ALA DEPARTMENT MEETING PROTOCOL

PRIOR TO MEETING

The Sergeant at Arms and Assistant Sergeant at Arms should arrive at least thirty minutes prior to the meeting time, prepared to assist as needed.

RIBBONS

The sash ribbon is worn by various officers on all levels, past and present. The sash is worn on formal occasions – never over a topcoat, but may be worn over a suit coat. The sash is worn over the right shoulder and under the left arm. No pins or decorations should be affixed to the sash, and it should hang crossed and secured by an invisible fastening on the underside. Sashes should be removed prior to eating or using restroom.

PINS

Auxiliary pin and/or Officer's Badge should be worn over the heart. At no time should the Auxiliary pin be used to fasten a scarf, tie, etc. Members are encouraged to wear the pin of their current office or the highest office held by the member. If a corsage is worn it should be worn on the left side above the Auxiliary pin since the corsage is considered part of the dress once in place.

If a flag pin is worn it should be worn on the left side above and to the left of the Auxiliary pin.

Protocol for the Presiding Officer – The Chair

Prepare and follow an agenda to start and end the meeting on time.

Conduct yourself professionally.

Demonstrate knowledge, understanding, and care.

Be prepared to assist Chairmen if needed

Recognize and give credit to Chairmen or Committee responsible for the meeting

Lead the applause for the person coming to the podium to speak.

Show special courtesies to Past National Presidents and Past Department Presidents to honor their service.

Protocol for Members

Arrive on time for the meeting.

Dress appropriately for the event; bring paper and pen.

Be mindful of and follow designated seating.

When you wish to speak rise and wait for recognition from the Chair before speaking.

When addressing an officer who is presiding in place of the President or Chairman, use the title President or Chairman.

Speak to the Chair, not to other members.

Be brief and keep to the subject when speaking.

Make frequent eye-contact (more than half the time) to show respectful attention.

Unless asked by the speaker to look up specific details do not use your phone during the meeting(s) but put it on airplane or silent mode.

Avoid side-talking or personal conversations during meetings to give your attention to the speaker.

We accommodate those who learn differently but please keep fidget tools or hand-crafts quiet and discreet to avoid distracting others from the meeting.

Protocol for Delegates

Plan to attend all sessions.

Be on time and in the proper seating area.

Take part in the discussion.

Study the call and discuss issues with Unit members.

Be prepared to vote.

Report back to your Unit after the meeting.

Protocol for Inviting Guests

Invitations: a written invitation should be sent to all guests who will speak or participate at a function of your Department, District, County, or Unit. The invitation should include type of meeting; attire for the event; what's expected of the speaker; date, time, and location of the event; and travel information.

Reception Line

The President or Chairman heads the line

The guest of honor is next to the President, to her left

Other guests follow according to rank.

Each person in the reception line repeats the name of the person just greeted to the person next to them in the reception line.

The reception line should be kept short.

Advancement of Officers and Guests – *Escorting*

Double line escorting has the Assistant Sergeant at Arms on the left, and the Sergeant at Arms on the right, followed by the Distinguished Guest Chairman on the left and the Distinguished Guest on her right.

Single line escorting has Sergeant at Arms, Distinguished Guest Chairman, Distinguished Guest, and Assistant Sergeant at Arms.

The person escorting the guest takes the guest's left arm in her right arm.

Past Department Presidents precede the current officers in the processional.

Officers follow according to the rank of their office.

The Department President is last in line preceded by the National Executive Committeewoman.

Introductions

Guests of honor are always introduced by the Department President or presiding officer.

In making introductions, it is a general rule to introduce elected officers before appointed officers or, if the guests or head table officers are each to say a few words, then recognize the lowest ranking guest or officer and go up the line.

It is appropriate to state a specific maximum speaking time allotted for each person.

Seating

The presiding officer is always at the center of the head table or to the right of the podium. The guest of honor is seated to the right of the presiding officer.

At a business session it is customary to have the parliamentarian seated to the immediate right of the presiding officer. Guests or officers are seated right, left, right, etc., on either side of the presiding officer according to rank.

Corsages

While corsages are a tradition in many Departments it is not a requirement. If corsages are to be worn there should be enough provided for every person seated at the head table and a designated person should present the corsages to the head table members before the start of the meeting.

Gifts

Gifts for the guests of honor should pack easily.

Room gifts, such as water and fruit, are always welcome.

Why We Don't Walk Between the Colors

Many Departments and Units observe this custom that is fairly unique to The American Legion Family. The custom is that the space between the podium and the flags is considered hallowed ground meant to honor and respect our departed. This custom is observed while the meeting is in session. It is not in the U. S. Flag code.

Text provided 2023 by PWDVP Toni Gimpel

Edited 2026 by Dept. Pres. Lucinda Sutherland