

2021-2022 Department of Idaho ALA Legislative Program

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As a member of The American Legion Family, The American Legion asks that you share The American Legion's 117th Congress Legislative Priorities with your members of Congress. The American Legion continues to serve as a powerful voice for veterans in our nation's capital, but the power of our voice is amplified by our membership's voices! The American Legion's Legionnaires, Auxiliary members, and Sons of The American Legion are the heart and soul of our grassroots organization. <https://www.legion.org/legislative> Go to this website and read our legislative priorities and sign up for Legislative Alerts.

Host a Meet the Candidates Night. This is a good opportunity to work as a Legion Family in your communities. Details on how you can do this is on the Auxiliary website www.alaforveterans.org —sign in on your member portal and go to Legislative Committee

You can also receive the American Legion Dispatch in digital format at <https://www.legion.org/dispatch> that gives monthly information concerning our mission.

Read the Legislative Blogs on www.ALAforveterans.org

Familiarize Yourself with Legislative Priorities Legislative issues recurring for The American Legion Family include the following:

Veterans Program Funding

- **Veterans Affairs Funding:** Provide adequate funding for programs and services of the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs.
- **Housing and Urban Development Funding:** Provide adequate funding for the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's permanent supportive housing program for homeless veterans (HUD-VASH).
- **Labor Funding:** Provide adequate funding for the U.S. Department of Labor's Veterans' Employment and Training Services (VETS).
- **State Veterans Homes:** Provide adequate funding for veteran's long-term care facilities.

Veterans' Healthcare

- **Availability of Care:** Ensure modern and geographically distributed VA facilities and care in the community.
- **Quality of Care:** Monitor the quality of healthcare provided by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs.
- **Treatment for Women Veterans:** Ensure adequate and qualified staff and settings for treating women veterans.
- **Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder; Traumatic Brain Injury; Military Sexual Trauma:** Improve veterans' access to mental health and substance use services, including services for PTSD, TBI, and MST.
- **Wounded Warrior Care:** Provide health and rehabilitation support for returning wounded servicemembers.
- **Caregiver Support:** Expand current caregiver benefits to veterans of all eras.

Veterans Disability

- **VA Benefits Claims:** Eliminate the backlog in processing of claims and appeals for veterans' benefits.
- **Concurrent Receipt:** Eliminate the deduction of disabled veterans' disability pay from their military retirement pensions.
- **Medical Record Sharing:** Expedite the implementation of an information system for electronic sharing of medical records between the U.S. Departments of Defense and Veterans Affairs.

Veterans Education and Employment Education Benefits: Ensure proper administration and veterans' utilization of VA education benefits.

- **Credentialing:** Incentivize states to recognize education and skills gained during military service as sufficient for state occupational credentials.
- **Federal Preference:** Monitor federal agency application of veterans' preference in hiring and contracting.

Troops and Family Support

- **Defense Funding:** Provide adequate funding for the nation's military operations, equipment, maintenance, and facilities, servicemember pay and benefits, and retiree healthcare.
- **Housing:** Ensure the Basic Allowance for Housing keeps pace with housing costs.
- **Transition Assistance:** Ensure opportunities for servicemembers and families participating in pre-deployment, pre-separation, and transition assistance briefings and services.

Americanism

- **Flag Protection:** Seek constitutional amendment to allow Congress to protect the flag.
- **Pledge of Allegiance:** Permit recitation of the Pledge of Allegiance at public events and in schools.

ALA Legislative Program

In local Congressional Districts and in Washington, D.C., American Legion Auxiliary members work to keep veterans' issues in front of legislators, strengthening our mission to serve veterans, servicemembers and their families.

While we may think that one voice may not make a difference on its own, that one voice added to the voice of others quickly becomes a collective power of 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, servicemembers and their families.

Legislative Priorities

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How your political comments can affect membership growth

A Mission Matters guest column contributed by Marri Krupco, department vice commander, The American Legion Department of Kansas, and ALA member of Unit 0279

With elections coming up in a couple of months, let us touch on a topic that relates to membership, but not directly. I am sure most of you are aware that The American Legion is a nonpartisan organization, meaning we do not side with a political party or take a stand on anything political that is not related to one of our four pillars. We also do not endorse candidates for government offices; however, we do pay attention to which politicians are supportive of our causes. The American Legion Auxiliary, as part of the Legion Family, also stands by this nonpartisanship.

With, members need to be more conscientious of what we post on social media, the emails we send, and the words we speak. I am not saying we should not have an opinion; what I am saying is we do need to be able to recognize when it is not appropriate to share those opinions. At no point ever will all of us agree on everything, but we all can still work toward common goals.

An example of how this can affect membership

You are wearing your favorite pro-so-and-so hat and approach someone wearing a U.S. Army shirt and strike up a conversation. You tell them you belong to the local American Legion organization and invite them to come to an event happening over the weekend. They say something about your hat, and you proceed to rant about how much you love so-and-so and how horrible a person their opponent is. As it turns out, this Army veteran likes the opponent. They do not tell you that because they just spent the last 10 minutes listening to you tell them how terrible their candidate is, and subsequently they do not ever come by the post to an event. They never become a member because they have been left with the wrong impression of what The American Legion Family is all about.

Be cautious of what you post on social media

More than likely, people are not going to do their political research on social media. Therefore, that is not the forum to share that kind of information. This is especially important if you have a considerable following on social media that places you a representative of The American Legion Family. You do not want to accidentally give the impression that what you share is the stance of our organizations. Trust me: Even if you comment that it is your personal opinion, and not that of our Legion Family organizations, they will not notice the comment. You can send this kind of thing in a private message to people who know you and trust your opinion.

Be respectful while representing The American Legion Family

If you are wearing anything that shows The American Legion, the emblem, or even something with another American Legion Family name or emblem on it, then you are representing those organizations. Please be careful what you say, as again you could inadvertently make an eligible member feel uncomfortable or turned off about joining.

Be watchful of your attire when attending Legion Family events

Last, if you are wearing that pro-so-and-so hat or shirt, tread lightly when talking to potential new members, or even current members for that matter. If you are able, I recommend removing your hat or changing that shirt before starting the conversation. If you cannot change your shirt and you are asked about it, do not make a big deal. Simply state that “it’s just a shirt.” Do not get into a political conversation with a new member or one you do not know personally, as this can cause the person to misunderstand the aims and purposes of our American Legion Family organizations.

This article was originally published in the August 2020 Auxiliary magazine.

2021-2022 Legislative Program Awards Deadlines and Submission Requirements

Thank you for taking the time to share a favorite story about the positive impact you or someone you know has had on our mission! Your story may inspire another member into service. It also helps us tell the world who we are, what we do, and why we matter.

Here are the national awards for this committee:

Unit Award: Most Outstanding Unit Legislative Program (per division) • Deadline
June 1

- All department entries must be sent by the department chairman to their national division chairman postmarked by 5 p.m. EST on the deadline listed above. Members should follow instructions from their department.

Department Award: Best Department Legislative Program (per division) • Deadline
June 1

- All department entries must be sent by the department chairman to their national division chairman postmarked by 5 p.m. EST on the deadline listed above. Members should follow instructions from their department.

Please note – when applicable, unit and department deadlines differ.

Just follow these simple steps to submit your award entry:

1. Fill out the form on the next page as completely as possible
2. Send your form to the appropriate division chairman for the Legislative program found at the Red Book link on this committee page by June 1. Please email a copy to Beth McGinn, beth1011@msn.com, and include any photos that aid in your storytelling.

If you have questions, please contact legislative@ALAforVeterans.org



**American Legion Auxiliary
Legislative Service Report and Award Cover Sheet**

Please note, your report will also be viewed as an award entry if this cover sheet is attached. **Complete the following if you are applying for a member award.**

Unit #: _____ Full official unit name: _____ Name of state
where you are a member: _____ Member's Full Name:
_____ ALA member ID#: _____ Nominating Member (if different from
above): _____ Nominator's Phone number:
(____) _____ Nominator's Email address:
_____ National committee sponsoring award:
_____ Name of the award you are applying for:

***** **For a unit award or to submit a year-end unit narrative report, please complete this section.** Be sure to give the complete name of your unit. The award certificate will be prepared using the information you include below.

Unit #: _____ Full official unit name: _____ Name of
department: _____ Unit president/chairman
(circle one) name: _____ Above listed person's ALA member ID#:
_____ Phone number: (____) _____ Email address:

***** **For a department award or to submit a year-end department narrative report, please complete this section:**

Name of department: _____ Name of
department chairman: _____ Chairman's phone
number: (____) _____ ALA member ID#: _____ Chairman's email address:

_____ **Please see instructions on previous page
about where to send this form.**