

I. THE DEPARTMENT COMMANDER

For at least the one year he is in office, the Commander has a unique role. The Commander must project an image - one of dignity and decorum. To many, the Department Commander "IS" the American Legion. The Commander should dress appropriately, drink in moderation - if at all- and observe the social amenities. That does not mean that there won't be opportunities for the Commander to "let his hair down". There will be picnics and dances where dress codes are relaxed, but behavior should still be well within the bounds of propriety. It should be stressed here, as elsewhere, that we are speaking of the office and not the individual. If the office is to command respect, the incumbent must see that his or her conduct merits that respect (i.e. is consistent with the office).

I. ACCOMODATIONS AND ARRANGEMENTS FOR VARIOUS FUNCTIONS

Generally speaking, accommodations and arrangements for any functions listed should be appropriate for the dignity of the office of Department Commander. These arrangements should be made far enough in advance and confirmed to ensure that proper accommodations are available.

A. Conferences and Conventions

Accommodations and arrangements for all Department Conferences and Conventions will be made by the Department Adjutant and the Adjutant's staff. All costs incurred to support the Commander's official role at these functions will be borne by the Department. This will include travel, lodging, meals and miscellaneous expenses determined by the Commander and the Adjutant to be in the best interest of the Department.

B. American Legion Programs (e.g. Boys and Girls State, Junior Law Cadet)

Each Program shall have an individual designated to be responsible for matters of protocol.

Typically, arrangements for the Commander to attend Boys' State, Girls' State, Junior Law Cadet, and JROTC Drill Team Competitions, or similar functions will be coordinated by the Directors or their designated representative with the Department Adjutant.

The Commander's accommodations, as needed, for these Programs will be arranged for by the respective Programs. Those arrangements will be conveyed to the Adjutant and Commander prior to his expected attendance.

C. American Legion/Auxiliary College & New Officers Conference

Arrangements and accommodations for these meetings should be completed by the Department Adjutant. Coordination with the College President or Committee will be necessary to ensure that the Commander/President is available, as needed, for presentations to the attendees of the College and to participate in various activities.

Any expenses incurred by the commander should come from the Commander's expense account, the Department President's expense should be covered within the Program budget.

D. Other Department Events -

Throughout the year there are several Department-oriented functions where the Department Commander's attendance is expected, is traditional or desirable.

These events are as follows:

- Department Baseball Tournament, opening and closing ceremonies
- Department Softball Tournament
- Department Bowling Tournament
- Department Golf Tournament
- VA Hospital Visitations
- "Day on the Hill"
- Junior Shooting Sports Tournament

NOTE: this list could expand with the addition of new programs.

Arrangements for the Commander to attend these events should be coordinated by the respective Committee Chairmen or their designated representatives with the Department Adjutant as far in advance of the proposed dates as possible. If the event is to require overnight accommodations, these should be arranged by the Committee Chairmen and the information forwarded to the Commander and the Department Adjutant.

The Commander's expenses incurred for these events will be the responsibility of the Department and should be charged to the Commander's expense account.

E. Homecomings (Department Commanders and Department President)

If there is a Commander's or President's Homecoming, these are Post/Unit functions; however, since they involve the Department Commander/President, they will be addressed here.

Arrangements for available dates should be coordinated by the respective Homecoming committees with the Department Commander, the Department President, and the Department Adjutant and the Department Secretary as soon as possible following the Department Convention.

Arrangements for accommodations (lodging, meals, etc.) for the Commander or President should be made by the Post Homecoming committee and the information forwarded to the Department Commander, Department Adjutant, and Department President as soon as available.

F. Official National Functions:

Accommodations and arrangements for the Commander for all National functions should be made by the Department Adjutant. The commander should be consulted for availability for these functions, and if necessary, a Vice-Commander substituted. The Commander should complete the appropriate function and hotel forms to ensure personal needs and requests are attended to. The completed forms should be forwarded to the Adjutant by the Commander as appropriate. As soon as the arrangements are confirmed, the Commander should be notified.

These functions include, but are not limited to the following:

- National Convention
- National Membership Workshop
- Regional Information Conference
- Washington Conference
- American Legion Auxiliary Awareness Assembly
- National Commander's Homecoming (normally Commander's direct liaison with host Department)
- National Commander's Legislative Testimony

Costs for these events should be borne by the Department as part of the Commander's expense account.

II. ATTENDANCE AT VARIOUS FUNCTIONS

"Functions", as used in this manual, refer to American Legion and American Legion Auxiliary ceremonies, conferences, conventions, banquets, meetings and

other activities to which dignitaries of the Legion and Auxiliary have been invited or otherwise find themselves in attendance.

The discussion of functions will include the type of function, functions the Commander is obliged to attend, those that it would be appropriate for him to attend and those where his presence would be inappropriate. Functions should also include visitations to Posts, Districts, Unites and large or small gatherings to which he has been invited to "drops in".

A. "Must" Functions

During the course of his tenure, there are several "Must" functions that the Department Commander traditionally attends. Included at this writing are:

- Department Convention in July
- Special Olympics - Post 24
- National Membership Workshop - Indianapolis- Late July/early August
- Legion College/New Officers Conference - 2nd weekend in August (Legion College could be held in May some years)
- Legion Baseball State Championships - August
- Regional or higher Championships if applicable
- National Convention - late August/early September
- National Commander's Testimony - Washington D.C. late September
- National Information Conference - September/October
- Commander and Adjutant's Meeting - Indianapolis - 3rd week in October
- Post 25 Annual Meeting - War Memorial Museum in Hampton
- Fall Conference - late October/early November
- A banquet in his honor, attendance at Arlington Cemetery, the laying of a wreath at the Tomb of the Unknowns and visitations to local Posts in the **17th District on Veteran's Day and Veteran's Day eve.**
- A speech at the Virginia War Memorial on **Memorial Day - Richmond**
- **Law & Order Night** at Tidewater Post 327
- A Post 25-sponsored event at the **War Memorial in Newport News** - 3rd Thursday in November
- Opening of Christmas Gifts in VA hospitals
- Day on the Hill - mid-January-Richmond
- George Washington Birthday Parade - Alexandria
- Washington Conference - late February/March
- Carnival at Salem VA Hospital

Because these are traditional, the dates should be blocked out on the Commander's calendar by the Department Adjutant as early as possible. It is incumbent on the sponsoring groups to issue an invitation to the Commander. Likewise, as a courtesy to these sponsors, the Commander on assuming office should respectfully decline any invitations that would conflict with these dates. As will be discussed later, this is very much a function of the Department Adjutant.

Even though in recent years there have been other functions that appear to be becoming "traditional", they have been listed above and should for the present be attended, if at all possible. Invitations should be forwarded through the Adjutant.

B. Appropriate Functions

The determination of what functions the Commander **should** attend is a delicate area that requires tact and diplomacy. If there is a rule of thumb, it is that **the Commander should attend those functions at which he has access to the largest number of Legionnaires**. The Department Commander, especially one who is still employed, has a limited amount of time. He must frequently restrict his Department activity to weekends. He must travel long distances at Department cost. Hotel and dining accommodations may or may not be involved. Without denigrating the importance to the sponsor of any function, it goes without saying that the Commander cannot attend every function to which he might be welcome or add prestige. The following suggestions might be helpful:

1. If the Commander is in the area, it would be appropriate to invite him to a well-prepared function where his presence has been announced in advance.
2. If the Commander is to be in a District, the District Commander shall appoint a Legionnaire (Aide) to prepare an itinerary. This applies to Post visits as well.
3. The District Commander should see the Posts in his District are informed of the visit of the Department Commander and that as many Legionnaires as possible will be in attendance.
4. Except as provided in "1" above. Posts are discouraged from inviting the commander to a purely local function that may be sparsely attended, such as a regular Post meeting, presentation of a Life-Membership, small patriotic observance, Post dance or "drop-in" visit.
5. If the Commander is scheduled to attend a function, the host Post or District should inform the local media. As will be discussed elsewhere. Department will provide a brief biography for this purpose.

NOTE: the above procedures should also be followed regarding visits to Districts and Units by the Department Auxiliary President.

While most invitations to the Department commander should be considered on their merits on a case-by-case basis, functions that are appropriate for the Commander are parades, District Conferences, and Conventions, dedications of Post Homes, Monuments, etc., parks and cemeteries. Oratorical contests beyond the District level and visits to VA Medical Centers.

C. Inappropriate Functions:

It is inappropriate for the Commander to just "drop in" unannounced to a Post or District. A Post or District likes to put its best foot forward to visiting dignitaries. It is unfair for the commander to visit unannounced, so that the host is unprepared. Even when the Commander is in the area, Posts can be alerted that they might expect a visit from the Commander. It is unfair for Post and Districts to encourage too much informality. Legionnaires at all levels should understand that the Commander is expected to remain somewhat aloof and not accept every invitation that is extended.

III. ROLE OF THE ADJUTANT - THE COMMANDER'S CALENDAR:

It is to a very great extent the duty of the Department Adjutant to see that the Commander attends appropriate functions and avoids inadvisable visitations. The Headquarters Administrative Secretary will liaison directly with the Commander in order to maintain a calendar containing the same scheduling information as the Commander's. The Adjutant will oversee the maintenance of this calendar and any problems in schedules will be resolved between the Commander and Adjutant. The Commander should refer **all** invitations to the Adjutant, even if he thinks he is available for a function. The Adjutant should ascertain if the date is open and whether it is an appropriate function. After discussing invitations and comparing calendars, the Adjutant should RSVP regrets or acceptances in the name of the Commander. It is customary for the Adjutant to brief the leading candidate(s) for Commander on "**MUST**" functions and his role as Adjutant in shaping the itinerary prior to Department elections.

The Commander's schedule can be obtained through the Adjutant on a "need-to-know" basis. It will not be routinely published.

The Adjutant will ensure that a photo and biography of the new Commander appears in the first edition of the "Virginia Legionnaire" following the Department Convention.

There was at one time in the Department of Virginia, a rule of thumb that the Commander did not accept (or the Adjutant accept for him) any engagement where the Commander was not the principal speaker, regardless of the rank of others in attendance. That is a harsh rule that could result in the host having to choose between the Commander and a distinguished public figure or of depriving the Commander of an appearance at a prestigious event. However, the Adjutant should attempt to place his Commander in the best light possible, least equally with other guests. The Adjutant should see in advance that arrangements have been made for housing and meals, even if the host cannot pay for those accommodations. The Adjutant should advise the Commander of the appropriate dress for the occasion, and he should provide a brief biographical sketch of the Commander and a suggested introduction to the host. Above all, it is up to the Adjutant to ensure that there are not conflicts in the Commander's schedule. That is why it is essential that the Commander make no commitments that the Adjutant is not aware of. Adhering to schedules is the responsibility of the Commander, as being late for an engagement is an affront to the host. By the same token, it is disrespectful to the Commander if hosts of functions do not follow the announced schedule.

Priority of Functions to be attended will be determined by the Commander and the Adjutant. Generally, the priority is as follows:

1. Visit of National Commander/ Vice Commander
2. List of "**MUST**" functions
3. Non-Legion National, State, Community civic ceremonies and events
4. District Conventions
5. Significant Post events, e.g., anniversaries, ground-breakings and homecomings
6. Post meetings

IV. AIDE TO THE COMMANDER

When the Department Commander is scheduled for an official visit to a Post or District, the District/Post Commander shall:

- Appoint a knowledgeable and responsible person as an aide to escort the Department Commander during the course of the visit.
- Notify the Department Commander and the Department Adjutant the name, address and phone number of the appointed aide.

A. Duties of the Aide to the Commander

1. Prior to the arrival of the Department Commander, the appointed aide will contact the Department Commander in order to set a time and place for the initial meeting (e.g. hotel, the post, etc.)
2. Provide escort services to the Department Commander at the various functions as requested by the Commander. This could include escort from motel to functions) and return, introductions to Legionnaires, their spouses and others, and familiarization with local personalities idiosyncrasies, etc.

V. DRESS

Except where informal dress is appropriate and has been specified, such as for picnics, or for a costume affair, the Commander should wear coat and tie and slacks or business suit or Legion uniform, or in the case of a female Commander, suit, dress or Legion uniform. Even where informality is the order of the day, discretion is advised.

NOTE: At any function, Department or National, where special dress will be the "order of the day/night", those in attendance should be notified. This is especially true of "black tie or dinner jacket" situations.

V. DEPARTMENT CONVENTION AND CONFERENCES

A. Required Appearances/Addresses

The Commander is extended an invitation to address the Auxiliary Conferences and Conventions. The President advises the Adjutant of a time "window" for Commander's visit that best suits her meeting.

The Adjutant should accompany the Commander, if possible. The President will present each to the meeting.

The NEC shall be invited to address the Auxiliary. He should accompany the Commander and Adjutant unless there is a National Legion visitor, then he should come at a different time (president should advise). The President will present the NEC who will introduce the guest.

B. Department Socials - Banquets, Receptions, etc.:

1. Banquets:

At the Department Convention Banquet, the Department Commander and spouse are normally seated at the Head Table to the right of the Immediate past Commander (M.C.) and spouse. The Department President and her escort are seated at the Head Table.

2. Reception/Receiving Line:

The Department Commander and spouse will lead the receiving line at all Department Receptions. Other members of the receiving line will be coordinated by the Adjutant. The President coordinates with the Adjutant who is on her guest list and should be in the receiving line. Any National visitors in attendance at a Conference or Convention should be in the receiving line.

3. Auxiliary Membership Breakfast:

The Auxiliary has a Membership breakfast at the Fall Conference. The Department Commander, Vice Commanders and the Membership Chairman are guest of their counterparts. Invitations are issued by the counterpart and RSVP's should be returned by the invited parties.

4. Volunteer Breakfast:

The joint Volunteer Breakfast at the Convention is chaired by the Legion and Auxiliary VA&R Chairman. The commander and his spouse are guests and are seated at the head table, but because of time constraints, his remarks should be very brief.

5. Past President's Luncheon:

The Auxiliary has a Past Presidents Luncheon at the Convention. This is chaired by the immediate Past President. The Commander and his spouse and the immediate Past Commander and his spouse are guests of the Department.

6. Gifts:

The Commander and the President will exchange gifts after each address the Joint Session during the Department Convention weekend.

NOTE: In determining the value of a gift to the President, Legion officials should keep in mind that the President's gift is "out-of-pocket".

7. National Convention:

The Present Department Commander invites the Present President and spouse to attend the Commander's Banquet. The Immediate Past Commander (Chairman of Delegation) invite the Immediate Past President (Chairman of Delegation) respectively, and their spouse to attend the Commander's Banquet.

The Present President and the Immediate Past President invite the Present Commander and the Immediate Past Commander, respectively, and spouses to the States' Dinner.

NOTE: It is customary that this procedure be followed between the Department Adjutant and Secretary.

8. Other National Functions:

An invitation should be issued to the President and spouse and Past National President(s) to attend the Legislative Reception at the annual Washington Conference.

An invitation should be extended to the President to accompany the Commander and his group on their "visit to the Hill" for meetings with Virginia Senators and Representatives.

9. Day on the Hill (Richmond):

Instructions should be sent to the President for the Department's "Day on the Hill". Remarks are always expected from the Auxiliary Legislative Chairman and she will be seated on the stage.

If a visit to the Governor is planned, the President and Legislative Chairman should be invited, if possible.

10. General:

When both the Commander and the President are bringing greetings at any meeting, the Commander is introduced first and conveys his greetings first. If he is to be the Principal speaker, the President is introduced first.

When a Department Commander, President, Adjutant or NEC is acting in an official capacity for either organization and members of both organizations are present, all invitations should include the spouse. This includes accommodations, tickets, seating, etc. Explicit instructions should be given in order to reduce the possibility of embarrassing situations.

After all official visits, the Commander and President should follow-up with an appropriate hand-written note of thanks to the host.

I. DEPARTMENT VICE COMMANDERS

Each Department Vice Commander shall act as the representative of the Department Commander in connection with the Posts and territory assigned to him and shall exercise special supervision over such territory, and shall visit each District at least twice during his term of office. Subject to the approval of the Department Finance Committee reasonable provision shall be made, consistent with financial conditions of the Department, toward defraying the necessary traveling expenses incurred by the Department Vice Commanders in execution of their duties as aforesaid.

He/she also:

shall attend the Virginia State American Legion College and New Department Officers Conference.

shall make every effort to attend the National Convention during his/her year in office.

shall attend a National Leadership Workshop while in office.

shall attend Veterans Day and Memorial Day programs in his/her area of responsibility, i.e., the Northern Area Vice Commander shall represent the Department Commander at Quantico National Cemetery on both Veterans Day and Memorial Day, unless otherwise directed.

shall visit VA hospital(s) in his/her area of responsibility.

shall attend the Washington National Conference.

shall attend as many District Conventions as is possible. However, such visits should be coordinated to prevent concurrent visits by both, the Department commander and a Department Vice Commander.

shall represent the Department Commander as directed from time to time.

II. DEPARTMENT NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEEMAN

The Department National Executive Committeeman shall attend all Department Conferences and Conventions during his term of office, where he/she will attend Executive Committee Meetings and the Sunday Morning Joint Meeting and Religious Program, and attend whatever other meetings and/or programs normally required of the Department NECman.

He/she also:

shall attend Virginia State American Legion College and New Department Officers Conference.

shall attend the National Conventions during his/her term of office.

shall attend Legislative Conference in Washington if at all possible.

shall attend the National Leadership Workshop while in office.

shall attend Fall and Spring NEC Meetings in Indianapolis.

shall attend the Washington National Conference.

shall perform such other duties as the National Commander might direct and the Department Commander or Department Adjutant might request from time to time.

III. DEPARTMENT ALTERNATIVE NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEEMAN

The Department Alternative National Executive Committeeman shall attend all Department Conferences and Conventions during his term of office, where he/she will attend Executive Committee Meetings and the Sunday Morning Joint Meeting and Religious Program, and attend whatever other meetings and/or programs normally required of the Department Alternate NECman.

He/she also:

shall attend Virginia State American Legion College and New Department Officers Conference.

shall attend the National Conventions during his/her term of office.

shall attend Legislative Conference in Washington if at all possible.

shall attend the National Leadership Workshop while in office.

shall attend the Washington National Conference.

shall perform such other duties as the National Commander might direct and the Department Commander or Department Adjutant might request from time to time.

IV. DEPARTMENT CHAPLAIN

The Department Chaplain shall attend all Department Conference and Conventions during his term of office, where he/she will attend the Executive Committee Meetings and the Sunday morning Joint Meeting and Religious Program.

He/she also:

shall attend the Virginia State American Legion College and New Department Officers Conference.

shall make every effort to attend the Nation's Chaplain's Conference in Indianapolis.

shall make every effort to attend the National Convention during his/her year in office.

shall make every effort to attend a National Leadership Workshop while in office.

shall make very effort to attend the Washington National conference.

shall perform such other religious serves (Four chaplains/Funerals) as the Department Commander or Department Adjutant might direct from time to time.

v. DEPARTMENT SERGEANT-AT-ARMS

The Department Sergeant-at-Arms shall attend all Department Conferences and Conventions during his term of office. During said conferences and convention, it shall be the Sergeant-at-Arms responsibility to monitor the Department Commander's schedule to ensure that he/she is where he/she needs to be one time. The Sergeant-at-Arms will attend the Executive Committee Meetings and the Sunday Morning Joint Meeting and Religious Program at both conferences and conventions. During the Department Convention, the Department Sergeant-at-Arms is responsible for the conduct and performance of the Honor Guard.

He/she also:

shall attend Virginia State American Legion College and New Department Officers Conference.

shall attend the National Conventions during his/her term of office if at all possible.

shall attend the National Leadership Workshop while in office, if at all possible.

shall attend the Washington National Conference, if at all possible.

shall perform such other duties as the Department Commander the Department Commander or Department Adjutant might request from time to time.