



Department of Wisconsin 2021-2022 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 <https://www.votervoicenet.com/AmericanLegion/Campaigns> to subscribe. 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.
- Visit the Legion's legislative website, 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 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, 2022** 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.

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, 2022.

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 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(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
 - ALA Legislative Facebook group: www.facebook.com/groups/2013alalegislativecommittee or search for “ALA National Legislative Group page”
 - ALA Department of Wisconsin Legislative Facebook

National Contact Information:

Beth McGinn, National Chairman
Department of Delaware
beth1011@msn.com
(302) 381-3897

Sue Cunniff Coughlin, Central Division Chairman
Department of Illinois
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(773) 852-5560

Committee contact information:
legislative@ALAforVeterans.org



HOW TO HOST A “MEET THE CANDIDATE” NIGHT

Committee:

Legislative

Contact Information for Questions:

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 registration¹. 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.

¹ 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.