From the Chairman’s Bunker

With Memorial Day behind us, the weather is heating up and so are many of our Americanism youth programs. Summer for The American Legion and its youth signifies several weeks filled with patriotism, education, leadership, competition, character development and teamwork. It’s during these warm months that our youth programs get underway at the department level and involve tens of thousands of youth each year. Of these department-level youth program participants, many will extend their experience at the national level with Boys Nation, Junior 3-Position Air-Rifle National Championship or American Legion Baseball World Series.

These outstanding American Legion national programs could not exist, however, if not for the dedication of Legionnaires supporting their department programs that ensure a wide-range of opportunities for the youth residing in their communities. The challenges faced by America’s youth today are more complex and the competition for their attention is greater than ever. The electronic age has brought many conveniences to our everyday lives but has also created unique challenges. Children have less incentive to form meaningful relationships through live interaction, to pursue interests away from a computer monitor or other screen and learn about American values directly from those that raised their right hands to defend them.

Our challenge remains to grow participation in Americanism programs to ensure we reach the greatest amount of young people possible each year. Youth involved in summer Americanism programs such as the Youth Cadet Law Enforcement Program, Boys State, Baseball and Junior Shooting Sports Program participate in world-class competition, dedicated to enhancing their lives and building our nation’s future leaders. To find out more about Americanism programs, visit www.legion.org/programs.
The American Legion and Samsung have teamed up to establish the Samsung American Legion Alumni Association in order to engage recipients of the Samsung American Legion Scholarship. The mission of the association is to engage alumni while advocating the ideals of continued freedom, learning, and service, while also fostering life-long relationships between recipients and the organizations.

The Samsung American Legion Alumni Association is a developing alumni association in its’ beginning phases. The current focus is to locate and engage alumni in order to build excitement and interest in the alumni association. The Samsung American Legion Scholarship started in 1996, and all National Winners and State Finalists are encouraged to join the Samsung American Legion Alumni Association groups on Facebook and LinkedIn. There are approximately 2,000 scholarship alumni that are eligible to join the alumni association. Recruitment of members has been almost entirely online and over social media.

An Executive Committee consisting of representatives from the American Legion family and Samsung has been established to guide the growth and development of the association. This Executive Committee met in Washington D.C. at the beginning of June to plan for the future of the association and to celebrate the 2016 scholarship recipients at a recognition breakfast. Recently, the Executive Committee appointed the first National Alumni Board of Directors, which consists of nine scholarship alumni from across the country. These alumni will work together to lead the organization.

The Samsung American Legion Alumni Association is a brand new organization; it is still growing and developing as new scholars join every week. Samsung American Legion Scholarship recipients wishing to join the association should join the Samsung American Legion Alumni Association LinkedIn group and/or the Samsung American Legion Scholars group at the links below. For more information, contact Brittany Yoder at byoder@legion.org or 317-630-1208.

www.linkedin.com/groups/8466591  www.facebook.com/groups/SamsungScholars
Americanism 2016 Planner

June 14
Flag Day

July 4
Independence Day

July 15
Child Welfare Foundation
grant applications due

August 11-16
American Legion World Series

August 26-September 1
American Legion National Convention

September 16-18
Children & Youth and
Junior Shooting Sports Conferences

September 23-25
Combined Americanism Conference

October 9
Child Welfare Foundation
2016 Grant Selection

October 10-13
Fall Meetings

October 27
Scouting Chairmen Tele-Conference

September 2
VJ Day

November 11
Veterans Day

2016 American Legion World Series

Thursday – August 11

Game 1  Southeast vs. Great Lakes  12:30 pm
Game 2  Central Plains vs. Northwest  4:00 pm
Game 3  Northeast vs. Mid-Atlantic  7:30 pm

Friday – August 12

Game 4  Mid-South vs. Western  12:30 pm
Game 5  Southeast vs. Central Plains  4:00 pm
Game 6  Great Lakes vs. Northwest  7:30 pm

Saturday – August 13

Game 7  Mid-Atlantic vs. Western  12:30 pm
Game 8  Northeast vs. Mid-South  4:00 pm
Game 9  Great Lakes vs. Central Plains  7:30 pm

Sunday – August 14

Game 10  Southeast vs. Northwest  1:00 pm
Game 11  Mid-Atlantic vs. Mid-South  4:00 pm
Game 12  Northeast vs. Western  7:30 pm

Monday – August 15

Game 13  Stars winner vs. Stripes runner-up  4:00 pm
Game 14  Stripes winner vs. Stars runner-up  7:30 pm

Championship Tuesday – August 16

Game 15  Winner Game 13 vs. Winner Game 14  7:00 pm
Upcoming Americanism Conferences

Online registration is now available for the annual Children & Youth, Junior Shooting and Combined Americanism Conferences being held at the Sheraton City Centre Hotel in Indianapolis. Completing the online registration does not reserve overnight accommodations. Hotel reservation links will be provided following conference registration. Additional information on the Scouting Chairman Tele-Conference will be available online in September.

Children & Youth Conference
September 16-18, 2016
www.legion.org/cyconference

Junior Shooting Sports Conference
September 16-18, 2016
www.legion.org/jrshootingconference

Combined Americanism Conferences
September 23-25, 2016
Sessions include Boys and Girls State, Baseball, Chaplains and Oratorical Contest.
www.legion.org/cacregistration

Scouting Chairmen Tele-Conference
October 27, 2016 1:00-4:00 pm EDT
Additional information will be posted on www.legion.org when available.

American Legion Baseball

As American Legion Baseball celebrates its 90th World Series, we are especially thankful to our fans, parents, coaches and sponsors who have made the American Legion Baseball program so successful over the decades. Thanks to their loyal dedication and countless volunteer hours and community teamwork, we now have the opportunity to showcase our premier youth baseball program on national television.

The best way to experience the American Legion World Series is by watching from the stands at Keeter Stadium in Shelby, North Carolina, August 11-16, 2016. For those not able to attend, there’s no reason to miss any of the action. All the games leading up to the semi-final games will be broadcast online through ESPN3. There’s no need to be tied to your computer either; just download the ESPN mobile app and watch on your mobile devices.

The semi-final games and championship game will be covered live on ESPNU (check your local cable or satellite provider for availability). Get in the game! Begin planning your post viewing parties now and enjoy our national pastime with your fellow Legionnaires! A viewing party is a great opportunity for the post to open its doors to the public to watch as well! For more information on the tournament, contact the national baseball staff at baseball@legion.org.
Americanism Commission Department Awards

O’Connor Americanism Trophy
The Daniel J. O’Connor Americanism Trophy is awarded annually to that department that has conducted the best all-around Americanism activities. The Americanism Commission will determine the three departments achieving the greatest number of percentage points based upon activities reported on the current Consolidated Post Reports. The winner will be selected from the top three departments based on the best narrative statement that shall be no less than 200 words and not more than 500 words.
Submissions must be received, no later than July 15 annually, at:

The American Legion
Attn: Americanism Division
P.O. Box 1055
Indianapolis, IN 46206
americanism@legion.org

Frank N. Belgrano, Jr. Trophy
The Americanism Commission continues to award the Frank N. Belgrano, Jr., Trophy to the most deserving department with an active scouting program. Therefore, it is necessary that departments continue to provide substantiating information as outlined by the Trophies, Awards and Ceremonies Manual, which states:

"The Frank N. Belgrano, Jr., Trophy is to be awarded annually to the department that has rendered the most outstanding service during the period July 31-August 1 to the program of the Boy Scouts of America. The award, to be based on the number of troops organized, strength of existing troops and general welfare of the Scout movement under Legion sponsorship within the department based on written reports with substantiating evidence submitted to National Headquarters 15 days prior to the National Convention.

Departments that want to be considered for the award are required to submit a report with a narrative description of the department's efforts and accomplishments for the period July 31, 2015 through August 1, 2016. The design and length of the narrative is your decision, but we want the selection committee to have something other than statistical information to consider when they determine the winner. The selection committee has placed a very strong emphasis upon the narrative report in determining the winner.

Reports and narratives can be mailed, emailed or faxed no later than August 10, 2016, to:

The American Legion
Attn: Americanism Division—Scouting
P.O. Box 1055
Indianapolis, IN 46206
Fax 317-630-1369
scouting@legion.org
American Legion

Legacy Scholarship Enhancement

For the past 15 years, The American Legion Legacy Scholarship has provided post-secondary education funds for children of fallen Post-9/11 servicemembers. The American Legion has awarded a total of 213 scholarships in the amount of $492,681. This scholarship remains the Legion’s way of acknowledging the sacrifice of our heroes by allowing their children to receive quality educational opportunities.

The rising cost of education and changing provisions in the availability of federal and state educational benefits inspired further action – enhancements to The American Legion Legacy Scholarship. At the 2016 Spring Meetings, the National Executive Committee (NEC) approved expansion of scholarship eligibility to include the children of Post-9/11 veterans with a VA-rated disability of 50 percent or higher. The NEC also significantly raised the amount of funds available for award each year. Fifty percent of funds raised for the Legacy Scholarship during a calendar year plus fifty percent of the income from the trust will now be available to award as scholarships the following year.

Additionally, the scholarship was changed to focus on a student’s needs over simple merit. Rather than collectively splitting a smaller, fixed amount, individual students may now be eligible for up to $20,000 from a single award. Children of the fallen will receive priority consideration in the granting of scholarships. These changes will go into effect for the 2017 award year.

To make the most of these exciting opportunities, we need your help!

Not only must we engage as many eligible recipients as possible; we must continue to solicit donations for The American Legion Legacy Scholarship Trust Fund. All donations to the fund (100%) go to growing the corpus and providing vital educational opportunities to the children of our fallen and disabled Post-9/11 veterans. We must make this information known to our local schools and veteran agencies in order to recruit as many qualified applicants and willing donors as possible. With Legion family members, such as yourself, spreading the word all over the country, we can ensure The American Legion Legacy Scholarship becomes the premiere form of private financial aid for our Post-9/11 families who have sacrificed most for our freedoms.

Additional information can be found by visiting www.legion.org/scholarships/legacy, email scholarships@legion.org or call 317-630-1212.
Youth Cadet Law Enforcement Program

The Americanism Commission is concerned that, in today’s society, law enforcement is not always regarded with the respect it deserves. The Commission further recognizes that The American Legion Youth Cadet Law Enforcement program is an excellent vehicle through which young people are empowered to realize early on that peace officers stand as staunch supporters for moral and legal rights, and that the dedication and impact they have in local communities, state and nation should be regarded with respect and appreciation. The program also serves as an influential stepping stone in life for high school students considering a career in law enforcement as they experience those professional practices and concepts first-hand during their week-long experience at a state police training academy.

To support the efforts of the Americanism Commission a new committee has been formed. The goal of The American Legion Youth Cadet Law Enforcement Program Committee is to promote, sponsor, coordinate, facilitate and foster activities to ensure the continued development, sustainability, growth and viability of The American Legion Youth Cadet Law Enforcement Program.

Departments are encouraged to work with their state police or other law enforcement organizations to develop a Youth Cadet Law Enforcement Program. A promotional video urging departments to establish a Youth Cadet Law Enforcement Program can be found on the Legion website at www.legion.org/juniorlaw/resources. Nineteen departments currently sponsor a Youth Cadet Law Enforcement Program: Arizona, Connecticut, Delaware, Florida, Illinois, Kansas, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Michigan, Missouri, Nebraska, North Carolina, Ohio, Oregon, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, South Dakota, Vermont and Virginia.
Flag Etiquette

As posts prepare for the Flag Day holiday, of which many will conduct disposal of unserviceable flag ceremonies, we call your attention to the following –

Since 1937, The American Legion has promoted the use of a public flag disposal ceremony as part of a patriotic holiday such as Flag Day. This Disposal of Unserviceable Flags Ceremony is a fitting tribute and an overt expression of patriotism, which enhances the understanding by the public for the honor and respect due the flag of the United States.

American Legion posts are encouraged to conduct the ceremony as yet another part of the flag education program of the Americanism Commission. It is a great community service project that is not difficult to undertake. More information can be found at www.legion.org/flag/ceremony.

Does The American Legion endorse sending flag stars to troops?

The Americanism Commission does not subscribe to the practice of cutting the United States flag into individual pieces prior to its proper disposal no matter what the reason or occasion may be. The Commission is of the opinion that when the flag is no longer a fitting emblem for display it should be disposed in its entirety, preferably by burning. The flag began as a whole; therefore it is to be disposed of as a whole.

We are aware of organizations such as "Stars for Our Troops" that takes in old, tattered and worn-out American Flags, has volunteers cut each embroidered star from the flag, disposes of the stripes properly, and places each star into a tiny plastic bag with a card for members of the Armed Forces at home or overseas. Contrary to what is found on some websites, The American Legion does not endorse the use of the flag in this manner.