



Why You Should Belong

Veterans Strengthening America



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The American Legion is the nation's largest and most influential organization of U.S. veterans. Today, it accounts for 1.5 million members who support their communities in nearly 12,000 posts worldwide.

Since its 1919 founding, The American Legion has been a staunch advocate for veterans, military members, their families and the communities in which they reside.

It helped create the Department of Veterans Affairs, drafted and drove passage of the GI Bill and updates, and brought into existence dozens of health-care benefits for veterans, including the PACT Act to provide health-care service and disability compensation to millions of veterans suffering from toxic exposures.

Additionally, American Legion accredited service officers provide free representation for veterans and their families applying for disability benefits, survivor assistance, GI Bill opportunities and more. They secure billions in claims assistance each year.

Every day, The American Legion works on behalf of U.S. servicemembers. It is recognized as a leader in transition assistance from military to civilian life, providing resources for careers, education and more.

Other priorities:

- **Volunteering:** The American Legion has supported and actively participated in the VA Voluntary Service program since it began in 1946. Today, 30,000 volunteers serve nearly 700,000 hours annually at various VA medical centers.
- **Mentoring:** In the 1920s, The American Legion played a key role in creating the U.S. Flag Code. Today, Legionnaires teach schoolchildren, Scouts and other youth groups the history of the American flag, how to show respect for it, as well as how to properly fold and care for it.
- **Giving:** The Legion raises funds to award scholarships, provide support for wounded servicemembers and distribute emergency aid to disaster victims.

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PILLAR I: VETERANS AFFAIRS & REHABILITATION

The American Legion Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation pillar is composed of programs, services and advocacy efforts that improve the lives of those who served, along with their families and dependents.

A top priority for The American Legion is Be the One. The mission of Be the One is to reduce the rate of veteran suicide by destigmatizing the need to ask for help, and empowering Legion Family members and others to know when a veteran is in crisis and how to act to save a life. The American Legion has a variety of resources to help members Be the One at betheneone.org. These resources include suicide prevention training, how-to videos, materials to host a Be the One event, and more.

Additionally, The American Legion advocates on Capitol Hill for a well-funded, appropriately staffed VA that can handle benefits claims efficiently, quickly and accurately. Accredited American Legion service officers provide more than 750,000 benefits claims for disabled veterans and their families, free of charge, each year. In fiscal 2024, those service officers provided more than \$21 billion in VA disability benefits.

The American Legion also conducts System Worth Saving visits to VA facilities across the United States for an assessment of the facility and discussions with patients and staff. Working hand in hand with VA, the Legion completes an assessment, offers solutions and publishes its findings.

Be the One is not just a “catchy phrase. It’s not an initiative. It’s a mission. It’s a mission, our mission, to change lives and save lives. That’s what Be the One is. It’s our mission to be the one to save one.”

Daniel J. Seehafer, past national commander
of The American Legion

EMPLOYMENT AND BUSINESS

The American Legion conducts, promotes and supports hundreds of veteran job fairs and career events nationwide each year. Thousands of veterans land jobs because of these efforts. Meanwhile, The American Legion helps place hundreds of other veterans in job-training programs every year. Working veteran-to-veteran with The American Legion Small Business Task Force, along with the Small Business Administration, Department of Labor, VA and corporate associates, The American Legion helps veterans understand the federal contracting process and offers personal guidance for career-seeking veterans.

legion.org/careers

VETERANS EDUCATION AND THE GI BILL

The American Legion was instrumental in the creation of the Harry W. Colmery Veterans Educational Assistance Act of 2017, also known as the “Forever GI Bill.” providing veterans with education benefits that better meet today’s needs. The law builds on previous GI Bill revisions and adds improvements to the benefit, making it more helpful to National Guardsmen, reservists and those pursuing online education. legion.org/education

WORKING WITH VA

VA and The American Legion are working side-by-side to improve the speed and delivery of benefits claims. Through its System Worth Saving and Regional Office Action Review initiatives, The American Legion pinpoints problems, identifies best practices and works together with staff in VA medical centers. legion.org/veteransbenefits

BOARD OF VETERANS APPEALS

For veterans and families disputing benefits decisions by VA, The American Legion has staff representatives who can help with the appeals process or strengthen a case, free of charge to veterans.

WOMEN VETERANS

The American Legion supports women veterans, provides resources to those in transition and works to address their unique needs such as gender-specific health care and military sexual trauma.

DISCHARGE REVIEW

The American Legion offers free assistance to those applying to their service branches for corrections to military records and discharge statuses. American Legion experts help veterans with claims for Combat Related Special Compensation and the procurement of accurate records. Email var@legion.org

HELP FOR HOMELESS VETERANS

American Legion posts throughout the country build shelters or provide financial and volunteer support for homeless veterans. At the national level, The American Legion works with VA to raise awareness and allocate funds to help alleviate the problem. legion.org/homelessveterans

VA VOLUNTEER SERVICES

Legionnaires donate more than 1 million hours of service a year at veterans health-care facilities, working through the VA Volunteer Services program. These volunteer hours save the federal government millions of dollars each year.

FINAL RESPECTS

The American Legion fulfills a sacred duty by honoring the memories of U.S. veterans after their deaths. American Legion honor guards salute their fallen comrades at funeral services throughout the country. American Legion Riders provide motorcycle escorts at services for veterans. The American Legion also works closely with the National Cemetery Administration, Arlington National Cemetery and American Battle Monuments Commission to honor the fallen.

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PILLAR II: NATIONAL SECURITY

The American Legion's positions on national defense, homeland security, border control and military support are all part of the long-held American Legion value that the key to peace and world stability is a strong, well-resourced defense.

In order to protect America, troops and their families must have support. The American Legion plays a vital role in supporting those who protect our freedoms.

The American Legion is addressing and improving the quality of life for servicemembers and their families through its Base Assessment and Servicemember Experience (BASE) program, launched in 2022. The BASE program focuses on mental health, childcare, base housing and barracks, community relations, access to health care, education, spousal employment, food and financial insecurities, and more.

The intent of these visits is to work with the Department of Defense and congressional leaders to foster a constructive dialogue on improving quality-of-life conditions for military members and their families.

The American Legion also is heavily involved in blood-donation efforts. The American Legion Blood Donor Program has existed officially since 1942. Over the years, The American Legion became the nation's top organizational donor of blood for the Red Cross. Each year, thousands of Legionnaires donate to support the American Red Cross.

legion.org/security

"These visits are important because we cannot simply rely on web stories or data extrapolated from surveys – we need to hear the servicemembers' perspective firsthand. Conversations open a two-way communication that spark ideas on reforms and shared best practices."

National Security Division staff

OPERATION COMFORT WARRIORS

Operation Comfort Warriors (OCW) assists wounded, injured or ill active-duty military personnel and veterans by providing morale-enhancing gifts to warrior transition units, VA and DoD medical care facilities, military installations, and 501(c)3 and 501(c)19 organizations which are part of the American Legion Family or such nonprofit entities sponsored by an American Legion legal entity.

legion.org/operationcomfortwarriors

MILITARY QUALITY OF LIFE

The American Legion's support of the U.S. military – from adequate funding for weapons systems to reasonable child care services for deployed troops – is respected in the Pentagon, at the White House and on Capitol Hill.

SUPPORT FOR TRICARE

The U.S. military's health-care system and medical insurance program frequently face challenges in Washington. The American Legion persistently testifies on the need to keep TRICARE and TRICARE For Life viable and affordable benefits of military service.

DISASTER PREPAREDNESS

Dozens of American Legion posts set the tone for preparing for natural disasters. In many communities, American Legion posts serve as civil-defense shelters and havens of relief in the event of catastrophe or attack on U.S. soil.

BORDER SECURITY AND IMMIGRATION

The American Legion advocates for strict border and port security as a defense against invasion or attack by foreign enemies, illegal drug trafficking and adverse economic impact. Transnational Criminal Organizations continue to operate across borders while engaging in drug smuggling, human trafficking, arms dealing, money laundering and are a threat to American communities. The American Legion implores lawmakers to work together on behalf of Americans to improve national security.

NATIONAL EMERGENCY FUND

The National Emergency Fund has provided more than \$10 million in immediate financial assistance to American Legion members and posts affected by natural disasters. The financial grants have helped American Legion members and American Legion posts rebuild their lives.

legion.org/emergency

BLUE STAR BANNERS

The American Legion's Blue Star Banner was resurrected after 9/11 to acknowledge U.S. families with loved ones serving in the U.S. Armed Forces during wartime. American Legion Blue Star Salutes and other post-sponsored events to distribute the banners are effective expressions of homefront support for military families.

BLOOD DONOR PROGRAM

The American Legion Blood Donor Program recognizes departments in two areas for blood donation efforts: post participation and individual Legionnaire participation.

legion.org/security

FOREIGN RELATIONS

The American Legion maintains a strong working relationship with the State Department to promote peace, human rights and trade on a global scale. The American Legion urges the president and Congress to continue pursuing the "smart power" strategy of using military and economic strength in tandem with foreign aid and human-rights negotiations to fulfill U.S. foreign policy.

FULL ACCOUNTING OF POW/MIAS

The American Legion maintains unwavering support for the full accounting of all U.S. military personnel taken as prisoners of war, missing or killed in action on foreign soil. Official meetings of The American Legion start with a prayer to honor our nation's POWs. POW/ MIA flags, patches and pins are displayed at American Legion events to demonstrate the organization's eternal vigilance.

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PILLAR III: AMERICANISM

For those looking to make differences in their local communities, The American Legion is a great place to start. From American Legion Baseball to Boys State/Boys Nation to the Oratorical Contest, there are plenty of opportunities to make your mark.

American Legion Baseball is celebrating 100 years. The initial resolution proposing an American Legion Baseball program was passed at the Department of South Dakota's convention on July 17, 1925, "to teach practical lessons in sportsmanship and citizenship by emphasizing such qualities as loyalty, respect for the rules, fair play, courage and physical fitness."

"How American Legion Baseball has lasted 100 years is what it offers to the young men that have participated in the program," says Gary Stone, chairman of the National American Legion Baseball Committee. "It's a sense of community; it's the only organization I'm aware of that's sponsored by a veterans organization. And if you go back through the alumni that have come through the program, what they've contributed to the community and the nation, those are the things we stand for."

Each season of Legion Baseball culminates with the American Legion World Series in Shelby, N.C., watched by millions on ESPNU and ESPN3.

More than 50,000 young athletes compete for nearly 3,000 American Legion Baseball teams each year. Some of these baseball players go on to play professionally, including 87 who have been enshrined in the Baseball Hall of Fame in Cooperstown, N.Y.

legion.org/baseball

"American Legion Baseball helped me take my game to the next level because I was able to play with so many great athletes. It was a great experience. At the end of the day, those are the experiences you take with you no matter where you play."

Major League Baseball player **Albert Pujols**, who played American Legion Baseball for Post 340 in Independence, Mo.

BOYS STATE/BOYS NATION

Young men throughout the country learn firsthand how government works during American Legion Boys State and American Legion Boys Nation. From each Boys State program, two delegates are selected to attend Boys Nation in Washington, D.C., where they form a mock federal Senate and meet with top officials in the nation's capital. The American Legion Auxiliary conducts a separate program for young women. legion.org/boysnation

JUNIOR SHOOTING SPORTS

American Legion youth air-rifle teams compete throughout the country for a possible berth in the National Junior Shooting Sports championships at Hillsdale College in Hillsdale, Mich. legion.org/shooting

ORATORICAL COMPETITION

The American Legion High School Oratorical Scholarship Program gives thousands of young people the opportunity to hone their speaking skills and learn about the U.S. Constitution. Competitions at the local and state levels lead up to the National American Legion High School Oratorical Contest at Hillsdale College in Hillsdale, Mich., where top finishers are awarded more than \$203,500 in scholarships. legion.org/oratorical

YOUTH LAW CADET ENFORCEMENT

American Legion departments conduct weeklong American Legion Youth Cadet Law Enforcement Programs for rising high school seniors that educate them about law enforcement and instills respect for law officials. legion.org/juniorlaw

SCOUTING

American Legion posts sponsor more than 2,300 Scouting units and provide thousands of dollars in scholarships. The American Legion offers a national scholarship for Eagle Scout of the Year, and the Square Knot Award for Legionnaires who assist Scouting programs in their communities. legion.org/scouting

EDUCATION ASSISTANCE

The American Legion provides access to dozens of scholarships and education programs at the national, state and local levels. legion.org/scholarships

LEGACY SCHOLARSHIP

The American Legion Legacy Scholarship provides college scholarships for children of military personnel who were killed on active duty since 9/11, or have a combined VA disability rating of 50 percent or greater. The needs-based scholarship is designed to fulfill a gap after all federal and state grants and scholarships have been used by eligible applicants. Since 2001, the Legacy Scholarship has provided nearly \$7.9 million in financial aid. legion.org/scholarships/legacy

U.S. FLAG PROTECTION AND EDUCATION

The American Legion is the nation's leading supporter of a constitutional amendment to protect the U.S. flag from desecration. Since a 5-4 Supreme Court decision in 1989 defined flag burning as free speech, The American Legion has advocated alongside members of Congress, the Citizens Flag Alliance and the majority of Americans to return to the states the right to enact flag-protection laws. The American Legion is also the nation's foremost authority on the U.S. Flag Code and proper dignified disposal of unserviceable U.S. flags. legion.org/flag

VOTER PARTICIPATION

American Legion posts serve as polling places, political debate venues and forums during campaigns. The American Legion is a nonpartisan organization but takes an active role in the political process and encourages Americans to register and vote in all elections. legion.org/vote

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PILLAR IV: CHILDREN & YOUTH

The American Legion's Children & Youth pillar is guided by three main objectives: strengthen the family unit, support organizations that help children in need, and provide communities with well-rounded programs to deliver hope and opportunity for young people facing difficult challenges.

Temporary Financial Assistance (TFA) is designed to assist minor children of eligible active-duty servicemembers or eligible American Legion members through cash grants. These grants help families meet the costs of shelter, utilities, food, clothing and medical expenses.

Over the last decade, over \$5.4 million in TFA grants have been awarded. An example of how The American Legion aids servicemembers was in full view of the nation in January 2019 when the longest government shutdown prevented U.S. Coast Guard servicemembers from receiving their paychecks.

In response, American Legion volunteers and staff worked tirelessly to process TFA grants so the Coast Guard personnel and their families would be able to afford food, pay housing and utilities, and take care of other necessary bills.

In all, the American Legion distributed more than \$1 million to Coast Guard members and their families at that time. While an extraordinary effort, this type of support is carried out by American Legion members daily throughout the United States. legion.org/tfa

"The American Legion was almost like a hero for me. The American Legion eased our financial burden and worry with their assistance to help us."

Ivan Redhorn of Great Falls, Mont., an Army veteran of the Iraq War and a father of six who lost his home to a house fire

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AMERICAN LEGION FAMILY

The American Legion Family consists of The American Legion, Sons of The American Legion, American Legion Auxiliary and American Legion Riders. Members of the Riders must also be members of the Legion, Auxiliary or Sons.



- **Sons of The American Legion:** Founded in 1932, the SAL honor the service and sacrifice of veterans. There are more than 390,000 members worldwide. Members include males whose parents or grandparents served in the U.S. military and are eligible for membership in The American Legion. legion.org/sons/join
- **American Legion Auxiliary:** The Auxiliary's membership criteria was changed in 2019 from "wives" to "spouses," allowing males to join the organization. With 7,600 units in the United States, members are dedicated to serving, helping and meeting the needs of veterans, their families and their communities. alaforveterans.org

- **American Legion Riders:** There are more than 2,500 American Legion Riders chapters across the nation. Riders support their communities with local fundraising events and are the primary force behind the American Legion Veterans & Children Fund (VCF). Legion Riders raise awareness and collect donations during the annual American Legion Legacy Ride to support VCF, which raised \$930,000 in its first year riding for the cause in 2024.

Additionally, Riders perform a number of services for American Legion-supported causes and provide support at military funerals.

legion.org/riders



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Benefits of American Legion Membership



THE AMERICAN LEGION MAGAZINE

Members of The American Legion receive a free subscription to *The American Legion Magazine*, the largest veterans magazine in the nation. Every month the magazine is filled with interesting stories, interviews, graphics, photos and ads of interest to Legionnaires and their families. legion.org/magazine

AMERICAN LEGION ONLINE UPDATE

Members are invited to receive the free twice-weekly American Legion Online Update e-newsletter that delivers a comprehensive round-up of stories, photos, videos and other material straight to their email inboxes. To subscribe, go to legion.org/newsletters.

MYLEGION.ORG

MyLegion is a free, secure website for American Legion members to manage their profile information, print membership cards, renew membership, view member-only discounts, manage American Legion subscriptions to e-newsletters and the magazine, find an accredited Legion servie officer and more. mylegion.org

MEMBER BENEFITS

Membership in The American Legion gives Legionnaires access to discounts on a variety of products and services. Discounts are available through participating providers in auto rental, home services, financial and insurance, medical, moving and relocation, travel and other industries. legion.org/benefits

FINANCIAL AND INSURANCE SERVICES

The American Legion and USAA have teamed up to connect the nation's largest veterans service organization with one of the nation's top-ranked insurance and financial services company. American Legion members have access to the full range of financial and insurance services and a separate credit card. For every USAA membership originating through the dedicated American Legion-USAA website (legion.org/usaa) or by a special toll-free phone line – 877-699-2654 – American Legion programs receive a financial donation from USAA.

AMERICAN LEGION EMBLEM SALES

Members of the American Legion Family are invited to review the Emblem Sales catalog for the latest in patriotic merchandise, American-made flags and apparel. A catalog of products is shipped to members, or they can visit Emblem Sales online anytime to safely place their orders. emblem.legion.org

GRASSROOTS ACTION CENTER

Members stay up to date on congressional action related to American Legion resolutions and programs. Additionally, they can receive legislative alerts, easily contact their elected officials to advocate for veteran-friendly legislation, and much more. legion.org/legislative



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legion.org



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American Legion post.