



# Why You Should Belong

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Veterans Strengthening America



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## Veterans Strengthening America

The American Legion is the nation's largest and most influential organization of U.S. veterans. Today, it counts nearly 1.8 million members who support their communities in more than 12,000 posts worldwide.

Since COVID-19 disrupted the American way of life in 2020, American Legion members from coast to coast have responded to the call to serve their communities.

While adhering to social-distancing guidelines, Legionnaires provided meals to community members. American Legion posts served as blood-donation centers. Legion Family members created mini-parades to wish happy birthdays to veterans who were isolated in their homes. American Legion members distributed masks and other personal protection equipment to health-care workers. Whenever their communities called, The American Legion responded.

Since its 1919 founding, The American Legion has been a staunch advocate for veterans, military members, their families and the communities in which they reside.

It ushered in the modern VA, drafted and drove passage of the GI Bill and updates, and brought into existence dozens of health-care benefits for veterans.

Every day, The American Legion works on behalf of U.S. servicemembers. It is recognized as a leader in transition assistance from military to civilian life, providing resources for careers, education and more. Other priorities:

- **Volunteering:** Members log millions of community service hours as VA volunteers, and more than \$1.5 million is raised annually to assist VA hospitals.
- **Mentoring:** In the 1920s, The American Legion played a key role in creating the U.S. Flag Code. Today, Legionnaires teach schoolchildren, Scouts and other youth groups the history of the American flag as well as how to properly fold and care for it.
- **Giving:** The Legion raises funds to award scholarships, provide support for wounded servicemembers and distribute emergency aid to disaster victims.

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## PILLAR I: VETERANS AFFAIRS & REHABILITATION

The American Legion Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation pillar is composed of programs, services and advocacy efforts that improve the lives of those who served, along with their families and dependents.

The American Legion advocates on Capitol Hill for a well-funded, appropriately staffed VA that can handle benefits claims efficiently, quickly and accurately. In fact, The American Legion helped usher in much needed change to the review of VA benefits claims disputes. The president signed the historic legislation onstage during The American Legion's 99th National Convention in 2017.

The American Legion conducts System Worth Saving visits to VA facilities across the United States. These visits include a thorough assessment of the facility and discussions with patients and staff at VA. This information is then compiled and published.

The American Legion works one-on-one with veterans to ensure they receive proper benefits. Accredited American Legion service officers are trained to provide free expert assistance to veterans and their families.

Service officers spend the majority of their time on claims for VA disability benefits, but these compassionate professionals also provide information, referrals and resources on education, employment and business, death benefits and more.

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*“Financially it’s changed my life, but even bigger than that, I now have the opportunity to heal. Every time I go to the doctor I get re-evaluated. Today is the last time. Now I can put that in my history.”*

– **Jill Baker**, who had her disability rating upgraded to 100 percent, thanks to The American Legion

### EMPLOYMENT AND BUSINESS

The American Legion conducts, promotes and supports hundreds of veteran job fairs and career events nationwide each year. Thousands of veterans land jobs because of these efforts. Meanwhile, The American Legion helps place hundreds of other veterans in job-training programs every year. Working veteran-to-veteran with The American Legion Small Business Task Force, along with the Small Business Administration, Department of Labor, VA and corporate associates, The American Legion helps veterans understand the federal contracting process and offers personal guidance for career-seeking veterans. [legion.org/careers](https://www.legion.org/careers)

### VETERANS EDUCATION AND THE GI BILL

The American Legion was instrumental in the creation of the Harry W. Colmery Veterans Educational Assistance Act of 2017, also known as the “Forever GI Bill” providing veterans with education benefits that better meet today’s needs. The law builds on previous GI Bill revisions and adds improvements to the benefit, making it more helpful to National Guardsmen, reservists and those pursuing online education. [legion.org/education](https://www.legion.org/education)

### WORKING WITH VA

VA and The American Legion are working side by side to improve the speed and delivery of benefits claims. Through its System Worth Saving and Regional Office Action Review initiatives, The American Legion pinpoints problems, identifies best practices and works together with staff in VA medical centers. [legion.org/veteransbenefits](https://www.legion.org/veteransbenefits)

### BOARD OF VETERANS APPEALS

For veterans and families disputing benefits decisions by VA, The American Legion has staff representatives in Washington, D.C., who can help with the appeals process or strengthen a case, free of charge to veterans.

### WOMEN VETERANS

The American Legion supports women veterans, provides resources to those in transition and works to address their unique needs such as gender-specific health care and Military Sexual Trauma.

Email [wmvo@legion.org](mailto:wmvo@legion.org)

### DISCHARGE REVIEW

The American Legion offers free assistance to those applying to their service branches for corrections to military records and discharge statuses. American Legion experts help veterans with claims for Combat Related Special Compensation and with the procurement of accurate records.

Email [var@legion.org](mailto:var@legion.org)

### HELP FOR HOMELESS VETERANS

American Legion posts throughout the country build shelters or provide financial and volunteer support for homeless veterans. At the national level, The American Legion works with VA to raise awareness and allocate funds to help alleviate the problem. [legion.org/homelessveterans](https://www.legion.org/homelessveterans)

### VA VOLUNTEER SERVICES

Legionnaires donate more than 1 million hours of service a year at veterans health-care facilities, working through the VA Volunteer Services program. These volunteer hours save the federal government millions of dollars each year.

[legion.org/volunteers](https://www.legion.org/volunteers)

### FINAL RESPECTS

The American Legion fulfills a sacred duty by honoring the memories of U.S. veterans after their deaths. American Legion honor guards salute their fallen comrades at funeral services throughout the country. American Legion Riders provide motorcycle escorts at services for veterans. The American Legion also works closely with the National Cemetery Administration, Arlington National Cemetery and the American Battle Monuments Commission to honor the fallen.

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## PILLAR II: NATIONAL SECURITY

The American Legion's positions on national defense, homeland security, border control and military support are all part of the long-held American Legion value that the key to peace and world stability is a strong, well-resourced defense.

In order to protect America, troops and their families must have support. The American Legion plays a vital role in supporting those who protect our freedoms.

American Legion posts adopt military units, deliver care packages, provide support for families of deployed service-members and welcome the troops home.

The pandemic has had a severe impact on health-care facilities, especially long-term care facilities like veterans homes. Taiwan donated 250,000 surgical masks to The American Legion. In turn, The American Legion distributed a portion to the Soldiers Home in Holyoke, Mass., which was hard hit by the coronavirus. In addition, American Legion posts in Massachusetts had already risen to the occasion by providing care packages to the home. The mask donation and care packages are examples of The American Legion's dedication to keeping America's veterans and their communities safe.

Another area where The American Legion is heavily involved is in blood-donation efforts. The American Legion Blood Donor Program has existed officially since 1942. Each year, Legionnaires have donated to support the American Red Cross.

[legion.org/security](https://legion.org/security)

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*"Our donation is more than just the masks. It's about a shared commitment between Taiwan and the United States, as well as a commitment to those who serve in the armed forces of both countries."*

- **Bi-khim Hsiao**, Representative of the Republic of China (Taiwan) to the United States

## OPERATION COMFORT WARRIORS

This program provides wounded servicemembers with rehabilitation equipment for physical therapy and entertainment in the form of special clothing, electronics, sports equipment, music and more. One hundred percent of donations to OCW go toward gifts for injured servicemen and women. [legion.org/ocw](http://legion.org/ocw)

## MILITARY QUALITY OF LIFE

The American Legion's support of the U.S. military – from adequate funding for weapons systems to reasonable child-care services for deployed troops – is respected in the Pentagon, at the White House and on Capitol Hill.

## SUPPORT FOR TRICARE

The U.S. military's health-care system and medical insurance program frequently face challenges in Washington. The American Legion persistently testifies on the need to keep TRICARE and TRICARE For Life viable and affordable benefits of military service.

## DISASTER PREPAREDNESS

Dozens of American Legion posts and more than 3,400 Ham Radio Club volunteers set the tone for preparing for natural disasters. In many communities, American Legion posts serve as civil-defense shelters and havens of relief in the event of catastrophe or attack on U.S. soil. Ham radio operators can relay messages when other communication systems are down. [legion.org/hamradio](http://legion.org/hamradio)

## BORDER SECURITY AND IMMIGRATION

The American Legion opposes illegal immigration and amnesty for those who came to the United States illegally. The American Legion advocates for strict border and port security as a defense against invasion or attack by foreign enemies, illegal drug trafficking and adverse economic impact. The American Legion, however, strongly supports legal naturalization.

## NATIONAL EMERGENCY FUND

The National Emergency Fund has provided more than \$9 million in immediate financial assistance to American Legion Family members and posts affected by natural disasters. The financial grants have helped American Legion members and Sons of The American Legion members rebuild their lives. [legion.org/emergency](http://legion.org/emergency)

## BLUE STAR BANNERS

The American Legion's Blue Star Banner was resurrected after 9/11 to acknowledge U.S. families with loved ones serving in the Armed Forces during wartime. American Legion Blue Star Salutes and other post-sponsored events to distribute the banners are effective expressions of homefront support for military families. [legion.org/troops/bluestar](http://legion.org/troops/bluestar)

## BLOOD DONOR PROGRAM

The American Legion conducts state competitions throughout the country for posts that donate blood or host blood drives. [legion.org/security/blood](http://legion.org/security/blood)

## FOREIGN RELATIONS

The American Legion maintains a strong working relationship with the State Department to promote peace, human rights and trade on a global scale. The American Legion urges the president and Congress to continue pursuing the "smart power" strategy of using military and economic strength in tandem with foreign aid and human-rights negotiations to fulfill U.S. foreign policy.

## FULL ACCOUNTING OF POW/MIAS

The American Legion maintains unwavering support for the full accounting of all U.S. military personnel taken as prisoners of war, missing or killed in action on foreign soil. Official meetings of the American Legion start with a prayer to honor our nation's POWs. POW/ MIA flags, patches and pins are displayed at American Legion events to demonstrate the organization's eternal vigilance. [legion.org/powmia](http://legion.org/powmia)

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## PILLAR III: AMERICANISM

For those looking to make differences in their local communities, The American Legion is a great place to start. From American Legion Baseball to Boys State/Boys Nation to the Oratorical Contest, there are plenty of opportunities to make your mark.

Take, for example, the experience of Pat Unger, commander of Tyler Cates American Legion Post 281 in Mount Juliet, Tenn. Unger's vision of creating an American Legion Baseball team came true. The post provides support by supplying uniforms, attending games, serving refreshments and meeting players' transportation needs.

"The enthusiasm and camaraderie among the Legion members and players has been one of the most rewarding experiences for everyone," Unger says. "The experience of going to a baseball game and knowing that The American Legion is a driving force behind the teams is both gratifying and satisfying. American Legion Baseball is truly a rewarding and fun endeavor for any American Legion post to be involved with."

American Legion posts and volunteers like Unger coordinate each season, culminating with the American Legion World Series in Shelby, N.C., watched by millions on ESPNU and ESPN3.

More than 54,000 young athletes compete for over 3,400 American Legion Baseball teams each year. Some of these baseball players go on to play professionally, including more than 82 who have been enshrined in the Baseball Hall of Fame in Cooperstown, N.Y.

[legion.org/baseball](http://legion.org/baseball)

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*"Relationships are what drive everything – especially in the game of baseball – and have the opportunity to form that kind of unity like we did with American Legion Baseball. It's just as important as learning to field a ground ball."*

– Major League Baseball All-Star **Brian Dozier**,  
who played American Legion Baseball for  
Post 49 in Tupelo, Miss.

## BOYS STATE/BOYS NATION

Young men throughout the country learn firsthand how government works during American Legion Boys State and American Legion Boys Nation. From each Boys State program, two delegates are selected to attend Boys Nation in Washington, D.C., where they form a mock federal Senate and meet with top officials in the nation's capital.

[legion.org/boysnation](http://legion.org/boysnation)

## JUNIOR SHOOTING SPORTS

American Legion youth air-rifle teams compete throughout the country for a possible berth in the National Junior Shooting Sports championships at the U.S. Olympic Training Center in Colorado Springs, Colo. [legion.org/shooting](http://legion.org/shooting)

## ORATORICAL COMPETITION

The American Legion High School Oratorical Scholarship Program gives thousands of young people the opportunity to hone their speaking skills and learn about the U.S. Constitution. Competitions at the local and state levels lead up to the National American Legion High School Oratorical Contest in Indianapolis, where top finishers are awarded more than \$203,500 in scholarships. [legion.org/oratorical](http://legion.org/oratorical)

## YOUTH LAW CADET ENFORCEMENT

American Legion departments conduct week-long American Legion Youth Cadet Law Enforcement Programs for rising high school seniors that educate them about law enforcement and instills respect for law officials.

[legion.org/juniorlaw](http://legion.org/juniorlaw)

## SCOUTING

American Legion posts sponsor more than 2,300 Scouting units and provide thousands of dollars in scholarships. The American Legion offers a national scholarship for Eagle Scout of the Year and the Square Knot Award for Legionnaires who assist Scouting programs in their communities.

[legion.org/scouting](http://legion.org/scouting)

## EDUCATION ASSISTANCE

At the national, state and local levels, The American Legion provides access to dozens of scholarships and education programs.

[legion.org/scholarships](http://legion.org/scholarships)

## LEGACY SCHOLARSHIP

The American Legion Legacy Scholarship provides college scholarships for children of military personnel who were killed on active duty since 9/11, or have a combined VA disability rating of 50 percent or greater. The needs-based scholarship is designed to fulfill a gap after all federal and state grants and scholarships have been used by eligible applicants. [legion.org/scholarships/legacy](http://legion.org/scholarships/legacy)

## U.S. FLAG PROTECTION AND EDUCATION

The American Legion is the nation's leading supporter of a constitutional amendment to protect the U.S. flag from desecration. Since a 5-4 Supreme Court decision in 1989 defined flag burning as free speech, The American Legion has advocated alongside members of Congress, the Citizens Flag Alliance and the majority of Americans to return to the states the right to enact flag-protection laws. The American Legion is also the nation's foremost authority on the U.S. Flag Code and proper dignified disposal of unserviceable U.S. flags. [legion.org/flag](http://legion.org/flag)

## VOTER PARTICIPATION

American Legion posts serve as polling places, political debate venues and forums during campaigns. The American Legion is a nonpartisan organization but takes an active role in the political process and encourages Americans to register and vote in all elections. [legion.org/vote](http://legion.org/vote)

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## PILLAR IV: CHILDREN & YOUTH

The American Legion's Children & Youth pillar is guided by three main objectives: strengthen the family unit, support organizations that help children in need, and provide communities with well-rounded programs to provide hope and opportunity for young people facing difficult challenges.

Temporary Financial Assistance (TFA) is designed to assist minor children of eligible active-duty service-members or eligible American Legion members through cash grants. These grants help families meet the costs of shelter, utilities, food and medical expenses.

An example of how The American Legion aids service-members was in full view of the nation in January 2019 when the longest government shutdown prevented U.S. Coast Guard servicemembers from receiving their paychecks.

In response, American Legion volunteers and staff worked tirelessly to process TFA grants so that the Coast Guard personnel and their families would be able to afford food, pay housing and utilities, and take care of other necessary bills.

In all, the American Legion distributed more than \$1 million to Coast Guard members and their families at that time. While an extraordinary effort, this type of support is carried out by American Legion members daily throughout the United States. [legion.org/tfa](https://www.legion.org/tfa)

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*"The American Legion was almost like a hero for me. The American Legion eased our financial burden and worry with their assistance to help us."*

– **Ivan Redhorn** of Great Falls, Mont., an Army veteran of the Iraq War and a father of six, who lost his home to a house fire.

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## AMERICAN LEGION FAMILY

The American Legion Family consists of The American Legion, Sons of The American Legion, American Legion Auxiliary and American Legion Riders. Members of the Riders must also be members of The American Legion, Auxiliary or Sons.

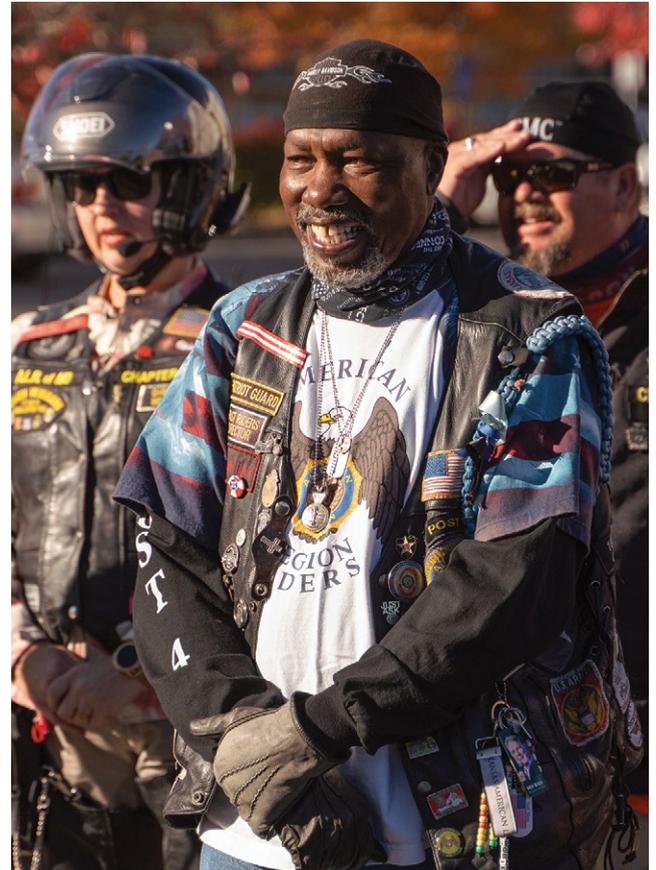


- **The Sons of The American Legion:** Founded in 1932, the Sons honor the service and sacrifice of veterans. There are more than 372,000 members in the United States. Members include males whose parents or grandparents served in the U.S. military and were eligible for American Legion membership. [legion.org/sons/join](https://legion.org/sons/join)
- **The American Legion Auxiliary:** The Auxiliary's membership criteria was changed in 2019 from "wives" to "spouses," allowing males to join the organization. With 9,000 units in the United States, members are dedicated to serving, helping and meeting the needs of veterans, their families and their communities. [alaforveterans.org](https://alaforveterans.org)

• **American Legion Riders:** There are more than 2,500 American Legion Riders chapters across the nation. American Legion Riders support their communities with local fundraising events as well as being the primary force behind the annual Legacy Scholarship Fund. Riders raise awareness and collect donations during the annual American Legion Legacy Ride, which has helped raise more than \$12 million for the scholarship fund.

Additionally, Riders perform a number of services for American Legion-supported causes and provide support at military funerals.

[legion.org/riders](https://legion.org/riders)



# Why You Should Belong

## Benefits of American Legion Membership



### THE AMERICAN LEGION MAGAZINE

Members of The American Legion receive a free subscription to The American Legion Magazine, the largest veterans magazine in the nation. Every month, the magazine is filled with interesting stories, interviews, graphics, photos and ads of interest to Legionnaires and their families. [legion.org/magazine](https://legion.org/magazine)

### AMERICAN LEGION ONLINE UPDATE

Members are automatically invited to receive the free weekly American Legion Online Update e-newsletter, which delivers a comprehensive round-up of stories, photos, videos and other material straight to their email inboxes. To subscribe, go to [legion.org/newsletters](https://legion.org/newsletters).

### MYLEGION.ORG

An online network just for Legionnaires is available through [mylegion.org](https://mylegion.org). The network is built for veterans who want to communicate better with each other and with their posts. It offers a variety of services, including membership administration tools.

## MEMBER DISCOUNTS

Membership in The American Legion gives Legionnaires access to discounts on a variety of products and services. Discounts are available through participating providers in the following categories: car rental, home services, financial and insurance, medical, moving and relocation, travel and other industries. [legion.org/discounts](https://legion.org/discounts)

## FINANCIAL AND INSURANCE SERVICES

The American Legion and USAA have teamed up to connect the nation's largest veterans service organization with one of the nation's top-ranked insurance and financial services company. American Legion members now have access to the full range of financial and insurance services and a separate credit card. For every USAA membership originating through the dedicated American Legion-USAA website ([legion.org/usaa](https://legion.org/usaa)) or by a special toll-free phone line – 877-699-2654 – American Legion programs receive a financial donation from USAA.

## AMERICAN LEGION EMBLEM SALES

Members of the American Legion Family are invited to review the Emblem Sales catalog for the latest in patriotic merchandise, American-made flags and apparel. A catalog of products is shipped to members, or they can visit Emblem Sales online anytime to safely place their orders. [emblem.legion.org](https://emblem.legion.org)

## LEGISLATIVE ACTION CENTER

Members stay up to date on congressional action related to American Legion resolutions and programs. Additionally, they can receive legislative alerts, easily contact their elected officials to advocate for veteran-friendly legislation, and much more. [legion.org/legislative](https://legion.org/legislative)

# Why You Should Belong

## Contact information

### MEMBERSHIP

(317) 630-1327, [membership@legion.org](mailto:membership@legion.org)

### VETERANS AFFAIRS & REHABILITATION

(202) 263-5759, [var@legion.org](mailto:var@legion.org)

### VETERANS EMPLOYMENT & EDUCATION

(202) 263-5771, [vec@legion.org](mailto:vec@legion.org)

### LEGISLATIVE

(202) 263-5752, [legislative@legion.org](mailto:legislative@legion.org)

### NATIONAL SECURITY

(202) 263-5765, [ns@legion.org](mailto:ns@legion.org)

### AMERICANISM

(317) 630-1203, [americanism@legion.org](mailto:americanism@legion.org)

### MEDIA AND COMMUNICATIONS

(317) 630-1298, [magazine@legion.org](mailto:magazine@legion.org)

### THE AMERICAN LEGION MAGAZINE

(317) 630-1298, [magazine@legion.org](mailto:magazine@legion.org)

### SONS OF THE AMERICAN LEGION

(317) 630-1205, [sal@legion.org](mailto:sal@legion.org)

### AMERICAN LEGION RIDERS

(317) 630-1327, [legionriders@legion.org](mailto:legionriders@legion.org)

## How do I ...

... find a post close to me?

Go to [legion.org/posts](https://legion.org/posts) to search our database.

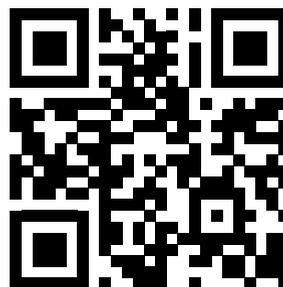
... find an American Legion job fair close to me?

Go to [legion.org/careers/jobfairs](https://legion.org/careers/jobfairs).

... find a service officer?

Go to [legion.org/serviceofficers](https://legion.org/serviceofficers) to search our database.

## Join Today



Scan here  
to visit [legion.org/join](https://legion.org/join)  
or visit your local  
American Legion post.

## Who to contact

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 AMERICAN  
**LEGION**

P.O. Box 1055  
Indianapolis, IN 46206  
1-800-433-3318

**legion.org**



Connect with The American Legion

