

THE AMERICAN LEGION
A QUICK GUIDE FOR LEADERSHIP ON FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Can I get The American Legion at the local, state and national level to support a candidate running for Congress or any political office?

No. In Article II, Section 2, 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.” Additionally the National Charter, approved by Congress, stipulates The American Legion as an organization is nonpolitical. Therefore, The American Legion as an organization is never to help or endorse a candidate. However, you, as a private citizen and not speaking for the organization, can do whatever is legal and ethical to advance his/her candidacy.

Where can I find information on actions pending in Congress and The American Legion’s position on legislation? How can I get involved in the legislative process from the local level?

The American Legion maintains several web pages dedicated to our legislative activities. The Legislative information landing page on our national website, www.legion.org/legislative, is regularly updated with news and information about Legion legislative activities, our current legislative priorities and recent testimony.

There is also a link to our “Legislative Action Center”, where members can see the most recent “Action Alerts” and send messages to their elected officials. The Legislative Division also sends out action alerts via email when important legislation is pending. The alerts provide key message points and a specific request for action. Sign up to receive action alert email: capwiz.com/legion/mlm/signup

The Legislative Division also sends out a semi-weekly newsletter that provides information on legislative issues and news concerning The American Legion’s legislative initiatives. Sign up to receive the Legislative Update at www.legion.org/newsletters.

The Legislative Division has a wealth of useful information on members of Congress, the Executive Branch, the media and individual pieces of Legislation. There are many useful documents available for download at www.legion.org/publications#legislative. You can also contact the Legislative Division by emailing leg@legion.org.

Can I wear my American Legion cap to a political event?

No. The American Legion cap is considered the official legion uniform (see p. 40 of 2018 Officer's Guide). If attending a political event, The American Legion cap, or any clothing with The American Legion emblem visible, must be removed so as not to imply any endorsement by The American Legion.

Can we use our American Legion post for a political event?

When using post facilities to host any candidates, the post must remove American Legion emblems and American Legion flags to avoid any impression of endorsements. Candidates for all parties must be presented equal opportunity to use the facilities on the same terms and conditions as other competing candidates.

Can our post accept political donations?

No. If financial contributions are offered by candidates for political office, campaigns, political action committees or political parties, your post should politely decline. The American Legion must avoid any perception of supporting any candidate or political party at all times.

The American Legion values its independence and effectiveness on veterans' issues. This stance is best maintained by neutrality on all individual candidates or political parties. The American Legion, by legal definition, is non-partisan and supports "or opposes as necessary" only issues which impact the Four Pillars.

If the Post has a problem with a member in their Post, can the Post ask National for help?

According to the Federal Charter, the United States Code Annotated Title 36, Chapter 217, Section §21704 titled Powers: The American Legion may "provide guidance and leadership to organizations and local chapters, but may not control or otherwise influence the specific activities and conduct of such organizations and local chapters."

The National organization has no legion direct authority on actions or activities of a local post. Remember your "chain of command." Issues within a post should be brought to the respective local post commander. In the event the issue is with the post commander, the issue should be brought forward to the other department-defined intermediate bodies such as counties and district commanders before addressing persons within the department.

Why is so much emphasis placed on district commanders when these offices are not even required by the organization

The national constitution gives departments authority to create intermediate bodies between posts and departments for promoting the programs of The American Legion. It further states that the Department Executive Committee (DEC) shall define the powers of the intermediate bodies (county, district, zone, area, etc.) so as not to invade the prerogatives invested in the post, department or National.

The district (county, zone or area in some departments depending on size and desire) commander is the department commander's link between department and posts in order to enhance The American Legion programs. This vital link serves to extend the communications span of the department commander but does not usurp their responsibilities. The district commander is the liaison between the post and department, but also has the implied obligation to provide guidance and supervision within the guidelines established by the DEC.

The [District/County Commanders Guide](#) (available for download from the Legion.org website) provides additional suggested information and guidance.

How does a Post apply/qualify for ceremonial rifles?

The individual post is required to have their Commander or Adjutant fill out the form located at www.tacom.army.mil. This form must be sent to your Department Adjutant to validate the post is in good standing and will forward the form to the National Security Division Director for further processing. The [Officers Guide and Manual of Ceremonies](#) (available for download from the Legion.org website) has the procedures for requesting rifles, ammunition and static military equipment.

Can our Post's rifles be loaned to another Post or an organization within the respective Post/Detachment?

No. Rifles are only to be used by the issued organization's Post. The weapons are not to be shared or loaned or utilized by anyone other than that organization's members. The Sons of the American Legion may use the ceremonial rifles provided they comply with local, state, federal law (i.e. no felonies); over 18 years of age; and have weapon safety training. Sons are not authorized to have their own Honor Guard using US Army ceremonial rifles and at least one veteran member of the Post is required to participate.

Does the Post own the rifles?

No. All rifles remain the property of the US Government. The Post is the custodian of the rifles conditionally issued for ceremonial purposes. There is a requirement that the post must send a rifle inventory to the Army. See current [Officers Guide and Manual of Ceremonies](#) (available for download from the Legion.org website) for additional guidance.

What if the Post thinks they bought the rifles and want to keep the rifles as personal property?

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What if the Post closes, do the rifles go to the District Commander or to a neighboring post in need?

No. The post Adjutant or Commander must contact the Army Donations Program Office for disposition (return) instructions prior to closing the Post. See current [Officers Guide and Manual of Ceremonies](#) (available for download from the Legion.org website) for additional guidance.

Our Post has different models of rifles on hand (M1897, M1903, M1917, M1, etc.). What models of rifles need to be recorded on the Ceremonial Rifle Inventory form?

You are required to report by model, manufacturer, and serial numbers all types of rifles. See current [Officers Guide and Manual of Ceremonies](#) (available for download from the Legion.org website) for additional guidance.

Does the Officers' Guide and Manual of Ceremonies include Army Donations Program information?

Yes, The current [Officers Guide and Manual of Ceremonies](#) (available for download from the Legion.org website) has information.

Why can't Vietnam-era veterans attend the National American Legion College (NALC)?

The National American Legion College (NALC) is the capstone leadership educational program provided by The American Legion National Headquarters to Legionnaires from every department. The intent of NALC is to mold leaders for the

future. The intent is to return these future leaders to their respective departments and be used for the needs of the department in conducting their own department level training programs, mentorship and preparing them for leadership positions. The goal is having a department level American Legion College to further train members for leadership positions within the departments, districts, counties and posts. NALC graduates may be prime candidates to use for this training development and execution.

The current practice is to inspire post-Vietnam veterans as first priority to lead change in The American Legion; however, if the department has one fully qualified candidate (post-Vietnam) they can also nominate a Vietnam-era veteran as an additional candidate. Therefore, first priority goes to candidate from each department who is a post-Vietnam veteran and has at least two years in The American Legion. In selection of candidates, preference should be given to members who have held or are holding leadership roles no higher than district/county level. If the intent is to train future leaders, then it would serve little purpose to send a past or current department officer.

This criterion is outlined on the NALC application form, either in the hard copy sent to the departments or in the application that is posted on the national legion web site. (www.legion.org).

Why is the Consolidated Post Report (CPR) so important that every post should submit one?

When the National Commander testifies before Congress, the Consolidated Post Report (CPR) data is used to provide numerical data of what the collective American Legion is doing. Leadership at all levels of the organization need to impress upon our posts that they need to report what they are accomplishing in their community. The CPR is important to the business of The American Legion.

The Federal Charter requires the National Organization to report to Congress on the activities of the corporation during the prior calendar year. The CPR is essential in collecting the data to compile this report to Congress.

Every post is most likely doing something in the community. It is important that the post leadership report what they are doing and at what level they are assisting. The post or department may fill out a CPR to just submit a report but the level of participation is what is essential. This is made easier by using the CPR form on mylegion.org. It has the capability to keep a running total and save the data until the next event. The magnitude of our numbers from just 68% (which is yearly average at National level) of our posts reporting has a major impact on Congress.

A department headquarters may also report program accomplishments on the department HQ post's CPR. For instance, if the department sponsors four young

men to Boy's State, or department staff members donate blood during a blood drive, those activities should also be reported on the departments HQ CPR.

Can the National organization help in funding a local memorial or education center?

Due to the increasing number of proposed memorials coming to the attention of the Internal Affairs Commission, it is not possible for The American Legion to honor all such requests for financial support; therefore, the Commission adopted the following policy:

The National Headquarters will not consider financial support for memorials, museums or education centers that are not in the greater Washington, DC, area and federally supported by Congress and the National Parks System.

When I see how my Congress members vote on veterans' earned benefits issues, I have a feeling they don't really care about veterans. When is The American Legion going to make their votes public?

All votes of members of Congress are public; unfortunately, many veterans' bills are agreed to under unanimous consent (voice vote). Another problem is that veterans' bills are often included in omnibus legislative packages; which means there are many other provisions not related to veterans' benefits or issues that are controversial. This means a member's vote against or for such omnibus bills may not reflect a member's true position on a veterans' benefit or issue. The website www.govtrack.us provides information about individual members of Congress and their voting records.

The best way to know a lawmaker's position on any issue is to ask – by email, letter, phone call, town hall meeting, etc. Make your judgment based on his or her response to you. Hold your two senators and your representative accountable.

On the whole, veterans' benefits have improved significantly. The American Legion has never been, and will never be, a single-issue national wartime veterans' service organization.

Why doesn't The American Legion establish a male auxiliary or allow male spouses of female veterans to join The Sons of The American Legion?

Female veterans are most certainly welcome in The American Legion and have been since 1919 and well before women could vote in this nation. The issue is with their spouses who have not joined the military.

We commend any husband who supports their veteran spouse and their membership as a Legionnaire. Eligibility into the Sons of the American Legion has specific criteria. It is limited only to male descendants of veterans who meet the membership eligibility criteria. Unfortunately, husbands of female veterans are not eligible to join The Sons of the American Legion. However, at the local level, American Legion Posts have the autonomy to create a specific organization that addresses husbands of veteran spouses as long as the post remains compliant with IRS requirements. The details would have to be worked out with their post executive board. Posts that are interested can consult with their Department Office for advice and guidance.

How can we get stories into *The American Legion Magazine*?

The American Legion Magazine is the nation's largest and best-read publication for veterans and their families. With a monthly readership of over 2 million, the magazine receives hundreds of submissions per month and can only publish a small fraction of them, balanced within an editorial calendar that addresses major issues facing our nation and the world. Submissions can be sent by e-mail to magazine@legion.org or by mail to *American Legion Magazine*, PO Box 1055, Indianapolis, IN 46206. Submissions cannot be returned, so the Magazine strongly urges members not to send original photos or documents.

In order to provide local posts and members a forum to share their stories, The American Legion Media & Communications Division has developed and maintains the [Legiontown USA](http://LegiontownUSA) web site for members and posts to share their stories, photos and other materials. Many of those submissions are positioned on the Honor & Remembrance platform at legion.org/honor which appears online.

Often, a story and photo from a local post is best-suited in a local, district or department publication. In order to reach national print media, the story and/or photo must relate directly to a national issue, value, resolution or initiative. Those who submit articles are encouraged to include a query letter that expresses the national issue, value, resolution or initiative that matches the submission.

Are there any other *American Legion periodicals*?

The [American Legion Dispatch](http://AmericanLegionDispatch) is a national leadership publication that disseminates in print and by e-mail stories and information from posts that can be replicated across the country. Unique programs, membership initiatives, organizational articles and stories of community service are welcome in the Dispatch and can be submitted by e-mail at dispatch@legion.org or by contacting Editor Cameran Richardson at crichardson@legion.org, or by mailing to American Legion Dispatch, PO Box 1055, Indianapolis, IN, 46206.

There is also the Membership/Training newsletter created by the Internal Affairs and Membership Division. To subscribe to the newsletter please visit legion.org/membership

Are there any death benefits available from The American Legion?

There are no death benefits simply by virtue of your membership; however, if a member passes away, the family should check to see if the member held a life insurance policy with any of our benefit partners. Since this is protected information, National Headquarters doesn't have this available on its records. Family members can contact our insurance providers at the numbers listed below to see if the member had an active policy:

Hartford Life – (800) 542-5547

Union Fidelity – (800) 523-5758

Globe Life – (800) 654-5433

Legionnaires Insurance Trust – (800) 235-6943

Additionally, some departments may offer a free \$1,000 accidental death benefit with a paid membership, which is also separate from the National Organization. You would need to contact the member's department headquarters to inquire about a possible death benefit; you can find a listing of the department offices on our website at Legion.org/membershipmanagement.

You can also contact the US Department of Veterans Affairs at (800) 827-1000 as well as the appropriate state Veterans Affairs Office to see if there would be a death benefit as a result of the veteran's military service.

How can I get help with my VA claim?

The American Legion Department Service Officers are specially trained to provide information and assistance relating to the VA and other veteran's issues. You can call our Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation Division in our DC office at (202) 861-2700 or email them at VAR@legion.org. You can also find a listing of American Legion certified Service Officers on our web site at Legion.org/serviceofficers.

How can I find a local post?

Visit the National website Legion.org/posts and search for posts by city or zip code by using the post locator.

My family member served on active duty so can I join under his/her service?

It's possible that you may be able to join one of the other organizations in the "Legion Family." The Sons of The American Legion (SAL) is comprised of male descendants, adopted sons and step-sons of American Legion members. (There are no age limitations.) Many posts have an active SAL program and you can contact one near you to learn more. (Visit [Legion.org/sons](https://www.legion.org/sons) for more information.)

Our sister organization is the American Legion Auxiliary. Eligibility is open to mothers, wives, daughters, sisters, grand-daughters, great-grand-daughters, or grandmothers of members of The American Legion, or of deceased veterans who served in the United States Armed Forces during the listed war eras. (Women who are eligible for membership in The American Legion are also eligible to join the Auxiliary.) Visit their website at [Alaforveterans.org](https://www.alaforveterans.org) or you can reach their National Headquarters office by calling (317) 569-4500.

For additional Frequently Asked Questions:

Membership: <https://www.legion.org/membership/faq>

Legion Riders: <https://www.legion.org/riders/faq>

Paid Up For Life: <https://www.legion.org/membership/218307/new-simplified-pufl-program-faqs>

Sons of The American Legion: <https://www.legion.org/sons/membershipfaqs>