



THE AMERICAN LEGION  
*Veterans Strengthening America*  
NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS

PO BOX 1055, INDIANAPOLIS, IN, 46206-1055 • WWW.LEGION.ORG • P: (317) 630-1350 • F: (317) 630-1223

# The American Legion 104th Birthday 2023

The American Legion  
Media & Communications Division

Milton J. Foreman was a distinguished general, a World War One hero and a founder of The American Legion.

In 1921, Foreman provided a roadmap for service and national unity in an Armistice address at the University of Illinois.

“Between good and bad no armistice is possible; the fight goes on and on; the sound of its cannon can never cease, as it ceased three years ago in France,” he told the crowd. “We must develop our national feeling. We must get rid of ‘blocs’ – agricultural blocs, labor blocs, capitalistic blocs, -- and think of our country as a unit and ourselves as much a part of that unit as if we were the officers and the privates in an army. We must train ourselves in this national service, fight in it, die in it if necessary...You must have the courage and endurance for this.” – unquote.

On the day of Foreman's Armistice Day speech, fellow American Legion founder Hamilton Fish, Junior, a powerful member of Congress, stood at Arlington National Cemetery for the dedication of the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier. The Tomb was the culmination of Legion-advocacy and Fish's legislative determination.

Though Past National Commander Foreman did not live to see the horrors of World War Two, his call for training, service, unity, courage and endurance would be answered by the next generation of Americans. It was the generation that would transform a start-up organization of Great War veterans into the largest and most powerful community service force in the country.

It was Foreman's contemporaries in The American Legion who would create the greatest domestic legislation ever passed by Congress – the GI Bill of Rights.

Legionnaires from World War One, led by Past National Commander Harry Colmery, understood that America had a duty to remember its newest veterans.

The Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944 would make higher education, home loans, vocational training and readjustment compensation available to those who honorably answered the nation's call during what many viewed was a war for survival.

On the back of every American Legion membership card is the Preamble to our organization's Constitution. In the Preamble, we pledge to "make right the master of might."

The American Legion has always believed in "Might." It is why our founders included a strong national defense as one of our Four Pillars.

While many of America's wartime enemies had strong militaries, The American Legion understood Foreman's warning that between good and bad no armistice was possible.

For too many veterans, the war does not end when the guns fall silent. Last year, The American Legion witnessed the signing of the Sergeant First Class Heath Robinson Honoring Our PACT Act. The law provides comprehensive health care and benefits to veterans with illnesses related to burn pits, atomic radiation, Agent Orange and other toxic exposures.

Thousands of Legionnaires worldwide wrote, called, visited and messaged lawmakers. They reminded Congress that elected officials should serve veterans as well as veterans have served America. The PACT Act wasn't the only recent legislative achievement by The American Legion.

The Department of Veterans Affairs is now mandated to conduct annual Buddy Check Weeks, an initiative started by The American Legion. Through our camaraderie, The American Legion has always appreciated the power of peers. Veterans share a common bond and can have a positive impact on those in crisis. Through Buddy Checks and the Be the One program, The American Legion has made suicide prevention its top priority.

There is no single answer to solving the tragedy that thousands of veterans each year die by their own hand. American Legion National Commander Jim Troiola (Tree ola) simply asks that we each commit to “be the one to save one.” That means eliminating the stigma and instead saluting the courage that it requires to call the 988-crisis line and begin the path to mental wellness.

Since our founding, The American Legion has understood that service encompasses far more than military duty and commitment to veterans.

It is an obligation to our communities, and especially, the youth of America. From Boys & Girls State...to Shooting Sports...to Baseball...to Oratorical contests...The American Legion Family offers the finest programs and scholarship opportunities of any service organization in the country.

An important aspect of our American Legion Veterans & Children Foundation is its training of a strong corps of service officers but that is only part of its mission.

The Veterans & Children Foundation also provides Temporary Financial Assistance to Legion and military families in need due to expenses related to food, shelter, utilities and health.

These are just a few of the programs in which The American Legion delivers on its motto of Veterans Strengthening America.

The American Legion's true strength does not come from the corridors of Congress or from its national headquarters. It comes from the communities. It is on display when residents of a storm-stricken town take refuge at an American Legion post that is converted into a makeshift emergency shelter.

The strength is in an American Legion job fair, post meeting or troop homecoming event. The American Legion's strength is felt when a group of cap-wearing veterans visits patients at a VA hospital.

The strength of the Legion resonates when volunteers speak about their military experience in school classrooms on Veterans Day.

The American Legion strength is seen when an honor guard pays respects at a veteran's funeral or a Rider's chapter raises awareness for a worthy cause.



One hundred and four years ago, a committed group of World War One veterans from the United States met in Paris, France with a broad vision. Included among their goals was “to inculcate the duty and obligation of the citizen to the state.” It was repeated by PNC Foreman’s expressed desire two years later to “develop our national feeling.” More than a century later – the duty, obligation and *national feeling* desired by the founders exists in abundance. It can be found at more than 12,000 American Legion posts around the globe. It is a feeling that has proven timeless over the last 104 years, one that matters deeply today and will endure for generations to come.

Thank you and God Bless our American Legion.