



CHARTER OF  
THE AMERICAN LEGION

# **National Constitution and By-laws**

Uniform Codes of Procedure for the  
Revocation, Cancellation or Suspension  
of Department and Post Charters

Prepared by  
**THE AMERICAN LEGION**  
**NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS**  
Indianapolis, Indiana

## Official

The National Constitution of THE AMERICAN LEGION as set out herein, is in full force and effect and represents action taken by National Conventions, being the Constitution adopted at the First Annual Convention, Minneapolis, Minn., Nov. 10-12, 1919, and as amended at the Second Annual Convention, Cleveland, Oh., Sept. 27-29, 1920; Fourth Annual Convention, New Orleans, La., Oct. 16-20, 1922; Fifth Annual Convention, San Francisco, Calif., Oct. 15-19, 1923; Sixth Annual Convention, St. Paul, Minn., Sept. 15-19, 1924; Seventh Annual Convention, Omaha, Nebr., Oct. 5-9, 1925; Ninth Annual Convention, Paris, France, Sept. 19-22, and Ratification Convention, New York N.Y., Oct. 19-22, 1927; Twelfth Annual Convention, Boston, Mass., Oct. 6-9, 1930; Fifteenth Annual Convention, Chicago, Ill., Oct. 2-5, 1933; Nineteenth Annual Convention, New York, N.Y., Sept. 20-23, 1937; Twentieth Annual Convention, Los Angeles, Calif., Sept. 19-22, 1938; Twenty-first Annual Convention, Chicago, Ill., Sept. 25-28, 1939; Twenty-second Annual Convention, Boston, Mass., Sept. 23-26, 1940; Twenty-third Annual Convention, Milwaukee, Wis., Sept. 18, 1941; Twenty-fourth Annual Convention, Kansas City, Mo., Sept. 19-21, 1942; Twenty-fifth Annual Convention, Omaha, Neb., Sept. 21-23, 1943; Twenty-seventh Annual Convention, Chicago, Ill., Nov. 18-21, 1945; Twenty-eighth Annual Convention, San Francisco, Calif., Sept. 30-Oct. 1-4, 1946; Twenty-ninth Annual Convention, New York, N.Y., Aug. 28-31, 1947; Thirtieth Annual Convention, Miami, Fla., Oct. 18-21, 1948; Thirty-first Annual Convention, Philadelphia, Pa., Aug. 29-Sept. 1, 1949; Thirty-second Annual Convention, Los Angeles, Calif., Oct. 9-12, 1950; Thirty-third Annual Convention, Miami, Fla., Oct. 15-18, 1951; Thirty-fourth Annual Convention, New York, N.Y., Aug. 25-28, 1952; Thirty-sixth Annual Convention, Washington, D.C., Aug. 30-Sept. 2, 1954; Thirty-seventh Annual Convention, Miami, Fla. Oct. 10-13, 1955; Thirty-eighth Annual Convention, Los Angeles, Calif., Sept. 3-6, 1956; Fortieth Annual Convention, Chicago, Ill., Sept. 1-4, 1958; Forty-second Annual Convention, Miami Beach, Fla., Oct. 17-20, 1960; Forty-eighth Annual Convention, Washington, D.C., Aug. 30-Sept. 1, 1966; Fifty-second Annual Convention, Portland, Ore., Sept. 1-3, 1970; Fifty-fourth Annual Convention, Chicago, Ill., Aug. 22-24, 1972; Fifty-fifth Annual Convention, Honolulu, Hi., Aug. 21-23, 1973; Fifty-sixth Annual Convention, Miami Beach, Fla., Aug. 20-22, 1974; Fifty-eighth Annual Convention, Seattle, Wash., Aug. 24-26, 1976; Fifty-ninth Annual Convention, Denver, Colo., Aug. 23-25, 1977; Sixty-first Annual Convention, Houston, Tex., Aug. 21-23, 1979; Sixty-ninth Annual Convention, San Antonio, Tex., Aug. 25-27, 1987; Seventy-second Annual Convention, Indianapolis, Ind., Aug. 28-30, 1990; Seventy-third Annual Convention, Phoenix, Arizona, Sept. 3-5, 1991; the Seventy-seventh Annual Convention, Indianapolis, Ind., Sept. 4-6, 1995; Seventy-ninth Annual Convention, Orlando, Fla., Sept. 2-4, 1997; Eighty-second Annual Convention, Milwaukee, Wis., Sept. 5-7, 2000; and reiterated at the Eighty-third Annual Convention, Charlotte, NC, Aug. 27-29, 2002; Ninety-fourth Annual Convention, Indianapolis, Ind., Aug. 28-30, 2012; and *Ninety-seventh Annual Convention, Baltimore, MD, Sept. 1-3, 2015.*

The By-Laws as adopted at the Fourth Annual Convention, New Orleans, La., Oct. 16-20, 1922, and as amended at the Fifth Annual Convention, San Francisco, Calif., Oct. 15-19, 1923; Sixth Annual Convention, St. Paul, Minn., Sept. 15-19, 1924; Eleventh Annual Convention, Louisville, Ky., Sept. 30-Oct. 1, 2, 3, 1929; Fifteenth Annual Convention, Chicago, Ill., Oct. 2-5, 1933; Nineteenth Annual Convention, New York, N.Y., Sept. 20-23, 1937; Twentieth Annual Convention, Los Angeles, Calif., Sept. 19-22, 1938; Twenty-first Annual Convention, Chicago, Ill., Sept. 25-28, 1939; Twenty-second Annual Convention, Boston, Mass., Sept. 23-26, 1940; Twenty-third Annual Convention, Milwaukee, Wis., Sept. 15-18, 1941; Twenty-seventh Annual convention, Chicago, Ill., Nov. 18-21, 1945; Twenty-ninth Annual Convention, New York, N.Y., Aug. 28-31, 1947; Thirtieth Annual Convention, Miami, Fla., Oct. 18-21, 1948; Thirty-first Annual convention, Philadelphia, Pa., Aug. 29-Sept. 1, 1949; Thirty-third Annual Convention, Miami, Fla., Oct. 15-18, 1951; Thirty-fourth Annual Convention, New York, N.Y., Aug. 25-28, 1952; Thirty-ninth Annual Convention, Atlantic City, N.J., Sept. 16-19, 1957; Fifty-second Annual Convention, Portland, Ore., Sept. 1-3, 1970; Fifty-eighth Annual Convention, Seattle, Wash., August 24-26, 1976; and Fifty-ninth Annual Convention, Denver, Colo., Aug. 23-25, 1977; and Ninety-Second Annual National Convention, Milwaukee, Wis., Aug. 31-Sept. 2, 2010; Ninety-fifth Annual Convention, Houston, Texas., Aug. 23 - 29, 2013; and *Ninety-seventh Annual National Convention, Baltimore, MD, Sept. 1-3, 2015 (as found in italic print).*

Daniel S. Wheeler, National Adjutant

**UNITED STATES CODE**  
**ANNOTATED**  
**TITLE 36, CHAPTER 217,**  
**SECTIONS 21701-21708**

**THE AMERICAN LEGION**

Created by Act of Congress  
Washington, DC on  
September 16, 1919

**§ 21701. Organization**

(a) **Federal charter.**--The American Legion (in this chapter [36 U.S.C.A. § 21701 et seq.], the "corporation") is a federally chartered corporation.

(b) **Perpetual existence.**--Except as otherwise provided, the corporation has perpetual existence.

**§ 21702. Purposes**

The purposes of the corporation are--

- (1) to uphold and defend the Constitution of the United States;
- (2) to promote peace and good will among the peoples of the United States and all the nations of the Earth;
- (3) to preserve the memories and incidents of the 2 World Wars and the other great hostilities fought to uphold democracy;
- (4) to cement the ties and comradeship born of service; and
- (5) to consecrate the efforts of its members to mutual helpfulness and service to their country.

**§ 21703. Membership**

An individual is eligible for membership in the corporation only if the individual--

- (1) has served in the Armed Forces of--
  - (A) the United States at any time during any period from--
    - (i) April 6, 1917, through November 11, 1918;
    - (ii) December 7, 1941, through December 31, 1946;
    - (iii) June 25, 1950, through January 31, 1955;
    - (iv) February 28, 1961, through May 7, 1975;
    - (v) August 24, 1982, through July 31, 1984;
    - (vi) December 20, 1989, through January 31, 1990; or
    - (vii) August 2, 1990, through the date of cessation of hostilities, as decided by the United States Government; or
  - (B) a government associated with the United States during a period referred to in subclause (A) of this clause and was a citizen of the United States when the individual entered that service; and
- (2) was honorably discharged or separated from that service or continues to serve honorably during or after that period.

**§ 21704. Powers**

The corporation may--

- (1) adopt a constitution, bylaws, and regulations to carry out the purposes of the corporation;
- (2) adopt and alter a corporate seal;
- (3) establish and maintain offices to conduct its activities;
- (4) establish State and territorial organizations and local chapter or post organizations;
- (5) provide guidance and leadership to organizations and local chapters established under paragraph (4), but may not control or otherwise influence the specific activities and conduct of such organizations and local chapters;<sup>1</sup>
- (6) acquire, own, lease, encumber, and transfer property as necessary to carry out the purposes of the corporation;

<sup>1</sup> Added December 13, 2011

- (7) publish a magazine and other publications;
- (8) sue and be sued; and
- (9) do any other act necessary and proper to carry out the purposes of the corporation.

### **§ 21705. Exclusive right to name, emblems, and badges**

The corporation and its State and local subdivisions have the exclusive right to use the name “The American Legion” or “American Legion”. The corporation has the exclusive right to use, manufacture, and control the right to manufacture, emblems and badges the corporation adopts.

### **§ 21706. Political activities**

The corporation shall be nonpolitical and may not promote the candidacy of an individual seeking public office.

### **§ 21707. Service of process**

As a condition to the exercise of any power or privilege granted by this chapter [36 U.S.C.A. § 21701 et seq.], the corporation shall file, with the secretary of state or other designated official of each State, the name and address of an agent in that State on whom legal process or demands against the corporation may be served.

### **§ 21708. Annual report**

Not later than January 1 of each year, the corporation shall submit a report to Congress on the activities of the corporation during the prior calendar year. The report may not be printed as a public document.

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Note: Title 36 U.S. Code was rewritten in 1998. The language above is the rewritten, current version as amended.

# CONSTITUTION of The American Legion

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## PREAMBLE

For God and Country, we associate ourselves together for the following purposes:

To uphold and defend the Constitution of the United States of America; to maintain law and order; to foster and perpetuate a one hundred percent Americanism; to preserve the memories and incidents of our associations in the Great Wars; to inculcate a sense of individual obligation to the community, state and nation; to combat the autocracy of both the classes and the masses; to make right the master of might; to promote peace and good will on earth; to safeguard and transmit to posterity the principles of justice, freedom and democracy; to consecrate and sanctify our comradeship by our devotion to mutual helpfulness.

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## ARTICLE I

**Section 1.** The name of this organization shall be THE AMERICAN LEGION.

**Section 2.** The National Headquarters of THE AMERICAN LEGION shall be located at the site of the Indiana World War Memorial in the city of Indianapolis, Indiana.

## ARTICLE II

### NATURE

**Section 1.** THE AMERICAN LEGION is a civilian organization; membership therein does not affect nor increase liability for military or police service. Rank does not exist in the Legion; no member shall be addressed by his military or naval title in any convention or meeting of the Legion.

**Section 2.** THE AMERICAN LEGION shall be absolutely nonpolitical and shall not be used for the dissemination of partisan principles nor for the promotion of the candidacy of any person seeking public office or preferment.

## ARTICLE III

### ORGANIZATION

**Section 1.** THE AMERICAN LEGION shall be organized in Departments and these in turn in Posts. There shall be one Department in each state, in the District of Columbia, and there may be one Department in each territory and insular possessions of the United States. The National Executive Committee may establish Posts in the territorial and insular possessions of the United States and foreign countries, and shall designate the Department under whose jurisdiction they shall function, but this shall in no way affect the status of Departments already established.

# ARTICLE IV

## ELIGIBILITY

**Section 1.** Any person shall be eligible for membership in THE AMERICAN LEGION who was a member of the Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Coast Guard or Air Force of the United States and assigned to active duty at some time during any of the following periods: April 6, 1917, to November 11, 1918; December 7, 1941, to December 31, 1946; June 25, 1950, to January 31, 1955; February 28, 1961, to May 7, 1975; August 24, 1982, to July 31, 1984; December 20, 1989, to January 31, 1990; August 2, 1990, to the date of cessation of hostilities as determined by the Government of the United States; all dates inclusive, or who, being a citizen of the United States at the time of his entry therein, served on active duty in the armed forces of any of the Governments associated with the United States during any of said periods; provided, however, that such service shall have been terminated by honorable discharge or honorable separation, or continued honorably during or after any of said periods; provided, further, that no person shall be entitled to membership who, being in such service during any of said periods, refused on conscientious, political or other grounds to subject himself to military discipline or unqualified service. \*

**Section 2.** There shall be no form or class of membership except an active membership, and dues shall be paid annually or for life.

**Section 3.** No person may be a member at any one time of more than one Post.

**Section 4.** No person, who has been expelled by a Post, shall be admitted to membership in another Post without the consent of the expelling Post, except that where such consent has been asked for and denied by such Post, he may then appeal to the Executive Committee of the Department of the expelling Post for permission to be admitted to membership in another Post, and shall be ineligible for membership until such permission is granted.

# ARTICLE V

## NATIONAL CONVENTION

**Section 1.** The legislative body of THE AMERICAN LEGION shall be the National Convention, except as otherwise provided in the Constitution and By-Laws.

**Section 2.** The time and place of the National Conventions shall be determined by the National Executive Committee, which shall have authority to change such time and place for sufficient reasons to it appearing.

**Section 3.** In the National Convention each Department shall be entitled to five delegates and one additional delegate for each one thousand members, or major fraction thereof, whose current dues have been received by the National Treasurer 30 days prior to the meeting of said convention, and whose registration fees, as fixed by the National Executive Committee, for its total authorized delegate strength, have been paid; and to one alternate for each delegate. The delegates shall be chosen not less than two weeks before the National Convention at Department Conventions or in any other manner specified by any Department Constitution.

**Section 4.** Each duly registered delegate shall be entitled to one vote. The vote of any registered delegate absent and not represented by an alternate shall be cast by the majority of the

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\*Note: Appendix following National By-Laws, carries amended sections of the National Charter of The American Legion.

registered delegates present from his Department. Alternates for registered delegates shall have all the privileges of registered delegates, except that of voting. A registered delegate is one who has received his credentials after his registration fee has been paid.

**Section 5.** A quorum shall exist at a National Convention when sixty percent of the Departments are represented as provided above.

**Section 6.** The National Executive Committee shall provide a Uniform Code of Procedure for the orderly organization and operation of National Conventions with continuing power of revision, and said Code shall be applicable at all National Conventions unless it is amended, suspended, or repealed by a majority vote of the total authorized representation at a National Convention.

## ARTICLE VI

### NATIONAL OFFICERS

**Section 1.** The National Convention shall elect a National Commander, and five National Vice Commanders, who shall serve without seniority. No two Vice Commanders shall be chosen from the same Department. No persons shall be eligible for re-election to the office of National Commander or National Vice Commander.

**Section 2.** Such officers shall serve until the adjournment of the succeeding National Convention following their election and thereafter until their successors are chosen. Vacancies in these offices occurring between National Conventions shall be filled by election by the National Executive Committee, and any member of THE AMERICAN LEGION, in good standing, shall be eligible for election to such vacancy. Provided, however, that no Past National Commander, or Past National Vice Commander shall be elected to fill any vacancy in these respective offices.

**Section 3.** The National Executive Committee at its first meeting following the National Convention shall appoint the National Adjutant, National Treasurer, National Judge Advocate, National Chaplain, and National Historian, such officers to hold office at the pleasure of the appointing power. All persons having the custody of funds shall give adequate bonds, which shall be approved by the National Executive Committee.

**Section 4.** All Past National Commanders, while in good standing in their respective Posts, shall be members for life of the National Executive Committee, without vote, and shall also be life delegates to all National Conventions of THE AMERICAN LEGION, with vote, to be exercised by them with their respective Departments.

## ARTICLE VII

### NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

**Section 1.** Between National Conventions, the administrative power shall be vested in the National Executive Committee, which shall be composed of the National Commander, the National Vice Commanders, and one National Executive Committeeman and one alternate from each Department to be elected as such Department shall determine, the alternate to act only in the absence of the National Executive Committeeman.

**Section 2.** The term of office of such National Executive Committeemen and alternates shall be two years. The term of office of each National Executive Committeeman and alternate shall commence immediately upon the adjournment of the National Convention next ensuing after their election and shall end at the adjournment of the second next succeeding annual National Convention.

**Section 3.** Members of the National Executive Committee shall be delegates to the National Convention with vote, which vote shall be exercised with their respective Departments, except that the vote of the National Commander shall be exercised only in his capacity as chairman of the National Convention.

## ARTICLE VIII

### DEPARTMENT ORGANIZATION

**Section 1.** Departments shall be chartered by the National Executive Committee and shall be composed of the Posts within their respective areas, and such other Posts as the National Executive Committee may approve. Each Department charter shall be signed by the National Commander and National Adjutant.

**Section 2.** Each Department shall have a Department Commander, one or more Department Vice Commanders, a Department Adjutant and a Department Executive Committee, and may have a Chaplain and such other officers as the Department shall determine.

**Section 3.** Departments shall have authority to create and charter intermediate bodies between the Posts and Department to act as a liaison between such organizations and for the purpose of promoting the programs of The American Legion.

**Section 4.** The Department Executive Committee shall define the powers of such intermediate groups, but in no event shall such powers invade the prerogatives now vested either in the Post or Department or National Organization.

**Section 5.** Such intermediate bodies now existing within the Departments and heretofore authorized or recognized by such Department are hereby officially recognized to the extent of the powers herein granted.

## ARTICLE IX

### POST ORGANIZATION

**Section 1.** Those who desire to form a Post shall make application for a temporary charter to the Commander of the Department in which they reside. The temporary charter shall be issued by the National Commander and National Adjutant upon receipt of the application properly executed by the charter members of the projected Post, but only when such application is approved by the Commander of the Department or by the Department Executive Committee.

**Section 2.** The minimum membership of a Post shall be determined by the Executive Committee of the Department in whose area it lies.

**Section 3.** No Post shall be named after any living person.

**Section 4.** A temporary charter shall be granted and shall state that it is granted on the recommendation of the Department and on the following terms and conditions:

1. All acts heretofore duly and properly taken for the formation of the above named Post are recognized and confirmed by the National Executive Committee.
2. The above named Post shall uphold the declared principles of THE AMERICAN LEGION and shall conform to and abide by the regulations and decisions of the Department and of the National Executive Committee, or other duly constituted national governing body of THE AMERICAN LEGION.
3. This charter is subject to revocation by the National Executive Committee on the recommendation of the Department, or by such authority that may hereafter be established by the



National Convention.

**Section 5.** After a temporary charter has been in effect for a probationary period of at least ninety days, application for a permanent charter may be made. Such probationary period shall not exceed one year upon the termination of which the Department shall determine whether or not a permanent charter shall be issued or denied and the action of the Department shall be final.

**Section 6.** All charters shall be countersigned by the Commander and the Adjutant of the Department.

**Section 7.** Each Department may prescribe the Constitution of its Posts. Permanent charters may be suspended, cancelled or revoked by the Department Executive Committee as provided in the By-Laws.

## ARTICLE X

### FINANCE

**Section 1.** The revenue of THE AMERICAN LEGION shall be derived from annual membership dues and from such other sources as may be approved by the National Executive Committee.

**Section 2.** The amount of such annual dues shall be determined by each National Convention for the ensuing year.

**Section 3.1.** The annual dues shall be collected by each Post and transmitted promptly through the Department to the National Treasurer. Departments are designated agents for collection for THE AMERICAN LEGION with respect to such annual dues and upon the receipt thereof shall remit them promptly to THE AMERICAN LEGION. In no event shall the period transpiring between the receipt of such annual dues by a Department and the remittance thereof to THE AMERICAN LEGION exceed thirty (30) days.

**Section 3.2.** The annual dues shall be collected in such alternate method(s) as determined by the National Executive Committee from time to time and thereafter communicated to the Departments for communications to the Posts provided that (a) in no instance shall the National Organization or the Departments be empowered to retain, or withhold, more than each ones published amount of per capita dues; (b) in no event shall the period transpiring between the receipt of such annual dues by the National Organization and the remittance thereof to the Departments exceed thirty (30) days; and (c) any such alternative method shall be in addition to and not in substitution for method 3.1 above.

**Section 4.** Annual dues shall be payable October 20 of each year, for the succeeding calendar year.

## ARTICLE XI

### DISCIPLINE

**Section 1.** The National Executive Committee, after notice and a hearing before a subcommittee as hereinafter provided, may cancel, suspend or revoke the charter of a Department for any good and sufficient cause to it appearing.

**Section 2.** The National Executive Committee may designate, appoint and authorize a subcommittee to hear and try and make written findings of fact and recommendations with reference to the matter of the cancellation, suspension or revocation of the charter of any Department of THE AMERICAN LEGION after said Department shall have received due and proper notice of said hearing and trial. Said subcommittee shall make its written findings and recommendations to the National Executive Committee for its approval or rejection, and the action of said National Executive Committee upon such findings and recommendations shall be final and conclusive.

**Section 3.** The hearing and trial of any cause involving the cancellation, suspension, or revocation of the charter of any Department in THE AMERICAN LEGION shall be had and held under rules of procedure to be adopted by the National Executive Committee.

**Section 4.** Upon suspension of the charter of any Department of THE AMERICAN LEGION, the National Executive Committee is authorized, empowered and directed, by and through its duly authorized agents, to take possession, custody and control of all of the records, property and assets of and belonging to such Department, and to provide for the government and administration of such Department during said suspension.

**Section 5.** Upon cancellation or revocation of the charter of any Department of THE AMERICAN LEGION, the National Executive Committee is authorized, empowered and directed, by and through its duly authorized agents, to take possession, custody and control of all of the records, property and assets of such Department, and to take all necessary and proper steps and proceedings to conclude and close the affairs of such Department, and said National Executive Committee may provide for such continued recognition and activities of Posts in said Departments as it may deem proper.

## ARTICLE XII

### CHANGE OF RESIDENCE

**Section 1.** Any member in good standing in a Post removing from his Department shall be entitled to a certificate from his Post stating his membership and the duration thereof.

## ARTICLE XIII

### AUXILIARIES

**Section 1.** THE AMERICAN LEGION recognizes an auxiliary organization, known as the American Legion Auxiliary.

**Section 2.** *Membership in the American Legion Auxiliary shall be limited to the grandmothers, mothers, sisters, wives, and direct and adopted female descendants of members of THE AMERICAN LEGION, and to the grandmothers, mothers, sisters, wives, and direct and adopted female descendants of all men and women who were in the Armed Forces of the United States during any of the following periods: April 6, 1917, to November 11, 1918; December 7, 1941, to December 31, 1946; June 25, 1950, to January 31, 1955; February 28, 1961, to May 7, 1975; August 24, 1982, to July 31, 1984; December 20, 1989, to January 31, 1990; August 2, 1990, to the date of cessation of hostilities as determined by the Government of the United States; all dates inclusive, or who, being citizens of the United States at the time of their entry therein, served on active duty in the Armed Forces of any of the governments associated with the United States during any of said periods, and died in the line of duty or after honorable discharge; and to those women who of their own right are eligible for membership in THE AMERICAN LEGION.*

**Section 3.** The Auxiliary shall be governed in each Department of THE AMERICAN LEGION by such rules and regulations as may be prescribed by the National Executive Committee and thereafter approved by such Department of THE AMERICAN LEGION.

## ARTICLE XIV

### RATIFICATION

**Section 1.** All acts performed and charters heretofore granted by the temporary organization to THE AMERICAN LEGION are hereby ratified and confirmed.

# ARTICLE XV

## AMENDMENTS

**Section 1.** The Constitution may be amended at any National Convention by a vote of two-thirds of the total authorized representation thereat, provided that the proposed amendment shall have been submitted through the National Adjutant to the several Departments and members of the National Executive Committee by mailing same to them at least twenty (20) days prior to the convening of the next National Convention; any such proposed amendment may be amended without further notice by a two-thirds vote of the total authorized representation thereat, provided it does not increase the modification proposed by the amendment and it has received the approval of the Convention Committee on Constitutional Amendments; and, provided further, it may be amended by unanimous vote at any National Convention without notice.

**Section 2.** That no proposed amendment shall be submitted through the National Adjutant to the several Departments and members of the National Executive Committee, as provided in Section 1 of this article, unless said proposed amendment shall have been first submitted by a Department Convention, Department Executive Committee, or the National Executive Committee.

# ARTICLE XVI

## NATIONAL INCORPORATION

This Constitution is adopted conformably to the Act of Congress of the United States of America of September 16, 1919, and all amendatory acts thereto.

# ARTICLE XVII

In the event the Congress of the United States shall amend the eligibility clause in the Act creating THE AMERICAN LEGION, this Constitution shall be deemed amended in conformance therewith, but subject to all consistent limitations and restrictions in this Constitution contained.

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# BY-LAWS of The American Legion

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## ARTICLE I

### NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

**Section 1.** In case of death, resignation or removal by his respective Department of any National Executive Committeeman or alternate to the National Executive Committee, the successor shall be selected as such Department shall determine and shall serve for the remainder of such unexpired term.

**Section 2.** The National Executive Committee shall meet within twenty-four hours before and after each National Convention and within forty-five days following its adjournment, provided however, that the National Commander shall have authority to extend said forty-five-day period for sufficient reasons to him appearing, upon approval by the National Executive Committee, and in May of each year. Special meetings may be held upon reasonable notice at the call of the National Commander. The National Commander shall call a meeting of the National Executive Committee upon the written request of National Executive Committeemen from fifteen or more Departments.

**Section 3.** Twenty-five members shall constitute a quorum of the National Executive Committee.

**Section 4.** The National Commander shall name such committees as he shall deem advisable, subject to ratification by the National Executive Committee at its next meeting succeeding the appointment.

**Section 5.** The National Executive Committee shall appoint, upon nomination by the National Commander, a Finance Commission to be composed of seven (7) members. Of the seven members appointed following the National Convention (1945) at which this amendment is adopted, two shall be appointed to serve for a term of one year, two shall be appointed to serve for a term of two years, and three shall be appointed to serve for a term of three years; thereafter each succeeding appointee shall serve for a term of three years or until removed by the majority vote of the National Executive Committee. The National Commander and the National Treasurer shall be ex officio members of said commission and the National Adjutant shall be ex officio secretary of the said commission. The Finance Commission shall be charged with the preparation of the yearly budget and the handling of funds under that budget, and such other duties as shall be prescribed by the National Executive Committee, subject to the approval of the National Executive Committee.

**Section 6.** *There shall be the following standing commissions: Americanism Commission, Convention Commission, Finance Commission, Internal Affairs Commission, Legislative Commission, Marketing Commission, Media & Communications Commission, National Security Commission, Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation Commission, Veterans Employment & Education Commission.*

The commissions shall consist of such number of members of *THE AMERICAN LEGION* as the National Executive Committee may from time to time determine. Appointments to such commissions shall be made by the National Executive Committee upon nomination by the National Commander. The National Executive Committee is empowered to assign duties and responsibilities to all standing commissions and committees and to group standing committees with commissions for the purpose of efficient supervision and coordination of activities.

**Section 7.** The National Executive Committee shall provide for the appointment and employment of such subordinate officers and employees as may be needed for the administration of the affairs of THE AMERICAN LEGION, and prescribe their duties and emoluments.

**Section 8.** All questions affecting the election, eligibility and conduct of national officers shall be referred to and determined by the National Executive Committee. All questions affecting the election, eligibility and conduct of the National Executive Committeeman from any Department, or of Department officers, or members of Department Executive Committees, shall be referred to and determined by the Executive Committee of the Department involved, which shall be the final authority thereon.

## ARTICLE II

### DUTIES OF OFFICERS

**Section 1. NATIONAL COMMANDER:** The National Commander shall be the executive head of THE AMERICAN LEGION with full power to enforce the provisions of the National Constitution, National By-Laws, and the will of the National Convention. He shall be the chairman of the National Convention and the National Executive Committee. He shall perform such other duties as are usually incident to the office.

**Section 2. NATIONAL VICE COMMANDERS:** The National Vice Commanders shall act as representatives of the National Commander on all matters referred to them by him, and shall, on his request, preside over the meetings of the National Convention or National Executive Committee, and perform such other duties as are usually incident to the office.

**Section 3. NATIONAL ADJUTANT:** The National Adjutant shall be charged with the administration of the policies and mandates of the National Convention, the National Executive Committee, and of the National Commander. He shall perform such other duties as are usually incident to the office. He shall also be authorized, in event of the death or resignation of the National Commander, to summon the National Executive Committee for the election of a successor, and in event the National Adjutant shall fail, refuse or neglect, within fifteen days after said death or resignation, to issue a call for said meeting of the National Executive Committee to be held within thirty days after said death or resignation, then said meeting for the purpose of electing a successor may be held upon the written demand therefore signed by representatives from fifteen or more Departments, giving fifteen days' notice thereof.

**Section 4. NATIONAL TREASURER:** The National Treasurer shall be the custodian of the funds of the National Organization. He shall sign all checks disbursing the funds of the National Organization, and shall make reports upon the condition of the national treasury when called for by the National Commander. The National Treasurer shall furnish a surety bond as hereinafter prescribed. He shall perform such other duties as are usually incident to the office.

**Section 5. NATIONAL JUDGE ADVOCATE:** The National Judge Advocate shall advise the national officers and the National Executive Committee on all legal matters, including the construction and interpretation of the National Constitution and By-Laws, and shall perform such other duties as are usually incident to the office.

**Section 6. NATIONAL CHAPLAIN:** The National Chaplain shall perform such divine and nonsectarian services as may be necessary, adhering to such ceremonial rituals as may be recommended by National Headquarters from time to time.

**Section 7. NATIONAL HISTORIAN:** The National Historian shall collect from year to year all records and data of value and interest for the National Headquarters of THE AMERICAN LEGION, and shall compile during his term of office a complete history of the year's activities. He shall also assist Department and Post historians so

as to coordinate and unify the work of these officials, and shall have such other duties as the National Executive Committee shall prescribe.

## ARTICLE III

### CHARTERS

**Section 1.** The Department Executive Committee may suspend, cancel or revoke a Post Charter. The action taken by the Department Executive Committee shall be final and conclusive unless an appeal is taken to the National Executive Committee within thirty days from the date of said suspension, cancellation or revocation. The action taken by the National Executive Committee upon appeal shall be final.

**Section 2.** Any Post failing to meet the obligations imposed upon it by the Constitution and By-Laws, or ceasing to function for six months as an American Legion Post, or voluntarily ceasing to function as a Post, or merging with one or more other Posts, or refusing to pay the Department and National per capita dues, or under such other conditions as might make such action necessary shall, upon order of the Department Executive Committee, surrender its charter for cancellation. Upon failure to surrender such charter, immediate steps may be taken for its revocation, suspension or cancellation.

**Section 3.** Upon revocation, cancellation or suspension of the charter of a Post in any Department of THE AMERICAN LEGION, said Post shall immediately cease operations and upon revocation or cancellation shall turn over its charter to its Department Commander or Department Executive Committee, and the Department Executive Committee is authorized, empowered and directed by and through its duly authorized agent to take possession, custody and control of all the records, property and assets of said Post; provided, however, that nothing herein shall be construed as requiring any Department to take over or assume any financial responsibility as to such property. Said Department Executive Committee may provide for the transfer of the members in said Post to other Posts of their choice, subject to the approval of such other Post.

**Section 4.** The National Executive Committee shall provide a uniform code defining the procedure to be followed in the revocation, cancellation or suspension of Post charters and providing for a method of appeal and further providing a code of procedure for the revocation, cancellation or suspension of Department charters with continuing power to revise said code, provided, however, that the procedure now in effect shall continue until such code is so adopted.

## ARTICLE IV

### DISCIPLINE OF POST AND POST MEMBERS

**Section 1.** Each Post of THE AMERICAN LEGION shall be the judge of its own membership, subject to the restrictions of the Constitution and By-Laws, except that no person who is a member of an organization which has for its aim the overthrow of the United States Government by force or violence, or who subscribes to the principles of any group opposed to our form of government, shall be eligible to become or remain a member of THE AMERICAN LEGION.

**Section 2.** Members may be suspended or expelled from the Legion only upon a proper showing of cause. Charges shall be based upon disloyalty, neglect of duty, dishonesty and conduct unbecoming a member of THE AMERICAN LEGION. All charges must be made under oath in writing by the accusers, and no member in good standing shall lose his membership until given a fair trial by the Post or Department in such manner and form as the Department By-Laws and Department Executive Committee shall prescribe.

**Section 3.** Any member who has been suspended or expelled has the right of appeal to his Department Executive Committee, or to the Department Convention, according to the provisions in the By-Laws of such Department. The decision of the Department shall be final.

**Section 4.** A member whose dues for the current year have not been paid by January first shall be classed as delinquent. If his dues are paid on or before February first, he shall be automatically reinstated. If he is still delinquent after February first, he shall be suspended from all privileges. If he is still under such suspension on June thirtieth of such year, his membership in THE AMERICAN LEGION shall be forfeited. A member so suspended or whose membership has been so forfeited may be reinstated to active membership in good standing by vote of the Post and payment of current dues for the year in which the reinstatement occurs. Provided, however, that the Posts, Departments and the National Organization may waive the provisions hereof, upon payment of dues for the year in which reinstatement occurs, with reference to former members who have been prevented from the payment of dues by reason of active military service.

## ARTICLE V

### MEMBERSHIP

**Section 1.** Membership in THE AMERICAN LEGION is membership in the National Organization of THE AMERICAN LEGION by affiliation with Posts.

## ARTICLE VI

### MONIES AND COLLECTIONS

**Section 1.** *All national employees and volunteers handling all American Legion monies and negotiable instruments shall be covered by fidelity/crime insurance in an adequate amount as desired by the Finance Commission and said fidelity/crime insurance policy(s) shall be approved by the National Treasurer, National Judge Advocate, and Finance Commission.*

**Section 2.** National Headquarters shall, should it be deemed advisable, detail special auditors to investigate the membership roll and financial statement of any Department, and should that Department so desire, assist in a similar audit of Posts within that Department.

## ARTICLE VII

### TRANSFER OF POSTS

**Section 1.** Posts of THE AMERICAN LEGION formed within units of the Army, Navy, Marine Corps or other organizations liable to transfer from one place to another, and which are organized under the Department in which they are then located, may transfer to another Department in a manner similar to the transfer of individuals from one Post to another.

**Section 2.** Any existing Post in the territorial or insular possession of the United States or in foreign countries, which is not under the jurisdiction of a present existing Department, shall within one year following the adoption hereof, unless extended by the National Executive Committee, request the National Executive Committee to place it under the jurisdiction of a Department to be selected by such Post. Said request shall have attached thereto the formal consent of such Department. Should a Post fail or refuse to make such request or be unable to obtain the consent of a Department, then the National Executive Committee shall designate the Department.

# ARTICLE VIII

## AMENDMENTS

**Section 1.** These By-Laws may be amended at any National Convention by a vote of two-thirds of the total authorized representation thereat, provided that the proposed amendment shall have been submitted through the National Adjutant to the several Departments and members of the National Executive Committee by mailing same to them at least twenty (20) days prior to the convening of the next National Convention; any such proposed amendment may be amended without further notice by a two-thirds vote of the total authorized representation thereat, provided it does not increase the modification proposed by the amendment and it has received the approval of the Convention Committee on Constitutional Amendments; and, provided further, it may be amended by unanimous vote at any National Convention without notice.

**Section 2.** That no proposed amendment shall be submitted through the National Adjutant to the several Departments and members of the National Executive Committee, as provided in Section 1 of this article, unless said proposed amendment shall have been first submitted by a Department Convention, Department Executive Committee, or the National Executive Committee.



## Appendix to the Constitution and By-Laws

Amendments to the Charter of The American Legion enacted by Congress, October 29, 1942, Public Act 767; July 9, 1946, Public Act 495; December 28, 1950, Public Act 895; June 26, 1953, Public Act 80; July 26, 1955, Public Act 178; September 1, 1966, Public Act 89-550; December 27, 1974, Public Act 93-557; August 17, 1978, Public Act 95-346; December 21, 1979, Public Act 96-155; October 30, 1990, Public Act 101-478; December 3, 1991, Public Act 102-179; November 20, 1997, Public Act 105-110; August 12, 1998, Public Act 105-225; November 3, 1998, Public Act 105-354; December 2, 2002, Public Act 107-309; December 13, 2011, Public Act 112-66.

*Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, That section 3 of the Act entitled "An Act to Incorporate The American Legion," approved September 16, 1919 (41 Stat. 285, Title 36, U.S.C., Sec. 43, amended to Title 36, U.S.C., Sec. 21702), is hereby further amended to read as follows:*

### ORIGINAL SECTION

**Sec. 3.** That the purpose of the corporation shall be: To promote peace and good will among the peoples of the United States and all the nations of the earth; to preserve the memories and incidents of the Great War of 1917-1918; to cement the ties of love and comradeship born of service; and to consecrate the efforts of its members to mutual helpfulness and service to their country.

### AMENDED SECTION

*"Sec. 21702. That the purpose of this corporation shall be: To uphold and defend the Constitution of the United States of America; to promote peace and good will among the peoples of the United States and all the nations of the earth; to preserve the memories and incidents of the two World Wars and the other great hostilities fought to uphold democracy; to cement the ties and comradeship born of service; and to consecrate the efforts of its members to mutual helpfulness and service to their country."*

That section 5 of such Act of September 16, 1919 (41 Stat. 285, Title 36, U.S.C., Sec. 45, amended to Title 36, U.S.C., Sec. 21703) is hereby further amended to read as follows:

### ORIGINAL SECTION

**Sec. 5.** That no person shall be a member of this corporation unless he served in the naval or military service of the United States at some time during the period between April 6, 1917, and November 11, 1918, both dates inclusive, or who, being citizens of the United States at the time of enlistment, served in the military or naval services of any of the governments associated with the United States during the Great War.

### AMENDED SECTION

*"Sec. 21703. That no person shall be a member of this corporation unless such person has served in the naval or military services of the United States at some time during any of the following periods: April 6, 1917, to November 11, 1918; December 7, 1941, to December 31, 1946; June 25, 1950, to January 31, 1955; February 28, 1961, to May 7, 1975; August 24, 1982, to July 31, 1984; December 20, 1989, to January 31, 1990; August 2, 1990, to the date of cessation of hostilities as determined by the Government of the United States; all dates inclusive, or who, being a citizen of the United States at the time of entry therein, served in the military or naval service of any of the governments associated with the United States during said wars or hostilities: Provided, however, that such person shall have an honorable discharge or separation from such service or continues to serve honorably during or after any of the aforesaid terminal dates."*

# Uniform Code of Procedure for the Revocation, Cancellation or Suspension of Department Charters

(Adopted by the National Executive Committee of The American Legion, November 21-22, 1940, Indianapolis, Indiana)

## I. Charges

**Section 1.** A charge that any Department should, for any good and sufficient cause, have its charter cancelled, suspended or revoked, may be initiated by a Department of THE AMERICAN LEGION in good standing, or by any three (3) Posts of the Department accused. A charge may be withdrawn only with the consent of the National Commander.

**Section 2.** Such charge shall be filed with the National Commander at National Headquarters.

**Section 3.** Such charge shall be in writing, and signed by the respective Commanders and Adjutants of the Department or Posts, as the case may be, and sworn to before any officer authorized to administer oaths.

**Section 4.** Three additional copies of such charge shall be filed with the original. The National Commander shall forthwith cause one copy of such charge to be served on the defendant Department by delivering a true copy thereof to the Adjutant of said Department as hereinafter provided.

**Section 5.** Such charge shall include the following:

- a. A certified or attested copy of the resolution authorizing the filing of such charge.
- b. The full name and address of the Department against which the charge is made, as well as the full name and address of the Commander and Adjutant of such Department.
- c. A clear, concise and detailed statement of the facts upon which the charge is based.
- d. The section or sections of the Constitution and By-Laws alleged to have been violated.
- e. Affidavits or documents substantiating the charge may be attached.

**Section 6.** After a charge has been filed, the National Commander shall forthwith cause a full investigation of the facts to be made. After such investigation, the National Commander shall file a report and recommendation with the National Executive Committee for its action thereon at its next meeting.

**Section 7.** Proceedings relating to the cancellation, suspension or revocation of a Department charter may originate with either the National Commander or the National Executive Committee.

**Section 8.** The action of the National Executive Committee in rejecting any charge or charges against a Department shall be final.

## II. Resolution of National Executive Committee

Should the National Executive Committee determine by a majority vote that a hearing and trial should be held to determine

whether a Department charter should be cancelled, suspended or revoked, it shall then adopt a resolution which shall include the following:

- a. A statement that the National Executive Committee has determined that a hearing and trial is warranted.
- b. Authorization and direction to the National Commander and National Adjutant to sign a formal complaint.
- c. The names and addresses of the members of the subcommittee before which the hearing and trial is to be held.
- d. The name and address of the National Judge Advocate or special acting National Judge Advocate who is to assist the committee.
- e. Authorization to the subcommittee to hire such stenographic or other help as may be necessary and to incur such expense as may be necessary.
- f. That the subcommittee shall report its written findings of fact and recommendation to the National Executive Committee at its next meeting, provided, however, that if the hearing or trial is not completed a partial report shall be made.

### III. Complaint

**Section 1.** In all cases a formal complaint, in triplicate, shall be drawn by the National Judge Advocate and signed by THE AMERICAN LEGION, through its National Commander and National Adjutant, setting forth the following:

- a. A clear and concise statement of the facts upon which the charges are predicated.
- b. The origin of the charges.
- c. A copy of the resolution of the National Executive Committee appointing the subcommittee and its assistants.
- d. A copy of the Uniform Code of Procedure for the Revocation, Cancellation, or Suspension of Department Charters.
- e. The time within which an appearance or answer shall be filed by the Department, which shall be not less than twenty (20) or more than sixty (60) days from the date of the service of a copy of the complaint.
- f. The time and place for the hearing and trial, which shall not be more than thirty (30) days after the date of the expiration of the time for the filing of the answer.

**Section 2.** Any such complaint may be amended by the subcommittee of the National Executive Committee in its discretion at any time upon such terms as may be deemed just in the opinion of the said subcommittee.

### IV. Service

**Section 1.** The subcommittee shall cause a true copy of the complaint to be served on the defendant Department.

**Section 2.** All complaints, orders and other process and papers of the subcommittee or of the national organization of THE AMERICAN LEGION may be served personally, or by registered mail, or by leaving a copy thereof at the principal office of the Department or Post or place of residence of the person to be served. The verified return by the individual serving the same showing service thereof in the manner herein provided, or the registry return receipt shall be proof of service.

**Section 3.** All notices, orders, papers or other process which are to be served on the National Headquarters of THE AMERICAN LEGION, or the subcommittee appointed to conduct the trial, shall be deemed served if they are served on the National Adjutant at National Headquarters, said service to be made as herein before provided.

**Section 4.** Witnesses may be summoned by a notice signed by either the special acting National Judge Advocate, the National Judge Advocate, or by a member of the subcommittee.

## V. Answer

**Section 1.** The defendant Department shall file an answer to said complaint with the National Judge Advocate at National Headquarters within the time specified in the complaint. The answer shall contain a clear and concise statement of the facts which constitute its defense. Any charge or specification in the complaint which is not expressly denied or explained in the answer shall be deemed to be admitted.

**Section 2.** In the event that the complaint is amended during the course of the hearing or trial, the defendant shall be furnished with a copy of such amendment, and may file an amended answer to the said amended complaint within five (5) days thereafter.

## VI. Subcommittee

**Section 1.** The subcommittee to hear and try and make written findings of fact and recommendations with reference to the matter of the cancellation, suspension or revocation of the Department charter shall be appointed by the National Executive Committee and shall consist of not more than five (5) nor less than three (3) members of the National Executive Committee. The National Executive Committeeman of the Department under investigation shall not be a member of such subcommittee.

**Section 2.** Should no member of the subcommittee be a lawyer, opinions on questions of law may be obtained from the National Judge Advocate.

**Section 3.** A majority of the members of the subcommittee shall constitute a quorum. If for any reason there is less than a quorum, the hearing shall be adjourned until a quorum is present.

**Section 4.** The duties of the National Judge Advocate or special acting National Judge Advocate shall be to see that the trial is prompt, complete and thorough, make all arrangements for the hearings, the summoning of all witnesses and the production of all papers. He shall see that all the orders of the subcommittee shall be carried out. He shall examine and cross-examine all witnesses.

## VII. Hearing and Trial

**Section 1.** The rules of evidence prevailing in courts of law and equity shall not be controlling. The subcommittee shall decide all questions arising as to the relevancy of the evidence and the regularity of the proceedings.

**Section 2.** The subcommittee may hold its hearings in closed sessions or may open them to the public. The subcommittee shall hear witnesses on oath or affirmation.

**Section 3.** Any party to the proceedings shall have the right to appear at such hearing in person, by counsel, or otherwise, subject to such reasonable restrictions as may be placed on this right by the subcommittee, and to examine and cross-examine witnesses and to introduce documentary or other evidence.

**Section 4.** Stipulations of fact may be introduced in evidence with respect to any issues.

**Section 5.** Objection to the conduct of the hearing shall be stated orally together with a short statement of the grounds of such objection and included in the stenographic report of the hearing.

**Section 6.** Any party to the proceedings shall be entitled to a reasonable period at the close of the hearing for oral argument, which shall not be included in the stenographic report of the hearing. Briefs maybe filed by the parties within the time fixed by the subcommittee.

**Section 7.** In the discretion of the subcommittee, the hearings may be continued from day to day, or adjourned to a later date, or to a different place by announcement thereof at the hearing by the chairman or vice-chairman of the subcommittee, or by other appropriate notice.

**Section 8.** A stenographic report of the trial shall be made.

## VIII. Report of Subcommittee

**Section 1.** The subcommittee, after it has completed its hearings, shall file the complete report of the proceedings had upon the trial, together with its written findings of fact and recommendations with reference thereto with the National Adjutant not less than five (5) days before the next meeting of the National Executive Committee, all of which shall be open to the inspection of all members of the National Executive Committee as well as representative or representatives of the Defendant Department.

**Section 2.** The National Executive Committee shall consider said report and act thereon.

**Section 3.** At the National Executive Committee meeting at which the report of the said subcommittee is to be considered, one (1) representative of the defendant Department may, within the discretion of the National Executive Committee, be given the privilege of the floor for not more than one (1) hour.

**Section 4.** Should the subcommittee's report be a partial report, the National Executive Committee may continue the committee and authorize it to hold further hearings and present its final report at the next meeting of the National Executive Committee.

**Section 5.** The decision of the National Executive Committee, based upon the report of its subcommittee, shall be final and no appeal can be taken therefrom.

# Uniform Code of Procedure for the Revocation, Cancellation or Suspension of Post Charters

(Adopted by the National Executive Committee of  
THE AMERICAN LEGION May 1-2, 1941, Indianapolis, Ind.  
Amended by that body November 6-7, 1941)

## I. Charges

**Section 1.** A charge that any Post should, for any good and sufficient cause, have its charter cancelled, suspended or revoked may be initiated by any intermediate body between the Post and the Department, or by any three Posts of the Department in which the Post accused is located. A charge may be withdrawn only with the consent of the Department Commander.

**Section 2.** Such charge shall be filed with the Department Commander at Department Headquarters.

**Section 3.** Such charge shall be in writing, and signed by the respective Commanders and Adjutants of the intermediate bodies or Posts, as the case may be, and sworn to before any officer authorized to administer oaths.

**Section 4.** Three additional copies of such charge shall be filed with the original. The Department Commander shall forthwith cause one (1) copy of such charge to be served on the defendant Post by delivering a true copy thereof to the Adjutant of said Post, as hereinafter provided.

**Section 5.** Such charge shall include the following:

- a. A certified or attested copy of the resolution authorizing the filing of such charge.
- b. The full name and address of the Post against which the charge is made, as well as the full name and address of the Commander and Adjutant of such Post.
- c. A clear, concise and detailed statement of the facts upon which the charge is based.
- d. The section or sections of the National and Department Constitutions and By-Laws alleged to have been violated.
- e. Affidavits or documents substantiating the charge may be attached.

**Section 6.** After a charge has been filed, the Department Commander shall forthwith cause a full investigation of the facts to be made. After such investigation, the Department Commander shall file a report and recommendation with the Department Executive Committee for its action thereon at its next meeting.

**Section 7.** Proceedings relating to the cancellation, suspension or revocation of a Post charter may also originate with either the Department Commander or the Department Executive Committee.

**Section 8.** The action of the Department Executive Committee in rejecting any charge or charges against a Post shall be final.

## II. Resolution of Department Executive Committee

**Section 1.** Should the Department Executive Committee determine by a majority vote that the Post should surrender its charter, said Department Executive Committee shall direct the defendant Post to surrender its charter for cancellation, and shall pass a resolution that unless the charter is so surrendered, prior to the date therein specified, a hearing and trial be held to determine whether the Post charter should be cancelled, suspended or revoked, and said resolution shall include the following:

- a. A statement that the Department Executive Committee has determined that a hearing and trial is warranted.
- b. Authorization and direction to the Department Commander and Department Adjutant to sign a formal complaint.
- c. The names and addresses of the members of the subcommittee before which the hearing and the trial is to be held.
- d. The name and address of the Department Judge Advocate or special acting Department Judge Advocate who is to assist the committee.
- e. Authorization to the subcommittee to hire such stenographic or other help as may be necessary and to incur such expense as may be necessary. Said expense, including the cost of stenographic report of the trial when ordered to be transcribed by the subcommittee or the Department Executive Committee, shall be taxed as costs against the Department, complainants or defendant Post in such manner and amount as the Department Executive Committee shall prescribe.
- f. That the subcommittee shall report its written findings of fact and recommendation to the Department Executive Committee at its next meeting, provided, however, that if the hearing or trial is not completed, a partial report shall be made.

## III. Complaint

**Section 1.** In all cases, a formal complaint, in triplicate, shall be drawn by the Department Judge Advocate and signed by The American Legion, through its Department Commander and Department Adjutant, setting forth the following:

- a. A clear and concise statement of the facts upon which the charges are predicted.
- b. The origin of the charges.
- c. A copy of the resolution of the Department Executive Committee appointing the subcommittee and its assistants.
- d. A copy of the Uniform Code of Procedure for the Revocation, Cancellation or Suspension of Post Charters.
- e. The time within which an appearance or answer shall be filed by the Post, which shall be not less than twenty (20) or more than sixty (60) days from the date of the service of a copy of the complaint.
- f. The time and place for the hearing and trial, which shall not be more than thirty (30) days after the date of the expiration of the time for the filing of the answer.

**Section 2.** Any such complaint may be amended by the subcommittee of the Department Executive Committee in its discretion at any time upon such terms as may be deemed just in the opinion of the said subcommittee.

## IV. Service

**Section 1.** The subcommittee shall cause a true copy of the complaint to be served on the defendant Post.

**Section 2.** All complaints, orders and other process and papers of the subcommittee or the Department organization of THE AMERICAN LEGION may be served personally, or by registered mail, or by leaving a copy thereof at the principle office or Headquarters of the intermediate body or Post, or place of residence of the person or officer to be served. The verified return by the individual serving the same showing service thereof in the manner herein provided, or the registry return receipt shall be proof of service.

**Section 3.** All notices, orders, papers or other process which are to be served on the Department Headquarters of THE AMERICAN LEGION, or the subcommittee appointed to conduct the trial, shall be deemed served if they are served on the Department Adjutant at Department Headquarters, said service to be made as herein above provided.

**Section 4.** Witnesses may be summoned by a notice signed by either the special acting Department Judge Advocate, the Department Judge Advocate, or by a member of the subcommittee.

## V. Answer

**Section 1.** The defendant Post shall file an answer to said complaint with the Department Judge Advocate at Department Headquarters within the time specified in the complaint. The answer shall contain a clear and concise statement of the facts which constitute its defense. Any charge or specification in the complaint which is not expressly denied or explained in the answer shall be deemed to be admitted.

**Section 2.** In the event that the complaint is amended during the course of the hearing or trial, the defendant shall be furnished with a copy of such amendment, and may file an amended answer to the said amended complaint within five (5) days thereafter.

## VI. Subcommittee

**Section 1.** The subcommittee to hear and try and make written findings of fact and recommendations with reference to the matter of the cancellation, suspension or revocation of the Post charter shall be appointed by the Department Executive Committee and shall consist of not less than three (3) members of the Department Executive Committee. No member of the Post under investigation shall be a member of such subcommittee.

**Section 2.** Should no member of the subcommittee be a lawyer, opinions on questions of law may be obtained from the Department Judge Advocate.

**Section 3.** A majority of the members of the subcommittee shall constitute a quorum. If for any reason there is less than a quorum, the hearing shall be adjourned until a quorum is present.

**Section 4.** The duties of the Department Judge Advocate or special acting Department Judge Advocate shall be to see that the trial is prompt, complete and thorough, make all arrangements for the hearings, the summoning of all witnesses and the production of all papers. He shall see that all the orders of the subcommittee shall be carried out. He shall examine and cross-examine all witnesses.

## VII. Hearing and Trial

**Section 1.** The rules of evidence prevailing in courts of law and equity shall not be controlling. The subcommittee shall decide all



questions arising as to relevancy of the evidence and the regularity of the proceedings.

**Section 2.** The subcommittee may hold its hearings in closed sessions or may open them to the public. The subcommittee shall hear witnesses on oath or affirmation.

**Section 3.** Any party to the proceeding shall have the right to appear at such hearing in person, by counsel or otherwise, subject to such reasonable restrictions as may be placed on this right by the subcommittee, and to examine and cross-examine witnesses and to introduce documentary or other evidence.

**Section 4.** Stipulations of fact may be introduced in evidence with respect to any issues.

**Section 5.** Objection to the conduct of the hearing shall be stated orally together with a short statement of the grounds of such objection and included in the stenographic report of the hearing.

**Section 6.** Any party to the proceedings shall be entitled to a reasonable period at the close of the hearing for oral argument, which shall not be included in the stenographic report of the hearing. Briefs may be filed by the parties within the time fixed by the subcommittee.

**Section 7.** In the discretion of the subcommittee, the hearings may be continued from day to day, or adjourned to a later date, or to a different place by announcement thereof at the hearing by the chairman or vice-chairman of the subcommittee or by other appropriate notices.

**Section 8.** A stenographic report of the trial shall be made.

## VIII. Report of Subcommittee

**Section 1.** The subcommittee, after it has completed its hearings, shall file the complete report of the proceedings had upon the trial, together with its written findings of fact and recommendations with reference thereto with the Department Adjutant not less than five (5) days before the next meeting of the Department Executive Committee, all of which shall be open to the inspection of all members of the Department Executive Committee, as well as representative or representatives of the defendant Post.

**Section 2.** The Department Executive Committee shall consider said report and act thereon.

**Section 3.** At the Department Executive Committee meeting at which the report of the said subcommittee is to be considered, one representative of the defendant Post may, within the discretion of the Department Executive Committee, be given the privilege of the floor for not more than one (1) hour.

**Section 4.** Should the subcommittee's report be a partial report, the Department Executive Committee may continue the committee and authorize it to hold further hearings and present its final report at the next meeting of the Department Executive Committee.

## IX. Appeal

**Section 1.** Should the Department Executive Committee refuse to cancel, suspend or revoke the charter of the Post, such decision shall be final and no appeal can be taken therefrom.

**Section 2.** Should the Department Executive Committee, upon a report of its subcommittee, cancel, suspend or revoke the charter of the defendant Post, the defendant Post and the National Adjutant shall be notified by the Department Adjutant of the decision of the Department Executive Committee, which notice shall be

mailed within five (5) days after such decision has been rendered. Should the defendant Post desire to appeal from the decision of the Department Executive Committee, it shall serve its notice of appeal, signed by the Post Commander and Post Adjutant, on the Department Adjutant at Department Headquarters within thirty (30) days from the date of said suspension, cancellation or revocation.

**Section 3.** Upon receipt of said notice of appeal, the Department Commander shall immediately notify the National Commander of such appeal and shall cause the Department Judge Advocate, or acting Department Judge Advocate, and the subcommittee to submit all the papers and the complete record of the hearings to the National Commander. Upon receipt of the notice of appeal, the National Commander shall appoint a subcommittee of not more than five (5) nor less than three (3) members of the National Executive Committee for the purpose of hearing the appeal from the action of the Department Executive Committee.

**Section 4.** The National Executive Committeeman, or alternate, from the Department of which the defendant Post is a part, shall not be eligible to serve on this committee.

**Section 5.** This subcommittee of the National Executive Committee shall meet at least one (1) day prior to the meeting of the National Executive Committee and to this committee the National Commander shall refer the complete record, in writing, of said proceedings with such exceptions thereto as are made by the defendant Post.

**Section 6.** This subcommittee may make its recommendations merely from the records, or it may permit representatives of the Department or the defendant Post to appear and argue the matter before the committee, and it may, as such hearing of such appeal, take further evidence relating thereto under such rules and conditions as it may from time to time adopt.

**Section 7.** This subcommittee shall review the cause and recommend to the National Executive Committee the action to be taken thereon.

**Section 8.** The decision of the National Executive Committee, based upon the report of this subcommittee, shall be final and there shall be no appeal therefrom.

**Section 9.** The cost of the proceeding may be retaxed as the National Executive Committee shall deem just and equitable.





# THE AMERICAN LEGION

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