



# American Legion Training Newsletter

Internal Affairs Division

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## Leaders Are Born, Not Made



PNC David K. Rehbein that make us unique, one of which is a tendency toward leadership. That is just the beginning though. All good leaders during their lifetimes has had the opportunity to observe,

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that make us unique, one of which is a tendency toward leadership. That is just the beginning though. All good leaders during their lifetimes has had the opportunity to observe,

small posts that don't have previous district and department leaders to learn from or those from posts being revitalized after a period of inactivity, leadership training is a necessity.

The American Legion College, both at the department and national levels, provides that opportunity for leadership

**Commander Rehbein was elected as the 91<sup>st</sup> National Commander of The American Legion in August, 2008. He is a U.S. Army veteran of the Vietnam era. Commander Rehbein holds a bachelor's degree in physics and a master's degree in metallurgy. Following graduation, he accepted a position as research metallurgist at the Ames Laboratory, U.S. Department of Energy, where he remained until his retirement in July 2008. Commander Rehbein currently serves as the National American Legion College Chancellor.**

learn from and be mentored by those leaders who came before. That is true whether it is leadership in the military, business, academia or The American Legion.

What about those who do not receive that opportunity, who don't have that previous leader to learn from and be mentored by? We can only address that situation by identifying those potential leaders and providing them opportunity through training. For those who come from

training, but we are going beyond that. This training newsletter will lead the way to much broader training for Legionnaires wanting to know more but really wanting to do more. What we know is important but what we do with what we know is crucial. It is my hope that the training opportunities made available through this newsletter will be widely spread throughout The American Legion. Doing that will help us create a better organization as we enter our second century.

## WE WANT YOU!



Welcome to the new training newsletter published by the Internal Affairs Division.

This periodic, Legionnaire-driven newsletter will highlight training that other departments and individuals are conducting in The American Legion. Focus will be given to:

- best practices
- ideas
- creative thinking

To make this newsletter work, we need your submissions on best practices, ideas and creative thinking. Send all the above to [train@legion.org](mailto:train@legion.org).

Submissions should focus on stimulating training and what your department and posts are doing.

All contributions will be properly credited to the author.

Hope you enjoy!

# AMERICAN LEGION LEADER ELECTIONS



Submitted by Rick Pushies, Webmaster  
District 16, Department of California

It will soon be time to elect new leaders in our local posts. Sometimes Legionnaires question, who is eligible to hold office in a post? Traditionally, past members who are in good standing (dues paid current) are eligible to hold office in their posts.

The annual cycle of The American Legion begins each year on July 1



and runs through the end of June the following year. The officer election cycle starts to come into view in March when nominations begin to be made for new leaders at the post. During April and May, the officer election process continues and by the end of June the annual election process is over, till the cycle begins again the following year.

The quality of the leaders we elect significantly impacts the success of our posts. Posts that have a sizeable pool of Legionnaires with a passion to serve as leaders are blessed. Good leadership candidates have a clear vision for success in our post and give us hope, that things will get better.

## Looking for Leaders

What should we look for in the Legionnaires we elect to lead our posts? The most obvious is a desire to serve. Legionnaires who really want to serve as leaders, usually make better leaders than those who do not.

Here are some thoughts on the kind of things we should all look for, in Legionnaires we select as leaders:

- A true passion for The American Legion.
- A willingness to learn more about our history and programs.
- The time and energy needed to succeed.
- The ability to develop a clear vision for post success.
- An effective and frequent communicator.
- Effective computer skills, which are increasingly becoming important.
- Ability to get the job done and keep the Legion Family together.

The Legionnaires we elect to lead our posts are important. Seek out and elect the best Legionnaires available to lead, then work hard to support them, as we work hard to serve all our veterans.

What are post leaders responsible for? In the broad view, they are responsible for the success of our post. To find a more detailed answer to the question of what leaders do, look in these document:

- Your post constitution, bylaws and standing rules.  
*These should be available from the adjutant.*
- Post Officer Guide and Manual of Ceremonies
- Post Adjutant's Manual
- Post Operations Manual and Post Building Guide



Post leaders are elected by the post membership or appointed by the newly elected post commander, per the post bylaws. The key post leadership roles are commander, first vice commander, second vice commander, adjutant and finance officer. Good post commanders work with and through other post leaders.

To help our newer Legionnaires better understand what these key leaders do, here is our "grass roots" perspective.



**Post Commander:** "First among equals" is a good way to look at the relationship of the post commander to other post members. The commander ensures the

# AMERICAN LEGION LEADER ELECTIONS (cont'd)

post's vision of success is completed and keeps the post family together in the process. The post commander traditionally serves as the president of the board of directors for incorporated posts.

The post commander is also the voice of the post, within the post and at meetings beyond the post. Post commanders also work with and through other leaders to complete the business of the post, as they cultivate and guide them for future leadership roles.

## VICE COMMANDER

### First Vice Commander:

The American Legion Post Officer's Guide states this about the first vice commander, "In the majority of posts, a first and second vice commander are elected, with membership the primary concern of the first vice commander."

In too many posts, the first vice commander serves as a membership committee of one. A post, even a small post, should have a Membership Committee to help with recruitment, Post 1000 transfers, renewals, retention and with ensuring the post routinely has personal (by phone or in person) contact, with every member of the post. A Membership Committee of two (or more), is far more effective than the committee of one.



### Second Vice

**Commander:** The duties of a post second vice commander can vary from post to post.

Most posts ask their second vice commander to follow the guidance given in the Post Officer's Guide, "The second vice commander is responsible for building an "I like my post because ..." atmosphere in which Legionnaires have fun while doing the work of the Legion."

## FINANCE OFFICER

**Finance Officer:** Much of the post finance officer's work is defined and determined by standard accounting practices and the needs of the post. The post finance officer is the person of integrity that helps develop a post budget and administers the post book of accounts. Finance officers also advise post leaders on the formulating and administering of financial policies, including the annual post budget.



### Post

### Adjutant:

Whether the post adjutant is seen as a post 'first sergeant' or a continuity

officer, the adjutant is a critical leader in the long term success of a post. Adjutants are responsible for keeping official records of post business, minutes of meetings and a number of key administrative duties.

The post commanders, finance officer and adjutant, working with and through the post

Executive Committee, make up a significant portion of a post's leadership team. They have a big influence in the success our posts achieve.

Good post leaders must give an adequate commitment of time, sufficient personal energy and must communicate effectively, to give our posts strong roots in the communities where we serve our veterans. Our post leaders should ensure good green grass grows at our posts and the roots grow strong. The grass roots of The American Legion, always grow best at local posts.



Rick is a Vietnam Era, USMC veteran. Prior to becoming involved with The

American Legion, Rick spent much of his free time as a volunteer Boy Scout leader and has extensive experience in teaching leadership training for volunteers. He also has 20 year's experience as a volunteer webmaster for the Boy Scouts of America and The American Legion.

Rick is a member of the California American Legion Press Association (CALPA) and the National American Legion Press Association (NALPA).

If you need help or have questions about graphic images, give Rick a call at 805-925-9144. No promises, but he will try hard to give you a helping hand.

# NATIONAL TRAINING

## Sons of The American Legion



**National:** The National Management Institute is a three phase, one day training course conducted on the Saturday before the Spring National Executive Committee Meeting. A recommendation from your Detachment National Executive Committeeman is required prior to acceptance into the three year program.

All training is developed and conducted by SAL members and focuses on developing leadership tools:

### PHASE 1 THE JOURNEY BEGINS

Remembering the Basics; Effective Communications

### PHASE 2 THE JOURNEY CONTINUES

Time Management; Personal Administrative Skills

### PHASE 3 THE JOURNEY ENDS

Integrity, Creditability & Ethics; Planning for Success; Leader & Coach; Driving for Results

**LEAD:** A LEAD training course is now available through request of your department. The SAL program is an important member of our American Legion Family. By implementing best practices, a squadron can be a true asset of our posts.

The majority of SAL training is available, produced and developed at the detachment level of the organization. Please contact your detachment directly to determine what would best suit the needs of your area.

## Leadership, Education And Development



(L.E.A.D) is a collection of training sessions (modules) designed to provide professional development for posts, districts and department level members.

National staff subject matter experts have developed a number of courses covering a wide range of topics relevant to the operations of The

American Legion.

Instructors, lesson plans, handouts and training materials are provided at no expense to departments. Departments choose the training topics, provide the training venue (to include AV support) and attendees.

Most modules are approximately two-hours in length. Some, like "Leadership Development In The American Legion," are four-hour modules and can be extended to six or eight-hour training classes.

If you are interested in any of the LEAD modules, please contact your department headquarters to coordinate the training.



## FIND IT ONLINE

*myLegion.org* is a **FREE** website designed to connect members of The American Legion to their post and department leadership.

*myLegion* includes a site at each level of the organization:

**Members** - view information on file at National Headquarters, messages and events published through department and post *myLegion* sites, and network with other *myLegion* members.

**Departments** - membership information, reports and electronic membership tools such as data change forms for all posts and squadrons within their departments.

**Posts/Districts/Counties** - provides Legion and SAL information for all members in their posts. Allows posts to submit member data change forms and Consolidated Post Reports electronically. Upload post images, newsletters, messages, and calendars. Create membership listings, view members renewing online, search for members who have expired or are members of the department headquarters post, and chat with other officers discussing veterans issues and sharing membership ideas.