2020-2021 Department of Virginia Membership Plan

2021... THE MISSION CONTINUES

Theme: “Engage!”

We WILL boldly go where no other Department has gone before, and we will be beaming up our membership crews for an exciting new voyage! Let’s make it so!

Stardate: 210701

Starfleet:

USS Northern Enterprise – consists of 5 Federation Districts
USS Eastern Discovery – consists of 6 Federation Districts
USS Western Excelsior – consists of 6 Federation Districts

The Prime Directive: Obtain 100% of the 2021 Membership Goal.

Engage: Mission Log

This year’s membership drive will boldly take us back to the basics in building a foundation where we teach our “Federation Members” to be independent thinkers; develop autonomy, create significant membership building skills, and work confidently together…all pursuing the same Prime Directive of 100% membership attainment. The Star Trek theme and the proposed plan is “engagement oriented” and intended to reignite the FUN back in membership activities.

The “Engage: 2021” theme lends to two essential components to the membership equation:

First, it creates a FOCAL POINT. An articulated and defined vision that gathers the attention of everyone and focuses it. “Where there is no vision, the Membership will just wander around.” When everyone focuses their vision, it is reasonable to expect that as an eye on the prize attitude can be maintained. The problem is almost always focus.

Second, an articulated vision provides a FUNNEL. It gathers our membership and their recruiting talents together. When vision and the activities that propel our Department
toward it’s articulated, defined, and celebrated, engagement emerges. If that occurs, we will begin to see how our **Legion Family** works together and is absolutely critical if a unified effort in the SAME direction is going to be the result.

**Recruiting and Retention through Engagement, Action and Revitalization (E.A.R.)**

Together we must work to increase our membership across the Department of Virginia by focusing on recruiting new members and retaining existing members. We will be successful in this mission if we use the **E.A.R. method**:

- **Engage** our current Legion Family members to increase retention
- **Act** to increase The American Legion’s visibility in our communities
- **Revitalize** our struggling posts with help from the department and national organizations

**eCheck Processing**

The MyLegion.org website, has significantly streamlined the process of post membership management. We now have the ability for Post Adjutants to electronically submit membership cards with payment (eCheck) to the Department of Virginia’s Membership Office at no additional cost – saving postage and time while creating a receipt for efficient recordkeeping.

There were three Posts who piloted this program prior to the new membership year to ensure this process was understood. Training will begin end of July as well as training will be provided online the first week of August at the National Membership Meeting. This designated training will be used to qualify posts to utilize the eCheck system.

Once qualified, Post Adjutants, or designated Membership Chairpersons will be able to process transfers into their post via MyLegion.org. Throughout the 2020 – 2021 Membership year, all membership cards transmitted to Department of Virginia’s Membership Office via MyLegion.org will count for all Target Date Membership Turn-In’s.

**Department of Virginia’s “Legionnaires for a Decade”**

Department of Virginia’s “Legionnaires for a Decade” is an opt-in program where Legionnaires from participating posts can pre-pay their membership dues for 10 years. As an example, if your post’s current annual membership is $35- you can sign a member up to this program for a one-time payment of only $350.00 or on a 10-month payment plan. (See pages 10-12 for additional information).
**Active and Reserve Component Outreach**

Virginia is home to a large contingent of Active Duty from all respective service branches, Reserve Component (Army National Guard, Air National Guard, Army Reserve, Navy Reserve, Air Force Reserve, Coast Guard Reserve and Marine Corps Reserve) service members at armories, stations and reserve centers throughout the state. In order to increase our market penetration of this eligible demographic, as an organization we must actively engage these patriotic volunteers serving our nation.

District Membership Teams that actively engage with Reserve Component units at their armory, station or reserve center may apply for a grant of up to $300.00 for the purchase of refreshments or marketing items (t-shirts, challenge coins, hats, etc.).

**Student Veterans of America and Post Charters**

Student Veterans of America is a student veterans’ group that coordinates a coalition of military support "chapters" at college campuses in our country and around the world. The chapters exist to provide support for student veterans who are still growing accustomed to an academic life that can sometimes differ drastically from the regimented and organized lifestyle they lived in the military. To help student veterans cope, SVA chapters provide a peer network for veterans on campus, fostering a sense of camaraderie among them and an esprit de corps that they knew and loved during their service.

SVA chapters often host activities on campus, both social and professional in nature. As an officially recognized student group by their schools, chapters serve as a touchstone for student veterans – who might be finding it difficult to relate to their college-aged peers.

As a long-time stalwart and advocate for veteran’s education, The American Legion is an official partner of Student Veterans of America. The Legion recognizes the need to provide support to veterans on campus and the positive impact that a population of educated veterans can have on our society. Accordingly, the Legion provides mentorship, support and a collaborative voice to Student Veterans of America.

Working with the SVA National President and his staff, the Department of Virginia will reach out to and engage with SVA chapters to launch a minimum of 2 new Student Veteran Posts during the 2020-2021 membership year. Legionnaires within the respective Districts can provide valuable services to SVA members to get them up and running so they can move forward in the form of assistance with benefits processing and mentorship.

Student Veteran Posts Charter efforts will be led by the Membership Chair and the DMS/New Post Committee.
Department-wide Membership Engagement/Outreach Activities

There are multiple Department-wide engagement/outreach activities for this year’s membership drive. It is encouraged, based on health guidelines, to have each post across the Department participate in (but not limited to) the following:

- **DMS (141) Engagement Day**: A Department-wide activity held on Department-designated date in August.
- **Buddy Check**: Designated weeks during each quarter
- **Veteran Employment Career Fairs**: Coordinated participation efforts with the Veterans Employment and Education Chair and respective posts in geographic location of these events across the state. Also, see if it can be performed at virtual events.
- **VSO Partnership and Outreach**: Signed partnerships at Department level with Team RWB, Team Rubicon, Mission Continues, Student Veterans of America and outreach to posts with respective nearby Chapters for engagement
- **Operation: Engage**: A Department-wide door-knocking campaign in selected urban and suburban areas in each district (concentrated populations). Held on Department-designated date in October.
- **Awareness Walk for Veterans**: Bringing back the “Awareness Walk for Veterans” during the 2020-2021 Membership year is meant to assist in community outreach for our respective posts across the Department and continue to help create an understanding of the many different issues facing America’s veterans, servicemembers and families. Held either at the Department Spring Conference or a designated Saturday in April by Region, based on health guidelines. To improve the overall participation and as backup plan from state health guidelines, it is possible this could become a virtual event.
- **Legionnaire for Life**: This is a program designed to help revitalize each individual Post and targets specifically the newest generation of Legion eligible members. There would be specific goals for each Post with this program and limited in number due to the design of its investment and the size of the Post.
- **Legion Family Play Day**: Family Play Day activities expand on American Legion Past National Commander Denise H. Rohan’s “Family First” message to promote membership and strengthen renewal by uniting the American Legion Family around activities for all ages as a way to welcome younger veterans and their families into the organization. To be held on a Department-wide designated Saturday in September.
Since the 2016 – 2017 Membership Year, the Department of Virginia has experienced membership decrease of 3,508 members at an average annualized rate of 877 members per year. The 2019-2020 year had a membership increase of 4,116 or an average of 19 members per post. In an effort to reverse this trend rate, and keeping in mind a rough estimate of membership goal next year, the Department of Virginia has adopted a five-pronged approach to membership improvement:

- **Recruiting**
  - Incentives for Individuals whom recruit at least 10 new members.
  - Incentives for Posts that increase the number of new members recruited compared to the 2019 – 2020 Membership Year.
  - Minimum requirement of 2 new members for each respective post to be eligible for any Post membership awards.
  - Minimum requirement of every Post Commander to recruit one new member and Post Membership Chair to recruit one new member, to lead by example in new member attainment.
  - Incentives for the top three Districts who recruit the most new members for the 2020-2021 membership year.

- **Retention**
• Incentives for Posts that achieve at least 95% retention of their 2020 paid members (or 100% of all 2020 paid members still living).

• **Active and Reserve Component Outreach**
  o Incentives for Districts that conduct Active and Reserve Component unit outreach events.

• **Student Veteran Post Development**
  o Incentives for Districts that create Student Veteran Posts within their respective District.
  o Target goal of 2 Student Veteran Post to be created in 2020-2021 year.

• **District Phone Engagement and Community Outreach**
  o Incentives for Districts that conduct Phone Engagement and highest number of Community outreach events.

In addition to long-standing recognition programs such as the Department Recruiter of the Year, Gold Brigade, Silver Brigade, and a newly created Department Cardinal Brigade; 100% Membership awards; several new recognition programs have been established to incentivize increased new membership recruitment, increased membership retention, outreach to Active Duty and Reserve Component units, creation of Student Veteran posts, and efforts to revitalize struggling posts.

**Department of Virginia Cardinal Brigade Recruiting Award Incentive**

The addition of the Department of Virginia Cardinal Brigade to the two national American Legion Membership Award Incentives (Gold and Silver Brigade) that are already in place, would and is intended to be, the first building block for developing future Gold and Silver Brigade award recipients.

Award criteria: Legionnaires who recruit 12-24 new members into The American Legion starting July 1st of the new membership year to the May target date at the end of the membership year.

**2020-2021 Department Member Recruiting Individual Incentives**

• New member recruiters will earn a limited edition, specially designed numbered challenge coin specifically designed to recognize Virginia Legionnaire Recruiters and certificate signed by Department Commander Bill Feasenmyer and the Department Membership Chair as recognition for recruiting at least ten (10) new members (a new member is any Legionnaire recruited into a Department of Virginia post whom was not a 2020 paid member).

Recruiters certify their eligibility by submitting the New Member Listing Certification Form to the Department Membership Office no earlier than October 1, 2020.
2020-2021 Department Member Recruiting Post Incentives

- Posts that increase their new member totals from the 2019 – 2020 Close of Books Final Membership Report will receive one entry for each additional new member recruited beyond their 2019 – 2020 total of new members into a drawing held at the Department Convention to win one of three cash prizes of $300.00, $175.00, and $100.00.

- The top three posts (1) from each category of posts (large posts with greater than 500 members, medium posts with more than 100 to 499 members, and small posts less than 100 members; categories based off of the 2020 Close of Books Final Report) recruiting the greatest number of new members will be recognized on the stage and receive a distinctive plaque at the Department Convention.

Posts will be automatically entered into the drawing following the issuance of the 2021 Close of Books Final Report.

2020-2021 Department Member Retention Incentives

- Each post that retains at least 95% of their 2020 paid members (or 100% of all living 2020 paid members) will earn a distinctive Retention Honor Ribbon for their post colors and a certificate signed by Department Commander Bill Feasenmyer and the Department Membership Chair.

- Posts that earn the Retention Honor Ribbon will be entered into a drawing at the Department Convention to win one of three cash prizes of $300.00, $150.00, and $100.00.

Posts will be automatically entered into the drawing following the issuance of the 2021 Close of Books Final Report.

2020-2021 Department Active and Reserve Component Outreach Incentives

- The District Commander and Membership Chairman from the district that conducts the greatest number of Reserve Component unit outreach events as of December 31, 2020 will earn a special Engage 2021 award at the 2021 Department Convention.

- Districts may request a grant of up to $300.00 for their Active and Reserve Component outreach efforts in addition to the use of the Department of Virginia’s professional exhibitor booth wrap with promotional literature to ensure a professional appearance and successful impression of our organization.
• The top three districts conducting the greatest number of Active and Reserve Component unit events will be recognized on the stage and receive a distinctive plaque at the Department Convention.

• All volunteers participating in Active and Reserve Component unit events will receive a signed Certificate of Appreciation signed by Department Commander Bill Feasenmyer and the Department Membership Chair. It is up to the respective District Membership Chairs to provide the volunteer documentation for these events.

• Posts participating in the Veterans Awareness Walks will receive a signed Certificate of Appreciation signed by Department Commander Bill Feasenmyer and the Department Membership Chair.

2020-2021 Department Engagement Incentives

• The District Commander and Membership Chairman from the district that conducts the greatest number of Post Engagement events between July 1, 2020 and May 31, 2021 will earn a special Engage 2021 award at the 2021 Department Convention.

• The top three districts conducting the greatest number of Post Engagement events will be recognized on the stage and receive a distinctive plaque at the Department Convention.

• All volunteers participating in DMS (141) Post Phone Engagement and Community Outreach events will receive a signed Certificate of Appreciation signed by Department Commander Bill Feasenmyer and the Department Membership Chair.

2020-2021 Department Target Date Turn-In Incentives

• The first place District Commander and Membership Chairman at each Target Date Turn-In will have their names engraved on a newly created 2020 – 2021 Traveling Membership Trophy which will be presented to the first place District Commander at each Target Date Turn-In.

• The first place District Commander and Membership Chairman, as of the 2021 Close of Books Final Membership Report, will be recognized on stage at the Department Convention and permanently awarded the 2020 – 2021 Traveling Membership Trophy.

Reminder – membership transmittals submitted via MyLegion.org will count for all Target Date Turn-In competitions.
Operation: Engage

Concept – Operation: Engage will involve all seventeen districts throughout the Department of Virginia in a door knocking campaign in selected urban and suburban areas in each district (concentrated populations). American Legion Family members will gather in centralized locations throughout their districts to meet up with their assigned Team Captains at 8am on the TBA Saturday in September to pass out "driving sheets" (rosters of non-renewed Legionnaires last paid in 2016 to 2020, sorted in logical driving sequences) and provide a short briefing with refreshments (coffee, juice, donuts). All entities are encouraged to participate as well with the same concept in mind.

Following the morning briefing, the respective teams would drive their assigned route, knock on doors and engage with the non-renewed Legionnaires then return to their starting point to turn in dues, transfer forms, eat lunch, and a new driving route sheet for the afternoon. The day will run from 8am to about 5pm.

If a Legionnaire is not home, the volunteers will leave a door hanger asking them to go to legion.org/renew along with their Membership ID number. During the 2021 Spring Conference’s general session, two awards will be presented as a result of Operation: Engage:

- A plaque to the District that provides the most teams of two-four volunteers and a plaque to the District that gained the most members during the operation.
- Additionally, each American Legion Family volunteer will receive a distinctive “Operation: Engage” award to commemorate their participation in the event. The event will be open to volunteers from the entire American Legion Family -- Legionnaires, Sons, Auxiliary, and Riders.

Funding

Required Resources (Supplementary Budgetary Request) --

1. $100.00 per district for morning refreshments ($1,700).
2. $200.00 per district for lunch at the post ($3,400).
The Department of Virginia’s “Legionnaire for a Decade”: 10-Year Membership

Department of Virginia’s “Legionnaire for a Decade” is an opt-in retention incentive program where Legionnaires from participating posts can pre-pay their membership dues for 10 years – based on the respective post’s 2021 annual membership dues. As an example, if a Post’s annual dues are $35, then for a one-time payment of only $350.00 or a 10 month payment of just $35.00 per year – that member can sign up and lock in for a 10 year membership at that price.

This innovative membership program will protect Legionnaires from future dues increases while providing convenience and peace of mind that they won’t see renewal notice for the next decade. Posts will be responsible for the administration of this opportunity and will forward to the Department Membership Chair the name of the Legionnaire (and Post) as a backup.

Eligibility Information

If you have served federal active duty in the United States Armed Forces since December 7, 1941 and have been honorably discharged or are still serving - you are eligible for membership in The American Legion!

*Because eligibility dates remain open, all active duty members of the U.S. Armed Forces are eligible to join The American Legion at this time, until the date of the end of hostilities as determined by the government of the United States.

**U.S. Merchant Marine eligible only from December 7, 1941 to December 31, 1946 (WWII).

Department of Virginia’s “Legionnaire for a Decade”: 10-Year Membership Plan Frequently Asked Questions

Q1: Why was the 10-Year Membership program created?

A1: The program was created for several reasons, the first of which is retention. Membership is the lifeblood of The American Legion and retaining our members is of high importance. A 10-year membership option allows members to “set it and forget it” by locking in their membership at a discounted rate without the need to renew for a decade.

Q2: Am I eligible for the 10-Year Membership program?
A2: All American Legion members in good standing are eligible for the program. SAL and Auxiliary are not currently eligible for this program.

Q3: How much does the 10-Year Membership program cost?

A3: The program is dependent on the 2021 Membership dues of the respective post. Not knowing if there will be a due increase over the next 10 years, makes this program a competitive option for members to lock in discounted rates.

Q4: How the 10-Year Membership program different from paid up for life?

A4: Paid-up-for-Life, or PUFL, basis payment by the age of the member. Gulf War and Post 9/11 veterans sometimes pay more than $1,000 for their life membership. While this option makes sense for some, this locked in rate base don their respective Post’s current annual membership dues for 10-years makes sense for others.

Q5: What are the advantages in participating in the 10-Year Membership program over traditional annual membership?

A5: Advantages of the program include locking in the current annual rate of their respective post for 10 years; “Set it and forget it” no need to renew membership for a decade as your membership will be automatically renewed by their respective Post; Protect yourself from future dues increases, your rate is paid up front and will not be effected by potential Department and National per capita dues increases.

Q6: What if there is a due increase during my 10-Year Membership plan?

A6: The 10-Year Membership plan locks this rate in regardless of any dues increase for the 10 years of this contract. This offer is backed by the Department and is an opt-in for posts who want to participate to encourage their members from feeling the effects of future dues increases. The respective Post’s rate is locked in, regardless of potential National and Department per capita dues increases.

Q7: Can I transfer my membership while participating in the 10-Year Membership program?

A7: As long as your transfer is within the state of Virginia, your 10-Year Membership plan will stay active however, it is the responsibility of the post and Legionnaire to maintain proper records of this transaction. 10-Year Membership is only valid to Virginia Legionnaires. Department Headquarters WILL NOT offer a refund if you choose to move out of the state within the duration of your plan.
Q8: What if my Post closes while I participate in the 10-Year Membership program?

A8: If a Post closes during your 10-year Membership plan, contact The American Legion, Department of Virginia HQ. The Department will work with you to transfer you into another participating Post to include Headquarters Post 141.
Bringing back the “Awareness Walk for Veterans” during the 2020-2021 Membership year – (with potential of making it virtual) - this is meant to assist in community outreach for our respective posts across the Department and continue to help create an understanding of the many different issues facing America’s veterans, servicemembers and families.

- Awareness walks can bring attention to the thousands of servicemembers who struggle to overcome hardships caused by traumatic brain injury or post-traumatic stress disorder.
- We can remind the public that reforming the VA health care system is not a task, but a continuing process – one that will only improve if Americans hold their elected officials accountable and demand that veterans be treated with the dignity and respect that they have earned.
- Walks can remind employers that the best way to thank a veteran is to hire one. By providing jobs, employers will also help eliminate veteran’s homelessness.

In addition to these essential veterans' issues, our awareness walks can highlight the four pillars of The American Legion and the Legion Family as a whole.

- Walks can remind the public that defense cuts over recent years have been dangerously irresponsible. The premise that we must accept either cuts to personnel benefits or weapons modernization is false. We must never send our military members into harm's way without the training and resources that they need to win.
- A walk for veterans will make a bold statement about Americanism, as the flag of our great country is displayed and waved by spectators and walk participants.
- Young people represent the future of our country and our walks will be a great venue to remind the public of the life-changing services offered by our programs, such as Temporary Financial Assistance, Child Welfare Foundation and The American Legion Legacy Scholarship.
- We can showcase great American Legion family youth activities such as Boys and Girls State, our High School Oratorical Scholarship Program, American Legion Baseball and Junior Shooting Sports.

The important thing to remember about organizing an awareness walk is that there is no one way to do it.

- Every Post within their respective community has its own strengths and unique characteristics.
- Engage with your community leaders and organize teams to handle various tasks. A packet will be provided for those participating to include media advisory, news release, radio and television text and flyer. Social Media is an effective and usually free method of getting the word out efficiently to large groups. Letters to the editor
and announcements in post newsletters and church bulletins can also generate interest.

- Perhaps respective community mayors can issue a proclamation of support. Necessary permits should be obtained, and civic and public leaders should be invited. The local business community can be a source to solicit sponsorships.

Above all, make this an American Legion family affair. Encourage participation from the American Legion Auxiliary, the Sons of the American Legion and The American Legion Riders. The talent and resources available among our nearly 270 posts are simply amazing.

**Please note:** The *Awareness Walks* will be conducted on a Department-designated Saturday in April to ensure plenty of time for proper coordination within the respective communities.
Legionnaire for Life Program

This is a program designed to help revitalize each individual Post and targets specifically the newest generation of Legion eligible members. There would be specific goals for each Post with this program and limited in number due to the design of its investment and the size of the Post.

I say investment because there is a slight investment monetarily but a major investment in time and effort to make this work and be successful. This would be a rolling 2-year investment of time for each new targeted member and is designed for a Post’s New Member Team to take charge and make it happen.

This program’s eligibility is for Gulf War and up Veterans only. It is also a mentorship program designed to teach these new members what the Legion is about and will have involvement from the Post Commander, District Vice Commander (who is assigned to that Post), District Commander, Department Vice Commander (assigned to that region) and the Department Membership Chair (assigned to that region – North, East and West). There will be specific accountability for outreach to the new member (depending on level mentioned) and a specific tracking mechanism created.

All Post are encouraged to participate in the program however, it is designed more for the Posts with over 50 members due to the nature of how this program works. There is a specific maximum number of members that can be signed up for this program, as well as a maximum number of new members the Post can “invest in” – (pay from their membership account) to get this program up and running:

Post membership of 50 or less: up to the Post but no assignment and no monetary investment allowed
Post membership of 51-150: 3 Legionnaires for Life members and 1 max pay by Post
Post membership of 151-300: 6 Legionnaires for Life members and 3 max pay by Post
Post membership of 301-450: 12 Legionnaires for Life and 6 max pay by Post
Post membership of 451-600: 12 Legionnaires for Life and 6 max pay by Post
Post membership of 601 and above: 24 Legionnaires for Life and 12 max pay by Post

The pay by Post means a one-year membership investment paid by the respective Post membership’s account.

The program entails a complete welcoming committee approach as mentioned earlier in this white paper. Contact from various levels welcoming aboard. Seeing what the new member is interested in. Setting up an official “Induction Ceremony,” encouraging him to attend the next District meeting for recognition at District level and encouraging him to take part in 1 Legion activity (preferably a 1 day investment) over the course of the year. There will be bonus points if the member goes to Legion College and/or completes the Legion Extension Course online. The new member will be assigned a “Legion Mentor”
from the respective Post and they will have 1 additional coach automatically assigned – (District Vice Commander assigned to that Post) to assist in mentorship. The Membership Chair of the Post keeps overall tracking of all interactions.

The Department Vice Commander and Membership Chairs will keep track of the ongoing mentorship and provide this information to the Department Membership Chair.

There needs to be some form of commitment paperwork assigned between the new member and mentor to show a good faith approach that we want to invest our time with him/her and show we care about them being a new member. There needs to be (1) monthly interaction by phone or email and (1) face to face every other month at a minimum. This also needs to be a 2 year commitment- statistically if you can get a new member to be active beyond 2 years that member will become a “Legionnaire for Life.”
Family Play Day activities expand on American Legion Past National Commander Denise H. Rohan’s “Family First” message to promote membership and strengthen renewal by uniting the American Legion Family around activities for all ages as a way to welcome younger veterans and their families into the organization.

Posts are encouraged to create their own visions of Legion Family Play Days, based on their available resources, community needs and other factors. For example, a post in a warm-weather state with an outdoor area may want to include games such as bean-bag toss or cornhole, a parent-child kickball game, a dunking tank or others. A post that does not have its own home may want to work with a community center, library or similar facility to host an event featuring board games, face-painting, karaoke and other activities.

The kit contains useful information and downloadable resources that posts can adapt to their own specific events. The resources include a customizable flyer, media advisory and social media posts.

**Please note:** This event will be a Department-designated Saturday in September. Although, it may be postponed due to the current world situation and rescheduled in the Spring. This is a fantastic opportunity to utilize as a “Back to School” Community activity.

Go to: [https://www.legion.org/publications/247440/legion-family-play-day-toolkit](https://www.legion.org/publications/247440/legion-family-play-day-toolkit)