The purpose of the National Legislative Commission is to promote the legislative mandates of The American Legion before Congress. These mandates are dictated by resolutions adopted either at a national convention or by the National Executive Committee.

The American Legion’s legislative portfolio covers a broad spectrum of issues, such as the global war on terrorism; juvenile delinquency; veterans employment, training and education; military preparedness; immigration; flag protection; and veterans health care. The American Legion’s mandates are promoted by oral and written testimony at congressional hearings.

During our commission meetings we hear briefings from federal executives, military leaders, elected officials, think tanks and some of the best minds available on the topics of legislation, budget, and overall issues of national interest for which The American Legion advocates. We have heard briefings on a wide variety of topics such as the VA budget; a history and background for veterans benefits in this country; and training for veterans seeking public office.

To date, during the Second Session of the 114th Congress, The American Legion has issued nine letters of support that specifically address legislation relative to our national legislative resolutions. We have testified 22 times before committees of Congress. Our national commander personally testified before a joint session of the House and Senate Veterans’ Affairs committees, presenting The American Legion’s legislative program on February 23.

One of the commission’s most important tools is the National Legislative Council. Composed of 585 volunteer Legionnaires, this body directs grassroots campaigns and lobbying of Congress through countless hours of telephone calls, e-mails and face-to-face meetings. In addition, the American Legion Auxiliary and Sons of The American Legion are critical components in the Legion’s grassroots lobbying efforts.
Since the last national convention, a number of public laws were enacted which address areas of concern to The American Legion. They include:

- Public Law 114-68, which requires the Department of Homeland Security's (DHS) Customs and Border Protection (CBP) division to actively recruit military veterans who are separating from service in order to fill vacancies in the CBP’s ranks to enforce the nation’s immigration laws.

- Public Law 114-75, the “Wounded Warriors Federal Leave Act of 2015,” allows newly hired federal workers who are veterans with at least a 30 percent disability rating to receive leave to receive medical treatment for their disability.

- Public Law 114-113 contains funding for the federal government for the balance of fiscal 2016. This includes $28.7 billion for Department of Justice programs such as the FBI, the U.S. Marshals Service, the Drug Enforcement Administration, state and local law enforcement assistance, and for various state and local law enforcement and crime prevention grant programs, including the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP). The law also includes:
  - Funding for Department of Labor (DOL) programs relating to veterans employment and fighting homelessness, totaling $271 million;
  - Funding for DOD programs in P.L. 114-113 was set at $514.1 billion, an increase of $23.9 billion over fiscal 2015 totals. This funding amounts reflects the realization that despite the end of war in Iraq, our nation’s security must be kept strong; and,
  - VA discretionary funding totaling $71.4 billion. An additional $63.3 billion in advance appropriations for VA medical care accounts for fiscal 2017 was also in the measure.

The American Legion’s legislative attention during the remainder of 2016 will be devoted to fiscal 2017 appropriations and fiscal 2018 advance appropriations for medical care accounts for VA, homeland security and national defense; continued support for legislation to eliminate the disabled veterans tax; and passage of a constitutional amendment to protect the American flag from physical desecration. If you would like further information about the Legislative Commission or its work, please contact the Legislative Division at 202-861-2700, extension 5752 or go to www.legion.org/legislative.