

INITIATION

Regular Form

The initiation of candidates for membership in The American Legion is an important function of each post. The new member needs to be shown, officially and formally, that he is indeed a part of the organization. He deserves the courtesy of being introduced to the organization, which has accepted his membership application and his dues payment. This is the purpose of the initiation ceremony.

Whether performed by the officers of the post or an established ritual team, the initiation ceremony should be conducted at least once a year. Each officer should learn his respective portion of the ceremony in order to be able to deliver it without reference to the printed text. Each initiation officer should wear the regulation American Legion cap and badge of office.

The Sergeant-at-Arms is responsible for preparation of the hall or meeting room for the initiation. He should see to it that the following items, which are presented to the candidates during the ceremony, are on hand in sufficient quantity: American Flags (initiation size), American Legion lapel pins, and Flag Etiquette booklets. All of those items are available through National Emblem Sales (see your current catalog.) In addition, the Sergeant-at-Arms, depending on the format your post wished to use for this ceremony, will set up the following items: Poppies (real or imitation) in a neat arrangement in a vase at either the station of the Second Vice Commander or near the podium identifying the station of the Commander; a gavel bell at the station of the Past Commander or near the podium of the Commander; and a miniature stand of colors consisting of the American Flag and the Legion colors at the station of the First Vice Commander or near the podium.

This ceremony is designed to conform with the floor plan of a post meeting room as illustrated. (Page 3-3 of the "Post Officers Guide and Manual of Ceremonies") Candidates are escorted by the Sergeant-at-Arms to the various officers' stations for instruction. However, the ceremony may be altered to conform with the meeting room layout as illustrated with the candidates standing in the area provided between the stations of the First Vice Commander and the Second Vice Commander. The outline of the ritual may be modified to permit all initiation officers to come to the podium to deliver their respective instructions to the candidates.

The candidates for initiation will assemble at the back of the meeting room or, preferably, in a nearby room immediately prior to the ceremony.

THE BUSINESS OF THE MEETING HAVING BEEN CLEARED, THE COMMANDER SHALL CALL THE MEETING TO ORDER WITH ONE (1) RAP OF THE GAVEL.

COMMANDER: "We shall now proceed to the initiation of new members. In order that we may impress upon these candidates the serious import and sacred obligations of American Legion membership, all present will conduct themselves in a manner befitting such ceremony.

"The Sergeant-at-Arms will present those ready for initiation."

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS, STANDING AT HIS STATION AND AFTER SALUTING THE FLAG:

"Commander, there are - (number ?) - veterans who have been accepted for membership in The American Legion and are awaiting the obligation."

COMMANDER: "As these candidates have been accepted for membership, we shall proceed with the initiation. Sergeant-at-Arms, escort the candidates into the hall and place them properly before the Flag."

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS, AFTER ESCORTING CANDIDATES TO APPROPRIATE LOCATION:

"Commander, I present these candidates for initiation into The American Legion."

COMMANDER, AFTER GIVING THREE (3) RAPS OF THE GAVEL:

"The chaplain will offer prayer."

THE CHAPLAIN STEPS TO THE RIGHT OF THE AMERICAN FLAG AND FACES THE CANDIDATES.

CHAPLAIN: "Let us pray. Our Heavenly Father, grant that we may approach this ceremony with clean hearts. Keep us ever mindful of our obligation to those who have made the supreme sacrifice for our country and her noble purpose. We humbly pray that your love may find its way into the hearts and souls of all men that they shall never again seek occasion of conflict, but live in peace and harmony, laboring for the broader benefits of mankind. You have blessed us with the opportunity to serve our country in her hour of need. We pray that you would grant us continued opportunities to serve in time of peace as we served in time of war. Bless The American Legion and those here who await its obligation, that together we may advance the sacred cause of Justice, Freedom, and Democracy; that together we may serve you and our country in undivided loyalty. Amen."

THE CHAPLAIN RETURNS TO HIS STATION. THE MEMBERSHIP IS SEATED BY ONE (1) RAP OF THE GAVEL AND POST COMMANDER ADDRESSES THE CANDIDATES.

COMMANDER: "The American Legion cherishes four great principles: Justice, Freedom, Democracy, and Loyalty. Its pledge is service to veterans, especially the disabled, the distressed, and their widows and orphans. The cause of service to community, state, and nation is jealously guarded and opportunity to serve is offered to all members. Before you are asked to assume the responsibility of membership in The American Legion by accepting its obligations, you will hear an explanation of the principles and symbols of our organization.

"Sergeant-at-Arms, conduct the candidates to the Second Vice Commander for instruction in Justice."

THE SERGEANT-AT-ARMS ESCORTS THE CANDIDATES TO THE DESIGNATED POSITION, FACING THE SECOND VICE COMMANDER'S STATION. THE SECOND VICE COMMANDER RISES.

SECOND VICE COMMANDER: "Justice makes no distinction of persons. It favors neither high nor low, neither rich nor poor, neither the classes nor the masses. Justice is the guiding star of life. It transcends all boundaries of race and creed. Justice for our sick and disabled veterans has always been, and must forever be, the first concern of The American Legion. The rehabilitation of those men and women who valiantly offered their all in response to their country's call, the relief of those who have suffered by that sacrifice, is our hallowed duty. Legionnaires must be ever vigilant that none shall feel the injustice of work undone. The American Legion is ever mindful of its duty to the nation, and the nation's duty to those who answered its call in time of war.

"This display of poppies, the official flower of The American Legion, serves as a memorial to those who gave their lives that Justice might prevail. Remember their sacrifice! May your actions forever bring credit upon The American Legion, an organization which is a living memorial to the dead heroes who fought that Justice, the divine right of man, might ever endure.

"Sergeant-at-Arms, conduct the candidates to the Past Commander for instruction in Freedom."

THE SERGEANT-AT-ARMS ESCORTS THE CANDIDATES TO THE DESIGNATED POSITION, FACING THE PAST COMMANDER'S STATION. THE PAST COMMANDER RISES.

PAST COMMANDER: "Freedom is an ideal of surpassing strength; it is the power of self-determination. For Freedom, Americans throughout the years willingly have fought and died.

"In the War of the Revolution, Freedom was won for the people of the United States. In the Wars of the Twentieth Century, the torch of Freedom led and inspired the American forces through the darkness of conflict.

"The American Legion is dedicated to the concept of Freedom from injustice to the children and youth of our Nation. No nation can long endure if it fails to care for its future citizens. The American Legion has achieved recognition as a National leader in behalf of the nation's children and youth that they may know that Freedom from want, ignorance, and Tyranny are God-given rights to be preserved at whatever the cost. The American Legion staunchly defends the principle of equal opportunity for all in a country where all may enjoy the blessings of Freedom.

"This bell typifies the famous Liberty Bell which in bold and clarion tones rang out the news of Freedom and the birth of a new nation. It is here to remind you that America will remain the land of the free only as long as America is the home of the brave.

"I give you the American Flag, the emblem of Freedom, and a Flag Etiquette booklet."

THE PAST COMMANDER HANDS EACH CANDIDATE A SMALL AMERICAN FLAG AND FLAG ETIQUETTE BOOKLET.

"Sergeant-at-Arms, conduct the candidates to the First Vice Commander for instruction in Democracy and its meaning to America."

THE SERGEANT-AT-ARMS ESCORTS THE CANDIDATES TO THE DESIGNATED POSITION FACING THE FIRST VICE COMMANDER'S STATION. THE FIRST VICE COMMANDER RISES.

FIRST VICE COMMANDER: "Democracy is government of the people, by the people, and for the people. Democracy is American in principle and universal in appeal. It offers a voice in government to each citizen. Of its benefits, each citizen may share.

"Democracy finds expression with The American Legion. Within our meeting halls, distinction of rank is unknown. All Legionnaires are equal in a common service. Each Legionnaire is permitted a free voice, but not a voice so free as to transcend the limits of Liberty.

"Democracy can exist only where all do their share, where each citizen knows and accepts the responsibility of service to community, state and nation. Legionnaires must encourage the exercise of franchise among our citizens as a means of preserving and perpetuating our precious heritage. Yes, Democracy to The American Legion is real. It carries a responsibility which each Legionnaire should accept.

(HERE FIRST VICE COMMANDER REFERS TO EITHER A MINIATURE STAND OF COLORS CONSISTING OF THE AMERICAN FLAG AND AMERICAN LEGION COLORS LOCATED AT HIS STATION OR THE POST'S SET OF COLORS AT THE FRONT OF THE ROOM, DEPENDING ON THE FORMAT OF INITIATION USED.)

"These Flags symbolize America, the home of Democracy, and The American Legion. The red stripes of our country's Flag represent the valor, the zeal, and the passion of those who defended the noble cause of individual dignity; the white stripes signify hope, purity, and integrity. The stars of white on a field of blue proclaim that the heights of pure Democracy reach to the very stars of the heavens. This blue and gold emblem against a background of blue reminds us constantly of our golden opportunities as Legionnaires to promote and protect the principle of Democracy in a government so dearly won and so valiantly maintained.

"Sergeant-at-Arms, conduct the candidates to the Commander for instruction in Loyalty and its application in The American Legion."

THE SERGEANT-AT-ARMS ESCORTS THE CANDIDATES TO THE DESIGNATED POSITION FACING THE COMMANDER'S STATION. THE COMMANDER RISES.

COMMANDER: "Loyalty is an attribute of The American Legion as it is the first virtue of the person serving in the uniform of our country. It is as dear as Justice is desirable, as Freedom is glorious, as Democracy is practical. Loyalty will lead us to defend our organization in all that is right, and to do our utmost that we shall be right. Loyalty to our country is the basis of true Americanism. Disloyalty and oppression are foreign to our ideals; nor do we tolerate any form of radicalism or violence seeking to destroy our form of government. The Constitution of the United States of America, the bulwark of our liberties and guarantor of our rights, is sacred to the Legionnaire. Be ever loyal to that which has established your freedoms and defined your responsibilities. Understand that The American Legion is in no sense a military organization. Because its membership is drawn from every race, religion, occupational pursuit, and political persuasion, The American Legion is obligated to strict neutrality on all questions concerning religion, politics, and industrial strife. You have received instruction in The American Legion's four basic attributes--Justice,

Freedom, Democracy, and Loyalty--and its great principles of service. Are you now ready and willing to obligate yourself as expressed in the Preamble to the Constitution of The American Legion? If so, you will each answer, "I am."

CANDIDATES: "I am." (ALL CANDIDATES MUST ANSWER, SIGNIFYING THEY ARE WILLING TO TAKE THE OBLIGATION.)

COMMANDER: "All present will stand at attention during the obligation."

(THREE (3) RAPS OF THE GAVEL.)

THE COMMANDER STEPS TO THE RIGHT AND IMMEDIATELY NEXT TO THE AMERICAN FLAG, RAISES HIS RIGHT HAND, AND ADDRESSES THE CANDIDATES.

COMMANDER: "You raise your right hand and repeat after me:

"I, (HERE GIVE YOUR NAME),

"do, solemnly pledge

"To uphold and defend

"The Constitution of the United States of America;

"To maintain law and order;

"To foster and perpetuate

"A one hundred per cent 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;

"To all of which I pledge myself

"For God and Country.

"I am not a member and do not subscribe

"To the principles of any group

"Opposed to our form of government.

"Hands down."

THE COMMANDER RESUMES HIS STATION AND SEATS THE MEMBERSHIP WITH ONE (1) RAP OF THE GAVEL. THE CHAPLAIN RISES AND STANDS NEAR THE EMBLEM.

CHAPLAIN: "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 that form the background stand for the principles of The American Legion, for Loyalty, Justice, Freedom, and Democracy will dispel the darkness of violence, strife, and evil.

"The two gold rings around the field of blue, bearing our name, typify two of our four main objectives-- rehabilitation of our sick- and disabled veterans, and the care for the children and youth of America. Within the rings is placed a wreath for remembrance of those who died that liberty might live. Upon the wreath is set a star reflecting the glory of victory and our promise to the world the perpetuation of the cardinal principles of The American Legion.

"Set upon the star are two bronze rings which represent the other two of our main objectives--a deep and abiding spirit of Americanism, and service to the community, state, and nation.

"The inscription demands that the wearer shall ever guard the sanctity of home, of country, of free institutions."

THE CHAPLAIN RETURNS TO HIS STATION. THE COMMANDER RISES AND ADDRESSES THE CANDIDATES.

COMMANDER: "The Emblem of The American Legion is the emblem of Americanism. Americanism is unity of love, singleness of allegiance, practicality of purpose, care of the distressed, the education of children, all directed to the promotion of a common good. It is that spirit of patriotism which shall ever preserve our land from the stagnation which is the death of peoples. As Legionnaires, we preach and teach the spirit of patriotism throughout the Republic. We must be ever mindful of our obligations as citizens, striving constantly to redeem those obligations. In the Emblem of The American Legion there is great prophecy. It is the promise of the defenders of the Republic, pledging the fullest good for the betterment of all.

"I welcome you to The American Legion, and present you with the Emblem of The American Legion, a symbol of service."

THE COMMANDER STEPS FROM HIS STATION, GIVES EACH NEW LEGIONNAIRE AN EMBLEM LAPEL BUTTON, AND SHAKES HIS HAND.