

AMERICANISM

2009-2010

MESSAGE POINTS

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, passed in 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 2007, thirty states have adopted English as their official language of government.
- 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 and that all Citizenship Naturalization Ceremonies also be conducted 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 the sole official language in 31 nations (16 percent). An additional 20 nations recognize English as one of two or more official languages. (Source: www.us-english.org)

Issue – **Illegal Immigration**

Message Points

- The American Legion, since the organization's first convention, has recognized the threat of illegal immigration to this country's security and well-being. It has continually passed resolutions calling on Congress and other governmental agencies to pass and enforce effective immigration laws that will restrict entry of illegal immigrants.
- The American Legion is unalterably opposed to illegal immigration and urges Congress, the U.S. Justice Department, the Department of Homeland Security and state governments to take the necessary action to stop the invasion of this country by illegal immigrants. The specific strategy endorsed by The American Legion includes the following steps:
 - Secure the borders and other points of entry in the United States:
 - (a) Construct physical barriers, as appropriate,
 - (b) Acquire and utilize latest technology to monitor border activity,
 - (c) Employ and train a sufficient number of U.S. Border Patrol Agents to effectively patrol border regions with employment preference given to former members of the U.S. Armed Forces,
 - (d) Utilize National Guard troops to assist in providing border security,
 - (e) Insure all vessels and their cargo arriving at our seaports are thoroughly searched;
 - Eliminate the jobs magnet and social services benefits:
 - (a) Mandate verification of employment eligibility,
 - (b) Enforce sanctions against employers who knowingly hire illegal residents,
 - (c) Make illegal residents ineligible for Social Security and other government-sponsored public services,
 - (d) Eliminate governmental financial aid for illegal alien students;
 - Enforce existing laws and pass new laws to reduce U.S. illegal population:
 - (a) Reject amnesty or "legalization" programs for illegal aliens,
 - (b) Enforce immigration laws and promote cooperation between federal, state and local law enforcement officials, with emphasis on interior enforcement,
 - (c) Establish parameters for non-criminal deportations,
 - (d) Prohibit eligibility to services offered by financial institutions in the United States,
 - (e) Issue no drivers licenses to illegal aliens,
 - (f) Designate English as the official language of the U.S. government and print all documents, including election ballots, in the English language only,
 - (g) Work with state and local governments to discourage illegal settlement;

- (h) Revise legal immigration procedures; screen and track foreign visitors legally entering the U.S.:
- Eliminate the Visa Lottery Program,
 - (a) Restrict the number of countries participating in the Visa Waiver Program,
 - (b) Create new visa categories or expand the H-2A and H-2B Visa Categories for temporary agricultural and temporary and seasonal workers as necessary to replace illegal workers eliminated from employment opportunities in the U.S.,
 - (c) Create and enforce a reporting system to track the whereabouts of foreign visitors to include students at academic institutions, members of a country's diplomatic corps, aircraft and vessel crews, foreign press representatives, exchange visitors, H-1B Workers, L-1 Intracompany Transferees and those individuals categorized as humanitarian entrants
- The American Legion calls for Congressional action to take the steps necessary to secure the borders of this country. It also requests an accountability of our elected officials on illegal immigration issues and to use all possible means to bring solution to the challenges faced by the United States because of our illegal population.
- The American Legion is not opposed to legal immigration, and has encouraged a path of moderation, embracing the concept that immigration should be regulated so that immigrants may be readily absorbed into the general population.

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 11th 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** 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. (Res. 5, NEC May 2006, "Oppose Changes to the National Anthem.")

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 (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 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 1055, Indianapolis, Indiana, 46206.

PROVIDING FOR THE CHILDREN LEFT BEHIND

The terrorist attacks on the United States were unspeakable acts that left families torn apart. As an unfortunate consequence of Sept. 11 and the subsequent war against terrorism, many children of America's active duty military personnel are now members of single-parent families. In most cases, this also means their opportunity to attend college has been greatly diminished.

Children of active duty military killed at war are entitled to receive federal federal money towards a college education. But it's not enough. The American Legion has fought long and hard to see that our active duty military personnel and their families are looked after. But despite our efforts, there are significant shortfalls in dollars that have been allotted by our government in recent years. The educational benefit provided to surviving children is one of these shortfalls.

There are 1.2 million dependent children of the U.S. military; of those nearly 70% are age 11 or younger.

(Source: Department of Defense Quadrennial Defense Review—FY2004)

Help us bridge the gap

The facts are indisputable. The money provided by law has not kept up with what a higher education costs today, let alone what college will cost in years to come. Remember, these children are the direct descendants of people who died while actively protecting our country. Their parents sacrificed their lives. The least we can do is make sure that their children are provided for.

The American Legion Legacy Scholarship

We are raising funds to fill the gap. Providing for the children that were left behind is our civic duty. Helping to provide for their education is a powerful way to show our thanks. These parents died protecting our country. We owe it to them to see that their children get the opportunity a college education can provide. That is why we have established the American Legion Legacy Scholarship.

Critical Education Gap	
4-year, State College	\$ 57,332
4-year, Out-of-State College	\$100,800
4-year, Private College	\$136,528
<i>(Source: The College Board 2008-2009)</i>	
Total Military College Benefit	\$ 41,175
<i>(Source: Department of Veterans Affairs)</i>	

As this table illustrates, the total benefit for these survivors is just a little more than \$36,000 to be used for a college education. In today's dollars, this benefit will pay little more than half of what a college education costs in the most affordable category. This gap grows even greater when the cost of a college education in the future is estimated. The most conservative estimates predict that these costs will increase by 5 percent per year, meaning that in 16 years, the most affordable college education will be more than \$119,187. Military compensation will not keep up with these dramatic increases. It is clear these children will need our help.

Please join us in our effort

We need the support of many to make The American Legion Legacy Scholarship a reality. Too many men and women in uniform have died in the fight to preserve our nation's freedoms. Together, we can make sure their children have the opportunity these parents were unable to provide. We encourage you to give generously to **The American Legion Legacy Scholarship Fund**. Help us to bridge the gap and restore the faith of these special children.

Send your tax-deductible contributions to:

The American Legion Legacy Scholarship Fund, P.O. Box 1055, Indianapolis, Indiana, 46206.

www.legion.org

Americanism (317) 630-1207
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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 <http://www.tioh.hqda.pentagon.mil/FAQ/ServiceFlagFactSheet.htm> . 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 of the banners and static cling versions for home and automobile, as well as lapel pins, are available from The American Legion 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.