MEET YOUR NEW NATIONAL COMMANDER

James W. “Bill” Oxford of North Carolina was elected during the 101st National Convention to lead The American Legion for 2019-2020.

By The American Legion

James W. “Bill” Oxford of North Carolina was elected to lead The American Legion for 2019-2020.

“...I am humbled beyond belief ... to accept this nomination as your national commander,” said Oxford, who was elected on stage in the Indiana Convention Center during The American Legion’s 101st National Convention in Indianapolis Aug. 29. “Whatever this job is, I will do it to the best of my ability, but I can’t do it alone. I need everybody here on my team, helping us reach our goals and objectives. We are all stakeholders in this organization. We are the future of this organization.”

Oxford is a native of Lenoir, N.C., where he is a Paid Up for Life member and past commander of Post 29. During his military service, Oxford served in the U.S. Marine Corps as an aviation electronic technician for the A-6 Intruder and served in Vietnam during his initial enlistment. After being discharged as a sergeant in 1970, Oxford joined the North Carolina National Guard. He subsequently attended officer’s candidate school and transferred to the U.S. Army reserve where he retired as a colonel after more than 34 years of military service.

He has served as Department of North Carolina commander, as well as either chairing or being a part of several national American Legion commissions. He also is a former mayor and city council member of Cajah’s Mountain, N.C., and has served as the public address announcer for the Post 29 American Legion Baseball team.

NEWS ALERT

2019 Annual Report

The American Legion’s 2019 Annual Report can be viewed and downloaded at www.legion.org/annualreport. Inside the 68-page report, readers can learn about Legion successes from the past year and find information on the organization’s programs that support its four pillars.

Legion Family Play Day flyer

The American Legion’s National Executive Committee passed Resolution 20 during Spring Meetings in May, which calls for American Legion posts to “promote a fun, positive public image and attract a new generation of American Legion Family members through the planning and operation of Family Play Day or Game Night events in their communities.”

Post 365 in Vista, Calif., and Post 116 in Fuquay-Varina, N.C., held the first two Legion Family Play Days in July.

If your post is planning on having a Legion Family Play Day, a customizable flyer to promote your event is available for download under the Media & Communications tab at www.legion.org/publications.

Fall Meetings

The American Legion’s annual Fall Meetings will be Oct. 14-17 in Indianapolis. Follow coverage of resolutions passed, presentations made, recipients of the Samsung American Legion Scholarship and Child Welfare Foundation grants at www.legion.org.

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COMMANDER'S MESSAGE

My two fundraising projects

First and foremost, I want to thank you for electing me as your 2019-2020 national commander. I look forward to working alongside the Legion Family as we move into our second century of service, and I am excited to see what the year holds for this great organization of ours.

As you may know, national commander's oftentimes have projects that they support during their year. From now until the end of December, my commanders project will be The American Legion’s 100th Anniversary Commemorative Coin series. Proceeds from coin sales will help fund American Legion programs that support veterans, servicemembers, their families and the communities in which they live.

Coin sales end Dec. 31.

Those centennial coins make great gifts and give you American Legion memorabilia. I know in North Carolina we’re going to use those centennial coins as membership incentives.

To make a purchase or for more information about the centennial coins, visit www.legion.org/coin or call 800-872-6468.

Then, in January, my emphasis will shift to fundraising for The American Legion Veterans and Children’s Foundation. All contributions to the foundation go directly to the Legion’s Temporary Financial Assistance program and to Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation efforts – primarily training for American Legion service officers who work tirelessly to help veterans and families understand their health-care benefits, education and employment opportunities.

As we think about who we are and what we do as stakeholders, as the future of this organization, we are building the foundation for the future of the organization for the next 100 years.

We have a great team, and we will continue to have a great team. When we think about all the things that we do, that team makes it possible to accomplish those things.

James W. "Bill" Oxford
National Commander

MEMBERSHIP

Recruit three new members for ‘A Foundation for the Future’ pin

American Legion National Commander James W. "Bill" Oxford will award his national commander “A Foundation for the Future” membership excellence pin to any Legionnaire who obtains three new members into The American Legion.

A new member is any eligible person joining for the 2020 membership year who was not a member of The American Legion during the 2019 membership year.

Each member listed must be eligible for membership in The American Legion. Forward names of Sons of The American Legion members or Auxiliary members to your detachment or unit for use in their respective incentive programs.

Only one pin will be awarded per individual. Upon receipt, national membership staff will confirm the names and mail the pin directly to the person who earned it.

Download the incentive pin form online at www.legion.org/commander/pin.

MEMBERSHIP

Legion Family Honor Ribbon

American Legion National Commander James W. “Bill” Oxford will award his 100 percent American Legion Family Ribbon to any American Legion Family that achieves 100 percent membership by May 30, 2020.

For this award, the Legion Family is defined as a post and any combination of an Auxiliary unit, Sons of The American Legion squadron or Legion Riders chapter.

Each branch must achieve 100 percent membership to qualify for the award.

Download the form at www.legion.org/commander/ribbon.
NATIONAL ADJUTANT’S MESSAGE

A letter to be opened 50 years from now

My predecessor wrote a letter to be opened by his successor on the Legion’s 100th anniversary; I have done the same for 2069.

By Daniel S. Wheeler

Thank you, my fellow Legionnaires, for another great and well-attended National Convention. A lot of support for veterans was shown during the 101st convention in Indianapolis by many of the speakers on the convention floor, including from Vice President Mike Pence and Secretary of Veterans Affairs Robert Wilkie.

Also on the convention floor was a message that was read aloud to delegates.

On the 50th anniversary of The American Legion in 1969, American Legion National Adjutant William F. Hauck wrote a letter to his successor to be opened on the 100th anniversary of the Legion. The letter was about observations from the time.

“We are disturbed over some of the things that are happening on our college campuses,” Hauck wrote. “Our young people are upset over the war in Vietnam. Most of them are fine young people, but those who seemingly provide leadership seem to have lost their way as far as the principles of patriotism and love of country are concerned. Yet, as we look at history, we find this has been characteristic of many ages of man and hope that this too shall pass away.”

Hauck’s message was optimistic about the nation’s future, as long as The American Legion stays true to its founding principles. “We hope the America you inherit from us will still be strong and free and a vibrant force in the affairs of men. If it is, we can truly say our job here was well done.

“We can only say that any accomplishment of the Legion was the result of all of us living with the final point in the Preamble to the Constitution given to us by our founders of a half century ago when each of us coming into this organization pledged ourselves to a life of mutual helpfulness.”

I have written a message for the veteran who would hold my position in 2069.

“Greetings from Post Everlasting! I say this not out of melancholy or poor health. In fact, I write this as energetic and optimistic about the prospects and future successes of our organization as I have been at any time during my association with The American Legion.

“While Legionnaires now passed have built a legacy that has proven vital to the nation, the living should not be governed by the dead. You have access to information and technology that we can only dream about. Customs change. And events dictate that we must adapt and change … the alternative is for our organization to die or lose relevance, and I refuse to believe that America’s veterans would allow that to happen.

“If the organization dies, let it be because there are no more wars!”

The letters are sealed in a canister and held at American Legion National Headquarters until 2069.
During his remarks to the delegation Oxford reflected back on The American Legion’s 100 years of successes and accomplishments. He pointed out the Legion’s role in creating the original GI Bill, establishing the Department of Veterans Affairs, drafting the U.S. Flag Code and, most recently, gaining passage of the LEGION Act. Oxford highlighted the Legion’s relationship with the American Legion Auxiliary, the Sons of The American Legion and the American Legion Riders; pointed out ways the Legion supports youth through programs such as American Legion Baseball, Boys State and Boys Nation, Junior Shooting Sports, the Oratorical Contest, Youth Cadet Law Enforcement programs and Scouting; and applauded the Legion’s charitable funds, such as Operation Comfort Warriors, the National Emergency Fund, and the Veterans and Children Foundation, which have provided millions in financial support.

“All of these things we’ve talked about shows who we are, but it also shows what we do,” Oxford said.

Oxford said something else needed to increase membership is to raise the visibility of The American Legion. He wants posts to send out news releases before and after events, whether it’s a fish fry, baseball game or flag retirement ceremony.

“We all know what the Legion is and the value we have. But does everybody else? A photo, an article, a video, a blog. And use social media.”

Oxford then turned his focus toward the future. “The things we did yesterday, we do today and we will do tomorrow are building the foundation for the future of this organization,” he said. “And if we think about The American Legion’s policies, programs (and) efforts, we’ve got to consider what makes those programs work. Those programs work by the people who participate in them.”

Oxford said membership is the key to the Legion’s mission succeeding. He set goals of a 90-percent retention rate and adding 100,000 new members in 2019-2020, with a long-term goal of reaching 3.3 million members – the all-time high number set in 1946.

With the LEGION Act’s passage, “we need to recognize and pursue the 4.2 million veterans now eligible to become Legionnaires,” Oxford said.

“If we get everybody involved, we can gain 100,000 new members.”
During the American Legion's 101st National Convention, delegates approved changes to the Constitution and Bylaws to replace the word “wife” with “spouse,” related to the membership criteria for the American Legion Auxiliary (ALA).

The American Legion, which was chartered by Congress, created the ALA. For that reason, the ALA operates as a separate corporation and does not need congressional approval for an eligibility change. The American Legion’s bylaws have always set the eligibility requirements of the ALA.

“We are happy to welcome eligible male spouses of veterans and servicemembers to the American Legion Family,” ALA National President Nicole Clapp said. “This is consistent with our longstanding legacy of embracing military families and supporting them any way we can.”

The ALA is taking applications for new potential members as of Sept. 1.

The change to Article XIII now reads as such:

> Membership in The American Legion Auxiliary shall be limited to the:
> 
> (1) grandmothers, mothers, sisters, spouses, and direct and adopted female descendants of members of The American Legion; and
> 
> (2) grandmothers, mothers, sisters, spouses, and direct and adopted female descendants of all men and women who served in either of the following periods: April 6, 1917, to November 11, 1918, and any time after December 7, 1941, who, being a citizen of the United States at the time of their entry therein served on active duty in the Armed Forces of any of the governments associated with the United States during either eligibility periods and died in the line of duty or after honorable discharge;
> 
> (3) grandmothers, mothers, sisters, spouses, and direct and adopted female descendants of all men and women who were in the Armed Forces of the United States during either of the following periods: April 6, 1917, to November 11, 1918; and any time after December 7, 1941, who served on active duty in the Armed Forces of the United States during either eligibility periods and died in the line of duty or after honorable discharge; and
> 
> (4) to those women who of their own right are eligible for membership in The American Legion.

**Common questions and answers to what this means going forward**

**Question:** Why change ALA membership eligibility?

**Answer:** In 1920, veterans were almost 100 percent male so the ALA was formed as the organization for the spouses of the veteran. Those spouses just happened to be women. Today, an estimated 16 percent of enlisted people and 18 percent of officers are women, who may be married to a non-veteran. To keep the ALA as the organization that supports spouses of the veteran, we need to change the ALA’s definition from wives to spouses, thereby updating the organization to represent the changing makeup of the military.

**Q:** How can this change help ALA membership?

**A:** Think about female spouses who are alone as their husband is deployed. They have the ALA to lean on. Who can the male spouse rely on? With this eligibility change, now male spouses who are ALA members can receive the same support while their wives are deployed.

**Q:** Would this change need to be approved by Congress?

**A:** No, because the American Legion Auxiliary is not chartered by Congress. The American Legion, which was chartered by Congress, created the ALA. The Legion approved the ALA to operate as a separate corporation; however, The American Legion has always set the eligibility requirements of the ALA in their bylaws.

**Q:** What about the previous communications issued by former ALA leadership claiming this change could not happen? Why is that information inaccurate?

**A:** Previously released messaging could have been interpreted by members to mean ALA needs congressional approval for this change to happen. That information is inaccurate. The American Legion Auxiliary is not chartered by Congress.

**Q:** ALA refers to itself as the world’s largest women’s patriotic service organization. Will the Auxiliary still use that phrase?

**A:** Now that the resolution has been adopted by The American Legion, the Auxiliary will no longer call itself the world’s largest women’s patriotic service organization.

**Q:** How would this change affect the ALA membership application or signing up new members?

**A:** Applications are now being accepted. Visit [www.alaforveterans.org/join](http://www.alaforveterans.org/join) to learn more.
DID YOU KNOW?

You can now subscribe to The American Legion’s text alerts when the flag has been ordered to fly at half staff. In recent months, the Flag Alerts continued to be dispatched whenever the president ordered flags to be lowered as part of a period of mourning. However, due to a change in text policy by phone carriers, new subscribers were unable to sign up for the alerts. Now customers can opt-in to receive text messages for the flag alerts (those who previously signed up will not have to do so again). To subscribe to the Flag Alerts, text Flag to 534466.

If you no longer want to receive these notifications, text STOP to 534466 to cancel the service. Or email cs@legion.org.

Data rates may apply. Depending on your text plan, you may be charged by your carrier.

More than $554,000 was donated to The American Legion Legacy Scholarship Fund on the floor of the 101st National Convention Aug. 27 in Indianapolis, bringing this year’s donation total to $975,208. The top donation was from the Department of Minnesota ($175,000), followed by the Departments of Missouri ($86,109), South Carolina ($66,107), Illinois ($32,825) and Michigan ($29,023). The Departments of Florida, California, Nebraska and Kansas all contributed more than $20,000. The fund supports children of the post-9/11 fallen and disabled.

www.legion.org/scholarships

MEMBERSHIP

The ‘why’ to starting a new American Legion post

There were 56 American Legion posts chartered during immediate Past National Commander Brett Reistad’s year for 2018-2019. If you are chartering a new American Legion post during newly elected James W. “Bill” Oxford’s year as national commander, 2019-2020, we want to hear your why. Please send an email to dispatch@legion.org.

The following are three posts chartered this past year.

Post 210 in New Haven, Conn.

“Post-9/11 veterans deserve to have a local and vibrant veterans community that looks like them, knows their issues, and stands with them. The young veterans of Post 210 are so new to The American Legion and to being actual veterans, they really aren’t sure what they hope to accomplish. But a few things are clear: they stick together, they look out for each other, and they know they are building something important for themselves, for fellow veterans of all ages, and for our community.” – Post 210 Commander Charles Pickett

Post 412 in Lake Nona, Fla.

“Post 412 was started because there was a need for a post in the area close to the Orlando VA hospital. We want to be the premiere veterans organization in the area, serving the needs of the veterans and the community. As of today, we are 40 members strong and we are adding an Auxiliary and a Riders Chapter in the next couple of months.” – Post 412 Commander Bill Musto

Post 265 in Lake Kiowa, Texas

“Our mission is to pay it forward by remembering all those that came before us, honoring their sacrifice and teaching about that sacrifice for our future generations. We value the little things in life such as being a good neighbor, helping out during times of trouble, supporting veterans in need, assisting them with benefits and being able to lend an ear when needed. Our members are passionate about being a beacon of service upholding the motto of Veterans Still Serving America.” – Post 265 Commander Jeremy Jordan
103 PERCENT MEMBERSHIP AWARD

American Legion National Commander James W. "Bill" Oxford will award his national commander "A Foundation for the Future" membership incentive pin to any post, district, county, division, department commander or membership chairman who achieves 103 percent of their assigned membership goal for 2020.

Download the 103 percent membership goal form online:

www.legion.org/commander/103percent

POST EXCELLENCE AWARD

The American Legion’s Post Excellence Award has added new criteria for the 2019-2020 membership year. To qualify for the Post Excellence Award, a post is required to achieve excellence in four areas: membership, submission of the Consolidated Post Report (CPR), attaining a 90 percent renewal rate and community activity.

The purposes of this award is membership growth, exposure of American Legion values to the youth of the community, and increased visibility of the American Legion Family through service projects. A post achieving this qualification will have had numerous post members involved in planning and achieving these goals. Many posts are most likely already active in these areas and will qualify without extra effort. Others, however, will need to increase their efforts in one or more areas to qualify for the award.

The standard to be achieved in each area is as follows:

Membership: An American Legion post must attain at least 103 percent of their membership goal. And at least one post officer attends district meetings.

Consolidated Post Report: CPRs must be submitted by July 1. The American Legion’s federal charter requires the submission of an annual report to Congress on activities for the year. MyLegion.org has made it simple for a post to submit its CPR in a timely manner.

Renewal rate: The post must renew at least 90 percent of their members that were on the 2019 roster.

Community activity: The post must conduct an event that connects the local community with The American Legion post. The objective is to open your doors, welcome the community in, and educate them on what The American Legion is all about and how the post is an asset to the community. Posts do not need to have a physical building to accomplish this. This activity can be held in a park, a community center or anywhere the post can welcome and interact with the local community.

The district commander responsible for the post will certify a post as having achieved the four specified criteria. The district commander will submit a list of posts meeting the criteria to department headquarters. That list should include the post name, phone number, address and commander’s name. If possible, accompany the last two criteria with copies of press releases submitted to the local media about the community projects to show that the projects were not only accomplished but that an attempt was made to enhance the image of The American Legion through local media. Copies submitted should include a date and time stamp showing receipt by the media outlet.

The department adjutant will transmit information as posts qualify to:

The American Legion National Headquarters
Attn: Membership
P.O. Box 1055
Indianapolis, IN 46206-1055
**NATIONAL EMERGENCY FUND**

**Support is available for those affected by Dorian**

American Legion members will need help in the aftermath of Hurricane Dorian, which has devastated the Bahamas, leaving neighborhoods in ruins. And that’s where The American Legion’s National Emergency Fund (NEF) comes into play.

NEF has helped thousands of American Legion members who have had their lives shattered by natural disasters like hurricanes, tornadoes, floods and more.

NEF grants provide immediate financial assistance for American Legion and Sons of The American Legion (SAL) members who have been affected by the natural disaster. Eligible American Legion members and Sons of The American Legion members affected by Dorian can request assistance for an NEF grant at [www.legion.org/nef](http://www.legion.org/nef). The NEF provides up to $3,000 for Legion and SAL members with an active membership who have been displaced due to damages to their primary residence.

American Legion posts also qualify for an NEF grant of up to $10,000 for damages sustained as a result of a natural disaster, and whose programs and activities within the community are impacted.

Several American Legion posts have been collecting donations to support those in need following Hurricane Dorian, such as American Legion Post 254 in North Port, Fla., which has been collecting diapers, towels, food and more.

Please consider a donation to the NEF to help keep the fund viable for American Legion and Sons of The American Legion members and posts facing recovery from natural disasters in the years to come. Donations can be made online at [www.legion.org/donate](http://www.legion.org/donate).