Sons of The American Legion

YOUTH HANDBOOK

THE FOUR PILLARS

The American Legion's four pillars – Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation, National Security; Americanism, and Children and Youth – are as relevant today as when our organization was founded in 1919.

All American Legion officers should be familiar with the programs offered under each pillar, along with how to conduct and publicize them, recruit participants and inspire community involvement.

In addition, all officers should know The American Legion's legislative positions and be fully engaged in discussing with local, state and national elected officials how to support and achieve our legislative goals.

As an officer, strive to become a source of American Legion history and knowledge. Be
eager and prepared to answer any and all questions from a potential new member, and to speak with authority about The American Legion to other community groups.

Welcome every new member into The American Legion by assigning him or her a mentor who is familiar with our traditions, customs, policies and programs.

Finally, encourage members old and new to complete The American Legion Extension Institute, which is the best and most convenient way to gain basic knowledge of who we are and what we do. Many Legionnaires want to become stronger leaders, but just need the opportunity, making continuous training and education programs necessary at every level – post, district, county and department.

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OVERVIEW

About the Sons

The Sons of The American Legion (SAL), created in 1932, is an organized program within The American Legion. It is made up of boys and men of all ages whose parents or grandparents served in the United States military and became eligible for membership in The American Legion. Together, members of The American Legion, The American Legion Auxiliary, the Sons of The American Legion and American Legion Riders make up The American Legion Family, which consists of about 3.4 million members.

All three organizations place high importance on preserving American traditions and values, improving the quality of life for our nation's children, caring for veterans and their families and, perhaps most importantly, teaching the fundamentals of good citizenship.

The mission of the Sons is to support veterans and their families and the policies of The American Legion. Virtually everything that involves the Sons could be grouped under three areas:

- Supporting veterans and their families.
- Promoting patriotism and Americanism.
- Advocating for programs which benefit the youth of our country.

How to join the Sons

All male descendants adopted sons, and stepsons of members of The American Legion, and such male descendants of veterans who died in service during the period of April 6, 1917, through November 11, 1918, or any time from December 7, 1941, to date, who served honorably, as set forth in Article IV, Section 1, of the National Constitution of The American Legion, or who died subsequent to their honorable discharge from such service, shall be eligible for membership in the Sons of The American Legion.

To join the SAL, contact an American Legion post near you. To locate a post near you, visit **www.legion.org/posts**.

Those ideals have motivated hundreds of thousands of males to join the Sons, enabling them to become involved in American Legion programs with their parents and/or grandparents. Many younger members get involved and learn valuable leadership skills involving organization, public speaking, negotiating, budgeting and fundraising skills. Membership in the SAL also provides individuals with opportunities to forge lifelong friendships with people who share a common bond.

Preamble to the Constitution of the Sons of The American Legion

Proud possessors of a priceless heritage, we male descendants of veterans of all wars, associate ourselves together as "Sons of The American Legion" 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 true spirit of Americanism; to preserve the memories of our former members and the associations of our members and our forefathers in all 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 friendship by our devotion to mutual helpfulness; to adopt in letter and spirit all of the great principles for which The American Legion stands; and to assist in carrying on for God and Country.

History of the Sons

The first squadron chartered was Bruce P. Robison Post 133 in Indianapolis. The first membership card was issued to John P. Ragsdale; his brothers Edward and Robert were also charter members and received cards No. 2 and 3. John was killed in an aerial mission over Germany in 1943; Edward was also killed in service during World War II. In 1946 the name of the post was changed to Robison-Ragsdale Post 133.

By 1934, the SAL had expanded to 24 detachments, 170 squadrons, and 524 members. In the late 1930s, Sons were closely involved with Legionnaires in nationwide radio programs and printed a monthly national newspaper called "The Legion Heir." There were more than 60,000 members in 1938 when Paramount Pictures released a film titled "Sons of The Legion" starring Donald O'Connor, William Frawley and Evelyn Keyes. The movie played in thousands of theaters around the country where local SAL musical units provided live entertainment.

The SAL had more than 70,000 members in the late 1930s. However, with the onset of World War II, many Sons marched off to war and many of them never returned. When Sons returned home after World War II, they found their military service had made them eligible to join The American Legion. In the decade between 1946 and 1956, an era which included the Korean War, millions of ex-servicemen and women, joined The American Legion. As the membership of The American Legion swelled, membership in the Sons dropped to fewer than 6,000.

Only through the efforts of dedicated American Legion Family members did the SAL membership turn around. In 1958, membership inched past the 10,000 mark and then climbed to nearly 17,000 in the early 1960s.

The Sons' first National SAL Workshop was held during The American Legion's 1964 National Convention in Dallas. National workshops continued annually through 1967, and were then replaced by national caucuses, which were held annually through 1971.

In 1972, The American Legion's National Executive Committee (NEC) approved the creation of a national SAL organization under the full supervision and control of the NEC. This opened the door for the Sons of The American Legion to hold its first National Convention in Chicago in August 1972. Robert Faust of

California was elected the first national commander of the Sons.

Each year since 1972, the SAL has recorded new all-time membership records. In 1989, Sons membership exceeded 100,000 for the first time. Membership broke the 200,000 mark in 1997 and in 2005 surpassed 300,000 members.

Supporting veterans and their families

SAL members have volunteered hundreds of thousands of hours in VA hospitals and medical centers throughout the country and raised millions of dollars that have been used to purchase items including TVs, radios, medical equipment and clothing for patients.

There are countless ways in which Sons can assist veterans and deployed military personnel. Sons volunteer at VA hospitals around the country, talking or playing games with veterans. SAL members also assist veterans with chores around their homes such as performing yardwork or running errands. Additionally, members of the Sons handle similar activities for families of servicemembers who are on deployment. Here are some other examples of activities that SAL members or squadrons can participate in:

- Visit patients in a VA medical center or a nursing home.
- Send a greeting card to a hospitalized veteran.
- Study and learn about veterans.
- Participate in the Veterans History Project.
- Help with your local Auxiliary Poppy drive.
- Participate in an "Adopt A Veteran" program.
- Learn about the service eligibility of the veteran through whom you are eligible for membership.

The American Legion and its Auxiliary have a specific program for those under 21 who volunteer at VA facilities: Volunteens.

Those who have been fully integrated into the voluntary service program aid in the recovery and rehabilitation of sick and disabled veterans, under the supervision of VA staff members,

The student volunteers will receive valuable experience and training which will benefit them in applying for college and jobs. Student volunteers are liaisons within their communities and provide a valuable element of caring for veterans.

The VA Voluntary Service program offers students excellent opportunities for:

- Exploring health-care career options.
- Gaining experience in a health-care environment.
- Learning new skills.
- Making new friends.
- Qualifying to be nominated for a James H. Parke Memorial Youth Scholarship.

There are many opportunities to explore in the Volunteens program. A wide variety of assignments are available. Volunteers are selected according to the needs of the medical center, assignment preference and skills. Training is provided by the VA medical facility.

Throughout The American Legion, there are individuals who lead programs that assist veterans. There are service officers at the local, district, state and national levels who are knowledgeable in connecting volunteers to opportunities to assist veterans.

To find out where help is most needed, contact an American Legion service officer in your area. The local post and/or squadron should be able to assist.

Promoting patriotism and Americanism

Regardless of where SAL members live or how active their squadron is, they can demonstrate being good citizens and promote Americanism in their communities and schools. Ideas on promoting Americanism and helping your community can be as easy as:

- Learning proper flag etiquette and respect for the flag.
- Learning "The Star-Spangled Banner."
- Participating in Memorial Day and Veterans Day programs.
- Entering an American Legion Auxiliary Essay Contest (grades 3-12).
- Participating in your local Color Guard.
- Promoting the Blue Star Banner to honor all who are serving America.
- Assisting at blood drives.
- Participating in an Adopt-a-Highway program.
- Organizing a community food drive.
- Recycling.
- Tutoring/mentoring someone.
- Volunteering or participating in the annual Oratorical contest or Boys State programs.

Advocating for programs which benefit the youth of our country

SAL is a major contributor to the Child Welfare Foundation (CWF) In fact, the Sons organization is the single largest contributor to the CWF. In less than a decade, the SAL has accounted for more than $8 million to the CWF.

The foundation is a nonprofit corporation that accepts funding proposals from nonprofit organizations for projects that contribute to the physical, mental, emotional and spiritual welfare of children.

Donations fund these projects, which is where Sons squadrons can assist the CWF.

Squadrons are encouraged to hold community fundraisers such as car washes,

etc., with the proceeds going to the CWF. Additionally, National Headquarters will provide items such as CWF coffee mugs and coins that can be sold as a way to raise money for the foundation. Contact National Headquarters by calling **(317) 630-1202** or emailing **cwf@legion.org**.

Another option for squadrons is to donate money as part of a memorial in the name of a local veteran, post or squadron member.
Memorial certificates are made for donations of $20 or more. Donations of $300 or more are recognized with plaques.

Not only can SAL members help fund these projects, they can also help their squadron receive national recognition.

Every year at the National Convention, the national chairman gives out certificates to detachments, districts, squadrons and individual members who have made significant donations to the CWF. Awards are also given out to recognize detachments which have made the largest per capita donations. These awards are given out at the National Convention:

Garland R. Murphy Jr. Award: for the detachment with the highest donations.

Heritage Circle Gift Club: Plaques for cumulative donations made during the year. Benefactor: $5,000 (gold); Patron: $2,500 (silver); Sponsor: $1,000 (bronze).

Cornerstone Gift Club, awards to individuals for cumulative donations:

Foundation Ambassadors, $1,000 (gold logo pin with five diamonds); President's Circle, $500 (gold logo pin with one diamond); Foundation Partners, $250 (gold logo pin with one blue sapphire); Century Club, $100 (gold logo pin with one amethyst).

Child Welfare Banners/Streamers: awarded to squadrons with $1 per capita per member.

Other detachment (state level) awards: the Spirit of Excellence awards and the Leadership Club awards are available for those detachments that participate.

Other ways to participate

- Attend a district or detachment meeting.
- Serve as an officer in your squadron.
- Make motions that effect or support your squadron's success
- Chair a special activity.
- Know membership eligibility for The American Legion, American Legion Auxiliary and Sons of The American Legion.
- Know the meaning of the SAL emblem.
- Learn the SAL Preamble to the Constitution.
- Recruit and sign up new members in your squadron.
- Learn how to be a leader in your squadron and your community

Recognition awards

The Sons of The American Legion offers recognition plans to those who epitomize qualities such as patriotism and citizenship. The most well-known programs are the Ten Ideals and the Five Point Program of Service:

The Ten Ideals: This award of recognition may be presented to SAL members who have completed the Ten Ideals Programs. The Ten Ideals are: Patriotism, Health, Knowledge, Training, Honor, Faith, Helpfulness, Courtesy, Reverence and Comradeship.

The Five-Star Award: This award can be presented to SAL members who show perfection in the Five Point Program of Service. The award is a gold plated medal bearing the SAL emblem, and the symbol is of the five points.

Insignia for the Five-Star Award can only be had by certification. This is the study program for older members. The five points are:

- Patriotism: Love of flag; love of country
- Citizenship: Individual obligation of citizenship
- Discipline: Respect for and obedience to rules
- Leadership: Participation in group activities
- Legionism: Knowledge of The American Legion

Detailed information on the Ten Ideals and the Five Point Program can be found in the Squadron Handbook of Sons of The American Legion.

Five-Star Medal

The Ten Ideals Medal

SYMBOLS OF PATRIOTISM

The Sons of The American Legion organization is recognized by its emblem, which is similar to its parent organization, The American Legion. SAL members wear a specific cap.

SAL emblem

- The design of the SAL emblem was taken from The American Legion's emblem, but is oval in shape so as to be easily distinguished.
- The star in the center represents our country, and the five points of the star represent the five-point program of the Sons of The American Legion.
- The sun in the background represents the Sons and the rays represent the loyalty of its membership.
- The blue of the emblem, like the blue of our flag, stands for justice.
- The two stars in the blue border stand for freedom and democracy.
- The wreath below the star is in memory of our comrades, and those who willingly gave their lives for their country.
- The 10 points of the emblem represent the 10 ideals of every Legionnaire's son.

SAL cap

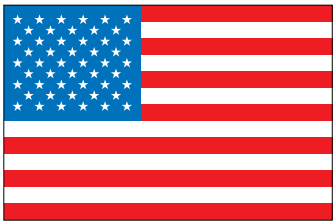
The SAL cap should be worn at all SAL and American Legion Family functions. Different colored hats denote different administrative levels throughout the Sons:

- Squadron member or officer – French blue with red, white and blue piping
- District officer – French blue bottom with piping and white top
- Detachment officer – French blue with piping and gold top
- National officer – Solid gold with piping

A member of the Sons of The American Legion wearing a cap should render and respond to salutes and conduct himself in the same manner as he would if he were wearing a military uniform. If you are not wearing a SAL cap, the ordinary rules of etiquette should be observed. When not wearing the official SAL cap, the proper salute to the flag is with your right hand over your heart.

The SAL cap is not to be worn during meals or while eating or while consuming alcoholic beverages.

Members of a Squadron Honor Guard should wear the SAL cap in a place of worship while in marching order or standing guard. SAL members who are not in formation should uncover when entering the place of worship, remain uncovered during the entire service and re-cover after leaving the place of worship.



History of the American flag

Congress first approved the flag on June 14, 1777.

This date is now observed as Flag Day throughout America. It was first stated that there would be a star and stripe for each state, making 13 of both. Over the years, the number of stars has been changed to include one star for each of the 50 states, while the stripes remained the same to represent the 13 original colonies.

Later, the colors of the flag were given special meaning. The red is for valor and zeal – white is for hope, purity and cleanliness of life – and blue is the color of heaven, loyalty, sincerity, justice and truth.

The nickname "Old Glory" was given to our flag on Aug. 10, 1831. The flag means the spirit of liberty and human freedom.

Proper display of the flag

The American Legion is responsible for writing the U.S. Flag Code, and is known as a leading authority on flag etiquette. All SAL members should understand and follow the proper procedures for displaying and folding the U.S. flag.

Display of the American flag is usually from sunrise to sunset.

The flag should be displayed daily on or near the main building of every public place and during school days in or near every schoolhouse.

Flags are flown at half-staff as a mark of respect for a former or current state official who has died, or for a member of the armed forces who has died in active duty. When the flag is flown at half-staff, it should be hoisted to the top for a moment, and then lowered to the half-staff position. The flag should then be raised to the top before it is lowered for the day.

When two or more flags are flown from the same pole, the American flag must be on top.

When displayed with another flag against a wall, the U.S. flag should be on its own right (left to a person facing the wall) The U.S. flag should also be slightly higher than all the other flags on display in the room.

Procedures for folding the flag

There are no specific Flag Code procedures for folding the flag. However, this is the traditional method:

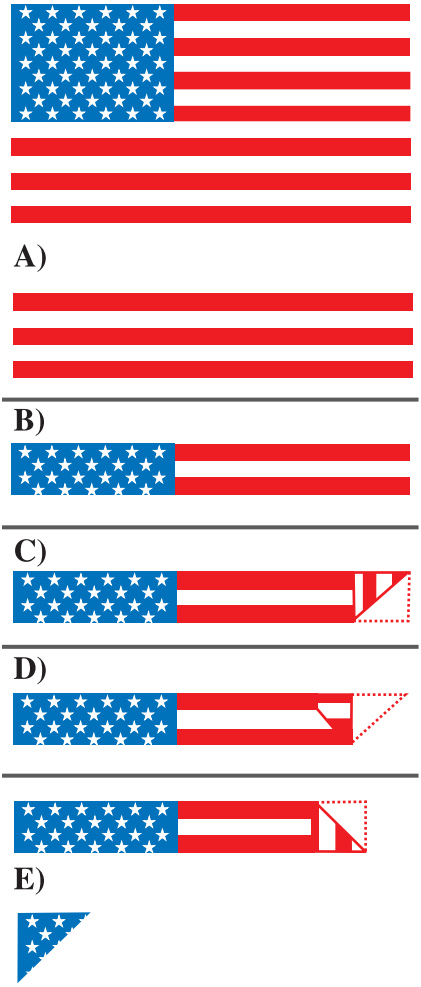
a) Straighten out the flag to full length and fold lengthwise once.

b) Fold it lengthwise a second time to meet the open edge, making sure that the union of stars on the blue field remains outward in full view. (A large flag may have to be folded lengthwise a third time.)

c) A triangular fold is then started by bringing the striped corner of the folded edge to the open edge.

d) The outer point is then turned inward parallel with the open edge to form a second triangle.

e) The diagonal or triangular folding is continued toward the blue union until the end is reached, with only the blue showing and the form being that of a cocked (three-corner) hat.



The national anthem

The national anthem of the United States is "The Star-Spangled Banner," written by Francis Scott Key after witnessing the bombardment of Fort McHenry by the British in 1812. "The Star-Spangled Banner" became the national anthem by an act of Congress in 1931. The lyrics:

O say, can you see, by the dawn's early light,
What so proudly we hailed at the twilight's last gleaming?
Whose broad stripes and bright stars, through the perilous fight,
O'er the ramparts we watched, were so gallantly streaming?
And the rocket's red glare, the bombs bursting in air,
Gave proof through the night that our flag was still there.
O say does that star spangled banner yet wave
O'er the land of the free, and the home of the brave?

On the shore dimly seen through the mists of the deep.
Where the foe's haughty host in dread silence reposes,
What is that which the breeze, o'er the towering steep,
As it fitfully blows, half conceals, half discloses?
Now it catches the gleam of the morning's first beam,
In full glory reflected now shines in the stream:
'Tis the Star-Spangled Banner! O long may it wave
O'er the land of the free and the home of the brave.

And where is that band who so vauntingly swore
That the havoc of war and the battle's confusion
A home and a country should leave us no more?
Their blood has washed out their foul footsteps' pollution.
No refuge could save the hireling and slave
From the terror of flight, or the gloom of the grave:
And the Star-Spangled Banner, in triumph doth wave
O'er the land of the free and the home of the brave.

O thus be it ever when freemen shall stand
Between their loved homes and the war's desolation!
Blest with vict'ry and peace, may the Heaven-rescued land
Praise the Power that hath made and preserved us a nation.
Then conquer we must when our cause it is just
And this be our motto: "In God is our Trust."
And the Star-Spangled Banner in triumph shall wave
O'er the land of the free and the home of the brave!

The Pledge of Allegiance

The Pledge of Allegiance of the United States, originally composed by Francis Bellamy in 1892, was adopted by Congress in 1942.

I pledge allegiance *(I promise to be true)*

to the flag *(to the symbol of our country)*

of the United States of America *(each state that has joined to make our country)*

and to the Republic *(a republic is a country where people choose others to make laws for them – the government is for the people)*

for which it stands *(the flag means the country)*

one nation *(a single country)*

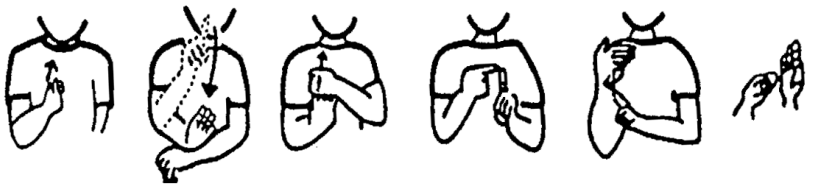
under God *(the people believe in a supreme being)*

indivisible *(the country cannot be split into parts)*

with liberty and justice *(with freedom and fairness)*

for all. *(for each person in the country – you and me!)*

Signing the Pledge of Allegiance



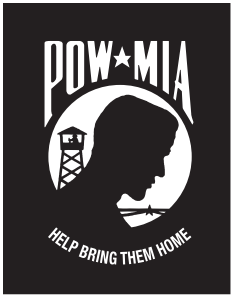
"I pledge allegiance to the flag of

the United States of America and to

the Republic for which it stands, one nation under

God, indivisible, with liberty

and justice for all."



The POW/MIA flag

In 1971 Mary Hoff, the wife of Navy pilot Lt. Cmdr. Michael Hoff, who was listed as missing in action during the Vietnam War, developed the idea for a national flag to remind every American of U.S. servicemembers who were prisoners of war or missing in action. The black and white image of a gaunt silhouette, a strand of barbed wire and an ominous watchtower was designed by Newt Heisley, a former World War II pilot.

By the end of the Vietnam War, more than 2,500 servicemembers were listed as prisoners of war or missing in action. In 1979, Congress and the president proclaimed the first National POW/MIA Recognition Day. Three years later, the POW/MIA flag became the only flag other than the Stars and Stripes to fly over the White House in Washington, D.C.

On Aug. 10, 1990, Congress passed a law designating the POW/MIA flag as: "The symbol of our nation's concern and commitment to resolving as fully as possible the fates of Americans still prisoner, missing and unaccounted for in Southeast Asia."

Blue Star Service Banners

The Blue Star Service Banner was designed and patented in 1917 by World War I Army Capt. Robert L. Queissner of the 5th Ohio Infantry, who had two sons serving on the front line. It quickly became the unofficial symbol of a child in the service.

During World War II, the Department of War issued specifications on the manufacture of the flag as well as guidelines indicating when and by whom the service flag could be flown or the service lapel button be worn.

Today, Blue Star Service Banners are displayed by families who have a loved one serving in the armed forces, including the National Guard and Reserves of all military departments. The banner displayed in the front window of a home shows a family's pride in their loved one serving in the military, and reminds others that preserving America's freedom demands much.

The blue star represents one family member serving in the armed forces. A banner can have up to five stars, signifying that five members of that family are currently in military uniform on active duty.

If the individual symbolized is killed or dies while serving, the star representing that individual will have superimposed on it a gold star of smaller size so that the blue forms a border. On flags displaying multiple stars, including gold stars, when the flags are suspended as against a wall, the gold star(s) will be to the right of, or above the blue star(s) a place of honor nearest the staff.

The American's Creed

I believe in the United States of America as a government for the people, by 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.

PROGRAMS AND OPPORTUNITIES

The American Legion promotes several programs aimed at young adults. Among them:

The American Legion High School Oratorical Scholarship Program – a Constitutional Speech Contest

High school students develop a deeper understanding of and appreciation for the U.S. Constitution when competing in the oratorical contest. Contestants research and give speeches related to the Constitution, starting with competitions at the post level. Winners at the state level go to Indianapolis for the national finals every April. The top three winners at the national level receive scholarships for $25,000; $22,500; and $20,000, respectively.

American Legion Baseball

Many posts sponsor an American Legion baseball team. Teams compete on the local, state and national level. The American Legion World Series is played each year in Shelby, N.C., and broadcast by ESPNU.

Boys State

American Legion Boys State is among the most respected and selective educational programs of government instruction for high school students. It is a participatory program where each participant becomes a part of the operation of his local, county and state government. While the recommended guidelines for Boys State programs suggest that only males who have completed their junior year of high school and have at least one semester of high school remaining should be considered for the program, American Legion departments possess the authority to establish their own criteria for Boys State program eligibility, selection, participation and operation. Each year, two state representatives from Boys State attend Boys Nation in the Washington, D.C., area.

Junior Shooting Sports

This program is for boys and girls from elementary to high school age. They are taught gun safety and basic marksmanship. This program also includes a national

championship, held over the summer in Colorado, where two $1,000 scholarships are awarded by the Sons of The American Legion.

Youth Cadet Law Enforcement

The program is available to male and female high school students who have completed their junior year of high school and are in good academic standing. They should be of good moral character and possess a desire to learn more about law enforcement. High schools should recommend students who meet these qualifications to local posts sponsoring the Youth Cadet Law Enforcement Program.

Children and youth

SAL members can assist in this program by helping all children realize their full potential by instilling three basic goals:

1. Help strengthen families.

2. Serve children's physical, intellectual, emotional and spiritual needs.

3. Support other organizations that help children and youth.

Some ways to achieve these goals include participating as a volunteer in Special Olympics and assisting with community service programs aimed at children's activities in your community.

WEBSITES AND RESOURCES

- Sons of The American Legion: **www.legion.org/sons**
- The American Legion: **www.legion.org**
- American Legion Auxiliary: **www.alaforveterans.org**
- American Legion Riders: **www.legion.org/riders**
- American Legion Emblem Sales: **emblem.legion.org**
- American Legion Child Welfare Foundation: **www.cwf-inc.org**

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