Vol. 33 No. 3

THE AMERICAN LEGION
Dispatch
November 2022 Veterans Strengthening America

MEMBERSHIP

DISPATCH GOING DIGITAL ONLY

Final print issue is December 2022. Sign up for the Digital Dispatch to stay informed on membership, training, promotions and more.

By The American Legion

It was announced in the October issue of the *Dispatch* that effective January 2023, The American Legion *Dispatch* goes to a digital-only format. This opportunity will reach more officers and leaders of the organization more frequently with a greater portfolio of resources.

The printed *Dispatch* has been mailed only to post adjutants, department leadership and district commanders. This is all changing to provide a robust e-newsletter and web landing page (legion.org/dispatch) that will provide all officers of The American Legion, American Legion Auxiliary and Sons of The American Legion with a greater portfolio of resources and tools that will inform, educate and engage.

The last printed version of *Dispatch* will be the December 2022 issue.

The Digital Dispatch currently has more than 30,000 subscribers and growing. With the digital newsletter, you receive American Legion membership, training, promotions and more right in your email inbox.

For more information on the digital format, here are some questions and answers.

Question: Why is The American Legion no longer going to print and mail the Dispatch?
Answer: The digital format also allows American Legion Family members to receive information on such topics as membership recruitment and retention, program delivery and guidance for officers at every level. The printed publication has about half the

See Dispatch going digital only on Page 4

NEWS ALERT

Attend Training Tuesdays virtually

The last Tuesday of every month the Internal Affairs and Membership Division hosts a training session virtually on Legion-specific topics such as veterans claims support, legislative support, programs and MyLegion. Listen to archived sessions at legion.org/training/training-tuesdays. The next Training Tuesday is Nov. 29 at 7 p.m. Eastern.

Observe National Family Week

Nov. 20-26 will mark this year's National Family Week. Download The American Legion's National Family Week brochure at legion.org/publications under Americanism. Posts can get involved in established local National Family Week activities; encourage local and state governments to observe and engage in National Family Week; and organize a family festival.

Receive Post Honor Ribbon

Honor ribbons are awarded to posts whose membership for the current membership year (as of Dec. 31) achieves an advance membership (for the year about to begin) equal to or greater than the final membership for the year ending. Certification forms must be submitted to National Headquarters by Jan. 31. The form is in the National Membership Awards Points Manual located at legion.org/publications under Membership.

COMMANDER'S MESSAGE

A perfect time to reach out to veterans

Vincent J. Troiola
National Commander

Dear American Legion Family members,

The holiday season is upon us. While it is a joyous time, for many this time of year often brings sadness, loneliness and depression. And these feelings can lead to thoughts of suicide for our veterans. This is where we need to Be the One to ask our veterans how they are doing, listen when they need to talk and reach out when they are struggling. We can help save the life of a veteran by putting our Be the One initiative into action.

There are excellent resources on the Be the One web page, ***betheone.org*** to help you share this message and carry it with you always, especially in these next few months with the holidays. Let's all Be the One to save the life of a veteran.

This season also is an opportunity for American Legion members to reach out and perform Buddy Checks. A simple phone call will go a long way as some veterans and Legionnaires are home bound, lonely and could use a visit for camaraderie. You can invite them to your post's holiday meals or events. A little recognition and showing of care goes a long way.

A Buddy Check kit can be downloaded at ***legion.org/buddycheck***.

When you reach out to veterans, share about the many American Legion programs that can provide needed assistance at this time. That might be The American Legion's Temporary Financial Assistance program if they have young children in the home and are facing a financial hardship with paying a bill, or they may need to speak with an American Legion service officer to help file a VA claim. Whatever the need may be, our veterans must know that we will Be the One and they are not alone

MEMBERSHIP

Expired membership incentive V.E.T.S. pin

To qualify for National Commander Vincent J. "Jim" Troiola's V.E.T.S. (veterans, education, teamwork and sponsor) expired membership incentive pin, American Legion members will need to reinstate five expired members into The American Legion for the 2023 membership year who were not a member during the 2022 membership year.

Please make sure that members have been processed before submission of this award. Pins will not be mailed until they are verified on the national database.

Forward the names of Sons of The American Legion members or Auxiliary members to your squadron or unit for use in their respective incentive programs.

Download the expired membership incentive pin form at ***legion.org/commander/vets-pin***.

MEMBERSHIP

Membership excellence "Be the One" pin

American Legion National Commander Vincent J. "Jim" Troiola will award his national commander "Be the One" 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 2023 membership year who was not a member of The American Legion during the 2022 membership year. Transfers do not count as new members.

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 squadron 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 in the national database and mail the pin directly to the person who earned it.

Download the "Be The One" membership incentive pin form at ***legion.org/commander/pin***.

SUICIDE PREVENTION

‘Be the One’ resources: QR code, wallet cards and more

New resources are available for American Legion Family members to use in support of the “Be the One” initiative to reduce the rate of veteran suicide.

The web page, betheone.org, has been updated with a variety of resources.

Among them:

Wallet cards. Four Be the One wallet cards can be downloaded and printed to keep with you at all times or to hand out. The business-size cards include:

- Card 1 – Be the One logo and QR code (directing to betheone.org)
- Card 2 – Be the One logo, Legion brandmark and QR code
- Card 3 – Be the One logo, Legion brandmark and How to Be the One list
- Card 4 – Be the One logo, Legion brandmark, How to Be the One list and QR code

These cards can be used as single-sided cards, combined for double-sided cards, or added to the back side of a personal, post or American Legion business card.

Brochures. Two brochures are available. One is a PDF that can be used to educate agencies with mental health services, community partners, local government leaders and others about Be the One. The other brochure is a Word document that can be downloaded and customized for posts to use at suicide awareness events. The entire back page of the trifold is intentionally left blank (other than directions, which can be deleted) so that posts can fill it with local resources.

Branding materials. A variety of approved American Legion Be the One promotional materials that posts can use to promote the initiative.

Content. This includes the special two-part magazine series on Be the One. The series includes stories and snippets about how American Legion members and posts are actively participating in events geared toward reducing the stigma associated with mental health counseling.

Video links. Vimeo playlist includes videos that can be downloaded and played while offline. They can be shared on social media, posted to the web and played at post events.

QR code. This directs to the Be the One landing page and can be used to direct others to find information and resources related to the campaign.

SHARE YOUR BE THE ONE STORY

If your post is hosting, planning or participating in a “Be the One” suicide prevention event, let us know by sharing it on Legiontown (legiontown.org) and/or emailing the details to **magazine@legion.org**. And share your Be the One personal story on Legiontown as well.

Have a membership success story?

Share: legiontown.org

Dispatch

Published monthly.
Printed by PRINTING PARTNERS, Indianapolis, Ind.

All American Legion publications are entitled and encouraged to reproduce all staff-written stories within, but please credit *Dispatch* as the source. Equal opportunity employer.

Correspondence and letters to the editor:
The American Legion Dispatch
P.O. Box 1055
Indianapolis, IN 46206

Subscriptions/Customer Service:
(317) 630-1221

Email: **dispatch@legion.org**

Fax: **(317) 630-1280**

Online: **legion.org/dispatch**

EDITOR
Cameran Richardson

DESIGNER
Celesta Török-Lee

From Dispatch going digital only on Page 1

circulation of the digital version. The ability to go fully digital expands the audience reach to ensure that more officers have access to information they need. It also offers the ability to deliver important information in a more timely manner.

Question: Will the Digital Dispatch still have the same kinds of stories and photos?
Answer: An emailed Digital Dispatch is now sent monthly to subscribers, featuring a roundup of top headlines with clickable links to the stories that are housed on the Dispatch landing page, legion.org/dispatch. This will be the standard format moving forward with enhanced features now in development. The Digital Dispatch is free of charge for anyone who registers to receive it.

Question: How do I sign up for the Digital Dispatch?
Answer: Go to legion.org/newsletters and click on Digital Dispatch. You will be directed to sign in to your MyLegion.org account. Then you will opt in to receive the Digital Dispatch.

Question: How will I receive the online edition of the Dispatch?
Answer: You will receive an email alerting you that new Dispatch material is ready to read on the legion.org/dispatch landing page. The e-newsletter will function the same way that the weekly Monday Briefing, Commander's Message and American Legion Online Update e-newsletter does, providing a roundup of headlines with clickable links to the actual stories.

Question: How often will the Digital Dispatch come out?
Answer: The Digital Dispatch will come out at least twice a month.

CALENDAR

Deadlines and announcements

Membership. The 75% membership (not including DMS totals) target date is Dec. 7. This target date is worth 7,500 points. Transmittals must be received and fully processed at National Headquarters during normal business hours on or before the December target date.

Scouting. Nominations for the 2023 American Legion Eagle Scout of the Year award are now being accepted. View the application at legion.org/scouting/nominate.

An applicant's nomination packet must be received by their respective American Legion department headquarters no later than March 1, 2023. Departments must then select and certify their department's top nominee to American Legion National Headquarters no later than April 1, 2023.

Awards. The Certificate of Meritorioius Service All-Time High Award is awarded to all posts that have enrolled an advance membership for the membership year (as of Dec. 31) equaling or surpassing the post's previous all-time high membership. The application is on page 14 of the National Membership Awards Program Manual, legion.org/publications.

Membership renewal. Members can safely and conveniently pay their dues for 2023 at legion.org/renew. Membership renewal also can be done through your mylegion.org account. When your membership becomes eligible for renewal, a "Renew Now" button appears at the top right-hand page of your account. Click on "Renew Now" and the amount due is displayed in "My Order Balance." Select "Pay Now" or "Renew Now" to proceed.

MEDIA

How to submit story ideas for magazine publication

The American Legion Magazine is the nation's largest and best-read publication for veterans and their families. The magazine receives hundreds of submissions per month and can only publish a small fraction of them, balanced within an editorial calendar that addresses major issues facing our nation and the world.

Submissions can be sent by email to **magazine@legion.org** or by mail to American Legion Magazine, PO Box 1055, Indianapolis, IN 46206. Submissions cannot be returned, so do not send original photos or documents.

In order to provide local posts and members a forum to share their stories, The American Legion Media & Communications Division maintains the Legiontown web platform, legiontown.org, for members and posts to share their stories, photos and other materials.

MEMBERSHIP

Nine ready to use QR codes

QR codes are everywhere – on business cards, in restaurants for contactless menus and flyers – to drive people to websites, social media platforms and more.

Nine QR codes that direct to Legion.org pages are now available for posts, districts and departments to use on flyers, brochures and for other marketing purposes.

Download the QR codes at *betheone.org*.

The QR codes drive people to the following Legion web pages: join, renew, Be the One, donate, find a post, find a service officer, The American Legion Media Alliance, Veterans & Children Foundation and Legion.org.

How to scan a QR code

1. Open the built-in camera app on your phone
2. Point the camera at the QR code
3. Tap the banner that appears on the screen

Sites to create a QR code

- QRCode Monkey, *qrcode-monkey.com*
- QR Code Generator, *goqr.me/*
- QR Stuff, *qrstuff.com/*
- Beaconstac, *beaconstac.com/qr-code-generator*
- Canva, *canva.com* (Canva users can use the app within the software to generate QR codes in their designs.)

What to avoid when using QR codes

- Research what size is best for your media. Going too big or too small with the QR code can cause scanning errors.
- Don't put it on the web. Visitors on your site are already there and scanning a QR code is harder than tapping a link. The same applies for email.

CLAIMS AND BENEFITS

Service officers: national staff available for support

In September, there were 1,211 informal hearing presentations prepared by American Legion claims specialists, free of charge, to help veterans appeal their denial of VA benefits. And 307 appeals cases from veterans disputing VA benefits decisions were ruled in favor of the veteran, thanks to free representation from American Legion benefits specialists.

Tony Cross, a Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation Division veterans disability claims specialist, shared during the October Training Tuesday that there are currently 600 Board of Veterans Appeals cases under the Appeals Modernization Act, and 510 legacy cases, assigned to one of the Legion's appeals representatives. Through the Veteran Appeals Improvement and Modernization Act of 2017, there are three decision review options for disagreements with benefits decisions – Higher-Level Review (form 20-0996), Supplemental Claim (form 20-0995) and Appeal to the Board of Veterans Appeals.

"The request for higher level review takes on average less time than going to the Board of Veterans Appeals," Cross said. "The board can take on average one calendar year."

With the increase of board hearings being virtual for veterans, which has seen an increase of benefits granted rate of 56%, Dave Spivey, senior team leader in the Legion's BVA unit, said it's important to prepare the veteran in advance of his or her hearing.

"Make sure the veteran has the ability to communicate with the judge (virtually) and make sure that virtual hearing can go without any glitches," he said. "Communicate with the veteran much earlier than the hearing to make sure the veteran is able to connect and communicate." Spivey recommended doing a pre-hearing to ensure all will go well during the actual hearing.

If an American Legion service officer needs help representing a veteran during a virtual board hearing, please email **americanlegionhearingrequests@va.gov**. National staff can provide support so a hearing is not delayed or rescheduled. And email **va&r@legion.org** for all other questions.

Photo by Greg Latza

MEMBERSHIP

New reports in MyLegion

The 2022-2023 Consolidated Post Reports and Consolidated Squadron Reports are now available in MyLegion.org for post and squadron adjutants to access.

This report can be updated throughout the year and finalized when complete. The final day to submit online for the 2022-2023 Consolidated Report is Aug. 31, 2023. When submitting online, there is no need to mail a paper form.

Follow these steps to access the reports.

1. Begin in My Groups. The dashboard will display a link for consolidated reports.
2. Click "Edit Reports" or "View/Edit Reports" from the left menu. Then view dashboard. The dashboard with consolidated report options is restricted to post and squadron adjutants.
3. My Consolidated Post Reports window will open. This window provides information for open and closed reports. Click "Edit" to open the report.
4. Click "Edit" in Preview and Final Steps to open the report fields to enter data.

Report information provides field boxes to include data. The number located at the lower right indicates the maximum characters allowed. Tab to go from one field to the next or scroll and click. Please note that the report is no longer completed in sections; it is one continuous form. At the bottom of the form are buttons to "Save as Draft," "Next" or "Cancel."

- Save As Draft – saves draft and allows you to return and make future entries.
- Next – provides "Submit Final" button to finalize. Finalizing the report closes the report for additional updates.

To print the report: Click "Print Friendly View" link that displays the report questions and answers. Another print link appears. Click "Print." This report can be saved as a PDF or sent to your output printer.

Three new reports in MyLegion

New reports in MyLegion are now available. To access reports from your My Account page, enter My Groups. Go to "Reports/Labels" from the left My Views menu. Then select the desired report. Each report allows you to set parameters. Set parameters and click "View Report."

1. Member dues history

This report is available for posts, squadrons, districts and counties. Enter the member ID and organization (The American Legion or Sons of The American Legion) to view payment history. Payment history provided includes join date and payments (last paid year 2011 to current).

2. Paid members by post

This report is available for districts and counties. This report may take longer to generate data. The paid members report includes all members who have paid to that post.

3. Project stay active

This report is available for posts, squadrons, districts and counties. You can find members by ZIP code that have recently moved into your area to connect with them and see if they would like to transfer to your post.

MEMBERSHIP

Why should posts submit a CPR?

When The American Legion national commander testifies before Congress, the Consolidated Post Report (CPR) data is used to provide numerical data of what the collective American Legion is doing. We report the hours, dollars and numbers of participants to show in quantifiable ways how our organization lives up to its motto of Veterans Strengthening America.

Leadership should impress upon posts that they need to report their accomplishments in their community. For 2021-22, only about 67% of our more than 12,200 local posts submitted reports. The CPR is how we know more than 3,700 posts conducted Buddy Check last year.

The Federal Charter requires the national organization to report to Congress on the activities of the corporation during the prior calendar year. The CPR is essential in collecting the data to compile this report to Congress.

Every post is doing something in their community. It is important that the post leadership report what they are doing to show our impact. The post may fill out a CPR by using the CPR form on mylegion.org. It has the capability to keep a running total and save the data until you're ready to submit.

MEMBERSHIP

Post Excellence Award with V.E.T.S. license plate

To qualify for the American Legion's Post Excellence Award and National Commander Vincent J. "Jim" Troiola's V.E.T.S. license plate, a post is required to achieve excellence in four areas: membership, submission of the Consolidated Post Report (CPR), attaining a 90% renewal rate, and community activity.

The purpose of this award is membership growth, exposure of American Legion values to the community, and increased visibility of the American Legion Family through service projects. A post achieving this qualification will have had numerous post members involved in planning and achieving these goals. Many posts are already active in these areas and will qualify without extra effort. Others, however, will need to increase their efforts in one or more areas to qualify for the award.

The standard to be achieved in each area is as follows:

- **Membership**: The post must attain at least 103% of their membership goal. At least one post officer attends district meetings.
- **Consolidated Post Report**: CPRs must be submitted by July 1. The American Legion's federal charter requires the submission of an annual report to Congress on activities for the year. MyLegion.org has made it simple for a post to submit its CPR in a timely manner.
- **90% Renewal Rate**: The post must renew at least 90% of their members that were on the 2022 roster.
- **Community Activity**: The post must conduct an event that connects the local community with The American Legion post. The objective is to open your doors, welcome the community in, and educate them on what The American Legion is all about and how the post is an asset to the community. Posts do not need to have a physical building to accomplish this. This activity can be held in a park, a community center, or anywhere the post can welcome and interact with the local community.
- **Certification for the award**: The district commander responsible for the post will certify a post as having achieved the four specified criteria. The district commander will submit a list of posts meeting the criteria to department headquarters. That list should include the post name, phone number, address and commander's name. If possible, accompany the last two criteria with copies of press releases submitted to the local media about the projects to show that the projects were not only accomplished but that an attempt was made to enhance the image of The American Legion through local media. The copy submitted should include a date and time stamp showing receipt by the media outlet.

The department adjutant will transmit information as posts qualify to:

The American Legion National Headquarters
Attn: Membership
P.O. Box 1055
Indianapolis, IN 46206-1055

MEMBERSHIP

100% American Legion Family Ribbon

American Legion National Commander Vincent J. "Jim" Troiola will award his 100% American Legion Family Ribbon to any American Legion Family that achieves 100 percent membership by the 2023 100% membership target date. For this award, the Legion Family is defined as a post and/or any combination of an Auxiliary unit or Sons squadron. Each must achieve 100% membership to qualify for the award.

The department adjutant will transmit information to:

The American Legion National Headquarters
Attn: Internal Affairs & Membership Division
P.O. Box 1055
Indianapolis, IN 46206-1055

Download the 100% Legion Family Ribbon form at ***legion.org/commander/ribbon***.

MEMBERSHIP

103% membership award

American Legion National Commander Vincent J. "Jim" Troiola will award his national commander "Be the One" membership incentive pin to any post, district, county, division or department commander, or membership chairman, who achieves 103 percent of their assigned membership goal for 2023.

Download the 103% membership award form at ***legion.org/commander/103percent***.

Dispatch
November 2022 Veterans Strengthening America

P.O. BOX 1055 • INDIANAPOLIS, IN 46206

Non-Profit Organization
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
THE AMERICAN LEGION

Holiday blood drive starts Nov. 24

The annual American Legion Holiday Donor Blood Drive is Nov. 24 through Dec. 31. American Legion Family members are encouraged to give blood and host blood drives as part of the program to help a lifesaving cause. Visit ***legion.org/security/blood*** for more information.

MEMBERSHIP

Purpose of the Membership Data Form

The American Legion Member Data Form (MDF) is a multipurpose form for tracking and providing accurate information on post members. You can download the form online at ***legion.org/publications*** under Membership or contact your department headquarters. With the exception of transferring members from one post to another, most MDF changes can be made through ***MyLegion.org***.

Note: Members can be transferred online through ***MyLegion.org*** if the member is paying at the time of the transfer.

The MDF can be used to report: deceased member; continuous years; name correction; address change; war era; branch of service; telephone number; date of birth; honorary life member; email; and post transfer.

On the MDF, always include the nine-digit member ID number, post number and department name. The signature of the authorized post officer is required at the bottom of the form. Route the parts of the MDF as follows:

Part 1-3: Mail to department headquarters

Part 4: Retain in post files

Membership transfer

Membership transfer from one post to another is handled by completing the Member Data Form. The right to transfer does not include the right to be accepted by any post. Members still must vote upon acceptance of the applicant. Being the member of more than one post at one time is a violation of the American Legion Constitution. Formal transfer is the only method of transferring from one post to another so continuity of Legion membership is available to members in good standing.

IMPORTANT! Always ask prospective members if they currently are or have been members. If the veteran has a current or previous nine-digit member ID number, it should be reported on the transfer request and dues card forwarded to the department.

Many members who change posts start paying dues in the new post without the formality of an official transfer. This can result in a duplicate membership record entered in the database. Such transfers risk the member losing his or her continuous membership record. The member will also likely receive renewal notices from National Headquarters asking for dues to be paid to both the former and current posts.