NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE
OF
THE AMERICAN LEGION
INDIANAPOLIS, INDIANA
OCTOBER 14-15 , 2015

Resolution No. 22: The American Legion 21st Century Policy on Education
Origin: Americanism Commission
Submitted By: Americanism Commission

WHEREAS, The Forty-first National Convention of The American Legion assembled in Minneapolis-St. Paul, Minnesota, August 24-27, 1959, adopted Resolution No. 618, The American Legion Policy on Education; and

WHEREAS, The National Executive Committee of The American Legion in regular meeting, October 18-19, 1967, adopted Resolution No. 16, amending The American Legion's Policy Statement on Education; and

WHEREAS, The National Executive Committee of The American Legion in regular meeting, October 9-10, 1974 adopted Resolution No. 21 amending the Policy on Education; and

WHEREAS, The National Executive Committee of The American Legion in regular meeting, October 14-15, 1981, adopted Resolution No. 12 Inclusion of Career Education Concept in The American Legion Policy on Education; and

WHEREAS, The National Executive Committee of The American Legion in regular meeting, October 14-15, 1992, adopted Resolution No. 31 The American Legion Policy on Education As Amended; and

WHEREAS, The National Executive Committee of The American Legion in regular meeting, October 20-21, 1993, adopted Resolution No. 27 Amendment to the American Legion Policy on Education; and

WHEREAS, The Americanism Commission, at the suggestion and study of the Committee on Youth Education, wishes to amend the Policy on Education to reflect current educational terminology and the state of education in the United States of America in the twenty-first century; and

WHEREAS, The Americanism Commission wishes to consolidate previous amendments into this resolution; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By the National Executive Committee of The American Legion in regular meeting assembled in Indianapolis, Indiana, on October 14-15, 2015, That the attached Exhibit A be adopted as expressing the education policy of The American Legion; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That Resolution No. 31 of the National Executive Committee, October 1992, American Legion: Policy On Education As Amended, and Resolution No. 27 of the National Executive Committee, October 1993, Amendment To The American Legion Policy on Education, are hereby superseded and rescinded.

EXHIBIT A

THE AMERICAN LEGION 21st-CENTURY POLICY ON EDUCATION

FUNDAMENTAL CONCEPTS

The American Legion stands strongly in continued support of the principle that education is a vital prerequisite to the successful functioning of a democratic society. While recognizing the right of private and religious groups to maintain schools, The American Legion vigorously subscribes to the necessity of a universal, publicly-supported system of primary, secondary and post-secondary education to ensure that every American child has the opportunity for a free, adequate and appropriate public education. The American Legion believes that popular self-government as created by the covenant set forth in the Constitution of the United States cannot continue to exist unless our country safeguards a continuing system of free public education. Not only does proper national defense require trained personnel, but the daily operations of our local, state and federal governments, our farms, our professions, our commerce and industry, and, in fact, every phase of life today, demands that we have competent citizens, who are qualified, willing and able to discharge their responsibilities.

Washington, Jefferson, and Madison stated clearly their beliefs that American citizenship should be based on a system of public enlightenment. The long tradition of public schooling in the United States remains a model for the developed and developing world for the freedom of access, choice and governance found within the system. As competition in the global economic market grows, The American Legion believes it to be fundamental that the public schools of our nation remain such a model.

The availability of educational opportunity for every individual to pursue their own development is fundamental to the achievement of all other social goals. Therefore, our educational system must be designed to provide every person the means to reach their highest potential, which in turn will provide our country as a whole with the highest level of responsible citizens and specialized workers required in the modern world. In turn, we will have greater assurance of economic growth, sound decision-making and social, economic and national security.

The American Legion cannot subscribe to any system suggesting preferential training of elite education only for the classes; rather we put our faith in widespread public education for the masses. Neither do we suggest that every student can derive the same benefits from education, nor do we mean to convey that the able or exceptional student should be held back to a group pattern.

The model educational system should produce citizens, who in their various careers understand and who are dedicated to the principals of free enterprise; to democratic principles and processes, and whose devotion to freedom and human dignity goes beyond mere lip service.

EXHIBIT A

BASIC STRUCTURE OF AMERICAN EDUCATION

a. Community Public School:

Each community should be served by a system of public elementary and secondary schools, which are sufficiently provided with modern facilities, highly qualified and adequately paid teachers and a rigorous, standards-based educational program. Under such an educational system, educators should be allowed to develop and deliver curricula that meet the needs of their students before and without conforming to a rigid and inflexible set of constraints.

b. Educational Standards:

Realizing that non-partisan and independent studies clearly show a decline in the academic performance of students from the United States against their international peers, The American Legion supports the efforts of educators, educational programs and educational systems which attempt to raise our students' educational attainment to the highest levels in the world. Such a revolution is not possible without the adoption of certain educational practices and standards of a universal nature, so long as such standards and practices are designed for the education of the masses and will aid the American public education system in attaining a competitive advantage over other international education systems.

c. Teacher Preparation:

No greater public trust is invested in any person than that given to our nation's educators. Given much of the responsibility for preparing the youth of today to be the society of tomorrow, these individuals must be exemplary citizens and true experts in their subject matter. Regardless of the manner they arrive to the classroom, traditional schools of education or non-traditional certification programs, we expect no less than highly qualified and completely motivated individuals be given charge of our children's education. The American Legion believes in ongoing professional development for teachers regardless of previous experience or tenure.

d. Character Education:

The character or values instilled in a youth are vitally important to their future actions as a citizen. Educational institutions serve a vital role along with home, church and community in delivering appropriate and non-prejudicial character education to the youth of America. As each relies upon the other to foster and support different areas of said character development, these entities should work together in the best interest of the youth in their charge.

e. Services for Children with Special Needs:

Appropriate and if necessary, independent educational services should be available to children with special needs, including the talented, the physically, mentally and emotionally challenged, those with hearing, speech, language, reading or other difficulties, and those with

educational delays imposed by migratory status, in order to assist them in fulfilling their potential.

f. Career and Vocational Education:

All educational systems should provide students with the emotional, academic and vocational skills necessary to achieve entry-level positions within the work force of their economic and/or geographic region. These skills should include but are not limited to: emotional intelligence training, employment seeking skills and practical academic skills. The increasing progress of modern industry and social organizations require workers of increasingly technical skill. Educational systems should be equipped to provide vocational training to all young people who do not desire higher education. Older workers who seek to advance their occupational skill or require retraining because of technological or other changes should also be served by a system of vocational education.

The infusion of career readiness training in all aspects of education provides students an opportunity to make a proper choice regarding their academic and economic futures, or put simply, tough choices of work and school. Their ability to choose successfully adds to the productivity of the Nation. We acknowledge and support the great contribution made in this field by private enterprise.

g. Higher Education:

At no other time in our history as a nation has the strength and necessity of our public higher education system been more important to the American way of life. The individual states and federal governments must remain dedicated to seeing greater rates of college graduation at an affordable cost to students and families. Opportunities for higher education should remain socially and economically available to all qualified individuals. The processes of higher education should serve to enhance opportunities for individuals and thus benefit our whole society.

h. Adult Education:

Public education systems should provide educational opportunities for adults in order to increase their cultural enjoyment; contribute to responsible citizenship; and widen the base of their knowledge. Where necessary, public education systems should provide "second chance" diploma programs to aid in the formation and promotion of a more informed and participatory citizenship.

i. Private, Parochial and Homeschool Education:

The American Legion recognizes the contributions of individual families, parochial and private institutions in providing educational opportunities at all levels, and the necessity for their continued existence; Furthermore, public funds should be made available to assist students in furthering their education in all types of institutions.

j. Charter and Non-traditional Schools:

The American Legion supports legal and controlled systems of education, which may seem untraditional in the long history of education (i.e. charter or online schools). In the same manner as private, parochial and home school systems, The American Legion believes public funds should be made available to assist such institutions.

k. Mass Media:

Throughout the organizational history of The American Legion, a salient goal has been support for a free and responsible press and mass media to serve the needs of the American people. A free society has a continuing need for trustworthy, non-partisan education about its political, economic and social options. The American people depend largely upon the mass media for lifetime informational needs beyond the years of formal schooling. The American Legion is forthrightly supportive of professional and objective journalism as the vital vehicle for enlightenment of our citizens throughout their lifetimes. Education does not cease with the end of formal schooling. A responsible press and mass media will always remain a critically needed aspect of a free American society.

l. Family Responsibility:

The American Legion and American Legion Auxiliary must assume a leadership role in the promotion of family responsibility in the basic education of the child. We must encourage all entities and organizations, both public and private, in the development of parenting programs designed to provide the strongest possible preschool preparation of the young. These parenting skills need promotion throughout the child's schooling. The outcome to be pursued will be sound basic skills, healthy self-esteem and understanding of interdependence and acceptance of each American to all others. Responsibility throughout lifetimes of parents and children alike is essential to educational well-being of all.

CONTROL AND FINANCING

The American Legion is opposed to usurping local and state control of schools with federal mandates. The genius of the American public schools has been in its closeness to the people. Our structure of government in its historical development has placed the responsibility of public education upon the individual states. Insomuch as the state is willing and able to provide free and appropriate public education to its students, the federal government should show restraint in involving itself in the affairs of state. Realizing that some states may request or require guidance from the federal government in order to meet international standards for providing competitive educations to America's students.

The American Legion advocates the proposition that under our system of government each state is vested with the authority, direction and control of public education within its borders in accordance with law. The American Legion further believes in the largest possible measure of home rule in public education and that states should delegate to local communities the greatest autonomy that is feasible. The well-being of individual youth must

be the paramount goal of our educational endeavor. Such autonomy should not be used by the local jurisdiction to promote a bias or prejudicial curriculum not composed of scientific, technical and logical facts and reasoning. Local and proximate school authority remains the best safeguard against misapplication of educational programs for economic or political gain.

FEDERAL EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITIES OF NATIONAL INTEREST

a. Armed Forces:

The American Legion recognizes that the Federal government has a continuing and justifiable primary responsibility for organizing, administering, operating and financing educational programs of the Armed Forces.

b. Research:

The American Legion realizes that research, both basic and applied, will create the frontiers of tomorrow in economic, social and civic life. The role of the Federal government in research primarily should support requirements for the operation of programs of Federal agencies. The federal government, state public institutions of higher learning and private agencies all have a responsibility to further the development of research.

c. "G.I. Bill":

In time of war when young men and women are required to enter the Armed Forces for extended periods of time, it is in the national interest for the federal government, as part of the program for the rehabilitation and restoration of these individuals to proper roles in civilian life, to provide special programs of educational benefits, and thus restore to them opportunities which they lost because of their service in time of war.

Experience under The American Legion sponsored "G.I. Bill" demonstrates the soundness of such applied principle of rehabilitation. The education provided was not only of personal value to the millions of veterans who avail themselves of various educational opportunities, but during the present ongoing period of turmoil due to international terrorism, and the volatile nature of the economy, the current Post-9/11 GI Bill and the GySgt Fry scholarship provide invaluable funding for the post-secondary education of veterans and their families.

d. Educational Leadership:

The needs of the present often far exceed the geographic limitations of the various political subdivisions of our Nation. Leadership at the national level is required in the solution of many of our educational problems. The federal government, through the President, the Congress, and the agencies prescribed through law, has a role of leadership in addressing educational questions related to national interests. However, The American Legion holds that this role of leadership should be exercised with minimal federal control.

EXHIBIT A

ROLE OF THE AMERICAN LEGION

The American Legion maintains a tremendous program of educational and youth activities which are evident in every state in our nation. Within these programs, we sponsor vigorous involvement on the part of our membership with their local schools, as well as offering an array of scholarships for those students showing excellence in their contributions to academia and community service. Additionally, American Legionnaires bear a responsibility of serving on local school boards, and participating in community, state and national efforts to constantly improve education.

CONCLUSION

The American Legion wholeheartedly subscribes to the proposition that every educational tool should be provided for the fullest development of the mental resources and technical skills of our people. We believe that educational standards should be benchmarked; curricula should be stimulating; teacher preparation should be strengthened; teachers' salaries should be improved; testing and guidance programs should be extended and strengthened; physical facilities for instruction should be expanded and updated; maximum intellectual opportunities should be provided for all students commensurate with capacity to absorb and apply irrespective of financial resources of the student or his or her family. All of this should be done to strengthen our position in the global education market, and return our students to the forefront of educational attainment and our schools to educational leadership.

The American Legion further believes that the citizens of this country should be dedicated to the pursuance of excellence in the entire realm of intellectual endeavor; that our people should recognize and honor those persons who have developed their intellectual abilities to the fullest extent; that teachers should enrich their knowledge and capacity particularly in the fields in which they teach (making them highly qualified); and that scholarship assistance to deserving students should be expanded.

A major result of our educational process must be to provide people with the finest training in the world in basic skills of communication and critical thought, reasoning, and comprehension. School programs should be constantly re-appraised to see that they accomplish these objectives.

Such educational programs will fulfill the dreams of the past, the needs of the present and the aspirations of the future. The American Legion supports such a system of education, and believes that the vitality of our democratic way of life is dependent upon such schools.