



District Commander Orientation

Department of Iowa
Programs Guide

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Contents

Introduction	3
American Legion of Iowa Boys State	4
High School Oratorical Contest	5
5th Grade Flag Essay Contest	6
Junior Shooting Sports	7
American Legion Baseball	7
Scouting	8
Law Enforcement Officer and Firefighter of the Year	9
Educator of the Year	10
Legionnaire of the Year	10
Consolidated Post Reports	10
Temporary Financial Assistance (TFA)	12
Vets of Valor	12
Veterans Assistance: Department Service Office	13
Disaster Preparedness	14
Get Out the Vote	14
Notes	15

Introduction

The Department of Iowa has many programs involving children, youth and members of the Legion and community. Each program is unique but all promote values shared by Legionnaires. As a District Commander, you will be responsible for seeing these programs are appropriately chaired and thriving. This booklet will serve as a guide for many of the **Programs and Support Programs**, and what you are to expect. An electronic copy of this booklet is provided for you convenience on the Department website under District Forms.

The Department website will serve you well for information, materials and resources available at the convenience of your mobile device, home or work. Much of the information landscape for The American Legion has transitioned or will soon be transitioning to digital regardless of your personal preferences. Find someone who can help you if you are not technically savvy.

Each program will have a document drafted by their respective **Committees and Committee Chairmen**, National or State, outlining and detailing the necessary information for Districts, Posts and participants containing applications, guidelines and rules. Winners of the program receive an award in the form of a plaque, trophy or scholarship.

One point to note, quality and engaged **District Chairmen** will create or continue a thriving program rather than stagnate them. A **District Chairman** is not a position to fill for the sake of checking a box, rather they are someone who genuinely is excited about seeing the program succeed and continued annually. Chairmen will be your allies in championing programs which engage the community. Remember, greater exposure to Legion programs increases potential membership for those unaware or are on the fence about joining.

Department Website: www.ialegion.org/programs

Youth Programs

American Legion of Iowa Boys State

www.ialegion.org/boysstate

The American Legion of Iowa Boys State (Hawkeye Boys State) program is perhaps the largest by volume and details for Department Programs. Each year, delegates selected to represent the many Posts and communities throughout the state gather in the Summer for a week-long civics course. The delegates form a mock state for which they create a full governing society, utilizing the processes employed by current US Legislators. At the end of the week, a delegate will be chosen to receive a scholarship, another the title of Boys State Governor, and two nominated to be national representatives as Senators at Boys Nation.

Post Chairman: Not a position to be filled but someone who is willing to champion the program and see quality candidates are sent as delegate representatives. They should be informed and function as liaisons between The American Legion and delegates.

Deadlines and Guidelines:

- Early reservations (\$250 per delegate) are due by the end of the year without exception (December 31).
 - Online reservations are the preferred method.
 - Checks can be mailed afterwards.
- Any reservation placed on or after January 1 will be \$300 per delegate.
- Selection process should be taking place beginning January with interviews (Chairmen Guide provided with this packet or can be found online).
- Posts will receive an online letter to hand or forward to delegates for registration (no handwritten forms).
- ALL REFUND REQUESTS can be submitted online www.ialegion.org/refunds no later than April 1. This form is only available January 1 – April 1 of the current program year.

- Should a delegate cancel after the refund cutoff, Posts are advised to find a replacement.
- Posts and District Board Members are responsible for communication with delegates and parents.
- District Orientations are scheduled for Mid-Spring – Delegates and parents are highly encouraged to attend. If they are unable to attend their District’s Orientation, they may attend another if it is convenient.
 - In the event a delegate is unable to attend a physical orientation, materials and resources can be found on the Department Website for them and their family to examine.
- Boys State Session will commence in June.
- Encourage your District’s Legionnaires to attend Legionnaires Day (the Tuesday during Boys State).

High School Oratorical Contest

www.ialegion.org/oratorical

The American Legion High School Oratorical Scholarship Program seeks to develop a well-rounded student who gains insight and a deeper appreciation for the US Constitution. The contest hones qualities of leadership, public speaking with emphases on critical thinking and clarity of speech, responsibility and citizenship. Contestants focus and address an assigned phase or subject of the US Constitution.

Deadlines and Guidelines:

- Rules conform to the National rules (available online at www.ialegion.org/oratorical) unless exceptions for the contest are stated as outlined below.
- **The District Contest** shall consist of no more than one contestant from each Post/County in the District.
 - If there is more than one contestant from each County, there shall be a County Contest to determine the representative from the County who will advance to the District Contest.

- Prior to Area Contests, a Local, County and District Contest will be held. **Area Contests** will be held between January and February. Locations and hosts TBD by the committee.
 - **AREA I** – (Districts 1, 5, & 6)
 - **AREA II** – (Districts 2, 3, & 4)
 - **AREA III** – (Districts 7, 8, & 9)
- **Department Finals** will be held the Sunday of Mid-Winter Conference.
- The **National Contest** will be held in Indianapolis where the Department winner will advance.

5th Grade Flag Essay Contest

www.ialegion.org/flag-essay

The purpose of essay contest is to develop a deeper knowledge and appreciation for the United States Flag on the part of elementary-level students. Other objectives of the contest include the ability to gain knowledge of flag etiquette and respect for the flag.

Deadlines and Guidelines:

- Local and District Contest awards, if any, will be the responsibility of the individual posts and districts. The contest must be completed in time to be forwarded to Department of Iowa.
- Individual Legion Posts will forward one winning entry to their District Children and Youth Chairman, with signed Participation Application, postmarked by the beginning of January.
- District entries will be judged by the respective District Children and Youth Chairman, and sent to Department Headquarters, postmarked by the beginning of February.
- Department Children and Youth Committee will judge the nine District entries at Mid-Winter Conference.

Junior Shooting Sports

www.ialegion.org/jssp

The American Legion Junior Shooting Sports Program encourages marksmanship and gun safety education for junior high and high school age youth. As part of the program, The American Legion of Iowa will conduct an Air Rifle Championship Tournament, which provides competitors an opportunity to test their marksmanship ability in competition with other shooters throughout Iowa. The National Standard Three-Position Air Rifle Rules, which is updated every few years, will govern the Match. The Department Match will be a Best-Four-Count Team (five shooters, 4 top scores count) as outlined under the National Standard Three-Position Air Rifle Rules.

Deadlines and Guidelines:

- Posts wishing to sponsor a new shooting club for this competition must have the official affiliation by the end of December.
- Registrations and Medical forms for all shooters are due to the Department by the beginning of March if they wish to participate.
- The Department Match is held Mid-March at a facility which can host (example: Camp Dodge, DSM North High School).
- Scoring is conducted electronically, which eliminates protests, and posted where participants, coaches and family members can view within minutes.

American Legion Baseball

www.ialegion.org/baseball

Since 1925, American Legion Baseball has contributed to the development of good sportsmanship and good citizenship while providing wholesome recreation for the nation's youth. The history of American Legion Baseball has proved that American youths receive on the baseball diamond a thorough understanding of sportsmanship, teamwork, and good citizenship – valued traits for America's future leaders.

Deadlines and Guidelines:

- Currently, the tournament is held late Summer due to high school season conflicts.
- Teams must register by the deadline at the end of February and have their registration and insurance paid online to participate.
- Background checks and screenings must be completed first by all members of the coaching/management staff before insurance certificates can be released.
- Depending on the location of the tournament, your District may be hosting. This would be a great opportunity to get your District involved by volunteering (Color Guard during the National Anthem, meals for the teams, etc.).
 - Communicate with your District Chairman.

Scouting

www.ialegion.org/scouting

The American Legion's support for Boy Scouts of America began at the Legion's first national convention in 1919. Legion Posts sponsor many Scouting units across Iowa, and the rest of the country. This is natural for Legionnaires, who bring their service-learned skills and experiences as veterans to help build character and positive traits in our country's youth. Few other post activities generate more goodwill from the community.

Legion Posts support and celebrate Scouts who earn the rank of Eagle. In addition, posts can nominate individuals for Eagle Scout of the Year, Adult Cub and Boy Scouter of the Year.

The Square Knot Award may be awarded to members of the American Legion, American Legion Auxiliary and Sons of the American Legion who are actively involved and have made significant contributions to the Scouting Program.

Deadlines and Guidelines:

- Posts can request a Certificate of Recognition from the Department for Scouts who have achieved the rank of Eagle. This may be presented to the Eagle Scout at the honor ceremony.

- Eagle Scout of Year nomination guidelines are found in the nomination form provided through National.
- Nominations must be received by the Department by the beginning of March to be considered.
- Nominees are judged according to Committee guidelines and the finalist is forwarded to National for consideration by the beginning of April.
- Adult Cub and Boy Scouters are nominated by posts, judged by the Committee and selected to receive an award at Department Convention.

Law Enforcement Officer and Firefighter of the Year

www.ialegion.org/lawenforcement

www.ialegion.org/firefighter

The American Legion recognizes leaders within the community to exemplify values and characteristics that mirror their own.

The American Legion gives its National Law Enforcement Officer of the Year Award to a well-rounded law enforcement officer who has exceeded the duty requirements expected of his or her position and has demonstrated a distinct pattern of community service coupled with professional achievement.

The American Legion will give a National Firefighter of the Year Award to a firefighter who has exceeded the requirements expected of his or her position and has shown a distinct pattern of community service and professional achievement.

Deadlines and Guidelines:

- Nominations must be submitted by the beginning of November to the Department.
- Nominees are judged at the beginning of the year and the finalist's application is forwarded to National for consideration.
- Awards are presented at Department Convention.

Educator of the Year

www.ialegion.org/educator

Educators play a significant role in the lives of impressionable minds. Some educators have gone above and beyond their job description to incorporate and promote the aims and purposes of the American Legion of Iowa. This award is only given in state as it is not a nationally recognized award.

Deadlines and Guidelines:

- Nominations must be submitted at the beginning of April to the Department.
- The Award is presented at Department Convention.

Legionnaire of the Year

www.ialegion.org/loty

The recipient of The American Legion of Iowa Art McLaughlin Legionnaire of the Year is recognized because they are a member who exemplifies leadership as a *blue cap*. Named after the Legionnaire who made the Legion one of his life's passion, the nominees for this State award go above and beyond being a number.

Deadlines and Guidelines:

- Nomination forms can be found on the Department website.
- Nominations are accepted up to June 15.
- The award is given to the winning nominee at the Department Convention.

Consolidated Post Reports

www.ialegion.org/cpr

You have probably heard or said it over and over, "Every Posts does something." The Consolidated Post Report (CPRs) were established as a way for departments to document the various activities that have transpired at Posts throughout the fiscal year (June 1 – May 31). This

report, combined with other reports, provides the National Commander and other Legion Leaders information when testifying on Capitol Hill on behalf of veterans everywhere.

If Legionnaires want Congress to act in favor of veterans, the Department and National need to know what happens so Legislators make informed decisions.

One of the most lasting contributions to American life is that of making American communities better places in which to live. The Department of Iowa recognizes the volunteerism of local Posts based on this information at Convention.

Hundreds of different types of projects, designed for the betterment of communities, are sponsored by American Legion Posts each year. Every community needs many improvements, and local American Legion Posts take the lead in active, aggressive campaigns for community betterment.

Deadlines and Guidelines:

- Posts should already keep a record of what transpired throughout the year. If not, encourage them.
- Reports are mailed to Posts in the early Spring.
- Posts must submit the information requested electronically through mylegion.org or by mail to the Department Headquarters no later than June 15.
 - Fewer hardcopies will be mailed in the future because of the increase in electronic submittals.
- This falls on the leadership of the Legion, nationally and state, as to what is reported which means it ultimately falls on you as to why the Posts in your District have or have not reported.
- Get familiar with the form and how to submit it electronically so you can help those Posts who fail pay attention to this very important report.

Support Programs

www.ialegion.org/supportprograms

Temporary Financial Assistance (TFA)

www.ialegion.org/tfa

Since its establishment in 1925, The American Legion Temporary Financial Assistance (TFA) program has awarded cash grants to minor children of current active duty or American Legion members. These grants help families in need meet the cost of shelter, food, utilities and health expenses, thereby keeping the child or children in a more stable environment.

Guidelines:

- Eligibility guidelines can be found online at on the Department Website under Support Programs – Temporary Financial Assistance – www.ialegion.org.
- Specific to qualifying veterans with at least one minor.
- Must show proof of eligibility to qualify.
- Brochures and how to obtain a form can be found on the TFA page.

Vets of Valor

www.ialegion.org/vov

Thanks to the generosity of sponsors, The American Legion of Iowa can provide the Vets of Valor program, an assistance to Iowa veterans and their families.

Each year, the American Legion hosts events in cooperation with different organizations to raise awareness and funds for veterans. Late Spring/Early Summer is the Vets of Valor motorcycle ride and in the Fall, the radiothon.

Guidelines:

- Veterans who do not qualify for TFAs may qualify for Vets of Valor.
- Donations are always welcomed.
- Applications can be submitted to the Department Adjutant or Programs Director, preferably through email.
- The application is the same as the one used for TFAs.

Veterans Assistance: Department Service Office

www.ialegion.org/service-office

Part of the American Legion's Vision is to "respond to the quality of life needs of all veterans and their families."

Since its inception, The American Legion's National Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation (VA&R) Commission has assisted veterans in "readjusting to civilian life, restoring their health and usefulness to society, and assuring them of the well-being of their widows and children." The backbone of this effort has always been the service officer.

Guidelines:

- The Department of Iowa Service Office is located in the Federal building in Des Moines, adjacent to the VA Regional Office.
 - Iowa American Legion Service Office
Federal Building, Room 561
210 Walnut St.
Des Moines, IA 50309
- The Service Office also maintains an office in the VA Medical Center in Iowa City.
- The Service office is responsible for providing assistance and representation in any claim for VA benefits.
- The Service Office contact information can be found on the Department Website.

Disaster Preparedness

www.ialegion.org/disasterprep

The American Legion encourages Americans to prepare for emergencies in their homes, businesses and communities. American Legion Posts are encouraged to take simple steps to prepare for disasters: Get a Kit; Make a Plan; Be Informed about the different types of emergencies and their appropriate responses; and Get Involved.

Guidelines:

- Disaster Preparedness Booklet can be found on the Department Website.
- Individuals interested in more information about family and business preparedness can visit www.ready.gov or call 1-800-BE-READY to receive free materials.

Get Out the Vote

www.ialegion.org/gotv.

The American Legion encourages all Americans to register and vote in all elections. Legionnaires have traditionally responded to the call and are among the groups of individuals most likely to cast their ballots on Election Day.

Guidelines:

- Information can be found on the Department Website.

Notes
