



Veterans Service Days

**A Complete Guide on Organizing, Planning and
Holding Veterans Service Days in Your District**

Includes media package

Veterans Service Days

Objectives

1. To raise public awareness of veterans' issues to garner attention and support by the public and promote the advocacy of The American Legion.
2. To stimulate grass roots activism in engaging The American Legion family, veterans and their families and the general public in participating in the legislative process by communicating their support of veterans' issues with legislators.
3. To conduct Veterans Service Days in districts at public locations where service officers can provide assistance, information and support to veterans regarding claims, benefits, rights, and employment assistance.
4. To expose non-member veterans to the benefits of membership in The American Legion.

To achieve tangible results, Congressional representatives should be invited. All local media should be invited. All veterans will be invited and strongly encouraged to attend to discuss their past problems, current needs, potential benefits and any assistance they or their families need. They will be given brochures on any and all veterans support available to them along with personal one-on-one time with American Legion Service Officers. Health screenings can be made available. Auxiliary and Sons of the American Legion can participate to offer support and help for family members. City officials, military commanders and all active duty personnel can be invited including National Guard and Reserves.

VETERANS SERVICE DAY can be held at a post, government building, school gymnasium or any large facility. No speeches are needed or wanted, only direct contact and assistance. Feedback will be obtained and problems of local veterans documented, much as was done in the "I am not a number" campaign.

A **VETERANS SERVICE DAY** may be organized for the district, combining the talents and manpower of all of the posts or assigning the task to a single post with the most assets and members willing to reach out. In keeping with the Legiontown USA campaign, it is suggested that the event be conducted during the September through November timeframe to raise community visibility of the services offered by The American Legion.

Tools

The American Legion National Headquarters has developed fill-in-the-blank media materials, news releases, radio copy, talking points and draft letters to promote the event for each district. The materials follow in this booklet and are available for downloading from the Internet at <http://www.legion.org/whatsnew/eventplanning> to provide easy editing and printing.

VETERANS SERVICE DAY SPONSORSHIP IDEAS

- Clown to entertain kids with balloons, coloring books, etc. sponsored by...
- Radio station remote broadcast sponsored by...
- Food and beverages provided by...
- Entertainment (band, singer, DJ) provided by...
- Prizes for drawing provided by...
- Signs donated by...
- Deputized Veterans Advocate badges paid for by...
- Health screenings by VA
- Jobs by National Guard, Reserve recruiters
- Blood donation service by American Red Cross
- VSD sweatbands, cups, handouts courtesy of...

Deputized Veterans Advocate Pins

National Emblem Sales can order special “Deputized Veterans Advocate” pins for sale or presentation as appropriate. The two-inch gold star can be purchased for between one and three dollars depending on



quantity and sold for more to pay for incidental costs of the events.

To order, contact American Legion Emblem Sales:

By toll-free telephone at 1-866-632-7131

By Mail at: Special Orders, American Legion Emblem Sales

P.O. Box 1050, Indianapolis, IN 46206-1050

By Fax at 1-317-630-1381.

The following pages contain media tools for use by Veterans Service Day Chairmen in preparing for a Veterans Service Day in their respective districts.

Veterans Service Day

Media Tool Kit

Please carefully edit these materials to reflect the actual activities and services that will be offered in your specific event.

Veterans Service Day

Operational Checklist

IMMEDIATELY

- Determine date and location
 - Easy public access/parking _____
 - Community Center/Park/Gym/school-neutral location _____
 - Inclement weather back-up _____
 - Large enough to accommodate anticipated numbers _____
 - Advise department of date/location _____
- Set planning meeting with local participants _____
- Assign volunteers _____
 - Service Officers _____
 - Public Relations Officer(s) _____
 - Finance Officer _____
 - Identify costs _____
 - Seek sponsors _____
 - Negotiate contracts _____
 - Provide payment(s) _____
 - Event Planning Officer and personnel for Logistics _____
 - Designer for Visuals _____
 - Child Care Coordinator _____
 - Tables, Chairs, Decorations _____
 - Blue Star Service Banner table/booth _____
 - Family Support Network/Legacy Scholarship Joint VSO booth _____
 - Refreshments _____
 - Entertainment: band, clown, balloons/small flags for kids, etc. _____
 - Cleanup _____
 - Thank you letters _____
 - Meet with Mayor _____
 - Obtain city support _____
 - Provide suggested proclamation _____
 - Invite to event _____
 - Request Fire/Rescue First Aid standby for event _____
 - Police/Fire/City recruiting table with applications _____
- Internal Campaign _____
 - Promote event in participating district and post newsletters _____
 - Place promotional information on Internet Websites of local post//units/squadrons _____

Invite Congressman for District and both Senators _____

- Invite National Guard and Reserve Units _____
 - Commanding Officers _____
 - Table for local recruiters _____
- Invite nearest VA Hospital to set up free health screening for Veterans and families. _____
- Invite all community colleges in area to set up table/booth _____
- Invite local state veterans vocational assistance office to set up booth/table _____
- Invite Veterans History Project Interviewers to set up booth/table _____
- Invite Red Cross to collect blood donations _____
- Meet with Chamber of Commerce; offer tables for businesses interested in recruiting veterans for jobs and possible sponsorship. _____

14 TO 30 DAYS PRIOR TO EVENT

Public Media Campaign

- Distribute media releases and advisories personally with email backup _____
- Contact local station(s) with remote capability to discuss live broadcast _____
- Mail letters to Chamber of Commerce, veteran-owned businesses, industry, churches, and other non-profit organizations. _____
- Ask area police and fire chiefs, county sheriff to spread the word to veteran members of respective departments. _____
- Send letters to area clergy asking to place in church bulletin. _____
- Send letters to the editors of newspapers, daily and weekly, in the area _____
- Send talk radio advisory to all talk stations in area _____
- Contact TV morning shows with info and offer to appear _____
- Contact radio and TV station public service directors and pitch broadcast copy promoting the event: offer to record or do a live interview about the event. Contact Rotary, Lions, etc. and ask for a few minutes to pitch the event at their next meeting. _____

7 DAYS PRIOR TO EVENT

Logistics

- Confirm Congressman's appearance _____
- Site visit; re-evaluate logistical needs _____
- Assign Photographer _____
- Arrange for video monitor and DVD player for looped video _____
- Print and blow-up all signs _____
- Reproduce all necessary documents/handouts _____
- Obtain and guard carefully the Deputized Veterans Advocate Pins and have enough clipboards for veterans to sign upon issuance. _____

- Assign volunteer facilitators to ensure each veteran is given the attention, assistance and full briefing of veterans issues...along with the hospitality and camaraderie expected. _____
- Assign individuals to brief and “deputize” them as veterans’ advocates. _____
- Ensure a United States Flag will be present and placed properly _____
- Assign canvassing teams to distribute flyers, posters promoting the event. _____

DAY OF EVENT

- Set up 3 hours prior to start _____
- Briefing session for volunteers -- in place 1 hour before start _____
- Morning reminder calls to media/assignment editors, Congressman’s and Senators local offices _____
- Be available for media interviews and suggest other good interview possibilities to reporters. Stress talking points on Mandatory Funding and veterans participation in the political process. Provide press kits to all media present. _____
- Make sure all veterans and their families are greeted and given direction and hospitality. _____

1 TO 5 DAYS AFTER EVENT

- Follow up with any claims or assistance requested at the event _____
- Thank you letters to all who helped _____
- After action report to department _____

The following materials are provided for your consideration. They are designed with fill-in-the-blank specific information within parentheses.

For ease in editing, this document may be downloaded on the Internet in text format at:

<http://www.legion.org/whatsnew/eventplanning>

(LETTERHEAD)

Letters to the Editor
(Name of Newspaper)
Recount Words

Dear Editor:

As American troops continue to battle terrorists on the far side of the globe, many are returning home as hardened veterans of a different kind of war. They join their predecessors of other wars in earning the honored title of an American veteran.

On (Day, date, time, location), our community will hold the largest-ever Veterans Service Day for them and their families. The American Legion will offer advice, information and assistance to them in getting the benefits they earned in service to their country. It's a family affair, with free baby sitting, educational booths from community colleges, free health screening, available jobs for veterans and information about what Congress is doing for them today.

I invite all veterans and their families to partake in a fun-filled day of information and camaraderie. Everyone in the area is welcome to come on out and thank our veterans for their service. Refreshments are free.

America has never begrudged the expense of taking care of our men and women in uniform who, as President Lincoln stated in 1865, "shall have borne the battle, and for his widow, and his orphan." We and members of our community will be there to make that happen.

Spread the word to the veterans in your neighborhood and join them (day).

District Commander
The American Legion
Address/phone number

(LETTERHEAD)

Family Veterans' Fair Slated for Region; Free Assistance with Benefits, Claims Provided

CITY (Month/day, 20XX) – What is being called the largest gathering of military veterans in recent (State) history will be held Saturday, (month/date) at (location) between (time) a.m. and (time) p.m.

“No where else will area veterans and members of the National Guard and Reserves find as much information about benefits, VA home loans, DD 214 recovery, service-connected disability claims assistance and all the entitlements a military service member has earned, than under this one roof, “said (full name), district commander of the American Legion. “This is a family affair with free baby sitting, health screening, plenty of camaraderie and lots of useful information.”

Trained service officers from the veterans service organizations will be on hand to provide free assistance and information to anyone who has served in any branch of the armed forces, in any war up to and including America's newest Iraq and Afghanistan veterans. This Veterans Service Day will also offer an excellent opportunity for citizens to turn out to say “thanks for serving” to veterans in the community.

Veterans will also receive the latest information on issues of importance to veterans under consideration in the 111th Congress. Information will be available on contacting elected representatives. An invitation has been extended to Congressman (name) to personally meet with (his/her) veteran constituents in the (##) district.

“This is all about service to our fellow veterans, (commander name) said. “We invite all veterans, of all branches of service, active duty and members of the Guard and Reserve to joins us – learn about the benefits you have earned by serving America – and become one of (State's) most informed veterans advocates.”

In addition to service officers, local community colleges will have representatives available on educational benefits, the VA will provide free health screening and the state will have information on the latest jobs available to veterans in the area.

“America has never begrudged the expense of taking care of our men and women in uniform who, as President Lincoln stated in 1865, “shall have borne the battle, and for his widow, and his orphan,” (commander name) said. “We are here to help make that happen.”

-- 30 --

Media Contact: (name, telephone number)

(LETTERHEAD)

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

(Date), 20XX

MEDIA ADVISORY

**Veterans Group to Hold Largest-ever
Veterans Service Day for area veterans**

Who:	<u>The American Legion</u>
What:	Will conduct the area’s largest-ever outreach to military veterans of all wars, including recently returned veterans of Iraq and Afghanistan. Veterans Service Day will be held with free benefits information and assistance to veterans and their families. Additionally, the latest information on issues of importance to veterans in the 111 th Congress will be provided to each along with information on how they can work with their elected representative. Activities will include a job fair for veterans and local colleges will display education benefits for veterans. Public invited to stop by and “thank a veteran.” Congressman (Name) has been invited to meet with constituents and their families.
When:	(Time, from--to)
Where:	(Location)

Contact: (Name, phone number).

(LETTERHEAD)

Dear Station Manager/News Director:

On (day, date, time, location), the American Legion will hold the largest Veterans Service Day in recent history in this area. We will have trained service officers on location to assist area veterans and their families with benefits counseling, claims assistance, filing for VA home loans, educational programs, etc.

This is a free service to all (State) veterans and their families. Additionally, we invite all residents in your broadcast audience to stop by and “thank a veteran” for their service to America.

Veterans from all war eras, including active duty, National Guard and Reserve veterans of Iraq and Afghanistan are welcome. We will have free refreshments, baby-sitting, booths from local community colleges and a mini-jobs fair.

I ask for your help in promoting this event to your audience and providing news coverage of the event on (date). A public service announcement is attached for your use. Please feel free to edit according to your continuity requirements.

The war on terrorism continues to impact the lives of local veterans and their families. We hope this event will be able to help many of them and elevate public awareness of the price paid by our friends and neighbors in serving our nation.

Thank you for your commitment in helping our area military veterans. Please contact me at any time for more information.

Sincerely,

(NAME)
District Commander

CALLING ALL VETERANS

Public Service Radio Spot 60-Seconds

ARE YOU A MILITARY VETERAN? IF SO, YOU'RE INVITED TO THE BIGGEST VETERANS SERVICE FAIR EVER HELD IN THIS AREA.

LEARN ABOUT BENEFITS YOU EARNED WHILE IN UNIFORM. GET HELP IN FILLING OUT FORMS, FILING A SERVICE-CONNECTED DISABILITY, GETTING YOUR DD 214, A VA HOME LOAN OR EDUCATIONAL BENEFITS.

NEED A JOB? WE'LL HAVE THOSE LEADS TOO.

BRING THE WHOLE FAMILY. IT'S ALL FREE - REFRESHMENTS, SERVICE, FUN AND CAMARADERIE.

MEET YOUR CONGRESSMEN AND FIND OUT WHAT WASHINGTON PLANS TO DO THIS YEAR ABOUT VETERANS ISSUES THAT DIRECTLY AFFECT YOU AND YOUR FAMILY.

FREE BABY SITTING AND BALOONS FOR THE KIDS.

DON'T MISS VETERANS SERVICE DAY, (Date, time, location).

AND IF YOU'RE NOT A VETERAN, STOP BY AND SAY, "THANKS FOR SERVING."

Brought to you by this station and The American Legion.

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(LETTERHEAD)

Dear Chamber of Commerce President:

On (day, date, time, location), the American Legion will hold the largest Veterans Service Day in history in this area. We will have trained service officers on location to assist area veterans and their families with benefits counseling, claims assistance, filing for VA home loans, educational programs, etc.

This is a free service to all (State) veterans and their families. Additionally, we are inviting all residents in the area to stop by and “thank a veteran” for their service to America.

Veterans from all war eras, including active duty, National Guard and Reserve veterans of Iraq and Afghanistan are welcome. We will have free refreshments, baby-sitting, booths from local community colleges and a mini-jobs fair.

I ask for your help in promoting this event to your members. Please encourage them to promote the event and enable their veteran-employees to attend. Better yet, there are sponsorship opportunities available and we enthusiastically welcome businesses to partner with us in making this event memorable for our local heroes. And, if they are hiring and are interested in seeking proven performers with a ‘can-do’ attitude, we would be delighted for them to participate with a recruiting table.

The war on terrorism continues to impact the lives of local veterans and their families. We hope this event will be able to help many of them and elevate public awareness of the price paid by our friends and neighbors in serving our nation.

Thank you for your commitment in helping our area military veterans. Please contact me at any time to discuss sponsorship and promotional opportunities.

Sincerely,

(NAME)
District Commander

(LETTERHEAD)

Dear Business Leader (Name):

Business leaders like you have always been the beacons of light when it comes to community involvement and good will advocacy. You are influential in these endeavors because you care about the well being of the people in our community. That is why we'd like to ask your help in getting the word out to any of your business associates, employees, friends and family members who are veterans.

What we need is your help in telling any military veterans, or Guard and Reserve personnel you know about the largest-ever Veteran Service Day to be held on (day, date) at (location) from (time) to (time).

This event is a one-stop-shop for veterans and their families to learn about their veteran's benefits, claims preparations and filing, VA home loans, DD-214 recovery, and educational benefits. There will be free health screenings by the VA and free baby-sitting for the kids. Veteran service officers will be on hand and our congressman has been invited so that our local veterans can share their ideas and voice their concerns over veterans' issues.

Veterans' Service Day is conducted by District () of The American Legion and posts _ _ _ .

Enclosed are some flyers on the Veterans Service Day event for your reference. In fact, if you would like to attend the event to learn more about veterans' benefits for yourself or your company, or you are seeking highly skilled new employees, we'd be more than happy to have you as one of our special guests. Your presence at the event, as a concerned citizen and community leader, would be greatly appreciated.

Thank you for your support and assistance in this important outreach.

Sincerely,

(Name)
District Commander
The American Legion

Enclosures

(LETTERHEAD)

Dear Veteran Business Owner:

As a veteran who has served America with honor and devotion to duty, I'd like to offer you the opportunity to help us serve America again.

Don't worry, we're not asking that you re-enlist or for any donations. What we need is a veteran like you to help another veteran by getting the word out on the largest Veterans' Service Day yet to be held on (Day, date) at (Location, hours).

This event is a one-stop-shop for veterans and their families to learn about health screenings, claims preparations and filing, VA home loans, DD-214 recovery, educational benefits and jobs. Veteran service officers will be on hand and every opportunity is being made to have our congressmen there so that our local veterans can share their ideas and voice their concerns over veterans' issues.

What we are asking is your help in getting the word out to your associates and employees who are veterans or who may have family who are veterans. In particular, we want to reach those associates and employees of yours who are on Active Duty or serving in the Guard or Reserve. We want them to know what benefits and entitlements they have earned for serving their country.

Enclosed are some flyers on the Veteran Service Day event for your reference. If you would like to attend the event to learn more about veterans' benefits for yourself or your company, we'd be more than happy to have you as one of our special guests. Your presence at the event if you, as a concerned veteran or as a community leader, would be greatly appreciated.

Thank you for having serving your country and best of luck in your business enterprise.

Sincerely,

(Name)
District Commander
The American Legion

Enclosures

(Email to local businesses)

From: District ____ The American Legion
Date:
Subject: Your Assistance in Helping Our Veterans

Business leaders like you have always been the beacons of light when it comes to community involvement and good will advocacy. That is why we'd like to ask your help in getting the word out to any of your business associates, employees, friends and family members who are veterans.

What we need is your help in telling any military veterans, or Guard and Reserve personnel you know about the largest-ever Veteran Service Day to be held on (Day, date) at (location) (time). A press release is provided for your information and use.

This event is a one-stop-shop for veterans and their families to learn about their veteran's benefits, claims preparations and filing, VA home loans, DD-214 recovery, and educational benefits. There will be free health screenings by the VA and free baby-sitting for the kids. Veteran service officers will be on hand and our congressman has been invited so that our local veterans can share their ideas and voice their concerns over veterans' issues.

There are no sales involved, no gimmicks, and no solicitation. Just information to pass on that will help better the lives of veterans who have served this country with honor and distinction.

We would appreciate it if you could share the information about Veterans Service Day with any co-worker, employee or family member who is a veteran or who is currently serving in the Guard, Reserves or on Active Duty today.

In doing so you would be helping us in America's efforts to increase the quality of life for our veterans.

Thank you for your support and assistance in this important outreach.

Sincerely,

District Commander
The American Legion

CITY PROCLAMATION

CITY OF (NAME)

Whereas, operations in Afghanistan and Iraq continue and Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, Marines, and Coast Guardsmen from (State) are serving throughout the world; and

Whereas, the blessings of liberty require constant vigilance and sacrifice, and every man, woman and child in this great nation owes a debt of gratitude to those who have, or still are serving so selflessly; and

Whereas, veterans of the war on terrorism and wars past have served and continue to serve with honor, courage and commitment; and

Whereas, (DAY, DATE), 20XX has been set aside to assist these outstanding Americans in obtaining the benefits they so rightly deserve, the city of (NAME) is honored to host a gathering of these patriots and their families for a day of veteran benefits assistance, information and camaraderie; and

Resolved, that, as the Mayor of (CITY), I am issuing this Proclamation to declare (DAY, DATE), 2009 as

Veterans Service Day

And be it further Resolved, that all citizens of (CITY) and surrounding area are invited to take due note of the continuing commitments of these dedicated men and women who have, and continue to place their lives in harms way as (State's) citizen-soldiers, protecting American values and preserving democracy for the world.

Respectfully Submitted and Approved, on this (DAY, DATE), 20XX.

Signed:

Attest:

VETERANS SERVICE ★ DAY ★

- ▶ Veterans Benefits
- ▶ Guard & Reserves
- ▶ VA Home Loans
- ▶ Claim Preparation & Filing
- ▶ Jobs
- ▶ Military Medals
- ▶ DD-214 Recovery
- ▶ Education Benefits

Meet with Veteran Service Officers,
meet your congressman,
and meet fellow veterans to share
your ideas and voice your concerns
on veterans' issues.

ALL WELCOME
If you're not a veteran,
stop by and thank one.



THE AMERICAN LEGION