

AMERICANISM

PILLAR

2014-2015

MESSAGE POINTS

## **Issue – CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT TO PROTECT THE FLAG OF THE UNITED STATES**

### Message Points:

- The American Legion has campaigned diligently for the passage of an amendment to the Constitution of the United States to protect the symbol of our Nation, the Flag of the United States, from physical desecration.
- Part of that campaign has included the founding of The Citizens Flag Alliance, Inc., a coalition of civic, veteran, business and fraternal organizations which have come together to persuade Congress to propose a flag amendment.
- The legislatures of all 50 states have indicated by memorial resolutions to the U.S. Congress that such an amendment to the U.S. Constitution is needed in view of the 1989 decision of the United States Supreme Court (Texas v. Johnson) that invalidated all flag protection laws.
- Surveys have consistently shown that over 80% of the American people support the passage of a flag amendment.
- Flag protection amendments have passed the House of Representatives six times previously, only to fall short of the necessary two-thirds supermajority required in the Senate.
- Since the time of the American Revolution millions of men and women have proudly defended our country under the “Stars & Stripes” and, as a last gesture of gratitude, this emblem of our country is placed upon the coffin of veterans as a token of respect for service rendered to a grateful nation.
- The American Legion will continue to urge the Congress of the United States to propose and approve an amendment to the U.S. Constitution that would allow the Congress to prohibit the physical desecration of the Flag of the United States.
- The American Legion will continue its efforts through affiliation with The Citizens Flag Alliance, Inc., to bring to a successful conclusion the grassroots campaign to amend the Constitution of the United States of America in order to return to the people their right to protect the Flag from acts of physical desecration.

## **Issue – OPPOSES POLICY OF PROHIBITING THE PLACEMENT OF AMERICAN FLAGS ON INDIVIDUAL VETERAN'S GRAVES IN NATIONAL CEMETERIES**

### Message Points:

- The American Legion, an organization of wartime veterans, has an ongoing position to oppose attempts that would prohibit the placement of flags on individual graves. This was made clear in 1978 at the National Convention in New Orleans when delegates passed Resolution 498 titled “Oppose Any Plan to Stop the Decoration of Individual Graves in any National Cemetery” and by Resolution 214, National Convention 1997 at the National Convention in Orlando entitled “Oppose Policy of Prohibiting the Placement of American Flags on Individual Graves in National Cemeteries.”
- President Abraham Lincoln, in 1862, signed legislation creating the national cemeteries and through the years it has been traditional and customary to decorate the individual graves with the U.S. Flag. The flag represents the country for which they served and by displaying the National Symbol, the country expresses a degree of appreciation to that veteran; that it remembers his or her service.
- The American Legion believes it is wrong that some national cemeteries have adopted policies prohibiting the placement of the flags while, at the same time, allowing floral and other items to be placed on the gravesites.
- National Cemeteries are symbolically “American Cathedrals” where the living respect the memories and service of the veterans and family members interred therein. There is no more fitting remembrance of veterans and their service to this country than the U.S. Flag.

## Issue – ENGLISH AS THE OFFICIAL LANGUAGE

### Message Points:

- The American Legion strongly urges Congress and State Legislatures to designate English as the official language of government in the United States. As of 2013, thirty-one states have adopted English as their official language of government. (Source: [www.us-english.org](http://www.us-english.org))
- The American Legion believes naturalized citizens should have the ability to speak and understand the English language. It also believes bilingual programs and ballots printed in another language are counterproductive, costly and tend to discourage immigrants from entering the mainstream of American life.
- The American Legion urges Congress to encourage and fund alternative bilingual education programs to serve, as was originally intended, as a short intermediate step to achieve a proficiency in the English language. Bilingual education programs that provide primary instruction in the student's native language relegates English to secondary status.
- The American Legion believes all election ballots should be printed in the English language.
- The American Legion believes that the promotion of another language over English in the United States contributes to separatism rather than unification of purpose. It believes that legislation designating English as the official language of this country would help unify the different cultures and facilitate the learning of English by immigrants.
- The American Legion adopted its first formal resolution calling for English as the official language at a national convention in 1983. A follow-up resolution, adopted in 1994, made reference to the belief that “the English language is undergoing gradual displacement in this era of high immigration.”
- The American Legion recognizes the desire of immigrants to maintain a cultural link with their native country by speaking their native language. This is understandable and appropriate when the individual also possesses a proficiency in the English language at a level conducive to normal conversation. The American Legion encourages immigrants to achieve a proficiency in multiple languages.
- Ninety-two percent of the world's countries (178 of 193) have at least one official language. English is an official language in 51 nations (26 percent). The United States is one of the only 15 nations that does not have an official language policy. (Source: [www.us-english.org](http://www.us-english.org))

## Issue – BACKGROUND CHECKS

### Message Points

- In the aftermath of several high-profile allegations of child sexual molestation across the United States demonstrating the importance for ensuring protection of the youth participants in The American Legion's youth programs, procedures were successfully implemented in 2013 for the background screening of volunteers selected to staff national tournaments of American Legion Baseball, The American Legion Boys Nation, The American Legion National Oratorical Contest, The American Legion National Junior Shooting Competition, and National Boy Scout Jamborees. (NEC Resolution 4, May 2012).
- Mandatory background screening of coaches, managers, and volunteer staff of Junior and Senior American Legion Baseball teams was also successfully implemented in 2013. (NEC Resolution 16, October 2012)
- Departments of The American Legion are also encouraged to institute background screening procedures for volunteers supporting youth programs conducted within their departments as offered in the resolution titled "Background Screening Procedures and Policies For American Legion Youth Program Volunteers" (NEC Resolution 12, May 2012).
- Through numerous resolutions over the years The American Legion has advocated for guarding against child neglect and abuse.

## Issue – PATRIOTIC HOLIDAYS

### Message Points:

- The majority of Americans view Memorial Day as a time for relaxation and leisure recreation rather than as a solemn occasion and a time to reflect and pay tribute to the American servicemen and women who sacrificed their lives in defense of our Nation. This has occurred due, in part, to the changing of traditional holiday dates to create “three-day weekends.”
- The American Legion believes that the time-honored traditional observances of these holidays have eroded because of the changes in dates and commercialization of the holidays. The American Legion believes that the importance of these holidays warrants their observance on the traditional dates.
- The American Legion encourages Congress to restore the official observance of Lincoln’s Birthday to February 12, Washington’s Birthday to February 22, Memorial Day to May 30 and Columbus Day to October 12 each year.
- The American Legion urges the passage of federal legislation that would result in an annual Presidential proclamation calling on all American institutions, public and private, to toll their bells for one minute, beginning at 11 a.m. on May 30, in remembrance of the servicemen and women who died defending our Nation and our freedom.
- **“National Moment of Remembrance”**: The American Legion supports a “National Moment of Remembrance” and encourages all Americans to pause for a moment of silence at 3 PM (local time) on the federally observed date of Memorial Day to remember those who died in service to their country.
- **Armed Forces Day**: The American Legion supports the annual observance of “Armed Forces Day” in support of the role of this country’s armed forces and to acknowledge the service of those who serve in them.
- **VJ Day**: The American Legion urges our government to not be influenced by the Japanese or intimidated by them to delete the term “VJ Day” from our vocabulary.
- **Veterans Day**: The American Legion encourages the nation’s schools to conduct Veterans Day observances on or near November 11 each year. The American Legion has pledged to assist in this activity by providing speakers for such observances. It also opposes any and all efforts that would designate Veterans Day on any day other than the traditional November 11<sup>th</sup> date.

## Issue – SCHOOL PRAYER

### Message Points:

- The American Legion believes Congress should take steps to correct problems resulting from court rulings that have prohibited “prescribed” prayer in schools. A Constitutional Amendment to permit voluntary school prayer is an alternative warranting consideration.
- The American Legion believes in a person's right to use the Holy Scriptures in public places, over the air waves and while traveling in space.
- The American Legion also believes it should be the right of every human being to publicly express his faith in God and the Holy Scriptures without fear of reprisal from the government or any other power.
- U.S. Supreme Court decisions in the early 1960's have severely restricted the practice of public prayer even though those decisions simply addressed prescribed or compulsory prayer and not prayer of a “voluntary” nature.
- The U.S. Supreme Court in 1985 rendered a decision that cited an Alabama law which authorized one minute of silence in public schools for “meditation or voluntary prayer” as being unconstitutional. In 1992, in **Lee vs. Weisman**, the Supreme Court affirmed, 5-4, a clear separation between church and state by ruling that it is unconstitutional to allow prayers as part of a public school graduation ceremony.
- Through the years since the Supreme Court rulings, numerous measures have been introduced in the Congress that were intended to express the sense of Congress for a period of silence in public schools; or which seek a Constitutional Amendment to allow voluntary school prayer.
- The American Legion has always placed one's belief in a Supreme Being as paramount to a healthy nation. It is reflected in the first clause of the Preamble to The American Legion's Constitution that reads "For God and Country...."

## Issue – THE STAR SPANGLED BANNER

### Message Points:

- **The Star Spangled Banner** became our National Anthem on March 3, 1931, when President Herbert Hoover signed Public Law 823.
- The American Legion believes that many millions of Americans cherish and respect the currently accepted version, both words and music, of **The Star Spangled Banner**, our National Anthem. This traditional version was first used in 1918 as the “Service Version” by the War Department for use in Army and Navy song books.
- Many Americans have been offended by disrespectful and unconventional playing and singing of the National Anthem at sporting events. The American Legion encourages the playing of the National Anthem in its original customary and traditional rendition.
- Some celebrities and public figures have voiced their opinions that **The Star Spangled Banner** should be replaced with **America, the Beautiful, God Bless America** or another song. The American Legion opposes any changes in the words and music of the National Anthem as adopted under Public Law 823 of the 71st Congress.
- The American Legion urges radio and television networks and stations to desist from pre-empting with commercial advertisements the singing and playing of our National Anthem and the raising and/or lowering of our Flag.
- The American Legion believes **The Star Spangled Banner** should be performed in the English Language.

## Issue – THE UNITED STATES CONSTITUTION

### Message Points:

- The American Legion's members pledge their unwavering support for the United States Constitution when they recite the Preamble to the Legion's Constitution prior to organization meetings and gatherings. The American Legion was formed as an organization to uphold and defend the U.S. Constitution in a manner not unlike those who defended the Constitution by paying the supreme sacrifice, with their lives.
- The American Legion is particularly vigilant in opposing attempts to dilute the rights outlined in the First Amendment. The following is the official position of The American Legion in regards to free speech in the United States:
  - (a) The right of free speech is essential to keep a people free. A people cannot long remain free if they cannot fairly object to the conduct of those they have themselves placed in authority. This guarantees freedom not only to the ones who agree with us, but also to the ones who disagree with us. Such is the proud constitutional heritage of America.
  - (b) But, like all other rights, the right of free speech must be exercised in a civilized community with due regard to the rest of the community. A right granted by the people for their own protection creates no right to destroy the people. Hence, free speech must not incite to violence and crime or to corrupt the public morale. Reasonable limitations to this end are lawful as protection to freedom of speech.
  - (c) The American Legion remedy to end violations of the right of free speech is not the use of lawful force, but the use of lawful methods. Complaint should be made to the duly constituted authorities; and if one is lawfully deputized, such authorities may be directly aided.
  - (d) The American Legion remedy to overcome the preaching of unwise doctrine, though in a lawful manner, is not unlawful suppression of the preaching, but education in wise doctrine. Wisdom in the end will always overcome folly, and meanwhile an orderly society will be preserved.
- The American Legion believes that the weakening of any one individual right guaranteed by the Bill of Rights weakens all rights guaranteed by the document and when individual rights are gone, then all rights reside with the government.

## **Issue – PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

### Message Points:

- The American Legion supports the Pledge of Allegiance in its current form and is adamantly opposed to any and all attempts to revise it beyond the version that was approved by the Congress of the United States in 1954.
- The American Legion is opposed to the ruling by certain liberal federal judges who have declared the reciting of the Pledge of Allegiance in our nation's schools to be unconstitutional because of its references to God.
- The American Legion, in 1983, spearheaded a national effort to teach and encourage all U.S. citizens to recite the Pledge of Allegiance correctly. The campaign also called on Legionnaires to introduce the necessary information into the public schools and to other youth groups to ensure that future generations of Americans are able to recite the Pledge of Allegiance correctly.
- Both Houses of Congress begin their sessions by reciting the Pledge of Allegiance. It is customary in the opening of public meetings to also recite the pledge, particularly on Flag Day, June 14, as part of a national show of respect to Old Glory.
- The American Legion is recognized as one of the foremost authorities on proper display, care and respect for the United States Flag. The American Legion, along with more than 140 other organizations, are involved in a campaign led by the Citizens Flag Alliance, Inc. to give Congress the authority to protect the flag from acts of physical desecration.

## **Issue – SUPPORTS THE PLACEMENT OF UNITED STATES FLAGS IN SCHOOL CLASSROOMS**

### Message Points:

- The American Legion, an organization of wartime veterans, has an ongoing position to encourage the placement of United States Flags in school classrooms. Resolution 23, National Executive Committee October 2003, titled “Display Of The Flag Of The United States in School Classrooms” encourages The American Legion, at all levels, to support efforts to display the Flag of the United States in the nation’s school classrooms.
- The American Legion believes that at an early age, children should begin to develop an appreciation for the Nation and for what the Flag of the United States represents. Respect for the Flag of the United States is a foundation upon which to build an understanding of the sacrifices made by the Nation’s forefathers and veterans.
- Many classrooms in the United States do not display the Flag of the United States and do not participate in the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag.
- Many state governments have legislation mandating the display of the Flag of the United States in school classrooms.
- The American Legion has produced "For Which It Stands," a DVD which includes an animated feature explaining the meaning behind the Pledge of Allegiance, information about the history of the flag of the United States, the significance and meaning of our flag, and respecting and caring for our flag.

## Issue – AMERICA’S RELIGIOUS HISTORY AND HERITAGE THREATENED

### Message Points:

- Our Flag, our Pledge of Allegiance, our Boy Scouts, our veterans’ memorials, our religious history and heritage, our American values – all are under attack by activists. The courts are awarding the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) millions of dollars in taxpayer-paid “attorney fee awards” authorized under the Civil Rights Act, 42 U.S. Code Section 1988.
- The American public generally does not know the ACLU is profiting in such cases as follows:
  - (a) A Federal Court in Riverside, California allowed the ACLU to pursue a precedent-setting lawsuit to remove a solitary cross from the Mojave Desert Veterans Memorial. ACLU attorneys were awarded \$63,000 for this case.
  - (b) The ACLU reaped some \$940,000 in settlement from the City of San Diego when it surrendered in ACLU’s litigation to kick the Boy Scouts out of Balboa Park. The Boy Scouts are appealing. The American Legion has filed a friend-of-the-court brief supporting the Scouts.
  - (c) The ACLU received some \$500,000 to drive the Ten Commandments out of the courthouse of Alabama’s Judge Roy Moore, notwithstanding the fact that the same Ten Commandments are on the massive doors and the wall of the U.S. Supreme Court itself.
  - (d) Portland Public Schools were ordered to pay the ACLU \$108,000 in a case brought for an atheist who objected to the Boys Scouts being allowed to recruit during non-class time. In addition, the school district spent \$232,000 defending this suit. At the time of this writing, Portland is considering a complete ban.
  - (e) The Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors surrendered on a 3-2 vote to the ACLU’s demands that it change the county seal because of a tiny cross in one small panel representing the mission period of its history. The ACLU, exposing its hypocrisy as well as fanaticism, did not demand removal of the central religious figure dominating the seal – “Pomona,” the Italo-Roman goddess of *poma*, i.e. fruits. A citizens’ initiative petition is ongoing to place the issue on the ballot and overturn the surrender to the ACLU.
  - (f) The city council of Redlands, California reluctantly surrendered to the ACLU’s demand that it change its city seal to remove a cross, for fear of court-ordered attorney fees to the ACLU.

- While the law was written with good intentions – to ensure legitimate victims of civil-rights violations could obtain representation – it has been exploited by the ACLU in First Amendment “establishment of religion clause” cases. In these cases, there are, in fact, no attorney fees incurred by the ACLU or its plaintiffs, who appear to be “mascot plaintiffs” with *de minimis* claims. ACLU profits from these cases at taxpayer expense.
- Elected and appointed officials at the local, state and federal levels have literally backed away from standing up to the ACLU in fear of enormous attorney fees being imposed by unelected judges not answerable to the American taxpayer.

## **Issue – THE AMERICAN LEGION LEGACY SCHOLARSHIP**

### Message Points:

- The American Legion established the American Legion Legacy Scholarship in honor of those service men and women who died in the September 11 terrorist attacks on America. The scholarship will benefit the children of military personnel who die on active duty on or after September 11, 2001.
- The American Legion has established a trust to fund the scholarship. Legion family members, corporations and individuals are encouraged to donate to the fund. Annual interest from the trust will determine the dollar amount of the scholarships. The larger the trust fund the greater the scholarship aid.
- America's "total force" military is comprised of active duty military, Guard and Reserve Units from across the Nation. According to Department of Defense statistics, over fifty percent of service men and women are married and many have children.
- Department of Defense figures reveal that, on average, since 2001 over 1,500 members of our active duty Armed Forces died each year. Just as sure as military service is a high-risk profession, there will be families who can benefit from our efforts to provide educational opportunities for these children.
- The American Legion Legacy Trust Fund is a 501 (c) 3 public charity as defined by IRS code.
- Tax-deductible donations may be sent to: The American Legion Legacy Scholarship Fund, The American Legion, P.O. Box 361626, Indianapolis, Indiana, 46236.

## **Issue – AMERICAN LEGION BASEBALL WORLD SERIES**

### Message Points:

- Resolution 14, National Executive Committee, May 2012, designated Shelby, North Carolina as the permanent site for The American Legion Baseball World Series (ALBWS).
- Future Dates for ALBWS Series are:  
August 13-18, 2015  
August 11-16, 2016
- New ALBWS attendance record of 110,036 set at the 2013 World Series eclipsed the 2013 record of 104,726.
- The championship game of the 2014 ALBWS was telecast live on ESPNU. The other 14 games were again webcast live on ESPN3.com. The 2015 ALBWS championship game will be telecast live on ESPNU
- Since 1925, American Legion Baseball has taught hundreds of thousands of young Americans the importance of sportsmanship, good health and active citizenship.
- Approximately 74,000 players, participate annually in American Legion baseball with over 3,700 teams registering.
- On average 55 percent of Major League Baseball players played American Legion Baseball.
- Nearly 72 percent of all college players played American Legion Baseball.
- Sixty-three American Legion Baseball graduates have been inducted into the Baseball Hall of Fame in Cooperstown, New York. Hall of Famers include Johnny Bench, Ryne Sandberg, Wade Boggs, Whitey Herzog, Yogi Berra, and Reggie Jackson. Current stars such as Chipper Jones, Albert Pujols and Darin Erstad played American Legion Baseball.

## Issue – OPERATION COMFORT WARRIORS

### Message Points:

- Operation Comfort Warriors (OCW) is a program dedicated to meeting the needs of wounded, injured, and ill military personnel by providing recreational, therapeutic and comfort items not usually supplied by the government and by assisting those in transition and their families. Transition may be back into a different military specialty or back into civilian life.
- 100% of all donations go to the program. All costs related to the administration and marketing of the program are paid by the general fund of The American Legion.
- OCW uses donations to provide patients in military hospitals and warrior transition units items that offer some entertainment and distraction and possibly some enjoyment during their recovery.
- OCW also provides outings such as dinners, sporting events, and trips to amusement parks for the service person and their family. Family is always invited to join their service member as part of the event.
- Since the program was created in 2006 more than \$2.3 million dollars has been raised. OCW is part of The American Legion Charities and is a 501 (c) 3.
- Some of the most recent recipients of OCW are Ft. Campbell, Ft. Knox, Camp Pendleton MCB, Ft. Jackson, Ft. Drum, Ft. Carson, Ft. Bragg, Camp Lejune MCB, Ft. Meade, Walter Reed NMMC, Ft. Hood, VA hospitals in Indianapolis, Charlotte, Albuquerque, Houston, Minneapolis, Ft. Stewart, and Ft. Riley.
- OCW is successful because of the many individuals, American Legion posts, American Legion Auxiliary units, and Sons of The American Legion squadrons have helped raise funds and participate in the events.
- Tax-deductable donations can be mailed to: Operation Comfort Warriors, The American Legion, P.O. Box 361656, Indianapolis, Indiana, 46236

## BLUE STAR SERVICE BANNERS FACT SHEET

- The Blue Star Service Banner was designed, and patented in 1917 by World War I Army Capt. Robert L. Queissner of the 5th Ohio Infantry who had two sons serving on the front line. It quickly became the unofficial symbol of a child in the service.
- On Sept. 24, 1917, an Ohio congressman read the following into the Congressional Record: "...The mayor of Cleveland, the Chamber of Commerce and the governor of Ohio have adopted this service flag. The world should know of those who give so much for liberty. The dearest thing in all the world to a father and mother - their children."
- During World War II, the Department of War issued specifications on the manufacture of the flag, as well as guidelines indicating when and by whom the Service flag could be flown or the Service Lapel button could be worn. The Department of Defense updated the guidelines on December 1, 1967 with DoD Directive 1348.1, which implemented an Act of Congress authorizing a service flag and a service lapel button (U.S.C. 179-182).
- The Blue Star Service Banner typically displayed in windows is an 8.5 by 14-inch white field with a blue star(s) sewn onto a red banner. The size may vary but should be in proportion to the size of the U.S. Flag.
- Today Blue Star Service Banners are displayed by families who have a loved one serving in the armed forces, including the National Guard and Reserves of all military departments. The banner displayed in the front window of a home shows a family's pride in their loved one serving in the military and reminds others that preserving America's freedom demands much.
- The blue star represents one family member serving in the armed forces. A banner can have up to five stars, signifying that five members of that family are currently in military uniform on active duty.
- If the individual symbolized is killed or dies while serving, the star representing that individual will have superimposed on it a gold star of smaller size so that the blue forms a border. On flags displaying multiple stars, including gold stars, when the flags are suspended as against a wall, the gold star(s) will be to the right of, or above the blue star(s), a place of honor nearest the staff.
- Blue Star Mothers and Gold Star Mothers organizations were established during World War I and remain active today.

- Blue Star Service Banners, while widely used across America during World Wars I and II, were not embraced during the Korean or Vietnam wars with nearly the same enthusiasm.
- The American Legion is rekindling the spirit of pride in our military men and women following the horrific terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. The American Legion is providing banners to families in communities across the nation. Free color downloads are available at [www.legion.org](http://www.legion.org) of the banners and static cling versions for home and automobile, as well as lapel pins, are available from The American Legion Flag & Emblem Sales.
- The American Legion also has a special Blue Star Banner Corporate Flag for government and corporate America to show their support for employees called to active duty in the war against terrorism.