

Media & Communications Commission

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The American Legion Media & Communications Commission oversees the majority of print and digital media products and channels delivered from National Headquarters. The commission also has oversight of the organization's media outreach program, including press conferences, appearances in national news and media alerts. It also provides support for key marketing initiatives and corporate relationships.

The flagship of the program is *The American Legion Magazine*, the nation's best-read and most widely circulated veterans magazine, according to an independent audit. With a circulation of 2 million households and a readership exceeding 3.2 million, *The American Legion Magazine* ranks No. 1 in readership frequency, according to a survey by researcher GfK MRI. That means that subscribers have read four out of the last four or three out of the last four issues more often than readers of all other U.S. magazines. Its content is general interest, driven by the organization's main areas of engagement – patriotism, defense, veterans, children and youth, national and international affairs.

The media area of the Marketing, Media & Communications Division draws most of its revenue from advertising sales into the magazine. In 2015, the year-end sales figure was \$9,981,114, or 92.9 percent of total advertising revenue. The bulk of the remainder of the division's operating revenue comes from a \$3 per member allocation.

The division's media channels and assets include:

- **Print.** This category includes *The American Legion Magazine*; *The American Legion Dispatch* (monthly leadership newsletter); *The American Legion Annual Report*; *The American Legion National Convention Guide*; the National Commander's Testimony to Congress; brochures, internal documents and additional print media as assigned from national leadership, including event programs; and other specialty products such as *Our Pillars, Your Platforms*, which is published during each presidential election year. Additionally, the division fulfills the editing and designing needs of 200 brochures and documents associated with other National Headquarters divisions.
- **Media outreach.** The division is responsible for promoting the organization's programs, messages and priorities to outside media and key stakeholders. This includes the writing and

distribution of press releases; regular engagement with national broadcast, print and web media producers; the development and delivery of media events and press conferences; timely alerts' and audience quantification.

- **Web.** The American Legion national website at www.legion.org is the nation's most-visited veterans web platform and serves as a gateway to virtually all American Legion media products and channels. The site, which receives between 400,000 and 600,000 unique visitors per month, offers news, videos and photography; transactional engagement through donations, membership and merchandising; entrance to special-interest microsites on such topics as the 100th Anniversary of The American Legion and Legiontown USA, where veterans are invited to fulfill their own content and share it; The American Legion Online Extension Institute training module; and the Burn Pit blog site, to name a few. Legion.org is also the entry point to the organization's interactive and transactional platform supporting American Legion Baseball. The American Legion's video vault, called LegionTV, also houses all of the organization's video content in one microsite.
- **E-mail.** The division produces a portfolio of popular e-newsletters, led by the weekly American Legion Online Update, which reaches more than 630,000 subscribers every Thursday with links to the top stories of the week on the Legion.org platform. Another e-newsletter with nearly as many subscribers is the National Commander's Message, which goes out twice monthly, typically to promote a particular subject or interest. The Online Update and the National Commander's Message receive open rates of over 30 percent on a frequent basis — a rate far above the industry standard. Other e-newsletters include Honor and Remembrance, Flag Alert, The American Legion Riders, Legislative Update, The American Legion Baseball Dugout, The American Legion Career Center and The American Legion Centennial. Each newsletter has an open rate that far exceeds the industry standard.
- **Social.** The American Legion has a fast-growing network of social media channels, including Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, YouTube, Instagram and Pinterest. The Legion's Facebook community now has approximately 99,200 in its audience, and the national Twitter following is approximately 63,500.
- **Mobile.** The American Legion's mobile audience grew rapidly over the past 18 months, now representing roughly 34 percent of page views, as compared to 12 percent a year ago. Division staff redesigned the mobile site this year to make it more user-friendly for our growing audience.
- **Smartphone apps:** The American Legion Media & Communications Division has produced and developed five smartphone mobile apps, including a general American Legion app introduced in 2014 that already has nearly 20,500 downloads; an American Legion Claims Coach app to help in the VA benefits process; which has about 15,000 downloads; an American Legion World Series app, which generated more than 7,300 downloads; along with a National Convention app and a Sons of The American Legion app.
- **Physical.** The American Legion Media & Communications Division produces a variety of physical displays, including parade floats, plaques, convention booths and other forms of physical media for the organization.

- **100th Anniversary.** The American Legion Media & Communications Division is deeply involved in the organization's centennial program, including organizational structure, merchandising, promotion, media products and general support.
- **Internal communication groups.** The division has been actively engaged with two communication groups that help promote Legion activities and programs. The National American Legion Press Association (NALPA) is made up of Legion Family members who are responsible for public relations at the department or post level. Division staff members provide training and resources to these members so they can efficiently and effectively promote the Legion in their communities. Staff also support The American Legion Amateur Radio Club (TALARC). These amateur ham radio operators interact with others inside and outside the Legion, and provide critical communication support in times of emergencies or natural disasters.

The goal of this integrated approach to American Legion media is to maximize efficiencies, resources and talents to deliver the organization's message in a well-branded, effective strategy that aims to improve internal and external awareness, generate membership, inform visitors, stimulate interactions and ease transactions. These tools are used for veterans outreach, which includes promoting the many values, programs and interests of The American Legion.

Overall, the media and communications program is built to replicate and represent the values and interests of The American Legion, from the individual member to the local post to the state department to the national headquarters, internal and external, and beyond.