

# THE AMERICAN LEGION FAMILY



## Protocols & Procedures



## **Purpose:**

This Protocol Guide is intended to assist those responsible for planning and conducting American Legion functions to achieve successful outcomes for these events. Following established protocols enables functions to proceed smoothly and predictably and serves to enhance the image of both the host organization and The American Legion, The Department of Michigan. This is critical, especially when American Legion visitors from outside The Department of Michigan and when non-Legionnaire visitors are present.

## **Scope:**

This Protocol training covers planning and conduct of American Legion functions, including visitations by American Legion dignitaries. It does not cover public events such as Memorial Day and Veterans' Day ceremonies.



*“Successful outcomes are usually determined by detailed planning and effective execution.”*

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- General Planning Guidelines
  - General Visitation Protocol
  - Site Selection Guidelines
  - Itinerary Planning Guidelines
  - Dinner Planning Guidelines
  - Communications Planning Guidelines
  - Speaking Protocol

# *General Planning Guidelines*

- Confirmation of Date – Ensure that the itinerary and planned dates have not been forgotten by all parties involved with the visit, check schedules, make follow up calls
- Site Selection – Where is the event held, how many people does it hold, is it handicapped accessible, how many restrooms, does the site make sense?
- Chairmen – You should have a chair person for the event, the dinner and possibly the hall or entertainment. Trying to do everything can lead to failure, get help!
- Speaking/MC – know that you have a good speaker, someone who is easily understood, clear, has a well thought out speech or story.



# Visitation Guidelines

- When ever you have a dignitary attend a post/district function you should always make sure of the following:
- You or someone planning the event should know who the guest is
- Greet all guest at the door if possible, make them feel welcome. WE ARE ALL STRANGERS to them, we need to make them feel comfortable
- Make sure you and others know to address the guest by their title and show them respect
- Make sure your guest know how to get to your event
- Do they need over night accommodations?
- Know who is paying for any extra out of pocket expenses if needed for guest
- Introduce guest to members, this will make the guest feel comfortable and also make your members feel like they matter
- Make sure the facility is ready: Clean, Parking, Lighting, Snacks, Food, Drinks
- Make sure all local Legion officers know about the event and send invitations
- Introduce guest and prior dignitaries by current & past titles

# Itinerary

| Topic            | Suggestions                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
|------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| * General        | * Finalize list of visitors (from R.S.V.P.'s) with arrival times, rooming requirements, transportation requirements, if any                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| * Agenda         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Develop detailed activities plan to include arrivals of visitors, luncheon, tour, press conference, dinner, other related activities, breakfast next day, departures, etc.</li> <li>* Coordinate plans with Communications Chair and other event committee chairs</li> <li>* Coordinate agenda with Department Commander/Adjutant and other Department-level organizations (Auxiliary, S.A.L.) as applicable.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| * Rooming        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* National Commander should be located in a small suite</li> <li>* National Commander's Aide located near the Commander</li> <li>* Department Commander located near National Commander</li> <li>* Consider spouses accompanying guests</li> <li>* Non-smoking rooms preferred by guests?</li> <li>* Advise guests of financial arrangements for room charges and other miscellaneous charges to room               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Room charges for National Commander and Aide should be paid by host organization. Other guest room charges are absorbed at the discretion of the host organization.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| * Transportation | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Establish Welcoming Committee               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Department Vice Commander for the Area, Department Sergeant-at-Arms from Hot County, District Commander and County Commander should greet Distinguished Guests upon arrival. National Commander should be greeted by Department Commander, Department Adjutant, Department Vice Commander for the Area and District Commander plus other(s) at the discretion of the host organization.</li> </ul> </li> <li>* Coordinate airport pick-up, if applicable</li> <li>* Use private autos/vans (arrange for drivers) or public transportation as applicable for all phases of the visitation. Van transportation is often a convenience for tours, etc.</li> <li>* Arrange for reserved parking for visiting dignitaries               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Usually reserved parking spots are provided for National Commander, Department Commander, Department Auxiliary President, S.A.L. Detachment Commander, as applicable.</li> </ul> </li> </ul> |

# Site Selection

| Topic                        | Suggestions                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
|------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| * <b>Geographic Location</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>* Central to applicable region (district, county) considering population distributions</li><li>* Accessible to transportation, e.g. airport for National Commander's Visit</li><li>* Media presence, if applicable</li><li>* Points of interest for tour, if applicable</li><li>* Map(s) available (for first-time visitors)</li></ul> |
| * <b>Facilities</b>          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>* Large enough to handle anticipated audience</li><li>* Parking (including reserved spots for Honored Guests)</li><li>* Food Preparation, serving capacity</li><li>* Separate luncheon facility, if applicable</li><li>* Press Conference area, if applicable</li></ul>                                                                |
| * <b>Rooming</b>             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>* Suitable hotel/motel accommodations (small suite for National Commander, if applicable). Consider all potential guests in visiting party.</li></ul>                                                                                                                                                                                  |

# Communications

| Topic                         | Suggestions                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
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| * Notification & Coordination | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Department Commander's Visitation – use form as shown in Appendix "I"</li> <li>* National Commander's Visitation – date will be advised by Department Adjutant. Coordinate all details closely with Department Commander and Department Adjutant.</li> <li>* Coordinate with Department Auxiliary and Sons of The American Legion Detachment as applicable</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| * Invitations                 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Letters of invitation to Distinguished Guest, local dignitaries, news media, etc. See Appendix "H". Include complimentary ticket(s) with invitations, where applicable. List should include:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>--Department level--Commander, Adjutant, NEC and/or Alternate NEC, Vice Commander, Sergeant-at-Arms, Auxiliary President (if joint visitation), S.A.L. Detachment Commander</li> <li>--Other--Past Department Commanders, Past Department Presidents form the host District, Auxiliary Officers (if not a joint visitation), local dignitaries at the discretion of the host organization.</li> </ul> </li> <li>* Advise guest who will be seated at Head Table that they'll be seated there and whether or not they'll be speaking.</li> <li>* For those who will be participating in an itinerary, describe what will be done on the tour, etc.</li> <li>* Advise rooming arrangements as applicable.</li> </ul> |
| * Publicity                   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* News releases to local TV, Radio, Print media (See Appendix "G")</li> <li>* Usually a National Commander's Visitation will include a press conference. Determine invitation list and suitable site</li> <li>* Posters to advertise event</li> <li>* American Legion Post Newsletter article(s)</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| * General                     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Obtain biographical data for honored guest(s) for use in news releases and program. Edit as appropriate. Obtain pictures if they're available for news releases and/or programs</li> <li>* Gift(s) for honored guest(s)</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |

# Dinner Planning

| Topic                 | Suggestions                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
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| * Facility Selection  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Establish Preliminary estimate of attendance, usually based upon past experience</li> <li>* Adequate parking available? Reserved parking spots?</li> <li>* Will it support room layout? (see Appendix "A")</li> <li>* Will non-smoking area(s) be available?</li> <li>* Public Address System to do the job</li> <li>* Kitchen facilities, serving capability to handle anticipated attendance expeditiously</li> <li>* Note that Department dinners and events involving special guests should have dinner served on china with metal utensils</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| * Menu & Refreshments | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Time – cocktail hour, dinner service, ceremonies</li> <li>* Dinner selection</li> <li>* Hors D'oeuvres</li> <li>* Open bar vs. cash bar</li> <li>* Cost calculation; per person and total (consider cost of complimentary tickets and other non-food costs)</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| * Tickets             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Develop list of distinguished guests (free tickets) Note that if funds are available, suggested recipients of complimentary tickets would be:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Department Commander and his Aides</li> <li>Department Vice Commander from host organization</li> <li>District Commander</li> <li>NEC and/or Alternate NEC, if invited</li> <li>Spouses of Guest receiving complimentary tickets</li> <li>Others as host organization desires</li> </ul> </li> <li>* Develop cost per ticket (note costs like decorations, etc)</li> <li>* Develop advertising strategy, invitation letter?</li> <li>* Design/print tickets (see Appendix "C")</li> <li>* Establish ticket sales team, distribute tickets, record numbered blocks if applicable, develop sales record system</li> <li>* Distribute complimentary tickets (indicate "complimentary" on ticket itself)</li> </ul> |
| * Room Layout         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Coordinate with banquet facility (see Appendix "A") for head table location, distinguished guests table(s), etc.</li> <li>* Table tent cards, head table place cards</li> <li>* Head Table arrangement (see Appendix "B")</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |

# Speaking Protocol

| Topic                        | Guideline                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
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| * Speaking Order             | * The main speaker/guest of honor speaks as he/she will receive the longest speech of introduction and their address will conclude the speaking portion of the program.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| * Speeches of Introduction   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Should be brief, to-the-point</li> <li>* Refrain from reciting biographical data, use anecdotes when appropriate</li> <li>* Length of speech of introduction varies with respect to the rank of the individual being introduced; the highest-ranking guest receives the longest speech of introduction</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| * Introduction of Head Table | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Generally done by the Master of Ceremonies</li> <li>* Order of introduction starts with speaker's extreme left, working toward the center, then with speaker's extreme right, working toward the center</li> <li>* Introductions should be brief – names and titles/functions. Refrain from lengthy introductions of any particular individual.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| * Order of Introduction      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Are generally done in order of rank within the organization, from low to high: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Local dignitaries, non-American Legion guests</li> <li>S.A.L. Officers – Local, District, Department, National</li> <li>Auxiliary Officers – Local District, Department, National</li> <li>American Legion Officers – Local, District, Department, National</li> </ul> </li> <li>American Legion Officers are usually introduced in the order by which they're installed into office: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sergeant-at-Arms</li> <li>Service Officer</li> <li>Historian</li> <li>Judge Advocate</li> <li>Chaplain</li> <li>Treasurer</li> <li>Adjutant</li> <li>Vice Commander</li> <li>Commander</li> </ul> </li> <li>If NEC or Alternate NEC is present, this officer should be introduced just prior to the Department Commander</li> </ul> |



# Post Meeting Protocol

- According to the National & Department bylaws all American Legion meetings are to be opened & closed with the same procedure.
- Commander will call to order, make all stand (3 raps of gavel), salute colors which should already be in place, uncover for prayer, POW/MIA, pledge, cover, recite preamble, hit gavel and sit, the meeting will be called to order.
- POW/MIA ceremony can be done long or short form, in most cases at regularly convened meetings it is the short form. Points to mention about the POW/MIA script when being read are highlighted. Many legionaries mispronounce these words and it would be a good idea to know them and know their meaning, DO NOT RUSH
- A POW/MIA Empty Chair is placed at all official meetings of The American Legion, as a physical symbol of the thousands of American POW/MIAs still unaccounted for from all wars and conflicts involving the United States of America. This is a reminder for all of us to spare no effort to secure the release of any American prisoners from captivity, **the repatriation** of the remains of those who died bravely in defense of liberty, and a full accounting of those missing. Let us **rededicate** ourselves for this vital **endeavor**!”

- **The commander and membership shall recite the preamble of the Constitution of**

- **The American Legion slowly and in unison, as follows:**

“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 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 good will 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.”

- **To foster and perpetuate**

- (*per·pet·u·ate*) - Preserve (something valued) from oblivion or extinction

- **inculcate a sense of individual obligation**

- (*in·cul·cate*) - Instill (an attitude, idea, or habit) by persistent instruction

- **Autocracy**

- (*au·toc·ra·cy*) - A form of **government** in which unlimited power is held by a single **individual**

- **Posterity**

- (*pos·ter·i·ty*) - All future generations

- **consecrate and sanctify**

- to make or declare sacred & Set apart as or declare holy



# *Conference's & Convention's*

- Before a convention is held a protocol document “Rules of Convention” is provided to legionnaires to notify them how to conduct themselves, how to be recognized on the floor and the manner which debating will be heard.
- Roberts Rules of Order is a reference for any items not covered by the rules of convention or any constitution & bylaws
- Voting on the floor – Who turn is it? Why did that district vote before us?
- What is a “Pass”, “Abstain”, “Yield”, “Vote Yea & No”
- Speaking on the floor – If a legion member wishes to speak on the floor to the DEC he/she must 1<sup>st</sup> have the permission from the district commander. Step to microphone, give your name, district & post for the record.

# LEGION CAPS

- **Official American Legion Caps**

- The following regulations have been promulgated by National Emblem Sales to standardize the use of lettering, insignia, etc., on the official American Legion cap, as based on Resolution No. 58, adopted by the National Executive Committee, April 30-May 1, 1964.

- (a) **Style 1**—Post numerals at right front between piping and front crease. Department name in full on left side beneath emblem. Lettering on emblem side to be in straight line.
- (b) **Style 2**—Post numerals at right front between piping and front crease. Town name in full and department abbreviated on left side beneath emblem. Lettering on emblem side to be in straight line.
- (c) **Style 2**—Shall not be used when the post town is not physically located within the recognized geographic and/or postal boundaries of the department of which the post is a member.
- (d) Where any additional lettering is desired, this must be on the right side of cap. This lettering is restricted to name of post, such as “J.S. Jones,” or officer title, such as “Commander” or “Past Adjutant.” Where present or past officer cap insignia or badges are used in place of embroidered titles, these must be on right side of cap.
- (e) Consecutive years membership insignia, membership stars or decorations (authorized American Legion or military services) must be attached to the right side of cap. Fraternal or civil organization insignia cannot be used on American Legion caps.
- (f) Names or nicknames of individual members cannot be used on caps.

- **Restrictions**

- (a) The left side (emblem side) of any American Legion cap cannot contain other than the official American Legion emblem, and lettering as set forth previously in this resolution for post, county, district, department or national caps.
- (b) No member of any organization, such as drum and bugle corps, bands, and so forth, sponsored by any post or intermediate organizations between the department and post levels, or by any department, shall wear the overseas caps having the color, or combination of colors, authorized for the sole use of county, district, department or national officers, when the members of uniformed groups are not appearing in the full uniform of their group;...”



- POST LEVEL
- COUNTY
- DISTRICT
- DEPARTMENT / STATE
- NATIONAL

# Hierarchy of The American Legion

