Election Year Reminders on Partisan Politics and Voting

Article II, Section 2, of the constitution of The American Legion states, “The American Legion shall be absolutely nonpolitical and shall not be used for the dissemination of partisan principles nor for the promotion of the candidacy of any person seeking public office or preferment.” The National Charter, approved by Congress, also stipulates The American Legion as an organization that is nonpolitical. The term “nonpolitical” been interpreted by the National Judge Advocate as “nonpartisan” in modern terms. The American Legion is allowed by Congress to lobby for veterans benefits and a strong United States of America. Therefore, The American Legion as an organization, is prohibited from contributing, helping or endorsing a candidate; however, a member, as a private citizen, and not representing the organization, can employ whatever legal and ethical means to advance his or her candidate.

The Legion cap is considered the official Legion uniform and it is not an individual Legion member’s decision on the appropriate usage of the cap and emblem. When attending a political event, The American Legion cap, or any clothing with the emblem visible, should be removed so as not to imply endorsement by The American Legion. Failure to do so may cause those who see the emblem or name worn at in improper location, such as a partisan rally, to incorrectly assume Legion endorsement.

When using post facilities to host candidates, post should remove the emblem and Legion flag to avoid any impression of endorsement. Candidates for all parties must be presented equal opportunity at the same time to use the facilities on the same terms and conditions as other competing candidates.

Financial contributions offered by candidates for political office, campaigns, political action committees or political parties to The American Legion should be politely declined. Accepting these contributions may be perfectly legal, but The American Legion must avoid any perception of supporting any candidate or political party.

The American Legion values its independence and effectiveness on veterans’ issues. This stance is best maintained by neutrality on individual candidates or political parties. The American Legion by legal definition is non-partisan and supports only issues which impact the Four Pillars of the organization.

Although we must avoid partisan politics, The American Legion strongly urges all eligible citizens to register to vote and to cast their ballots in ALL elections at ALL levels through the Legion’s Get Out the Vote (GOTV) program.

To assist individuals and posts with GOTV efforts, the Americanism Commission publishes Get Out the Vote and Vote America. Both are available for free at www.legion.org/publications. More information and samples of news releases and public service announcements or to share your post’s GOTV success stories visit www.legion.org/vote.