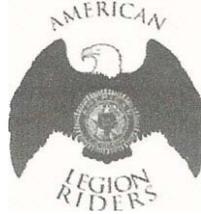


# The American Legion Riders



Department of California  
Department Officers Guide



## **AMERICAN LEGION RIDERS DEPARTMENT OF CALIFORNIA CHAPTER OFFICERS GUIDE**

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#### Preface:

This guide is a compilation of information intended to inform and educate the officers and members of the American Legion Riders Department of California. As American Legion Riders we have the opportunity to learn about our parent organizations while serving in an activity we enjoy.

The American Legion Riders was formed to provide an avenue for those members who are motorcycle enthusiasts to support the Post of the American Legion and serve our fellow veterans. In short, the American Legion Riders exist to support the Post. The American Legion and its Posts do not exist to support the American Legion Riders.

It is imperative that the officers and members of the American Legion Riders learn and practice the traditions of the American Legion so to prepare to one day lead the American Legion into the future. Change is a constant and change with purpose and meaning is accomplished only when a solid foundation of knowledge and understanding of history are acquired before sweeping changes are proposed. The proud traditions of the American Legion will be entrusted to the next generation of Legion leaders. May they respect and revere the sacrifices of those whose vision and tenacity made the American Legion.



## **THE AMERICAN LEGION RIDERS DEPARTMENT OF CALIFORNIA CHAPTER OFFICERS GUIDE**

### **INTRODUCTION**

The use of the name, emblems and regalia of the American Legion and their incorporation into the American Legion Riders Department of California name and emblems is conditioned on eligibility and conduct. Eligibility must be determined when a person makes application for membership in their parent organization. Conduct must be learned through education and participation.

As members of the American Legion Riders Department of California, we owe an obligation to our parent organizations to support the Four Pillars of the American Legion. It is our duty to learn and to perpetuate the proper and accepted protocols, procedures and ceremonial manner of our parent organizations. The existing policies, protocols and procedures supersede any policies, protocols and procedures put in place at any level without proper authority and approval.

The American Legion has a long and rich history of advocating for veterans issues. Through many years of experience the American Legion has developed the protocols and procedures that we must respect and adhere to as members of the American Legion Riders Department of California. It is incumbent on both leaders and members to learn the policies, procedures, and protocols of the American Legion and the American Legion Riders Department of California.

### **THE FOUR PILLARS of THE AMERICAN LEGION**

The American Legion publication on the Four Pillars states the following:

*In 1919, The American Legion was founded on four pillars: Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation, National Security, Americanism, and Children & Youth. Each of these pillars encompasses a variety of programs that benefit our nation's veterans, its service members, their families, the youth of America and ordinary citizens. These programs make a difference in hundreds of thousands of lives each year.*

*Our organization's positions and programs are guided by resolutions passed by American Legion National Convention delegates, and by committee and commission members who represent 2.5 million wartime veterans and their families. These programs, and the men and women who take the time to perform them allow The American Legion to make a difference on the local, state and national/eve/s.*

*It's who we are and what we do.*

The Four Pillars are:

#### **I. Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation**

This pillar supports work in the areas of; VA Claims Backlog, Access to VA Health Care,

Network of Service Officers, VA Vet Centers, Health-care Funding Formula, Veterans with Special Needs, Volunteering, Final Respects, Heroes to Hometowns, Careers for Veterans, Homelessness, GI Bill Benefits.

#### II. National Security

This pillar supports work in the areas of; Support for the Troops, Size of the Armed Forces, Quality of Life, Homeland Security, POW/MIAs, Operation Comfort Warriors,

#### III. Americanism

This pillar supports work in the areas of; Flag Protection, Illegal Immigration, Voter Registration and Participation, Boy Scouts of America, The Pledge of Allegiance, Establishment-Clause Lawsuits, Legacy Run, Boys Nation, American Legion Baseball.

#### IV. Children & Youth

This pillar supports work in the areas of; Combating Child Pornography, Catastrophic Illness, Intellectual Disabilities, Immunization, Family Integrity, Media Violence, Drug Abuse, Child Sexual Exploitation, Family Support Network, Temporary Financial, Assistance Samsung Scholarship, Child Welfare Foundation.

As American Legion Riders, all of our activities and programs should be directly linked to one of the Four Pillars of The American Legion and shown to impact and be of direct benefit to veterans or of interest and benefit to The American Legion.

#### LEGISLATIVE ACTIVITY

Chapters and members of the American Legion Riders Department of California should promote the official legislative mandates of The American Legion; disseminate legislative updates; establish, maintain and promote proactive grassroots lobbying activities; and establish and maintain liaison with elected officials and their staff.

When representing themselves to be members of American Legion Riders Department of California or its parent organizations, or *displaying any emblems or regalia of the American Legion or its programs*, all advocacy activities must be in compliance with Section 2, Article II of the Constitution of The American Legion Riders Department of California Bylaws:

*"The American Legion Riders shall be absolutely nonpolitical and shall not be used for the dissemination of partisan principles or for the promotion of the candidacy of any person seeking public office or preferment. No candidate for, or incumbent of remunerative elected public office shall hold any office in The American Legion Riders, Department of California, or subdivision thereof."*

However, voter education is a critical element of the electoral process. This does not prohibit your Chapter from holding town hall meetings, "Meet the Candidate Nights," or allowing candidates to address post meetings, district conferences, or state conventions. Candidates may be allowed to participate, as long as an invitation is extended to all candidates affording them an equal opportunity to participate.

The American Legion Riders cannot endorse or oppose any candidate, even if the candidate is a Legionnaire and Post member. A Post/Chapter home should be free of any political materials that would appear to be an endorsement of a particular candidate. If the position of one candidate is posted, the position of all candidates must be posted. Every effort must be made to remain nonpartisan.

Any advocacy activity that cannot be directly linked to one of the Four Pillars of The American Legion and shown to impact and be of benefit to veterans or of interest and benefit to The American Legion should be avoided. *If in doubt, contact the Judge Advocate before proceeding.*

## CEREMONY and PROTOCOL

/- , Ceremony is defined as a formal act or series of acts prescribed by ritual, protocol, or convention; a conventional act of politeness or etiquette; observance of an established code of civility or politeness. Ceremony to some is an action performed formally with no deep significance.

To American Legion Riders, ceremony should be an act that teaches and revives American Legion traditions keeping alive the principles on which the American Legion was founded.

Observance of the ceremonies enables members to learn and adhere to the principles of the American Legion. Opening and closing ceremonies observed at the Chapter level, teach and keep alive the precepts contained in the preamble:

*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 great 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.*

Attached to the end of this manual you will find The Membership Meeting protocol and the Installation of Officer's ceremony that may be printed and placed in a separate binder for ease of use.

## **DISTINGUISHED GUEST and INTRODUCTIONS**

Properly introducing distinguished guests at your meeting demonstrates your knowledge of the American Legion its protocol. It is a show of respect for the commitment, effort and time required to attain office.

Introductions are generally done in order of rank within the organization, from low to high:

1. Local dignitaries, non-American Legion guests, SAL Officers.
2. Auxiliary: Local, District, Department, National, Auxiliary Officers.
3. American Legion Riders Local, Area, Department
4. American Legion Post, County, District, Department.
5. National American Legion Officers are usually introduced in the order by which they're installed into office; Sergeant-at-Arms - Service Officer - Historian - Judge Advocate - Chaplain - Treasurer - Adjutant - Vice Commander(s) - Commander
5. If NEC (National Executive Committeeman) or Alternate NEC is present, this officer should be introduced just prior to the Department Commander, with the Alt NEC before the NEC.

## Meaning of Our Preamble

The preamble is a literary and ideological classic. It sparkles with the purest gems of patriotic thought. It reflects all the spiritual glory of Divine precepts. It is remarkable for the simple brevity into which has been compacted an inspiring pattern for all the future of a free and decent way of life. It has impact as a tenet of faith in God. Each of the ten clauses of the Preamble, though brief, has a world of meaning.

*For God and Country, we associate ourselves together for the following purposes ...* This is the introduction. It declares that The American Legion recognizes the influence of Almighty God in all worthwhile endeavors and declares the allegiance of American Legionnaires to both God and Nation.

*To uphold and defend the Constitution of the United States of America ...* The Constitution of the United States is the written bulwark of our free way of life and representative government. It is our guarantee of liberty, freedom, justice and democracy. Members of The American Legion bore arms and went to war, to defend and uphold this document of freedom.

*To maintain law and order ...* Without law and order, liberty would become license. Law and order protect our pursuit of happiness, one of our God-given rights. Members of The American Legion served in wars to uphold law and order among nations. It is just as important to maintain the due processes of law in our domestic affairs. It binds Legionnaires to obey the laws of the land and to support the constituted authorities in enforcing those laws.

*To foster and perpetuate a 100 percent Americanism ...* Americanism is the gist of the American ideals of freedom, justice, individual rights and unfenced-in opportunities. It embraces all the freedoms we cherish and all the rights that are guaranteed to us. It is the very opposite of hatred, bigotry and intolerance. Americanism is the creed that has blazed the world-wide trail for justice, fair play, decency, belief in God, private enterprise, universal education, and progress in all human endeavors. It puts a premium on the virtues of loyalty, patriotism, hard work and thrift.

*To preserve the memories and incidents of our associations in the great wars ...* Service in defense of America is the greatest experience in the lifetimes of all veterans - recalling the highlights of that service means more than flashbacks to tense moments of excitement and danger in battle, the grime of muddy trenches, the perils of sub-infested oceans and the combat in the wild blue yonder. It means also the un-erasable recollection of the comradeships, the bravery of pals, the team work, the sacrifices, the miseries and hardships of military campaigns shared in common. It means the bond that binds all ex-servicemen and women together in mutual affection, respect and gratitude. It also means keeping green forever the memories of the supreme sacrifices of gallant American patriots, sacrifices necessary to the winnings of wars. It means faithful annual observance of Memorial Day and Veterans Day.

*To inculcate a sense of individual obligation to the community, state and nation ...* Always interested in building a better nation, the founders of The American Legion believed that such building must start first with the individual in their own community. So they made it one of the cardinal principles of The American Legion to inculcate that sense of personal obligation to the community, state and nation into the individual citizen. That means educating the citizen - young, old and future - in his and her responsibility to be active in making the hometown a better place in which to live, in discharging the duty of voting in elections, in paying taxes promptly, in contributing to community chest funds and to blood banks. The word "inculcate" means "to impress by frequent admonitions" and "to enforce by frequent repetitions." Like the duties themselves, the reminders that they remain to be carried forward, are never finished.

*To combat the autocracy of both the classes and the masses ...* This clause places the Legionnaire on the side of right in opposing autocracy by either class or mass when this threatens. In a democracy such as ours, composed as it is of all nationalities, races, creeds and economic groups, there are bound to be both classes and masses. Indeed, the masses are composed of classes - but all groups within the mass must feel assured that in this nation, reason and fairness will prevail in all human activities and relations.

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*To make right the master of might.* Many wars have been started by dictators who wanted their might to be the right. If human freedom is not to perish from the earth, right must always be master of might. The rights of small nations must be protected against the tyranny that powerful neighbors may seek to impose on them - just as the rights of minorities in our society must be protected and respected. Legionnaires are pledged by this clause always to stand with the right, protect the weak and preserve the liberties of the individual. This concept is the basis of The American Legion's continued advocacy of a strong national preparedness so as to achieve the ideal situation that right will be backed by adequate might.

*To promote peace and good will on earth ...* Until the entire world becomes a good neighborhood, Legionnaires must continue the effort to promote peace and good will on earth. It is in pursuance of this founding ideal that The American Legion has supported from the beginning and seeks to strengthen the United Nations organization. Obliquely, The American Legion also contributes to this ideal by firmly supporting a strong national defense to discourage breaking of the peace by aggressors.

*To safeguard and transmit to posterity the principles of justice, freedom and democracy ...* On this ideal of safeguarding and transmitting the principles of justice, freedom and democracy, all of the youth-training programs of The American Legion are built. All Americans can be proud that in our international relations we have tried to live by the golden rule, the mark of justice. We have granted to others, as we prize it ourselves, the great boon of freedom. Through the Monroe Doctrine, we called a halt to foreign imperialism in the western hemisphere. We gave freedom to the Philippines. These principles are part of the American heritage. Legionnaires are pledged to protect and preserve that heritage.

*To consecrate and sanctify our comradeship by our devotion to mutual helpfulness ...* The last or tenth clause of our Preamble pledges Legionnaires to "consecrate and sanctify our comradeship by our devotion to mutual helpfulness." This is the most important ideal expressed in our Preamble. It marked a new concept in America - a concept that made The American Legion the greatest force for social betterment in the history of the United States. We can hail The American Legion today as an unparalleled force in these United States for social betterment. American Legion concepts and its ideal of devotion to mutual helpfulness warmed up the whole social climate of America. Today America is extending its helpful hands all over the world through our assistance programs of foreign aid. This all came about because the veterans of World War I came home enriched with wonderful ties of friendship and gave those ties a meaning by consecrating them to the ideal of mutual helpfulness.

This is why we should all be proud to be Legionnaires!

## CHAIN OF COMMAND

This following information explains The American Legion Family and each branch's responsibility.

The National Headquarters of The American Legion has no control over the day-to-day operations of Department Headquarters. It does no good to call, write, or e-mail National Headquarters about problems within a Post or about anything to do with membership. They simply refer said correspondence/calls back to Department Headquarters and, if it is anything other than membership, Department Headquarters refers same back to the Post.

Department Headquarters has no control over the day-to-day operations of Posts. There is a chain of command for complaints regarding officers or members of a Post beginning with the Commander of the Post. If the Commander is the problem or fails to solve the problem, the next step is to go to the District Judge Advocate, and THEN the Department Judge Advocate.

The American Legion Riders Department of California has no direct control over the day-to-day operations of the Chapters. The chain of command for complaints regarding Chapter officers or members begins with the Chapter President. If the Chapter President is the problem or fails to solve the problem, the next step is to go to the Area Vice President, and THEN the Department President

The American Legion Auxiliary was provided for by the first National Convention of The American Legion in 1919 as a SEPARATE corporation with no oversight or monetary ties to The American Legion at any level of the organization. The relationship between the two organizations is one of COOPERATION rather than REGULATION. The American Legion Posts and American Legion Auxiliary Units are related, but independent organizations each with separate EIN's, financial records, By-laws, etc.

The National Judge Advocate of The American Legion has issued the following ruling:

*"It is crystal clear that The American Legion Post has no authority to control the Unit related to it. The Post may not revoke nor threaten revocation of its Unit's charter. The Unit should regard its connection with the Post as a distinct honor. It should strive unceasingly to carry out the National Constitution's pledge to participate in and contribute to the accomplishment of the aims and purposes of The American Legion. "*

Eligibility and membership in the Auxiliary is limited to women who have direct personal connection with service members from World Wars I and II, the Korean or Vietnam War, or conflicts in Lebanon, Grenada, Panama, Operation Desert Shield/Storm, the Gulf War, OIF/OEF until the cessation of hostilities as determined by the US Government. (Additional information on eligibility and membership may be obtained from The American Legion Auxiliary National website.) As of this writing, men are not eligible for membership in The American Legion Auxiliary.

The Sons of The American Legion was created in 1932 as a COMMITTEE within the American Legion. It is made up of boys and men of all ages whose parents or grandparents served in the US military and became eligible for membership in The American Legion.

All male descendants, adopted sons, or stepsons of members of The American Legion and such male descendants of veterans who died in service during periods of war as designated by the United States Congress for eligibility in The American Legion or who died subsequent to their honorable discharge from such service, shall be eligible for membership in the Sons of The American Legion. You are NOT eligible under an uncle or aunt. No females are eligible for membership in the Sons of The American Legion.