**2017-2018 Legislative Program Action Plan**

Welcome to the 2017-2018 American Legion Auxiliary year. Our Department President T.K. Wildricks’ theme is Catching Rays, Creating Brighter Futures. This year the Department of Florida will “Rock” as we make a difference on issues concerning veterans, women, military life, national security and patriotism.

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

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

**What can Unit members do? Activities and Ideas**

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

**Subscribe to the following informational material**

* The American Legion’s ***Legislative Action Alerts*** to receive notification when they call on Legion Family members to take immediate action on legislative issues. Visit [www.capwiz.com/legion/mlm/signup](http://www.capwiz.com/legion/mlm/signup)to subscribe. Report to your Unit Chairman when you have done so.
* The American Legion’s ***Legislative Update and e-newsletters*** keep you informed on recurring veteran, military, budget and funding, healthcare, patriotism, and awareness issues. Visit [www.legion.org](http://www.legion.org) to subscribe. Report to your Unit Chairman when you have done so.
* Order a copy of the ***ALA Legislative Advocacy Guide*** through Department Headquarters or download from [www.alaforveterans.org](http://www.alaforveterans.org) Follow the suggestions and guidelines to help build legislative awareness within your American Legion family and your community. **I have provided a copy for each Unit.**

**Call to Action**

* Visit [www.legion.org/legislative](http://www.legion.org/legislative) to keep current on legislative priorities. Download 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.
* The point papers provide more information on the issues and the Legion’s position on them.
* Actively post the American Legion families legislative priorities on social media.
* Identify and contact your U.S. Representative and two U.S. Senators to build a relationship with these individuals and their staff members.
* Complete the **Congressional Meeting Report Form** following any meeting with your U.S. Representative, U.S. Senator or their staff members. Visit [www.legion.org/legislative/aar](http://www.legion.org/legislative/aar) to complete the form and give a copy to your Unit Chairman.
* Subscribe to e-newsletters of your elected officials to monitor what they consider to be vital to our veterans, military families and national security issues. Follow each elected officials’ website and follow them on social media.
* Connect with other civic and community organizations to rally support for the American Legion’s legislative priorities and potential American Legion Family membership opportunities.
* Attend local town hall meetings to become better informed and to network within your community.
* If possible, meet with state and national-level public officials to discuss issues facing veterans and their families. Remember, there is strength in numbers, attend as a Legion Family.
* Please contact your Department Chairman or Department President if you have a personal or professional relationship with a U.S. Representative or U.S. Senator that serves on the Veterans Affairs committee and you’d be willing to participate in the ALA Veterans Affairs Legislative Mini-Council. Each of these members should be willing to contact the officials when called to take action by the Legion on an issue.

**Unit Initiatives**

* Send a letter of introduction to local, state and national level officials introducing yourself as an American Legion Auxiliary representative. (template included)
* Follow us on the ALA Facebook page, search “**ALA National Legislative Group”** auxiliary members must ask to join.
* Distribute and utilize the ***ALA Legislative Advocacy Guide*** to your Unit members and discuss the legislative process.
* Invite a local or state official’s staff member (both parties) to your unit meeting to explain the best way to contact the official.
* Include legislative issues in unit communications, (newsletters, bulletin boards, and social media.)
* Work with your Legion counterpart to plan for a Legion Family meeting with elected officials.
* Emphasize a different legislative priority each month. Draft a letter concerning that issue and have Unit members sign, to communicate the importance of the legislation related to veterans and their families. Send to your elected officials. Check ***Legislative Action Alerts*** for any pressing priorities.
* 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 you Legion Family to host a “Meet the Candidate/Official” night. Make veterans, military, health, budget and funding, women veterans, and patriotism the focus of your discussion. (See “How To” sheet for details.)
* Encourage all Unit members to sign-up for **National’s Legislative e-mail blast**. Contact your Department Chairman Dee Bell at [legislative@alafl.org](mailto:legislative@alafl.org)

**Legislative Petition**

American Flag Protection Act – The American Legion Family strongly believes the flag is a symbol of our nation’s freedom and all that we hold in common as Americans, secured by the servicemen and women who sacrificed so much for all citizens. To support this initiative, have a petition drive within your community. The petition is in the Program Action Plan or can be downloaded from Citizens Flag Alliance.

POW/MIA Stamp Act – In order to continue to honor the sacrifices of the brave men and women of the Armed Forces who have been prisoner, missing or unaccounted for the Postmaster General shall provide for the issuance of a forever stamp. Go to

www.congress.gov/bill/115thcongress/house-bill/2765 to learn more. I have included a petition form so that your American Legion Family can **TAKE ACTION**.

**Legislative Action Alert**

The American Legion 100th Anniversary Commemorative Coin Act – This legislation will honor the Legion for its’ 100 years of service to our nation’s heroes. The U.S. Mint will issue a variety of special limited edition commemorative coins available in 2019. The Senate passed this bill on August 3, 2017. Contact your U.S. House of Representatives to encourage them to support this legislation.

***Chairman’s Challenge***

American Flag Painted Rock Project: Raise awareness of the Legislative priorities of the American Legion Family. Paint rocks with an American Flag on one side and our website address [www.alafl.org](http://www.alafl.org) on the other side. Place your rocks in your local communities, your out-of-state communities, or world-wide while on vacation. We will have a link on our website for those who have found a rock to click on. Legislative issues concerning veterans and their families, our military, women veterans, national security and patriotism will be emphasized. This challenge was jump-started at workshop with each attendee receiving a painted American Flag rock. Check out painted rocks on facebook. Let’s see how far and wide our American Legion Family Legislative message can travel.

**Legislative Reporting**

Mid-year and year-end reports reflect your efforts and accomplishments through-out the year.

*Mid-Year Reports*

**Unit** mid-year reports are due **December 1,2017** to your District Chairman. Please include a list detailing your efforts. **District** mid-year reports and lists are due to the Department Chairman by **December 15,2017.**

Year-End Reports

**Unit** year-end reports are due **April 1,2018** to your District Chairman. Please include a list detailing your accomplishments and project photos. **District** year-end reports and lists are due to the Department Chairman by **April 15,2018.**

**Legislative Awards**

**DEPARTMENT**

**Beaming Legislative Alert Award**

A certificate will be awarded to the Unit with the highest percentage of membership who signs-up for Legislative Action Alerts at [www.capwiz.com/legion/mlm/signup](http://www.capwiz.com/legion/mlm/signup) (1 unit in each membership group.)

Taking time to share your story about the positive impact your Unit had on our mission is worth doing. It helps us tell the world who we are, what we do and why we matter.

**Most Outstanding Legislative Program**

**Unit Award**: Unit Legislative Award

**Type of Award/Presented To:**

* A certificate will be presented to the most outstanding overall legislative program in each membership group.
* A plaque will be presented to the most outstanding overall program in the Department. The overall Department winner will be forwarded to the Divisional and National Chairmen for judging.

**Materials and Guidelines:**

* Entries must include the award cover sheet located in this program plan.
* For the most outstanding overall legislative program in each membership group.
* 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.
* Units must submit their entry to the department chairman by May 15, 2018
* Attach a cover sheet, including the name of award and name and contact information for the Department and Unit Legislative Chairman.

**NATIONAL**

**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 program in the division.
* 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 news articles.
* Units must submit their entry to the Department Chairman by May 15, 2018
* Attach a cover sheet, including the name of award and name and contact information for the Department and Unit Legislative Chairman.

**Additional Resources You Can Use**

* How to Host a “Meet the Candidate” night is included

1. [www.alaforveterans.org](http://www.alaforveterans.org) on the Legislative 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

1. www.legion.org/legislative (The American Legion’s Legislative Center)

* Legislative Testimony Information
* Point Paper, Priority Sheets, Letters of Support
* Congressional Contact Report Form

Follow us on Facebook:

* ALA National Headquarters: www.facebook.com/ALAfor Veterans
* ALA Legislative Facebook group:

search for “**ALA National Legislative Group**” auxiliary members must ask to join.

1. The American Legion “Legislative Agenda for the 115th Congress” pamphlet

**Dee Bell**

**326 72nd Ave.**

**St. Pete Beach, Fl. 33706**

**727-360-1423**

**legislative@alafl.org**

**How to Host a “Meet the Candidate” Night**

**Contact information for questions:** [legislative@ALAforveterans.org](mailto:legislative@ALAforveterans.org)

**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 family event the unit president should appoint a planning committee to work with the Legislative Chairman. Identify a place, date and time for the event. Plan advertising and public relations. Think about refreshments: will they be donated or will you buy them. Set guidelines for candidates about literature, political signs and handouts.

* 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 to be displayed on post property.

1. After the candidate filling date has passed, pull a list of candidates from your states’ election board or Supervisor of Elections’ website. Prepare a spreadsheet of all ballot-ready candidates who will be invited. List their name, address, phone, email, party and office. Allow ample time to contact them and receive their response.
2. Mail and email invitation letters with chairman contact information and the deadline 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 to the Event**

1. The planning committee arranges for volunteers:

* Moderator (1) – Someone impartial and ideally not part of the American Legion Family, such as a local news reporter or radio host or someone known and respected in the community. Using someone on TV or radio ensures that it will be announced on TV/radio.
* Timekeeper (1) – To keep everyone on track. Each candidate should get an equal amount of time each round.
* Legion Family Ambassadors (Several) – To man a table on programs, services and membership opportunities your Legion Family offers.
* Servers (Several) – Have a team of volunteers to serve refreshments.
* Crowd Control (Several) – Volunteers to ensure that no one gets out of control. (Legion Family Sgt.-at-Arms possibly)
* 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 attendees and address issues.*

* Public Relations Coordinator (1) – Someone who will ensure that the event is advertised in local newspapers, social media, websites and any other media outlet. (A team can be formed)

1. 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 (2-3minutes.) After opening speeches and introductions, the moderator will ask for questions (that have been screened.)

* 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.
* 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 the front of the audience.
2. Prepare tent cards for all candidates with their name, party and the office their seeking. You may wish to seat alphabetically in an effort to not show favoritism.
3. Set up a table to talk about the programs, services and membership opportunities your Legion Family offers.
4. Set-up a table for voter registration. Members of our Americanism committee could man this table. Or you could invite an outside organization i.e. League of Women Voters.

**After the Event**

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

**UNIT LEGISLATIVE MID-YEAR REPORT**

**Due Date to District Chairman December 1, 2017**

Unit Name & Number \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_District\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Unit Legislative Chairman’s Name\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Email\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Phone\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**If necessary, list all answers on a separate sheet of paper and attach this form.**

1. How many Unit members signed up for Legislative Action Alerts?
2. How many American Legion Family members joined the Legislative Facebook page?
3. How many times did Unit members contact (phone, email, letters, visits etc.) their local, state or national officials about legislative priorities of the American Legion?
4. What legislative events (town hall meetings, legislative receptions etc.) did Unit members attend in their communities or throughout Florida? Describe
5. How did Unit members develop relationships with their elected officials?
6. Please describe how Unit members connected with local and state officials and what were their successes?
7. Did your Unit discuss the Legislative Program and priorities at Unit meetings?
8. Did your Unit host a “Meet the Candidate” night?
9. Please list any additional legislative activities during 2017-2018.

**Send 2 copies of your report to District Chairman by December 1,2017**

**DISTRICT LEGISLATIVE MID-YEAR REPORT**

**Due Date to Department Chairman December 15, 2017**

District\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

District Legislative Chairman’s Name\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Email\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_Phone\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**If necessary, list all answers on a separate sheet of paper and attach this form.**

1. **BY UNIT,** how many Unit members signed up for Legislative Action Alerts?
2. **BY POST FAMILY,** how many members joined the Legislative Facebook page?

1. How many times did Units contact their local, state or national officials?
2. What legislative events did Units attend in their communities?
3. How did Units develop relationship with their elected officials?

1. How did the Units rally support within their community?
2. How many Units discussed legislative program at their meetings?
3. How many Units hosted a “Meet the Candidate” night?
4. Please list any additional legislative activities during the 2017-2018 year.

**Send unit reports & District report to the Department Chairman by December 15, 2017**

**Dee Bell**

**326 72nd Ave. St.**

**Pete Beach, Fl. 33706**

**UNIT LEGISLATIVE YEAR-END REPORT**

**Due Date to District Chairman April 1,2018**

Unit Name & Number\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ District\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Unit Legislative Chairman’s Name\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Email\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Phone\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**If necessary, list all answers on a separate sheet of paper and attach this form. Please include photos of your events or projects.**

1. How many Unit members signed up for Legislative Action Alerts?
2. How many American Legion Family members joined the Legislative Facebook page?
3. How many times did Unit members contact local, state or national officials?
4. What legislative events did unit members attend in their communities? Describe
5. How did Unit members develop relationships with elected officials?
6. How did the Unit rally support for the American Legion legislative agenda?
7. Did your Unit discuss the legislative program and priorities at meetings?
8. Did your Unit host a “Meet the Candidate” night?
9. Please list any additional activities during the 2017-2018 year.

**Send 2 copies of your report & photos to your District Legislative Chairman by April 1, 2018**

**DISTRICT LEGISLATIVE YEAR-END REPORT**

**Due Date to Department Chairman April 15,2018**

District\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

District Legislative Chairman’s Name\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Email\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Phone\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**If necessary, list all answers on a separate sheet of paper and attach this form.**

1. **BY UNIT,** how many Unit members signed up for Legislative Action Alerts?
2. **BY POST FAMILY**, how many members joined the Legislative Facebook page?
3. How many times did Units contact local, state or national elected officials?
4. What legislative events did Units attend in their communities?
5. How did Units develop relationships with their elected officials?
6. How did the Units rally support for the American Legion legislative agenda?
7. How many units discussed the Legislative Program and priorities at their meetings?
8. How many Units hosted a “Meet the Candidate” night?
9. Please list any additional activities during the 2017-2018 year.

**Please send unit reports & photos to the Dept. Legislative Chairman by April 15, 2018**

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