

**The
American
Legion**



For God and Country

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The American Legion 97th Birthday 2016

The American Legion
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Duty, Honor, Country. This is the theme chosen by National Commander Dale Barnett for his year in office and it's three words that capture the story of The American Legion over its first 97 years.

The duty that we have as Legionnaires is spelled out in the Preamble to the Constitution of The American Legion. It's our duty to "uphold and defend the Constitution of the United States of America."

It's our duty to "maintain law and order, to foster and perpetuate a 100 percent Americanism and to preserve the memories and incidents of our associations in the Great Wars." You can see these duties carried out when we honor our Law Enforcement Officers of the Year, when we take positions to support our great Constitution and when we teach flag etiquette to young people and sponsor the best youth programs in the country.

Our duty to our communities is displayed every day through the great work of our local posts. The American Legion advocates for all veterans regardless of class, wealth or rank. We believe in a strong national defense – but have never argued that “Might makes Right,” for nobody hates war more than the warrior.

It is our duty to promote peace and goodwill. It is also our duty to promote justice, freedom and democracy. So while we desperately want peace, we do not believe in “peace at any price.” The American way of life and the safety of our communities are worth fighting for.

And it is not just a duty but our desire to sanctify our comradeship by our devotion to mutual helpfulness. That comradeship is a big factor in many of us deciding to join The American Legion in the first place.

The author of America's greatest legislation, Past National Commander Harry Colmery, believed America had a duty to remember her returning war veterans. It was the GI Bill of Rights that made it possible for veterans to obtain higher educations and purchase homes.

Then there is honor.

Honor is not just the way we live our lives but it's the emotion that most Americans feel when they see a Legionnaire wearing our cap and our Emblem.

We are proud to be veterans and the overwhelming majority of our citizens are proud of us. Our status as veterans is symbolic of service, sacrifice and patriotism. It is an honor to serve in an organization that was founded by great World War I veterans and has advocated for God and Country ever since.

It is an honor to assist wounded, injured and ill veterans through our Operation Comfort Warriors program. It is an honor to play roles in awarding a veteran with well-deserved benefits earned by military service.

It is an honor to conduct a job fair intended to transform unemployed veterans into productive workers capable of supporting their families. It is an honor to help a homeless veteran obtain stable and safe shelter.

It is an honor to ride in an American Legion Legacy Run and raise money so the children of our Fallen heroes can attend college. Last year, American Legion Riders raised \$1.2 million as they rode to Baltimore for this great cause.

It is also an honor to raise money for the National Emergency Fund as a small way to show our appreciation for veterans and families who – through no fault of their own – have had the misfortune of being victimized by natural disaster.

Our third obligation is to Country. That sometimes means taking stances on controversial issues.

For example, it is for our Country that The American Legion insists that our government deliver on President Lincoln's promise "to care for him who shall have borne the battle and for his widow, and his orphan."

It is for our Country and our communities that we advocate a strong national defense. It is for our Country that we insist that our Flag be constitutionally protected from desecration.

It is for our Country that we warn against the national security and economic threats represented by our government's unwillingness to stop illegal immigration. It is for our Country that The American Legion says no to amnesty and yes to border security.

It is for our Country that we believe in preserving and protecting veterans' memorials – regardless of whether atheists or other secularists find God offensive.

It is for our Country that we defend the First Amendment's protection of religious freedom and the Second Amendment's right to bear arms.

It is for our Country that many of our comrades made the Supreme Sacrifice while defending our freedom.

Duty, Honor, Country. These words are more than just a motto from West Point or a theme used by the National Commander of The American Legion. They are the essence of our service as Legionnaires. They are attributes found among all American military veterans.

They are the reason that we want a strong VA health system that reflects the gratitude that we, the American people, have for those who have sacrificed for this nation.

Duty, Honor and Country are also the reasons that we remember to pray for the daily safety of our troops in harms' way.

The benefits of a society that values duty, honor and country are self-evident. We need to grow our American Legion Family so we can spread our devotion to duty, honor and country to places and communities that desperately need all three.

We need to celebrate the historical accomplishments and birth of our great American Legion, while at the same time constantly visualize ways to apply our organization's founding principles to the future.

For 97 years The American Legion has been a force for good in America. With God's grace, our best years are still ahead.

Thank you, God Bless America and God Bless The American Legion.

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