

## **Americanism**

INTRODUCTION: Americanism is possibly the broadest area of service with which the American Legion Auxiliary is involved, and the associated activities are seemingly endless.

Principles of Americanism: The characteristic that distinguishes our form of government from others is the recognition of the truth that the inherent and fundamental rights of people are derived from God and not from governments, dictators, or majorities. The unalienable rights, which are the gifts of man from his Creator are: freedom of worship; freedom of speech and press; freedom of assemblage; freedom to work in such occupation as the experience, training and qualifications of a person may enable them to secure and hold; freedom to enjoy the fruits of his work, which means the protection of property rights; and the right to pursue his happiness so long as he/she does not harm others in the pursuit of this happiness. Upon these basic principles, the structure of our form of government was established.

Americanism Defined: Americanism is the love of America; loyalty to her institutions as the best yet devised by man to secure life, liberty, individual dignity, and happiness; and the willingness to defend our country and flag against all enemies, foreign and domestic. It is a vital, active, living force.

Americanism means peace, strength, the will and the courage to live as free people in a free land. It means a friendly hand to people everywhere who respect our institutions and our thinking. It is not a word; it is a cause, a way of life – the best way of life ever known – a challenge and a hope in this world. Americanism is an ideal of loyal patriotism, religious tolerance, righteous freedom, fearless courage, honest integrity, abiding faith in the commanding destiny of the United States, and a fathomless love for the principles that led our forefathers to find this country.

It is complete and unqualified loyalty to the ideals of government as set forth in the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution of the United States. It is respect for, and ready obedience to, duly constituted authority and the laws of the land. It is freedom without license, religion without bigotry, charity without bias, and a desire to secure the blessings of liberty for our nation and for our posterity.

The development of the Americanism program in the American Legion Auxiliary depends largely upon the initiative of the Americanism chairmen. Those members must possess the qualities of leadership, vision, high idealism, and be able to inspire others of the committee and the membership to carry out the requirements of the various activities associated with the Americanism program. Americanism chairmen should be among the most patriotic and active members of the Unit.

It is recommended that Auxiliary Units establish an Americanism Commission/Committee, whose duty shall be the endeavor to realize in the United States the basic ideal of 100 percent Americanism through the planning, establishment and conduct of a continuous, constructive educational system.

**COMMUNITY SERVICE AND SAFETY ACTIVITIES:** The objective of the broad, far-reaching community service program of the American Legion Auxiliary is “to inculcate a sense of individual obligation to the community, state and nation.”

One of the most lasting American Legion Auxiliary contributions to American life is that of making our communities better places in which to live. Community service is a major Americanism activity. Several good projects should be included in the program of every Unit each year. Completed projects add strength and better service to the community. Every community needs many improvements, and therein lies the opportunity for the local Unit to take the lead in an active, aggressive campaign for community betterment.

The Unit should first consult their sponsoring American Legion Post for ideas and assistance. From there they should look over activities promoted by others, decide what the community needs and set out, with the cooperation of other organizations, to accomplish its desired objectives. Active participation in community affairs promotes favorable public opinion, improves the image of the American Legion Auxiliary and often increases Unit membership.

#### **Suggested Community Service Activities**

Winter – teen centers, hobby and craft shows, dances, forum discussions on community problems, voting activities, holiday bazaars and Americanism study courses.

Spring and Summer – Girls State, bicycling, golf tournaments, hiking, concerts, street dances, parks, playgrounds, festivals, planting trees, marksmanship, fishing tournaments and the development of swimming and wading pools and bathing beaches.

Fall – County fairs and exhibits, educational facilities, educational entertainment courses, organize a Scout troop, Color Guard activities and other participatory school programs, back-to-school events and election activities.

These are only a few of the activities and programs that will contribute to the creation of community spirit and harmony. These suggested projects can be developed with a minimum expenditure of funds through coordination and unity of effort, coupled with imagination, initiative and resourcefulness on the part of the squadron membership.

### Community Betterment Get Out the Vote Program (GOTV):

Each election is important, and it is also important that all eligible voters exercise their right of franchise by casting his or her ballot. On this premise, the "Get Out the Vote" program was initiated. The concept is to organize teams in the community to see that each voter is properly registered, and on Election Day, each registered voter casts their ballot.

The American Legion Auxiliary can take an active role working at polling places, volunteering, helping to get voters to the polls, and encouraging everyone they come in contact with to take on their democratic responsibility and cast their vote.

When our Founding Fathers established our form of government, they based the practical workings of this government upon a new and untried political philosophy. It was a philosophy of government that had long existed in the minds of men but had never been tried in a practical manner. They based our form of government upon the idea that the great Creator of man had endowed every human being with "certain unalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness," and they established the function of government as that of protecting these God-given rights.

### American Legion Auxiliary Girls State:

Youth Learning About Government Girls State is one of the most respected and selective educational programs of government instruction for high school students in the nation. It is a program where each delegate learns about the operation of her local, county and state governments. The American Legion Auxiliary sponsors the program for young women called Girls State. At Girls State young ladies learn about the rights, privileges, duties and responsibilities of a franchised citizen. The training is objective and practical with city, county and state governments operated by elected and appointed officials placed in office by citizens of their respective Girls State. Activities include legislative sessions, court proceedings, law enforcement presentations, assemblies, bands, chorus and recreational programs. American Legion Auxiliary Units interview and select participants for their Girls State program after receiving recommendations from school officials.

Costs are usually paid by an American Legion Auxiliary Units, a local business or another community-based organization. Girls Nation two of the most outstanding participants from each state's Girls State programs are invited to American Legion Auxiliary Girls Nation.

This activity, held annually in the Washington, D.C., area, also emphasizes citizenship and education. However, it centers on the study of the federal government and its supporting agencies. Like American Legion Auxiliary Girls State, Girls Nation is an exercise in a two-party system of government. Each delegate becomes a senator and is assigned to one of

two mythical political parties. The girls' caucus organizes into committees, conduct hearings and act on bills they introduce into the Girls Nation Senate.

Organization of parties, party conventions, and nomination and election of officers all provide practical experience in government. These and similar activities create an understanding of, and an appreciation for, the U.S. system of government.

The American Legion High School Oratorical Scholarship Program: "A Constitutional Speech Contest"

Learning About Constitution; Earning Dollars for College the Oratorical Scholarship Program is designed to help high school students develop a deeper knowledge and understanding of the Constitution of the United States. Other objectives are leadership, ability to think and speak clearly and intelligently, and preparation for acceptance of the duties, responsibilities, rights and privileges of American citizenship. High school students are eligible to compete, subject to the rules established by the National Americanism Commission. The contest has two phases: prepared orations of eight to 10 minutes in length, and an assigned topic presentation of three to five minutes. Reach out to your post leadership and find out how your Auxiliary Unit can help your Oratorical Contest succeed!

Flag Education Program: Care and Respect for the American Flag

The American Legion Auxiliary Americanism efforts should include a Flag Education Program designed to build patriotism in our youth and all Americans and to develop a thorough understanding of proper flag display and courtesy.

Flag education has been a major activity of the American Legion Auxiliary since its inception, with thousands of flag education programs presented each year in classrooms across the country. Flag education in the schools fills a great need since more than half of the states mandate some form of instruction on flag education to their school districts.

The American Legion Auxiliary offers coloring books on "America the Beautiful" which helps with flag education in the younger grades, and of course the essay program offers an opportunity for the older youth.

Remember to plan community activities for the Americanism related holidays:

Arbor Day	April 25, 2025
Memorial Day	May 26, 2025
Flag Day	June 14
Independence Day	July 4
POW/MIA Day	September 19, 2025
Veterans Day	November 11

Important:

Be sure to document each event and activity for reporting and try to include photographs of the events. This will be helpful when you are reporting to your district leadership and your Americanism Chairperson.

Also, reach out in your community and hand deliver a Certificate of Appreciation for flying their American Flag in front of their business. Let them know their effort to show their Americanism is noticed and appreciated. Have your members nominate businesses in your area by turning in a nomination form with the business name and location to your Unit's Americanism Chairperson.

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