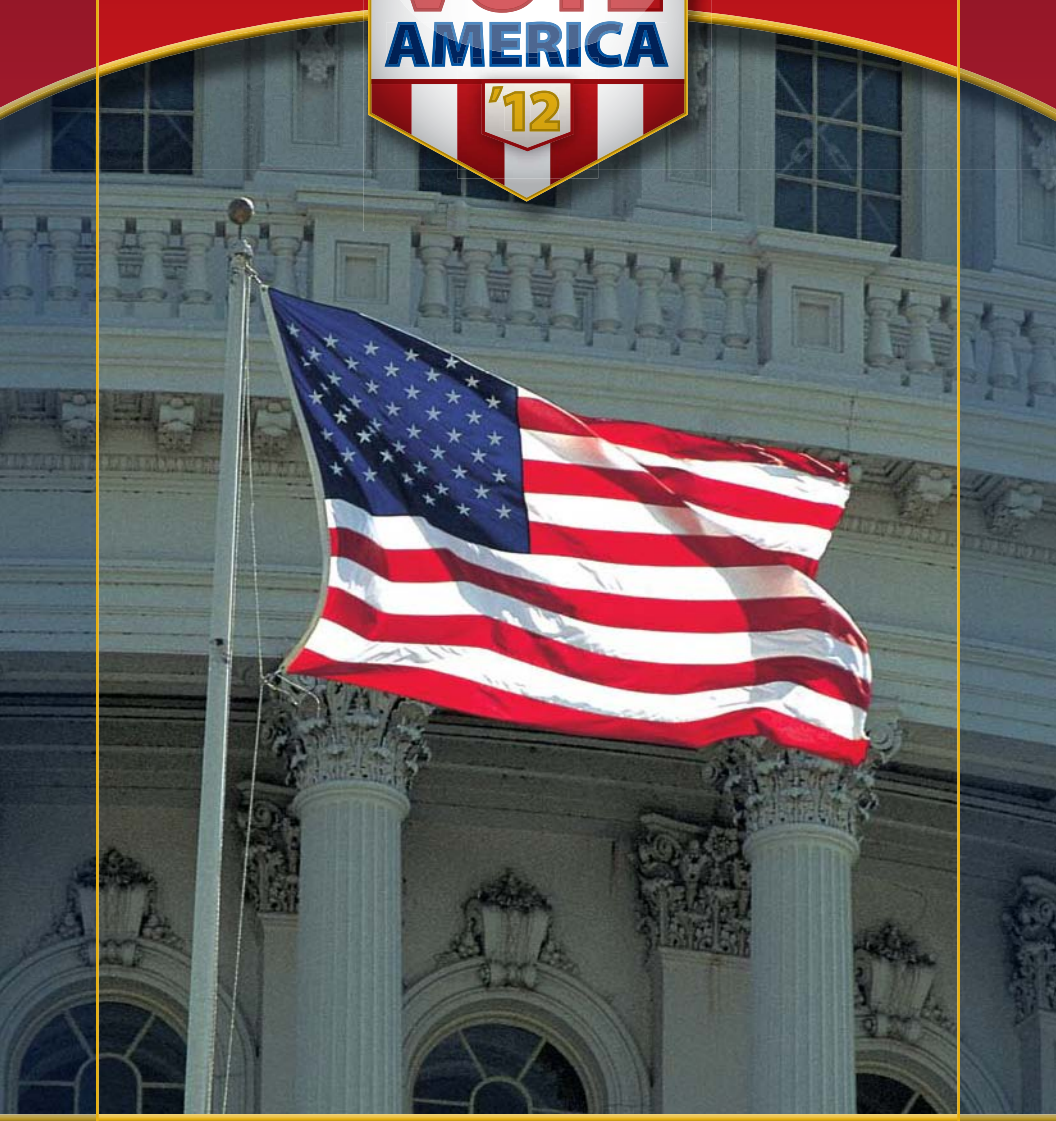
THE AMERICAN LEGION

VOTE AMERICA '12



GUIDE TO PROMOTING THE "GET OUT THE VOTE" PROGRAM

The American's Creed

By William Tyler Page

I believe in the United States of America as a government of the people, by the people, for the people; whose just powers are derived from the consent of the governed, a democracy in a republic, a sovereign Nation of many sovereign States; a perfect union, one and inseparable; established upon those principles of freedom, equality, justice, and humanity for which American patriots sacrificed their lives and fortunes.

I therefore believe it is my duty to my country to love it, to support its Constitution, to obey its laws, to respect its flag, and to defend it against all enemies.

Written 1917, accepted by the U.S. House of Representatives on April 3, 1918.

Preamble to the Constitution of The American Legion

For God and country, we associate ourselves together for the following purposes:

- To uphold and defend the Constitution of the United States of America;
- To maintain law and order;
- To foster and perpetuate a 100 percent Americanism;
- To preserve the memories and incidents of our associations in the Great Wars;
- To inculcate a sense of individual obligation to the community, state and nation;
- To combat the autocracy of both the classes and the masses;
- To make right the master of might;
- To promote peace and good will on earth;
- To safeguard and transmit to posterity the principles of justice, freedom and democracy;
- To consecrate and sanctify our comradeship by our devotion to mutual helpfulness.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction	2
Where to Begin...	3
Follow Rules of Nonpartisanship	6
– 501(c)(19) Organizations — You're A Key Player	7
Suggested Plan of Action	8
– Milestones	8
– A Friendly Reminder Helps	10
A Simple Media Plan	11
– Sample News Release	12
– Sample Radio Public Service Announcements	13
1971 Resolution Encourages GOTV Participation "Get Out The Vote"	14
2007 Resolution "Support for Voter Registration and Voting Program"	15
Online Resources	16
Questions and Answers	17
Report Your Activities	19

"The future of this republic is in the hands of the American voter."

— Dwight D. Eisenhower,
34th President of the United States (1890-1969)

"Always vote for principle, though you may vote alone,
and you may cherish the sweetest reflection
that your vote is never lost."

— John Quincy Adams,
Sixth President of the United States (1767-1848)

FOREWORD

The American Legion encourages all Americans to register and vote in all elections. Legionnaires have traditionally responded to the call and are among the groups of individuals most likely to cast their ballots on Election Day.

Americans have the right to vote for whom they choose to represent them in our representative form of government. They also have the duty, a responsibility, to use their right to vote and to familiarize themselves with the candidates and the issues up for decision on Election Day.

Every election is important, as the individuals elected to office will establish laws under which we must live and they will make important decisions for spending the tax dollars we pay to our government.

Citizens must be reminded that good government is established when concerned citizens participate in the electoral process. They must also understand what is expected of them and they must know clearly and simply how to go about doing it. The American Legion Get Out the Vote program strives to do that.

Each year we elect hundreds of thousands of public officials whose decisions directly influence the lives and well-being of all citizens. The benefits derived from voting are produced by electing officials that are in tune with the wishes of the citizens and their concerns in providing a community in which it is suitable to live, work and raise a family.

The electorate must be reminded that their vote guarantees all other rights, builds schools, paves highways, collects taxes, maintains the Armed Forces, directs the foreign policy, and influences how our friends overseas view our Republic. History has proven that one vote can make a difference so it is important that every single voice be heard. Each citizen must be made aware that their vote is important and that you are willing to help provide an easy access to the election process for them.

Voting is a powerful way for a citizen to participate in their government. It gives them a voice in issues that affect their lives. It is the goal of The American Legion and its Get Out the Vote program to encourage more Americans to vote, to suggest activities on how American Legion posts can increase the turnout and serve as a resource to get the job done.

INTRODUCTION

In the United States, the electoral process is administered by the states and their political subdivisions (counties, towns, parishes, cities and villages). Only a few uniform standards imposed or recommended by the federal government limit local election laws and procedures. As a result, the electoral process varies greatly among the states and even within them, but there exists factors common to voting anywhere. They are: eligibility, residency and registration.

Eligibility – The 26th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution says "The right of citizens of the United States, who are eighteen years or older, to vote shall not be denied or abridged…" There are no language and literacy tests required, although minority language provisions exist in some jurisdictions. Voter disqualifications are a matter of state law, so they may vary among the states. The most common reasons for disqualifications are conviction of a crime (felony) or being adjudicated as mentally incompetent. Some jurisdictions require photo identification before voting.

Residency – In voting for candidates for the offices of President and Vice President of the United States, there is a nationwide 30-day residency requirement. Residency requirements for all other elections vary by state, and may possibly vary within a state.

Registration – All states except North Dakota require registration in order to vote. Some states allow registration on Election Day either at the polls or at other locations designated by the jurisdiction. Deadlines for registration in other states vary with most requiring registration at least 30 days before the election. Some of those states are considering reducing the amount of time between the registration deadline and Election Day.

Registration is generally permanent in most areas as long as the voter resides at the same address and exercises their right to vote within a specified number of years. Registration lists maintained by a jurisdiction are generally purged in ways that include canvassing, a comparison with mailing addresses or by a failure to vote in a general election.

The 103rd Congress passed the National Voter Registration Act of 1993 and made the voter registration process much easier for many Americans. Widely known at the time as the Motor Voter Act, it requires states to register voters in three specific ways that are in addition to any other procedures that states may use for voter registration. They are:

- Simultaneous application for driver's license and voter registration.
- Mail application for voter registration.
- Application in person at designated government agencies, including public assistance agencies and agencies that provide services to people with disabilities.

Election officials must send all applicants a notice informing them of their voter registration status. American Legion posts participating in Get Out the Vote activities should provide residents in their area information that is specific to their political subdivision as it could encourage both greater registration and Election Day turnout. A brochure that includes information on dates, voting locations, hours the polls are open is an excellent way to inform the public.

WHERE TO BEGIN …

The first step in organizing a Get Out the Vote (GOTV) program in an American Legion post is to get a commitment from post officers for the resources needed for this important community service program. Resources, of course, include manpower and funding, which will vary based on the size and scope of the program conducted by the post. The next step is to organize within the post by forming a committee of interested persons (Legion, Auxiliary and SAL) and assign duties and responsibilities to distribute the workload and assist with the overall program.

Post organization of the GOTV program might include the following subcommittees, their activities and responsibilities:

Schools – This committee could make the necessary contacts with the local school(s) or school board(s) so as to integrate the GOTV program into the education community. The responsibilities of this committee might be to encourage 18-year-old citizens to register to vote, organize a school assembly on citizenship responsibilities, conduct a poster coloring or essay contest with awards provided by the post, and conduct "mock" elections in which students run for office.

Canvassing – For a GOTV program to be effective, it needs the personal contact with potential voters to stir registration interest and get the electorate to the polls. If the law permits volunteers to act as deputy registrars or to distribute applications for mail registration, this committee can bring registration directly to the citizens. Plan this carefully. Use well-trained,

motivated volunteers and secure the necessary permission and assistance from election officials. Personal contact can be made by going door-to-door, by phone and through the mail, with a booth or registration table at public places and at your own American Legion post meeting or at meetings or activities of other groups and organizations.

Transportation and Child Care – This committee could focus on providing free transportation to the polls for voters who may lack transportation, such as the elderly, physically handicapped, parents with small children and others. Posts can partner with auto dealers, car rental agencies and other businesses to provide use of automobiles or vans. Volunteers could use their own personal vehicles, although it must be reliable.

Several days prior to the election, a phone number should be designated and a base of operation established. The phone number should be widely publicized in the community and personal contacts should be made with area nursing homes, assisted living facilities, medical centers and other groups or organizations that may serve the targeted voters. The committee should recruit drivers who have a good driving record and skills and have a familiarity with the community.

American Legion posts and associated family groups can "sit" with children, the handicapped and the elderly in place of an eligible voter if it makes a difference as to whether or not they vote on Election Day. A volunteer-staffed facility, such as an American Legion post near the polling place, could be designated to care for youngsters while their parent(s) vote. Toys and activities could be loaned or donated by members or by local businesses.

As in all activities associated with a GOTV program, everyone involved should be briefed and thoroughly understand the Legion's strict and unyielding requirement that volunteers adhere to nonpartisanship when working with the program. Printed and verbal instructions on what the workers can and cannot do should be made clear to all involved in the activity.

Business and Labor – This committee could seek the cooperation of community business and labor groups. Such contacts could result in new members for The American Legion, help with programs and result in new sponsorships for other community service activities. Some activities that this committee may pursue include the following:

- Seek permission to place registration and vote reminders, brochures and posters in businesses, factories and where people congregate.

- Place radio, television, print or online ads that are cooperatively sponsored by an American Legion post and a business, or ads sponsored by several businesses, that provide registration information and voting reminders.
- Place voting reminders on restaurant menus and placemats, or banking and other business statements.
- Suggest to businesses that a discount be offered to anyone showing his or her voting registration card the week prior to the election.

Special Events – A wide variety of activities could be included in this committee's list of responsibilities. It would be responsible for any special events associated with the post's GOTV program. Some suggestions include:

- Conduct and publish results of surveys on key issues and other nonpartisan concerns.
- Organize dances, raffles, etc. for the purpose of raising funds for the GOTV program.
- Hold public forums, debates or information assemblies (more details below).

Public forums can be a valuable community service when sponsored by the post, but care must be taken to assure that any forum or candidates' debate sponsored or held in the Legion post is open to the public and that invitations are extended to all the respective candidates.

Candidates should not be invited to speak at or during an official meeting of The American Legion. By nature, The American Legion is nonpolitical and can neither engage in partisan politics nor promote the candidacy of any person for public office. By limiting the number of candidates at a forum or meeting not open to the public, a post may be inviting embarrassment and possible legal action. (See section on Nonpartisanship.)

Posts hosting public forums should enlist the aid of a neutral party. The Legion can sponsor the event – even host it in their post home – but the conduct of it may best be left to a mutually agreed upon and experienced moderator.

Working with other groups or organizations in a registration and voting drive offers many advantages. It allows shared experiences, pooling of resources, increase in volunteer force and it avoids duplication of efforts.

Become familiar with the federal, state and local laws that govern voter registration in your community. Voter registration practices - methods, deadlines, permissible sites, and role of volunteers - differ from state to state and often vary among local jurisdictions in the same state. For more information, contact your Secretary of State or check out Project Vote-Smart state guides on voter registration drives.

Federal laws, such as the Voting Rights Act, Voting Access for the Elderly and Handicapped Act, and Help America Vote Act protect the rights of minorities and other citizens to vote. Seek legal assistance if you believe that state or local registration practices violate citizens' voting rights. Be sure to keep registration drives nonpartisan.

FOLLOW RULES OF NONPARTISANSHIP

The American Legion shall be absolutely nonpolitical and shall not be used for the dissemination of partisan principles nor for the candidacy of any person seeking public office or preferment. Failure to do so could endanger an American Legion post's non-profit status. This does not mean that individuals are forbidden to show partisanship. The point to remember is that when partisanship is shown, it must be independent of association with an American Legion post and its voter registration and Get Out the Vote efforts.

Federal election laws require that any registration drive conducted or sponsored by a corporation, labor union or trade association be nonpartisan. The Internal Revenue Code mandates the strict nonpartisanship of all such activities by organizations eligible to receive nonprofit, tax-exempt status under the IRS Code.

A nonpartisan organization does not support, oppose or provide aid to any candidate for public office or to any political party. Nonpartisan registration and get-out-the-vote drives may be directed at either the general public or at a defined population group such as young adults or minority citizens. In a nonpartisan drive, registration and voting assistance, information or materials must be offered and made available to all, regardless of which candidate or party they support.

Volunteers working on an American Legion sponsored registration and voting drive should not wear campaign buttons or make their personal views about candidates, parties and issues known in any way while they are engaged in nonpartisan activities for their post. Any campaign materials or literature should be removed from areas where nonpartisan activities are taking place.

501(c)(19) Organizations — You're A Key Player

Non-profit organizations like American Legion posts need not go into exile fearing the IRS when elections approach. In fact, there are many things that can be done that contribute significantly in The American Legion's Get Out the Vote Program. Posts have the capacity to play a key role in educating and activating voters in the community. Following are a few examples of what a 501(c)(19) organization can do:

- Conduct voter registration and nonpartisan get-out-the-vote campaigns.
- Educate the public on issues and encourage participation in the political process.
- Educate all candidates and political parties on your issues.
- Host or participate in a nonpartisan candidate forum.
- Make presentations on your organization's issue to platform committees, campaign staff, candidates, media, and the general public.
- Work on behalf of any germane ballot measures.
- Continue your normal lobbying on issues.
- Following is a recap of some things you CANNOT do as a 501(c)(19) organization:

  - Endorse or oppose a candidate for public office.

  - Coordinate activities with a candidate.

  - Make contributions (money, time or facilities) to a candidate.

  - Manage, fund or organize a Political Action Committee.

In simple terms, keep in mind this rule of thumb: "GOTV activities in an American Legion post must be nonpartisan, which simply means the post cannot show or state a preference for or against a particular candidate or candidates, or a particular political party."

A SUGGESTED PLAN OF ACTION

Some of the subcommittees mentioned previously may not be necessary for your situation, or there may be other subcommittees needed to conduct a well-rounded program in your post. In either case, an effort should be made by post members to continue as long as there are goals and a possibility to achieve them. Success will occur only with a strong commitment from everyone involved with the activity.

Setting the goals, objectives and milestones for a GOTV activity should be based on your state's voter registration deadline, party primaries and Election Day. After this initial meeting, a news release should be sent to the media announcing the formation of your GOTV committee, its general purpose and provide general information about the activity.

After allowing some time for the subcommittees to organize and formulate some specific plans, the full committee should meet to hear their reports, refine the goals, and set up a calendar of events. The committee's plan of action might be similar to the following.

Milestones

First Milestone

- Have a comprehensive plan in place to follow in the organizing stage of the program. Include the goals and objectives of your program.
- Develop a roster of qualified and interested volunteers.
- Organize subcommittees and assign responsibilities.
- Begin the drive by issuing voter registration reminders.
- See if your post is needed as a polling location.

Second Milestone

- Continue registration drive.
- Begin news releases on GOTV activities.
- Contact business establishments and organizations.
- Identify those who may need assistance with absentee voting.

Third Milestone

- Begin distributing "VOTE" lapel tabs, bumper stickers or other GOTV promotional materials.
- Begin ad campaign in newspapers, on radio and television, and online.

- Hold a benefit activity to raise funds for the program.
- Identify and publicize all of the local polling locations near your post.

Fourth Milestone

- Conduct a survey of local issues.
- Hold a public forum or debate for candidates (Remember the rules of nonpartisanship).
- Identify and publicize handicap access points at polling locations near your local post.

Fifth Milestone

- Increase the number of public service announcements on radio and television.
- Develop transportation arrangements for voters on Election Day.
- Make arrangements for child care.
- Remind volunteers of the need for assistance.

Sixth Milestone

- Intensify all public relations efforts.
- Hold a candidates forum/debate.
- Hold an Election Week benefit.
- Involve key event volunteers in a practice session.

Election Day… and you're prepared!!

Wear your Legion cap to the polls to vote, but in doing so remember not to wear any political campaign materials.

After the election, the committee should meet again to hear final reports of the subcommittees. Keep a record of what worked well; abandon what did not work and continue to add new ideas to improve the program for the next election. Don't forget to report the successful results of your post's GOTV efforts to the media.

The route to a successful Get Out the Vote program is not without pitfalls, roadblocks or confusion. However, with maximum effort by the post committee and volunteers, the program will work and be a source of pride to the post membership and others in the community. But don't stop there. Keep the voting spirit alive by using your plan for every election, from school board to the Presidency.

A Friendly Reminder Helps

Most people need a constant reminder that Election Day is approaching and that they need to register in order to vote. One means of creating the public consciousness is to hand out flyers or promotional items at local shopping malls. A small card the size of a regular business card saying something like "Have you registered to vote? A reminder from American Legion post …" can be an effective means to get the message to large numbers of people.

Volunteers can take the message door-to-door with locally produced door hangers that contain information on where to register, deadlines and where to vote. Another means of gaining good publicity for the program is to have your city mayor or other government official sign a proclamation designating a day or week as "Voter Registration Month/Week/Day." Don't forget to notify the local media because without them, the ceremony means little.

"Personally, I believe that our American system works as long as you participate in it. You must vote and make your voice heard. Otherwise you will be left out."

— Mari-Luci Jaramillo, Educator and Diplomat

A SIMPLE MEDIA PLAN

Get Out the Vote campaigns flourish every four years. Radio and television stations conduct them, newspapers will do their part and cable television will get into the act as well. The role that American Legion posts can play is to take advantage of the natural interest of the media and help them help themselves. So here's a media plan to consider.

Approach the television station with the highest viewership in town. Talk with the Public Affairs Director and explain that your members want to partner with them to get more people registered and voting in 2012. The television station has the means of promoting registration drives, it has the contacts to get many aspects of the drive going. What it can use is volunteers to do the work. Your post can provide that. If the station isn't interested, try another station.

Talk with Public Affairs or Public Service Directors of all the radio stations in your community. Share with them the "Suggested Public Service Announcements." Urge them to help get people registered. Thank them when they do.

Contact the Public Affairs Director of cable television systems. Suggest that they use the radio PSA copy and create special television visuals to make them suitable for airing.

At the appropriate time (you need to make that determination) customize the suggested news release to fit your local situation and send to all the newspapers in your town. And when Election Day passes, follow-up with appropriate thank you notes to the media and others who assisted with your activity.

"Lower voter participation
is a silent threat to our democracy ....
it under-represents young people, the poor, the disabled,
those with little education, minorities and you and me."

— Nancy Neuman, Writer

Sample News Release

American Legion Launches Voter Registration Campaign

(City, Name, Date) – The American Legion in (community) is mobilizing to fight voter apathy and get residents registered to cast their votes on Election Day. Members of American Legion post (No.) are urging their friends and neighbors to help stop the decline in voter participation and, instead, get every eligible voter to the polls.

(Full Name), commander of (name of post), says the campaign in (city) is part of The American Legion's nationwide "Get Out the Vote" program. (Last name) said "we've been doing this since 1920 but this year, it is taking on added importance. There are so many important things happening in the world today that will shape how we live our lives tomorrow."

"Under the provision of The American Legion's federal charter, we are prohibited from supporting, opposing or providing aid to any political party or any candidate for public office," (last name) said. "But, The American Legion can use its volunteer resources and facilities to encourage eligible citizens to register and vote. After all, it is a citizen's duty and responsibility."

(Last name) said that members of the post will keep the campaign going from the start of the registration drive to the close of polls on Election Day 2012.

(Insert information on dates, times, and how to obtain a ride to the polls and child care that is made available.)

CONTACT: (Full name of post Public Relations Chairman or other knowledgeable volunteer with a daytime phone number).

– 30 –

Sample Radio Public Service Announcements (PSA)

1. **30-Seconds** – The key to our representative form of American democracy is the right to vote. When you cast your ballot on Election Day you make America stronger. Now is the time to register. Election Day will soon be here. Do your part. Vote. A reminder from (station) and The American Legion. (50 words)

2. **30 Seconds** – America is admired the world over as the model of democracy, with the right to vote paramount among all its freedoms. So why do Americans have one of the poorest voting percentages in the world? Beat the odds. Register and vote. A reminder from (station) and The American Legion. (49 words)

3. **30 Seconds** – Feeling disenfranchised? Are you unhappy with your elected representatives? Do something about it. Vote on Election Day. It is your way to shape not only your future but also the future of our country. Do your part. Do your duty. Vote. A reminder from (station) and The American Legion. (49 words)

4. **15 Seconds** – Lame excuses and other forms of voter apathy have no place in American democracy. Show you care. Do your duty. Vote. A reminder from (station) and The American Legion.

1971 RESOLUTION ENCOURAGES GOTV PARTICIPATION

National Executive Committee
Indianapolis, Indiana
October 20-21, 1971
Resolution No. 2

"Get Out The Vote"

WHEREAS, The American Legion was placed on record at its Second Annual National Convention in Cleveland, Ohio in 1920, to urge all American Legion men to become qualified voters and fully discharge their patriotic duty; and

WHEREAS, Resolutions of similar content were adopted until the 1952 National Convention, New York City, August 24-28, 1952; and

WHEREAS, The 1952 National Convention adopted Resolution No. 136, providing an appropriate name (GET OUT THE VOTE) for this campaign. There have been many resolutions adopted supporting this campaign to the present time; and

WHEREAS, In these critical times Democracy can only be safeguarded by the active participation in elections by all enfranchised citizens, at the community, state and national levels; and

WHEREAS, The GET OUT THE VOTE campaign is non-partisan in nature and has for its purpose the encouragement of all eligible citizens to participate in all elections; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By the National Executive Committee of The American Legion in regular meeting assembled in Indianapolis, Indiana, on October 20-21, 1971, That The American Legion continue to support and endorse the GET OUT THE VOTE campaign and that it encourage and recommend the active participation of all Legionnaires, individually and collectively, in said campaign within their respective communities.

2007 Resolution Reiterates Legion GOTV Involvement

National Executive Committee
Indianapolis, Indiana
October 17-18, 2007
Resolution No. 4

"Support for Voter Registration and Voting Program"

WHEREAS, The American Legion, since its inception, has promoted an active involvement by its members, posts and departments in the electoral process in the United States; and

WHEREAS, Numerous resolutions through the years have put The American Legion on record encouraging all eligible voters to vote on Election Day; and

WHEREAS, Resolution 136, 1952 National convention, **Get Out the Vote**, established an American Legion voter education and participation program by the same name; and

WHEREAS, Our democratic republic is threatened by an apathetic populace who choose not to participate in our country's electoral process; and

WHEREAS, Members of The American Legion, who vote in numbers exceeding the national average, have a unique opportunity to participate in the electoral process and to encourage others to do so as well; and

WHEREAS, The Get Out the Vote program is non-partisan and has for its purpose the encouragement of all eligible voters to register and participate in all elections; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By the National Executive Committee of The American Legion in regular meeting assembled in Indianapolis, Indiana, October 17-18, 2007, That The American Legion reiterates its longstanding commitment of service to the United States of America by recognizing and promoting the truest form of Americanism and personal responsibility to our government, the act of voting on Election Day; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion, through its Get Out the Vote program, encourage its members, posts, districts and departments to fully involve themselves in the electoral process by serving as poll volunteers, poll workers, by voting and by encouraging and assisting others to register and vote.

ONLINE RESOURCES

There are numerous voting-related online resources available on the Internet that provide worthwhile information about the candidates, their parties, issues, conducting election activities, nonpartisanship, etc. Here are a few of those sites:

- **The American Legion Action Center**
  http://capwiz.com/legion/home/ — Find information on your state's voter registration and key primary and election dates.
- **C-SPAN's Campaign 2012**
  www.c-span.org/Campaign2012 — Online companion site to the public affairs network's coverage of the 2012 elections.
- **National Association of State Election Directors (NASED)**
  www.nased.org — Links to election website of each state. Includes detailed information on voter and candidate registrations, voter turnout data, and ballot and referendum information.
- **National Association of Secretaries of State (NASS)**
  www.nass.org — Find out if you are registered, that your voting record is up-to-date and download registration forms. Site contains numerous links to voting-related web sites.
- **The Election Center**
  www.electioncenter.org — Website of the National Association of Election Officials, a non-profit, nonpartisan organization of voter registration and elections administration professionals.
- **Federal Voting Assistance Program (FVAP)**
  www.fvap.gov/ — Operated by the Department of Defense, this web site provides a broad range of non-partisan information and assistance to facilitate the participation of more than six million U.S. citizens covered by the Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act (UOCAVA).
- **Project Vote-Smart**
  www.vote-smart.org — PVS is a political research organization designed to engage and educate voters. Site includes detailed information on candidates, their background and voting record.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

1. When and why did The American Legion become involved in a Get Out the Vote program?

   The involvement began in 1920 when it appeared that Americans were becoming apathetic about their government and especially their responsibility to it. The GOTV program evolved to address this concern and has continued through more than 20 Presidential elections.

2. Why is The American Legion, an organization of wartime veterans, still involved and what is the rationale for this involvement?

   Elections are important to our Republic and they impact virtually all aspects of our society. The leaders we choose to put in office make important decisions that affect not only the taxes we pay and the roads we drive on but also issues directly affecting the veterans community and our national security. The American Legion believes voting in our country's elections is among the truest expressions of Americanism. That is why the Get Out the Vote Program has been a major activity of the Legion since the earliest years of the organization.

3. What is the difference between the Get Out the Vote Program and the Vote America '12 activity?

   The GOTV program exists year round as a program of The American Legion while the Vote America '12 activity is a component of GOTV that exists to increase voter turnout for the 2012 primary and general elections.

4. What does The American Legion hope to achieve by involvement in GOTV activities?

   The American Legion hopes to make a difference in American elections by promoting an informed populace, participation in our government and involvement in the electoral process. We cannot forget that in this country, our government is "of the people, by the people and for the people," and that democracy only functions when the people participate.

"Bad officials are elected by good citizens who do not vote."

— George Jean Nathan, American editor and drama critic

5. Why can't The American Legion endorse a candidate? Why so much emphasis on nonpartisanship?

   Federal election laws require that any registration drive conducted or sponsored by groups like The American Legion be nonpartisan. In other words, the Internal Revenue Code mandates the strict nonpartisanship of all such activities by organizations eligible to receive tax-deductible contributions under Section 501(c)(19) of the Code. Failure to do so could endanger an American Legion post's non-profit status. A nonpartisan organization does not support, oppose or provide aid to any candidate for public office or to any political party. In a nonpartisan drive, registration and voting assistance, information or materials must be offered and made available to all, regardless of which candidate or party they support.

6. How can an American Legion post avoid the appearance of partisanship when conducting GOTV activities?

   There are steps that can be taken to reduce the possibility of appearing partisan. Volunteers working on an American Legion sponsored registration and voting drive should not wear campaign buttons or make their personal views about candidates, parties and issues known in any way while they are engaged in nonpartisan activities for their post. Campaign materials or literature should be removed from an area where nonpartisan activities are taking place.

7. How can a member be active in a campaign when the Legion has to remain nonpartisan?

   Partisanship is not a dirty word. As individuals, Legionnaires can be as partisan as they like. They must do so as John Q. Public, without the Legion cap and without a direct connection to an American Legion post. When working for the Legion post, a member must treat all candidates equally without making candidate endorsements. To do otherwise will endanger the post's nonprofit status with the Internal Revenue Service.

REPORT YOUR ACTIVITIES

Project Feedback

Please share your post's involvement in The American Legion's Get Out the Vote Program by completing the following form. Your response may be used in news articles and/or recognition and awards issued by the national organization. It will also allow us to gauge the effectiveness of the Get Out the Vote Program. The form can be faxed to National Headquarters 317-630-1369 or emailed to ACY@legion.org. The form can be found online by going to www.legion.org and clicking on the Vote America '12 logo.

Feedback Reply Form

Post/Unit/Squadron Name and Number

Project Coordinator

Phone#

E-mail Address

Commander/President/Commander

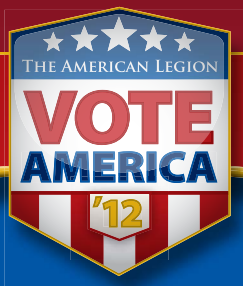
Street Address

City, State, ZIP

Activities held to promote Vote America '12

Assessment of impact your group's GOTV efforts had on your local election turnout

What other support materials would have been helpful?



THE AMERICAN LEGION

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