CORONAVIRUS - IMPROVISE, ADAPT, AND OVERCOME

The last 90 days have been historical, surreal, and for some shocking. Members have become sick from this virus, and we have heard that a few fellow Legionnaires have passed away. Members have been placed out of work, working in essential services, or working from home and, in some cases, become schoolteachers since schools have closed.

Times are challenging, but not over. For The American Legion, our mission continues. Yes, some American Legion Posts with buildings are closed off to gathering in fellowship, or the community fundraising dinner, but the mission continues. Some are offering carry-out food; others have been sewing facemasks for citizens, first responders, and medical professionals. Legionnaires are improvising.

They have been checking on their buddies and watching out for one another. For God and Country, Legionnaires are praying.

The Department of Michigan has canceled all 2020 summer programs, and our Annual Department Convention, so note the information in this issue is when things operate in a typical year. The department has learned, like many Posts have that virtual meetings, although not ideal, can work. Legionnaires are adapting.

Stay at home orders will eventually lift, and life will begin to evolve in a way we are not quite sure yet, but Legionnaires will overcome.

Memorial Day and the giving of Poppies happens in May, two traditions that mean so much to what The American Legion does and who we are, it will be exciting to see how Posts and Legionnaires think about how to honor our fallen comrades in this period of social distancing. Let’s the department know what you have planned or did.

What is special about this issue?

This issue is about you and your membership. This issue is about informing you about the organization you are a member. Maybe you have been a member for years; there is something in here for you. Or, you joined through the mail, and you are not quite sure what you joined, this issue is for you. Or, you didn’t renew because we didn’t do something like this before you left us.

Welcome aboard!

Think of this as a welcome aboard issue for you. This issue is packed with information about The American Legion. The American Legion has many aspects to it that members may not have realized even after years of being a member. It is not unusual for members to comment, “I didn’t know.”

Now you know.

It is our mission with this issue to highlight areas of the Legion so you can get the most from your membership.

Being a member of the Legion means different things to each member. You determine what it means to you. The Legion is an avenue to understand the benefits you may be entitled to from VA, and you want to pass that information on to your fellow veterans who need to know. The Legion is an organization that encourages giving back to our communities, and we have many programs give back. If you want to become active in your local post and become a part of a tribe, the Legion is for you.

Do you have a desire to volunteer and help veterans?

Our Volunteer Services program is for you. The VA Medical Centers, Vet Centers, other VA locations, and the State Veteran Homes need a platoon of volunteers to assist them in accomplishing their mission. In Michigan, American Legion volunteers serve tens of thousands of hours being a friend to veterans in need.

I don’t have time to volunteer.

No worries, just paying your membership dues each year provides support to thousands of veterans each year, by supporting the organization that teams with those veterans to battle the struggles they may be experiencing each day. When you carry a current membership card, if anyone asks you, if you support veterans, your response is easy. “YES, I do; I am a Legionnaire.”

If you have questions about your membership call (517) 371-4720 ext 124.

Don’t Face the VA Alone!
Veteran Service Officers are still working for you. See page 7.
Preamble to the American Legion Constitution

Legionnaires recite the preamble at every meeting. (Updated by National Executive Committee Oct 16, 2019)

FOR GOD AND COUNTRY WE ASSOCIATE OURSELVES TOGETHER

FOR THE FOLLOWING PURPOSES:

To uphold and defend the Constitution of the United States of America;
To maintain law and order;
To foster and perpetuate a one hundred percent Americanism;
To preserve the memories and incidents of our associations in the All Wars;
To inculcate a sense of individual obligation to the community, state and nation;
To combat the autocracy of both the classes and the masses;
To make right the master of might;
To promote peace and goodwill on earth;
To safeguard and transmit to posterity the principles of justice, freedom and democracy;
To consecrate and sanctify our comradeship by our devotion to mutual helpfulness.

Organization of The American Legion (simplified)

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<tr>
<th>National Convention</th>
<th>District Officers</th>
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<td>National Executive Committee</td>
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<td>Department Convention</td>
<td>Department Officers</td>
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Post Officer position titles:

- Commander
- Adjutant
- Finance Officer
- Senior Vice Commander
- Junior Vice Commander
- Judge Advocate
- Historian
- Sgt-at-Arms
- Chaplain

Those are basic positions that a post will have, although the only required officer positions that need to be filled are the commander and the adjutant/finance officer positions.

Any member in good standing may run for a position. Nominations and elections generally start in April and May, but refer to your Post Bylaws for specifics.

Districts have similar positions on their level.

Consider being a post officer.
Welcome new members to the best organization for our Comrades.

Legionnaires,

I want to thank you for your service to the United States of America; without you, we would not have the freedoms we enjoy. America is still the shining light on top of the mountain that others risk everything to come to for the opportunity to have a better life.

If you are a brand-new member welcome aboard, we have put together this edition for you, current members, and those who may have been members before to learn about the organization they belong.

The American Legion is more than the local post; it is a world-wide organization caring for and advocating for those serving and those who have served in our military, regardless of race, creed, gender, or ethnic background. The fact that you served is all the reason we need to press forward.

Read every page of this issue and know you belong to the best organization to advocate for our fellow veterans.

Sincerely,

Barry Wood

What is The American Legion?

The American Legion was chartered and incorporated by Congress in 1919 as a patriotic veterans organization devoted to mutual helpfulness. It is the nation’s largest wartime veterans service organization, committed to mentoring youth and sponsorship of wholesome programs in our communities, advocating patriotism and honor, promoting strong national security, and continued devotion to our fellow servicemembers and veterans.

The American Legion is a nonpartisan, not-for-profit organization with great political influence perpetuated by its grass-roots involvement in the legislation process from local districts to Capitol Hill. Legionnaires’ sense of obligation to community, state, and nation drives an honest advocacy for veterans in Washington. The Legion stands behind the issues most important to the nation’s veterans community, backed by resolutions passed by volunteer leadership.

The American Legion’s success depends entirely on active membership, participation, and volunteerism. The organization belongs to the people it serves and the communities in which it thrives.

Quick Hits:

- There are 55 Departments:
  All 50 states, plus
  The Department of France, Puerto Rico, Philippines, District of Columbia, and Mexico.
- 552,412 veterans in Michigan are eligible for membership because of the LEGION ACT.
- Michigan has five VA Medical Centers. Detroit, Ann Arbor, Saginaw, Battle Creek, and Iron Mountain.
- 29 Community Outpatient Base Clinics.
- Eight Vet Centers.
- One Regional Center.
- Two National Cemeteries.
- The first Legion Rider Chapter was started in Garden City Post 396.
- The Department ran a hospital in Battle Creek and an Orphanage in Otter Lake.
Welcome to Team Legion! You became a member by answering a solicitation in the U.S. mail, or online. A member of a Legion Post asked you to join, or you walked into a post, saw a post, or you were contacted during a local membership drive. Maybe your father or mother were members of a post, and you already knew a little bit about the Legion. Regardless of how you were signed up we appreciate your membership.

With membership card in hand, now what?

The first point we would make is that The American Legion is a volunteer organization, run by those volunteers who are people, and people come in many different ethnic backgrounds, colors, shapes, past experiences, and ideas. These people have a common thread in that they want to help their fellow veterans and community in some way, and none of them are perfect.

The second point we would make is that not all Legion posts are the same. Some are bigger than others, some participate in one of 22 American Legion programs, or more. Some are small and do many things, but some that are considered bigger might not participate in any American Legion programs. Some posts seem to run like a well-oiled machine, some struggle to turn the key to the ON position, and most are somewhere in between. Each post is a small community, and like communities, they are different.

Not every Legion post owns a building; in Michigan, we have about a 50-50 split on posts that own a building and those that do not. A building is not required; it is a form of revenue generation for that local Legion. Some have a club liquor license, and some do not. Those without buildings meet in local restaurants, other veteran service organization buildings, or a community center. A few Legion posts own businesses; for example, American Legion Post 106 in Grayling owns a bowling alley that is open to the public. American Legion Post 90 in Lake Linden, owns the Lakes Lounge and Off Shore Restaurant, open to the public, they are the place to go when visiting Lake Linden.

Each post is independently operated but must adhere to the Constitution and Bylaws of the post, department and national organization.

Where should you start?

There are steps you can take to learn more about your post. The first step is to go to a membership meeting and observe. Introduce yourself and meet the officers of the post. Ask for a copy of the posts constitution and bylaws to read.

Secondly, we would recommend meeting with the post commander and post adjutant before or after a membership meeting to ask them questions. Consider the following questions:

- What programs of The American Legion does the post participate?
- How does the post engage their local community to promote Americanism, patriotism, and veteran advocacy? They might have an honor guard, baseball team, or a school program.
- What kind of volunteer opportunities does the post offer to members?
- When are your membership meetings? What other meetings does the post have?

Reading materials

Visit michiganlegion.org and read the department constitution and bylaws, then visit Legion.org to read the national constitution and bylaws.

Take The American Legion Basic Course

Truly knowing an organization takes time but TAL has resources to help you learn more. As a member, you may go to www.legion.org/training and take the free basic course of instruction. This program will give you a brief history of The American Legion, explain the four pillars, and programs. From start to finish the course takes about three hours to complete, but it does not need to be completed in one sitting. You may start and stop at any time, then return to resume where you left off. After completing the course, you will receive an electronic certificate of completion.

American Legion Publications

TAL has over 200 brochures, manuals, speeches, and studies available on their website for download and purchase. Visit www.legion.org/publications. You should be receiving your monthly Legion magazine, and eight times a year the MI Legionnaire.

Can I visit other posts?

Yes, you can. As stated earlier each post is its own small community; some do more than others. If you find that your current post does not do what you think they should, we want to encourage you to visit other posts in your area. Visit several, ask questions, find a better fit for you and your participation. Transferring to a different post is easy. Take your membership card and your discharge papers (DD-214) to the new post and tell them you would like to transfer to them. The post adjutant or membership chairman will fill out a Member Data Form to facilitate the transfer.

Why do I need to take my discharge papers when transferring, when I am already a member?

The local post you belong to oversees their own membership. It is up to them to verify your status as a war-time era veteran. They have the right to deny or accept a member transfer, the membership card is not 100% verification to them that you qualify for The American Legion.

What post do I belong?

Have a look at your membership card, it says it right on your membership card. Note, when doing an internet search for a post number, be sure to include the state as well. Post No.1 is not unique to the Legion; each department might have Post No.1. A Google search might return 55 different options.

What is the Membership Year? Why do I receive renewal notices?

Let’s see if we can explain this with little confusion. The organizations fiscal year runs from July 1 to June 30. The American Legion’s goal is to have a 100% membership renewal by December 31 of each year for the next year completed. Meaning, they begin asking members to renew on July 1 for the following years membership. For example, starting July 1, 2019, you will be asked to renew your membership for the 2020 membership year even if you joined or renewed in January, February, or another month before July 1.

The organization would like to have membership completed as soon as possible to concentrate on pro-
grams. Please note your membership technically is not considered expired until December 31 of the membership year on your card.

First renewal notices go out the end of June or the first part of July. Members who have not renewed by mid-September will receive another renewal notice; the same goes for mid-October, mid-December, mid-February, and lastly mid-April.

I renewed at my post before one of those months, but still received a renewal notice, why?

When you renew with the post, the post adjutant, or member in charge of members, must send your membership information into department headquarters, then the department must transmit that information to the national headquarters. If the membership from the post was not sent on time for the department to forward on to national, then you will receive another notice. Your first contact should be to your post adjutant to determine if they had sent your membership in on time. Sometimes posts hold on to membership for too long, before sending it in.

Avoid the renewal notice, renew online at www.legion.org/renew starting July 1.

The American Legion does have an online renewal process for members. Visit www.legion.org/renew and renew online. To receive your new card, print off the temporary membership sheet national provides during the process and send that to your post adjutant. That will show you paid, and they can send your new membership card.

What is the official uniform of The American Legion?

According to Resolution No. 46, passed in spring 1965 by the National Executive Committee, “A Legionnaire is considered to be in uniform if wearing an official American Legion Cap.”

Caps are available at Emblem Sales. Visit them online at emblem.legion.org.

What is Emblem Sales?

The American Legion headquarters over the years has provided products to help American Legion Posts promote and function. Their product line grows each year, and they are one of the top-selling companies of U.S. Flags in the country.

They offer American Legion Family inspired clothing items, military branch specific items, post items, and much more. The American Legion Flag & Emblem division is self-sustaining, and part of the profits made are used to support the programs of The American Legion.

Visit their website at emblem.legion.org to order a catalog or shop online.

If you want to support The American Legion, veterans, and the programs we provide buy your U.S. Flags from Emblem sales and encourage your neighbors and local business to do the same.

The American Legion has many opportunities for members to engage their fellow veterans, youth, and their community. How much you decide to volunteer, or participate is entirely up to you.

We recognize that members become busy and their time is limited, but know that as a card carrying member of The American Legion you are still helping veterans and their families through the membership dues you pay.

What do membership dues cover?

When you pay your membership dues to the post, not all of the dues stays with the post. The post transmits $39.50 to the department headquarters per member, and department transmits $18.00 per member to the national headquarters.

Unlike other non-profit organizations we are a membership organization. Our membership dues pay for the majority of the day-to-day operations of the organization. Whereas, other non-profits, must raise money for the operations and their programs.

When The American Legion holds fundraisers for specific purposes 95% to 100% of the funds raised can go directly to the cause and not to administrative fees for the cause.

Five ways your membership dues support veterans and their families.

1. TAL Legislative efforts at the department and national levels support veteran and military issues being discussed in State Capitols and the U.S. Congress.

2. TAL Department of Michigan employees 19 accredited veteran service officers, and more than 15 National accredited veteran service officers in Washington, D.C. and Indianapolis to represent Veterans receive the benefits they have earned from the U.S. Department of Veterans Administration.

3. The Temporary Financial Assistance program gives direct assistance to veterans in need.

4. Administration of youth programs to promote good citizenship and learning.

5. The Legion give thousands of dollars away in scholarships each year to America’s youth.
**Membership Discounts for Members in Good Standing**

Take advantage of these national discounts.

Receive the discount codes by registering at www.mylegion.org, click the Members section providers. Have your membership card ready when you register.

The American Legion is working hard every year to partner with large corporations to provide discounts to Legionnaires and their families. Take advantage of these discounts today.

Mylegion.org is a portal for managing your membership options.

- Need to do an address change? Mylegion.org can help.
- View issues of the award-winning Legion magazine.
- Print a membership card.
- Renew online or set up automatic renewals.

**YOUR SUMMARY OF THE AMERICAN LEGION BENEFITS**

**Reserved for Members**

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<td>OfficeMax OFFICE DEPOT/OFICE MAX</td>
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<td>LIFESTATION</td>
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<td><strong>ADDED MEDICAL BENEFITS</strong></td>
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<td>DISCOUNTS ON HEARING AIDS</td>
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<td><strong>INSURANCE</strong></td>
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<td>LIFE INSURANCE THROUGH MUTUAL OF OMAHA</td>
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**AUTO RENTAL, RELOCATION, AND TRAVEL**

- **AUTO RENTALS** - Members can receive special discounts with ALAMO, NATIONAL, and ENTERPRISE.
- **NORTH AMERICAN VAN LINES AND ALLIED VAN LINES** - Preferred savings on interstate (state-to-state) moving and in-transit storage.
- **GOV VACATION REWARDS** - Members can get the best discount available on travel including airfare, hotel, car rental, vacation packages, cruises, and more.
- **VETERANS HOLIDAYS** - This program offers members the opportunity to rent a furnished condominium for 2-8 people, for an entire week, for less than they would pay for a single hotel room.

**NOTE:** These discount offers are valid at participating locations and are not valid with any other discounts or special prices. The American Legion does not guarantee any discounts.

USAA is proud to be the Preferred Provider of Insurance and Financial Services to The American Legion. We have proudly served the military community, veterans and their families since 1922.
**Benefits for being an American Legion member**

Does The American Legion sell my information to companies to advertise to members?

The American Legion does not sell membership information for use by companies. As a 501 (c) 19, non-profit veteran services organization we are required to offer benefits to our membership. For over 50-years the Department of Michigan has partnered with the Legionnaire Insurance Trust company to provide products to Michigan Legionnaires. These benefits not only benefit you, the member, but also the department, and the programs we provide. Over the last 50-years the LIT has provided over $4 million to our programs.

These funds are used to support veteran services to Michigan veterans who seek to file claims with the U.S. Department of Veterans Administration.

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**Legionnaire Benefits**

As a Member of the Legion Family, You Know How Important It Is to Help Those in Need ...

*Now We Can Help*

The LIT Plans can help with

- Hospital HELP Plan
- Cancer Care
- Accidental Death Protection
- On-The-Move Travel Accident
- Emergency Assistance Plus
- Medicare Supplement Insurance
- Health Insurance
- Dental Insurance
- Long-Term Care
- Lifeline Medical Alert Service

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**No Cost LegionCare - It’s FREE**

One product they offer to Legion Family members is called “No Cost LegionCare.”

LegionCare no cost to you accidental death insurance protection is guaranteed to Legionnaires, in good standing.**

As a member of the Legion Family, you're eligible for up to $5,000.00 in NO COST To You coverage. But your Confirmation is REQUIRED for activation.

**$5,000.00 ACCIDENTAL DEATH PROTECTION MEMBER-ONLY BENEFIT:**

Your beneficiary will receive a check for $5,000.00 if you suffer a fatal covered accident while you are traveling to or from or participating in any covered event conducted for Legion business, or $1,000.00 for all other fatal covered accidents. You pay nothing for this coverage.

Your Department of The American Legion endorses this coverage to stand by your family with up to $1,000.00 cash benefits paid straight to your beneficiary, if you suffer a fatal covered accident at home, on the job, in your car, on vacation, while traveling, wherever you are.

**The product for Members living in WA differs from the above. Please click here for a full description.**

To sign up visit:

www.thelit.com/no-cost-legioncare

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*The Accidental Death, Cancer Care, Hospital Help Plan, and On-The-Move Accident Insurance Plans are underwritten by Securian Life Insurance Company, St. Paul, MN. Plans may not be available in all states. These policies contain limitations and exclusions. Please visit www.ThelIT.com to review plan details.*
**What are the Meetings of the American Legion Department of Michigan?**

**NOTE:** This pre-COVID-19 way, time will tell what the future holds.

The fiscal year of the department is July 1 to June 30 of each year. The department convention is held towards the end of June; this is the department’s annual meeting of the membership. Business is conducted through the committees assigned, and the delegates who attend. Delegates (Legion members), will vote on recommended constitutional amendments, resolutions, and will vote for the next year’s department officers.

Between annual conventions, the Department Constitution and Bylaws gives powers to the Department Executive Committee to oversee the department. They are required to meet at least five times during the year. Their first meeting occurs immediately following the annual convention. The second meeting of the DEC is generally held in July or just before the National Membership Workshop. The third meeting occurs at the Department Fall Conference, the fourth at the Department Winter Meeting, and the fifth just before the opening of the annual convention.

The Department Fall Conference and the Winter Meeting are events held by the department to gather department committees together to plan and execute programs. Schools of instruction are held at these meetings to help Legion posts with their local programs and promote their missions.

Who can attend these meetings?

Any member in good standing may attend any meeting of the department. Guests are always welcome in the committee meetings. It is up to the chairman if questions or comments will be taken from the guests. Registration is required.

Who may apply for a Department Committee?

Again, any member is good standing may apply to be appointed to a department committee. Each year the new department commander appoints members to fill vacancies on committees and appoint chairpersons for each committee. Applications may be found on the department website under forms. www.michiganlegion.org/forms.

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**Be a Delegate from your Post at the Department Annual Convention**

Do you want to attend the Department Annual Convention? Be sure you are a delegate from your post.

How do you do that? Your post commander and post adjutant should have a received a delegate form from the department to place names of Legionnaires who will be delegates from your post to the convention. Only delegates may vote on the matters presented at the convention. As a delegate you part of a group from your post which represents the will of your post.

The district will also need your help and may assign you to represent the district at a particular convention committee meeting held on Friday morning of the convention. Once convention committees end, you will attend the district caucus and give your report to the district so a determination of the vote on particular issues will go.

These steps are all important in the function of the organization. Programs are started at a post level, and through a resolution process, they are moved up the organization one level at a time. If it is a good resolution and members continue to agree with it then it might make it to the national convention to become a program or position supported by the entire American Legion.

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**Did you know?**

- The American Legion Department of Michigan once ran a hospital, an orphanage, and property on Higgins Lake for posts have places for members to rest and relax.

- That Frank Murphy, the name on the Frank Murphy Hall of Justice in Detroit, was an American Legion member, served as mayor of Detroit when Michigan sponsored the 1931 American Legion National Convention. He served as Michigan’s Attorney General and was a U.S. Supreme Court Justice.

- The American Legion Riders program started at the Garden City American Legion Post 396. Most departments now have at least one Rider chapter. The Riders Legacy Run has raised millions of dollars for scholarships.

- Five National Commanders, two National Adjutants, and currently the National Judge Advocate is from the Department of Michigan.

- National Adjutant Don Glascoff, former Department of Michigan Adjutant, was present in the Oval office when President FDR signed the original G.I. Bill in 1944.

- The departments first executive meeting was held in Detroit on June 28, 1919 at the Moffet Building.

- U.S. President Gerald R. Ford was a Michigan Legionnaire.

- U.S. Senator Debbie Stabenow is a Michigan Girls State Alumni and Senator Gary Peters attended Michigan Boys State.

- The department headquarters holds the minutes from all executive committee meetings since June 28, 1919 to the present.

- Recent Senate Candidate John James was a Michigan Boys State Governor in the 1990’s.
Don’t Face the VA Alone!

Our American Veterans who have served this country should receive the benefits they have earned from the U.S. Department of Veterans Administration promptly.

The American Legion, Department of Veterans Affairs, hires and trains accredited veteran service officers to the U.S. Department of Veterans Administration regulations and with American Legion resources and training to be current on benefits available to military Veterans and their families.

American Legion, Department of Michigan accredited veteran service officers assist Veterans, located throughout the state, in filling out the appropriate forms correctly, filing the forms and evidence with the USDVA, and being the point of contact for Veterans as the claim process moves forward. If the claim is denied the American Legion will represent the Veteran in front of the appeals board at the regional offices and the Washington, D.C. offices at no charge to the Veteran.

Step One:

Find an Accredited Veteran Service Officer near you:

Call (313) 549-8557 and we will have an Accredited Veteran Service Officer contact you. *

Do You Need to Apply for Benefits from the Veterans Administration?

Are you a Current Member of the Military, a Military Veteran, or Family Member, and Resident of the State of Michigan seeking help with obtaining Veteran Affairs Benefits?

The Veterans Administration was created to help our American Veterans, established after World War 1 they created programs and benefits to help those who had served under honorable conditions. As a service member, you may have received some sort of Transition Assistance Program classes before you were discharged out; however, at the time you only wanted to get home.

Did you miss the part about the health care benefits or compensation and pension?

Now that you have been home a while, yes you may qualify for benefits other than the educational benefits of the GI Bill. As an older veteran from another wartime era, you too may be eligible for benefits you have long been eligible for and entitled to but have not taken advantage of them.

Don’t Face the VA Alone…

Congress authorized veterans to have a 3rd party represent them at the VA for their claim processing. The veteran may assign a “power of attorney” to an individual or an organization to properly represent them. In the case of the Michigan Veterans Coalition, the veteran would have a “power of attorney” with one of the five organizations. The organization would hold the POA for the life of the claim. Why is this important? A veteran’s claim may be denied by the Veterans Administration; however, the veteran has a right to appeal. With coalition members, we are one floor down from the Detroit Regional office where the claim was submitted. If the claim goes to Washington, D.C. during the appeals process, the national organizations of the various coalition members will oversee the appeal there. At “NO COST” to the veteran.

Beware of Attorney’s

Several years ago the US Congress authorized that attorneys may represent veterans in the claims process. Be aware that they may charge you for these services (sometimes taking 25%-30% of any lump sum compensation). The Michigan Veterans Coalition members have been representing veterans for over 80 years and have over 125 years of accredited veteran service experience on staff and ready to work for you.

Who should consider looking into Veteran Administration benefits or health care?

- Veterans discharged or released under other than a dishonorable condition
- A veteran laid off from work or employed with no health insurance
- A Vietnam Veteran who served in country and now has Type 2 Diabetes, heart conditions, certain cancers, respiratory conditions, or several other related presumptive conditions.
  - A Gulf Era War Veteran suffering from chronic fatigue syndrome or other undiagnosed condition
  - The spouse of a veteran who has passed away, but was receiving disability compensation from the VA.
  - A veteran or veterans spouse living on a low income or are homeless.

TIPS

Be Patient – The VA has been getting better and better each year in the claims process. We have seen claims go through from start to finish in a few weeks, but some can take months or even years.

Be Prepared – The application and claims creation process is long and sometimes confusing. Use an accredited veteran’s service officer to submit your claim (Find one near you). They will ensure every “i” is dotted and “t” is cross; having a FULLY developed claim means faster results. Work with your service officer when they request information, they work WITH you to develop the claim. See the checklist for items to bring to your initial meeting.

Be On Time – During the development process of the claim the veteran may be asked to visit a VA Medical facility for an examination. Show up on time to your appointment, the VA Health Care System is working with millions of veterans each year making time slots important. Missing your appointment will only delay a decision concerning your claim.

Be Active – Be actively involved in your claim, although your Veteran Service Officers should receive the same correspondence as you do they may not. Any correspondence you receive from the veterans administration make sure you make a copy for your service officer immediately. If there are time sensitive instructions we want to deal with them.

Michigan American Legion Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation

Our staff is dedicated to providing the very best veterans’ advocacy to Michigan Veterans and their families. They can assist with Claims Preparation, Presentation and appeal counsel in Veterans’ benefits services. Assist you and your Dependents in getting the Benefits that you have earned by your service to your country.

American Legion Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation

Mr. Gary Easterling, Director

Tripp Cantwell, Assistant Director

Patrick V. McNamara Federal Building
Room 1210
477 Michigan Avenue
Detroit, MI 48226

Office Phone (313) 964-6641
Fax (313) 964-5697

e-mail - al.vbadet@va.gov

Monday thru Friday 8a.m. to 4p.m.

Call the Detroit office for Field Service Officer Schedule

There are time limits on processes. If you have questions about your claim call the organization representing you.

Important websites:

- www.archives.gov/veterans - order discharge papers and some records.
- www.mivabenefits.org
- www.michiganlegion.org
- www legion.org/veteransbenefits
- www.va.gov/find-locations/
- www.michiganveterans.com

* During shutdown of State of Michigan. Call office after it opens.
What to do before a Veteran dies. 
Prepare today for tomorrow

Talking to family and comrades about the end of life details can be difficult, but it is a subject we all need to face eventually. To make that easier, we suggest a veteran and their family should be prepared for when the time comes.

How can a veteran and their family prepare?
Here are a few suggestions to assist in preparing.
1. Start with a checklist of documents in a single location.
   a. Discharge papers, for example, a copy of their DD-214, or other documentation. (www.archives.gov/veterans)
   b. Marriage licenses, and/or divorce decrees.
   c. If you receive VA compensation or another benefit, know your VA claims number.
   d. Family insurance or VA insurance policies.
2. Military Funeral Honors:
   a. Call 1-800-342-9647
   b. Or visit https://mfh.dmdc.osd.mil/mfh/
3. Attend a Dignity Memorial free pre-planning seminar for veterans. Call (586) 775-2424 to find out if one will be held near you.
4. Download a free Veterans Planning guide from Dignity Memorial's website https://veteransamleg.dignitymemorial.com/plan/

Dignity Memorial is a partner of the Department of Michigan and provides information on pre-planning for a funeral.

Wilwin Lodge in Custer, Michigan
1,200 acres of rest for our returning military and veterans.

Through the generosity of a Legionnaire several years ago, The American Legion, Department of Michigan was able to create a place where members of the military who were returning from deployment could go with their families to reconnect with each other after a long deployment. It has also become a retreat for clinical professionals to bring groups who have been diagnosed with PTSD or a Traumatic Brain Injury.

There are cabins, a central gathering cabin, a 60-acre lake for fishing, and plenty of open space for camping. Wilwin hosts Scouting troops, and veteran reunions.

The property is open to all veterans and Legionnaires based on availability, free of charge. Visit www.wilwinlodge.com for more information, or email them at info@wilwinlodge.com.

Michigan has two National Veteran Cemeteries
Great Lakes National Cemetery - Holly
Fort Custer National Cemetery - Battle Creek

The Michigan American Legion Foundation
Leave a lasting legacy

The Michigan American Legion Foundation was created to support the programs of the American Legion Department of Michigan. The department is a non-profit 501 (c) 19 designation, and this limits some donations and grant applications from being processed. In 2014, the department created a 501 (c) 3 subsidiary organization to accept donations and make the process easier for individual and corporate donors to give.

The foundation receives donations for the Patriot fund, and Wounded and Returning Soldier funds, Homeless Veterans Taskforce funds, Heroes to Hometown fund, baseball, and Boys State programs.

The foundation is incorporated in the State of Michigan. The EIN is 47-1280916. Recently an estate donated over $900,000 to support the Patriot fund, and Wounded and Returning Soldier fund. These funds will allow the department to provide temporary financial assistance to Michigan veterans for many years to come.

Leave a legacy that has a real impact.

Do you want to leave a legacy for generations or to shape the life of a young person? Give to directly to one of the supported funds or the foundation’s general fund. To learn more about the foundation and the programs it supports visit www.supportmilegion.org.

Make the foundation a part of your estate and give back to the organization that supports Michigan Veterans and their families.
Do you like the outdoors, but have a disability or have trouble with mobility?

Michigan Operation Freedom Outdoors is a cooperative partnership between the Michigan Department of Natural Resources, Eisenhower Center, the Brain Injury Association of Michigan, Passing Along The Heritage Foundation, Safari Club International Foundation, Michigan Building and Construction Trades Council, Michigan United Conservation Clubs, Disabled American Veterans, American Legion and more.

The mission of MiOFO is to provide improved outdoor recreation opportunities for wounded veterans and individuals with health challenges; and, to coordinate a support network that facilitates their recovery through connecting with nature.

Learn more at https://miofo.org/

Did you know LARA - the Department of Licensing and Regulatory Affairs has benefits for veterans?

The Michigan Department of Licensing and Regulatory Affairs manages the veteran benefits passed by the Michigan Legislature and signed by Governor Rick Snyder over the past eight-years.

They cover electricians, plumbers, boiler makers, business licenses, certification, corporation fees, and many more. There is a complete list on the website, which is not easy to navigate to, I would suggest the following approach.

Do a Google search with the phrase Michigan Lara services for veterans, the first two results should give you their page concerning veterans.

Google it!

Are you in need of temporary financial assistance?

On Feb. 25, 1946, Gov. Harry Kelly signed Public Act 9 into law, creating the Michigan Veterans Trust Fund from $50 million in post-World War II reserve funds. Since then, the MVTF has helped veterans of every era overcome unexpected expenses ranging from utility bills to home repairs to mortgage assistance and get back on their feet financially.

The Emergency Grant Program is intended to help veterans overcome an unforeseen situation causing a temporary or short term financial emergency or hardship that a grant will resolve and the applicant can demonstrate the ability to meet future expenses.

To apply for emergency funds from the MVTF, veterans should contact the MVTF county committee serving the county where you reside or fill out and submit an Emergency Assistance Form. Visit michiganveterans.com/a/Michigan-Veterans-Trust-Fund

Applications for assistance are reviewed and decided upon by committees appointed by the Michigan Veterans Trust Fund Board of Trustees. Appeals and reviews are sent to the board for consideration at their monthly meeting. The seven-member board is appointed by the Governor, and has constitutional authority over Emergency Grant Program expenditures and policies.

Did you know Michigan has two State Veteran Homes, with more on the way?

For over 125 years Michigan has had a State Veteran Home. The currently has two locations, Marquette, and Grand Rapids, with a third location in Southeast Michigan under construction. A home with skilled nursing, and memory care units.

Construction of a new facility in Grand Rapids begins this month, as well.

A veteran of the armed forces of the United States eligible for VA health care or financial assistance for long-term care may be admitted. Interested applicants should contact the Home directly for questions on eligibility. Veterans who enlisted after Sept. 7, 1980, or who entered active duty after Oct. 16, 1981, must have served 24 continuous months or the full period for which they were called to active duty in order to be eligible.

Subject to space and certain other requirements, a spouse, surviving spouse or parent of an eligible veteran may also be eligible for admission.

To learn more visit www.michiganveterans.org or call (800) MICH-VET.

Get your Veterans designation on your drivers license.

Veterans can sign up for the new driver’s licenses and state ID cards at their local Secretary of State branch. If they are renewing their license, they’ll only have to pay the normal renewal fee. If it isn’t time for them to renew, they can order a duplicate driver’s license or state ID for $9.

Bring an official copy of your DD-214, DD-215, or other discharge form to the secretary of state’s office when you renew your license.

Remember the Enhanced Drivers License will be required in 2020 to board an air flights and other identification. An EDL has a gold star in the upper right corner of your license.

Visit the secretary of state’s website to learn more:

www.michigan.gov/sos
Scholarship and Program Opportunities:
- A career in law enforcement
- Politics or how government works
- U.S. history and the U.S. Constitution
- Baseball
- Scouting
- Junior Shooting Sports

What is Boys State?

Boys State is an educational program sponsored by the American Legion Departments across the country to help young men learn about government and how it works. Our motto is “Learn by Doing.” The Boys State education staff’s goal is to facilitate the learning process by giving the citizens of Boys State an opportunity to govern themselves, and to run their own state.

High School Constitutional Speech Contest

High school students who can give a prepared oratorial presentation and an impromptu speech and who has an interest in the U.S. Constitution? Contestants have an opportunity to win $800 to $1,500 in scholarship money at the department level. Those moving on to the National Contest will receive $1500 for each level they move up to and compete for up to $18,000 in scholarship money at the National Oratorical Finals.

Registration begins in the fall, watch your october edition of the Legionnaire for more information.

Guy Wilson Scholarship

This scholarship is available to only Michigan residents who are high school seniors and are a son, daughter, grandchild or great-grandchild of a war-time veteran planning to or are attending any Michigan accredited college or university or trade school. Selection is based on a student's G.P.A. of 2.5 or higher, financial need, parent's or grandparent's honorable active war-time military service, goals and intentions. Scholarships are $500 and non-renewable.

William D. & Jewell Brewer Scholarship

This scholarship is available to only Michigan residents who available to only Michigan residents who are high school seniors or college students – without a bachelors degree, who are a son, daughter, grandchild or great-grandchild of a war-time veteran planning to or are attending any nationally accredited college or university or trade school. Selection is based on a student's G.P.A. of 2.5 or higher, financial need, parent's or grandparent's honorable active war-time military service, goals and intentions. Scholarships are $500 and non-renewable.

Eagle Scout of the Year Award

MUST:
- Be a registered, active member of a Boy Scout Troop, Varsity Scout Team, or Venturing Crew chartered to an American Legion post, American Legion Auxiliary unit or Sons of The American Legion squadron. OR
- Be a registered, active member of a chartered Boy Scout Troop, Varsity Scout Team, or Venturing Crew, and the son or grandson of a Legionnaire; Sons of The American Legion or Auxiliary member. AND
- Received the Eagle Scout Award.
- Be an active member of his religious institution and must have received the appropriate Boy Scout religious emblem.
- Have demonstrated practical citizenship in church, school, Scouting, and community.
- Have reached his 15th birthday and be enrolled in high school at the time of selection.
- Reside in the department (state) to which he applies

Note: Eagle Scouts still in high school who reached their 18th birthday during the nomination year remain eligible if otherwise qualified.

The American Legion Baseball Scholarship

Any Team Manager or Head Coach of an American Legion (Post – affiliated) team may nominate one player for consideration of this award.

Each Department (state) Baseball Committee will select a registered American Legion Player who best meets the qualifications as the 2020 American Legion Baseball Scholarship winner. Each department winner will receive a scholarship from The American Legion of $500 or more.

The American Legion Youth Cadet Law Enforcement Program

Michigan State Troopers and Law Enforcement Officers from around the State will show you what their life is like every day on the job. They bring their personal experience to the teachings of the day.

Top Student Trooper of the Week wins a $1,000 College Scholarship. Three other categories win $500 each.

Ask your Post, Auxiliary, Sons of the Legion, civic organization, local business, or other organization to sponsor them.