

## **INTERNAL AFFAIRS COMMISSION**

Robert E. Newman, Indiana, Chairman

Matthew E. Herndon, Indiana, Deputy Director

The National Internal Affairs Commission was established by resolution of the National Executive Committee in 1947. The original charge for this constitutional commission remains: to formulate and recommend policies, and to oversee the implementation of adopted policies relating to activities conducted for organizational purposes.

Among those purposes are all those not properly the responsibility of any other national commission, as well as membership strategies, post formation, clerical and records administration for posts and individual members, and special projects. The Commission provides guidance and assistance to the National Adjutant on necessary administrative operations. Under the broad interpretation of those purposes not properly the responsibility of other commissions, Internal Affairs oversees awards, constitutional discipline and commemorative activities. The Commission also monitors legislative and other regulatory activities that potentially affect Legion posts and departments, recommending appropriate courses of action.

The Commission has four standing committees assigned to it for supervision and coordination: American Legion Riders Advisory Committee, National Convention Resolutions Assignment, Constitution and By-Laws, and Membership & Post Activities.

The Internal Affairs Commission also provides guidance for the following programs:

**Sons of The American Legion** - The Sons of The American Legion (SAL) membership is currently more than 349,000 members worldwide. In 2020 COVID impacted the SAL membership; in 2021, the impact continues but is showing signs of the membership decline slowing down as our post and squadrons recover and re-open for business and serving our communities. Of the SAL detachments (states), 27% reported growth from 1 percent to more than 60 percent above their annual membership goals. The SAL continues with the “Buddy Check” initiative that reaches out to post members and veterans in

their communities to check on their health and well-being during these extraordinary times, with an epidemic being a worldwide threat, the end to the war in Afghanistan and natural disasters occurring throughout the country. It is the SAL, a program of The American Legion, that raises funds and volunteers to support programs such as the Veterans Affairs Volunteer Services (VAVS), National Emergency Fund (NEF), Legacy Scholarship Fund (LSF), Operation Comfort Warriors (OCW) and Child Welfare Foundation (CWF), to name a few.

According to the activity reported through the SAL's Consolidated Squadron Reports (CSR), SAL squadrons collectively donated cash and volunteered hours to the following:

- **Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation and Veterans Education and Employment** - volunteered over 142,703 hours, the equivalent of more than \$4 million in wages, and donated over \$1,024,672 in cash.
- **Americanism** - volunteered over 1,193,401 hours, the equivalent of more than \$34 million in wages, and donated more than \$1.5 million in cash.
- **Child Welfare Foundation** - volunteered over 18,430 hours, the equivalent of more than \$525,992 in wages, and donated over \$159,090 in cash.

In summary, across all its programs, the SAL volunteered 1,706,138 hours and donated \$5,324,436 with a total cash value of more than \$54 million that went directly to their communities and supported our veterans and veterans' families.

**The American Legion Riders** - The American Legion Riders (ALR) continue to be the most highly visible program of our American Legion Family - participating in countless community events throughout 54 departments. From escorting fallen heroes from flight line to funeral home to raising charitable donations through distance rides for the treatment of breast cancer, the ALR is the tip of the spear and the finest example of "veterans strengthening America." The rate of growth for the ALR is astounding. The program comprises organized chapters in over 2,100 American Legion posts, and an estimated 121,000 members in 54 departments consisting of 50 states, two U.S. territories and two foreign countries. All indications are that the program will continue to grow at a rapid rate.

Fortune Business Insights (2020) predicts a 7.2% growth in the global motorcycle market between 2021 and 2028, based largely on fossil fuel prices and unfavorable impressions of public transportation following the global pandemic. Combine that with a statistically significant veteran demographic

that is drawn to the motorcycle culture, grounded largely on the thrill, experience of freedom and camaraderie that motorcycle enthusiasts share, and it is likely that The American Legion will see rapid growth in the program as the Global War on Terror ends and servicemembers transition back into society. The obvious advantage to the growth in the ALR program is greater awareness of The American Legion to the communities we serve, and significantly more money raised for charitable causes.

With the high visibility and extraordinary growth of the program, and due to an ever-increasing and important presence in our local communities, the American Legion Riders National Committee presented a resolution to the National Executive Committee (NEC) of The American Legion in 2020 to standardize wear of the American Legion Riders brand and encourage standards of professional conduct commensurate with veterans serving the communities. The resolution passed.

Of all the causes the ALR champions, and the millions of dollars raised for local, state and national charities, no cause is more significant to the riders than the American Legion Legacy Scholarship Fund. This fund awards education scholarships to children of 9/11 veterans who were either killed in action or assessed with a 50% or higher service-connected disability rating from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. Since 2006, the annual American Legion Legacy Run has conducted 16 consecutive Legacy Runs, totaling over 20,000 miles ridden on America's streets, and helping our organization raise over \$12 million for the American Legion Legacy Scholarship Fund.

**National Emergency Fund** – Since 1989 the National Emergency Fund has provided nearly \$10 million in grant assistance to American Legion and Sons of The American Legion (SAL) members and American Legion posts across the nation. From Jan. 1 through Dec. 31, 2020, The American Legion provided \$150,923 in grant monies to Legion and SAL members and to American Legion posts. During the same period, the National Emergency Fund received donations totaling over \$236,000. This prepares us to support future natural disasters.

Every dollar contributed to the fund is used for providing financial assistance to members of The American Legion Family. The grants are to be used for immediate needs – lodging, food and clothing – and not as a substitute for insurance. In order to qualify, members must have been displaced or evacuated from their primary place of residence and be a member in good standing at the

time of loss. Monies to support the administrative costs of maintaining this fund and to conduct fundraising are absorbed through existing budget areas.

The National Emergency Fund is unique, and members know they can turn to The American Legion for immediate financial assistance, without payback. Through the generosity of American Legion and Sons of The American Legion members, the National Emergency Fund will continue to meet the needs of our Legion Family in the aftermath of local, state and national weather-related disasters.

**Consolidated Post Reports** - The Consolidated Post Report (CPR) was developed in 1975 to document the various activities a specific post has accomplished during the 12-month reporting period of June 1 through May 31. The CPR may be the most important post document submitted each year. The combined information is referenced when the National Commander and others speak to our representatives and validates our ability to testify on behalf of all veterans. An individual post story and impact is amplified when we speak with a collective voice. During the 2020-2021 reporting year, 62% of posts submitted a CPR.

Throughout the reporting year, American Legion post members provided:

- 244,990 volunteer hours provided to our communities
- 75,959 pints of blood donated by 50,735 American Legion members
- 2,504,183 community service hours at a cost of \$5,332,525
- 105,942 funeral honors performed at a cost of \$1,756,384
- 3,529 American Legion baseball teams sponsored at a cost of \$2,868,556
- 3,498 Scout Units sponsored representing 33,138 Scouts at a cost of \$1,288,944
- \$4,015,805 donated to school assisted programs and scholarships
- 9,872 Boys State Sponsored at a cost of \$2,010,112
- \$304,278 donated to the Temporary Financial Assistance
- \$287,671 donated to the National Emergency Fund
- \$4,199,661 in total donations to Children and Youth activities

**National American Legion College** - National American Legion College (NALC) hosts many talented young, ambitious Legionnaires at National Headquarters in Indianapolis for a week of intensive training. Upon graduation,

the students return to their departments with enhanced knowledge and appreciation for The American Legion. They are taught the core values and contributions of the organization and are challenged to think critically and creatively working as a team confronting The American Legion. Upon returning home, graduates stay in contact through social media and networking at National American Legion events.

Candidates for the NALC are veterans who demonstrate the potential or have demonstrated their ability to take on higher leadership roles. Student candidates are nominated by their respective departments and ranked by a four-person selection committee comprised of a past national commander who chairs the committee and four NALC graduates, one from the last four graduating classes. In 2020, due to the pandemic, The American Legion complied with COVID-19 mandates and restrictions by canceling the class. Unfortunately, this also reduced the number of attendees from 55 to 32. However, in 2021 two NALC classes will be convened, which will continue the 22-year tradition of producing National American Legion College graduates.

Over 800 graduates are making a difference in leadership and membership across the country. Many graduates have taken on various roles by either teaching/training their fellow Legionnaires, serving in leadership roles, or are appointed to many commissions and committees at the national and department levels. Graduates are encouraged to utilize the skills and knowledge by coordinating with their fellow graduates to develop training platforms that will benefit and enhance their American Legion knowledge and the issues that impact our veterans.

**American Legion Training** – American Legion members have access to many training events and materials, both online and in person. Encouraging training at all levels is vital to yield a better-informed membership base who understand the organization and the importance of their participation. The training area of the webpage offers materials to download for use in local training at the district and post level.

Basic Training is The American Legion's online, self-paced training program free to American Legion Family members. It is a ready resource for those who want to expand their knowledge of the nation's largest veterans service organization. It is a great introductory course to learn the organization and its history.

Training Tuesdays are live webinar events offered on the last Tuesday of each month. These one-hour sessions are open to all and cover a wide variety of topics of interest to post and district leadership.

Live training sessions are conducted each year during the national convention to engage attendees and encourage members to continue sharing The American Legion's mission and message.

**Operation Comfort Warriors (OCW)** – In 2020, Operation Comfort Warriors approved 22 grant requests totaling over \$208,802 for veterans and organizations serving veterans' needs in 15 different states, providing everything from entertainment access to critical personal care needs. In 2021 through Aug. 31, Operation Comfort Warriors has approved 39 grants totaling over \$200,000.

Every dollar contributed to the fund is used to:

- Demonstrate to wounded warriors that those who have come before them will continue to stand by them in their service to our great nation.
- Support individuals and programs that help wounded warriors wherever they are and in whatever stages of recovery they are in.
- Provide items and events that empower wounded warriors and their families to face their difficulties and come out stronger on the other side.

Few programs illustrate The American Legion's commitment to wounded, injured or ill military servicemembers and veterans more than Operation Comfort Warriors (OCW). OCW defines a "wounded warrior" as those veterans who have served, or those servicemembers who are still serving, honorably in the U.S. Armed Forces and who have become wounded, injured or ill. OCW supplements the high-quality care provided at military and Veterans Affairs (VA) medical facilities and transition units throughout the United States and abroad. OCW was established to provide those "non-essential" items not typically found as a budget line on government spreadsheets.

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## **NATIONAL CONVENTION RESOLUTIONS ASSIGNMENT COMMITTEE**

Henry P. Bradley, Massachusetts, Chairman

The Resolutions Assignment Committee meets at least three days before the convening of the national convention. This committee has the responsibility to receive, consider and transmit all resolutions – with or without recommendation – to the appropriate convention committee for a report to the convention. During an average year, between 200 and 300 resolutions will be assigned.

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## **CONSTITUTION AND BY-LAWS COMMITTEE**

Hon. Vincent M. Gaughan, Illinois, Chairman

The National Constitution and By-laws of The American Legion can only be amended by the duly elected delegates at a national convention.

However, the Constitution & By-Laws Committee, established by the authority of the National Executive Committee in 1939, authorizes this committee to study and make proper recommendations concerning all of the matters that pertain to the constitution and by-laws, as well as matters relating to the Uniform Code of Procedure, which provides rules and regulations for the revocation, cancellation or suspension of department and post charters of The American Legion.

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## **MEMBERSHIP & POST ACTIVITIES COMMITTEE**

John “Jay” Bowen, Colorado, Chairman

Matthew E. Herndon, Indiana, Deputy Director

Membership and programs go hand in hand to make The American Legion an organization able to provide people and resources to serve the needs of veterans and their families.

The committee has oversight of the implementation of the recommendations of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Relook Committee, whose charge was to update the original 21<sup>st</sup> Century report and chart the path for membership operations over the next 10 to 15 years.

### **Membership:**

Final 2019 membership – 1,809,212

Final 2020 membership – 1,762,061

2021 membership projection – 1,688,000

**58<sup>th</sup> Annual National Membership Workshop** - The 58<sup>th</sup> Annual National Membership Workshop was held virtually from Indianapolis on July 26-29, 2021. This was the second time the membership workshop was not held in person, and it was very successful.

There were eight training modules centered around the theme of “Growing and Retaining Membership.” There were also briefings from various divisions of National Headquarters, telling attendees how their division can assist in growing and retaining members. It was hosted live through Microsoft Teams with national staff as the presenters and moderators.

The goal of the workshop remained the same as in the past, and that is to provide these essential membership workers with the tools, knowledge and desire to conduct an effective American Legion membership program. Whether they are involved in membership recruitment or program implementation, the workshop teaches Legionnaires to help veterans and provide communities with the essential programs to maintain a quality of life for which all veterans fought and served to preserve.

When the workshop concluded, the attendees were prepared to face day-to-day membership challenges with a better understanding of The American Legion as it relates to matters involving the ability to recruit new members and retain the ones who are already members.

**New Post Development/Revitalization** - The Membership & Post Activities Committee developed a training program in January 1996 designed to assist posts, districts and departments in developing and revitalizing posts. The program provides training workshops to interested volunteers, along with practical, hands-on field application.

The success of the program is evident, based on the many post and district revitalizations and new posts developed in the past 24 years. Many departments have succeeded in revitalizing posts without any direct assistance from National Headquarters staff. Whether departments request field assistance or just send members to the training workshop, positive results follow if they adhere to the

guidelines established. All departments are encouraged to participate in this program. However, success requires a commitment from every level of leadership.