

## **INTERNAL AFFAIRS COMMISSION**

Robert E. Newman, Indiana, Chairman

Matthew E. Herndon, Indiana, 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 367,000 members worldwide. 37 of the 55 detachments (states) finished at 100 percent or above of their annual membership goals. The SAL continues with the Buddy Check initiative that reaches out to squadron members and veterans in their communities to check on their health and well-being. It is the SAL, a program of The American Legion, whose fundraising and volunteer efforts support programs such as the Veterans & Children Foundation (VCF), 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** - volunteered over 21,378,168 hours equaling over \$543,646,812 in direct labor and over \$921,216 in donations.
- **Veterans Education and Employment** - volunteered over 30,666 hours equaling over \$77,983,638 in direct labor and over \$315,678 in donations.
- **Americanism** - volunteered over 183,379 hours equaling over \$4,663,327 in direct labor and over \$346,561 in donations.
- **Child Welfare Foundation** - volunteered over 16,978 hours equaling over \$431,750 in labor directly and over \$239,342 in donations.

Across all SAL programs, they volunteered 24,271,083 hours equaling over \$617,213,641 in direct labor based on \$25.43 per volunteer hour, and donated over \$7,614,253 that went directly to their communities and supported our veterans and their families.

Since 1932, the Sons of The American Legion have continued to be an integral component of the American Legion Family and our local communities.

**The American Legion Riders** -- The American Legion Riders (ALR) has organized chapters in over 2,200 American Legion posts and an estimated 122,000 members in 54 departments within 50 states, two U.S. territories and two foreign countries.

Members of the American Legion Riders are comprised of members from the Legion Family: The American Legion, the Sons of The American Legion, and the American Legion Auxiliary. The ALR is organized into chapters sponsored by individual American Legion posts. ALR members are motorcycle enthusiasts who promote motorcycle safety, volunteer their time by supporting their communities, and participate in organized rides that bring awareness to The American Legion and various veteran causes.

Annually, the national organization and the ALR advisory committee plan and execute one of the country's largest organized motorcycle runs, the American Legion Legacy Run, held the week before the national convention. Riders from all over the country and overseas participate in this five-day, 1,100-mile ride that treks across many states.

During the multiple stops along the way, donors present donations to the American Legion Legacy Scholarship Fund. This fund provides needs-based

scholarships to children of post-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 Legacy Run has conducted 16 consecutive runs, traveled over 22,000 miles and raised more than \$16.4 million for the 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, 2021, The American Legion provided \$203,240 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 \$580,000. 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 2021-2022 reporting year, 67.4% of posts submitted a CPR.

Throughout the reporting year, American Legion post members provided:

- 409,891 volunteer hours provided to our communities
- 96,162 pints of blood donated by 56,103 American Legion members
- 13,775,339 community service hours at a cost of \$1,008,653,137
- 154,117 funeral honors performed at a cost of \$3,283,662
- 1,545 American Legion Baseball teams sponsored at a cost of \$4,513,208
- 1,776 Scout units sponsored, representing 33,179 Scouts at a cost of \$1,836,415
- \$4,708,481 donated to school-assisted programs and scholarships
- 4,917 Local Oratorical contestants sponsored at a cost of \$271,129
- 14,871 Boys State participants sponsored at a cost of \$3,407,743
- \$623,249 donated to Temporary Financial Assistance
- \$1,000,428,444 donated to the National Emergency Fund
- \$3,620,015 in total donations to Children & Youth activities

**National American Legion College** -- National American Legion College (NALC) annually hosts many talented, ambitious Legionnaires at National Headquarters in Indianapolis for a week of intensive training. They are taught the core values and contributions of the organization and are challenged to think critically and creatively, working as a team in confronting issues and challenges within communities and The American Legion. Upon graduation, the students return to their departments with enhanced knowledge and appreciation for The American Legion. Graduates also stay in contact with each other through social media and networking at national American Legion meetings and events.

Candidates for the NALC are veterans who demonstrate the potential or demonstrate their ability to take on higher leadership roles and responsibilities. Applicants 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 three NALC graduates, one from the last three graduating classes. Annually the committee reviews and ranks more than 75 applications. The highest scoring applicants fill the 55 seats available. The remaining applicants are placed on an alternate list based on their overall score and are used to fill vacancies in the event a student cannot attend.

In 2021, due to the pandemic, NALC conducted two classes back-to-back in November (2020 class) and December (2021 class). Both classes combined graduated 87 students. To date, over 875 active graduates are making a difference in leadership and membership across the country. Many graduates continue to take on various roles by either teaching, training or mentoring their fellow Legionnaires. They serve in various leadership roles and accept appointments to serve on one of our many commissions and committees at the national and department levels. Graduates are encouraged to utilize their 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 that understands the organization and the importance of their participation. The training area of the web page offers materials to download for use in local training at the district and post levels.

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 2021, Operation Comfort Warriors approved 69 grant requests totaling \$270,839.40 for veterans and organizations serving veterans' needs in 22 different states, providing everything from entertainment access and essential mobility devices to critical personal care needs. In 2022 through Sept. 23, Operation Comfort Warriors had approved 33 grants totaling over \$175,000.

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 defines a “wounded warrior” as those veterans who have 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 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

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 2020 membership – 1,762,061

Final 2021 membership – 1,694,048

2022 membership projection – 1,640,000

**59<sup>th</sup> Annual National Membership Workshop** -- During the first in-person membership workshop held in Indianapolis since 2019 (July 29-30, 2022) there were approximately 350 attendees from 53 departments that were assigned to four different groups: Programs and Membership, Member Engagement, Recruitment and Retention, and District Commander. The workshop was a great success, with those telling us via our survey they enjoyed training pertaining to growing and retaining membership at the post level featuring American Legion programs.

The goal of the workshop remained the same as in the past: 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 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 25 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.