POST COMMANDER

An Introduction

Leadership College

Department of Virginia

August 3, 2024

Instructor/Moderator

Bill Feasenmyer

47 Year Member of Post 284

Department Commander, 2020-2021

Past Commander, Colonial Heights Post 284, 2005-2006

Post 284 Finance Officer 2008-2021

Past 11th District Commander, 2008-2009

Past Department Vice Commander, 2011-2012

Department Americanism Chairman, 2012-2014

Department Law and Order Chairman, 2010-2011 & 2016-2020

Youth Cadet Law Enforcement Director, 2015-2020, 2022-present

National YCLE Committee, 2016-Present

Chairman 2024-

National Law & Order and Homeland Security Committee, 2017-present

Treasurer, Department of VA, 2017-2020, 2022-present

Post Commander Duties of Office

"To you, comrade, is entrusted a very important duty of teaching and protecting the cardinal principles of The American Legion throughout your entire post. To you is entrusted supervision of the duties of all other officers of this post. To you may come the needy and the distressed, and it is your duty to see no worthy comrade is turned away without full justice. It is your duty to see freedom is ever the watchword of those with whom you may come in contact. Loyalty to your post, to its membership, to the state and to the national organization are obligations which you now assume. You are more than the presiding officer for meetings. You are guided by the constitution and by the decisions of the post as a body, yet the responsibility for the success of the year's program is largely on your shoulders. You must initiate and carry through programs to completion. You must thoroughly familiarize yourself with the policies and traditions of your post and of The American Legion. By your sincere acceptance and earnest performance of these duties, may the great trust which your comrades have reposed in you be justified. To you, I extend the congratulations of the department, and I wish you well as you assume the responsibilities of your office. I present to you a copy of the Officer's Guide and Manual of Ceremonies to serve as your guide during the coming year."

Now, how do you accomplish what you have just pledged to do?

- Your Post
  - Has your post leadership prepared you to succeed?
  - Past commanders have an obligation to mentor
  - Is there a process in place to move up through the chairs and vice commanders? Or at least organize and execute major post event(s)?
  - A process to learn what you expect others to accomplish by having already accomplished it yourself in the past?
  - Is the responsibility shared or delegated appropriately? The commander cannot be the work horse.
  - Is there open communication among all the officers so that information is shared about who does what, when, where, etc
  - Is there a true Family atmosphere and mutual respect among the Auxiliary and Sons and Riders?

You-Before and during your term in office

Remember, you derive your authority from your membership and your post Constitution and By Laws

- Appearance (Controversial Comments to Follow)
  - Do You Look The Part of a Leader?
    - Same rules for small or large post
  - Are you wearing the correct attire for the event?
    - Post membership meeting
    - Post cookout
    - Post event open to the public
    - Outside public or community event
    - District or Department conference or convention
    - Meetings or Events with National Officers
  - Are you wearing your Legion cap/cover?
    - Is your Legion cap correct?

- **Social Media**
  - Part of your duties is to promote recognition for your Post
    - You want to tell the public about all your post is doing for Veterans, Youth, the Community, etc using newspapers, television, post website and even FB
    - Make sure that those in your post with the administrative rights to your website and FB page are aware of the proper use of those mediums.
  - When you accomplish the above, you can become synonymous with your Post and The American Legion
    - Think before you hit that enter button
    - Do not use your official title for any particular political person or agenda
    - Be aware of your surroundings when wearing your Legion cap
  - So, like it or not, if and when you choose to be an American Legion leader, you may unfortunately give up some of your individual rights to free speech
  - It is perfectly fine to support causes and positions that are endorsed by The American Legion

- **Learn all you can about The American Legion organization and it's programs**
  - National website, www.legion.org
    - Legion TV
    - Legion videos on You Tube
    - On line manuals
    - Program web pages

  - Department website, www.valegion.org
    - Downloads
    - *e legionnaire*
    - Program web pages

  - As Post Commander, you will be expected to talk to the public, write news articles about your post and its programs, and maybe even give a speech
    - Be sure that you have the facts

- **The American Legion Extension Institute**

  - The American Legion's official training program for officers, members, Legion College applicants and those who simply want to expand their knowledge of the nation's largest veterans service organization is now available online.

  - The American Legion Extension Institute has been rewritten, updated, streamlined and enhanced with videos, digital photos, clickable links, a historical timeline and additional features. To register and take the course, visit www.legion.org/alei. (Due to high traffic volume, you may experience some delays. If you experience delays, please try again later.) The program should take less than two hours to complete. It is divided into six sections, with a quiz at the end of each one, followed by a final exam.

- myLegion.org

Welcome to *my*Legion!

*my*Legion.org is a **FREE** website designed to connect members of The American Legion to their Post and Department leadership,

*my*Legion includes a site at each level of the organization:

Members - allows members to view information on file at National Headquarters, view messages and events published through the department and post *my*Legion sites, and network with other *my*Legion members using networking tools.

Departments - provides membership information, reports and electronic membership tools such as data change forms for all posts and squadrons within their department.

Posts/Districts/Counties - provides Legion and SAL information for all members in their post. Allows post to submit member data change forms and Consolidated Post Reports electronically. Upload post image, newsletter, message, and calendar. Create membership listings, view members renewing online, search for members who have expired or are members of the department headquarters post, and chat with other officers discussing veterans issues and sharing membership ideas.

Pick your *my*Legion site

Members *Click Here*

Available for Legion members only.

Departments Click Here

Available for department staff only.

Posts/Districts/Counties Click Here

Available for American Legion Posts, Districts and Counties only.

Prior to creating a Post/District/County account, an Authorization Form must be completed and submitted to National Headquarters for processing.

- **The American Legion and The Social Quarters**
  - Article IV. Section 2 of the By-Laws of The American Legion is as follows: “Members may be suspended or expelled from the Legion only upon a proper showing of cause.”
  - Charges shall be based on any serious conduct unbecoming a member of The American Legion.
    - Very specific and exact procedure must be followed based on National By-Laws. See page 132 of the Officer’s Guide

  - Your post club room or social quarters should have written rules or by-laws that are posted regarding the proper conduct of members and guests.
    - Suspensions may be ordered based on those rules that affect only the use of the social quarters or club room.

  - It is your responsibility to know the difference.

- **Alcohol Use**
  - You represent your post and The American Legion
  - NO Alcohol while wearing the Legion Cap
  - Do not put yourself in situations that affect your ability to lead your post or that may affect the reputation of your post

  - ABC laws and rules
    - Your appointed club room chair must know
    - Your club room manager and bartenders must know
    - As commander, you should have an idea

  - The good of the all is more important than the anger of the one
    - Enforce the rules

- **Office of Charitable Gaming**
- These regulations are ever changing, be aware, be involved

  - Bingo
  - Social Quarters pull tabs or electronic games
  - Your bingo chairman, your finance officer should know the rules and regulations
  - As commander, you should have an idea
  - Severe financial penalties can be enforced if the rules are not followed
  - Stand alone raffles with or without a Bingo license

Finance – just the basics

- State Corporation Annual Filing
- IRS 990 and/or 990T (Unrelated Business Income)
- What does being a 501 c 19 mean (501 c 3 and 501 c 4)
  - This is solely an IRS designation
  - Exempt from Federal Income Tax relating to your Charitable purpose
  - May still owe taxes on UBI (check with your CPA)
    - If you do file a 990T for UBI be sure to include unrelated business expense
  - Does not automatically mean exempt from Virginia state sales tax
  - State statute just recently put 501 c 19 in same category as 501 c 3 and c 4
- Annual Audit

Key Functions of the Post Commander

- Membership (It is needed to carry out Programs)
- Programs (It must have members to carry them out)
- The Four Pillars
  - Veteran Assistance
  - Youth
  - Americanism
  - Strong Defense
- Reporting
  - Consolidated Post Report
  - Narratives
  - Certification of New Officers
  - Department Awards Manual

Some more good things to know as Commander

In your Officer's Guide and Manual of Ceremonies

- Post membership meetings should have a standard formal agenda
  - POW-MIA ceremony
  - Posting/Saluting of the Colors
  - No alcohol before or during meetings
  - Guest speakers ok'd by the Commander
- Flag Disposal Ceremonies
- Funeral Services
- US Flag Code - become an expert on it
- Your Adjutant and Finance officer are your best friends – trust them

The American Legion Family

- American Legion Auxiliary
  - They are separately chartered
  - Not all posts have Auxiliary Units
  - Auxiliary units are good for your post
  - We are not responsible for and do not interfere with their overall functions

- Sons of the American Legion
  - A program of the American Legion
  - Post finance officer is required to review their financial accounts
  - Not all posts have Sons Squadrons
  - Sons Squadrons are good for your post
  - Legion is responsible for their overall functions

- American Legion Riders
  - A program of the American Legion
  - Post finance officer is required to review their financial accounts
  - Not all posts have ALR Chapters
  - ALR Chapters are good for your post
  - Legion is responsible for their overall functions