

Basic Training Part 3 History



The Vietnam War era produced another new generation of eligible veterans in an organization that was designed to expire after those who fought in World War I were gone. Led by veterans of the first two world wars, The American Legion was positioned through the 1960s to stand for patriotism, flag respect and traditional values at a time of major social shifts in the nation, including strong public opposition to the war.

Due to the Vietnam War, The American Legion pressed to the forefront two major developments in the treatment of veterans: proving the link between Agent Orange exposure and adverse health conditions suffered by veterans of the Vietnam War and gaining acceptance of post-traumatic stress disorder as a compensable VA condition and disability. The American Legion worked with Columbia University researchers to refute a federal study and conclusion finding no connection between Agent Orange and adverse health conditions of Vietnam War veterans. Also in the aftermath of the Vietnam War, The American Legion was instrumental in gaining diagnostic acceptance of PTSD, thus beginning a long and difficult journey in proper treatment for veterans confronting it.





A 5-4 U.S. Supreme Court ruling in the 1989 case *Texas v. Johnson* defined desecration of the U.S. flag as a constitutionally protected act of free speech. The ruling led The American Legion to assemble the Citizens Flag Alliance, a collaboration of more than 140 organizations, to seek a constitutional amendment that would return to the states the power to enact and enforce laws to protect the flag from such acts. In nearly every session of Congress since 1990, The American Legion has pushed for passage of an amendment that would simply read: "The Congress shall have power to prohibit the physical desecration of the flag of the United States." In 2005, the measure came within one Senate vote of passing with the supermajority required for a constitutional amendment.

In 1993, The American Legion Riders program was launched at Garden City, Mich., Post 396 to bring veteran motorcycle enthusiasts together. In the months and years that followed, the Legion Riders grew to more than 120,000 members and more than 2,200 chapters nationwide. The group is the driving fundraising force for the Legacy Scholarship program, which provides college money for the children of military men and women who lost their lives while serving on active duty or have a combined VA



disability rating of 50 percent or greater assigned on or after Sept. 11, 2001. The main event of the group is the annual American Legion Legacy Run, which typically starts in Indianapolis and proceeds to the national convention city where Legacy Scholarship funds are delivered to the national commander.



The terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001, led to a surge in patriotism and support for those serving in the U.S. Armed Forces. The American Legion quickly went to work reviving the Blue Star Banner program, identifying homes with loved ones serving in the war. Within months of the attacks, The American Legion launched the Legacy Scholarship Fund to provide college scholarships to the children of military men and women who

lost their lives on duty during or after the attacks; scholarship eligibility was later expanded to include the children of veterans with combined disability ratings of 50 percent or greater. The Legion lobbied vigorously against defense budget cuts as the war progressed and in 2005 passed Resolution 169 proclaiming the organization's support for the service members and their mission alike to defeat terrorism around the planet.

The American Legion celebrated its 100th anniversary between August 2018 and

November 2019. Thousands of state and local activities were conducted to honor the organization's first century of service. The motto of the centennial program was "Legacy & Vision" to concentrate both on the organization's many accomplishments of the past and its mission of the future as the post-9/11 generation of veterans began to assume leadership of the organization. The 101st



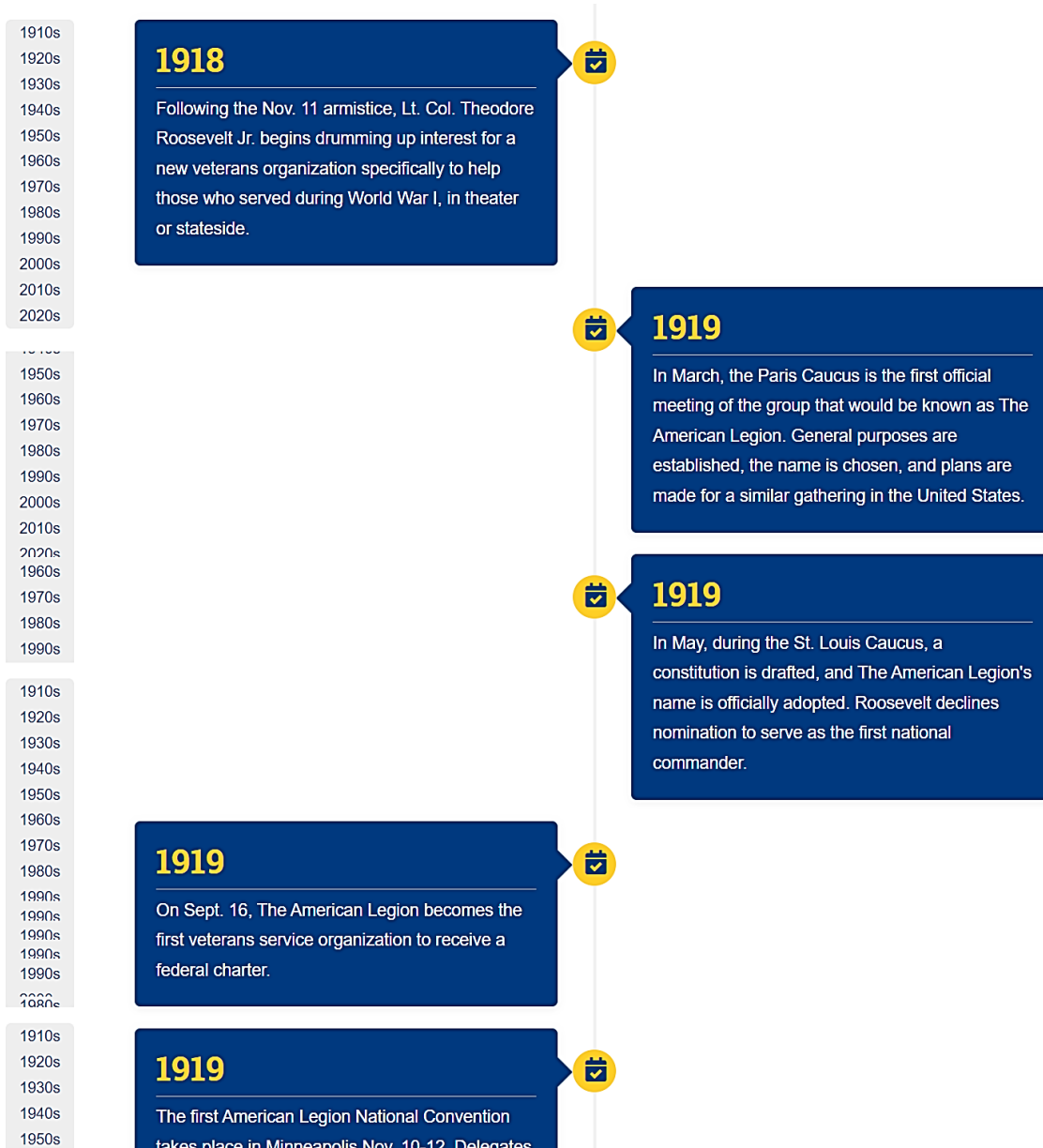
American Legion National Convention was conducted in Indianapolis, home of American Legion National Headquarters.

Pandemic relief



The COVID-19 pandemic, declared global in March 2020, set The American Legion in motion worldwide. Buddy Checks, blood donations, food-collection and distribution, procurement and delivery of personal protective equipment and more became community, state and national priorities during the crisis. The pandemic suspended plans for national youth program championships in 2020, as well as the 102nd American Legion National Convention, and for the first time in history, a national commander, James W. "Bill" Oxford of North Carolina, served a second term. The American Legion also launched a nationwide 100 Miles for Hope program to get American Legion Family members exercising during the pandemic and raise funds and awareness about the American Legion Veterans & Children Foundation.

Here is a partial graphic of the history timeline. It continues on to year 2020. You'll find it here: www.legion.org/alei/basic-training/history-organization/34



This ends the History portion of Basic Training. Next month will begin the next section, "Organization".

