



American Legion Training Newsletter

National Headquarters
Internal Affairs Division

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Five Core Documents of The American Legion



In all walks of life, training has played an integral part in our individual development.

As we grow older the opportunities to grow and

learn tend to be downplayed. In The American Legion's long 100-year history, training and education have played an

important part in our organization and in how we have impacted our nation. will provide you with most of the information you need to more completely understand how our great organization functions and operates.

The American Legion Charter and our National Constitution and By-Laws are our basic governance documents. The federal charter states the purpose



The Uniform Code of Procedures for The Organization of National Conventions covers how a national convention operates, the call for a convention, the standing convention committees and the rules under how the convention is to be conducted.

Rules of the National Executive Committee identifies the officers, their duties and powers, order of business, their fiscal policy, and their operating procedures.

The Outline of Authorization; Membership and Purpose for Commissions and Committees lists the 10 commissions and their purpose, plus all special committees, national commander's representatives, consultants and advisers and appointments of national commander's representatives, consultants and advisers.

Read, familiarize yourself and own the information found in these important documents and you will successfully understand how The American Legion works. Enjoy!

Dan W. Wheeler, the National Adjutant of The American Legion has served in that capacity since October 2008. Dan is a veteran of the U.S. Navy.

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Five documents produced by your national headquarters, *Charter of The American Legion, National Constitution and By-laws, Uniform Code of Procedure for The Organization of National Conventions, Rules of the National Executive Committee, and Outline of Authorization; Membership and Purpose for Commissions and Committees*, all available for free at www.legion.org/publications,

of the organization, member eligibility, powers, exclusive right to name and emblem and that we are non-profit. The American Legion constitution covers membership eligibility, who the national officers are, how they are elected, department and post organization and annual membership dues. The By-Laws list the duties of the National Executive Committee, the elected officers, chartering of departments and posts, and how discipline is to be conducted.

A Brief History of The American Legion

By Dan Wheeler, National Adjutant

I spoke recently to the **2017 National American Legion College** class. It is always a pleasure seeing a new group of energetic Legionnaires spend a challenging week learning about

the history and traditions of our great organization.

Most of the college occurred in the National Executive Committee Room on the fourth floor at our National Headquarters in Indy. Over the course of our 100 year history, a lot of impactful decisions have been made in that room.

Across the aptly-named American Legion Mall is our earlier national headquarters, and the previous meeting place for the NEC. These



rooms produced ideas leading to the birth of the GI Bill, support for Boy Scouts of America, and a policy stating that any discrimination based on race is un-American.

creating the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier; and **Ralph Godwin (MS)**, who led the team which developed the Godwin Report, a definitive membership study.



In our present NEC room The American Legion decided to take a stand on Agent Orange and sue the government for benefits and medical care; opening membership to Vietnam veterans and beyond; and called for the firing of a VA secretary and his two principal deputies, among other monumental positions.

At the very desks where the Legion College attendees sat, the great men and women leaders of our family have also sat. To name a few: **Harry Colmery (KS)**, who wrote the initial draft of the GI Bill; the late U.S. Rep. **Hamilton Fish (NY)**, one of the committee members authoring the Preamble, who commanded the Harlem Hellfighters of the Great War, and wrote the legislation

The NEC Room was also the meeting place for **Past National Commander E. Roy Stone, Jr. (SC)**, who was the "Dean of the NEC" for 50 years, and much that was accomplished by the American Legion including the creation of the Department of Veterans Affairs occurred on his watch.

The NEC Room also displays a painting by



Reni Mel entitled "America." It is signed on each bottom corner by **General Black Jack Pershing and Field Marshal**

Ferdinand Foch of France. It was presented to the Legion in 1923 and has hung in the NEC room ever since. Its theme is "America saving the world," which, with God's guidance, is what we did. And we need to be that reliable always.

Now back to the Serviceman's Readjustment Act of 1944, better known as the GI Bill of Rights.

In the end, other VSOs did not oppose the bill, as they had in the beginning. The point of contention between The American Legion and the other major VSOs was they didn't want to ask Congress for all that was needed, for fear that they would get nothing.

The American Legion knew that "memory is short." If veterans didn't get what they deserved immediately – now – it wouldn't happen later.

Our leaders were clear and concise in their vision of what needed to be done. They had

the courage and passion to achieve their vision. Those leaders made up their mind and didn't hesitate to commit...., it was all hands on deck. They possessed four attributes of truly great leaders: clarity, decisiveness, courage and passion.

Another point of importance regarding the GI Bill was not just about establishing means for veteran housing and education. It was also about avoiding a continuation of the Great Depression.

Sixteen million men and women were returning to a full-employment economy. Their return would create rampant unemployment and family devastation.

The GI Bill re-assimilated all of those service people back into the economy slowly creating a middle class with home ownership, education, and prosperity.

But, it almost didn't happen. In committee, the chairman, John Rankin, was opposed to

the "52-20" provision that gave unemployed veterans \$20 a week for up to 52 weeks. Rankin feared that some vets would refuse to look for work if they could be paid to do nothing.



PNC Harry Colmery (KS), "architect of the GI Bill"

In the end, the GI Bill passed into law and expressed a core belief of The American Legion: "The cost of war doesn't end when the cannon goes silent. It continues for the life of each person who fought in it."

A replica of the original GI Bill, along with FDR's signing pen and the congressional gavel are displayed under glass in our Endowment Room on the third floor. The original is kept in our safe on these grounds.

If you have not visited your American Legion National Headquarters in Indianapolis, I encourage you to do so. Your national staff would be happy to give you a tour.



G.I. Bill artifacts at The American Legion national headquarters

NATIONAL NEWSLETTERS

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www.legion.org/newsletters.

STAY CURRENT on YOUR PROGRAMS!



LEAD: Leadership, Education And Training

Disaster Preparedness and Response/ National Emergency Fund (NEF) 2 hours

Are your members able to provide real-time support to your fellow citizens, Legion Family members, and first responders?

“Mutual helpfulness” is a core principle of our organization.

We fulfill our duties to our community, our country, and our comrades by maintaining a state of readiness within our posts in case of natural or manmade disasters.



Posts, districts, and departments must prepare to meet these obligations everywhere in the nation. The *Disaster Preparedness/National Emergency Fund* training covers those steps necessary to develop emergency plans and checklists and work with local Homeland Security, Citizen Corps, and other community-based public safety organizations. Students will also learn how to properly document, prepare, and submit requests for emergency assistance for American Legion members under NEF.

LEAD offers more than 30 different training classes. A new cap/lapel pin will be presented to each participant who completes, at the minimum, eight hours of LEAD training. These modules are exportable as well—present the training with your own instructors!

For specific information regarding any training module, or LEAD in general, contact your department headquarters or ia@legion.org.

American Legion Online Update
Honor and Remembrance
Flag Alerts
The Dugout
Legion Riders
Commander's Message
Career Center
Centennial Celebration
Training in The American Legion
Member Discounts
Legislative
Digital Dispatch
Amateur Radio Club

Upcoming National Events



The American Legion Membership and Post Activities Planning Session convenes each year in Indianapolis over two days in January. Members of the national M&PA Committee learn, network and share best practices for membership growth and retention. Attendees hear from national leadership and guest speakers, debate and discuss membership initiatives, help develop national planning, and share best practices for American Legion membership growth within all the departments.

This periodic, Legionnaire-driven newsletter, produced by the Internal Affairs Division, highlights training that other departments and individuals are conducting throughout The American Legion.

Are you a trainer? Can you write? We need your submissions! Send your training ideas to train@legion.org.