



American Legion Training Newsletter

National Headquarters Internal Affairs & Membership Division

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Honor - Serve - Prepare

Membership is the key to OUR success



**By James W. "Bill" Oxford,
National Commander**

We are embarking on the next 100 years of The American Legion, and I would like to look at where we are going as an organization. It is critical to realize that we are the future of this organization. The things we did yesterday, the things we do today, and the things we will do tomorrow are the reason that my theme this year is building the "Foundation for the Future."

Our all-time high was 3.3 million members in 1946. This needs to be our ultimate goal, but we cannot expect this to happen overnight or even this year. The 2018-

2019 membership goal was just a little over 1.8 million members. We need to set and achieve goals that will act as stepping stones to getting us back to attaining our all-time high.

For the 2019 membership year, our retention rate for the whole organization finished at 86.3 percent, and we recruited 63,815 new members at the post level. Although these numbers are respectable, if we are going to have success and grow over last year's membership totals, we have to increase our retention rate and our traditional new recruiting. That is why I have set two personal goals for our great organization based on membership.

Goal one: Increase our overall

retention rate to 90 percent. As of Sept. 18, our retention rate is 48.3 percent. So we are halfway to our goal. We have to continue personally contacting our members preferably with a visit, but otherwise through email, text messaging or a phone call. We cannot solely rely upon the renewal notices to make contact.

Goal two: Increase our traditional recruiting to bring in 100,000 new members. With the passage of the LEGION Act, there are an additional 4.2 million veterans now eligible to become Legionnaires. That gives us an eligible pool of over 19 million veterans. We just have to ask these veterans to join and educate them on what we do. Every member, post, district and department can help

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About this newsletter

This periodic and Legionnaire-driven newsletter, produced by the Internal Affairs & Membership Division, is designed to address best practices, ideas and training that every Legionnaire needs to know to engage our membership through effective training now and into the future.

Highlighting new training ideas and resources becoming available in 2019 and beyond, it will also feature essays from successful leaders and training ideas of posts, districts, departments and individuals throughout The American Legion.

Are you a trainer? A writer? We need your submissions! Send your training ideas and articles to train@legion.org.

Membership is the key to OUR success

increase our visibility by engaging these veterans through our programs and events, such as a fish fry, family day, Boys/Girls State, flag retirement ceremony or an American Legion Baseball game. Invite and involve the American Legion Family to be a part of and welcome these veterans into our posts.

As we work to surpass our membership goals, we have to tell our story to complete the job. So the last goal I have is not based around membership numbers, but rather on the Consolidated Post Report (CPR). I want to increase our CPR response rate from 70 percent to 100 percent. Each post has a story to tell and when we speak collectively our strength is magnified.

As we submit our reports about American Legion programs and efforts, we must consider the people it took to make these things happen. I want to recognize any American Legion Family member for a job well done. Any Legionnaire, Auxiliary, Sons of The American Legion or Legion Rider member who recruits three new Legion members will receive my commander's membership incentive pin. Any post, district, county or department that exceeds 103 percent of their membership goal, the commander and membership chairman will receive my pin as well.

With Veterans Day coming up, I cannot stress enough the importance of conducting a Buddy Check. This is not a membership drive, but solely a health and welfare check on current, past and potential members. This is one of our reasons for existence. Assisting veterans and checking on their well-being is the essence of one of the founding pillars of The American Legion. If you have not done so, please plan a Buddy Check event and personally contact veterans living in your community.

If we meet these goals I have set in place, we will set the organization up for success. Ultimately, we have to raise The American Legion's visibility in our communities if we are going to be successful in membership. It is how we will build a foundation for the future of our American Legion.



Commander Oxford's new recruiting goal:

How do we get there?

By Internal Affairs & Membership Division

The excitement and rejuvenation we feel coming out of the 101st American Legion National Convention is evident. There were some notable achievements that set conditions for a truly remarkable 2020 membership year.

If all things had remained consistent coming into convention, 100,000 new members would have been seen as a difficult road ahead. However, looking at initiatives that surfaced during 2019 have Legionnaires from around the globe convinced that we will surpass the national commander's goal.

First, is the Buddy Check. The Buddy Check is not a membership drive, but rather an opportunity to get back to taking care of our fellow veterans. Veterans get the help they need and communities see an active post taking care of their own. The Buddy Check helped us get back to our roots and vindicate our purpose ***to consecrate and sanctify our comradeship by our devotion to mutual helpfulness.***

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FIND IT ONLINE : [*myLegion.org*](http://myLegion.org) *is a FREE website designed to connect members of The American Legion to their post and department leadership.*

Commander Oxford's new recruiting goal: How do we get there?

Second, is the monumental legislative achievement of the passing of the LEGION Act. The LEGION Act extends the current recognized war era back to Dec. 7, 1941, to honor military members who served their country with honor but whose service fell in gaps between war eras. This opens up membership eligibility and pays respect to 1,600 U.S. servicemembers who were killed or wounded during previously undeclared periods of war.

The following is a four-step recruiting process to help The American Legion and our commander achieve our goal.

1. Know the history of the organization.

All of the armed forces were born from necessity, but made storied by rich history. The history of each military service branch formed the foundation of its culture, and the culture is one of the many facets that appealed to us. Upon joining, we knew we had an obligation to continue the proud legacy of those that wore the cloth of our nation before us—and so we did just that! It seems obvious, then, that knowing the rich history of The American Legion is the minimum requirement for recruiting new members. This is why, at a minimum, every Legionnaire should take the [Basic Training](#) course. In order to have a vision for the future, we must know our past and

remain committed to the strategic purpose of the organization.

2. Sell the history, but paint a vivid picture of the future.

While it is important to know our rich history, it is even more important to understand our significance to the future of this great organization. A quick glimpse of the road behind us inspires pride and confidence in what we have done, but the road ahead reminds of the challenges and obstacles still ahead. In the process of looking for new members, identify veterans with the same interests and passion that will move us forward. Then paint a vision of what the grand future of The American Legion could be with their talents in our member ranks. If a prospective member can visualize themselves working with The American Legion, giving back and finding purpose in life, they will join.

3. Satisfy the real needs of prospective members.

Selling an organization is complex. To gain appeal, The American Legion needs to satisfy the needs of the prospective members who believe the organization can truly deliver on its many promises to veterans and their communities. That may be a need for camaraderie, a need to belong, a need to fulfill purpose, a need to help fellow veterans, a need to share burdens and demons, a need to advance community relations, or

countless other subjective needs. Of course, as is true with everything in life, there is no achieved perfection or ability to satisfy everyone's wants and needs. However, the more accommodating we can be to the real needs of the member, the more confident that we can be that we are selling truth!

4. Under promise and over deliver.

The simple reality is this: the biggest threat to recruiting is selling a lie. If you promise rainbows and butterflies and deliver dungeons and dragons, there is your first leadership failure — a broken promise. Selling the rich history of the collective body [and what it could be with their membership] can help to inspire them not only to join, but to be the necessary agents of change to advance us into our next century. After all, we all wanted to have a positive impact on our service and did — and so holds true for the future of The American Legion if we cultivate the young veteran talent. The foundation for being a Legionnaire is serving others before self, but human nature is to make the best “mutually beneficial” decision. Show the potential member how their participation in our organization can improve us, while also helping them with their own personal and professional growth.



Online video resources

Take advantage of American Legion videos on the Legion's Vimeo and YouTube channel.

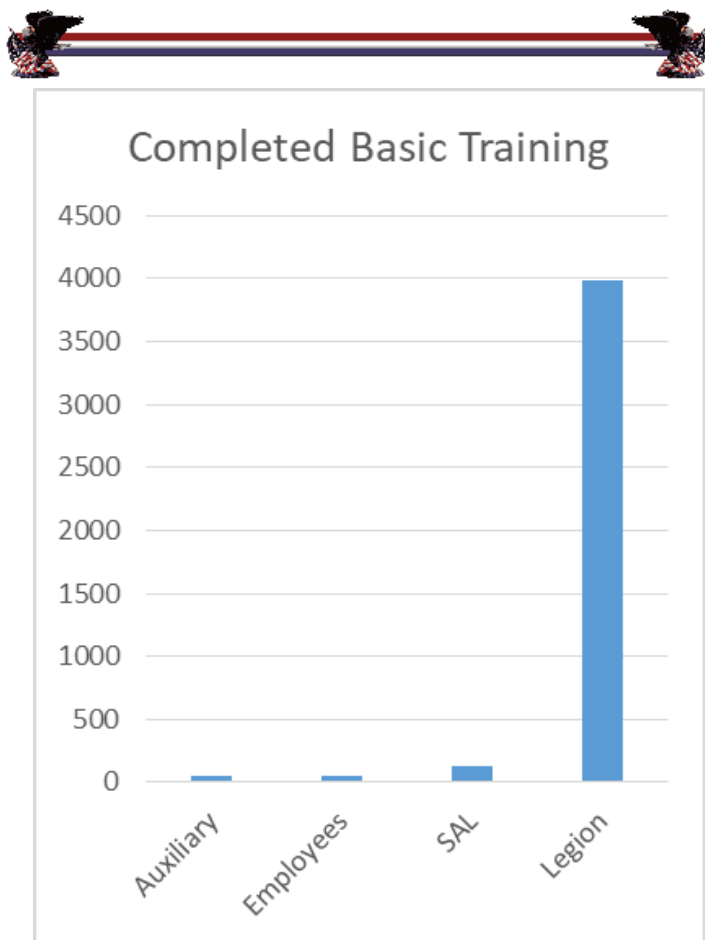
Use these tools at meetings, awareness tables, kiosks and anywhere you want to engage others about The American Legion.

Vimeo.com/americanlegion

www.youtube.com/user/americanlegionHQ

Upcoming Issue Topics:

- * **Kevin Mook (MD)** - Importance of the CPR
- * **Doug Chace (IN)** - Membership retention



Total of 4,252 people have taken the Basic Training course



Is your department holding training? Let us know and we will publicize it! Send your training info to train@legion.org.



MISSING AN EDITION?

Go to <http://www.legion.org/training/newsletters> and read or download any past edition you are missing!

National training under development

ALEI now stands for “American Legion Education Institute,” the forthcoming package of advanced American Legion online coursework for Legion Family members and youth program participants. The expanded ALEI will soon offer online training, YouTube videos, LEAD training videos, lesson plans for department instructors, and assistance for department Legion Colleges.



American Legion Basic Training — only the first step. The former American Legion Extension Institute (ALEI) course was renamed to “Basic Training” to indicate it is the first step of training. The original ALEI was an American Legion correspondence course designed decades ago to give members a history and description of the organization. The new Basic Training course is better defined as an introductory training course within the American Legion Extension Institute (now the new ALEI) explaining our mission, history, programs and basic skills. **It is the anchor course for future training under ALEI.** Basic Training is available now and is free at www.legion.org/alei.



District Training In A Box

To effectively implement District Training In A Box modules departments should maintain a cadre of approved educators, subject matter experts, facilitators, and trainers to develop members and progress the mission of the department through training. Graduates of National American Legion College and Department American Legion College are an excellent source for this group, but many of this group could be qualified based on their knowledge or expertise on a particular subject or profession. Many essential presenters at national workshops are members of the Sons of The American Legion and the color of a presenter’s cover should never be an assumption of their ability to promote training in a department, regardless of their connection or association to The American Legion family.

National Staff is developing training on the following topics:

PHASE ONE Projected Phase Completion Date: 2019 Fall NEC Meetings

Membership Development / Retention, Post adjutant, MyLegion.org, Membership Recruitment, Post Leader Development, Post commander, Online Transmittal Process, Parliamentary Procedures, Mentorship, This is The American Legion, Resolutions

PHASE TWO Projected Phase Completion Date: 2020 Spring NEC Meetings

Post Chaplain, Post Filing Requirements, Developing a Post Vision, Post Sergeant-at-Arms, Growing a Post, Running a Meeting, American Legion Etiquette/Protocol, Growing a Program, Helping Veterans and Their Families/OCW, Messaging to Your Community Fundraising, Constitution/By-laws Best Practices, Mentoring, Finance Officer, Post Service Officer

PHASE THREE Projected Phase Completion Date: 2020 Fall NEC Meetings

American Legion Riders, Oratorical Contest, Scholastic Scholarship, Sons of The American Legion, Boys State/Nation, American Legion Baseball, National Emergency Fund/disaster preparedness, Scouting, Junior Shooting Sports, American Legion foundations (Temporary Financial Assistance, Child Welfare Foundation and NEF), Youth Cadet Law Enforcement, color/honor guard, amateur radio (TALARC), Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps

While this training has the word “district” in the title, success of this training initiative lies squarely on the shoulders of the department level of the organization.

American Legion online resources

American Legion National College Class of 2019

Nov. 3-8

*There have been 59 members selected to
participate in the class.*

Best of luck to each of them!

Training Events Calendar

is now active! Check out

<http://www.legion.org/training/events>

for training events in your area.

Are you a department or district trainer and
want your event on this calendar?

Add it today!

Don't see the training you know should be
there? Contact your department training team.

