



**AMERICAN LEGION
DEPARTMENT OF MONTANA
2021
OFFICERS GUIDE FOR
ZONE COMMANDERS
&
DISTRICT COMMANDERS**

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TO: MONTANA AMERICAN LEGION DISTRICT COMMANDERS AND ZONE COMMANDERS.

FROM: GARY A. WHITE, DEPARTMENT ADJUTANT

This portfolio has been prepared for your personal use during the coming Legion year. In it, you will find information and suggestions that have been developed over the years that will be of assistance to you during your year as a member of the Department Executive Committee.

Much of the information is directed to District Commanders, who may be serving their first term in that capacity. As an aid to your District meeting, **I have included a complete agenda for you to follow.**

We cannot stress too strongly that help is available to you. The Department Headquarters Phone number is 406-324-3989/3990. Or Toll Free 866-793-1257. FAX Number is 406-226-7462 and the e-mail address is amlegmt29@mtlegion.org. Feel free to contact us at any time. There is also very useful information on the Department website: mtlegion.org; you should check it often.

This publication should be used in conjunction with the Department Post Officers Guide, The American Legion Manual of Ceremonies and The American Legion District Commanders Guide

District Commanders MUST sign up to use myLegion and both

District and Zone Commanders need to check their emails daily!

2020-2021 NATIONAL MEMBERSHIP TARGET DATES

EARLY BIRD/NEF KICKOFF	SEPTEMBER 11, 2020	50%
FALL MEETING	OCTOBER 9, 2020	55%
VETERANS DAY	NOVEMBER 14, 2020	65%
PEARL HARBOR DAY	DECEMBER 11, 2020	75%
MID-WINTER	JANUARY 16, 2021	80%
PRESIDENT'S DAY	FEBRUARY 12, 2021	85%
LEGION BIRTHDAY	MARCH 12, 2021	90%
CHILDREN & YOUTH	APRIL 9, 2021	95%
ARMED FORCES DAY	MAY 7, 2021	100%
DELEGATE STRENGTH	30 DAYS PRIOR TO NATIONAL CONVENTION	

Target dates fall on the second Wednesday of the Month unless there is a holiday on that day or at the beginning of that week.

The November target date will be on the second Thursday due to Veterans Day falling on that Monday

To maximize the December renewal, notice the January target date will be on the third Thursday of the month.

**AMERICAN LEGION
MEMBERSHIP
2021 RENEWAL SCHEDULE**

CUTOFF DATES

May 8, 2020

September 11, 2020

October 10, 2020

***December 11, 2020**

February 12, 2021

April 9, 2021

RENEWAL DATES

July 1, 2020

October 7, 2020

November 15, 2020

January 3, 2021

February 26, 2021

April 25, 2021

* This cutoff date is also a membership target date. Transmittals received after this date will not prevent a subsequent notice from being delivered at or around the renewal date.

THE AMERICAN LEGION OF MONTANA

YOU'RE THE NEW ZONE/DISTRICT COMMANDER

The National Constitution of The American Legion states "Departments shall have authority to create intermediate bodies between the Posts and Department to act as liaison between such organizations and for the purpose of promoting a program of The American Legion. The Department Executive Committee shall define the powers of such intermediate group, but in no event shall such powers invade the prerogative now vested either in the Post or Department or National Organization."

In many ways, the District Commander is the most important man in The American Legion. Experience has proven that when a District Commander has organized his District, is meeting his responsibilities, and is keeping a constant awareness of happenings in his District, the entire District is elevated.

The District Commander is the elected representative of the Posts in the District and the Zone Commander is elected to oversee the District Commanders in his Zone. Posts are responsible to carry out the objectives and programs of The American Legion and to fully comply with the obligations assumed under the Post, Department and National Constitutions. When a Post is inactive, begins to falter or fails, it is the District Commander and Zone Commander who must be prepared to give direction and control.

All District Commanders and Zone Commanders must be concerned generally with:

1. Membership potential, membership goals and target dates.
2. The status of programs throughout the District, including ideas to improve The American Legion's visibility and performance.
3. Some personal objectives.
4. Assignment of responsibilities to Officers, Chairmen, and Committees.
5. Planning District meetings and Post visitations by the Commander.
6. Identify members with potential to assume positions of greater responsibility.

MEMBERSHIP

The BIG job for the District Commander and Zone Commander is membership. They are counted on more and more each year to see that this important job is successfully accomplished, not only by Department, but by National.

The present membership goals for each District were set in the Spring and submitted to each District meeting for approval. However, the goals may have to be adjusted based on changes which could be made at the National Membership workshop in August. The Post goals were then set by the District membership committee. Any Post can petition to the District Commander to have its membership goal decreased or increased but the District goal total cannot be changed except by action of the Department Membership Committee.

RECRUITING ADDENDUM FOR DISTRICT & ZONE COMMANDERS

MEMBERSHIP is a management challenge. The Officers Guide clearly establishes the Post Vice Commander as the person most responsible for attention to membership. I quote: "Particularly should you interest yourself in the membership of the Post.... assisted by the most active and devoted members. No single factor has so important an influence on the Post's success as membership." This addendum therefore addresses how we hope to improve the recruiting efforts across the Department by attention to recruiting efforts by the Vice Commanders at all levels.

Zone Commanders will be expected to assist in this effort by assisting their respective District Commanders in compliance with the addendum.

The Department Vice Commander is responsible for membership/recruiting. There is a chain of responsibility down through the Zones, Districts and Posts so that this vital responsibility is clearly assigned and considered in every Post and District meeting. Many of you will say that this framework already exists. Yes, you are essentially correct, but the process has suffered from lack of attention to this vital function. We are starting a period of change and need your support, your thoughts and willingness to "give it a go."

- 1. The District Commander under the Zone Commander is responsible for providing a flow of information and MEMBERSHIP TEAM planning from the Department to the Post level.**
- 2. The District Commander SHALL APPOINT a District Membership Chairman.**
- 3. The District Commander or District Membership Chairman shall assist the Posts in organizing and implementing a membership program and reviewing the Post program during official Post visits.**
- 4. The District Commander, Post and District Vice Commanders, will meet with the Department Vice Commander and Zone Commander at the Fall District Meetings and review the membership programs. They will assist the Posts and Districts in establishing and planning a membership program. At the discretion of the Department Vice Commander or the Zone Commander, a similar meeting will be held during the Spring meetings.**
- 5. In the absence of the Post Vice Commander, a member from the POST MEMBERSHIP TEAM, should attend in his place.**
- 6. In the absence of the Department Vice Commander, the Zone Commander will act as his representative.**

ZONE COMMANDER DESCRIPTION OF DUTIES

The following duties are presented as a guide to Legionnaires upon assuming the position of Zone Commander. It should be clear that there will be some differences in what is required of Zone Commanders in various zones of the Department. Each Zone Commander will need to consider the needs of their respective zone and the relative priority of various tasks in order to lay out a plan of action which will achieve the objectives of the Department of Montana. No one can spell out a precise job description. What follows is an attempt to provide a "roadmap" which will assist in organizing your activities.

ESSENTIAL TASK/ RESPONSIBILITIES

VOTING MEMBER OF DEPARTMENT EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE: You are required to attend District Meetings, Fall Conference, Department Oratory Contest and Department Convention.

RULES COMMITTEE: You are a member of the Rules Committee during Fall Conference and Department Convention.

MEMBERSHIP: You are responsible to assure that each District Commander has an understanding of their responsibilities for recruiting. You should insist upon attention to membership goals, encourage recruiting plans and training for recruiting activities. Limited funds are at your disposal for recruiting (with Vice Commander's approval). The other half of "membership" is retention. You should ensure that each District Commander is insisting upon the establishment of interesting programs at the Post level. Effective Post programs must include active efforts to engage new Legionnaires into Post activities. If you have a Post that does not have regular meetings, you should start revitalizations as soon as possible. **Membership is a direct responsibility of the Department Vice Commander. Your plans and efforts should be in coordination with that office. National and Department personnel are available to assist with revitalization.**

TRAINING: If Legionnaires are to assume greater responsibilities, they must have some degree of preparation. You should always encourage the attendance at Legion schools, District meetings, and Conventions. Instruct your District Commanders to provide for training in their plans for District meetings. Be prepared to assist with the training. **You, along with your District Commanders, are required to complete the American Legion Basic Training available only online at www.legion.org/alei.** Be prepared to attend training provided by the Department or other sources of training. Always be intent upon preparing your replacement and ensuring that other responsible Legionnaires are doing the same. Recommend and encourage District/Post members to complete BASIC TRAINING and attend the Department Legion College held prior to Department Convention.

Assist in identifying viable candidates for the American Legion College and encourage application and attendance. Refer to leadership development on Page 7.

RESOLUTIONS: Yours is a unique opportunity to encourage the development of ideas. Ideas may come from any Legionnaire. Seek to encourage the preparation of resolutions at Post and District levels. Show interest in this vital function. Teach others, and personally remember that in the Legion ideas should come from the ground up.

PUBLICITY: Here lies one of your biggest challenges. Most Posts and Districts need to be strengthened in this vital function. You need to bring this to the attention of all Legionnaires with whom you manage contact. Seek or demand the existence of publicity officers and active efforts to publicize Legion activities. Consult with and seek the assistance of the Department Public Relations and Publicity Officer.

ASSISTANCE: This paragraph could well have been entitled “visitations.” Here is your chance to be seen and heard. Have a plan of visitation. Seek out where the Districts have weak Posts. Aim your visits at areas where you can make an impact. You will need to determine whether merely attending District meetings will meet the needs of your zone. Most likely more will be needed. When you visit, be prepared; be a leader, it’s expected and needed.

LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT: You should always be on the alert for talent. Every Post and District has Legionnaires with the potential to assume greater responsibilities. This can require more than mere recognition or training. There must also be opportunity and encouragement to seek to play a greater role. Identify these Legionnaires and seek a way to further their Legion career. In short, don’t let them be lost, bring them along!

RITUAL AND STANDARDS: Again, it is your task to set the standards and insist upon it being met. Ritual helps define us as unique; standards determine our pride and acceptance. Set the example, encourage excellence.

PLAN YOUR LEGION YEAR: The Department Commander and Vice Commander will expect you to accomplish some planning for carrying out your responsibilities. It is strongly recommended that you prepare a written plan for his/her use. This does not require great detail but should give an overview of how and when you expect to accomplish your tasks. Submission of your plan at the Department Convention would allow for discussion and coordination of the coming Legion year. It may greatly improve the effectiveness of the Fall District meetings.

REPORTS: You are required to provide written and oral reports to the Department Executive Committee at the Fall Conference and Department Convention.

COMMAND COMMUNICATION LINES: Lines of communication from the Department down to the Posts and from Posts up to Department are vital. They plug up! Information often does not flow up or down in a timely manner. Keep checking the flow. Problems will constantly arise. Find a way that helps you see if communications are working, then use it! Perhaps you can send a Quarterly/Monthly correspondence to your Posts. Use the Department website and **daily check your email**; if you don’t have e-mail, call Department weekly.

PREAMBLE AND UNIFORM: Know your Legion Preamble. Buy and wear your Zone Commander Legion cap. Dress and act appropriately.

IN SUMMARY: Yours is not a task for a ‘good old boy’. You have a vital role to play. The experience which you bring to bear upon your position is pure gold for The American Legion. Don’t let it be wasted! Teach, be visible, be creative, make suggestions, make demands, encourage, scold, praise; in short: **LEAD!!!!**

DISTRICT COMMANDER DESCRIPTION OF DUTIES

DISTRICT MEETINGS ARE THE DISTRICT COMMANDER’S RESPONSIBILITY. YOU ARE REQUIRED TO PLAN AND CONDUCT TWO DISTRICT MEETINGS PER YEAR – FALL AND SPRING, DATES TO BE PROVIDED BY DEPARTMENT HEADQUARTERS.

The following duties are presented as a guide to Legionnaires upon assuming the position of District Commander. Each District Commander will need to consider the needs of their respective District and the relative priority of various tasks in order to lay out a plan of action which will achieve the objectives of the Department of Montana. No one can spell out a precise job description. What follows is an attempt to provide a “roadmap” which will assist in organizing your activities.

ESSENTIAL TASK/ RESPONSIBILITIES:

VOTING MEMBER OF DEPARTMENT EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE: You are required to attend District Meetings, Fall Conference, Department Oratory Contest and Department Convention.

MEMBERSHIP: You are responsible to assure that each Post Commander has an understanding of their responsibilities for recruiting. You should insist upon attention to membership goals, encourage recruiting plans and training for recruiting activities. The other half (perhaps the most important) of “membership” is retention. You should ensure that each District Commander is insisting upon the establishment of interesting programs at Post level. Effective Post programs must include active efforts to engage new Legionnaires into Post activities. If you have a Post that does not have regular meetings, you should start revitalizations as soon as possible. **Membership is a direct responsibility of the Department Vice Commander. Your plans and efforts should be in coordination with that office and your Zone Commander.** However, the goals may have to be adjusted based on changes which could be made at the National Membership workshop in August.

TRAINING: If Legionnaires are to assume greater responsibilities, they must have some degree of preparation. You should always encourage the attendance at Legion schools, District meetings, and Conventions. Instruct your Post Commanders to provide for training in their plans for Post meetings. Be prepared to assist with the training. **You are required to complete the American Legion Basic Training Course.** Be prepared to attend training provided by the Department or other sources of training. Always be intent upon preparing your replacement and ensuring that other responsible Legionnaires are doing the same. Recommend and encourage District/Post members to attend Department Legion College training and complete Basic Training. Assist in identifying viable candidates for the American Legion College and encourage application and attendance. Refer to leadership development on Page 7.

RESOLUTIONS: Yours is a unique opportunity to encourage the development of ideas. Ideas may come from any Legionnaire. Seek to encourage the preparation of resolutions at Post and District levels. Show interest in this vital function. Teach others, and personally remember that in the Legion ideas should come from the ground up.

Here are just a few suggestions and things to think about concerning District meetings. It is imperative that you have this information well enough in mind so as to conduct your meetings in an orderly and efficient manner.

The normal schedule for a District meeting will be as follows:

- Registration 9:00 a.m.
- Presentations by Department Officers and/or training at 10:00 a.m.
- Service Officers Briefing at 11:00 a.m. (For all)
- Banquet at 12:00 noon
- Business Meetings at 1.30 p.m.

The Department Commander should be your speaker for the Spring Meeting and the Vice Commander for the Fall Meeting. Please send an invitation to the Dept. Officers as a courtesy. Try not to have any other speakers at the banquet, as it will detract from the Commander or Vice Commander.

Sometimes confusion exists concerning the role of the host Post and the District Officers. The Host Post is responsible for the physical facilities, arranging for the banquet and registration. The agenda and conduct of the meeting is the responsibility of the District Commander and his officers. **It is the District Commanders responsibility to notify all Posts in his/her District as to time and place of District Meetings and any other details. Contact the newspapers, TV and radio stations in your District with District Meeting information.**

Keep in close coordination with the American Legion Auxiliary District President; when meeting with the Post Commander to plan your meeting and include the Auxiliary Unit President as well.

THE DISTRICT MEETING

The District Meeting (Convention) is usually the largest meeting the average Legionnaire attends. Only a small percentage of the members attend a Department Convention, and even smaller percentages attend a National Convention. Therefore, a District meeting should be a good one and reflect credit not only upon yourself as the District Commander, but upon The American Legion in general.

District Commanders should consult with the host Post officers, as well as the Auxiliary Unit Officers, to work out details for the meetings. All Posts in the District

should be sent notices of the meeting 30 days in advance, as well as the Department Headquarters stating the time and place of the meeting and the time and place of the luncheon. Attendance is enhanced by calling Posts 2 weeks in advance and then again 3 days before.

The District Commander should write a note to each Legion dignitary expected to attend. The note should give full information about the date, time and place of the various events.

As presiding officer, the District Commander is seated near the center of the head table, with the District Adjutant usually on his right. (This is for the meeting not the banquet) The Sgt-at-Arms is seated close to the flag (which is always to the right of the head table, whether the head table is on a stage, platform or on the same level as the meeting hall) to take salutes to the flag by members entering or leaving the hall. The District Commander should insist that proper respect for the flag be shown by all Legionnaires. The District Chaplain may be seated either at the head table or close by.

Remember not to break the plain of the Flags. Do not hand or accept items through the plain. The field between the flags is considered hallowed ground.

SUGGESTED FORM FOR CONDUCTING A DISTRICT MEETING

(You may choose to call on the Department Commander/Vice Commander after the preamble if you chose to run the ceremonial portion in the morning)

The District Commander should select members of the District Resolution Committee, Finance Committee and any other District Committee from those present **BEFORE THE MEETING IS OPENED.** Nomination and Membership Goals Committee at Spring Meeting are a must.

The District Commander shall announce that the meeting is about to open. District Officers shall take their stations.

The District Commander shall give three raps of the gavel and the District Delegates shall stand at attention.

DISTRICT COMMANDER: "Hand Salute.... Two."

DISTRICT COMMANDER: "The District Chaplain will offer prayer."

DISTRICT COMMANDER: "All members/guests in attendance shall remain standing with their cap removed and placed over the heart from the Opening Prayer through the Pledge of Allegiance, to the end of the POW/MIA Ceremonies."

DISTRICT COMMANDER: "We will now have the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag."

DISTRICT COMMANDER: "Resolution #288, adopted at the 67th National Convention, calls for designating a POW/MIA Empty Chair at all official meetings of The American Legion as a physical symbol of the thousands of American POW/MIA's still unaccounted for from WW II, Korea, and Vietnam. Accordingly, at this time the Vice

Commander will place the POW/MIA Flag on the Empty chair – a reminder for all of us to spare no effort to secure the release of any American prisoners from captivity, the repatriation of the remains of those who died bravely in defense of liberty, and a full accounting of those missing. Let us rededicate ourselves for this vital endeavor.”

“Place the POW/MIA Flag on the Empty Chair.”

DISTRICT COMMANDER: “We will now recite the Preamble of The American Legion.”

DISTRICT COMMANDER: “I now declare District No. _____, Department of Montana, regularly convened.”

THE ORDER OF BUSINESS FOR DISTRICT MEETINGS SHALL BE:

- A. Reading of minutes of previous meeting.
- B. Roll Call of Posts
- C. Announce District Committees: Resolution, Finance and a Committee for the time and place of the Next District Meeting. (Nominating and Membership Goal Committee at Spring Meeting)
- D. Talks by Department Officers and Distinguished Guests
- E. Unfinished Business.
- F. District Committee reports and Time & Place Report.
- G. New Business and correspondence.
- H. Election of New District Officers (Spring Meeting Only).
- I. For the Good of The American Legion and announcements.
- J. Retire the POW/MIA Flag.
- K. Closing Prayer and Salute the Colors.

CLOSING CEREMONY

DISTRICT COMMANDER: “Is there any further business to come before this District Meeting?”

If not, the District Chaplain will lead us in a closing prayer and memorial to our Departed comrades.

(The District Commander shall give three raps of the gavel, and the members shall rise, uncover, and stand in silence.)

DISTRICT COMMANDER: "Till we meet again let us remember that our obligation to our Country can only be fulfilled by the faithful performance of all duties of citizenship. Let service to the community, state and nation be ever a main objective of The American Legion and its members. Let us be ever watchful of the honor of our Country, our organization and ourselves, that nothing shall swerve us from the path of Justice, Freedom and Democracy."

"The Vice Commander will please recover the POW/MIA Flag from the empty chair."

DISTRICT COMMANDER: "We will now salute the Colors. Hand Salute.... Two." "I now declare this meeting of District No. ____ of The American Legion adjourned."

JOINT BANQUET

1. You may appoint a Master of Ceremonies or perform the duties yourself.
2. Prepare a list of Legionnaires to be seated at the head table. Combine your list with the District Auxiliary President and delegate someone to arrange seating. The use of place cards will eliminate confusion.
3. No matter how the meal is served, a prayer is always in order. If the meal is a Buffet style, **have the prayer before starting the line**. It is nice to stand for the prayer, but if the tables and chairs are too crowded to stand comfortably, ask the group to remain seated. Make a definite announcement as to whether they should stand or remain seated.
4. Sometimes seating at the head table is limited. The Master of Ceremonies will, of course, be seated at the center of the table, with the Department Commander or his representative on his immediate right. To his immediate left will be the Department Auxiliary President or her representative. Others, in order, should be Dept. Vice Commander, District Commander, NEC, Alt. NEC, and Host Post Commander. Auxiliary members in addition to Department President should be District President, NEC, Host Unit President.
5. Introductions can be started as soon as the people are seated, **(ask for everyone to hold their applause until everyone has been introduced)**. The District President may be introduced for the purpose of introducing her District Officers, followed by the District Commander for the same purpose. The Dept Auxiliary President should be introduced and asked for a few remarks, and to introduce her Department Officers and Chairmen. The Auxiliary NEC and Legion NEC should be introduced separately and asked for a few words. The Department representative (Commander or Vice Commander) should be introduced for the purpose of introducing the Department Officers and Chairmen present.
6. The Department Commander is traditionally the main speaker at the SPRING MEETING. At the FALL MEETING, the Department Vice Commander is the official representative of the Department. This person should be called on last, to give the main address. After this talk, the District Commander might say a few words of appreciation, then the closing with the Master of Ceremonies asking for the benediction. It is always good practice to thank those who prepare the meal.

SUGGESTED FORM FOR CONDUCTING A BANQUET

DISTRICT BANQUET SCRIPT

- Give 5-minute warning
- (one rap of the gavel to signal take your seats)
- Three raps of the gavel, all present to come to attention

Colors being in place – Hand Salute

Two

Invocation- “The District Chaplain, _____, shall offer prayer.” Please uncover.

- POW/MIA Ceremony if used (read the ceremony instruct to keep caps removed)

“Those who have served, and those currently serving in the uniformed services of the United States, are ever mindful that the sweetness of enduring peace has always been tainted by the bitterness of personal sacrifice. We are compelled to never forget that while we enjoy our daily pleasures, there are others who have endured and may still be enduring the agonies of pain, deprivation and imprisonment.

Before we begin our activities, we pause to recognize our POWs and MIAs.

We call your attention to this small table which occupies a place of dignity and honor. It is set for one, symbolizing the fact that members of our armed forces are missing from our ranks. They are referred to as POWs and MIAs.

We call them comrades. They are unable to be with their loved ones and families, so we join together to pay humble tribute to them, and to bear witness to their continued absence.

The table is small, symbolizing the frailty of one prisoner, alone against his or her suppressors.

The tablecloth is white, symbolic of the purity of their intentions to respond to their Country’s call to arms.

The single rose in the vase signifies the blood they may have shed in sacrifice to ensure the freedom of our beloved United States of America. This rose also reminds us of the family and friends of our missing comrades who keep faith, while awaiting their return.

The red ribbon on the vase represents an unyielding determination for a proper accounting of our comrades who are not among us.

A slice of lemon on the plate reminds us of their bitter fate.

The salt sprinkled on the plate reminds us of the countless fallen tears of families as they wait.

The glass is inverted, they cannot toast with us at this time.

The chair is empty. They are NOT here. The candle is reminiscent of the light of hope, which lives in our hearts to illuminate their way home, away from their captors, to the open arms of a grateful nation.

The American flag reminds us that many of them may never return - and have paid the supreme sacrifice to insure our freedom.

Let us pray to the Supreme Commander that all of our comrades will soon be back within our ranks.

Let us remember - and never forget their sacrifice.

May God forever watch over them and protect them and their families.”

- **Pledge of Allegiance**
- **Give instruction to be seated**
- **(Make any opening remarks of your own.)**
- **Introduction of Head table-Instruct to hold applause until all introductions are complete.** (start on the left; should be Auxiliary Chaplain, Unit President, District President, and Department President or her Rep. from the right American Legion Chaplain, Post Commander, District Commander, Department Commander or Rep)
- (Begin meal by giving instructions for the food line(if buffet); Head table first.)
- **Ask the American Legion Auxiliary to introduce their Officers; Instruct to hold applause until all introductions are complete** (start with Unit, District and then Department).
- **Ask the American Legion to introduce their Officers; Instruct to hold applause until all introductions are complete** (start with Post, District and then Department)
- **Guest Speaker**

It is my pleasure to introduce _____.

- (Guest Speaker gives remarks.)
- **(Thank Guest Speaker for remarks.)**

- ***At the conclusion of the Guest Speaker*** call on the host Post for any raffles or drawings
- ***Thank the cooks and servers*** with a round of applause (ask the host Post to have them present)

The American Legion Auxiliary District Chaplain, _____, will offer Benediction. Please rise and uncover.

- *(Chaplain gives Benediction.)*

Retire POW/MIA flag (if used)

“Ladies and Gentlemen, this concludes the banquet. The American Legion will reconvene at (time) (location) the Auxiliary will reconvene at (time) (location)

Salute to the Colors.

Hand Salute

Two

ABOUT JOKES

Many Legionnaire and Auxiliary members have left Legion meetings, never to return again because someone told a story not fit for mixed company. The District Commander should personally talk to the Master of Ceremonies and have it clearly understood that off-colored stories are out of place at Legion meetings. **WHEN IN DOUBT – DON'T!!!**

POST VISITATIONS

The District Commander **MUST** visit each Post in his District at least once a year and more often if possible. He should be in contact often by email or phone with his Post Officers. By visiting his Posts at least once a year, the District Commander can wisely preside at his District meetings and represent the District at Department Executive Committee meetings and at Department Convention. If a Post is not conducting regular meetings, ask them to schedule a meeting for your visit or meet with the Commander and Adjutant.

HELP IS AVAILABLE

In addition to this information, the New District Commander will find much help in the **Post Leadership and Planning Manual**. The Manual is being constantly revised and enlarged and is issued each year to all Posts. The answers to most inquiries received at Department Headquarters can be found in this manual. This does not mean, however, that the District Commander or anyone else, should hesitate to ask this office for help, but a lot of time and effort could be saved by first looking for the answer in the manual.

REPORT

Each Zone and District Commander is required to submit to Department HQs an annual written report of activities prior to the Department Convention and Fall Conference (No later than May 15th and October 15th). This should be a brief, one page account of official duties during the term of office. It will be published in a booklet to be distributed at Department Convention/Fall Conference, together with the reports of other officers and chairmen and will become a part of the permanent records of The American Legion. It should be a report you would be proud of and reflect favorably on your term of office. Any changes or additions to your report will be given orally at Convention. You are also required to give a written report at the Fall Conference.

NEW POSTS

District Commanders should take a good look at the communities in their District where there was once a Legion Post. Some of these Posts were destroyed by a personality problem which no longer exists, and it is very possible that a few of these could be re-activated. There are also communities which have never had a Legion Post. With approximately 107,000 veterans in Montana, this means that about 85 percent of the eligible veterans **DO NOT BELONG** to The American Legion in Montana. Because of population shifts, many communities now have the potential for a small Post.

CANCELLATION OF POST CHARTERS

The Department Executive Committee may suspend, cancel or revoke a Post Charter. Any Montana Post failing to meet the obligations imposed upon it by the Department Constitution and By-Laws or ceasing to function as an American Legion Post for six months, or voluntarily ceasing to function as a Post, or refusing to pay Department and National per capita dues, or under such other conditions (having less than 10 members in a given year) as might make such action necessary, shall, upon order of the Department Executive Committee, surrender its Charter. This action should be first started by the District. There are two forms required, the District Commander must complete one and the Department Adjutant the other.

POST CHARTER/REVITALIZATION ACTIVITIES TIMELINE

Department Headquarters and/or District Follow-up team

Plan of Action: Hold a social and orientation meeting within 10 days after the completion of a Temporary Post Charter/Revitalization activity.

Note: Mentors make contact with all members signed during the recruiting exercise, use the telephone or send a letter informing them of information as follows.

- Welcome all Charter/Reinstated/Transferred members to the newly Chartered/Revitalized American Legion Post.

- Inform members of the current status of the Post, include the total number of members and names of those signed on the Temporary Charter, or signed for the Post Revitalization.
- Provide members with a point of contact in the event they may have questions, suggestions or know of someone who would like to join the Post.
- Ask newly signed members to locate a copy of their DD214 for review during a Post election or organizational meeting.

Action Plan: 1st Post meeting 14-21 days after completion of Post Charter/Revitalization. The Department and/or the mentoring team conducts this meeting.

Note: The Department Post Development/Revitalization team may conduct a meeting without a Post Charter/Revitalization Kit or The Temporary Charter. The first Post meeting should be held within two and not more than three weeks of the completion of the Charter/Revitalization fieldwork.

Step 1: Send a letter to all new members who signed and to all other prospects not signed during the initial recruiting campaign with the following information:

- Announce date, time and location of the first meeting
- Inform everyone to invite another veteran to attend the meeting
- Inform Charter/Revitalized Post members they will receive their membership card at the meeting. They should present separation papers or a DD-214. (We can provide forms to assist individual obtain a copy)

Step 2: Mentors are responsible for conduction the first and assisting with the next two or three meetings.

- It is the responsibility of the Department/District to provide officers/mentors to conduct the first meeting for a Chartered Post and assist as required a Revitalized Post. This is exciting it's their first meeting, keep it interesting, and provide them with a vision of what they can accomplish by working together.
- Distribute proposed agenda for the meeting.
- Hand out AD&D forms for free insurance
- Conduct the first Post meeting using the Post Officers Guide
- Do an introduction of all members
- The mentoring process begins at the first Post meeting. Introduce Department and District Officers; have them briefly describe the elected or appointed duty of the office they hold.
- Introduce members to the responsibilities and activities of the Post Offices. When the mentors have completed this phase of the meeting it is time to move on the electing or appointing Post Officers.

- Involve as many new members as possible in the activities that will lead up to the next meeting.
- Exchange names and phone numbers with all interested members. Contacts and communications are very important and should be developed as quickly as possible within the new Post membership.
- Provide a brief history of one or two of the accomplishments of The American Legion.
- Thank everyone for attending and ask them to invite other veterans they know to join with them at the next meeting.
- Before closing set the date, time and place for the next Post meeting.

Action Plan: The Posts 2nd meeting is held three to four weeks after the 1st. The Department and/or the mentoring team assists in conducting this meeting.

Note: 10 days prior to the Post meeting check in with the elected or appointed Post officers and other interested members. Make certain they are in the process of notifying the membership of the 2nd scheduled meeting. If the Post has no officers after the first meeting mentors make contact with the membership for the 2nd meeting. Mentors assist the elected or appointed Post officers conduct the 2nd meeting in accordance with the Legion By-Laws.

- Open the meeting in accordance with the Legion By-Laws.
- Present the Temporary Charter provided it is approved, signed and returned from National Headquarters.
- In the event the offices for the Post have not been filled explain the importance and the prescribed By-Law requirement of having Post Officers. It is imperative for the progress of the Post to complete the process of electing or appointing officers. Once you have completed the explanation you may elect or appoint a temporary slate of Post Officers.
- Make certain the new Officers and appointees understand the mentoring process is an ongoing activity until the day they no longer need assistance.
- Give a very brief overview of two or three basic Legion programs they may wish to get involved with.
- Ask the membership to give their input on what they feel may be a good Post program or community related Post activity
- After the meeting complete the Post Officers Data Reporting forms for Department Headquarters and make sure they are submitted properly
- Assist the Pos in filing for their EIN. This is the first step in becoming eligible for nonprofit status when opening the Post bank account.

Note: Follow up Mentoring Team

- The example you set as a mentor helps set the course for a successful Post to follow.
- Successful Posts have mentors that continue to work with a Post providing support and guidance. The requirement of attending the first 4 or 5 meetings is not uncommon, you will know when the new Post Officers are comfortable in conducting their business and Post meetings.
- Words of caution: don't become a dictator or let the Post membership become reliant on you for making their decisions. You are there to make suggestions and help them develop into leaders for their Post.

RECRUITING STATION/BOOTH

1. Booth-Store Front Equipment
 - 4 chairs for each 4 to 6-foot folding table or equal, (1) set up per side of booth or straight run wall area
 - 2 clipboards
 - Trash can
 - Banner or Sign designed to inform all the booth/table is manned by Legionnaires for the benefit of all who served and are serving in the United States Armed Forces and their families.
 - Dedicated, informed Legion, Auxiliary and Sons of The American Legion members –The Legion Family
2. Handout Pamphlets, Materials and Supplies
 - Membership applications for “The Legion Family”
 - Why you Should Belong –Stock No. 30-185
 - Membership Benefits pamphlet
 - Current Legion Magazines and Department Publications
 - Post Newsletter
 - Pamphlets on Children and Youth Programs
 - TS2 Troop Support booklet
 - Guide for Women Veterans
 - Agent Orange Guide for Benefits and Programs
 - Gulf War Era Benefits and Programs
 - Blue Star Service Poster
 - For Which it Stands DVD
 - Junior Shooting Sports Handbook
 - Legion Rider Information
 - “Win a Home Flag Set” Recruiter Registration Box (Post Optional)
 - Home Wall Mount American Flag Set for display purposes, winner of drawing receives this set (Post Optional)

3. General Information and Tips on Working a Booth

- Work in pairs with one person addressing the prospective member and the other person being the supporter
- Keep tabletop clean and booth area straight with materials laid out in a neat and orderly manner
- Dress in accordance for the activity, namely don't over or underdress. Be neat, look sharp with clothing that has some form of The American Legion Emblem, Patch or Insigne on them; you are making a first impression
- Remember to engage in conversation pertaining to Legion activities and events with all who pass by your location. Using the "Win a Home Flag Set" drawing box is a good tool to draw individuals into a patriotic conversation.
- Provide information regarding functions and activities The American Legion is involved in locally
- Assist the prospective member in filling out a membership application; fill in the required blanks, leaving the new member with the responsibility of signing their name.

PATRIOTIC EVENT FOR AMERICAN LEGION POSTS

CERTIFICATE OF GRATITUDE AND BLUE STAR SERVICE BANNER

Objective:

American Legion Posts and Districts organize a "Special Patriotic Event" designed to recognize individuals who are serving on active duty in the United States Armed Forces and the individual's family.

Plan:

The local American Legion Post /District develops and sponsors a special patriotic event involving a Certificate of Gratitude and Blue Star Service Banner. The Blue Star Service Banner is presented to families in the community who have a loved one serving in the Armed Forces. A Certificate of Gratitude is also present to the family, the certificate recognizes the family member who is serving on active duty. This event is designed to include all patriotic citizens from the community; school students, civic and spiritual leaders, city officials and community residence, National Guardsmen, Armed Forces Reserve, Active Duty Military and Veterans.

Steps Required:

1. Develop a roster of families with loved ones serving on active duty in the US Armed Forces; include names of the families loved one. The following listed resources are commonly used when developing an active roster.

- a. Local media; radio, television, newspaper, Posters and Post website.
 - b. Other patriotic organization, National Guard, Armed Forces Reserve Units and Local Armed Forces Recruiters and Military Installations.
 - c. Local church groups, community Ministerial Association, elected Community Officials and Community Leaders
 - d. Community High School students, councilors and teachers.
2. American Legion Post representative's coordinate with city/community officials to set up a schedule of activities for a pre-determined date, time, and place for this community event.
 3. The community is invited, and invitations are sent to families and the family member who will be recognized and presented with the Blue Star Service Banner and Certificates. In the event of the active duty family member being absent the family will on the behalf of that individual receive their Certificate.
 4. The public is invited to this event along with city, county, and state representatives and dignitaries from the community and business leaders. The Mayor or other dignitary should be invited to provide a proclamation recognizing the purpose of this event.
 5. Representatives of the United State Armed Forces are invited to speak and participate in the event.
 6. Media coverage of this event is important. Local newspapers, radio and television coverage is one of the key elements in making the event a success.
 7. Posts may order Blue Star Service Banners from The American Legion Emblem Sales catalog.
 8. The Certificates of Gratitude are available for printing, contact Department Headquarters for the template.

Event Results/Benefits:

1. A great way to recognize and thank those individuals who have made the commitment to protect and preserve the American way of life. The Certificate of Gratitude event is a show of patriotic support for those serving on active duty and for those who stand ready to be called to active duty.
2. Active duty elements of the Armed Forces, National Guard Units or Detachments and Armed Forces Reserve members are recipients of the certificates and their family is recognized with a Blue Star Banner. We recognize the Blue Star families for their sacrifices and the families' commitment to serving America.

3. Post receives recognition for sponsoring a worthy patriotic event that includes all elements of the community in a united show of support for those serving in the United States Armed Forces in the War on Terrorism.
4. Citizens of the community and those participating in the event are enlightened to the contributions and sacrifices being made by all whom serve in the Armed Forces and of the sacrifices of the families with loved ones who are serving on active duty.
5. Creates a patriotic venue for advancing and promoting a positive image of The American Legion for those who are serving to protect the American way of life.
6. The Patriotic Event provides another opportunity for Posts to work with the Total Force, Active Duty Reserve, and National Guard Units. Actions of this nature result in an opportunity for Posts to advance Reconnect Programs and Family Support Network Programs.
7. Action results in the Legion Posts in being provided with an opportunity to acquaint themselves with potential members, namely those being recognized.

**PATRIOTIC EVENT TALKING POINTS FOR THE BLUE STAR SERVICE
BANNER AND ARMED FORCES CERTIFICATE OF GRATITUDE**

The American Legion sponsored Certificate of Gratitude and Blue Star Patriotic event provides a venue for a show of community support for all who are serving in The Armed Forces and Their Families.

The American Legion along with other elements of the community presents a special personalized Certificate of Gratitude to all active duty Armed Forces personnel.

Families with loved ones serving in The Armed Forces are recognized and presented a Blue Star Service Banner.

Use all forms of the media in providing the general public with an invitation to show their support for our Armed Forces by actively participating in the Certificate of Gratitude and Blue Star Banner Event.

Community involvement in this Patriot Event starts with helping your local Legion Post generate a list of names of individuals who are serving on active duty in the United State Armed Forces. Anyone who has knowledge of families with loved ones serving on active duty are asked to provide this information to Legion representatives, by simply calling telephone number _____ and asking for _____

Invite community leaders, local businesses, churches, schools, and other Patriotic organizations to join in taking an active role in developing a list of families with loved one serving on active duty. Contact National Guard, and Armed Forces Reserve components and Armed Forces recruiters to assist in developing this list.

Provide information pertaining to the proposed location and date the event will take place. Announce that anyone with an interest in participating or those looking for more information may contact Legion member/members _____ at phone number _____

Invite the City Council and Chamber of Commerce to take an active role in working with The American Legion in planning this event.

Invite an elected community official to provide a Patriotic Proclamation for the event. Provide them an example of the Certificate of Gratitude and the Blue Star Service Banner.

Don't forget to thank EVERYONE for allowing you the time to present the certificates and banners.

MONTANA

