### Legion Centennial Coins Go on Sale

*The three coins celebrating The American Legion turning 100 will be on sale as of March 14. Proceeds support Legion programs.*

By The American Legion

The three commemorative coins that celebrate The American Legion’s centennial and legacy — a $5 gold piece, a silver dollar and a clad half-dollar — are on sale as of noon Eastern on March 14.

The coins can be purchased by visiting [www.legion.org/coin](http://www.legion.org/coin).

The U.S. Mint will issue 50,000 of the gold coins, 400,000 of the silver dollars and 750,000 of the half-dollars.

The gold pieces feature on the heads side the Eiffel Tower, a V for victory in World War I, the engraved word LIBERTY and the years 1919 – 2019 encircled by the outer ring of an American Legion emblem, recognizing the organization’s founding in Paris after the armistice that ended the Great War. On the tails side of the $5 coin, a soaring bald eagle is depicted, along with a sculpted American Legion emblem.

The silver dollar shows on the heads side the Legion emblem surrounded by oak leaves and a lily, commemorating the Legion’s founding in Paris. The reverse side has crossed U.S. and American Legion flags under a fleur-de-lis and the dates 1919 and 2019 and the inscription 100 YEARS OF SERVICE.

The half-dollar has on its heads side two children, one of whom is wearing her dad’s Legion cap, reciting the Pledge of Allegiance. The reverse continues the pledge with ... OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA with a billowing U.S. flag and Legion emblem above the inscription.

Proceeds from coin sales will benefit American Legion programs that assist veterans, servicemembers and their families.
‘Buddy Checks’ show Legion help is needed

During the week leading up to The American Legion’s 100th birthday, National Commander Brett Reistad called upon posts, districts, counties and departments to coordinate a team and call Legionnaires and former members simply to see how they are doing.

Reistad said for Legionnaires to ask “if there is anything The American Legion can do for them. This is not a membership campaign. It’s a comradeship campaign.

“They may just need to know that someone cares.”

Legionnaires who made Buddy Checks found that The American Legion’s assistance is needed.

The Department of Colorado sent out an email to everyone in the headquarters post through the website Mailchimp. The email message delivered asked how the member was doing and thanked them for their service and membership. The department was even able to customize each email to feature the members war era and the number of membership years in the Legion.

One headquarters post member responded needing assistance with paying utilities. The Department of Colorado financially assisted the veteran through two department assistance funds and transferred his membership to a post near his home.

The department also heard from a 93-year-old World War II veteran who just wanted to share his story, and another member replied simply thanking the department for checking in.

District 22 in San Diego, Calif., found veterans in need of food, transportation, pet therapy visits or just home visits all by making phone calls to hundreds of their members.

“Buddy Check is about seeing how veterans are doing. To discover that, it takes personal engagement,” Reistad said.

If you made Buddy Checks, please share about the feedback you heard from Legionnaires and non-members at www.legiontown.org.

DID YOU KNOW?

- The Sons of The American Legion will soon pass $8 million in donations to the Legion’s Child Welfare Foundation (CWF). As of Feb. 8, SAL donations to CWF stood at $7,992,545.18 since 1988. The CWF is a nonprofit that awards grants to organizations that contribute to the physical, mental, emotional and spiritual welfare of children and youth. legion.org/childwelfare

- The Department of North Carolina conducted a statewide revitalization effort over a two-day period in late January that resulted in the transfer of nearly 690 DMS members into local posts. For more information about conducting a revitalization effort in your area, please contact your regional membership liaison at www.legion.org/membership/contactus.

- In January, The American Legion’s Temporary Financial Assistance (TFA) program broke a single-month record in grant distribution – $1,030,163. Of the grants distributed, $1,000,500 assisted 3,120 children of 1,173 active duty Coast Guard servicemembers who were financially affected by the federal government shutdown. TFA grants are made possible by donations to The American Legion Veterans and Children Foundation. www.legion.org/donate

- The American Legion Auxiliary is selling 1,200 engraved brick pavers to be placed at the entrance of its new National Headquarters building in Indianapolis. For a $200 donation, American Legion Family members can honor a loved one with a memorial brick. This campaign will run through the end of March or when the bricks sell out. To purchase a memorial brick, fill out the order form available at www.alalfaforveterans.org.
MISSION CONTINUES BEYOND BASIC TRAINING

Mission. It’s a word we take very seriously in The American Legion. It’s a word that has been ingrained in every member of our organization since the first day of military basic training. Some Legionnaires were wounded while carrying out missions. Many lost friends, comrades and even family members who made the ultimate sacrifice for the nation we love, during a mission.

A century ago, The American Legion was founded by veterans who had a post-war mission. Their mission, one that continues today, was to care for veterans, provide patriotic programs for our nation’s youth, advocate for a strong national defense and instill societal pride in what it means to be American.

It is fitting that the most significant veterans legislation passed by Congress in 2018 was called the VA Mission Act. By reforming the Department of Veterans Affairs health care infrastructure, streamlining community care, expanding caregiver benefits, increasing access to private-sector care and recruiting quality health-care professionals, Congress is living up to President Lincoln’s mission to “care for him who shall have borne the battle, and for his widow, and his orphan.”

An important aspect of The American Legion’s legislative agenda – or mission – is to expand upon Lincoln’s promise and include equal benefits and respect for “her who shall have borne the battle, and for her widow and her orphan.”

And just as the most successful missions in the military require strong leadership, VA cannot accomplish great tasks on its own. It requires leadership from Congress and the White House, along with respectful dialog and assistance from The American Legion, our nation’s largest veterans service organization.

It also requires “a devotion to mutual helpfulness.” This is a mission that every American should undertake, and it is one that is enshrined in the Preamble to the Constitution of The American Legion and recited by our members at every official Legion meeting.

This devotion must extend to support for our nation’s first responders, Gold Star families and those working to prevent veteran suicide. Each of these communities has sacrificed enormously on our behalf. We owe them not only our gratitude but our tireless efforts to ensure that America never forgets its debt to those who have carried out their missions.

These are our legislative priorities. These are our callings. These are our missions.
Protect the best care anywhere

In 2018, The American Legion System Worth Saving Task Force visited 18 medical facilities to identify best practices and challenges, and to offer recommendations to improve the delivery of health care at VA hospitals and community-based outpatient clinics. Those visits revealed that VA facilities continue experiencing growth in veteran populations, need improved physical and information technology infrastructure, and struggle with shortages of physicians and nurses. The American Legion supports legislation that capitalizes on VA’s strengths and core competencies while ensuring that veterans continue to have access to the best care.

WHAT CAN CONGRESS DO?

- Attend American Legion town hall meetings that are held prior to a System Worth Saving site visit to hear directly from veterans about their VA health-care experiences.
- Do not sponsor or support legislation that authorizes VA to centralize operations successfully managed by local VA medical facilities.
- Enhance VA’s ability to offer telehealth services and telemedicine to rural communities.

Unrecognized armed hostilities recognition

The American Legion has identified fundamental shortcomings in the U.S. government’s wartime service designations and calls on congressional leaders to reassess and expand the timeline and characterization of “wartime service.”

Currently, the U.S. government recognizes only a few distinct official periods of war or armed conflict since World War II, such as Korea, Vietnam, Lebanon/Grenada/Panama and Gulf War/War on Terrorism. However, between these official periods, and during so-called “peacetime eras,” the U.S. military has been involved in frequent known armed hostilities resulting in nearly 1,600 U.S. personnel combat deaths and wounds. Yet, their sacrifices remain unrecognized as “wartime service” because these hostile events fall outside the U.S. government’s few distinct official periods of war or armed conflict.

Many veterans of wartime and peacetime eras alike have asked The American Legion and Congress for greater inclusion within the organization’s membership ranks, subsequent to a reassessed and expanded timeline that recognizes the services borne during armed hostile events not fitting within the government’s current designated periods of war and armed conflict.

Likewise, and in accordance with the charter, history, tradition and purposes of The American Legion, it is fair, proper and reasonable that all military personnel who served on active military duty during all unrecognized armed hostilities be recognized in accordance with the U.S. government’s reassessed and expanded designation of wartime service era.

WHAT CAN CONGRESS DO?

- Congress should pass S. 504, the Let Everyone Get Involved in Opportunities for National Service Act (LEGION Act), a bill aimed at authorizing The American Legion to determine the requirements for membership in The American Legion.
- Ensure VA’s non-VA claims and reimbursement system is automated, using the latest technology.
- Declare that the United States has been continuously engaged in a state of war from Dec. 7, 1941, to such date in the future as the U.S. government may determine that there has been an end to armed hostilities.
- Enact legislation allowing veterans to use their Medicare or private coverage when receiving services in VA facilities and Medicare be authorized to reimburse VA for such medical care.

VA recruitment and retention

As of June 2018, VA reported 45,239 overall vacancies out of a total of 419,353 full-time authorized and budgeted positions. The American Legion understands recruiting highly skilled health-care professionals to fill vacancies at VA facilities is an ambitious undertaking, given resources and regulatory constraints. Recruitment and retention solutions can be achieved, many without additional legislative action, to provide full staffing of top health-care professionals.

WHAT CAN CONGRESS DO?

- Pass legislation addressing the recruitment and retention challenges VA has regarding pay disparities among physicians and medical specialists who are providing direct health care to veterans.
Road home from PTSD/TBI

Researchers have reported that between 20 percent and 30 percent of Iraq and Afghanistan veterans have post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and/or depression. While the number of veterans diagnosed with traumatic brain injury (TBI) and PTSD is increasing significantly, the types of treatments offered remain limited and inadequate.

The American Legion’s TBI/PTSD Committee has spent eight years studying scientific research and meeting with clinicians, policy analysts and mental health experts to understand the problem and explore potential solutions.

WHAT CAN CONGRESS DO?

- Increase budgets for DoD and VA to improve the research, screening, diagnosis and treatment of TBI and PTSD.
- Urge DoD and VA to closely monitor and study drugs prescribed in potentially toxic combinations, particularly involving addictive benzodiazepines and opioids, especially when prescribed by non-VA providers through the Choice Program.
- Improve training for DoD and VA personnel to identify and prevent suicide risks.

Improving care for women veterans

The number of women enrolled in the VA health-care system is expected to grow by 33 percent over the next three years. Finding ways to ensure that these veterans are welcome and receive the services they deserve is vital to The American Legion.

The American Legion continues to focus on:

- Visiting VA health-care systems to explore any issues that could be preventing VA hospitals from providing gender-specific care.
- Provide child-care services at all VA medical centers.
- Educating women veterans about the importance of identifying as a veteran.
- Ensuring full-time gynecologists are available at all VA medical centers.
- Educating women veterans about the importance of identifying as a veteran.
- Advocating for an increase of female providers to assist female veterans who have been victims of military sexual trauma.

WHAT CAN CONGRESS DO?

- Enact legislation for VA facilities to implement current standards of care to women veterans, providing the latest diagnostic and treatment methods.
- Provide child-care services at all VA medical centers.
- Urge VA to meet the privacy needs of women veterans at its facilities.

The future of VA health care

In 2018, Congress approved and the president signed into law the most significant legislation to transform the Department of Veterans Affairs health-care system since 1996 – the VA Maintaining Systems and Strengthening Integrated Outside Networks Act, or the VA Mission Act. The legislation focuses on access to private-sector care, consolidation of community care programs, expansion of the Family Caregiver Program, and recruitment of qualified medical professionals.

One of the largest changes the legislation will bring to VA health care is the expansion of the Community Care Program. The VA Mission Act gives veterans more control when it comes to their health care, such as increased access to private-sector care, improvements to standards for quality, access to walk-in care, ensuring individuals can get appointments scheduled in a timely manner, and continuity of care.

WHAT CAN CONGRESS DO?

- Ensure frequent oversight into how VA is implementing the VA Mission Act, to ensure the intention of the law is followed.
- Provide funding for dental care and legal services for homeless veterans.
- Once the VA Mission Act is fully implemented, conduct congressional hearings to ensure all programs are operating the way that best serves the 9 million veterans utilizing the VA health-care system.
Veteran suicide prevention

In 2017, VA reported that the suicide rate among 18- to 24-year-old male Iraq and Afghanistan veterans has risen nearly fivefold, to an all-time high of 124 per 100,000 – 10 times the national average. The suicide rate of 18- to 29-year-old female veterans also has doubled.

WHAT CAN CONGRESS DO?
- Urge the DoD and VA to implement an automatic flagging system to alert providers of potentially fatal prescription drug combinations.
- Provide VA the necessary funding for complementary and alternative therapies for treating TBI, PTSD and other mental health conditions.
- Improve VA’s hiring process for mental health providers.
- Increase funding for DoD and VA suicide-prevention programs.

Electronic health records

In 2018, VA signed a $10 billion, 10-year contract with the Cerner Corp. to adopt the same electronic health record (EHR) system as DoD. VA later said it would need another $5.8 billion for project management costs. VA began deployment of its initial three sites in 2018, with the goal of fully implementing the system by 2028.

WHAT CAN CONGRESS DO?
- Ensure VA’s EHR initiative remains fully funded.
- Require VA to regularly report EHR progress to Congress.

Improve access to care for MST victims and survivors

According to a VA Office of Inspector General review and the Department of Defense 2017 Report on Sexual Assault in the Military, more than 5,200 servicemembers reported a sexual assault in fiscal 2017. The reported sexual assaults occurred during their military service.

The American Legion will work to ensure that those who have become victims are treated, while urging the U.S. armed forces to take steps to eradicate military sexual trauma (MST) entirely.

WHAT CAN CONGRESS DO?
- Ensure VA has all necessary resources to remain committed to providing veterans access to help they need to recover from MST.
- Encourage better awareness training in the DoD for MST sensitivity and develop more comprehensive care options for survivors, including better availability of therapists and group therapy, along with other options to make MST care more accessible to veterans.

Support for veteran caregivers

Section 161 of the VA Mission Act is the Expansion of Family Caregiver Program of Department of Veterans Affairs. It expands eligibility for veterans with service-connected medical issues on or before May 7, 1975. Previously, access to this program was limited only to post-9/11 service.

The American Legion urges VA to provide the same level of benefits to all eligible enrolled veterans. VA caregiver benefits should not be limited to specific eras but expanded to assist all who should be eligible.

WHAT CAN CONGRESS DO?
- Remove all eligibility dates from current legislation and public laws, and revise them to include veterans who otherwise meet the eligibility requirements.
Blue Water Navy veterans deserve benefits

Veterans who served on open-sea ships off the shore of Vietnam during the Vietnam War are called “Blue Water veterans.” Currently, only those veterans who physically set foot on the land of Vietnam or served on its inland waterways between Jan. 9, 1962, to May 7, 1975, are presumed to have been exposed to the toxic defoliant Agent Orange, which is linked to numerous adverse health conditions and diseases. Blue Water veterans who did not set foot in Vietnam or serve on the inland waterways must prove they were exposed during military service in order to receive disability compensation for conditions related to Agent Orange exposure.

WHAT CAN CONGRESS DO?
- Pass H.R. 299, the Blue Water Navy Vietnam Veterans Act.
- Amend Title 38, U.S. Code, to presume exposure to Agent Orange for any military personnel who served during the Vietnam War on any vessel that came within 12 nautical miles of the Vietnam coastline.

Prevent veteran homelessness

Through the U.S. Housing and Urban Development’s annual point-in-time count estimate of America’s homeless population, communities across the country reported that 37,878 veterans were experiencing homelessness in the United States in 2018. Since 2009, veteran homelessness has dropped considerably, obtaining a new low in 2018. The American Legion is focused on prevention, “to get them before they get on the street.”

WHAT CAN CONGRESS DO?
- Permanently authorize the Supportive Services for Veterans and Families program and maintain funding levels necessary to keep it operational.
- Fund legal services for homeless veterans.
- Continue to fund the homeless veterans Grant and Per Diem Program (transitional housing) at the level of need demonstrated in local communities.
- Provide a higher allocation of project-based HUD-VA Supportive Housing vouchers for homeless veterans.

Licensing and credentialing

The American Legion has established its Credentialing Advisory Task Force in order to promote the transferability of military skills and experience and expand upon progress by increasing awareness in the fields of licensing, certifications and credentialing.

WHAT CAN CONGRESS DO?
- Reintroduce H.R. 3018, the Veterans’ Entry to Apprenticeship Act, empowering businesses to design pre-apprenticeship programs for veterans through the Post-9/11 GI Bill.
- Recognize civilian credentialing trends and advocate for the needs of servicemembers, veterans and spouses.
- Promote military training and experience as widely accepted forms of competency for civilian employment.
- Support the growth and expansion of the U.S. Military Apprenticeship Program.

Fund law enforcement agencies

Law enforcement agencies across the country are changing the tactics and strategies they use to respond to pressing and chronic threats posed by violent crime, criminal gang activity, illegal and prescription drugs, human trafficking and domestic terrorism, as well as cybercrime and transnational organized crime. Local agencies have the potential to assist with these challenges but often lack the funding and training required.

WHAT CAN CONGRESS DO?
- Provide federal funding to law enforcement agencies to ensure they are equipped with necessary and modern equipment, training and technology.
Veterans preference hiring

Veterans preference hiring benefits veterans of every economic class, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation and creed. It is triggered when a hiring manager is deciding between two equally qualified candidates, one a non-veteran and the other a servicemember or veteran. Veterans preference requires a veteran to be fully qualified for the position sought.

WHAT CAN CONGRESS DO?

- Reaffirm continued application of veterans preference for federal hiring and reduction-in-force actions as originally intended by the Veterans Preference Hiring Act of 1944.
- Mandate that agencies using new hiring authorities, such as direct-hire authority, report annually to Congress on the employment level and representation of veterans in the agencies workforce, along with the number of veterans hired using these new authorities.
- Report all federal veteran recruiting and applicant-sourcing activities to ensure the veteran community is aware of job opportunities, regardless of hiring authority used, and any other activities that demonstrate federal commitments to affirmative outreach to veterans.
- Require that agencies that fall below the representative rate of veterans, as determined by the rate veterans are employed in the private sector, be required to discontinue any special hiring authorities until the under-representation of veterans is corrected.
- Update Public Law 89-554, Title 5, Sec. 3310, Veterans Preference occupations.

Federal contracting for veteran-owned businesses

As the youngest, federally recognized and preferred contracting group, veterans do not always receive the same contracting preferences as other groups. Currently, there is no preference for veterans when it comes to building our nation’s roads, highways and critical infrastructure.

WHAT CAN CONGRESS DO?

- The American Legion urges Congress to appoint a VA advisory committee to ensure parity for veterans in all small-business government contracting programs and provide advice and recommendations on specific VA veteran-owned small-business issues.
- Congress should reintroduce H.R. 1694, the Fairness to Veterans Act, which simply states that if any business is going to get a preference, then veteran-owned small businesses should at least get that same preference.

Cybersecurity

Cybersecurity remains a top concern across the public and private sectors. Overall, threats are multiplying and organizations have little control over them. Health-care networks are a major target for cyber criminals, and The American Legion is concerned about the privacy of veterans enrolled in VA health care.

WHAT CAN CONGRESS DO?

- Congress should prioritize investments in cyber defense, resilience and the continued integration of cyber capabilities into the full spectrum of military operations and the Department of Veterans Affairs.

Strengthen the U.S. military

The National Defense Authorization Act of 2019 authorizes $171 billion in defense spending, which reverses the effects of sequestration and exceeds the defense spending caps set by the Budget Control Act of 2011. However, according to an outline done by the Pentagon in early 2018, the planned trajectory of the defense budget will not be enough to rebuild the military and create separation between the United States and its strategic competitors.

WHAT CAN CONGRESS DO?

- Pass a fiscal 2020 budget commensurate with the expressed needs of the DoD to fulfill the Secretary of Defense’s 2018 National Defense Strategy.
Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment program

Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment (VR&E) was established to provide service-connected disabled veterans ways to obtain gainful and meaningful employment to achieve and sustain an independent living. VR&E should continue to make every effort to demonstrate efficacy in delivering these services while at the same time substantially improving quality of life for veterans.

WHAT CAN CONGRESS DO?

- Congress should ensure adequate vocational rehabilitation counselors and employment coordinators are provided in order to reduce caseloads and offer more individualized counseling for veterans.
- Congress should work to improve interagency collaboration and communication among key stakeholders of the program.
- Eliminate the 12-year delimiting date for eligibility to Chapter 31 benefits and allow veterans with employment impediments to qualify for VR&E benefits for life.
- Provide training programs geared specifically for VR&E counselors through Management Concepts Incorporated.

Maintain integrity of the GI Bill

Congress passed the largest increase to the Post-9/11 GI Bill through the Harry W. Colmery Veterans Educational Assistance Act of 2017. VA, however, is currently facing a crisis of failure to process claims in a timely manner and curb tuition abuse. Technological malfunctions at VA resulted in delayed GI Bill housing payments to hundreds of thousands of veterans during the 2018 fall semester.

WHAT CAN CONGRESS DO?

- Demand that VA execute decisive actions to ensure that veterans do not have to wait longer than 30 days for approved GI Bill benefits.
- Pass legislation to align the cost of GI Bill payments for public school flight programs with the existing rate on tuition and fees for private and nonprofit schools and return the cost savings to VA education programs.

New approaches to transition

With an estimated 200,000 servicemembers leaving the military each year, the Transition Assistance Program (TAP) is an important component in the change to civilian life. The American Legion continues to help transitioning servicemembers obtain gainful employment through resume and interview workshops, career fairs and entrepreneurship. However, as the booming economic landscape evolves, it is important that military and veteran interests are represented in civilian workforce initiatives.

WHAT CAN CONGRESS DO?

- Hold the DoD accountable for implementation of the Better Access to Technical Training, Learning, and Entrepreneurship (BATTLE) for Servicemembers Act, which was in the fiscal 2019 National Defense Authorization Act.
- Hold unit commanders or their designees accountable for ensuring all servicemembers, in particular the reserve component, are afforded the opportunity to attend TAP.
- Introduce legislation to authorize military spouses to accompany servicemembers participating in TAP.

Access to capital for small business

A key obstacle facing veteran-owned small businesses is lack of access to capital. Investments are needed to develop and bring to market innovative veteran-generated products and services.

Most veterans lack the requisite capital or collateral for traditional bank loans. Solutions to address this issue include adding an entrepreneurship component to the current GI Bill or creating more pathways for veterans to gain access to capital through public-private partnerships.

WHAT CAN CONGRESS DO?

- Congress should reintroduce H.R. 3248 from the 114th Congress, the Veterans Entrepreneurial Transition (VET) Act, allowing the Small Business Administration to carry out a three-year pilot program to assess the feasibility of offering grants to up to 250 eligible veterans and retiring or honorably discharged members of the U.S. armed forces to start, expand or acquire qualifying business enterprises.
THE AMERICAN LEGION
|
NATIONAL COMMANDER'S TESTIMONY OVERVIEW

WHAT CAN CONGRESS DO?

n Stop any attempts by CFPB leadership to weaken the Military Lending Act, including the bureau’s supervisory enforcement authority and rules against predatory lending by all businesses, including car dealerships.

n Support the function and implementation of the CFPB’s rule on “Payday, Vehicle Title, and Certain High-Cost Installment Loans.”

WHAT CAN CONGRESS DO?

n Establish a program within the Department of Defense that ensures Gold Star families receive the benefits and support they have earned.

n Ensure that Gold Star families are provided access to appropriate installations in order to visit the graves of loved ones.

WHAT CAN CONGRESS DO?

n Pass legislation identical to House Joint Resolution 61 from the 115th Congress. It would give power back to the people to decide if laws should be passed to protect the flag under which every U.S. servicemember has served.

WHAT CAN CONGRESS DO?

n Implement measures within the Department of Defense to ensure the process of naturalization through honorable military service is completed prior to discharge.

The Consumer Financial Protection Bureau (CFPB) decided in 2017 to suspend supervising banks, credit card companies and other lenders that deal with members of the military and their families to make sure they’re not committing fraud or abuse. The American Legion is deeply concerned by this decision. The CFPB must demonstrate greater vigilance on behalf of servicemembers to support military readiness and secure successful transitions to civilian life.

The American Legion strongly believes the U.S. flag is a symbol of our nation’s freedom and all that we hold in common, secured by the servicemen and women who have sacrificed so much.

That is why The American Legion continues to urge Congress to approve such an amendment to protect the flag from physical desecration. The proposed flag protection amendment is not an infringement upon the Bill of Rights. Instead, it is a wonderful exercise in the popular sovereignty the Bill of Rights was designed to protect.

Financial protections from scams

The American Legion National Headquarters recently created a full-time staff position at its Washington, D.C., office to advocate for Gold Star families. Surviving families should receive the highest level of support as they face heart-wrenching decisions immediately upon being notified.

Support for Gold Star families

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Expediting citizenship through military service

Immigrants have always made up a portion of the U.S. armed forces, and joining the military has been one of the fastest ways to become a U.S. citizen. More than 8,000 troops with green cards became citizens that way in 2017 alone.

A recent report released by the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) shows a 65 percent drop in the number of active-duty servicemembers who applied for, or became, naturalized citizens in the first quarter of 2018. The report notes that policy changes within DoD make it more difficult for servicemembers to get their naturalization paperwork in order, such as USCIS’s decision to no longer accept their fingerprints collected by DoD. The American Legion strongly opposes illegal immigration but believes in fairness for veterans.

WHAT CAN CONGRESS DO?

n Implement measures within the Department of Defense to ensure the process of naturalization through honorable military service is completed prior to discharge.
HONOR & REMEMBRANCE

Military funeral honors for veterans

All eligible veterans, including military retirees, are entitled to military funeral honors. At a minimum, the funeral honors ceremony will consist of the playing of taps and the folding and presentation of the American flag. At least two uniformed military personnel shall perform the ceremony. If a bugler is not available, an electronic recording will be played. One of the uniformed military personnel will be from the deceased veteran’s parent military service and will present the flag to the next of kin.

The next of kin or otherwise appropriate individual must request the funeral honors; they are not provided automatically. Per the Department of Defense (DoD) policy, the family must request that the funeral director contact the military. Funeral directors may call (877) 645-4667 to coordinate the ceremonies. The American Legion is encouraged to augment the honors detail as an authorized provider with a chaplain, pallbearers, firing party, bugler and/or color guard.

When The American Legion is assisting the DoD, the Legion should conform to DoD’s methods of conduct. In working together, The American Legion honors those who have gone before and all requirements for a reverent, respectful and dignified ceremony are met.

For more information on military funerals, please refer to the Legion’s Post Officers Guide and Manual of Ceremonies starting on page 59. Download the guide at www.legion.org/publications.

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Honor & Remembrance

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Honor & Remembrance

Military funeral honors for veterans

All eligible veterans, including military retirees, are entitled to military funeral honors. At a minimum, the funeral honors ceremony will consist of the playing of taps and the folding and presentation of the American flag. At least two uniformed military personnel shall perform the ceremony. If a bugler is not available, an electronic recording will be played. One of the uniformed military personnel will be from the deceased veteran’s parent military service and will present the flag to the next of kin.

The next of kin or otherwise appropriate individual must request the funeral honors; they are not provided automatically. Per the Department of Defense (DoD) policy, the family must request that the funeral director contact the military. Funeral directors may call (877) 645-4667 to coordinate the ceremonies. The American Legion is encouraged to augment the honors detail as an authorized provider with a chaplain, pallbearers, firing party, bugler and/or color guard.

When The American Legion is assisting the DoD, the Legion should conform to DoD’s methods of conduct. In working together, The American Legion honors those who have gone before and all requirements for a reverent, respectful and dignified ceremony are met.

For more information on military funerals, please refer to the Legion’s Post Officers Guide and Manual of Ceremonies starting on page 59. Download the guide at www.legion.org/publications.
MEMBERSHIP

Team 100: Why I joined and renew

“In 1960 my 5-year-old sister was diagnosed with an inoperable abdominal tumor. My father, who joined The American Legion in the 1950s, was self-employed and had no health insurance. Every penny he had went toward medical bills for my sister. That year my (three) siblings and I were not going to have a Christmas until the local Owosso Post 57 stepped up. They (the post and Auxiliary) provided us with a tree and all our gifts. During the early 1960s I got to know these men and women very well. They were and are my heroes. As a result of knowing these folks, immediately upon graduation from high school I enlisted in the U.S. Navy so that I could emulate my heroes and get closer to them. After my discharge the first thing I asked my father for was an application for (American Legion) membership. I now have 44 years with the Legion, am a Paid Up For Life member and currently hold the position of adjutant and finance officer (for over 15 years) in the very same Post 57. Most of those outstanding individuals are gone now, but I still have wonderful memories of them. Even though my sister died shortly after that Christmas, I still consider Christmas 1960 as the best I ever had.”

– David L. Mogg, Owosso, Mich., Post 57

American Legion National Commander Brett Reistad wants to know your reasons of why you joined The American Legion. And, equally important, why you renew.

As part of his Team 100 campaign, the centennial commander is assembling the thoughts of American Legion members to use in promotional materials to increase membership.

Email dispatch@legion.org to provide your reason for joining and renewing. #Team100