

## Americanism Program Engagement Plan 2023-2024

National President Lisa Williamson's theme for this year is "Be the One," and what better way to honor our Veterans than to **Promote Overwhelming Patriotism** through participation in the Americanism Program.

National has outlined the Americanism Program Engagement Plan into three main objectives: be knowledgeable, increase participation, and participate in the American Legion Americanism program. In addition to these objectives, National has also provided some action steps to assist you in working these objectives. These are guidelines to help you in your Unit program engagement plan. Get creative, **Promote Overwhelming Patriotism** within your Americanism Program, and remember above all to have fun while doing it. I have also provided you with some resources that are full of valuable information that I am sure will help you throughout the year.

This year as we "Ring our Bells in Service" with President Dee, let us all make her proud by taking the Americanism Program to the forefront as we educate our youth, adults, and our community and **POP AMERICANISM!**

For God and Country,

*Tammy Zell*

Tammy Zell  
Department Chairman  
3024 W. Meadow St.  
Tampa, FL 33611  
(813) 245-6761 cell  
**americanism@alaf1.org**

## AMERICANISM GOALS

Americanism promotes patriotism and responsible citizenship. We do this by striving towards the following goals set forth by the National ALA Americanism program:

1. Be knowledgeable on flag history, etiquette, and proper disposal methods, and promote the observation of patriotic holidays so your community will look to the ALA for information.
2. Increase participation in the American Essay Contest. The theme for the current year is: “What does freedom mean to me”.
3. Participate in the promotion of the American Legion’s Americanism programs.

Below and on the following page are some ideas that members or Unit can do during the year that align with the National goals. Please read through these and let them inspire you on your own path to P.O.P. Americanism.

- Consistently track your activities on the Americanism Activity Tracker and submit to [americanism@alafl.org](mailto:americanism@alafl.org) by April 15, 2024.
- Use hashtags on social media postings: #ringyourbells #alaflamericanism #popamericanism
- Work with your Unit Treasurer to develop a budget for the Americanism program to support awards for essay winners, flag purchases, purchase of informational and patriotic items for distribution in schools or other community venues and during presentations.
- Publish flag etiquette tips in your newspaper, monthly newsletter and on social media.
- Model respect for our flag at public events, such as sporting events.
- Visit schools at the beginning of the school year to give some basic facts about our flag, our national anthem, and when we stand and put our hands over our hearts at parades and ball games.
- Volunteer for a local patriotic event.
- Sign up at [www.legion.org](http://www.legion.org) to receive notifications on when to display your flag at half-staff.
- Contact and ask state and federal representatives to support the flag amendment.
- Vote! Take your children/grandchildren with you when you vote – many places have kid-related voting. Encourage others to vote.
- Recruit others to support the flag amendment by explaining what it is and why it is important.
- Sign up for The American Legion’s Legislative action alerts and follow flag issues.
- Work with local schools to further education of the Constitution, either whole or in part such as the Bill of Rights or the Preamble.

- Increase participation in the Americanism Essay Contest
  - o Contact schools and other organizations such as the Young Marines, Girl and Boy Scouts, and 4-H about the essay contest.
  - o Encourage Junior members to participate in the essay contest.
  - o Create information packets explaining essay contest rules, deadline dates, theme, and award opportunities.
  - o Contact the essay winner and their parents. Invite the parents to bring their child to your next Auxiliary meeting to read his/her winning essay. Provide refreshments.
  - o Work with school administration to identify guidance counselors, history teachers, etc. whose students would be interested in participating.
  - o Arrange for a day with the schools (preferably during a student assembly) to present the essay winners with their prizes. Provide cash award and/or savings bond.
- Work with your Legion Post to increase respect for the flag in your community; invite the public to participate in a flag disposal ceremony.
- Teach proper handling, displaying, and respect for the American flag, as well as our National Anthem and the Pledge of Allegiance.
- Organize a patriotic holiday event or participate in local patriotic holiday events (i.e. march in a parade, wave flags along the street on 9-11, etc.).
- Volunteer to keep up the area around the flag pole at your community's civic government area by planting seasonal flowers and collecting trash.
- Encourage local businesses to fly the American flag, especially on patriotic holidays.
- Encourage Legion Family members to fly an American flag at their home.
- Provide American flags to your local schools for classrooms.
- Order pocket flag kits and distribute to active-duty members.
- Identify and distribute assembled pocket flags to active-duty military overseas.
- Encourage members to participate in the Get Out the Vote campaign. For more information, refer to [www.legion.org/vote](http://www.legion.org/vote).
- Work with local schools to further education of the U.S. Constitution, either whole or in part such as the Bill of Rights or the Preamble.
- Support American Legion Baseball.
  - o Help with statistics.

- o Work the concession booth.
  - o Donate to a team.
  - o Contact local sports shops and ask if they would be willing to make donations toward a fundraiser or offer a discounted price to purchase needed items.
- Support the Oratorical Contest.
  - o Help prepare post home to sponsor local or district contest.
  - o Offer to be a judge or timekeeper.
  - o Offer to help out with refreshments.
  - o Provide transportation for candidates.
  - o Help recruit candidates at local schools and other organizations.
- Contact history teachers or debate coaches.
- Support Junior Shooting Sports, which promotes gun safety/marksmanship training for youth.
  - o Volunteer to help out with scoring, supervision, or transportation.
  - o Help recruit candidates at local schools and other organizations.
- Contact JROTC at local schools.

## Proper Flag Etiquette

When displaying the flag, DO the following:

- Display the U.S. flag from sunrise to sunset on buildings and stationary flagstuffs in the open. When a patriotic effect is desired, the flag may be displayed 24-hours a day if properly illuminated during the hours of darkness.
- When placed on a single staff or lanyard, place the U.S. Flag above all other flags.
- When flags are displayed in a row, the U.S. flag goes to the observer's left. Flags of other nations are flown at same height. State and local flags are traditionally flown lower.
- When used during a marching ceremony or parade with other flags, the U.S. Flag will be to the observer's left.
- On special days, the flag may be flown at half-staff. On Memorial Day it is flown at half-staff until noon and then raised.
- When flown at half-staff, should be first hoisted to the peak for an instant and then lowered to the half-staff position. The flag should be again raised to the peak before it is lowered for the day. By "half-staff" is meant lowering the flag to one-half the distance between the top and bottom of the staff.
- When the flag is displayed over the middle of the street, it should be suspended vertically with the union (blue field of stars) to the north in an east and west street or to the east in a north and south street.
- When placed on a podium the flag should be placed on the speaker's right or the staging area. Other flags should be placed to the left.
- When displayed either horizontally or vertically against a wall (or other flat surface), the union (blue field of stars) should be uppermost and to the flag's own right, that is, to the observer's left.
- When displayed in a window it should be displayed in the same way -- with the union or blue field to the left of the observer in the street.
- When the flag is displayed on a car, the staff shall be fixed firmly to the chassis or clamped to the right fender.
- When the flag is used to cover a casket, it should be so placed that the union is at the head and over the left shoulder. The flag should not be lowered into the grave or allowed to touch the ground.

When saluting the flag DO the following:

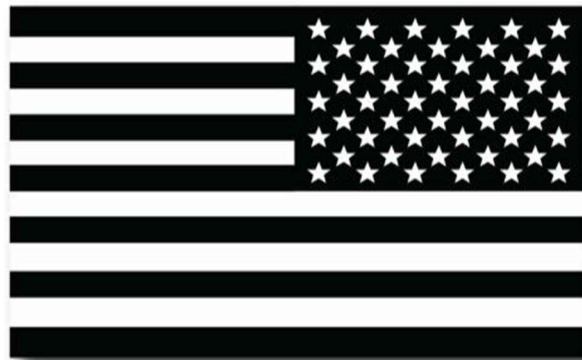
- All persons present in uniform (military, police, fire, etc.) should render the military salute. Members of the armed forces and veterans who are present but not in uniform may render the military salute.
- All other person's present should face the flag and stand at attention with their right hand over the heart with palm open, or if applicable, remove their headdress with their right hand and hold it at the left shoulder, the hand being over the heart.
- The American Legion National Headquarters has advised the following: The Post Officer's Guide and Manual of Ceremonies ask that those Legionnaires who are entering or exiting a meeting room salute the "station of the commander". An acceptable protocol for those who approach the podium is to also salute the colors. The National organization appreciates the demonstration of patriotism and respect given the colors by our ALA members when they have stopped and rendered a civilian hand salute.

When stowing or disposing of the flag, DO the following:

- Fold in the traditional triangle for stowage, never wadded up.
- It is important that the fire be fairly large and of sufficient intensity to ensure complete burning of the flag.
- Place the flag on the fire.
- The individual(s) can come to attention, salute the flag, recite the Pledge of Allegiance and have a brief period of silent reflection.
- After the flag is completely consumed, the fire should then be safely extinguished and the ashes buried.
- Please make sure you are conforming to local/state fire codes or ordinances.

Quick list of Flag Etiquette Don'ts:

- Don't dip the U.S. Flag for any person, flag, or vessel.
- Don't let the flag touch the ground.
- Don't fly flag upside down unless there is an emergency.
- Don't carry the flag flat, or carry things in it.
- Don't use the flag as clothing.
- Don't store the flag where it can get dirty.
- Don't use it as a cover.
- Don't fasten it or tie it back. Always allow it to fall free.
- Don't draw on, or otherwise mark the flag.
- Don't use the flag for decoration. Use bunting with the blue on top, then white, then red.



Why is the flag backwards on a military uniform? When the star field is first and foremost, it looks like the flag itself is storming into battle, much like our brave service men and women. If the flag were not mirrored on the Y axis, the star field would be on the left, making it look like the flag was retreating from battle instead of facing it head-on. This backwards American flag is called the Assaulting Forward. The flag faces forward for the battle the same as our troops do.

## WHEN TO FLY THE FLAG

The flag should be displayed, from sunrise to sunset, on all days when the weather permits, but especially on:

\*New Year's Day, January 1st.

Inauguration Day, January 20th (or January 21st if 20th falls on Sunday)

\*Martin Luther King's Birthday, Third Monday in January.

Lincoln's Birthday, February 12th.

\*President's Day, third Monday in February

Washington's Birthday, February 22nd.

Easter Sunday.

Mother's Day, Second Sunday in May.

Armed Forces Day, Third Saturday in May.

\*Memorial Day (half-staff until noon), Last Monday in May.

Flag Day, June 14th.

\*Juneteenth, June 19th.

\*Independence Day, July 4th.

\*Labor Day, First Monday in September.

Constitution Day, September 17th.

\*Columbus Day, October 12th.

Navy Day, October 27th.

\*Veterans Day, November 11th.

\*Thanksgiving Day, Fourth Thursday in November.

\*Christmas Day, December 25th.

Election Days (various).

Additional days may be proclaimed by the President of the United States.

Any declared State and Local Holidays.

\*Please be aware, the eleven federally observed dates of the above holidays may be different from the actual dates. (i.e.: when a federal holiday falls on the weekend, it will be observed the day before if it falls on Saturday or after if on Sunday)

## **MOURNING FLAG, BUNTING & RIBBON ETIQUETTE**

Many people wonder about proper etiquette when it comes to flying flags in periods of mourning. They want to show their respect, but they want to ensure that they are doing so appropriately.

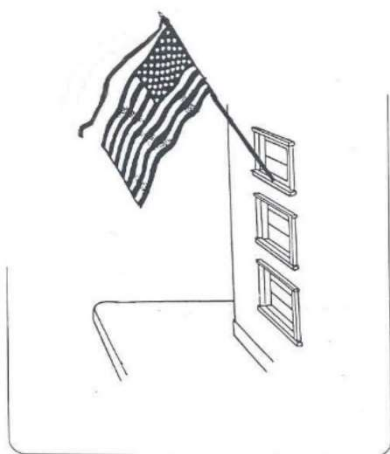
Mourning ribbons, buntings and flags are a great way to respectfully acknowledge a death, but how exactly should you go about displaying these items? How long should they remain on display for?

While mourning ribbon and flag etiquette varies depending on the specific scenario, there are a few general aspects of mourning protocol that it is important to be aware of. Here, we'll review the basics of mourning flag etiquette based on details provided by the Flag Research Center.

## **TRADITIONAL MOURNING FLAG, RIBBON & BUNTING ETIQUETTE**

No. 123 — 1 April 2005

distribution code: PFS, CFS, NFS, DSS, FB, NAVA, NIFDA, XCFS, XDSS, XFB, Consult, NFB



The Flag Research Center often receives questions concerning proper protocol in regard to mourning.

In Western tradition black has always been considered the proper color to symbolize mourning. Occasionally white and/or purple have been associated with black, but they are neither standard nor recommended. Mourning bunting, pull-downs, drapery, ribbons, etc. of black are appropriate. Plain black flags are not recommended since they have also been used as a symbol of anarchism.

American flags traditionally fly at half-staff as a symbol of mourning, but there are circumstances where this is inappropriate. When the length of a flagpole, the permanent attachment of a flag to a staff, or the existence of obstructions

such as shrubbery or a balcony make it difficult to half-staff, attaching black ribbons above a flag is an alternate mode of expressing mourning. A ribbon twice the flag length and no more than 10% the flag width should be tied in a bow above the flag and below the finial, such that the two resulting streamers correspond roughly to the flag length (see image below).

Public buildings of all kinds should express mourning only by the authority of appropriate authorities. For example, in the case of the death of the pope, mourning on public buildings in the United States (half-staffing, draping in black) should be undertaken only if the President issues an executive order authorizing it. The Flag Research Center will notify its paid clientele of such an eventuality.

## **FOLLOWING PROPER MOURNING PROTOCOL: DISPLAYING YOUR MOURNING FLAG, RIBBON & BUNTING CORRECTLY**

With the mourning protocol above in mind, here are a few additional tips for making sure that your mourning flags, ribbons and buntings are displayed properly



### **Choose a Mourning Ribbon That is the Same Size as Your Flag**

If you have chosen to display your flag with a mourning ribbon instead of lowering it to half-staff, you'll want to be sure you have chosen a mourning ribbon that is sized appropriately.

The mourning ribbon should be approximately as long as the flag itself, and should be no wider than 10% of the width of the flag.

The image to the right shows what a properly sized mourning ribbon should look like. Keep in mind that double mourning ribbons are available as well.



### **Display Mourning Buntings on Buildings and Grounds**

Mourning flags and ribbons aren't your only options when it comes to showing your respect during periods of mourning. It is also appropriate to display mourning buntings and banners on the buildings and grounds. These buntings and banners are typically black and purple, and may feature other artwork such as the logo of a fire department or police department depending on the individual being mourned. These items can be used in funeral processions as well.

Information borrowed from Gettysburg Flag Works, Inc.  
[www.gettysburgflag.com/mourning-bunting-ribbon-protocol](http://www.gettysburgflag.com/mourning-bunting-ribbon-protocol)  
(Use not intended as an endorsement by American Legion Auxiliary Department of Florida)

### **Salute the Colors**

The American Legion National Headquarters has advised the following on this matter. The Post Officer's Guide and Manual of Ceremonies ask that those Legionnaires who are entering or exiting a meeting room salute the "station of the commander". An acceptable protocol for those who approach the podium is to also salute the colors. The National organization appreciates the demonstration of patriotism and respect given the colors by our ALA members when they have stopped and rendered a civilian hand salute.

## HOW TO PROMOTE "STAR-SPANGLED KIDS"

**Committee:** Americanism

**Contact Information for Questions:** [americanism@alafl.org](mailto:americanism@alafl.org)

### **Star-Spangled Kids:**

- Educate youth on the history of the United States from the aspect of patriotism, Americanism and the U.S. Constitution.
- In conjunction with local schools, create a Unit Citizenship Award for children and youth who have demonstrated the ideals of the U.S. Constitution.
- Team with the Education chairman to bring veterans or servicemembers into the classroom to talk about what their service means to defending the ideals of the Constitution.
- Share "Fascinating Facts about the U.S. Constitution" each month in the department or unit bulletin, in tweets, or in a newspaper editorial.
- List important constitutional dates by chronological order or by month.
- Encourage students to test their knowledge of the Constitution.
- Distribute patriotic coloring book pages for children in primary grades.
- Celebrate Constitution Day (also known as Citizenship Day) on September 17, the day set aside each year to commemorate the signing of the U.S. Constitution. o Celebrate at September's Junior meeting with a cake or cupcakes.
- Let Juniors report on different sections of the Bill of Rights
- Print and distribute pocket copies of the U.S. Constitution for school children and/or Juniors.
- Put on a skit or musical about the Constitution and the signers.
- Hold a scavenger hunt in the post where children find information relating to the Constitution.
- Have members dress up as signers of the Constitution and describe the role of their character in the writing and signing of the Constitution.
- Encourage high school-aged students to use their knowledge of the U.S. Constitution by participating in The American Legion Oratorical Contest. Resources:
- [www.constitutionfacts.com](http://www.constitutionfacts.com) Constitution Day Resources:
- <http://ca3rsproject.org/pages/ConstitutionDayResources.html>

## **Spirit of Youth Scholarship Fund**

The Spirit of Youth Scholarship Fund is an umbrella that supports three separate scholarship opportunities for participants in American Legion Auxiliary programs. One is for American Legion Auxiliary Junior members, another for the Honorary National Junior Division Vice Presidents, and one is for participants in the American Legion Auxiliary Girls Nation program.

### **Application Deadline:**

The application deadline for the Spirit of Youth Scholarship for Junior members is March 1 of each year. Recipients are informed in late spring. The other two scholarships supported by this fund are awarded in conjunction with a national meeting.

You can help support students too! We invite you to join us in supporting our youth as they pursue a higher education. <https://donate.legion-aux.org/CSiDonate/Give.aspx/7GY9YLFO#c>

### **Spirit of Youth Scholarship for Junior Members**

The American Legion Auxiliary annually provides one Junior member in each of the five American Legion Auxiliary divisions with a \$5,000 scholarship.

### **SCHOLARSHIP RULES**

1. Candidates for this award shall be/shall have been Junior members of the American Legion Auxiliary, have held membership in the American Legion Auxiliary for the past three consecutive years, and must be a paid member for the current membership year. Applicant must continue their membership in the American Legion Auxiliary during the scholarship period.
2. Applicants must be in their senior year of high school.
3. This is a scholarship to attend an accredited institution of higher education. Applicants must be of good character and have grades that meet entrance requirements at the institution of their choice. Applicants must have at least a 3.0 GPA using a 4.0 scale.
4. Applicants must present the completed application to their local American Legion Auxiliary unit president **ON OR BEFORE MARCH 1.**
5. Judging, at all levels, shall be on the following basis:
  - Character/Leadership 30%
  - Essay/Application 30%
  - Academic Achievement 40%

## National Awards

### Americanism Essay Contest

This year's Essay Contest will be "*What Does Freedom Mean to Me?*". One award in each of the five classes will be presented in each Division, with Florida competing in the Southern Division. Department winners in each of the five classes will receive a certificate and medal at the Department Convention in June 2024. Winners at the National level will receive \$50 and a \$50 honorarium in the student's name to the National President's Scholarship at the National Convention in August 2024. It is up to the Unit as to what type of award or recognition they would like to bestow upon their local winners. The Americanism essay cover sheet is at the end of this program engagement plan and is also available at [alafl.org](http://alafl.org). The Units are to select and submit one winner in each class level electronically to the Department Chairman by April 1, 2024.

Essay Classes:

<u>Class</u>	<u>Grade Level</u>	<u>Word Requirement</u>
<u>I</u>	3 and 4	150-250
<u>II</u>	5 and 6	250-300
<u>III</u>	7 and 8	350-400
<u>IV</u>	9 and 10	450-500
<u>V</u>	11 and 12	450-500
VI	Students with special needs	Word count should correspond with <u>student's grade level.</u>

### Dorothy Pearl Plaque

A plaque will be presented to the Unit that reports Most Outstanding Americanism Program targeted to children and youth. The entry must be typewritten in narrative form, not to exceed 1,000 words. A maximum of five pictures and news articles, provided as separate jpg files, may be included. All entries must be submitted to the Department Chairman 30 days prior to Department Convention which will be May 13, 2024. Check Unit guide for additional information.

## Department Awards

### **Doris E. Hahn Trophy “Best All-Around Award for Americanism Activities”**

Entry to be typed on 8 ½” x 11” paper, double spaced, narrative form, not to exceed 1,000 words, and submitted to Department Chairman 30 days prior to Convention which will be May 15, 2024. Unit must have sponsored at least one girl to Girl’s State. Report to include only Americanism activities. Check Unit guide for additional information.

### **Chairman’s Award to a Unit that Promotes the best “Star Spangled Kids” program.**

Entry to be typed on 8 ½” x 11” paper, double spaced, narrative form, not to exceed 1,000 words. Please see “*How to Promote Star Spangled Kids*” for additional guidelines. Narrative to be submitted electronically to [americanism@al afl.org](mailto:americanism@al afl.org) . Cover page to include Unit name and number, name of Unit President and Unit Americanism Chairman. Please include pictures as separate jpg files. Report is due to Department Chairman 30 days prior to the Department Convention which will be May 15, 2024.

## End of Year Reporting

1. Unit Reports are due to District Chairman no later than April 1st, 2024.
2. Tracker sheets are due to Department Chairman no later than April 15th. This is an individual member’s means of tracking their own participation in Americanism events and activities. The Unit Chairman is to gather all member’s completed forms, combine into a single PDF and send to [americanism@al afl.org](mailto:americanism@al afl.org) prior to the deadline. The culmination of information from these trackers will also be beneficial for the Unit Report.
3. District Reports are due to the Department Chairman no later than April 15th and should consist of both the District Report form and a narrative. Narratives should answer the following questions:
  - Did any of your Units have Essay contestants, if so, what Unit and who are they?
  - How did the Units promote the flag usage, display and disposal?
  - How did the Units support the American Legion’s Americanism programs?
  - How did the Units promote Americanism in your community?
  - How did the Units spend time in classrooms teaching youth about Americanism ideals?
  - Did any Units contribute to the Spirit of Youth Fund? If so, which ones?

Forms and instructions can be found on the Department Website at ALAFL.org. All forms have been set up as fillable PDFs and members are encouraged to keep in the electronic format for ease of filling out and submitting. Any report submitted to District in a hardcopy format MUST be converted to electronic prior to submission to Department to be considered for any awards.

## Resources

1. American Legion Auxiliary National Headquarters at [www.ALAforVeterans.org](http://www.ALAforVeterans.org)
2. Pocket Flag Project at [www.pocketflagproject.com](http://www.pocketflagproject.com) or write Pocket Flag Project, P O Box 240847, Arvada CO 80006
3. Emblem sales at [www.emblem.legion.org](http://www.emblem.legion.org) . Flag education DVD explains the history significance, meaning, proper display and treatment of the U.S. flag. “Let’s Be Right On Flag Etiquette” is a booklet on proper flag etiquette.
4. The American Legion Flag Advocacy at [www.legion.org/flag](http://www.legion.org/flag)
5. American Legion’s Action Program of Americanism brochure at [www.legion.org/publications](http://www.legion.org/publications)
6. See Americanism program page on [www.ALAforVeterans.org](http://www.ALAforVeterans.org) for additional resources.
7. Spirit of Youth Fund scholarships, American Legion Auxiliary National Headquarters at [www.ALAforVeterans.org](http://www.ALAforVeterans.org)

## Flag Resources

Please be sure to always purchase **American-made** flags. Below is a helpful list of companies. This listing does not constitute an endorsement by the American Legion Auxiliary Department of Florida.

Flag and Emblem Sales: [www.emblem.legion.org/](http://www.emblem.legion.org/)

Grace Alley: [www.gracealley.com](http://www.gracealley.com) (This is a Florida-based, Veteran-owned company!)

Gettysburg Flag Works: [www.gettysburgflags.com](http://www.gettysburgflags.com)

Allegiance Flag Supply: [www.showallegiance.com](http://www.showallegiance.com)

The American Flag Company: [www.americanflags.com](http://www.americanflags.com)

Annin Flagmakers: [www.rayallen.com/annin-flagmakers/](http://www.rayallen.com/annin-flagmakers/)

Valley Forge Flag Company: [www.valleyforgeflag.com](http://www.valleyforgeflag.com)

A more expansive list can be found at: [www.allamerican.org/lists/american-flags/](http://www.allamerican.org/lists/american-flags/)

## The Thirteen Folds of the Flag

1. The first fold of our flag is a symbol of life.
2. The second fold is a symbol of our belief in the eternal life.
3. The third fold is made in honor and remembrance of the veteran departing our ranks who gave a portion of life for the defense of our country to attain a peace throughout the world.
4. The fourth fold represents our weaker nature, for as American citizens trusting in God, it is to Him we turn in times of peace as well as in times of war for His divine guidance.
5. The fifth fold is a tribute to our country, for in the words of Stephen Decatur, "Our country, in dealing with other countries, may she always be right; but it is still our country, right or wrong.
6. The sixth fold is for where our hearts lie. It is with our heart that we pledge allegiance to the flag of the United States of America, and to the republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.
7. The seventh fold is a tribute to our Armed Forces, for it is through the Armed Forces that we protect our country and our flag against all her enemies, whether they be found within or without the boundaries of our republic.
8. The eighth fold is a tribute to the one who entered in to the valley of the shadow of death, that we might see the light of day, and to honor mother, for whom it flies on Mother's Day.
9. The ninth fold is a tribute to womanhood; for it has been through their faith, love, loyalty and devotion that the character of the men and women who have made this country great have been molded.
10. The tenth fold is a tribute to father, for he, too, has given his sons and daughters for the defense of our country since they were first born.
11. The eleventh fold, represents the lower portion of the seal of King David and King Solomon, and glorifies, in the Hebrew's eyes, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.
12. The twelfth fold, represents an emblem of eternity and glorifies, in the Christian's eyes, God the Father, the Son, and Holy Ghost.
13. When the flag is completely folded, the stars are uppermost, reminding us of our national motto, "In God we Trust."

After the flag is completely folded and tucked in, it takes on the appearance of a cocked hat, ever reminding us of the soldiers who served under General George Washington, and the Sailors and Marines who served under Captain John Paul Jones, who were followed by their comrades and shipmates in the Armed Forces of the United States, preserving for us the rights, privileges and freedoms we enjoy today.

## Proper Flag Disposal

In the course of time and with proper service, flags become worn and are no longer serviceable. The amount of wear and tear is a judgement call but should never be so worn as to be disrespectful. At that time, it is necessary to properly dispose of them. The American Legion, the VFW, the Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts, as well as some state or county offices or police stations have boxes designated for that purpose. If you put the flag in one of these boxes, it will be properly disposed of. You may choose to dispose of the flag at home, but this should be done in a respectful manner by burning or burying the flag.

The American Legion developed the manual of ceremonies which was approved with Resolution 440 at the Convention held September 20-23, 1937, and adopted with the Flag Code by the Congress as law 829 Title 36 U.S. Code ch. 10 section 176 passed December 22, 1942 to properly dispose of a worn flag. They suggest that the flag be burned intact, but, if it is too large to burn intact, it should be respectfully cut into four quadrants, not cutting the blue star field as this symbolizes the union of the states. Once the flag is cut, it is no longer considered a flag of the nation. The American Legion family does not sanction cutting the stars from the flag to be distributed. If a flag is plastic or would be hazardous to burn, it should be buried.

The standard ceremony generally used by the Legion family for disposal consists of parallel lines of onlookers. The flags to be burned are brought before the Commander (or the person leading the ceremony) where he or she certifies that the flags are no longer serviceable. The color Guard presents the colors, and the chaplain offers prayers. The crowd salutes as the flag (which may be dipped in kerosene to speed burning) is placed on the fire, and the bugle sounds "Call to Colors". Once the flag(s) have burned, the Color Guard and the onlookers are dismissed, and the ashes are buried. The words of the ceremony may be found in the Legion manual of ceremonies or at [legion.org/flag/ceremony](http://legion.org/flag/ceremony).

As a symbol of our Nation, it is important that we treat the flag with respect and do not fly torn or tattered flags. When they have reached the end of their service, a dignified disposal is proper. At no time should an American flag reach the landfill or be placed in a garbage can. If you do not know how or where to properly dispose of your flag, call your local American Legion. Someone will be happy to help you show the proper respect for the banner that inspires so many to selfless service.

Submitted by Marie Mock, (former) Eastern Division Chairman

### Resources:

U.S. Department of Defense; [defense.gov](http://defense.gov)

U.S. Flag Code

[Let's Be Right on Flag Etiquette](#)

[Hunker.com](http://Hunker.com)