

2017-2022 American Legion Auxiliary Programs Action Plan

Legislative

The Legislative program provides information and assistance to American Legion Auxiliary members to advocate for the legislative agenda of The American Legion.

Committee Contact Information

legislative@ALAforVeterans.org

What Can You Do?

1. Encourage and empower members to be more knowledgeable to take action on The American Legion's legislative priorities.

Ideas:

Member

- Subscribe to the Legion's *Legislative Action Alerts* to receive notification when they call on all Legion Family members to take immediate action on a topic. Visit www.capwiz.com/legion/mlm/signup to subscribe. Report to your unit chairman when you have done so.
- Subscribe to the Legion's *Legislative Update* to stay informed on veteran and military legislative issues. Report to your unit chairman when you have subscribed.
- Order a copy of the *ALA Legislative Advocacy Guide* through your unit or your department headquarters and follow the suggestions it contains to help build legislative awareness in your community. The guide can also be downloaded from www.ALAforVeterans.org.
- Visit the Legion's legislative website, www.legion.org/legislative, to keep current on legislative priorities. The site also contains the Legion's legislative priority sheets and point papers, available for download.
 - The priority/drop sheets outline the Legion's priorities and you can "drop" these in your elected official's office.
 - The point papers provide more information on the issue and the Legion's position.
- Actively post The American Legion's legislative priorities on social media.
- Identify your U.S. representative and two U.S. senators and build a relationship and rapport with these individuals and/or members of their staff.
- Subscribe to e-newsletters of your elected officials to monitor what they consider to be their priorities and to make sure that veteran/military and national security issues are among them. Follow them on social media as well. (See each elected official's website for details how to sign-up and social media links).
- Connect with other civic organizations to communicate The American Legion's legislative priorities for potential support and membership opportunities.
- Attend local informational town hall meetings to become better informed and to network with other community and civic organizations.
- Attend department and/or legislative meetings and activities.

- Meet with state- and national-level public officials to discuss issues facing veterans, servicemembers and their families. If possible, attend meetings with other Legion Family members.
 - Remember, we're putting a face on legislative topics. We can share the human reality on how issues affect veterans and their families.
- Complete the Legion's *Congressional Meeting Report Form* following any meeting with your U.S. representative, U.S. senator and/or their legislative staff members. Visit www.legion.org/legislative/aar to complete the form.
- Let your department Legislative chairman or department president know if you have a personal or professional relationship with a U.S. representative and/or U.S. senator who serves on the Veterans Affairs committees or a member of his/her legislative staff and that you'd be willing to participate in the ALA Veterans Affairs Legislative Mini-Council. Each of these members should be willing to contact the representative, senator or staff member when called to action by the Legion on an issue.

Unit

- Hold a unit meeting to go over the steps outlined by the *ALA Legislative Advocacy Guide* and discuss the legislative priorities.
- Invite a staff member of your U.S. representative and/or senator to a unit meeting so he/she can explain the best way to contact the official.
- Include legislative priorities in unit communications (social media, newsletters).
- Work with your Legion counterpart to make arrangements for Legion Family members to meet with respective Congressional delegation while on recess and in home districts.
- Choose a different legislative priority each month and allow time at each unit meeting for members to draft letters and communicate the importance of legislation related to veterans and their families. Watch for *Legislative Action Alerts* for any pressing priority.
- Invite your department chairman to a unit meeting to explain how the department initiates legislative advocacy and how each unit can play a role.
- Work with your Legion Family to host a "Meet the Candidate" night. Make veterans/military issues the primary topic for discussion. (See the How To Sheet for details).

Department

- Order the *ALA Legislative Advocacy Guide* and distribute to each unit. Provide information on how members can order their own copies of the guide through their department. The guide can also be downloaded from the Legislative page on www.ALAforVeterans.org.
- Encourage members to subscribe to the Legion's *Legislative Action Alerts* to receive notification when they call on all Legion Family members to take immediate action on a topic. Visit www.capwiz.com/legion/mlm/signup to subscribe.
- Encourage members to subscribe to the Legion's *Legislative Update* to remain informed about current legislation activities on Capitol Hill. Visit www.legion.org/enewsletters to subscribe.
- Encourage all Legion Family members to complete the Legion's *Congressional Meeting Report Form* following all meetings with U.S. representatives, senators and/or their legislative staff members. Visit www.legion.org/legislative/aar to complete the form.

- Visit the Legion’s legislative website, www.legion.org/legislative, to keep your units and members current on our legislative priorities. The site also contains the Legion’s legislative priority sheets and point papers.
 - The priority/drop sheets outline the Legion’s priorities and you can “drop” these in your elected official’s office. Printed color copies can be requested by email by contacting Legion Headquarters. Be sure to include the quantity you are requesting and your contact information.
 - Point papers provide more information and the Legion’s position.
- Work with your Legion department Legislative chairman and request that the Auxiliary be included in Legion meetings with national and state officials, and be invited to legislative briefings and other functions. Encourage members to attend.
- Hold a department legislative workshop and invite members to participate in activities to articulate the purpose of the Legislative program.
 - Legion Legislative staff is authorized to travel to Auxiliary department functions by submitting a request to the national adjutant.
- Write articles on the Legion’s current legislative activities and publish them in ALA newsletters, newspapers and on websites. Article content can be drawn from the *Legislative Update*, articles in the Legion’s *Dispatch* or other Legion media.
- The work of the Legislative committee amplifies the work of other committees. Collaborate with your department’s Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation, National Security, Education and Americanism chairmen, depending on the legislative issue, to mobilize members and help distribute the “Calls to Action” throughout their spheres of influence.
- In joint effort with the Legion, advocate at the state level to identify and initiate specific steps that need to be taken to provide transitioning servicemembers and military spouses with the credentials they need as they transition into civilian life, reducing barriers to licensing based on military experience or frequent moves.
- In collaboration with your Legion department, coordinate days for the Legion Family to storm your state capital.

Legislative Reporting*

Mid-Year Reports

Mid-Year reports reflect the program work of units in the department, and are intended as an opportunity for mid-year correction. Each department Legislative chairman is required to submit a narrative report to the division Legislative chairman, plus copy the national Legislative chairman.

Year-End Reports

Annual reports reflect the program work of units in the department, and may result in a national award for participants if award requirements are met. Each department Legislative chairman is required to submit a narrative report to the division Legislative chairman, plus copy the national Legislative chairman. Members and units should follow their department’s protocol and deadlines.

**For deadlines and contact information, please consult the Annual Supplement to the 2017-2022 Programs Action Plan or visit the Legislative Committee page on the national website, www.ALAforVeterans.org.*

As part of your narrative report, please include answers to the following questions:

- How did you educate members in the legislative issues promoted by The American Legion and how did your members employ those methods?
- What legislative activities (town hall meetings, legislative receptions) did members attend in their communities and departments? What suggestions did members have to improve those activities? Please describe.
- How did members develop relationships with their elected officials? Please describe.
- Please describe how members were able to connect with their local and state officials and what were their successes.

Legislative Awards

Taking the time to share a favorite story about the positive impact you or someone you know has had on our mission is worth doing! It helps us tell the world who we are, what we do, and why we matter. Just three simple steps to add your part to our national success story:

- 1) Please follow instructions as you fill out the National Report and Awards Cover Sheet found in the awards section of the Programs Action Plan.
- 2) Provide details/examples about the activity as outlined in the award's materials and guidelines section.
- 3) Submit as indicated in the Annual Supplement to the Programs Action Plan.

National Report and Awards Cover Sheet, deadlines, and Legislative committee contact information may be found on the Legislative committee page on the national website, www.ALAforVeterans.org.

- A. Unit Award: Most Outstanding Unit Legislative Program**
- Award: Citation Plaque
 - Presented to: One unit in each division (5)
 - Materials and Guidelines:
 - Entries must be typewritten in narrative form.
 - Include pictures and newspaper articles.
- B. Department Award: Best Department Legislative Program**
- Award: Citation
 - Presented to: One department in each division (5)
 - Materials and Guidelines:
 - Entries must be typewritten in narrative form.
 - Include pictures and newspaper articles.

How To Sheets

- How To Host A "Meet the Candidate" Night

Additional Resources You Can Use

1. www.ALAforVeterans.org on the Legislative program page:
 - *ALA Legislative Advocacy Guide*
 - How to Fill Out the Congressional Contact Form

- How to Contact Legislators to Advocate for Veterans, Servicemembers and their Families
2. www.legion.org/legislative (The American Legion's Legislative Center):
 - Legislative Testimony Information
 - Point Papers, Priority Sheets, Letters of Support
 - Congressional Contact Report Form
 3. Facebook:
 - ALA National Headquarters: www.facebook.com/ALAforVeterans
 - The national Legislative Committee Facebook group, search "ALA National Legislative Group Page"
 4. Your national Legislative committee members (see Legislative program page on the national website or Annual Supplement for contact information)



HOW TO HOST A “MEET THE CANDIDATE” NIGHT

Committee:

Legislative

Contact Information for Questions:

legislative@ALAforVeterans.org

Encourage and empower members to be more knowledgeable to take action on The American Legion’s legislative priorities.

Step-by-Step Instructions:

A “meet the candidate” night is a question-and-answer session where all candidates for a specific election are invited to answer questions. It is not intended to be a debate.

Suggested Date of Event: 2-3 weeks before elections

3 Months Prior to the Event

1. In an effort to make this a Legion Family event, work with your Legion post, SAL squadron and Riders chapter (if applicable) to form a planning committee. If this isn’t a Legion Family event, the unit Legislative chairman and unit president should appoint a planning committee. Identify a place, date and time for the event. Map out a plan to get the word out to the general community. Think about if you’ll serve refreshments; will they be donated or do you need to buy them? Set guidelines for candidates before the event about literature, political signs and handouts.
 - a. If the place is the post home, ensure you have approval for the space and it’s on the calendar. Determine if your post allows political material (like signs) to be displayed on post property.
2. After the candidate filing deadline has passed, pull a list of candidates from your state’s election board or Supervisor of Elections’ website. Prepare a spreadsheet of all ballot-ready candidates (local, state and/or federal) who will be invited. List their name, address, phone, email, party and office. Allow ample time to contact them and receive their response.
3. Mail and email invitation letters with Legion Family Point of Contact name and the deadline date to reply. Remember: The Legion Family is nonpartisan, so you need to invite **ALL** candidates. Follow up periodically with candidates who have not replied. Suggest to the candidate they send another representative if there is a conflict in their scheduling.

2 Months Prior

1. The planning committee arranges for volunteers for the following roles:
 - a. Moderator (1) – Someone impartial and ideally not a part of the Legion Family, such as local news reporter or radio host or someone known and



respected by the community. Using someone on TV or radio also ensures that it will be announced on TV/radio.

- b. Timekeeper (1) – To keep everyone on track. Each candidate should get an equal amount of time each round.
 - c. Legion Family Ambassadors (Several) – To man a table on programs and services your Legion Family offers. They should also have membership applications on hand.
 - d. Servers (Several) – Have a small team of volunteers serve refreshments.
 - e. Crowd Control (Several) – Volunteers to ensure that no attendee gets out of control. (Legion Family Sergeants at Arms might be great for this role).
 - f. Screeners (Several) - Volunteers to collect and review questions from attendees. Selected questions will be given to the moderator for a Q&A period.
**Note: Candidates can stay after to talk with people and address their issues.*
 - g. Public Relations Coordinator (1) – Someone who will ensure that event is advertised in local newspapers, social media, websites and any other media outlet. They might invite a radio station or local TV station to stream the event live. (They might form a team to help promote the event on social media, create a hashtag, etc.).
2. The planning committee sets an agenda and how the event will proceed. Depending on the number of candidates in attendance, allow time for opening and closing speeches for each (this could be 2 to 3 minutes). After opening speeches and introductions, the moderator will ask for questions (that have been screened).
 - a. If question is to a particular candidate, allow 1-2 minutes for the answer and allow opposing candidate the same amount of time. There should be no rebuttals!
 - b. If it is a general question, the moderator can ask any candidate to address it, but again only 1-2 minutes per candidate.

Day of Event

1. Set up the room with the candidates in front of the audience.
2. Prepare tent cards for all candidates with their name, party and the office they're seeking. You may wish to seat candidates alphabetically in an effort to not show favoritism.
3. Set up a table to talk about the programs and services your Legion Family offers. They should also have membership applications on hand and other Legion Family branded information.



4. Setup a table for voter registration¹. Members of your Americanism committee might be good to man this table, or you can invite an outside organization, like the League of Women Voters to help with the voter registration.

After the Event

1. Follow up with thank you notes to all the candidates who participated.
2. If media did not attend, work with your Public Relations chairman to send pictures to be published and posted on social media.

¹ Remember: The deadline to register to vote may be up to 30 days prior to the election. Check with your local Election Board or Supervisor of Election.