

# SIGNIFICANT DATES IN THE HISTORY OF THE AMERICAN LEGION



- March 15-17, 1919 The American Legion is founded in Paris by members of the American Expeditionary Force.
- Sept. 16, 1919 The U.S. Congress charters The American Legion.
- Nov. 10-12, 1919 First national convention of The American Legion convenes in Minneapolis, Minn. Organization's Constitution and Preamble are adopted. resolution adopted supporting the Boy Scouts of America as first youth program.
- August 9, 1921 U.S. Veterans Bureau, forerunner of the Veterans Administration, is created as a result of efforts by The American Legion.
- June 15, 1923 First "Flag Code" is drafted during conference called by The American Legion. Congress adopted the code in 1942.
- July 17, 1925 American Legion Baseball program is created.
- June 23, 1935 First American Legion Boys State convenes in Springfield, Ill.
- June 1, 1938 First American Legion National High School Oratorical Championship held in Norman, Okla.
- Sept. 19-21, 1942 Preamble to the Constitution of The American Legion is changed for the first and only time since it was written in 1919. The word "War" is changed to "Wars."
- Dec. 15, 1943 Harry W. Colmery, past national commander of The American Legion, writes in longhand on hotel stationery the first draft of what will become the "GI Bill of Rights."
- June 22, 1944 President Franklin Roosevelt signs The GI BILL into law.
- May 29, 1946 A \$50,000 grant from The American Legion and the American Legion Auxiliary is presented to a small, struggling organization – the American Heart Association – to inaugurate a nationwide program for the study, prevention and treatment of rheumatic heart disease.
- May 4, 1950 The American Legion votes to contribute funds to the field of mental health with the provision that the three major mental health organizations then in existence be amalgamated into one. They accepted this provision and the National Association for Mental Health was born.
- July 9, 1954 The American Legion Child Welfare Foundation is formed.
- Sept. 1, 1966 The American Legion voices great concern over the fate of POWs in Vietnam.
- Aug. 26, 1982 The American Legion presents a \$1million check to the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund toward the construction of 'The Wall' in Washington, D.C.
- July 21, 1983 The American Legion announces its sponsorship of an independent study of the effects of exposure to Agent Orange on Vietnam veterans. (The results of "The American Legion Columbia University Study of Vietnam-era Veterans" were presented to Congress in 1989.)
- Jan. 1, 1989 The Department of Veterans Affairs begins operations. The American Legion fought for the VA to become a cabinet-level department.
- Oct. 16, 1989 Longstanding objective of The American Legion is achieved as the U.S. Court of Veterans Appeals begins operations.

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- Oct. 11, 1990 The Family Support Network of The American Legion is formed to assist the families of military personnel deployed during Operation Desert Shield/Desert Storm.
- June 15, 1991 The American Legion's first Junior Shooting Sports National Air Rifle Championships are held at the Olympic Training Center at Colorado Springs, Colo.
- Aug. 24, 1994 The American Legion announces creation of the Citizens Flag Alliance to work for a constitutional amendment to protect the American flag from physical desecration.
- Sept. 24, 1994 The American Legion announces partnership with the Smithsonian Institute's Air and Space Museum to develop an exhibit for the bomber Enola Gay, which dropped an atomic bomb on Hiroshima, Japan. Previous museum plans had drawn intense criticism from veterans, scholars and the public.
- Jan. 30, 1995 The American Legion announces acceptance of scaled-down exhibit "without political commentary" for the Enola Gay, ending the greatest controversy in the Smithsonian Institute's 149-year history.
- Oct. 1, 1995 The American Legion forms a Persian Gulf Task Force to enhance the organization's service to these veterans.
- Sept 16, 1996 The first \$20,000 postsecondary scholarship in the Samsung-American Legion High School Scholars program are granted to 10 students.
- June 11, 1997 The American Legion National Emergency Fund exceeds the \$1 million mark in grants to flood victims in Ohio, Kentucky, Indiana, Minnesota, and North Dakota.
- Sept. 3, 1997 The first National Law Enforcement Officer of the Year award is presented during the 79<sup>th</sup> National Convention in Orlando, Fla.
- March 28, 2000 The American Legion, the American Legion Auxiliary and the Sons of The American Legion donate \$2.7 million to the World War II Memorial Fund. Donations exceed 3.4 million by year end.
- Sept. 5, 2000 The American Legion presents the first "Spirit of Service" Awards to active duty service members for their off-duty volunteer activities.
- Aug. 28-30, 2001 The American Legion passes resolution to rekindle Blue Star Service Banner program.
- Sept. 12, 2001 The American Legion reactivates the Family Support Network following terrorist attacks in New York City and Washington, D.C.
- Oct. 10-11, 2001 The American Legion creates the American Legacy Scholarship Fund for children of military members killed on active duty on or after Sept. 11, 2001.
- Sept. 11, 2002 The American Legion takes lead in conducting "A Day To Remember" events to mark the anniversary of the terrorist attacks on the nation.
- Nov. 8, 2002 The American Legion launches national "I Am Not A Number" campaign to identify and document the delays veterans face in obtaining earned medical care benefits from the Department of Veterans Affairs.

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- Oct. 17, 2003 American Legion efforts on Capitol Hill break the deadlock on the Disabled Veterans Tax when Congress creates a 10-year phase-in for service-connected disabled retirees to receive military retired pay and VA disability compensation without subtraction from either. Legion efforts also result in passage of the Military Family Tax Relief Act.
- Sept. 3, 2004 American Legion lobbying leads to more progress in elimination of the Disabled Veterans Tax with passage of PL 108-375 that eliminates the 10-year phase-in for 100 percent service-connected retirees, allowing them to immediately begin receiving both retired pay and VA disability payments.
- Sept 19, 2004 The American Legion launches a national program, the Blue Star Salute, where posts across the country hold public events to recognize troops, their families and local businesses on Armed Forces Day.
- May 7, 2005 The American Legion lobbied successfully to remove from VA funding legislation administration-proposed increases in VA prescription co-payments and institution of user fee for Priority Group 8 veterans using VA health facilities. Efforts focus on legislation to provide mandatory, vice discretionary, funding of VA health care.
- June 30, 2008 President George W. Bush signs the Post-9/11 Veterans Education Assistance Act, a modern GI Bill strongly supported by The American Legion, which lobbied on its behalf.
- Oct. 22, 2009 President Obama signs the Veterans Health Care Budget Reform Act of 2009, guaranteeing "advance funding" for VA appropriations, a formula that The American Legion has strongly supported for many years. The new law sets funding for VA one year in advance.
- Feb. 1-28, 2010 The American Legion's Operation Comfort Warriors finishes in first place in Pepsi's Refresh Everything Project, a national Internet voting competition. As the top vote recipient, Operation Comfort Warriors won a \$250,000 grant to purchase gifts and recreational items for U.S. military members recovering in hospitals and warrior transition units around the globe.