

## The American Legion Emblem

“There shines the Emblem of The American Legion, it is your badge of distinction, honor and service. It stands for God and Country, and the highest rights of man. Of its several parts, each has a meaning.”

The Rays of the Sun form the background of our proud Emblem, and suggest that the Legion’s principles will dispel the darkness of violence and evil.

The Wreath forms the center, in loving memory of those brave comrades who gave their lives in the service of the United States, that liberty might endure.

The Star - victory symbol of World War I, symbolizes honor, glory and constancy. The letters U.S. leave no doubt as to the brightest star in the Legion’s star.

Two Large Rings – the outer ring stands for the rehabilitation of our sick and disabled buddies. The inner one denotes the welfare of America’s children.

Two Small Rings set upon the star. The outer pledges loyalty and Americanism. The inner is for service to our communities, our states and the Nation.

The words American Legion tie the whole emblem together representing truth, remembrance, constancy, honor, service, veterans affairs and rehabilitation, children and youth, loyalty, and Americanism.



## History of the Pledge of Allegiance

The original Pledge of Allegiance was written by Francis Bellamy. It was first given wide publicity through the official program of the National Public Schools Celebration of Columbus Day which was printed in The Youth’s Companion of September 8, 1892, and at the same time sent out in leaflet form to schools throughout the country. School children first recited the Pledge of Allegiance this way:

“I pledge allegiance to my Flag and to the Republic for which it stands one Nation indivisible, with Liberty and Justice for all.”

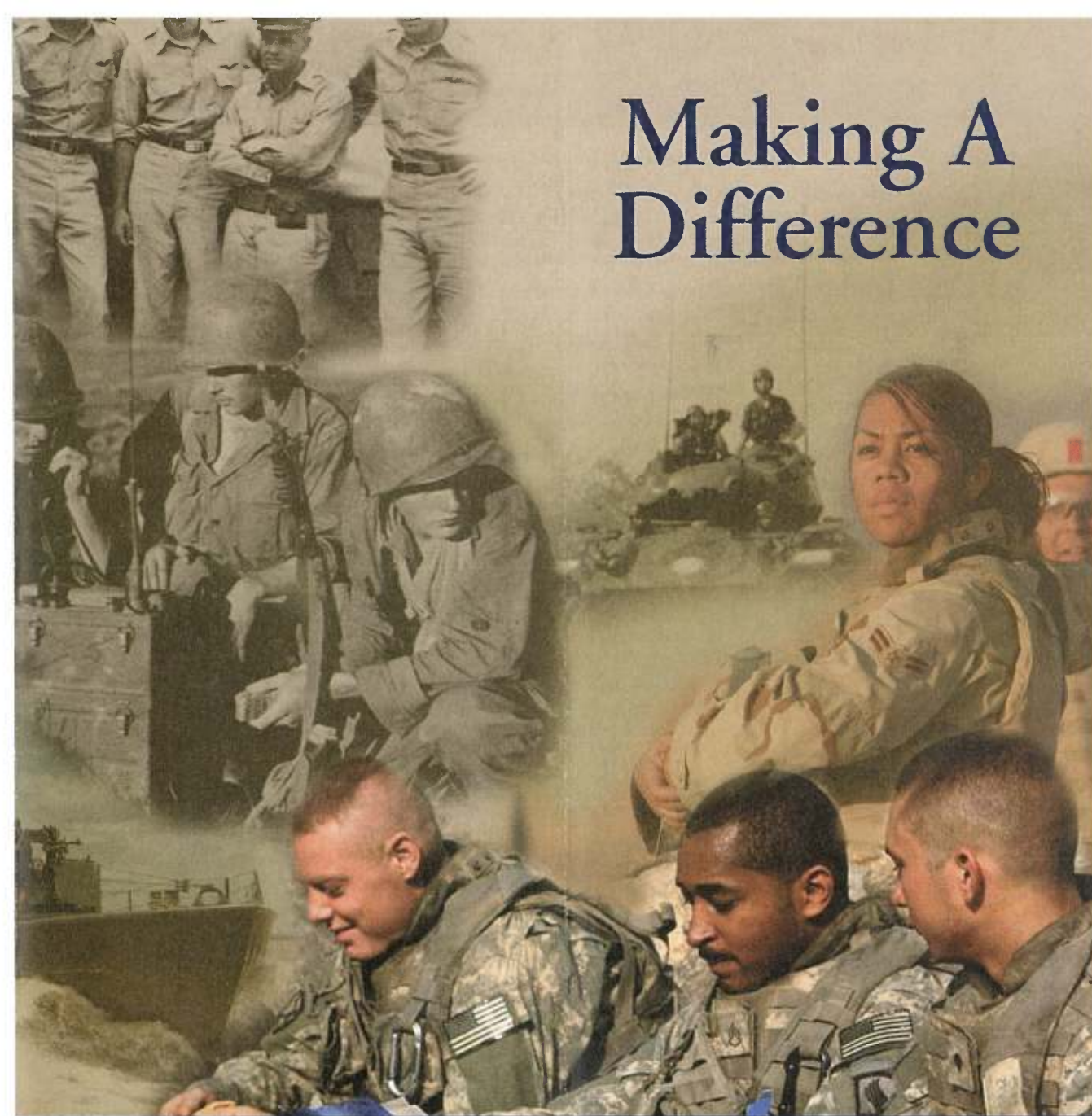
“The flag of the United States” replaced the words “my Flag” in 1923 because some foreign-born people might have in mind the flag of the country of their birth instead of the United States flag. A year later, “of America” was added after “United States.”

No form of the Pledge received official recognition by Congress until June 22, 1942, when the Pledge was formally included in the U.S. Flag Code. The official name of The Pledge of Allegiance was adopted in 1945. The last change in language came on Flag Day 1954, when Congress passed a law, which added the words “under God” after “one nation.”

Originally, the pledge was said with the right hand in the so-called “Bellamy Salute,” with the right hand resting first outward from the chest, then the arm extending out from the body. Once Hitler came to power in Europe, some Americans were concerned that this position of the arm and hand resembled the Nazi or Fascist salute. In 1942 Congress also established the current practice of rendering the pledge with the right hand over the heart.

The Flag Code specifies that any future changes to the pledge would have to be with the consent of the President.

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THE AMERICAN LEGION

# ★★★ Significant Dates ★★★

# THE AMERICAN LEGION

## Beginning

- March 15-17, 1919** The American Legion is founded in Paris by members of the American Expeditionary Force.
- Sept. 16, 1919** The U.S. Congress charters The American Legion.
- Nov. 10-12, 1919** First national convention of The American Legion convenes in Minneapolis, MN. Organization's Constitution and Preamble are adopted. Resolution adopted supporting the Boy Scouts of America as first youth program.

## 1920s

- August 9, 1921** U.S. Veterans Bureau, forerunner of the Veterans Administration, is created as a result of efforts by The American Legion.
- June 15, 1923** First "Flag Code" is drafted during conference called by The American Legion. Congress adopted the code in 1942.

## 1930s

- July 17, 1925** The American Legion Baseball program is created.
- June 23, 1935** First American Legion Boys State convenes in Springfield, IL.

## 1940s

- June 1, 1938** First American Legion National High School Oratorical Championship held in Norman, OK.
- Sept. 19-21, 1942** Preamble to the Constitution of The American Legion is changed for the first and only time since it was written in 1919. The word "War" is changed to "Wars."
- Dec. 15, 1943** Harry W. Colmery, past national commander of The American Legion, writes in longhand on hotel stationery the first draft of what will become the "GI Bill of Rights."
- June 22, 1944** President Franklin Roosevelt signs The GI Bill into law.

## 1950s

- May 29, 1946** A \$50,000 grant from The American Legion and The American Legion Auxiliary is presented to a small, struggling organization – the American Heart Association – to inaugurate a nationwide program for the study, prevention and treatment of rheumatic heart disease.
- May 4, 1950** The American Legion votes to contribute funds to the field of mental health with the provision that the three major mental health organizations then in existence be amalgamated into one. They accepted this provision and the National Association for Mental Health was born.

## 1960s

- July 9, 1954** The American Legion Child Welfare Foundation is formed.
- Sept. 1, 1966** The American Legion voices great concern over the fate of POWs in Vietnam.

## 1980s

- Aug. 26, 1982** The American Legion presents a \$1 million check to the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund toward the construction of 'The Wall' in Washington, D.C.
- July 21, 1983** The American Legion announces its sponsorship of an independent study of the effects of exposure to Agent Orange on Vietnam veterans. (The results of "The American Legion Columbia University Study of Vietnam-era Veterans" were presented to Congress in 1989.)
- Jan. 1, 1989** The American Legion fought for the VA to become a cabinet level department. The Department of Veterans Affairs begins.
- Oct. 16, 1989** Longstanding objective of The American Legion is achieved as the U.S. Court of Veterans Appeals begins operations.

## 1990s

- Oct. 11, 1990** The Family Support Network of The American Legion is formed to assist the families of military personnel deployed during Operation Desert Shield/Desert Storm.
- June 15, 1991** The American Legion's first Junior Shooting Sports National Air Rifle Championships are held at the Olympic Training Center at Colorado Springs, CO.
- Aug. 24, 1994** The American Legion announces creation of the Citizens Flag Alliance to work for a constitutional amendment to protect the American flag from physical desecration.
- Sept. 24, 1994** The American Legion announces partnership with the Smithsonian Institute's Air and Space Museum to develop an exhibit for the bomber Enola Gay, which dropped an atomic bomb on Hiroshima, Japan. Previous museum plans had drawn intense criticism from veterans, scholars and the public.

## 1990s (cont.)



## 2000s



- Jan. 30, 1995** The American Legion announces acceptance of scaled-down exhibit "without political commentary" for the Enola Gay, ending the greatest controversy in the Smithsonian Institute's 149-year history.
- Oct. 1, 1995** The American Legion forms a Persian Gulf Task Force to enhance the organization's service to these veterans.
- Sept 16, 1996** The first \$20,000 post secondary scholarship in the Samsung-American Legion High School Scholars program are granted to 10 students.
- June 11, 1997** The American Legion National Emergency Fund exceeds the \$1 million mark in grants to flood victims in Ohio, Kentucky, Indiana, Minnesota, and North Dakota.
- Sept. 3, 1997** The first National Law Enforcement Officer of the Year award is presented during the 79<sup>th</sup> National Convention in Orlando, FL.
- March 28, 2000** The American Legion, The American Legion Auxiliary and the Sons of The American Legion donate \$2.7 million to the World War II Memorial Fund. Donations exceed 3.4 million by year end.
- Sept. 5, 2000** The American Legion presents the first "Spirit of Service" Awards to active duty service members for their off-duty volunteer activities.
- Aug. 28-30, 2001** The American Legion passes resolution to rekindle Blue Star Service Banner program.
- Sept. 12, 2001** The American Legion reactivates the Family Support Network following terrorist attacks in New York City and Washington, D.C.
- Oct. 10-11, 2001** The American Legion creates the American Legacy Scholarship Fund for children of military members killed in active duty on or after Sept. 11, 2001.
- Sept. 11, 2002** The American Legion takes lead in conducting "A Day To Remember" events to mark the anniversary of the terrorist attacks on the nation.
- Nov. 8, 2002** The American Legion launches national "I Am Not A Number" campaign to identify and document the delays veterans face in obtaining earned medical care benefits from the Department of Veterans Affairs.
- Oct. 17, 2003** The American Legion efforts on Capitol Hill break the deadlock on the Disabled Veterans Tax when Congress creates a 10-year phase-in for service-connected disabled retirees to receive military retired pay and VA disability compensation without subtraction from either. Legion efforts also result in passage of the Military Family Tax Relief Act.
- Sept. 3, 2004** The American Legion lobbying leads to more progress in elimination of the Disabled Veterans Tax with passage of PL 108-375 that eliminates the 10-year phase-in for 100 percent service-connected retirees, allowing them to immediately begin receiving both retired pay and VA disability payments.
- Sept. 19, 2004** The American Legion launches a national program, the Blue Star Salute, where posts across the country hold public events to recognize troops, their families and local businesses on Armed Forces Day.
- May 7, 2005** The American Legion lobbied successfully to remove from VA funding legislation administration-proposed increases in VA prescription co-payments and institution of user fee for Priority Group 8 veterans using VA health facilities. Efforts focus on legislation to provide mandatory, vice discretionary, funding of VA health care.
- June 30, 2008** President George W. Bush signs the Post-9/11 Veterans Education Assistance Act, a modern GI Bill strongly supported by The American Legion, which lobbied on its behalf.