the Legion's National Executive Committee, three from the National Finance Committee, and three from the National Commission on Children & Youth.

Serving with the board of directors is a liaison committee consisting of nine members – three each from the American Legion Auxiliary, the Eight and Forty, and Sons of The American Legion. The board of directors considers applications for grants and approves funds for selected projects that meet one of the Foundation's two objectives.

It is not unusual for one of these annual grants to serve as "seed money" to help develop a worthy idea or project to the point where it can justify an appeal for a larger grant from a more lucrative source.

This "seed money" is important to show the promise of a new project. In many instances, it is extremely difficult to obtain funds to start a project, but it becomes progressively less difficult to secure such funds as the project develops.

Primary sources of income for the Foundation are contributions from individual Legionnaires and members of the American Legion Auxiliary, the Eight and Forty, and Sons of The American Legion.

The Foundation also receives income from bequests, investments and other sources. The grant application window is May 1 to July 15 of each year.

Notable 2011 Child Welfare Foundation Grants

Children's Organ Transplant Association of Bloomington, Indiana was awarded \$46,500 for their project, "One Million Miracles Initiative." This grant will update, produce and distribute COTA publicity materials, including public service announcement and targeted communications resources. The Sons of The American Legion sponsor this grant.

National Organizations for Youth Safety of Gainesville, Virginia was awarded \$25,000 for their project, "Youth Empowered Community Engagement to Prevent Distracted Driving." This grant will produce a youth engagement guide addressing youth traffic safety. The Sons of The American Legion sponsor this grant.

Our Military Kids of McLean, Virginia was awarded \$50,100 for their project, "Informational Video and Brochures." This grant will create a video and information brochures that can be used to promote the organization to prospective grantee families and prospective donors. The American Legion Auxiliary and the Sons of The American Legion sponsor this grant.

The National Children's Cancer Society (N.C.C.S.) of St. Louis, Missouri was awarded \$25,000 for their project, "Beyond the Cure (BTC)." This grant will create a video to educate and inspire childhood cancer survivors to embrace the future to recognize their conquests and to successfully handle the challenges ahead of them.

Disabled Veterans Tax

Military retirees with service-connected disabilities continue to have their Defense Department retired pay reduced by the amount of disability compensation that they receive from the Department of Veterans Affairs. If these veterans left the military after they incurred their service-connected disabilities, and retired from any other federal agency except a branch of the U.S. armed forces, they would receive both retired pay and disability compensation in full.

Service-connected military retirees make a sacrifice that no other service-connected federal retiree makes. It is a circumstance brought about by a century-old law. Congress has nibbled at the edges to change the law in fiscal year 2002 and 2003, but left the vast majority, those with less than 50 percent disability, with this unfair tax.

Creating a two-tiered benefits system that favors one group of service-disabled military retirees over another is not the answer. Creating a commission to study VA's disability compensation system – a system that requires medical evidence to prove a claim and is scrutinized by congressional Veteran's Affairs committees, an appeals process and a federal court – is not the answer. The answer is to repeal the tax for all service-disability military retirees. The American Legion will continue to fight for the removal of the disabled veterans tax for ALL service-connected disabled military retirees.

Medicare Reimbursement

The American Legion believes that our nation's 10 million veterans on Medicare should be allowed to apply their Medicare benefits toward health care in the Department of Veterans Affairs health care system.

Today, a veteran on Medicare can use his or her benefit just about anywhere except the VA, where quality health care can be attained far less more inexpensively than it can be acquired in the private sector.

The American Legion will continue to fight for "Medicare subvention" legislation to allow Medicare-eligible veterans the right to use Medicare to cover the costs of health care at the VA.

Flag Protection Amendment

Legionnaires are among a majority of American voters who regard the American Flag as an emblem of freedom and as the legitimate symbol of our great nation, which is worthy of a special place in our society. The American Legion supports a constitutional amendment to protect "Old Glory" from intentional physical desecration.

The proposed amendment has passed six times in the U.S. House of Representatives, only to fall short in the Senate. A two-thirds majority in both chambers would send the proposed amendment to the states for ratification.

The proposed 28th Amendment says, "The Congress shall have power to prohibit the physical desecration of the Flag of the United States."

Numerous public opinion surveys show the vast majority of Americans support the amendment. Legislatures in all 50 states have passed memorializing resolutions in support of a flag-protection amendment to the Constitution.