



**1580 COLUMBIA TURNPIKE, BLDG. 1, SUITE 3
CASTLETON-ON-HUDSON, NY 12033
518-463-1162
WWW.DEPTNY.ORG**



**DEPARTMENT PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE -
MAUREEN F. MORGAN**

It's February and the traveling team is getting ready to head off to the 8th District for our last visitation with a reschedule of two Counties from the 7th District due to snow. It seems like yesterday we were preparing for Convention and installation and now we are on our last visit. You blink and it's almost over. We have Valentine's Day this week too.

Members were so friendly and showed us so much that was done in their units and communities, counties, and districts. Please if you have a Facebook page for your unit, county, or district please post there first before posting on the Department Facebook page, or better yet report it on to your county chair so that it can get reported at the Department Executive Committee meeting which is coming up next month. Let's have 100% reporting from all the counties next month from all the committees. We do so much that it doesn't get reported let's pat ourselves on the back and report it.

The other problem we have is we need to learn how to talk to each other. We are a volunteer organization. We shouldn't be talking down to each other or at each other. We need to learn how to listen and treat each other with respect. If we can learn from each other and mentor each other, we can grow by leaps and bounds.

Here's a quote for everyone: "Life is too short to wake up with regrets. So, love the people who treat you right. Forget about those who don't. Believe everything happens for a reason. If you get a chance, take it. If it changes your life, let it. Nobody said life would be easy, they just promised it would be worth it".

So, let's remember to be kind to each other and let's learn to listen with our ears and not our mouths. We have two ears for a reason.



**MEMBERSHIP
LORA ROWE**

It was so nice seeing many of you at Mid-Winter. What a wonderful weekend it was and, hopefully, you took notes from the presentations and shared them with your unit. The next department award date of March 15, 2026, is coming up fast! This \$85 award is for Departments reaching 85% of their 2026 department membership goal. I am thrilled to say that as of February 11, New York is at 84.73% and only needs a .27% increase to achieve this....Sooooo C'mon NEW YORK!!! The percentage of 85 also needs to be achieved to complete the membership portion of obtaining the Merit Medallion!!!! We want to see President Maureen on stage at National being presented the Medallion. Only seven states currently have reached 85%, so let's have New York be the eighth!!!!

REMEMBER that 2026 dues must be paid before any back dues can be processed. This now includes 2025 and all prior dues. Anyone who hasn't paid since 2023 are now former members. If they haven't paid since 2024, they will be expired members.

IMPORTANT DD214 RETENTION INFORMATION Documentation has been received from the National Judge Advocate of The American Legion, Mark C. Seavey, regarding DD214 Retention. Because of its importance, I am sharing with you the verbiage from this document:
Effective immediately, the Adjutant or Secretary at each Unit shall verify a member's eligibility by reviewing documentation such as a DD214, then promptly return the document to the individual. No copies or electronic records containing Personally Identifiable Information shall be retained.
Some Units currently maintain decades of archived DD214s, including those of deceased members. These records should be securely destroyed to reduce exposure to identify theft and mitigate potential legal liability. This policy should be communicated to all membership staff and incorporated into Unit and Department procedures effective February 4, 2026.

I want to share with you a recipe for membership that came from the Department Membership Chair of Nebraska. I thought it was cute!

Recipe for Membership – We are stirring up the Members!

Recipe for Success:

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|--------------------|----------------------|----------------------|
| 1 cup of Ideas | ½ cup of Imagination | 2 lbs. of Leadership |
| 2 cups of Teamwork | 1 tbsp. of Goodwill | 2 tsp of Trust |
| 1 lb. of Vision | 3 tbsp. of Challenge | A heap of Hard Work |

Sprinkle generously with Passion. Stir Vigorously, pour into a container that works for you, and don't be afraid to let it overflow.

As with any recipe, you need to tweak and adjust to what it is that fits you and your needs. Do not be afraid to adjust your membership recipe to easy bite size pieces to meet your goal. Keep those "Happy Birthday America" celebrations going in your Units. In your next report, I would love to hear how you celebrated America's 250th birthday in coordination with your membership goals. Let's keep getting in those renewals!

VA & R / SERVICE TO VETERANS YVONNE BRUNNER

At the Midwinter Conference, several opportunities for involvement within Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation (VA&R) were discussed. Here are some ways members can make a difference:

- Volunteer at your local VA Medical Center, Community Living Centers, or State Veteran Homes. Volunteer roles include recreation therapy assistant, administrative support, and participating in special events such as bingo or a day at the races.
- Each facility provides a training orientation and placement for volunteers.
- Student volunteers are always welcomed. Students may earn volunteer credit required for high school graduation. Those under eighteen will need written consent from a parent or guardian. The Medical Center Director can nominate students who serve 100 hours or more for the James H. Parks scholarship, which awards \$2,400.
- Volunteer within your community. Review opportunities available within your units, such as organizing fundraising events like Stand Downs, baby showers, pasta nights, and more. Consider hosting a “dress for success” event with resume-building training. Be sure to include a donation bin for food items to support your local veterans pantry.
- Collaborate with external partners. Continue supporting programs that directly benefit veterans, including Be The One, Wreaths Across America, Honor Flight, and the Annual SAL & ALA Walk-A-Thon. Find out how you can contribute at the local level.

March 2026 marks the next reporting period. What you do matters not just at the unit or local level, but is documented through reporting. This process captures the service being provided to veterans, the military, their families, and the community, highlighting positive impacts and ways veterans are remembered and served. Our Department President, Maureen Morgan, has chosen two meaningful projects: the Empire Girls State program and the Military Women’s Memorial. Units or individuals can donate to one or both programs. Please specify your preferred distribution in the memo portion of your check.

Thank you to everyone for your dedication and commitment. Remember, it takes just one voice to start a change. *The American Veteran, the everyday heroes that walk amongst us.*

SAL-ALA WALK-A-THON

Thank you. Thank you to everyone who participated in the 2025 Walkathon !!

Each year we see more and more support from our members for this outstanding program, a program sponsored by both The Sons of the American Legion AND us !!!!- the American Legion Auxiliary.

Every dollar raised is an investment in improving the lives of our Veterans through hospital services and special projects including our Department President’s Project. Let us show our Veterans love and gratitude and get excited about Walkathon 2026 by planning early, encouraging more participation by walking/ writing-reaching out to family, friends, coworkers for support/ barbecuing- be creative, have fun, plan a Bingo Night for prizes, a Family Movie Afternoon - As Auxiliary members our service is our passion.

Thank you for all you dream, all you plan, all you do !!! Please check our Department Website in March to get updates and news.

CHILDREN AND YOUTH JULIANNE BARTON

March reporting will quickly be upon us. Surely, Children & Youth reports will be filled with wonderful stories of Holiday events and gift giving. Please be sure to attach any pictures with captions if you can email them to me. Remember to include the donations that were made during the Holiday season to Children's organizations like St. Jude's.

April is Children & Youth month and the Month of the Military Child. Plan a special celebration in honor of the children in your community. Host a dinner or plan a movie night, with popcorn! Any activity that will bring family and friends together and focus it around the children.

WEAR PURPLE ON APRIL 15TH-PURPLE UP! DAY

A day to celebrate our Military kids-Take lots of pictures to send in with your next report!
Please continue to be on the lookout for Youth Hero and Good Deed Award Candidates (be sure to forward a copy of the application to the C&Y Chairman). Thank you for all you are doing for our Children and be sure to REPORT IT!!!!

AMERICANISM LOUANNA GILBERT

What does Americanism mean to you? As the upcoming reporting period nears. I ask that each county address this question in their narrative. So, what does Americanism mean to me? To me it means RESPECT, not only to our flag but to the people who uphold the Constitution of the United States, to ourselves and to our Legion Family. Be open to new ideas, listen and respect what others may have to offer. We are fortunate enough to have the freedoms here that some other countries do not.

If at all possible, I would like to see 100% reporting in March. I know everyone does something to promote Americanism. It may be just saying the pledge at meetings, attending a community event wearing your pin or auxiliary shirt, or attending a naturalization ceremony. Donating a flag to replace a torn or worn flag to a neighbor or business, helping with Boy and Girl Scouts, flag retirement ceremonies and Get Out and Vote events, to name a few. Also going to your local schools not just to hand out flags, but to show them the meaning of the 13 steps to folding of the flag, ask some of your veterans to go with you to help. These are just some of the things that come to mind. Think out of the box, I am open to new ideas.

Lastly, I'd like to remind everyone that the deadline for submitting entries to the Americanism Essay Contest is April 1st. "Celebrating America's 250th Birthday and the Veterans who fought for our Freedom." Please get your chosen winners at Unit level sent to the department. Keep in contact with the schools and teachers in your area. This includes English, History and Government teachers. Encourage them to get their students involved in this special project. This also includes home schooled and special need children.

Remember RESPECT yourself and others and keep up the good work

**AMERICAN LEGION FAMILY COLLEGE
DEBBY HERRMANN**

The 2026 session is almost upon us and I am looking forward to another great session. At this year's Mid-Winter it was wonderful to see and hear from members that have already attended commenting on how an awesome experience it was. I brought 25 applications with me and they were all handed out. Our goal is to have another full class of 100 Legion Family members join us from June 5, 2026 through June 7, 2026 at SUNY Morrisville.

At the American Legion Family College staff meeting we reviewed last year's college surveys with many very positive comments. There were a couple of concerns and we listened. One of them being that Saturday is too long cramming in 9 sessions in that one day. Trust me it is exhausting for the staff as well. SO what we have done is move the session on Protocol to Friday afternoon. With that the student arrival and housing check in will be moved back an hour from 11:30 to 10:30AM - 12:30PM. There are also new instructors coming on board and we are working on better maps to direct you to Charlton Hall where the sessions are being held.

xx The application is available online using the link on our own website @ deptny.org. Go to programs click on American Legion Family College scroll down to see the application. There is a fillable PDF to complete online, print and send it in with your tuition or you can print and fill it out by hand. If you decide to fill it out by hand PLEASE make sure everything is legible especially your name as the applications are used to print your certificate. Get your application in as soon as possible. It is a first come, first serve policy. The tuition is \$350.00 and remember we have the Shelby Sobolowski scholarship to apply for, details are in the Plan of Action. The member selected will have to pay their tuition in advance but will be re-imbursed by Department after the completion of the 2 day session. Entries must be received by March 1, 2026.

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here is a section on the app. if you want to order a college shirt be aware they are men's shirt so order the size accordingly. As in the past they will be available the weekend of the college.

Please consider joining us in 2026. I ask for those who have attended early on in the development of the Legion Family College to consider coming again as things have changed and continue to change. It is truly a family experience.

**AUXILIARY EMERGENCY FUND
KAREN DRUCKER**

The Auxiliary Emergency Fund (AEF) National Zoom meeting for Committee Chairman was held on January 14, 2026. The focus of the meeting was on fund raising ideas. The Eastern Division is in second place of the AEF donation leader board at 36.3%, 1.5% from first place.

Fundraising ideas include:

1. Hold a themed event and have 60% of net proceeds go to AEF or
 - a. Luau
 - b. NASCAR Watch Party
 - c. Craft Fairs
 - d. Cookie and Cake Walks

AEF (CONTINUED)

2. Distribute baggies to collect loose change to donate to AEF,
3. Raffle blankets or hanging baskets to benefit AEF,
4. Pass a Jam Jar for when we get into “jams”, and
5. Promote AEF as a benefit of joining ALA.

Please remember, the Auxiliary Emergency Fund, is able to help Auxiliary members through the generosity of fellow members. Donations are easily made by texting “AEF” to 1-844-940-3450 or visit: The Auxiliary Emergency Fund (AEF) National Zoom meeting for Committee Chairman was held on January 14, 2026. The focus of the meeting was on fund raising ideas. The Eastern Division is in second place of the AEF donation leader board at 36.3%, 1.5% from first place.

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**ALA FOUNDATION
CATHLEEN MACINNES & TERRI WALLACE**

It was good to see so many of you at the Mid-Winter Conference! It was our honor to present and share the mission of the American Legion Auxiliary Foundation. One way to work towards the Unit Department Award (deadline May 1st) is to participate in the upcoming Celebrating Women of Service fundraising campaign.

Sunday, March 8, 2026, is International Women’s Day. On that day, we invite you to celebrate and honor the women who have influenced your life, your community, and - most especially - your American Legion Auxiliary Unit by donating to the American Legion Auxiliary Mission Endowment Fund.

Do you have an ALA mentor? Or like I did, do you have an “ALA Mom” who guided you in your early years as a member? Or an ALA member you particularly admire? It would be impressive if every Unit within the Department of New York donated to the Mission Endowment Fund in honor of its President.

But all Auxiliary members are not women! Consider recognizing our male members by honoring the women veterans who made them eligible.

Why donate to the Mission Endowment Fund?

- To support current National programs like Girls Nation and the Spirit of Youth Scholarship Fund.
- To ensure that the American Legion Auxiliary programs of service to America’s veterans, military, and their families continue for years to come.
- To honor your service legacy - and that of your fellow members.

Department Commander John Miga made the first donation, in honor of his wife Audrey, from the Department of New York at the Mid-Winter Conference. Thank you, Commander! The American Legion Auxiliary Foundation holds only four fundraisers each year - the Celebrating Women of Service program is one of them and we hope you, your Units, and your individual members will join us in recognizing all those women whose service has made the American Legion Auxiliary shine.

Make a gift on or after March 8th by texting WOMAN to 1-844-940-3450 or visiting <https://donate.legion-aux.org/woman>.

**CHAPLAIN
MARIE SANTACROCE**

Every member of our ALA Family is a treasure. Each unique, filled with love and compassion for our Veterans, their families and children in our communities.

Sadly, we have seen some members complete their earthly duties and we must say goodbye.

Upon the loss of a cherished member, please send the most current Death Notification Form, found in your Plan of Action, to me by email or US mail.

Also needed is the Data Membership Form that was given to all Membership Chairs at our Department Convention in July.

The MDF should be sent to Caitlin in the Department Office so that the loss of that member can be reported to National and their name can be removed from your membership roll next year.

Before you know it we will be together at the Department Convention in July.

At that time it is tradition to present our Department President with a Book of Prayers.

Please consider sending me a special prayer, poem, inspirational letter or message that I can include in this gift to Maureen. Thank you to those who have already shared with me.

Let us remember that we were created to be different so that we would all have unique gifts and talents to share with others. Let us embrace each other with open arms, open eyes and open hearts.

**CONSTITUTION & BYLAWS
PATRICIA HENNESSY N**

Many attendees of our Mid Winter Leadership event were made aware that Article 3, Membership, Section 4 reads “Each Unit has the authority to decide its membership and shall be responsible for verifying eligibility of prospective members, transfer or new”.

This may be done as a body, by the Membership Chairman or a Committee. It is whatever the Unit decides. But remember, whatever the choice it must be consistent. You cannot change the method for one particular individual.

Some Units have asked where to indicate the choice. Under your Standing Rules, you can write in accordance with Article 3, Section 4, Unit ——, shall Should the choice change, Standing Rules need changing.

COMMUNITY SERVICE ARDELLA TURNER

Strengthening Our Communities Through Service

The spirit of community service can be seen throughout the ALA, as we unite to demonstrate how acts of kindness—both big and small—can uplift entire communities. Members can participate in a wide range of activities, including community clean-ups, food bank donations, senior center visits, clothing drives, and many other opportunities that allow us to serve our communities, our veterans, and those less fortunate.

Upcoming ALA Academy LIVE Webinars

Stay informed and empowered with these upcoming training opportunities:

The Dos and Don'ts of Using Social Media.

Learn strategies for effectively promoting your American Legion Auxiliary unit's activities, events, and mission outreach.

Date: February 17, 2026 Time: 12:45 p.m. ET

The Science of the Samsung Scholarship

An informative overview of the Samsung Scholarship and the application process. This session reviews the key components of the scholarship and provides guidance for ALA Girls State and Legion Boys State citizens preparing to apply.

Date: February 25, 2026. Time: 7:00 p.m. ET

A Continuous Commitment

Please remember that Community Service is a year-round commitment. Keep planning those impactful events and continue making a difference.

Be sure to take pictures of your activities and share them with your Department, Department President, District President, and County President so the hard work of each unit can be highlighted and celebrated.

EDUCATION PATRICIA GALLEY

Education is for improving the lives of others and leaving your community and world better than you found it. It is time for scholarships to start flowing throughout New York State. Please make sure all the guidelines are met and submitted by the deadline. 2026 National Scholarships are due online by February 15th, 2026.

Department Scholarships are due online or submitted NO LATER than March 1st (unit), March 5th submitted to the County, and March 15th scholarships submitted to myself by the Department Chair.

Another important date is April 15th- Purple Up Day for our Military Children. We encourage you to wear purple and support our Military Children. May 4th-8th Teacher Appreciation Week.

Lastly, our next reporting date is March 1st for the unit, and March 10th for the County. I'm looking forward to seeing how our Education is doing since the last reporting date. I also encourage the Counties to apply for the unit and Department Award for Education by submitting electronically by 5PM on June 1st.

Something to look into!!!!

ALA EMPIRE GIRLS STATE
STEPH FALLON, MEGAN WALDEN, MOLLY MCLAUGHLIN

It's February, and time to check the ALA EGS timeline and deadlines!

Remember, your interviews and selection of your citizen(s) and alternate(s) should have been **COMPLETED** by February 1st!! Units should have all fees and selections to the County ALA EGS Chairman by February 15th and the County ALA EGS Chairman should have all fees and transmittals to our ALA EGS Registrar by February 28th! Remember, additional copies of the mailed materials can also be downloaded from the ALA EGS website: empiregirlsstate.org under the ALA Resources Tab. Password: GirlsState.

All Citizens AND Alternates must complete their registration on Wufoo by February 28th. Many have asked, and YES: Alternates are required to submit all paperwork requested, as they may be elevated to Citizen status at any time leading up to the program week.

Orientation Information will be sent to the email addresses the candidates (Citizens and Alternates) provide in their application in early May.

We'd like to extend a big **THANK YOU** to all who participated in our fundraiser raffles at Mid-Winter! Congratulations to the raffle winners and thank you to everyone who stopped by the table to pick up some EGS merch!

We are continuing to fundraise for the 2026 ALA EGS Session. Check out our 2026 ALA EGS Amazon Wishlist! The link to the wishlist is available on the ALA EGS website under the **DONATE** tab. You can purchase needed items for this year's session and they will be sent directly to the program. We also have our booster forms available on our website - sponsor a congratulatory message to an ALA EGS Citizen, shown at our end-of-week State of the State ceremony.

We're always happy to answer questions and offer help so please don't hesitate to reach out! Thank you for all you do!

FINANCE/AUDIT COMMITTEE**MARIE MOCK, MARYLOU PLATT, JOAN CACCAMO**

As we are looking forward to Spring, our thoughts turn to clean up. This is a good time to think of cleaning up your finances as well. Check your budget to see if it is functioning successfully. Have you had the income you projected? Have you had to spend money that should be routine but wasn't budgeted? Are there changes that should be made for next year? Since you need budget approval from the group, you should begin bringing up possible additions or changes soon.

The other finance concerns revolve around money sent to Department. Please look at your checks. They should be made out to ALA Department of NY. (Not to the President's project, etc. That goes on the memo line.) The numerical amount should match the written amount exactly. The date should be correct, especially the year. **DO NOT SEND CASH IN THE MAIL!**

In the Plan of Action, there is a form to use to send donations to Department – use it. Always use the forms for the current year. Forms from past years may not have the correct information, especially the names of the chairpeople.

Lastly, if you raise money for a stated purpose, you must use it for that purpose. You cannot put it in a general fund. Please check how you are allowed to use restricted funds such as poppy collections.

Every year we have people who do not follow the rules, and it wastes time and resources and may open us to legal consequences. Pay attention to what you are doing. You are the financial watch dogs of your group. Keep up the good work.

**HISTORIAN
SUZANNE WILLIAMS**

Now is the time to review the progress of your Unit's History Book. Some of the items that National has suggested we include in our Narrative Written Unit History are:

- 1) Title Page;
- 2) Foreword or Dedication;
- 3) a Prayer;
- 4) Pledge of Allegiance;
- 5) the first verse of the National Anthem;
- 6) the Preamble to the Constitution.

Additional points are awarded for including

- 1). List of elected Officers; 2) a photograph of the current President; and a list of Committee appointments.

March 1st Reports will be due shortly! Assemble the recent activity information by your Unit in order to complete your report. Make sure to report that your Unit "Retains Records", "Documents Events", "Retain Newspaper Articles", check all the boxes!

Tell us how your Unit will be celebrating the Annual Legion Birthday ; does your Unit or Post have a special celebration this year? Don't forget to include the Impact Numbers at the bottom of the Unit Historian Report Form. When complete, forward the Report to Your County Historian Chairman, before March 1st!

JUNIOR ACTIVITIES CATHY YERDON

Now that the Holidays are behind us, it is time to look forward to Springtime and warmer weather. I personally cannot wait to get out of this COLD weather. The year began with our Annual Department meeting in Albany on January 16 and 17, 2026 at the same time as the Mid-Winter Conference in Albany, NY. There were nine (9) girls in attendance, two (2) of which were new this year. We had a great group of girls.

We started the week-end off on Friday evening for the girls to get acquainted. We had some crafts for them to work on: Patriotic painted Star Sun-Catchers, Patriotic beaded key chains, and painted stars. Also, on Friday evening the girls had practiced the POW/MIA ceremony that they were scheduled to perform on Saturday morning. One of the projects for the Seniors was working on Tied Fleece Blankets. I had brought in three (3) sets for them to work on during Friday evening and Saturday when their business was complete.

Saturday morning, the Juniors joined the Senior members to perform the POW/MIA Ceremony. They were very respectful and performed the ceremony in a dignified manner. The Juniors also stayed to listen to National President Pam Speech. Once the ceremony was complete, our Juniors returned to their meeting room to conduct their business. The discussion began with the various Officer roles to be filled during elections. President Adelle was unable to attend so 1st Vice Serena took over. There were multiple girls who attended the Mission Training in Albany, NY.

Under new business, the Officers for 2026-2027 were elected: Congratulations to all!

President – Jaedyn Vernacotola
 Vice President – Allie Hagerty
 Secretary – Serena Forest
 Chaplain – Rilie Hagerty
 Historian – Ziva Yerdon
 Sgt At Arms – Adelle Collins



National President, Pam Ray along with Department President Maureen Morgan, visited the girls. They talked to them and took some pictures with the girls. The girls were very respectful and were very interested in what National President and Department President had to say.

After the elections, the girls joined the Senior meeting so that National President Pam Ray could install the Juniors in their new roles. This was a GREAT experience! Two of our Juniors (Jaedyn and Ailie) had a presentation on what “It Is To Be A Junior”. On Saturday, after the Senior Meeting was complete, there were more Tied Fleece Blankets to work on, so a few of us stayed to assist.

The 2026 Junior meeting was a success. I enjoyed learning from them. I would like to see more girls attend future meetings.

**LEADERSHIP
LUCILLE MOZZILLO**

I am sharing with you information passed along to us from the National Leadership Committee. Please don't forget about the Unit Member of the Year Award. The American Legion Auxiliary is known for being a grassroots organization. While there are opportunities to be a leader at all levels of the organization (Unit, County/District, Department, National), not everyone is interested in leading others. Some members want to spend their time and energies working on our programs. It is the work that these members do in the Units that builds the foundation which enables us to carry out our Mission of supporting our Veterans, our active military and their families, our children and youth, and our communities. It is the hardworking Unit members across the nation that are the backbone of this organization.

It is our job as leaders to thank these members and give them the recognition that they deserve. We are an organization of over 500,000 members. While not every member actively participates in our Units, we do have many members who are very active. If you ask them why they do what they do, they will give you many different answers, but no one says, "I do it for recognition."

As a sign of our appreciation for all that they do, we should show our thanks and recognize them as the valuable members that they are. Every Unit can do just that through the Unit Member of the Year Award. To be eligible for this award, the Senior member must have attained no higher than an elected or appointed position at the Unit level. Each year, along with their Annual Reports, Units can submit to their Department: The member's name, Along with a narrative of 1,000 words or less, telling of the wonderful things that their member does to work our Mission. A picture of the member (optional).

A committee will choose a winner from the narratives submitted to represent the Department at the National level. Deadline for entries, which should be mailed directly to me is May 1, 2026.



LEGISLATIVE DENA RESTAINO

Current Legislative Initiatives

Welcome to the November 2026 Legislative Newsletter! The American Legion's Grassroots Action Center offers information to stay informed on the issues and tools to communicate online with lawmakers and the media about the organization's priorities. If you haven't yet done so, please log on to make your advocacy voice heard. It takes less than thirty seconds to send a letter to your local lawmaker! The following campaigns are in need of your support:

1. "Be the One" Campaign: Today, the No. 1 issue facing the veteran community is suicide, according to the National Veteran Suicide Prevention Annual Report. Approximately 17-22 veterans or service members take their lives daily. That is more than 6,000 annually. The rate of suicide for veterans is more than 50% higher than that of non-veteran adults. As the Global War on Terrorism continues, more veterans will face mental health issues like Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. At its core, The American Legion is using a national platform to reduce the rate of veteran suicide. The "Be the One" Campaign will:

- De stigmatize asking for mental health support by creating opportunities for those with mental health issues to speak freely and get the help they need.
- Provide peer-to-peer support and resources in local communities.
- Deploy FDA approved therapeutics for veterans to identify issues and find resources for support. We urge the New York State Legislature and state agencies to provide greater awareness and to keep funding programs and groups dedicated to supporting veterans and their families. The American Legion supports Senate Bill S7129 which relates to veterans' health care and suicide prevention.

2. Veterans Mental Health: The American Legion also focuses on alternative treatment for mental health issues such as Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI). The American Legion believes alternatives to opioid medications will provide vital help to working service members and improve the quality of life for them and their families. Several actions have been taken at the state and national levels to address this, including: • Requesting the Governor and New York State Legislature to pursue, identify, and recommend viable alternative treatments to assist war-time veterans so that they can assume their rightful role as leaders and contributing citizens of The Empire State. The American Legion encourages New York State to gather support for any viable treatments that offer help for our military service men and women dealing with the trauma of war.

The following is an additional bill making its way through the halls of Albany: "S00142: Establishes the "Hire a Vet Program" which provides grants to municipalities where a veteran is hired and employed, for not less than one year and not less than thirty- five hours each week; grants up to \$5,000 for a qualified veteran and \$15,000 for a qualified vet who is disabled."



NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE NANCY BABIS

The new executive Director of the American Legion Auxiliary Ben Hendricks has begun to send newsletters to NEC representatives. Below are a few snippets from his December newsletter.

- Mission Training has been well attended. New York hosted a November meeting attended by over 200 members from at least 8 states.
- National Convention will be in Louisville, Ky in August. Due to rising costs and lower attendance, the Auxiliary luncheon is being discontinued. Member of the Year recognition will take place during the General session. Tentative registration fee for convention delegates will be \$35.
- Scholarships are slowly coming in. The 4 National scholarships are due by March 1, 2026. To date, the Children of Warriors scholarship has 41 applications, Non-Traditional student – 15, Spirit of Youth – 9 and the Member Loyalty 0. Please encourage members to apply. If anyone has any questions feel free to reach out to me at Nbabis8dp@gmail.com

I attended two short zoom meetings called by National President Pam Ray. There is nothing of substance to report from these meetings.

I had the honor of spending the Mid-Winter conference with President Pam. I am proud to say that she enjoyed our camaraderie, humor, and desire to work the mission of the American Legion Auxiliary. We managed to visit the leading candidate, Tom Shreck for The American Legion Department Commander's room and pose for some pictures. Enjoyed some music and meeting many American Legion, Sons of the American Legion and American Legion Auxiliary members at the reception. We even managed to get in some retail therapy!

Come on Spring!

NATIONAL SECURITY PATTY RAMA

The Salute to Service members Award

This national award honors one enlisted servicemember (E1–E9) from each military branch, including the National Guard and Reserves, totaling seven awards. Nomination Process: To nominate someone, complete the Formstack and write a narrative (up to 1,000 words) explaining why the individual deserves recognition. Be sure to highlight their military honors and community impact. An endorsement letter from their command group and a current photo in uniform (preferably an official DOD photo) are also required. The deadline for nominations is June 1, 2026. You can find the nomination form at: <https://www.legion-aux.org/salute-to-servicemembers-award-form>

Help Us Honor Our Active-Duty Heroes—

Warrior Wednesday Needs YOU! Each week this year, the American Legion Auxiliary National Security Committee is shining a light on the brave men and women currently serving in our nation's armed forces through our Warrior Wednesday series on Facebook. These stories remind us of the courage, sacrifice, and resilience of those who wear the uniform — and we want to share even more of them. That's where YOU come in. Do you know an active-duty service member, Guardsman, or Reservist? Do you have a family member currently serving? Is there someone in your department whose story deserves to be told? Help us honor them by inviting them to share their journey. We've created a simple questionnaire to make the process easy. Service members can tell their story, upload a photo, and give permission for us to feature them in our dedicated National Security Facebook Group.

NATIONAL SECURITY (CONTINUED)

Service Member Questionnaire:

https://legionaux.formstack.com/forms/stories_of_servicemembers_and_their_families

Why It Matters. Many of our members rarely get the chance to connect with active-duty personnel. By sharing these stories, we can:

- Build understanding and empathy for the challenges today's service members face
- Inspire new ways to support our military families
- Strengthen the bond between the American Legion Family and those currently serving

Let's work together to ensure every warrior feels seen, supported, and appreciated. Your voice — and their story — can make a lasting impact.

Adopt a 10th Mountain Platoon Program

The 10th Mountain Division (out of Fort Drum here in NY) is the most deployed unit in the U.S. Army so they are always looking for more patriotic organizations to adopt a platoon. 2nd Brigade Combat Team · Scheduled to deploy in March 2026 · They still need Sponsors to adopt a platoon. Contact CSM (R) Joseph McLaughlin at: (adopta10thmntnplt@gmail.com). You will be notified when you are assigned a platoon (normally between 20-50 Soldiers).

If you adopt: · The Platoon Officer or Platoon Sergeant notifies you, (hopefully before they deploy) · You receive a roster of soldiers (Name / rank / sex / birthday / hobbies) · You receive a mailing address when they arrive to their deployment area · Birthday and holiday cards are well received (soldiers will tell you if they need something if you ask) · Post Office Flat Rate packages are the best way to send goodies · Communication is only by email · Deployments are generally 9 months · Biggest expense is mailing packages

Shipping to military installations requires additional details

Posted On: Tuesday, 30 September 2025 American Legion Auxiliary National Website

Regulation overview effective Sept. 1:

U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) now require HS codes for all overseas military shipping to APO, FPO, and DPO addresses. Military mail must follow both domestic and international mail requirements (customs declarations are required since these packages are leaving our country, but they receive domestic pricing since they are going to our troops).

That means:

A detailed description of each item is critical. Enforcement of this started July 14, 2024, which made vague descriptions like snacks, toiletries, etc., unacceptable. Packages started being returned for insufficient customs.

Quantity, weight, and value of each item are now required. Previously, the quantity and value were a requirement, and the overall package weight was acceptable. Now there must be weight for each item with a description, and that weight is used to calculate your overall package weight (Ship Thrifty will tally them for you automatically). Based on everything we've heard, services that don't comply aren't technically compliant. Ship Thrifty modified its system to adhere to the requirements laid out.

SALUTE TO SERVICE Q & A INFORMATION

[Click here to view!](#)

NATIONAL SECURITY (CONTINUED)

Shipping to military installations requires additional detail (continued)

HS codes for goods (six digits minimum). Prior to Sept. 1, a detailed description of each item was acceptable for military shipping. The codes are now a required field, but USPS is not enforcing them at this time but could in the future. If they are left off a foreign package, customs authority could potentially review and reject any package. Ship Thrifty currently has a look-up feature and link to search Google for HS codes. They are building a care package specific HS code look-up and will still include the ability to search with Google if you don't find an item listed.

Country of origin (where it was made) — this is optional for now, but leaving it blank may cause rejection, so USPS suggests including it. Ship Thrifty currently requires this field and defaults the selection to the U.S. since that is what the majority will be. We didn't want to risk nonrefundable returns for anyone supporting the troops or the families of those serving.

Want to learn more? Ship Thrifty hosted webinars after the changes went into effect to share the implications of the changes. Here is the [recording of the webinar](#), which incorporates any new learnings to date. Care packing event checklist: <https://shipthrifty.com/resource/care-packing-event-checklist/>

PARLIAMENTARIAN
LINDA TOME

How about a few trivia questions about parliamentary procedure?? Let's go! See how many you get right!

- Q1. All treasurer's reports require a motion to be accepted.
- Q2. Once a group votes on an amendment to a motion, then no further action is needed on the main motion.
- Q3. A group can consider more than one item of business at the same time.
- Q4. A motion is required to approve the minutes.
- Q5. All treasurer's reports require a motion to be accepted.
- Q6. To make a motion, a member should start with these three words.
- Q7. Motions coming from these groups do not require a second.
- Q8. Once a motion is open for discussion, who has the right to speak first?
- Q9. This group is charged with identifying and recommending eligible candidates for elected leadership positions.
- Q10. Which reports should be first on the agenda --- officer reports, standing committee reports or special/ad-hoc committee reports?



PARLIAMENTARIAN (CONTINUED)

ANSWERS:

A1. False – Only the final financial report at the end of the fiscal year requires a motion and vote.

A2. False – The group must vote on the amendment first, but also must then vote on the full motion.

A3. False

A4. False – Once the presiding officer requests corrections, he or she can state that the minutes are approved as read or as corrected. A motion is only required if there is a dispute or debate about wording or a proposed correction.

A5. False – Only the final financial report at the end of the fiscal year requires a motion and vote.

A6. I move that

A7. Committees

A8. The person who made the motion

A9. Nominating Committee

A10. Officer Reports

POPPY KATHY SOULE

Thank you to the Units that ordered their poppies on time!

Thousands have been ordered, and thousands have been sent!!!

Please consider making some poppies alongside our Veterans, Supervisors, and fellow Legionnaires/Auxiliaries!!

This year at Mid-Winter Conference, all 4 Poppy Supervisors were showcased in the Poppy Committee Display. You can refer to the “Poppy Plan of Action” pages to find your Poppy Supervisor. Go to deptny.org and click on PLAN OF ACTION or refer to your printed POA.

By my recollection, we had Mid-Winter a smidge early! Boy, was it cold!!!

All those cold and snowy days since should have enabled everyone to get started on their Poppy Posters, Miss Poppy Contests, and all your other creative ideas. Be sure to check your deadline dates, which begin with May 1st.

Please be sure to pay attention to the details for submissions; there are 8-9 pages for the ‘Poppy POA’.

Finally, reports are due soon. March 1st is the deadline for Unit to County; March 10th is the deadline for County to Dept. Chair/ME.



PUBLIC RELATIONS PATRICIA MURPHY

I hope everyone has survived the snow and bitter cold. Spring will be here in a flash. It has been a busy few months keeping up everyone spreading the word about the American Legion Auxiliary. Encouraging ALA members to be visible in their communities through valuable, distinct branding. Share the latest news from ALA volunteers through newsletters, posters, social media radio and television. November reporting was great. When doing reports, it would be helpful to identify Facebook and web page numbers by unit, county or district. Mid-winter was a learning experience for all. I enjoyed catching up with familiar faces and meeting new attendees. I look forward to receiving your March reports. Keep sharing the news of your unit through the various media.

WARRIOR FAMILY ASSISTANCE LAURA BOOTH

I hope everyone is staying warm during this cold spell. Thank you to all the members who attended Mid-Winter this. Hopefully my presentation board helped.

Please remember that anyone who is submitting WFA applications must follow the complete guidelines. Applications must be reviewed and signed by 3 members from unit or county. If not, they will be returned to you. Please don't let the veteran suffer from this. Remember County reports are due March 10.

USA 250 CHALLENGE

President Pam Ray, Legion National Commander Dan Wiley, and Sons of The American Legion National Commander Bill Clancy promoting the USA 250 Challenge and sharing how they are participating.

USA 250 Challenge promotion!

This PSA features all three leaders explaining what the challenge is and how to join.

Mental Wellness.

Wiley shares how mental wellness can be involvement in the Legion's Be the One suicide prevention mission, making Buddy Check phone calls, or personal visits to check on the needs of veterans.

•***Physical exercise.*** Clancy reminds participants that anything fitness related counts, such as walking your dog, chair yoga, running, or pickle ball.

Community Service.

Ray gives examples of how to achieve 250 hours of community service through the serving of 250 meals to homeless veterans, sending 250 care packages to deployed troops, or making 250 quilts for veterans.

🇺🇸 Check out the ALA blog to learn more!

➔ <http://www.ALAforVeterans.org/.../Public-service...>



**DEPARTMENT OFFICE
BARBARA, CAITLIN, & TARA**

EFFECTIVE IMMEDIATELY: Per the National Judge Advocate of The American Legion, Mark Seavey- after the Post Adjutant verifies membership eligibility, all DD214's must be returned to the individual. No copies are to be made or kept by anyone.

- Please **do not send** DD214's/active-duty documentation into the office with applications. Once the Post Adjutant/Officer signs the application and the membership chair (ALA) verifies all supporting documents, return the supporting documents to the member. The office only needs the completed – signed application with the dues and transmittal.
- Remember – if the veteran is living, he/she must be a current paid member in the American Legion with a nine-digit membership number. This also pertains to any Active-duty person, they must be a current paid member in The American Legion in order for a family member to join under their eligibility.
- Remember to check off which era the veteran served and the relationship of the veteran to the ALA applicant. Please circle the appropriate relationship.
- PLEASE make sure to get rid of all old applications and use the current applications to avoid mistakes. Applications need to be complete and legible otherwise they will be returned to the unit membership chair.
- New members address needs to be complete. No abbreviations on city/town. All membership applications must be presented to the unit membership chairman with the proper documentation prior to being submitted to the office for processing.
- **Units with Unit FULL and Unit WRITE ALAMIS access** must send the completed membership applications signed by the Post Adjutant or Post officer to the department office once you enter and pay it. Please include the Unit number and new ID# on the application. Keep a copy for the unit file. Failure to adhere to the directions will result in your ALAMIS being terminated immediately.
- All transfers need to be sent to the department office as well as all data forms for deceased members.
- Membership chairs – if your unit members move, change any contact information, phone numbers, emails, etc., please send the change to the Department office so the information is updated in a timely manner. If your unit has ALAMIS Full or Write this should be done as soon as the member notifies you of their change. This also pertains to unit President, Membership Chair and Unit Treasurer.
- Mailed copies of the Newsletters are available at the cost of \$15.00 per year.
- **All Department checks issued must be deposited within 90 days.** Going forward the treasurer will not reissue checks that were not deposited in a timely manner.
- All checks sent to the office or given at county visitation should be made out as follows: **American Legion Auxiliary, Department of New York** and indicate in the memo line what it is for. Also, please remember to sign the check.
- All donations should be sent to the department office and **not** the committee chair. When submitting a donation form please indicate what unit or county it is from.
- **The 2027 Unit data – Direct Billing (Blue Form)** will be sent out in March. It is due back to the Department office – no later than May, 1, 2026. If your unit is considering a dues increase, you need to vote on it now before you fill out and return the form. After the May 1, 2026 deadline, National charges \$30.00 to change the dues rates per unit.
- If your unit officers change, please send an email to the department office and let us know who the new officer is.