How to Organize a Unit
of the
American Legion
Auxiliary

A history and procedural guide for establishing a new Unit in the American Legion Auxiliary

Issued by:
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Revised: 3/2012
By following the steps outlined in this booklet, you will become a part of organizing a new Unit of the American Legion Auxiliary.

You and the members of this new Unit will join hands with nearly one million women who are members of the more than 10,000 Units throughout our nation and the world.

As you become new Unit members, be ever mindful of the challenging words from our founding members:

. . . “for The American Legion to attain its full influence and power for good it must have, working side by side with our war veterans, the women who by blood and marriage are related to them . . .”
Overview of the American Legion Auxiliary

The American Legion Auxiliary is the largest patriotic women’s service organization in the world. There are more than 9,500 Units chartered in the United States and around the world in Australia, Canada, China, France, Germany, Mexico, Philippines, and the Virgin Islands.

The services of the Auxiliary touch the lives of all Americans. With the philosophy of “Service, not Self,” the Auxiliary develops a strong spirit of volunteerism in its members who have joined together in the fellowship of giving to others. Our multi-faceted programs assist veterans and their families, promote the welfare and education of young people, fund scholarships, support a multitude of community service projects, and provide information to the public on numerous local and national issues.

Auxiliary members believe in the ideals and principles of America’s founding fathers and pledge to foster patriotism, preserve and defend the Constitution, promote allegiance to God and Country, and uphold the basic principles of freedom of religion, freedom of expression and freedom of choice. The Auxiliary embodies the spirit of America that has prevailed through war and peace and continues to stand behind America today, as it did when the organization was first founded.

The Auxiliary was founded in 1919 to support the work of The American Legion. A Constitution and Bylaws modeled after the one of the Legion were adopted. In 1921, the first National Convention was held in Kansas City, Missouri. Officers were elected and provisions made for the completion of the national organization. A National Executive Committee (NEC) and a broad national policy were created. The National Headquarters was established in Indianapolis, Indiana.
How to Form a Unit

The American Legion Post must vote in favor of organizing an Auxiliary Unit. After the Post votes to organize the Unit, the Post Commander or Adjutant notifies the Department President or the Department Secretary. The Department Secretary will send a New Unit Kit that includes information needed to form the Unit to the Post officer. She will notify the Department Representative (District/County President or Unit Development & Revitalization Committee member) so she can work with the Post in organizing the Unit.

When the time and place of the informational and organizational meetings have been determined, a letter under the signature of the Commander and Adjutant should be mailed to all Post members, and a letter to Auxiliary members in the community who belong to the Department Headquarters Unit. Each letter should include the purpose, date, time and place of the two meetings and extend an invitation to become a charter member of the new Unit. (See appendix for sample letters). The Post is encouraged to publicize the meetings in the local media.

The Post Commander and Adjutant should attend these meetings to assist with the organization of the Unit. Other Post members are welcome to attend. The Commander and Adjutant must sign the charter application. The Adjutant, or other Post officer, needs to sign the membership applications to verify proper eligibility.

Informational Meeting:

The Department Auxiliary representative (District/County President or Unit Development and revitalization Committee member) should chair this meeting. The following should be discussed:

The National Constitution limits eligibility to the following:

1. Women who of their own right are eligible for membership in The American Legion.

2. Mothers, wives, daughters, sisters, granddaughters, great-granddaughters and grandmothers of members of The American Legion, and deceased veterans having served during the listed war periods. Step-relatives are also eligible.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date Range</th>
<th>War Period</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>April 6, 1917 – November 11, 1918</td>
<td>(World War I)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December 7, 1941 – December 31, 1946</td>
<td>(World War II)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December 7, 1941 – December 31, 1946</td>
<td>(U.S. Merchant Marines)</td>
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<tr>
<td>June 25, 1950 – January 31, 1955</td>
<td>(Korean War)</td>
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<tr>
<td>February 28, 1961 – May 7, 1975</td>
<td>(Vietnam War)</td>
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<tr>
<td>August 24, 1982 – July 31, 1984</td>
<td>(Grenada/Lebanon)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December 20, 1989- January 31, 1990</td>
<td>(Panama)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August 2, 1990 to cessation</td>
<td>(Desert Shield/Storm/War on Terror)</td>
</tr>
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Membership Classes:
The National Constitution provides for two classes of membership: Senior and Junior.
  - Senior membership shall be composed of members over the age of eighteen; provided, however, that a wife under the age of eighteen years, shall be classed as a Senior member.
  - Junior Membership shall consist of those members under the age of eighteen years.

Application:
All new members must complete an individual membership application. The application is to be signed by the member and the Post Adjutant or other Post officer.

Dues:
Unit will set amount of dues for Senior and Junior members. The amount must include the National per capita for Seniors and Juniors and Department, District/County per capita and any Department, District/County assessment. The National per capita dues for Senior members includes a subscription to the American Legion Auxiliary magazine.

Formation of Unit:
1. A minimum of 10 Senior members is required to form a Unit. Any number of transferred members may be designated as charter members, and can count as the 10 Senior Members. Junior members can also be charter members.
2. Discuss becoming an officer with these potential members.
3. Set date, time and place for the organizational meeting, and date, time and place of the Unit meeting for the next several months.
   - The organizational meeting should be held no later than three to four weeks after the informational meeting.

Organizational Meeting:
The Department Auxiliary representative should chair this meeting. The following business should be transacted:
1. Introductions: Department/District/County Auxiliary officers and Post Commander who introduces other Post officers.
2. Initiation Ceremony conducted by the District/County President. If she isn’t present, the highest-ranking officer present conducts the ceremony.
3. Department representative conducts the election of Unit officers as mandated by their Department Constitution and Bylaws. Newly elected President appoints non-elected officers.
4. Installation of Officers is conducted by the District/County President. If she isn’t present, the a. highest-ranking Department officer present conducts the installation. After installation, the newly elected officers assume their duties.
5. Explain the necessity for a Unit Constitution and Bylaws to govern Unit activities. At the a. third meeting, suggest the President appoint a committee to develop the Constitution. The b. Unit mentor will be available to offer guidance. (A sample can be found in the Unit c. Handbook of the American Legion Auxiliary.)
6. A short business session is to be conducted by the new President. Information to cover:
   - Confirm amount of Unit dues
   - Confirm date, time and place of Unit meeting
o Determine closing date for accepting charter members (National Constitution provides that the charter of a new Unit must be closed thirty (30) days after it has been signed by the Post Commander.)

o Unit Secretary distributes signed membership cards to new members present

7. After the meeting has adjourned the Unit Secretary, with help from Department representative, completes the following paperwork:
   o **Three** copies of the charter application signed by Post Commander, Adjutant and Unit President. Charter Application must include names and addresses of all charter members.
   o Membership applications signed by Post Adjutant or other Post officer for at least 10 Senior members. However, members that are transferring to the new unit will not have to fill out a new application.
   o Dues for each new member application (includes National, Department and District/County per capita and any Department/District/County assessments).
   o Charter fee as determined by Department Headquarters.
   o Completed Unit Data Form.
   o Officer list and any other Department/District/County forms.

The Unit must take the same name, number and location as The American Legion Post to which it is attached, and these will appear on the charter. The National President and National Secretary will issue the charter on receipt of the charter application, duly attested by the Department President, accompanied by membership applications and National dues for all new members.

Along with the charter, the Unit will receive a copy of the charter application bearing the endorsement of National and Department officers, form SS-4, instructions for form SS-4, and tax and bond information for units.

**Appendix:**

Sample Letters

• Letter to Legionnaires
• Letter to Auxiliary members in Department Headquarters Unit

Sample membership application
(LETTER TO LEGIONNAIRE CONCERNING FORMING A NEW UNIT)

Date

Dear Legionnaire,

Time and again it has been demonstrated that the most successful Posts are the ones who work cooperatively with their Auxiliary Units. With this in mind, our Post is very interested in forming an Auxiliary Unit as we realize the positive effect a Unit can have on a Post. We hope to build a family organization of Legion and Auxiliary members volunteering together to enable us to do more for our veterans, our youth and the community.

Do you have female family, relatives, friends and even co-workers who enjoy volunteering? Would they enjoy helping the Auxiliary in the betterment of our veterans, youth and our community? Are these women eligible for membership in the American Legion Auxiliary? If so, will you please share this information in this letter with them?

Young girls and women eligible for membership are the wife, daughter, mother, granddaughter, great granddaughter, sister and grandmother including same step relatives of a Legionnaire or a deceased veteran having served during the eligibility dates. Women who of their own right are eligible for membership in The American Legion are eligible to join the American Legion Auxiliary.

There will be an informal meeting of interested women and Post members on (insert date) at (insert location) at (insert time).

Auxiliary representatives from the District/county will be present at this meeting to provide information on programs and activities, dues, possible meeting date, officers etc. They will also be there to answer any questions you may have.

Having a strong Unit to work closely with our Post will strengthen our commitment to this community.

_________________________          _________________________
Post Commander                      Post Adjutant

It is recommended this letter be written on Post stationery.

SAMPLE LETTER

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Revised: 3/2012
(LETTER TO AUXILIARY DEPARTMENT HEADQUARTERS MEMBERS CONCERNING FORMING A NEW UNIT)

Date

Dear Auxiliary Member,

As a member of the American Legion Auxiliary you understand the importance of our programs and activities for our veterans, youth and communities. It is also heartwarming to know that Auxiliary members willingly volunteer their time and talent to make life better for these individuals and communities. The Auxiliary bi-monthly publication, the National News, not only invites you to read articles about the young girls and women who find it in their hearts to help veterans in need, but articles on Girls Nation/Girls State and the Freedom’s Foundation will make you proud.

Our Post is interested in forming an Auxiliary Unit in our community as we realize the positive effect a Unit can have on a Post. It has been demonstrated that the most successful Posts are ones who work cooperatively with their Auxiliary Units. We hope to build a family organization of Legion and Auxiliary members volunteering together.

Since we understand you are currently a member of the Department Headquarters Unit, can we count on you to help form a new Unit in our community? Working together, at whatever level of service you are interested in, will allow us to accomplish more. We hope you will consider transferring your membership to this new local Unit.

We invite you to attend an informational meeting of Post members and Auxiliary members in the community who currently belong to the Department Headquarters Unit. That meeting will be held on (insert date) at (insert time) at (insert location).

Auxiliary officers from the District/County will be present at this meeting to provide information on programs and activities, dues, officers, etc., as well as answer any questions you may have.

Having a strong Unit to work closely with our Post will strengthen our commitment to this community.

Sincerely,

________________________________________  ______________________________________
 Post Commander                          Post Adjutant

It is recommended this letter be written on Post stationery.

SAMPLE LETTER

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Revised: 3/2012
Membership Applications can also be found on our website www.ALAforVeterans.org
Applying for a New Charter

Instructions for Unit

When a new Unit is being chartered, the following documents are to be submitted to their American Legion Auxiliary Department Headquarters.

- Charter Application
- Membership Applications
- Membership Cards
- Membership Dues
- Charter Fee
- Unit Data Form
- Unit Officer List and other forms required by Department

1. Charter Application: Typewritten in triplicate, front and back. The front page of the application, Article XI of the Bylaws, Section 2 should include:
   - Name of the The American Legion Post to which the Unit is attached.
   - The Post number and name of Department.
   - Signature and complete address of Unit President.
   List the names of the additional new members with their complete address. On the last line in this section, type in Unit location and date. On the reverse side of the charter application, the First Endorsement is to be completed and signed by the Post Commander and attested by the Post Adjutant.

2. Membership Applications: Each prospective new member listed on the Charter application must have a completed membership application, unless they are a transfer. Application must be signed by the member and a Post officer to be valid. Eligibility on each member is to be verified by Post officer before submitting application to Department Headquarters.

3. Membership Dues: Unit will set amount of dues for Senior and Junior members. The amount must include the National per capita for Seniors and Juniors and Department, District/County per capita and any Department, District/County assessment.

4. Charter Fee: Amount of charter fee is determined by the Department and should be sent to Department Secretary. An additional fee is charged to have an inscribed Charter Roll. Contact your Department Headquarters for the amount of this fee. A separate typed list of names is required for the Charter Roll.

5. Unit Data Form: This form is used to obtain the contact information of the person to be listed on the National renewal notices. This person must be a current member. Dues amount for Senior and Junior dues is to be listed on the form.
   After completion of all documents, the Unit is to submit them to the Department Secretary. She will verify that all are correct and then forward them to National Headquarters to be processed.

Note: The National Constitution provides that the Charter of a new Unit must be closed thirty days after it has been signed by the Post Commander. Only members joining within this time frame can be classed as charter members and have their name on the charter.
Appendix:

Sample copy of Application for Unit Charter of the American Legion Auxiliary

Sample copy of a charter

Sample Unit Data Form

Sample of charter roll
American Legion Auxiliary
Application for Unit Charter

Provisions of the American Legion Auxiliary Constitution

ARTICLE III OF THE CONSTITUTION

Eligibility

Section 1. Membership in the American Legion Auxiliary shall be limited to the mothers, wives, daughters, sisters, granddaughters, great-granddaughters, and grandmothers of members of the American Legion, and to the mothers, wives, daughters, sisters, granddaughters, great-granddaughters, and grandmothers 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, 1994; December 20, 1989 to January 31, 1990; August 7, 1990 to the date of cessation of hostilities as determined by the Government of the United States, all dates inclusive, or any of the government associated with the United States during said periods, and died in lines of duty or after honorable discharge, and to those women who of their own rights are eligible for membership in the American Legion.

ARTICLE VIII OF THE BYLAWS

Unit Organization:

Section 1. Units shall be chartered by the National President and National Secretary on receipt of the charter application properly executed with typewritten names of the applicants on the original (white sheet), and accompanied by the pro forma dues and individual membership record forms. Application for Unit charters shall be signed by the Department President and the Commander of the American Legion Post to which the Unit is attached and said charters shall be closed thirty days after the application has been signed by the Commander of the American Legion Post.

Section 2. A Unit of the American Legion Auxiliary shall be the judge of its own membership, subject to the restriction of the Constitution and Bylaws, 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 a member of the American Legion Auxiliary.

Section 3. When a Unit ceases to function, or if the charter has been revoked or canceled, the charter and all Unit records and funds shall be immediately forwarded to Department Headquarters.

Section 4. No person may, at any time, be a member of more than one Unit.

Section 5. Any person in good standing wishing to transfer to another Unit must present to the Unit to whose membership card. Upon acceptance of the transfer application by the new Unit, the Unit Officer will complete the transfer section on the Membership Card Form. The new Unit Officer and the member must sign and date the Membership Card Form to be valid. The member shall then be entitled to active membership in said Unit. No dues shall be transferred.

Section 6. An Unpaid member may withdraw providing his dues are fully paid. Upon withdrawal, he shall be prohibited from joining any other Unit as a new member during the remainder of the current year for which said dues are paid. In the event a member wishes to remove his membership from one Unit to another during the current year, it shall be done by transfer and not by withdrawal.

Section 7. The Secretary is the officer of the Unit and shall be bonded, such position bond being available through National Headquarters.

ARTICLE XI OF THE BYLAWS

Charter:

Section 2. The Department Executive Committee may revoke, cancel or suspend a charter, and may refuse to issue a charter.

(SEE INSTRUCTIONS ON REVERSE SIDE)

To the American Legion Auxiliary, Department of

We, the undersigned, hereby certify that we are entitled to membership in the AMERICAN LEGION AUXILIARY under ARTICLE III of the National Constitution, as above quoted. We hereby request the issuance of a charter for the formation of an Auxiliary Unit at

[Location of Unit] (Legal name of Unit)

[Post No.] Department of

On issuance of a charter, we hereby agree to organize and maintain a Unit under the above name within the minimum membership designated by the National Constitution. We hereby further agree to uphold the principles of the American Legion and the American Legion Auxiliary and to comply with all rules and regulations prescribed by the Department and National organizations. This Auxiliary Unit shall be in all things subject to the jurisdiction of those bodies.

NAMES (Print or Type)

ADDRESS

[Print name of President] [Signature of President] [Date]

[Print name of Secretary] [Print mailing address] [City] [State] [Zip]

[Print name of Treasurer] [Print mailing address] [City] [State] [Zip]

I hereby certify to the accuracy and good faith of the above application. When issued, the Charter will be returned to the Department Headquarters for distribution.

[Print name of Unit President] [Signature of President] [Date]
INSTRUCTIONS (Read carefully)

1. The Unit President or other person designated by the Unit to receive the charter when issued must sign the certificate at the bottom of application on preceding page.
2. Charter applications must be printed or typed in triplicate, each bearing the names of the applicants eligible for membership. All three copies will be forwarded to the Department Headquarters, after signed by the Commander and the Adjutant of the Post to which the Unit is to be attached. The original will be retained by the Department Headquarters, and the other by the National Headquarters.
3. Each copy of the charter application must bear THE SIGNATURES called for in the FIRST AND SECOND ENDORSEMENTS below.
4. The application for charter and the following must be forwarded to Department Headquarters.
   a. Individual Membership Applications, signed by a Post Officer. (A minimum of 10 new Senior members is required.)
   b. Department and National membership dues for all names on the charter application (except transferring members who have already paid current year dues.)
   c. Charter fee in amount designated by the Department.
   d. Unit Data Form.

FIRST ENDORSEMENT

Date ___________________ 20____

To the Department:
The foregoing application has been approved by ____________________________, Post Number ____________, of The American Legion, Department of ____________________________, to which the Auxiliary Unit is to be attached.

Attest:

(Signature of Post Adjutant) ____________________________

(Signature of Post Commander) ____________________________

SECOND ENDORSEMENT

Date ___________________ 20____

Department Address

__________________________________________________________

I certify that I have examined the foregoing application. Approval is recommended. Charter is to be issued under the name of the American Legion Auxiliary Unit of ____________________________, Post Number ____________, of the American Legion Department of ____________________________, (Location of Unit).

(Signature of Department President)

Return to: American Legion Auxiliary
National Headquarters
777 N. Meridian St. 3rd Fl.
Indianapolis, IN 46204-1420

THIRD ENDORSEMENT

Date ___________________ 20____

To the President,
The American Legion Auxiliary, Department of ____________________________,

Returned. Approved. Charter issued and enclosed herewith.

(Signature of National Secretary)

FOURTH ENDORSEMENT

Date ___________________ 20____

To ____________________________, (Name of President of Auxiliary Unit)

Forwarded. Charter applied for herewith enclosed.

Department of ____________________________

(Signature of Department President)
AMERICAN LEGION AUXILIARY

20__UNIT DATA FORM -- DIRECT BILLING
(Type or Print Using Blue or Black Ink)

Understand that the dues amount listed below will be printed on the
incoming Membership Renewal Notices that will be mailed to each
Senior member of our Unit. Below is the address to be printed on each
Renewal Notice indicating where our members are to mail their dues for
this Unit.

It is understood that no change in the amount of dues or the address
to which the dues are sent can be made after a deadline which
Department Headquarters will establish based on the requirements of
National Headquarters.

DEPARTMENT OF __________________ UNIT NUMBER ________

20__ SENIOR DUES OF THE UNIT ARE $ __________
20__ JUNIOR DUES OF THE UNIT ARE $ __________

Name of individual in the Unit to receive membership dues

Address (Street or RR & Box)

City __________________________ Zip Code __________

(_ ) __________________________ Telephone Number ______

Area Code __________________________

Date ________ Signature __________ Title __________

RETURN COMPLETED FORM TO YOUR DEPARTMENT SECRETARY

Revised: 3/2012
CHARTER MEMBERSHIP ROLL

AMERICAN LEGION

AUXILIARY

UNIT OR ______________________ POST NO. ______
DEPARTMENT OF

SAMPLE

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