Vol. 31 No. 6

THE AMERICAN LEGION
Dispatch
February 2021 Veterans Strengthening America

MEMBERSHIP

507
Total number of reporting posts
The total number of Ohio posts that successfully met the standard criteria of the form requirements and submitted their CPR (either mailed or through myLegion.org) that National HQ processed by the extended deadline, Aug. 28, 2020.

96%
Department CPR Turn-In percentage
The percentage of posts (507/528) that completed the CPR for the state of Ohio. The Department of Ohio ranked 15th out of 55 nationwide departments and second in the Central Region for reporting year 2019-2020.

5,375
Number of cases handled by post service officers
The post service officer is a vital volunteer position at the post. They are responsible for connecting members and veterans with benefits and resources available in their community.

$175,797
Emergency aid given to veterans from post funds
Posts are often a critical piece to basic needs for veterans and their families who have fallen on hard times. The post may be the first place a member or veteran seeks assistance.

OPERATION COME BACK

Campaign encourages Legionnaires to contact, engage and renew at least 90 percent of the 2019 and 2020 expirees between now and March 15.

By The American Legion

615,000 – the number of 2019 and 2020 members who have not renewed for 2021.

Retention is a top membership priority for The American Legion as highlighted by National Commander Bill Oxford's goal for a 90 percent retention rate. To achieve this goal, The American Legion has launched the campaign "Operation Come Back" where Legionnaires are encouraged to contact, engage and renew at least 90 percent of the 2019 and 2020 expirees between now and March 15.

"Something that I would like for all of us to keep in mind, regardless of the color of hat we wear or the position we may hold, is that we are first and foremost members of an American Legion post," said Jay Bowen, Membership & Post Activities Committee chairman, during regional calls with department and national leadership last month. "So it is not just (the post's) responsibility to get membership, to get renewals. It is our responsibility to get membership and renewals.

"It's the leadership of getting this done – to get these Legionnaires to renew."

On those same regional calls, Oxford said that "leadership is being a good communicator. The secret, if we expect to get back on

See Operation Come Back on Page 4

NEWS ALERT

The American Legion Veterans and Children Foundation

A full color and black and white version of The American Legion Veterans and Children Foundation (V&CF) brochure is available for download at *legion.org/publications* under General.

The V&CF has two focuses:

1. Deliver needed aid for military and veteran parents who face unexpected financial hardships that threaten the stability of their homes. One-time Temporary Financial Assistance grants are used to cover housing, utilities, food and other basic needs for families with minor children at home.

2. Train American Legion accredited service officers who at any one time are continuously working more than 750,000 benefits claims for disabled veterans and their families, free of charge. American Legion Department Service Officers secured nearly $3.7 billion in benefits for the nation's veterans during fiscal year 2020.

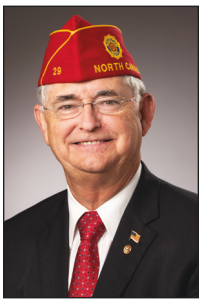
Safe, secure, tax-deductible donations to the V&CF can be made online at *legion.org/donate*.

TALMA contest

Members of The American Legion Media Alliance (TALMA) are eligible to submit entries to TALMA's second annual contest. Visit *legion.org/talma/contest* to review the contest and submit entries before the deadline of April 15. All entries must have been published during the 2020 calendar year.

COMMANDER'S MESSAGE

A membership call to action!



James W. Oxford
National Commander

As you may be aware, I have three challenges that are designed to grow and strengthen our organization:

- Recruit 100,000 new members.
- Attain 90 percent renewal rate.
- Achieve 100 percent Consolidated Post Reporting.

When we meet these challenges, we will be poised to provide the most influential voice for veteran advocacy and serve as an example of a truly unified body of selfless Americans during a critical time in our nation.

Many American Legion posts experienced periods of closure because of the ongoing global pandemic and were unable to provide face-to-face services for potential new members. With these varying degrees of COVID-19 restrictions and the personal precautionary measures of all Americans, it may be a challenge to meet the 100,000 new member goal. But by working together, we can be successful.

We have over 615,000 expired members for 2019 and 2020 – we have failed our veterans by not keeping their memberships active. Now is the perfect time to engage them, let them know we want them back in our ranks. Use the expired lists located in *MyLegion.org* to help supplement the traditional new recruit shortfall.

I also have a membership Call to Action between now and March 15 for 90 percent retention:

- Contact and renew expired members.
- Contact expired rosters.

The latest renewal notice is in our members' mailboxes. We need to be there for our members during this challenging period that our nation is facing.

American Legion posts also need to work the DMS lists. There are many members who join The American Legion through this program with the expectation of someone contacting them and welcoming them into the organization. Remember, there is a $5 incentive for the department when someone contacts a 2020 DMS member and gets them to transfer and renew at the local post for 2021.

We need to make working renewals our main priority. If recruiting is about having an organization worth belonging to, retention is about leadership. It is time to roll up our sleeves and put a personal touch on renewals by calling or visiting our members who have not yet renewed.

This is our way of building a Foundation for the Future for The American Legion.

James W. "Bill" Oxford

MEMBERSHIP

Recruit three new members for 'A Foundation for the Future' pin

American Legion National Commander James W. "Bill" Oxford will award his national commander "A Foundation for the Future" membership excellence pin to any Legionnaire who obtains three new members into The American Legion.

A new member is any eligible person joining for the 2021 membership year who was not a member of The American Legion during the 2020 membership year.

Each member listed must be eligible for membership in The American Legion. Forward names of Sons of The American Legion members or Auxiliary members to your detachment or unit for use in their respective incentive programs.

Only one pin will be awarded per individual. Upon receipt, national membership staff will confirm the names and mail the pin directly to the person who earned it.

Download the incentive pin form online at *legion.org/commander/pin*.

MEMBERSHIP

Legion Family Honor Ribbon

American Legion National Commander James W. "Bill" Oxford will award his 100 percent American Legion Family Ribbon to any American Legion Family that achieves 100 percent membership by June 30, 2021.

For this award, the Legion Family is defined as a post and any combination of an Auxiliary unit, Sons of The American Legion squadron or Legion Riders chapter.

Each branch must achieve 100 percent membership to qualify for the award.

Download the form at *legion.org/commander/ribbon*.

NATIONAL ADJUTANT'S MESSAGE

Black History Month: a celebration of service and sacrifice

This month is a reflection of all the ways Black Americans have continuously fought for America.

By Daniel S. Wheeler

It is Black History Month. As veterans, the month of February is a time we remember the sacrifices of African-American servicemembers such as the Buffalo Soldiers, the Harlem Hellfighters and the Tuskegee Airmen. And we honor the African-American men and women who continue to serve their nation with honor and distinction. They helped mold America into the nation that we are today, and I am proud that many continue their service through membership in The American Legion.

Autrey James, a Paid Up For Life member in the Department of California, wrote a personal account of what Black History Month means to him. I encourage you to read it in its entirety at ***legion.org/honor***. James, in part, wrote:

"I think of it (Black History Month) as celebrating the contributions of Black Americans to American history. I want us all to think of this month as a way to celebrate the service of Black Americans who have fought and died on foreign soil and on American soil to make sure the America we love lives up to the ideals of our founding fathers.

"As a Black American veteran, I know that I stand on the shoulders of giants who have paved the way for me. I am both grateful for the path they have laid and aware that it is my responsibility to pave the way for others who come after me.

"As a Black American and a veteran, I know that deeply ingrained in us are both the horrors we have endured in America and the pride in which we have continuously and faithfully served her. The history of my own family is but one example. These men (grandfather and great uncle) instilled in my family the love of country, people and service to this nation. They believed that their service would pave the way toward making equality a reality as opposed to an idea.

"Black Americans (and veterans) like my grandfather and great uncle have long believed that service to this nation in time of need would force America to live up to the ideals that its founding fathers wrote of but did not implement in their time. The men of my family believed that war and service would be transformative for America. After all, how could any nation expect its citizens to go abroad and fight for democracy and then continue to deny democracy to those very citizens who risked their lives for the American way of life.

"My grandfather and great uncle were right. Their service was transformative for America but what they did not realize was though the fight over there was over it was just beginning at home" ... the fight for civil rights for all Americans.

AFRICAN-AMERICAN MILITARY SERVICE STATISTICS

2.15 million Black military veterans nationwide

30.2% Active-duty enlisted women in 2016 who were African-American

17.1% Active-duty enlisted men in 2016 who were African-American

20,000+ Black Marine Corps recruits who received training at Montford Point camp in North Carolina during World War II

21 African-Americans who received the Medal of Honor for actions during the Vietnam War

7,243 Deaths of active-duty Black servicemembers in Vietnam

3,075 Deaths of active-duty Black servicemembers in the Korean War

901,896 African-Americans who served during World War II

24% of the 500,000 U.S. military personnel deployed to the Middle East during the Persian Gulf War who were African-American

350,000+ Black soldiers who served in American Expeditionary Forces units on the Western Front in World War I

Sources: 2016 American Community Survey, Statista, the Congressional Research Service, the National WWII Museum and the U.S. Army.

Have a membership success story?

Share: ***legiontown.org***

Dispatch

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28,202

Number of volunteer hours recorded at VA hospitals

A large majority of post members volunteer at their local VAMC or CBOC resulting in savings to the VA. The hourly rate for a volunteer is $27.20, resulting in a savings of $767,094.40 by Ohio volunteers.

$118,872

Contributions to VA Voluntary Service Program

Posts often set up a "post fund" at the VA where they directly contribute monies that support volunteer activities held at the VA.

89

Posts have a VA Voluntary Service Coordinator

There are over 88 VA facilities in Ohio and a Legionnaire is selected by their post and district commanders to serve as a deputy representative on behalf of The American Legion.

1,419

Number of VA voluntary service volunteers

There are additional voluntary positions outside of the deputy representatives who serve as VAVS Coordinator. These positions are critical to the voluntary services mission.

From Operation Come Back on Page 1

track, is to get our message out. We have to make the value of American Legion membership loud and clear. Our job as leaders is to create the excitement and enthusiasm and willingness to do the things necessary to retain every Legion member.

"Retention is about leadership. And leadership is about communication."

Attendees on the calls were asked to share best practices that support renewal efforts.

CPRs. The Department of Ohio is showing the value of membership through its new CPR Impact Summary Report, a department-wide collection of Consolidated Post Report data presented in key impact numbers. View the report at ***legion.org/documents/pdf/ohio.cpr.pdf***.

Ohio's CPR Impact Summary Report has the look and feel of national's monthly Membership Impact Report. The statistics presented can be used in membership renewal, recruitment or to otherwise explain the impact posts have statewide. A copy of Ohio's CPR Impact Summary Report was printed in-house and mailed to every post in the state.

"I can now take this when I go to the statehouse or meet with a member of Congress or the governor, I can say this is what our members and our posts are doing in the state of Ohio," said Department of Ohio Adjutant Suzette Heller, who emphasized that a post could put its CPR numbers on a single sheet to hand out. That way when a member asks why they should renew or join, the post could hand them a copy of the single-page report and say, "This is why. This is what we're doing," Heller said. "What a great way for posts to make a statement in their community, to their mayor. This is what your local American Legion did for the community."

Heller said a digital copy of its CPR Impact Summary Report will be emailed to 2019 and 2020 expirees for renewal. A small group of 2020 expires without email on file will receive a hard copy by mail, along with 2021 renewal instructions. Data will be reviewed to see who renewed for a return on investment.

MyLegion.org. The Department of Ohio also is encouraging its members to renew their membership through MyLegion.org, and for posts to use the online membership transmittal processing feature also through MyLegion.org. This feature allows posts to process their membership in batches and pay for membership online through e-checks. The electronic payment method eliminates the need for post officers to send the national/department portion of the three-part membership cards and paper checks to department headquarters.

Heller said the department has met every membership target date goal this membership year and contributes the success to online renewals and post membership transmittals.

Post data. The Department of Ohio has also been analyzing and breaking down membership data to help meet membership target dates. For example, posts close to reaching 100 percent membership are identified. District commanders are made aware of these posts and asked to call the post leadership to notify them of their membership standings – the department reaches out as well – and reminds the post to transfer department headquarter members in and to renew 2020 members.

"There's a lot of efforts on our part to make sure that we're holding everybody accountable," Heller said. "We're giving everybody the information and the resources that they need. And we're able to communicate the specifics to the district leadership and to the post leadership by any means possible – mail, Constant Contact, email and phone calls."

How to get started on Operation Come Back

- Access rosters for non-renewed members through MyLegion.org.
- Contact members and ask them to renew.
- Transmit renewal dues immediately to department/national.
- Send membership cards to member.

"If this organization is going to continue to grow, then retention is critical to that growth," Bowen said. "It absolutely is. Bottom line is we have to communicate."

ADVERTORIAL

Join The Movement

Become a Hometown Heroes Community Today!

Kingston, New York

During a trip through up-state New York, Doris Forte saw hometown heroes banners hanging from poles throughout a small town. Each banner featured the picture, name and rank of a local member of the military. Doris instantly loved the idea and thought her community of Kingston, NY should organize something similar.

Upon returning home, she shared the idea with her husband, Bill a veteran who liked the idea too. "It was very well received by our community right from the start," explained Bill. Kingston is located on the banks of the Hudson river between New York City and Albany with its roots tracing back to Dutch settlers in the 1600's. Maybe that's why our (roughly) 20,000 inhabitants have a pronounced taste for history, and take great pride in celebrating their local heroes.

Bill was excited to 'join the movement' and help coordinate the project with help from his wife. Bill explained that the first wave of the program involved 310 participants and that the banners – which are made of commercial grade vinyl – remained up year' round for three years! For the second wave, they exceeded 300 participants again. Bill is one of the heroes recognized on a banner, a member of a military family who has participated in our nation's war efforts for several generations.

This is a typical example of how a Hometown Heroes Banner Program comes to life – someone notices hometown heroes banners hanging from poles throughout a small town they visit or drive through. "We get tons of business this way," says Brian Arnold, Navy Veteran and VP of Sales at www.HometownHeroesBanners.com. "We always recommend that you work closely with your local organizations. They can be very helpful with getting projects started," adds Brian.

Our team has been helping communities celebrate their veterans since 2006, so we have a lot of happy families throughout the country who are quick to pass on our contact information. We're hopeful to see you take this opportunity to start a Hometown Heroes Banner Program in your community!

Honor Your Service Members & First Responders

We make it easy as 1-2-3!

Our Hometown Heroes Banner Program team is committed to your success and will coach you through every step of the process: from how to recruit volunteers and donors; to custom design and production of your banners; to creating excitement in your community. We offer the knowledge, experience and resources to help you create a program that will make your community proud.

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hometownheroesbanners.com/AL

The originator of the first Hometown Heroes Banner Program in the country, displayed in Harrisburg, Pa. in 2006.

MEMBERSHIP TOOLS

Access your membership benefits on MyLegion.org

As a current registered user of MyLegion.org, do you know all the member benefits available to you?

MyLegion is a free and secure website for American Legion and Sons of The American Legion members, as well as administrative officers of American Legion posts, districts and counties. Users can view their MyLegion.org membership account on any device with web access to quickly access member benefits.

As a registered user of MyLegion.org, you can:

- **Manage profile information.** You can see the information that National Headquarters has on file, such as your address, and make updates.
- **Print membership card.** You don't have to wait for a new membership card to arrive in the mail. By having access to your membership record through MyLegion.org, you can easily print a current membership card.
- **Renew membership.** You can renew your membership online or set up automatic membership renewal.
- **View member-only discounts.** American Legion members have access to veteran and military family discounts from retail to travel.
- **Manage American Legion subscriptions** to *Dispatch*, e-newsletters and *The American Legion Magazine*.
- **Find an American Legion accredited service officer.** The Service Officer Directory in MyLegion.org provides access to accredited American Legion service officers who provide expert assistance, free of charge, to veterans and their families.
- **Use the Veteran Benefit Calculator** and state benefit information. Determine your eligibility for hundreds of available benefits, including a listing of veterans benefits by state.
- **Get answers** to frequently asked questions:
  - How can I update demographics on my membership record?
  - How can I print my membership card?
  - How do I get my membership card when renewing online?
  - How do I transfer my membership?
  - When does your membership expire?
  - Why did I receive a renewal notice if I have already paid?

MyLegion.org membership benefits for administrative officers:

- **Fulfill and submit CPR.** The Consolidated Post Report on MyLegion.org can be continually updated throughout the reporting year and submitted electronically.
- **Process membership.** Administrative officers can process membership electronically, and renew or add new members, and transfer in paid existing members.
- **Create post reports.** You can create post and squadron mailing labels by address, last paid year (reflects current year and two prior), or ZIP code to allow you to address both current and expired members.
- **View revitalization reports.** This shows membership information for headquarters post members and members not renewed for the current membership year. Headquarter transfer letters and labels are available. The letter includes post number, location, address, transfer request, member ID, signature block, dues and more.
- **Manage member data.** Member data change by ID allows you to make changes to the member's data form. Click on edit data button to open the member data form (name, address, email address, dates of service, etc.) can also mark members as deceased.
- **View post current roster.** This roster shows members of a post who are current, and who last paid two years ago.
- **Search for American Legion members** by all members, membership ID or name. In member search you can view member information, payment history (dates back to 1991), offices and commissions (national only maintains commander and adjutants positions; any updates should be directed to your department headquarters).

Reminder

The American Legion has moved to a single sign-on for its collection of websites. This allows American Legion members and non-members who are registered users of American Legion national websites the need to only have one username and password when they visit and sign in to: Legion.org, MyLegion.org, Legiontown.org, Burnpit.us, Centennial.legion.org and Baseball.legion.org.

(Note: at this time, this requirement does not currently apply to registered users of the Emblem Sales website.)

In order to enjoy the benefit of this new single sign-on, current registered users of the aforementioned American Legion websites need to take a moment to re-register.

Follow the five steps below to set up your single sign-on account:

1. Click "Sign In" on an American Legion national website property. You will be taken to our SSO site, sso.legion.org.

2. Click "Register as a new user." Fill in the form using your best contact email address and member ID (if applicable).

3. Enter and confirm your desired password.

4. Click "Finish" to receive your confirmation email.

5. In the confirmation email, click the link to confirm your account (check junk folder). The provided email will be from sso@legion.org.

IMPORTANT: You must confirm the sent confirmation email from sso@legion.org. Please check your junk email folder if you don't see this email in your inbox. This step finalizes your account for single sign-on access. If you have questions about the re-registration process, please visit our frequently asked questions and answers online at legion.org/dispatch/guides.

COMRADES

Tell us your Buddy Check stories

The American Legion's Buddy Check program has proven extremely valuable in the time of the coronavirus pandemic. Legionnaires and posts have provided vital assistance, camaraderie and support for isolated veterans and their families.

Through the end of the 2020 membership year on June 30, more than 3,600 posts reported that they had conducted Buddy Checks in one form or another.

The American Legion Media & Communications Division is looking for more examples like that of Las Vegas Spirit of Freedom Post 76 Commander Tony Mascari who led efforts to conduct nearly 800 Buddy Checks in December and January alone.

"So many are shut in right now," Mascari said. "The majority of our membership … they're staying in. They're very concerned with what's going on in the outside world. To have somebody call, just to ask, 'How are you doing today and is there anything we can do for you?' – it was really, really amazing to talk to some of our members. I don't know that they've had a lot of that. They were grateful that somebody just called to say, 'How're you doing today?'"

Legionnaires, posts and departments using Buddy Checks to reach out to members are urged to share their stories at ***legiontown.org***. A special category specifically for Buddy Check stories has been set up to receive those examples, which will be used to encourage others to conduct programs of their own.

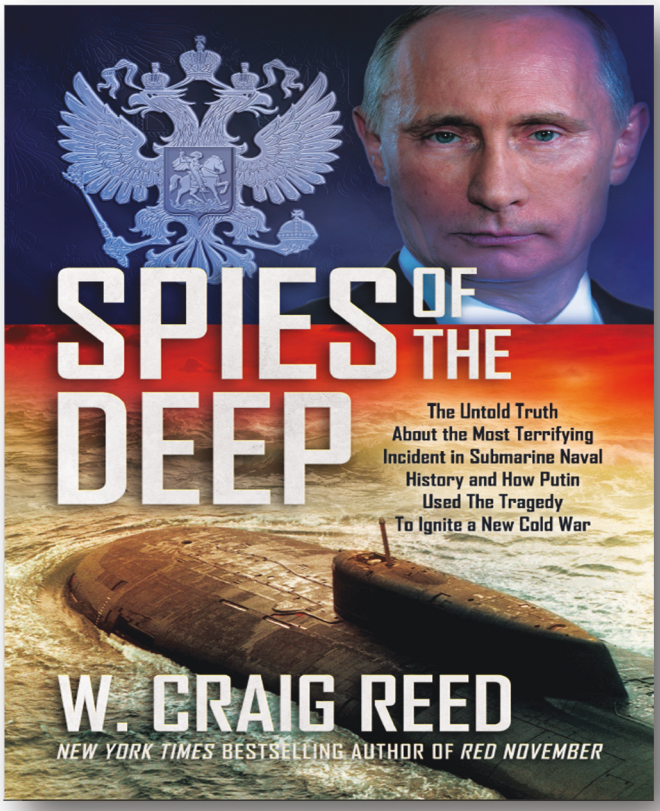
Resources, including scripts and guides to perform Buddy Checks, are available online at ***legion.org/buddycheck***.

Photo by Ben Mikesell

Buddy Check training

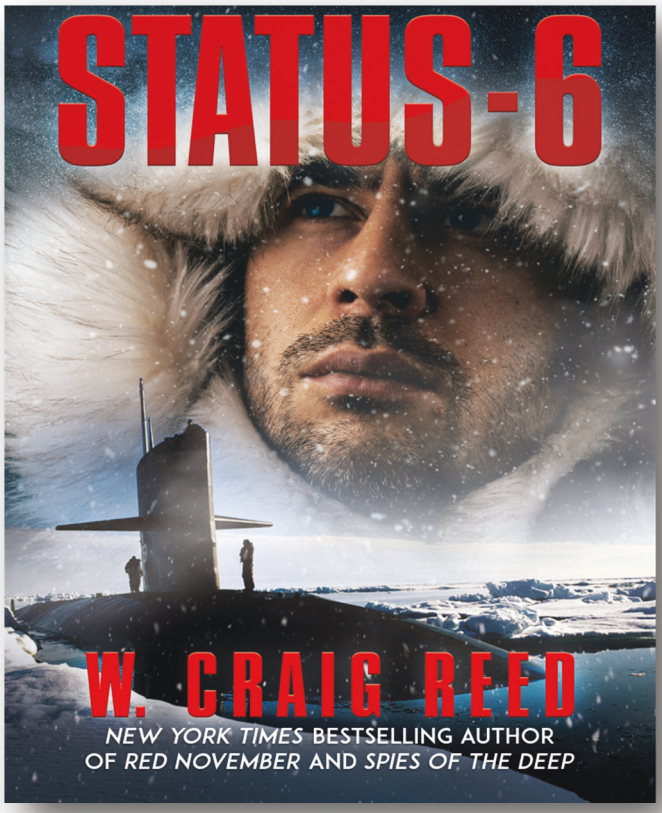
A National Headquarters Training Tuesday session was conducted on Buddy Checks. Watch the recorded video presentation at ***legion.org/training/training-tuesdays***.

The training focused on the who, what, where, when and why of Buddy Checks, and the strategic objectives of taking care of our fellow veterans.



"This book is riveting!" —T. Michael Bircumshaw, *American Submariner*

amazon



"Thriller of the Year!" — Grant Blackwood, #1 NYTBS *Tom Clancy* Author

Dispatch
February 2021 Veterans Strengthening America

The American Legion
P.O. BOX 1055 • INDIANAPOLIS, IN 46206

Non-Profit Organization
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Training Tuesday: Feb. 23

On the last Tuesday of every month, American Legion National Headquarters staff conduct training on different aspects of the organization. Tune in for this month's Training Tuesday on Feb. 23 at 7 p.m. EST. A link to attend the training via Microsoft Teams will be available on the Training Tuesday web page, *legion.org/training/training-tuesdays*.

Missed a Training Tuesday? All recorded sessions are archived on the Training Tuesday web page.

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