



For Service Members • Veterans and Their Families

The American Legion Auxiliary advocates with, and on behalf of, veterans, the military and their families. Advocacy is defined as a constituent relaying his or her ideas and opinions to governmental officials. These include the President of the United States, United States senators and representatives, state governors and legislators, mayors, county commissioners, city council members, and personnel in governmental agencies.

Advocacy succeeds when many individuals with the same goals and sentiments contact government officials and staff members to express their views. By virtue of our numbers, the more than 3 million members of The American Legion Family are a mighty force in providing for today's needs and working toward a better future for our veterans. Because the American Legion Auxiliary represents wives, mothers, daughters, granddaughters or sisters of a veteran, and women veterans, we bring a unique perspective and voice to the public policy process. Advocacy is not the responsibility of a few. It is the responsibility of all who care about our veterans and all Auxiliary members.

By contacting your local Congressional and also in Washington D.C., you are working to keep veterans, issues in front of legislators and strengthening our mission to service to veterans, service members and their families.

Here is a list of topics you could work on listed in the ALA Legislative Advocacy Guide

- Veterans Affairs Funding
- Housing and Urban Development Funding
- Labor Funding
- State Veterans Homes
- Veterans Healthcare
- Availability of Care
- Quality of Care
- Treatment for Women Veterans
- Post Traumatic Stress Disorder
- Traumatic Brain Injury
- Military Sexual Trauma
- Wounded Warrior Care
- Veterans Disability
- VA Benefits Claims
- Concurrent Receipt
- Medical Record Sharing
- Veterans Education and Employment
- Education Benefits
- Credentialing
- Federal Preference
- Troops and Family Support
- Defense Funding
- Housing
- Transition Assistance
- Americanism
- Flag Protection
- Pledge of Allegiance
- Voting

For further information on the Auxiliary's Legislative program, visit www.ALForVeterans.org/Programs/Legislative or email: legislative@ALForVeterans.org.



**LEGISLATIVE
ADVOCACY
AS A UNIT
Gets Involved**

Order and distribute the ***ALA Legislative Advocacy Guide*** from your department headquarters and distribute to members.

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*).



IDENTIFY YOUR LEGISLATORS

Federal—Each of us is represented by two U.S. senators and one U.S. representative. To find your elected Congressional officials, visit www.senate.gov, www.house.gov or the Legion’s CapWiz system at capwiz.com/legion/home. You can also call the U.S. Capitol Switchboard at (202) 224-3121 or toll-free at (877) 762-8762.

Legislative Narrative Report

Unit Name: _____ Unit #: _____ Submitted By: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

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

- How did you train 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.

Please send your Mid-Year and Year End Legislative Reports to:

Julie Dominguez Aysse
526 Milleman Street
Palisade, CO 81526

Email: palisadeala@gmail.com
Phone: (970) 623-0146
(I work nights, so I will return your call the next day)

Please keep in mind that as your chairmen I will be collecting reports from many units to complete my report for the Dept. and we have a dead line to submit our reports to the national chairmen, so please don't wait till the last minute to submit your report.

Thank you

HOW TO HOST A “MEET THE CANDIDATE” NIGHT

Committee:
Legislative

Submitted by:
Elaine Mackenzie, National Legislative Chairman

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 filling deadline has passed, pull a list of candidates from your state’s election board or Supervisor of Elections’ website. Prepare a spreadsheet of all ballotready 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.

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.*

