

## AMERICANISM COMMISSION

### **Richard Anderson**

*Connecticut*  
Chairman

### **Jill K. Druskis**

*Nebraska*  
Director

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 a fathomless love for the principles that led our forefathers to found this country. During the past year, the Americanism Commission continued to offer a variety of programs and activities to give recognition to the ideal of human values, and the dignity and worth of the individual. These programs and activities embrace many aspects of an individual's relationship to his or her community, state and nation.

Following is a summary of the commission's activities:

### **Committee on Children & Youth**

#### **Herbert J. Petit, Jr.**

*Louisiana*  
Chairman

Since The American Legion's inception, members have realized a need to care for and protect our nation's most valuable resource – our children. The purpose of the Americanism Commission's Committee on Children & Youth is to formulate, recommend and implement plans, programs and activities designed to:

- Assure care and protection for the children of veterans.
- Improve conditions for all children and youth, with due concern for maintaining the integrity of the family home.
- Prevent social and physical ills of children and youth where possible.
- Maintain a balanced program that provides for their physical, emotional, intellectual and spiritual needs.

Temporary Financial Assistance (TFA): Through our Temporary Financial Assistance program, a post may call upon the National Organization for financial assistance to help meet the basic needs (shelter, food, utilities, and medical) for children of currently serving active duty members or American Legion members when their parents are unable to do so. Last year over \$588,434 was granted to veterans' families that touched the lives of 933 children. Those funds afforded 433 veterans' families with food, clothing and shelter, thus preserving the integrity of the family home.

Youth Suicide Prevention: The American Legion is very concerned about the welfare of our nation's youth and a major problem that threatens them; among adolescents, ages 10-24, suicide is the second leading cause of death. Approximately 5,000 American youth take their own lives every year. Suicide is a permanent solution to a temporary problem which may possibly be prevented.

Halloween Safety: As long as Halloween activities are sponsored and promoted in our various communities by duly appointed and elected officials, The American Legion believes children and parents should know how to make this observance as safe as possible. To assist with this effort, The American

Legion distributes a brochure titled “Make Halloween a Safe and Fun Night” to educate children and parents about trick-or-treat safety.

The American Legion is proud of its accomplishments on behalf of our country's youth. Dedication to improving the lives of children has never wavered and will continue with the Committee on Children & Youth, to ensure that The American Legion will do everything possible to perpetuate “A Square Deal for Every Child.” This remains the ultimate goal and definitive challenge for the years ahead.

### **Committee on Youth Education**

**Mike Bredeck**

*Minnesota*

Chairman

Since our founding in 1919, The American Legion has continuously advocated greater program activity in the area of education. The American Legion believes that education is the cornerstone upon which the future of our nation is built. In keeping with this credo, activities during the past year have focused on improving and maintaining a stronger relationship between American Legion posts and schools in their communities.

The Americanism Commission continues to actively promote and solicit contributions to the American Legion Legacy Scholarship Fund. Resolution No. 1 titled *The American Legion Legacy Scholarship Enhancement*, adopted at the 2016 spring meetings of the National Executive Committee, makes needs-based scholarships available to children of servicemembers having died on active duty on or after September 11, 2001, and to children of Post-9/11 veterans having been assigned combined disability rating of 50% or greater by the Department of Veteran Affairs (VA). Children of fallen Post-9/11 servicemembers remains the first priority in awarding scholarships. This year, there were a total of 41 American Legion Legacy scholarships awarded totaling \$744,436; seven were awarded to children of the fallen, with the remaining scholarships awarded to 34 children of Post-9/11 veterans having been assigned a combined disability rating by the Department of Veterans Affairs of 50% or greater. Information about all scholarships offered by the national organization may be obtained by visiting [www.legion.org/scholarships](http://www.legion.org/scholarships) or by emailing [scholarships@legion.org](mailto:scholarships@legion.org).

Widely recognized throughout the country as the premiere authority on issues concerning the flag of the United States, The American Legion has produced *For Which It Stands*, a DVD about the history, significance and meaning of our flag, and proper respect and care for it. *For Which It Stands* is designed primarily for students in upper elementary, middle or junior high schools. The DVD is available from Emblem Sales (Stock No. 755.400) for \$9.95, plus shipping and handling.

Other events during the past year:

- The Samsung American Legion Scholarship fund continued to award scholarships to American Legion Boys State and American Legion Auxiliary Girls State recipients, having distributed more than \$6 million to students since inception of the scholarship in 1996.
- The annual Samsung American Legion Scholars Recognition was held in Washington, D.C., June 6-8, 2018. The national Scholars were each awarded a \$10,000 scholarship and honored on Capitol Hill with a special breakfast hosted by Samsung Electronics America and The American Legion.
- Thanks to a generous grant from Samsung Electronics America, The American Legion continues to progress in development of the Samsung American Legion Alumni Association. The American Legion has been working to recruit and engage scholarship alumni from across the nation. An

executive advisory committee and alumni board of directors is in place. Past scholarship alumni are being engaged on our social media platforms and are signing up for official alumni association membership at [www.legion.org/samsungalumni](http://www.legion.org/samsungalumni).

## **American Legion Baseball Committee**

**Gary Stone**

*Missouri*

Chairman

American Legion Baseball marks its 93<sup>rd</sup> season in 2018. Veterans Field at Keeter Stadium in Shelby, North Carolina, is home of the American Legion Baseball World Series, with American Legion Post 82 hosting.

- In 2018 games 1 through 6 of the 2018 World Series livestream online via ESPN3. Additionally, six pool-play games on Saturday and Sunday, the semi-finals games on Monday and “Championship Tuesday” televise on ESPNU.
- In 2017, over 600,000 viewers watched American Legion Baseball on ESPNU, doubling the 2016 numbers.
- American Legion Baseball has seen a massive uptick in publicity over the past year, especially during tournament time. In the months of July and August, 2017, the [www.legion.org/baseball](http://www.legion.org/baseball) website had over 2.5 million hits, which represented over 49% of the total traffic to the entire Legion.org website. In addition, over two million impressions were made on social media during that time span.
- The American Legion Baseball team from Henderson, Nevada, sponsored by American Legion Post 40, won the 2017 American Legion Baseball World Series. As national champions, the team was invited to attend the 2017 Major League Baseball World Series in Houston as guests of The American Legion and Major League Baseball.
- Shane Spencer, playing for the Henderson team, is the 2017 George W. Rulon Player of the Year. He is the 69<sup>th</sup> American Legion Baseball player to be honored by the National Baseball Hall of Fame in a ceremony over Memorial Day weekend. Seventy-five members are enshrined in the National Baseball Hall of Fame played American Legion Baseball.
- The 2017 American Legion Baseball All-Academic Team, sponsored by Diamond Sports, each received \$2,500 scholarships that were awarded to the eight deserving American Legion Baseball players, and one \$5,000 scholarship awarded to the team’s captain. The 2017 All-Academic Team Captain is Trace Henry of Tupelo, Mississippi.
- Resolution No. 5 titled *Creation of an American Legion Department Website Network* was adopted at the 2016 spring meetings of the National Executive Committee to further the promotion of the American Legion Baseball program by creating a national network of department baseball websites. Over 30 departments now participate in the program, including more than 20 which did not have a baseball website prior to the passing of this resolution.

## **Citizenship and Naturalization**

The Americanism Commission is committed to promoting understanding, appreciation and active participation in the rights and responsibilities of American citizenship and government. To this end, the commission seeks the successful cultural assimilation of legal immigrants and lawful residents who are seeking a legal path to American citizenship. The Americanism Commission strongly urges posts to collaborate with the Office of the United States Citizenship and Immigration Service (USCIS) to assist in the assimilation process for new and prospective citizens. To further perpetuate good citizenship, the commission encourages departments and American Legion posts to promote the *Get Out the Vote*

program, which encourages all eligible voters to register to vote and cast ballots in all elections at local, state and federal levels.

### **Troop and Family Support**

Family Support Network (FSN): Since September 11, 2001, our military forces, both active, reserve and national guard, have deployed to locations all around the globe in the ongoing war against terror. The families of deployed servicemembers often find themselves unable to meet normal household chores, obligations or finances. The American Legion maintains nationwide Family Support Network toll-free support at 1-800-504-4098 for military service personnel and their families who are affected by deployment or activation. An online application for assistance is located at [www.legion.org/familysupport](http://www.legion.org/familysupport). All requests are referred to American Legion posts in local communities, who then contact the military member or their family to determine and address their specific needs. As the nation's largest veterans service organization, our commitment to the men and women of our armed forces and their families is absolute.

Operation Comfort Warriors (OCW): The mission of Operation Comfort Warriors is to provide “non-essentials” – those items, events and activities which don't usually show up as a budget line on government spreadsheets that can give wounded, injured or ill servicemembers and veterans a measure of comfort and empowerment over their health condition. OCW disbursed \$156,026 through the fulfillment of 28 grants during 2017 that provided comfort to 9,079 wounded warriors and their families, and had the potential to impact an additional 15,000 personnel. Application for an OCW grant may be located at [www.legion.org/ocw](http://www.legion.org/ocw).

The American Legion continues to update its Troop and Family Support Center webpage to provide service personnel and their families ease in gaining information about American Legion programs that can aid them as they prepare, and during, military activation, deployment and return. This webpage can be a resource for American Legion members, posts and departments in conducting outreach efforts to the military forces within their communities. Additional information may be accessed at [www.legion.org/familysupport](http://www.legion.org/familysupport).

### **Youth Activities**

Programs for our nation's youth continue to help thousands reach their potential by building physical, mental and moral alertness while cultivating strong character and fostering civic responsibility. Activities and events of the past year included the following:

- Carlissa Frederich of Paducah, Kentucky, representing American Legion Post 73, won the 2018 American Legion National High School Oratorical Contest and was awarded \$19,500 in college scholarships. Emily Parker of Lino Lakes, Minnesota, representing American Legion Post 566, placed second and received \$17,500 in scholarships. Nathan York of National City, California, representing American Legion Post 255, placed third and received \$15,500 in scholarships.
- Michael Ankner from Denver, Colorado, was selected the 2018 American Legion Eagle Scout of the year, receiving a \$10,000 scholarship. Runners-up of a \$2,500 scholarship each are Benjamin Kelley from Cottage Grove, Wisconsin; Koen Weaver from Mount Morris, New York; and Jacob Sykora from Papillion, Nebraska.
- In 2017 there were 1,385 athletes who entered individual postal match competition and 174 teams entered team postal match competition of the American Legion Junior Shooting Sports program.
- Emily Stith of Colorado Springs, Colorado, competing for American Legion Post 209, and Hailey Smith of Winthrop Harbor, Illinois, competing for American Legion Post 865, captured the Precision

and Sporter championship titles respectively at the American Legion 3-Position Air Rifle National Championship Contest of The American Legion in 2017.

- At the American Legion 3-Position Air Rifle National Championship in 2017, the Francis Redington Sportsmanship award was presented to Grace Taschuk of Andover, Minnesota, representing American Legion Post 334 Junior Rifle Club.
- American Legion Boys State, one of the most respected and selective educational programs of government instruction for high school students, celebrated its 83<sup>rd</sup> anniversary this summer. In 2017, 19,139 young men participated in 49 American Legion Boys State programs.
- Darius Thomas of Alabama and Jayson Blackburn of Tennessee were elected President and Vice President respectively of the 2017 American Legion Boys Nation.

### **Youth Cadet Law Enforcement Committee**

**Larry Price**

*South Dakota*

Chairman

The Americanism Commission is concerned that in today's society law enforcement is not always regarded with the respect it deserves. The Commission further recognizes that The American Legion Youth Cadet Law Enforcement program is an excellent vehicle through which young people are empowered to realize that peace officers stand as staunch supporters for moral and legal rights, and that the dedication and impact they have in local communities, state, and nation should be regarded with respect and appreciation. The program also serves as an influential stepping stone in life for high school students considering a career in law enforcement as they experience those professional practices and concepts first-hand during their week-long experience at a state police training academy. Departments are encouraged to work with their state police or other law enforcement organizations to develop a Youth Cadet Law Enforcement Program. A promotional video urging departments to establish a Youth Cadet Law Enforcement Program can be found on the Legion website at [www.legion.org/juniorlaw/resources](http://www.legion.org/juniorlaw/resources).

Twenty-one departments currently sponsor a Youth Cadet Law Enforcement Program: Arizona, Connecticut, Delaware, Florida, Illinois, Indiana, Kansas, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Carolina, Ohio, Oregon, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, South Dakota, Vermont, Virginia, and Wisconsin.