

THE AMERICAN LEGION

Dispatch

November 2020

Veterans Strengthening America

FINANCIAL RELIEF



Emilee Thren, center, delivers a food box for a family in need as Ken Fussell holds the trunk open at American Legion Post 396 in Garden City, Mich. Photo by Junta Han

\$1,000 GRANTS HELP POSTS AFFECTED BY COVID

The American Legion's Mission Blue Post Assistance Program was approved by the National Executive Committee during 2020 Fall Meetings.

By The American Legion

Public health mandates in response to COVID-19 included stay-at-home orders and business closures. Those mandates financially impacted American Legion posts nationwide as member and community outreach efforts were limited, resulting in a loss of revenue.

To provide some relief during these challenging times, financial grants are now available for eligible American Legion posts.

Resolution No. 36, Mission Blue Post Assistance Program, will provide \$1,000 grants to posts that are in good standing with their respective department. These funds must be used exclusively to pay current or past due rent, mortgage, utilities and insurance.

The American Legion National Executive Committee approved Resolution No. 36 Oct. 14, during its annual Fall Meetings. Funds for

the approved grants will be provided through The American Legion National Emergency Fund (NEF).

Eligibility for a Mission Blue Post Assistance Program grant requires posts to have:

- A Consolidated Post Report on file.
- Filed an IRS 990 within the prescribed due date.
- Filed all other required forms and reports as prescribed by the department.
- Actively participated in one or more American Legion programs in the last 18 months.
- A financial need.
- A certificate of insurance naming The

See \$1,000 grants help posts affected by COVID on Page 4

NEWS ALERT

Training Tuesdays

The last Tuesday of each month American Legion National Headquarters staff will present 60 to 90-minute sessions on topics aimed at post commanders and adjutants. The November session will be held Tuesday, Nov. 24, at 7 p.m. EST. The topic is on what post adjutants should know to make their term a success. Attend the training session by visiting legion.org/training/training-Tuesdays.

Eagle Scout award nominations

Nominations for the 2021 American Legion Eagle Scout of the Year award are now being accepted.

An applicant's nomination packet must be received by their respective American Legion department headquarters no later than March 1, 2021. Departments must then select and certify their top nominee to American Legion National Headquarters no later than April 1, 2021.

Application information is available at legion.org/scouting/nominate.

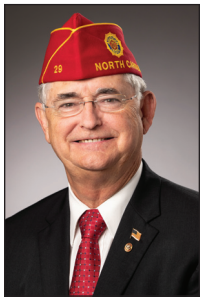
Holiday blood drive

The American Legion's Holiday Blood Donor Drive runs Nov. 26 through Dec. 31. Posts are encouraged to host blood drives during this time and can award donors with an American Legion blood donor tack (purchase through Emblem Sales (emblem.legion.org)).

Learn more about the program at legion.org/security/blood.

COMMANDER'S MESSAGE

Invite newly eligible veterans to serve with us



James W. Oxford
National Commander

On July 30, 2019, the LEGION Act was signed into law, which extended the ongoing declared period of war back to Dec. 7, 1941. The act paved the way to honor thousands of veterans who were killed or wounded on duty during periods not previously considered wartime.

Notably for The American Legion the LEGION Act — Let Everyone Get Involved in Opportunities for National Service Act — filled in the gaps of membership eligibility. What that means for us is that any veteran with an honorable discharge who served since the day Pearl Harbor was attacked is now eligible to join The American Legion.

For these newly eligible members — roughly 4.2 million — it means they can now join the nation's largest and most influential veterans service organization, and enjoy the rewards of membership.

But many of these now-eligible members don't yet realize they

can join. They have tried to sign up in the past, only to learn they were not eligible due to the previous definitions of war periods.

So, it is up to us to spread the word and let these deserving veterans know that we are now allowed to welcome them into our family. As you reach out to these non-members, visit legion.org to search for and read the article "11 things you need to know about the LEGION Act."

But communicating with these eligible members is not limited to just today or this week. Invite eligible members to your Thanksgiving or Christmas event at the post or elsewhere in your community.

What a wonderful opportunity to welcome them and demonstrate how we continue to serve our great nation, states and communities. And now, these newly eligible members are not only able to observe the great community service we provide, they can serve with us.

James W. "Bill" Oxford

NATIONAL COMMANDER

Oxford's three membership goals

American Legion National Commander James W. "Bill" Oxford will continue to focus on the following three goals for membership growth for 2021:

- 90 percent renewal rate
- 100,000 new members recruited
- 100 percent Consolidated Post Reporting

Renewal. During Fall Meetings in October, it was announced that membership renewal rate for 2021 currently stands just over 56 percent — nearly 3 percent higher than this time last year. "Retention must be the first priority to increase our membership and we must keep this in mind — retention starts the minute someone joins," said Membership & Post Activities Committee Chairman Jay Bowen of Colorado during his remarks to the National Executive Committee (NEC). "It means we have to engage our members by conducting Buddy Checks not just when it is time to pay dues, it should be a routine leadership tool to check on our members' health and welfare. We have to invite them to post and district training events, and we have to mentor them to be successful Legionnaires."

To help increase training, staff from National Headquarters will be conducting training sessions on the last Tuesday of every month. Topics of discussion will be based on feedback from

membership. Learn more at legion.org/training.

"By actively engaging these members, we will not only put them in a position to succeed, we will also show them we care about their personal growth in The American Legion," Bowen said. "When we do this retention is no longer a goal ... it is a given."

Recruiting. It's been over a year since the passage of the LEGION Act that filled in the gaps of membership eligibility. For the 2019-2020 membership year, 17,733 veterans joined under the Other Conflicts war era. "The passage of the LEGION Act removed the barrier of worrying about whether a veteran is eligible based on when they served," Bowen said. "It is our responsibility to engage all veterans and ask them to join."

Consolidated Post Reports (CPR). July 1 is the annual deadline for reports to be submitted. National Headquarters received 71 percent of the 100 percent goal of CPRs for the 2019-2020 year. The CPR data is used in a report to Congress, during interviews with national media outlets and more. Oxford stressed in his remarks to the NEC that even if a post has no activities to report, it should still send in the CPR. "If a post has not been active, the CPR can let us know that perhaps a revitalization is needed. Regardless, information is a good thing."

NATIONAL ADJUTANT'S MESSAGE

Our devotion to mutual helpfulness

When a fellow Legionnaire and his family became stranded while traveling through Wyoming, national and local American Legion leadership stepped in to help.

By Daniel S. Wheeler

I received a letter last month from Legionnaire Michael Barrett. His message of gratitude reiterated that as Legionnaires we have 12,500 local outlets manned by battle buddies devoted to mutual helpfulness.

Barrett, who served as the 17th Sergeant Major of the U.S. Marine Corps and addressed attendees of the 2018 National Convention in Minneapolis, was traveling from Oregon to Indiana with his son and future daughter-in-law, Lisa.

The three-vehicle caravan was traveling through Wyoming on Day 2 of their road trip when Lisa's Nissan broke down. About one mile from where the vehicle was stranded was Rock Springs, Wyo. It was a Saturday at "6 a.m., pitch black, no signs of life," wrote Barrett.

Then he saw The American Legion emblem.

"Rock Springs is limited in services, especially on a Saturday," Barrett wrote. "The Nissan dealer had a sign on their service center door, 'Open M-F 8:00AM - 5:00PM.' At this point I figured we were stuck for two days in this little Wyoming piece of paradise."

It was then that he contacted American Legion Executive Director Chanin Nuntavong in Washington, D.C., about connecting with Department of Wyoming leadership, who, in turn, got in touch with VA&R Chairman Ralph Bozella of Colorado. Bozella reached out to people he knew in Wyoming.

"Within minutes of my call with Nuntavong, Mike Cooke (Department of Wyoming commander and Post 24 member in Rock Springs) and I were coordinating. The Rock Springs (Post 24) went into action and welcomed us like we were family. Mike



Michael Barrett, speaking at 2018 American Legion National Convention in Minneapolis. Photo by Shelly Stone

went as far as organizing professional mechanics all of which are Legionnaires.

"Needless to say by 1200, Team Barrett was back on the road. We made our deadline reaching Bloomington (Ind.) as planned.

"I felt so proud, and relieved, being a Legionnaire ... I know any and every Legion department is ready to perform for their brothers and sisters as my family and I experienced."

I am pleased that the American Legion Family in Wyoming and of Post 24 could help. I appreciate Barrett sharing his mutual helpfulness experience.

This is just one of many stories I hear and receive from members of the good deeds and kindness performed by their fellow Legionnaires.

As we continue to charter through this difficult time of loss, financial hardships or separation from family and friends due to COVID-19, let The American Legion continue to be there for one another. Membership & Post Activities Chairman Jay Bowen summed this up well during his remarks to the National Executive Committee last month.

"There is no question we are living in unprecedented times," Bowen said. "But we are not that special – every generation before us had an unprecedented event occur that defined that generation. Our rich history tells the stories of how we worked together to overcome and respond to those events. What will history record about our response?

"I submit to you it needs to say, 'The American Legion was there for veterans and community then, we are there now, and we will be there always.'"

Have a membership success story?

Share: legiontown.org

Dispatch

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American Legion doing business as American Legion National Headquarters as an additional insured (See Resolution 35 memo below)

■ Documentation indicating that the post is properly incorporated.

The Mission Blue Post Assistance Program grant application is available on the web at legion.org/coronavirus.

American Legion posts applying for a grant will be required to first submit the completed application to their respective department for approval before it can be sent to National Headquarters. This application procedure is the same as the NEF.

American Legion posts have until Dec. 31, 2021, to apply for an Mission Blue Post Assistance Program grant.

RESOLUTION 35 MEMO

By Kevin Bartlett, National Judge Advocate

The American Legion national organization is the owner, protector and the organization that may grant the use of the names, emblems, trademarks and copyrights (Tradenames) of The American Legion. As owner and protector of the Tradenames, The American Legion utilizes a number of different protective insurance coverages. As owner, protector and grantor of the Tradenames, The American Legion, like all owners of trademarks or copyrights, is allowed to place restrictions upon the use of its Tradenames, including similar insurance requirements, reviewing Tradename usage prior to use, etc.

Resolution No. 35 places restrictions on the use of the Tradenames – namely that, if any organization would like to use the Tradenames of The American Legion and the Tradename-using organization has a situation whereby there is a need for liability insurance protection, then the Tradename-using organization will specify that The American Legion (and, if needed, the respective department of The American Legion) is held harmless and named as an additional insured on any and all insurance liability policies.

In other words, any organization using the Tradenames of The American Legion, and needing liability insurance coverage, is required to specify that The American Legion (and, if needed, the respective department of The American Legion) is held harmless and named as an additional insured on any and all insurance liability policies. This Tradename protection is a standard business practice and not viewed as a control of the insurance-purchasing organization.

This requirement brings up two Q&As for clarification.

Q: What is liability insurance?



The 2020 Fall Meetings took place virtually in the NEC Room at The American Legion National Headquarters, Indianapolis, due to the ongoing pandemic. Photo by Ben Mikesell

A: Liability insurance is an insurance product that provides an insured party with protection against claims resulting from injuries and damage to other people or property. Liability insurance policies protect both the insured and third parties who may be injured as a result of the policyholder's unintentional negligence and therefore the liability insurance covers legal costs and payouts for which an insured party is responsible, if the insured party is found legally liable. Liability

insurance policies pay these damaged parties and not the policyholders.

The different types of liability insurance include directors and officers insurance (D&O); commercial liability; general liability insurance; dram shop liability; special events insurance; employment practices liability (EPL); and criminal acts insurance.

Q: What is an additional insured?

A: An additional insured is a type of insurance status associated with liability insurance policies that provides coverage to another group that is not initially named in the liability policy. With an additional insured endorsement, the additional insured is then protected under the named insurer's liability policy.

Therefore the Tradename-using group may obtain this additional insured endorsement coverage for The American Legion, and the respective department of The American Legion as needed, by simply calling their insurance agent and requesting the addition of The American Legion, and the respective department of The American Legion as needed, to their liability insurance coverage(s) as an additional insured endorsement. The majority of insurance agencies do not charge for this endorsement; therefore, if presented with an additional charge one should inquire why such additional fee.

Enforcement of this Tradename business requirement is also covered in Resolution No. 35. The American Legion's national adjutant, or designee, has been given authority to independently investigate, confirm and determine that organizations using the Tradenames are also naming The American Legion, and respected department of The American Legion as needed, as additional insured on their respective liability insurance policies. Once a national adjutant's designee is determined and authorized, this designee's information will be made public.

The 37 resolutions from the Fall Meetings of the National Executive Committee are now available on the Digital Archive. archive.legion.org

LEGION.ORG

Post news

Starting Oct. 3, 22 white crosses a day were put up at American Legion Post 141 in Howell, Mich. For 30 days Post 141 Legion Riders placed the crosses to bring awareness to the estimated growing rate of veteran suicides daily nationwide.

On the final day, 660 white crosses adorned the outside of Post 141. “When you see the field of crosses relentlessly growing every day, every day, every day, for an entire month, that starts to give you a visual impact and that this problem is not just going to go away,” said Jon Luker, Legion Rider of Post 141. “That we’re going to have to actually engage it and do something in order for it to not keep growing relentlessly. So people can watch that field of crosses grow and hopefully get an idea from it that there are just way too many veterans losing hope.”



Photo courtesy James Bennett

A 1923 time capsule was uncovered at American Legion William Lee Netzer Post 23 in Sanger, Calif. Christian Gonzalez, son of Post 23 member Lt. Col. Cesar Gonzalez with the 144th Fighter Squadron in Fresno, Calif., was jackhammering concrete around the post’s flag pole for his Eagle Scout project when he noticed a metal box. Thinking it might be an electrical box he stopped and began chipping away with a hammer. What he found was a shocking surprise to him and members of American Legion Post 23 – a time capsule from June 14, 1923, when the post was chartered. Inside the time capsule was a Bible with the name Eugene Bradford inside the front cover; he was listed as the post adjutant on the charter roster. The Bible marker was on John 3:16, one of the most quoted verses in the Bible: “For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.”

Also inside was a charter membership roster; a roster of what is believed to be the Auxiliary unit; a 48-star small American flag; photo of a young soldier kneeling next to a tent, believed to be possibly from World War I; and two newspapers, the Sanger Herald dated June 14, 1923, and The Fresno Republican dated June 16, 1923. The Sanger Herald had a front-page story featuring the dedication of American Legion Post 23.



Facebook photo

Jeff Piper, second vice commander at American Legion Post 34 in Indianapolis, converted a 40-foot long Blue Bird school bus into a mobile grocery store approved to participate in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). The Cool Bus, as he named it, will bring fresh meat, produce and other items into community neighborhoods where the residents wouldn’t otherwise have easy access to such food.

Post 34 is currently housing the bus, which is staffed by veterans.

MYLEGION.ORG

New myLegion coming in December

In mid-December, a new mylegion.org will be released for American Legion members and officers. This release involves change to access and security.

Current administrative officers for myLegion include:

- Post and squadron adjutants
- County commanders
- District commanders

MyLegion users are probably familiar with the current architecture where one online profile exists for access to your personal member information, as well as another one for access to your post membership and electronic roster, and being able to process membership, print lists/labels, etc.

The new myLegion will be driven by one account profile associated with the email address on the administrative officer's personal membership record. Once logged into the new myLegion, administrative officers will see options to update their personal membership record and work with online post membership tools. Those select officers will also be able to grant authority to others that need access to online rosters and reports.

An email address will be required on the administrative officer's membership record to access the new myLegion, and all existing accounts will need to be registered. The registration process will send a one-time password (OTP) code to your email address. The OTP code will be required to complete the registration process.

To make sure the most up-to-date email address is on file for your personal membership record, visit mylegion.org and choose "Members Click Here." You can also call American Legion customer service at (833) 253-9995 to update your information, or email us at mylegion@legion.org.

For more details about the new myLegion site, visit legion.org/training and click on the "Training Tuesdays" tab. Once on the Training Tuesdays page you will see "myLegion 2021" with video presentation/Q&A below. Watch the video session that provides instruction to post adjutants on how to set up log-in credentials and display a preview of the new officer's dashboard and membership tools.

Please continue to visit legion.org/training as more training videos will be uploaded for the new myLegion.

Reminder

■ More than \$88,000 of the \$100,000 goal for The American Legion Legacy Scholarship Fund has been raised even with the 2020 Legacy Run cancelled. The American Legion has created a tiered donation program to donate to the Legacy Fund now through Dec. 31. Visit legion.org/riders/legacyrun/donation.

■ Dec. 19 will mark the 29th National Wreaths Across America Day where more than an anticipated 1 million remembrance wreaths will be laid on the graves of America's fallen veterans throughout the country and overseas. American Legion posts and Legion Family members participating in this annual program are encouraged to email sbrooks@legion.org in advance to share your plans.

■ As the gift-giving season is upon us, it's the perfect opportunity to make American Legion Charities Inc. your

charitable organization of choice on AmazonSmile.

AmazonSmile is a simple and automatic way to support your favorite charitable organization every time you shop, at no cost to you. When you shop at smile.amazon.com, you'll find the exact same low prices, vast selection and convenient shopping experience as Amazon.com, with the added bonus that the AmazonSmile Foundation will donate 0.5 percent of the purchase price from your eligible AmazonSmile purchases to your favorite charitable organization.

Only purchases at smile.amazon.com – not at amazon.com or the mobile app – support any charities.

Simply go to smile.amazon.com, sign into your normal Amazon account and then type in "American Legion Charities Inc" in the search box when the prompt comes up. American Legion Charities Inc. provides much-needed assistance to veterans, servicemembers and their families through financial grants and VA benefits claims.

VETERAN OUTREACH

Holiday to-do list: make Buddy Checks

Veterans can be at particular risk for depression and suicide around the holidays, and many are disproportionately hard-hit by the pandemic due to age, chronic health issues, post-traumatic stress and isolation.

The American Legion's Buddy Check program is designed to give Legionnaires the tools to make contact, engage in conversation, assess risks and direct veterans in need to the appropriate services.

Resources and toolkits for Buddy Check teams are available at legion.org/buddycheck. Also posted on the platform are American Legion Buddy Check success stories.

With military suicides up 20 percent over this time last year, Legionnaires are urged to make check-in calls to at-risk veterans across the nation and offer support and access to wellness programs in the winter months ahead.



Your support needed to help pass Buddy Check legislation

The American Legion is calling on its nearly 2 million members to contact Congress to unanimously pass the Buddy Check Week bill introduced with bipartisan support from U.S. Sens. Joni Ernst, R-Iowa; Doug Jones, D-Ala.; and Maggie Hassan, D-N.H.

The legislation will require VA to establish a "Buddy Check Week," as well as provide educational opportunities, materials and references for veterans to learn more about how to conduct personal wellness checks. The

bill also compels VA to expand resources for the Veterans Crisis Line to handle any potential increased volume during the designated week.

Contact Congress at votervoice.net/AmericanLegion/home to support the "Buddy Check Week" bill.

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November 2020

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U.S. POSTAGE

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October Membership Impact Report

\$114,848. Amount in American Legion National Emergency Fund grants issued to 65 different applicants after natural disasters through Oct. 8, 2020, damaged or destroyed veteran homes or American Legion posts.

\$39,000. Amount in American Legion Operation Comfort Warriors grants issued to three recipients in October.

3,683. Minimum number of American Legion posts that conducted Buddy Checks in the 2019-20 membership year, according to the most recent Consolidated Post Report, tabulated Aug. 31, with about 71 percent of posts reporting.

Read full report at legion.org/membership/impact.

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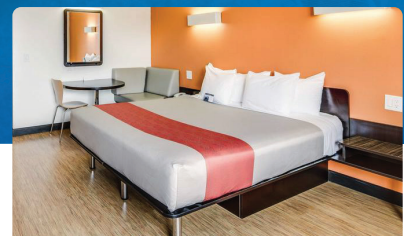
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