

Legislative Program Action Plan 2020 – 2021

As advocates for our veterans, we encourage our members to contact their elected officials by phone, email or letter to implore them to keep the needs and sacrifices of our soldiers and their families front and center as they go about their legislative work on behalf of their constituents.

This year as we head into elections it is important that we promote this program in our units, district at state, national and federal levels. Please encourage members to complete the census 2020 and VOTE either by mail in or in person. Advocacy simply means to have a voice, and we need to be that voice for our men and women who are currently and who have fought for our great country.

The Legislative program is a program where action can be taken from home and out in the community. Making phone calls, sending letters to our local officials, following our Legislative Agenda on the American Legion Legislative Center and finding out who has co-sponsored a bill on www/congress.gov.com is taking part in the Legislative process. Please encourage members to track their hours they spend on our ALA programs as these are important for our entire organization for when our National commander testifies before Congress and we go to Washington, D.C. to “Storm the Hill” to discuss our American Legion priorities that have direct impact on our Military, Veterans and Community.

President Ann’s theme this year will again be “Florida ALA Strong”. Honor Flight of Florida is our President’s project this year. We are strong, and together we CAN make a difference!

Our Department Legislative Committee will continue with our slogan, “Advocacy Strong, Florida Strong.” Let’s all take action in our legislative program as we follow laws to protect our Military, Veterans and Community, Together, we are Advocacy strong!

For God and Country,

Lisa Hoyland
5302 Date Palm Place
Tamarac, FL 33319

Committee Members

Sandy Allen

Molly Main

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What is this program, and why do we have it?

Every day, hundreds of thousands of soldiers are fighting for our freedom across the globe. At the Auxiliary, we never stop thinking about what they face while deployed and what they will need when they return home. As advocates for our veterans, we encourage our members to contact their elected officials by phone, e-mail or letter to implore them to keep the needs and sacrifices of our soldiers and their families' front and center as they go about their legislative work on behalf of their constituents – that's all of us!

The American Legion and Auxiliary are interested in legislative measures which come before the United States Congress and State legislatures. Through lobbying efforts we are able to influence legislation of benefit to veterans, the community and our nation.

The American Legion Auxiliary has a National legislative Committee which works closely with The American Legion National Legislative Commission. The American Legion Commission has offices in Washington, D.C. and continually promotes the passage of The American Legion sponsored legislation. The American Legion and Auxiliary also have Legislative Committees which function in a similar manner within the states.

Unit Support in Legislative Work:

When measures important to the American Legion and American Legion Auxiliary are before the lawmaking bodies, appeals go out for support. At such times the unit members should contact their representatives urging them to take the action desired.

Legislative Policy is Formed:

In all matters of legislation the American Legion Auxiliary follows the action of The American Legion, never endorsing any measure until The American Legion Has first endorsed it and never following a policy which does not coincide exactly with The American Legion's stand.

Advocates for Veterans:

American Legion Auxiliary members work to keep veterans' issues in front of legislators, which strengthens our mission to serve veterans, their families, and their community.

Each year the Auxiliary convenes its Washington D.C. conference in conjunction with The American Legion's annual meeting in our nation's capital to review The American Legion's legislative priorities and advise members how to be better advocates for those issues with their own state's Congressional legislators. Armed with information and enthusiasm, Auxiliary members "take to The Hill" to make their voices heard. The Legislative program periodically provides members with specific reasons to contact their legislators and provides them with summaries about issues of importance to our veterans.

While we may think that one voice may not make a difference on its own, that one voice added to the voice of others with the same goals and sentiments quickly becomes a collective voice of

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influence that can impact the decisions of our elected officials. Joining together, Auxiliary members can and do make a difference when they advocate for veterans, their families and their communities.

What Can you Do?

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

Here are some tips on how to do this:

- 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. Point papers provide more information and the Legion's position.
- Download a copy of the ALA Advocacy Guide. One of the most beneficial tools of the American Legion Auxiliary is the ALA Advocacy guide. The purpose of this Legislative Advocacy Guide is to help each Auxiliary member become a competent and informed advocate. It includes tips on gathering information on legislation, making legislative contacts, and building relationships with legislators and their staff at all levels of government.. **The guide can also be downloaded from the Legislative page on www.ALAforVeterans.org**
- **Promote and Like our Department of Florida FLALA Legislative Page!**

OBJECTIVE

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.

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- 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. o Remember, we are 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.

Legislative Work for the Unit:

The legislative activities of the Unit may be handled by the Unit President, by a standing Unit committee, or by a special committee appointed to conduct the work in special emergencies. The legislative matters usually deal with some other phase of Auxiliary work, such as Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation - getting beneficial legislation for veterans; Children and Youth - securing legislation beneficial to children of veterans and children generally; National Security - securing national security measures; or Americanism - obtaining the passage of measures to promote better citizenship or to curb the activities of radicals. The arousing of public sentiment in support of such measures might well be left to the committee handling the activity under which they fall.

All Unit Legislative Chairmen should subscribe to The Dispatch. The American Legion's publication. This biweekly newspaper describes current legislative issues and other news pertinent to The American Legion family. Subscription requests with payment should be sent to The Dispatch, The American Legion, PO Box 1055, Indianapolis, IN 46206.

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Unit Ideas:

- Hold a unit meeting to go over the steps outlined by the ALA Legislative Advocacy Guide and discuss the legislative priorities.
- Invite local, state or national elected officials to a unit meeting to discuss veterans' concerns.
- Include legislative priorities in unit communications (social media, newsletters).
- Choose a different legislative priority each month to present legislative information at each unit meeting. Watch for Legislative Action Alerts for any pressing priority.
- Invite your district or 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).
- 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. Report number of members that subscribe on your mid-year and end of year reports.
- Encourage members to subscribe to the Legion's Legislative Update to stay informed on veteran and military legislative issues. Report on your mid-year and end of year report forms how many unit members have subscribed.
- Order a copy of the ALA Legislative Advocacy Guide through your district 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.
- 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.
- Encourage members to 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 local, 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.
- Have members 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.

Legislative Work for the District:

The legislative activities of the District are usually handled by the District Legislative Chairman, if the district does not have a chair for this program then the District President. The legislative matters usually deal with some other phase of Auxiliary work, such as Veterans Affairs and

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Rehabilitation - getting beneficial legislation for veterans; Children and Youth - securing legislation beneficial to children of veterans and children generally; National Security - securing national security measures; or Americanism - obtaining the passage of measures to promote better citizenship or to curb the activities of radicals. The arousing of public sentiment in support of such measures might well be left to the committee handling the activity under which they fall.

The District Legislative Chairman should subscribe to The Dispatch. The American Legion's publication. This biweekly newspaper describes current legislative issues and other news pertinent to The American Legion family. Subscription requests with payment should be sent to The Dispatch, The American Legion, PO Box 1055, Indianapolis, IN 46206.

District Ideas:

- 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.ALForVeterans.org.
- Encourage units to have members 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 units to have their members 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.
- Work with your Legion district Legislative chairman and request that the Auxiliary be included in Legion meetings with local, state and national officials, and be invited to legislative briefings and other functions.
- Hold a district legislative workshop and invite members to participate in activities to articulate the purpose of the Legislative program.
- 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 district's Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation, National Security, Education and Americanism chairmen, depending on the legislative issue, to mobilize members
 - In joint effort with the Legion, advocate at the local and district 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.

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Legislative Reporting:

Mid-Year Reports reflect the program work of units in the district and are intended as an opportunity for mid-year correction. **Each Legislative unit chairman is requested to send a Mid-Year report to your District Chairman by December 1, 2020.**

District to Department by December 15, 2020

Year-End Reports reflect the program work of units in the district and may result in a state or national award for participants if award requirements are met. **Each Legislative unit chairman is requested to submit a Year-End report to your District Chairman by April 1, 2021.**

District to Department April 15, 2021

For National deadlines please refer to the National 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? 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.

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"
3. Your national Legislative committee members (see Legislative program page on the national website or Annual Supplement for contact information).

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7-Point Plan to Get Your Representative to Pay Attention

1. Write the member a personal letter and expect a response within thirty days. Do not use a form letter or postcard.
2. If you haven't heard from your member, call to ask for a meeting with the staff member in charge of veterans issues.
3. Be concise at the meeting. Have your facts straight and all your sources.
4. Request that your issue/concern be placed on the *radar screen* and supported by your member.
5. If the above isn't working, stand outside the member's office or committee door. Introduce yourself when she/he passes by and tell them about your concern as simply as possible. Back up your statement with facts.
6. Send a thank you letter for the time and support the member gives to your issue.
7. Hold her/him accountable. Send a note of appreciation if she/he votes yes. Send a note questioning a *no* vote.

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DEPARTMENT LEGISLATIVE AWARDS 2020-2021

Chairman Awards:

Each award application **must** include a cover sheet found in this program action plan. All awards will be announced at the Department Convention.

- **Flying Eagle Award** – this award is awarded to an individual member who has advocated and promoted the ALA Legislative program throughout the year to her unit members, represented the American Legion Auxiliary at community events, Town Hall meetings (ALA branded) and has invested many hours into the legislative program by reporting hours.
- Unit Award: Unit Legislative Chairman Award
- Type of Award: Chairman's Trophy
- Citation Presented to: Member
- Materials and Guidelines: Entries must be typewritten in narrative form and include pictures and newspaper articles. Must show or explain how you were representing the American Legion legislative program

Action in Advocacy – this award is awarded to the unit that has informed and provided tools to unit members to become grassroots advocates for veterans, service members and their families with local, state and national elected officials, supporting the Legislative agenda and initiatives of The American Legion

- Unit Award: Unit Legislative Award
- Type of Award: Chairman's Trophy
- Citation Presented to: One unit in each division (5 overall awards)
- Materials and Guidelines: Entries must be typewritten in narrative form and include pictures and newspaper articles. Must show or explain how you were representing the American Legion legislative program

A certificate will be presented to all Unit Chairman and members that have written and received replies from letters or emails sent to various legislators. Those replies must be attached to the Legislative Report and sent to the Department Legislative Chairman, Lisa Hoyland, 5302 Date Palm Place, Tamarac, Florida 33319.

If a Unit only completes the Report Form and does not do a narrative, they will still receive credit as having completed a report and be eligible for the citation of Merit. However, if the report shows all zeros or blank information, this will not qualify as an actual report.

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NATIONAL AWARD INFORMATION & DEADLINES

Each award application must include the cover sheet found in this program Plan. All awards will be announced at National Convention during the Legislative pre-convention meetings.

Unit Award: Unit Legislative Award Type of Award:

Citation Presented to: One unit in each division (5 overall awards)

Materials and Guidelines:

- Entries must include the award cover sheet located in this program Plan.
- For the most outstanding overall legislative report. Each entry must be typewritten in narrative form and must tell the story of legislative activism and how it made a difference in the lives of veterans and their families.
- Include pictures and newspaper articles.
- Attach an award cover sheet, including the name of the award, as well as the name and contact information for the department and unit Legislative chairmen.
- Entries must be sent to the Southern Area Division Legislative Chairman by June 1, 2021.

Criteria for Department and National narratives are as follows:

Narrative must be typed written in narrative form. Narrative must not exceed 1,000 words (Can be fewer words if program dictates) Narrative may include photographs and news articles. A copy of your Unit ALA Impact Form.

Don't forget to include Photos or sample letters to your representatives. We hope to recognize Units that did a great job in the Legislative Program this year at the Department Convention.