



## Department of Wisconsin 2022-2023 Legislative Program Action Plan

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### **What is this program, and why do we have it?**

The Legislative Program provides information and assistance to American Legion Auxiliary members to advocate for the legislative agenda of The American Legion.

### **What Can you Do?**

Encourage and empower members to be more knowledgeable, and to take action on The American Legion's legislative priorities. Work together with the entire American Legion Family to advocate for the issues outlined in the legislative agenda of The American Legion.

### **Ideas:**

#### **Member**

- Subscribe to the Legion's Legislative Action Alerts to receive notification when they call on all Legion Family members to take immediate action on a topic. Visit the Department of WI website to watch a how to (video) for accessing and using The American Legion Action Alerts: <https://www.amlegionauxwi.org/legislative>.
- Report to your unit chairman when you have done so.
- Subscribe to the Legion's Legislative Update to stay informed on veteran and military legislative issues. Report to your unit chairman when you have subscribed.
- Order a copy of the ALA Legislative Advocacy Guide through your unit or your department headquarters and follow the suggestions it contains to help build legislative awareness in your community. The guide can also be downloaded from [www.ALAforVeterans.org](http://www.ALAforVeterans.org).
- Visit the Legion's legislative website, [www.legion.org/legislative](http://www.legion.org/legislative), to keep current on legislative priorities. The site also contains the Legion's legislative priority sheets and point papers, available for download.
  - The priority/drop sheets outline the Legion's priorities and you can "drop" these in your elected official's office.
  - The point papers provide more information on the issue and the Legion's position.
- Actively post The American Legion's legislative priorities on social media.
- Identify your U.S. representative and two U.S. senators and build a relationship and rapport with these individuals and/or members of their staff.
- Subscribe to e-newsletters of your elected officials to monitor what they consider to be their priorities and to make sure that veteran/military and national security issues are among them. Follow them on social media as well. (See each elected official's website for details how to sign-up and social media links).
- Connect with other civic organizations to communicate The American Legion's legislative priorities for potential support and membership opportunities.
- Attend local informational town hall meetings to become better informed and to network with other community and civic organizations.
- Attend department and/or legislative meetings and activities.
- Meet with state- and national-level public officials to discuss issues facing veterans, servicemembers and their families. If possible, attend meetings with other Legion Family members.

- Remember, we're putting a face on legislative topics. We can share the human reality on how issues affect veterans and their families.
- Complete the Legion's Congressional Meeting Report Form following any meeting with your U.S. representative, U.S. senator and/or their legislative staff members. Visit [www.legion.org/legislative/aar](http://www.legion.org/legislative/aar) to complete the form.
- Let your department Legislative chairman or department president know if you have a personal or professional relationship with a U.S. representative and/or U.S. senator who serves on the Veterans Affairs committees or a member of his/her legislative staff and that you'd be willing to participate in the ALA Veterans Affairs Legislative Mini-Council. Each of these members should be willing to contact the representative, senator or staff member when called to action by the Legion on an issue.

## Unit

- Hold a unit meeting to go over the steps outlined by the ALA Legislative Advocacy Guide and discuss the legislative priorities.
- Invite a staff member of your U.S. representative and/or senator to a unit meeting so he/she can explain the best way to contact the official.
- Include legislative priorities in unit communications (social media, newsletters).
- Work with your Legion counterpart to make arrangements for Legion Family members to meet with respective Congressional delegation while on recess and in home districts.
- Choose a different legislative priority each month and allow time at each unit meeting for members to draft letters and communicate the importance of legislation related to veterans and their families. Watch for Legislative Action Alerts for any pressing priority.
- Invite your department chairman to a unit meeting to explain how the department initiates legislative advocacy and how each unit can play a role.
- Work with your Legion Family to host a "Meet the Candidate" night. Make veterans/military issues the primary topic for discussion. (See the How To Sheet for details).

## Legislative Reporting

### Year-End Reports

Annual reports reflect the program work of units in the department. It is requested that these reports are accompanied by photos of select unit projects. Each unit Legislative chairman is required to submit a narrative report by **April 15, 2023** to department headquarters, who will then forward it to the department Legislative chairman.

As part of your narrative report, please include answers to the following questions:

- How did you educate members in the legislative issues promoted by The American Legion and how did your members employ those methods?
- What legislative activities (town hall meetings, legislative receptions) did members attend in their communities and departments? What suggestions did members have to improve those activities? Please describe.
- How did members develop relationships with their elected officials? Please describe.
- Please describe how members were able to connect with their local and state officials and what their successes were.
- How many unit members signed up for TAL action alert and /or the National weekly report.

## Legislative Awards

All awards will be announced at National Convention during the Legislative pre-convention meetings.

**Unit Award:** Unit Legislative Award

**Type of Award:** Citation

**Presented to:** One unit in each division (5 overall awards)

**Materials and Guidelines:**

- Entries must include the award cover sheet.
- For the most outstanding overall legislative program in the division.
- Each entry must be typewritten in narrative form and must tell the story of legislative activism and how it made a difference in the lives of veterans and their families.
- Include pictures and newspaper articles.
- Units should submit their entry to their department chairman by May 15, 2023.

Attach an award cover sheet, including the name of the award, as well as the name and contact information for the department and unit Legislative chairman.

## How To Sheets How To Host A “Meet the Candidate” Night

### Additional Resources You Can Use

1. [www.ALAforVeterans.org](http://www.ALAforVeterans.org) on the Legislative page:
  - ALA Legislative Advocacy Guide
  - How to Fill Out the Congressional Contact Form
  - How to Contact Legislators to Advocate for Veterans, Servicemembers and their Families
2. [www.legion.org/legislative](http://www.legion.org/legislative)(The American Legion’s Legislative Center):
  - Legislative Testimony Information
  - Point Papers, Priority Sheets, Letters of Support
  - Congressional Contact Report Form
3. Follow us on Facebook:
  - ALA National Headquarters: [www.facebook.com/ALAforVeterans](https://www.facebook.com/ALAforVeterans)
  - ALA Legislative Facebook group: [www.facebook.com/groups/2013alalegislativecommittee](https://www.facebook.com/groups/2013alalegislativecommittee) or search for “ALA National Legislative Group page”
  - ALA Department of Wisconsin Legislative Facebook

### National Contact Information:

Pam Bates, National Chairman  
Department Ohio  
[pamelabates9@gmail.com](mailto:pamelabates9@gmail.com)  
937-974-2316

April Kollmorgen, Central Division Chairman  
Department of Wisconsin  
[aekollmorgen@icloud.com](mailto:aekollmorgen@icloud.com)  
360-362-2803

Committee contact information:  
[legislative@ALAforVeterans.org](mailto:legislative@ALAforVeterans.org)



## HOW TO HOST A “MEET THE CANDIDATE” NIGHT

### Committee:

## Legislative

### Contact Information for Questions:

[legislative@ALAforVeterans.org](mailto:legislative@ALAforVeterans.org)

**Encourage and empower members to be more knowledgeable to take action on The American Legion’s legislative priorities.**

### Step-by-Step Instructions:

A “meet the candidate” night is a question-and-answer session where all candidates for a specific election are invited to answer questions. It is not intended to be a debate.

**Suggested Date of Event:** 2-3 weeks before elections

#### ***3 Months Prior to the Event***

1. In an effort to make this a Legion Family event, work with your Legion post, SAL squadron and Riders chapter (if applicable) to form a planning committee. If this isn’t a Legion Family event, the unit Legislative chairman and unit president should appoint a planning committee. Identify a place, date and time for the event. Map out a plan to get the word out to the general community. Think about if you’ll serve refreshments; will they be donated, or do you need to buy them? Set guidelines for candidates before the event about literature, political signs and handouts.
  - a. If the place is the post home, ensure you have approval for the space and it’s on the calendar. Determine if your post allows political material (like signs) to be displayed on post property.
2. After the candidate filing deadline has passed, pull a list of candidates from your state’s election board or Supervisor of Elections’ website. Prepare a spreadsheet of all ballot- ready candidates (local, state and/or federal) who will be invited. List their name, address, phone, email, party and office. Allow ample time to contact them and receive their response.
3. Mail and email invitation letters with Legion Family Point of Contact name and the deadline date to reply. Remember: The Legion Family is nonpartisan, so you need to invite **ALL** candidates. Follow up periodically with candidates who have not replied. Suggest to the candidate they send another representative if there is a conflict in their scheduling.

#### ***2 Months Prior***

1. The planning committee arranges for volunteers for the following roles:
  - a. Moderator (1) – Someone impartial and ideally not a part of the Legion Family, such as local news reporter or radio host or someone known and respected by the community. Using someone on TV or radio also ensures that it will be announced on TV/radio.
  - b. Timekeeper (1) – To keep everyone on track. Each candidate should get an equal amount of time each round.
  - c. Legion Family Ambassadors (Several) – To man a table on programs and services your Legion Family offers. They should also have membership applications on hand.



- d. Servers (Several) – Have a small team of volunteers serve refreshments.
  - e. Crowd Control (Several) – Volunteers to ensure that no attendee gets out of control. (Legion Family Sergeants at Arms might be great for this role).
  - f. Screeners (Several) - Volunteers to collect and review questions from attendees. Selected questions will be given to the moderator for a Q&A period. *\*Note: Candidates can stay after to talk with people and address their issues.*
  - g. Public Relations Coordinator (1) – Someone who will ensure that event is advertised in local newspapers, social media, websites and any other media outlet. They might invite a radio station or local TV station to stream the event live. (They might form a team to help promote the event on social media, create a hashtag, etc.).
2. The planning committee sets an agenda and how the event will proceed. Depending on the number of candidates in attendance, allow time for opening and closing speeches for each (this could be 2 to 3 minutes). After opening speeches and introductions, the moderator will ask for questions (that have been screened).
    - a. If question is to a particular candidate, allow 1-2 minutes for the answer and allow opposing candidate the same amount of time. There should be no rebuttals!
    - b. If it is a general question, the moderator can ask any candidate to address it, but again only 1-2 minutes per candidate.

### **Day of Event**

1. Set up the room with the candidates in front of the audience.
2. Prepare tent cards for all candidates with their name, party and the office they're seeking. You may wish to seat candidates alphabetically in an effort to not show favoritism.
3. Set up a table to talk about the programs and services your Legion Family offers. They should also have membership applications on hand and other Legion Family branded information.
4. Setup a table for voter registration<sup>1</sup>. Members of your Americanism committee might be good to man this table, or you can invite an outside organization, like the League of Women Voters to help with the voter registration.

### **After the Event**

1. Follow up with thank you notes to all the candidates who participated.
2. If media did not attend, work with your Public Relations chairman to send pictures to be published and posted on social media.

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<sup>1</sup> Remember: The deadline to register to vote may be up to 30 days prior to the election. Check with your local Election Board or Supervisor of Election.



**American Legion Auxiliary  
2022-2023 National Award Cover Sheet**

**Send completed form to:**

Diane Weggen, Department Chairman  
16266 361<sup>st</sup> Street, Stanley WI 54768

Award certificates will be completed using the information given on this sheet, so please write carefully. All awards will be mailed to the department office after national convention. Department presidents may wish to recognize award recipients by presenting them at a department function.

National committee sponsoring award:                     **LEGISLATIVE**                    

Type of Award:  Department       Unit       Member

Name of the award you are applying for: \_\_\_\_\_

**Complete the following if you are applying for a department award:**

Name of department: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of department chairman: \_\_\_\_\_

Chairman's phone number: (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_ ALA member ID#: \_\_\_\_\_

Chairman's email address: \_\_\_\_\_

**Please complete the following if you are applying for a unit award.** Be sure to give the complete name of your unit. The award certificate will be prepared using the information you include below.

Unit #: \_\_\_\_\_ Full official unit name: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of department: \_\_\_\_\_

Unit president/chairman (circle one) name: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone number: (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_ ALA member ID#: \_\_\_\_\_

Email address: \_\_\_\_\_

**Please complete the following if you are applying for a member award.** Be sure to give the complete name of the member. The award certificate will be prepared using the information you include below.

Unit #: \_\_\_\_\_ Full official unit name: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of department: \_\_\_\_\_

Member Name: \_\_\_\_\_ ALA member ID#: \_\_\_\_\_

Nominating Member (if different from above): \_\_\_\_\_

Nominator's Phone number: (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_

Nominator's Email address: \_\_\_\_\_

# TAL 2023 Legislative Point Papers

## Mental Health & Suicide Prevention

The suicide rate among veterans is nearly double that of their civilian counterparts with more than 6,000 veterans losing their lives to suicide annually. It is imperative that asking for mental health assistance while increasing access to a variety of services along the mental health continuum be simultaneously de-stigmatized.

## VA Healthcare Modernization

The future of VA healthcare is a hybrid system consisting of inpatient and outpatient care, telehealth and community care. Congress must ensure that the VA has the most efficient technology and infrastructure needed to reach veterans no matter where they reside.

## PACT Act: Implementation & Oversight

The passage of the SFC Heath Robinson PACT Act in the 117th Congress ensured millions of toxic-exposed veterans will now have access to healthcare and compensation they rightfully deserve. The American Legion urges congress to provide the necessary oversight and funding to ensure VA has the resources they need to properly implement this legislation.

## Protect Veterans from Predatory Actors

America's veterans are being increasingly targeted by predatory actors who seek to profit from an array of benefits that have been rightfully earned by those who have served our nation. Congress must oppose legislation that seeks to elevate the standing of unaccredited predatory claims companies that target veterans and impose a cap on legal services provided in association with the Camp Lejeune Justice Act.

## Concurrent Receipt

Currently, 42,000 military retirees with combat-related injuries qualify for retirement pay for their service from DoD, and compensation for service-connected disabilities from VA. However, for retired veterans with a disability rating less than 50%, their VA compensation is deducted from their DoD retirement pay. The American Legion strongly supports ending this unfair policy of forcing many military retirees to forfeit their retirement pay to receive equal amounts of disability compensation.

## Guard & Reserve GI Bill Parity

National Guard and Reserve servicemembers are increasingly called upon to confront unique challenges. Yet despite all we ask of them, they are too often denied a cornerstone benefit of service: the GI Bill. Congress must pass legislation that would expand GI Bill benefits to Army Reserve and National Guard servicemembers for every day served while activated under state orders.

## **GI Bill for Honorable Service**

Currently, servicemembers with a “general under honorable conditions” discharges do not qualify for the GI bill. Congress must amend GI Bill eligibility under the U.S. Code to allow servicemembers who received a “general under honorable conditions discharge” access to benefits.

## **Support our Afghan Allies**

For two decades, U.S. soldiers fought shoulder-to-shoulder with brave Afghan allies who served with and protected American forces, fighting for the freedom of Afghanistan and its people. The U.S. is duty-bound to fulfill the promises made as a nation. As after the Vietnam war, genuine and lasting protection must be provided to Afghan allies who have made it safely to the U.S. and to those who have been left behind.

## **Military Quality of Life**

The U.S. military’s greatest resources are individual servicemembers and their families. The American Legion urges congress to pass legislation that would increase access to childcare for military families, increase appropriations to address matters involving servicemember food insecurity, and increase Basic Allowance Housing adjustment funding for military housing.

## **Pay the Coast Guard**

While the US Coast Guard is no longer a part of the Department of Defense (DoD), its role in domestic national security is vital. Congress must increase the Coast Guard budget annually and must protect pay and allowances for members of the Coast Guard during funding gaps.

## **Protect the American Flag**

Congress should change the U.S. Flag Code to codify patriotic and common customs and practices related to the display of the U.S. flag.