

American Legion Department of New York

Protocol and Planning Guide for Activities



Revision #4, 2023-2024
Sharon Rayno, Chair
Protocol Committee
Department of New York

Purpose:

This Protocol Guide is intended to assist those responsible for planning and conducting American Legion functions to achieve successful outcomes for these events. Following established protocols enables functions to proceed smoothly and predictably and serves to enhance the image of both the host organization and The American Legion, Department of New York.

Scope:

This Protocol Guide covers planning and conduct of American Legion functions, including visitations by American Legion dignitaries. It does not cover public events such as Memorial Day and Veterans' Day ceremonies.

Responsibility:

The maintenance of this Protocol Guide is the responsibility of the Protocol Committee of the Department of New York. Recommendations for revisions and/or addenda are encouraged and should be submitted in writing to:

Protocol Committee
The American Legion
Department of New York
1304 Park Blvd
Troy, New York 12180-9913

BASIC PROTOCOL GUIDELINES

When our National and Department Officers travel around the country and state, many of you will be involved with protocol, as it applies to the American Legion during the visits of your guests.

While most Legionnaires are polite and knowledgeable about etiquette there have been examples of poor taste and lack of protocol during past visits of your dignitaries.

While such errors in judgement can be the result of many things, they are more than likely the result of poor planning, a lack of communication or a lack of knowledge about the customs of the American Legion.

Communication: The chairperson should provide all the details about the itinerary to guests. Be specific and complete in the information you send to the guest(s). Inform your guests when they should be ready, and don't plan on too tight a schedule.

Coordination: If possible, coordinate with the neighboring county to arrange for one hotel that is central in location between the two counties. This will reduce travel and checking into multiple hotels for the guests.

Attire:

- Business attire = suit and tie or dress/pant suit.
- Business casual = Legion polo/or other type of shirt with collar; khaki or other than jeans pants or casual dress/skirt/pants/polo shirt. No shorts, tacky, dirty clothing.
- Dinner in Honor of the National Commander: Business casual, except for the head table, where dress is business.
- For all other official Department-level meal events: Business casual.
- Luncheons and tours: If possible, tell the guest (s) what they should be wearing.
- The Legion cap should always be worn during legion events based on Legion cap etiquette.

Contacts: A complete description of the itinerary is imperative. Make sure the guest (s) have telephone numbers of committee chairs and alternates. Confirm their travel plans, including arrival/departure times. Don't assume anything!

Meet: Meet your guest (s) properly and punctually. He/she should be met at the hotel or prior agreed upon arrival location. Be sure to be there waiting for them. Registration and room assignment should be done before they arrive, and the room should be the best available.

Gift Baskets: The room should reflect comfort, hospitality, and your careful planning. A modest arrangement of flowers, fruit and/or gift baskets are a nice welcome. Contents may include items from local vendors, the local newspaper, area attraction pamphlets, etc.

Conduct during events: There should be NO fundraising during formalities. Guests should not become intoxicated to the point of misconduct and embarrassment to the host organization or our guests. Dinner should only be served when scheduled, not during formal introductions and speeches.

Local Tours: If possible, local sightseeing should be planned. After all, the visit may be the only time your guest will be in your area of the country. What may be an everyday attraction for you may well be a “once in a lifetime” opportunity for your visitors.

Constraints: Due to budget, location availability and membership participation, organizations may have to limit their ability to offer a complete visitation experience, per the Protocol Guide, for Department guests. As a result, reducing the size of the head table and complimentary meals is acceptable. A late lunch instead of dinner is acceptable.

Meetings: Only paid-up members and Commander authorized guests are permitted at meetings. However, exceptions can be made with the Commanders approval, if a member has a disability and needs the attention of his or her spouse or an adult child it should be allowed.

This communication is the last stop in the process of protocol and being nice. It is the proper conclusion to your event and ties a ribbon on the whole package.

REMEMBER, PROPER PROTOCOL WILL MAKE YOUR EVENT BE MEMORABLE FOR BOTH YOU AND YOUR GUEST AND REFLECTS ON THE AMERICAN LEGION AS A WHOLE.

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General Planning Guidelines

Successful outcomes are usually determined by detailed planning and effective execution. The individual responsible for an American Legion function must establish an appropriate team to handle the various details of the planning and execution phases. Team members should be familiar with American Legion protocol. Most visits are joint, so the involvement of the entire Legion family is also important to ensure that information is disseminated to all. It is important to remember that the same recognition and courtesies are extended to the dignitaries from each faction of the Legion family. The Event Chairperson must communicate frequently with the County/District Protocol Chairs to ensure that the event follows proper procedures. Following are issues which should be addressed in the selection of team members and the planning and conduct of American Legion Functions.

- **Confirmation of Date:** This is a critical issue, often overlooked. In the case of a National Commander's Visitation, for instance, their visit is part of a country-wide itinerary established well in advance, and it determines the schedules for many other Department of New York representatives. For a Department Commander's Visitation, it must be communicated through the County Visitation Form (see Appendix "I"). Schedules sometimes change, so we must be alert to any changes and their implications.
- **Site Selection (pg. 3):** The function of site selection depends upon its purpose. It should be in a central location, readily accessible to those attending and be located near housing facilities that are adequate to house a traveling party. The facility should be able to support the size of the audience. Considerations: room layout requirements, proper public address equipment, adequate parking, etc. This is preferably an American Legion Post, but site selection should be based upon the suitability of the facility.
- **Event Chair:** This is a key individual. The event chair should have prior experience with planning and conducting the type of function in question and should have a proven record of accomplishment of managing a functional team, motivating other team members to perform their assigned tasks correctly and advising them appropriately.
- **Dinner Chair (pgs. 5&6, Appendices A, B 1-2, C, and F):** Must be able to manage all details of dinner planning with the host Post of the event facility management. Responsibilities can include tickets, ensuring proper room layout, head table arrangement, reserved tables, seating, menu planning, flowers and decorations, and program development, etc.
- **Communications Chair (Pg. 7, Appendices G, H, I 1-2):** This responsibility should include both internal American Legion communications (including the American Legion Auxiliary and The Sons of The American Legion) and public relations activities. This position should be filled by someone with excellent communications skills and a history of working with the media.
- **Itinerary Chair (Pg. 4):** This responsibility should include transportation, coordination of any tours to be conducted, rooming, and special parking, etc.
- **Master of Ceremonies (Pg 8, Appendices D1-4, and E):** Must be an effective public speaker and familiar with American Legion Protocol.
- **Color Guard:** Posting of the colors enhances any American Legion function and should be included whenever possible.

A detailed description of the individual responsibilities of team members follows on the noted pages and in the noted appendices.

General Visitation Protocol

Following protocol enables American Legion activities to proceed smoothly and predictably and serves to provide the courtesies that we should extend to one another. It enhances the image of The American Legion to the benefit of everyone associated or touched by its activities and functions.

Topic	Guideline
County Commander's Visitation to Posts	The County Commander and County Membership Chairperson should individually attend at least one complete meeting at all posts in their respective county, coordinating these visits well in advance.
District Commander's Visitation to Counties	The District Commander and District Membership Chairperson should individually attend at least one complete meeting at all counties in their respective District, coordinating these visits well in advance.
Department Commander's Visitations to the Counties	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coordination for Department Commander's Visitations to counties should start with the County Visitation Form (See Appendix "I") • The county organization is the host for these visitations. Those individuals' receiving complimentary tickets is at the discretion of the county organization. R.S.V.P. letters of invitation to guests with itinerary and complimentary ticket(s), if applicable, should be sent to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Department level - Commander, Adjutant, NEC and/or Alternate NEC, Vice Commander (for the affected District), Sergeant-at-Arms. If joint visitation: Auxiliary President, and S.A.L. Detachment Commander. • District level - Commander, Vice Commanders, Adjutant, Treasurer, Judge Advocate, Historian, Chaplain, Sergeant-at-Arms, Executive Committee, and Aides. • County level- Commander, Vice Commanders, Adjutant, Past Department Commanders, Past Department Presidents, and Past Detachment Commanders from the host county, County Auxiliary Officers (if not a joint visitation), County S.A.L. Commander, County S.A.L. Officers. • Local dignitaries at the discretion of the host organization.

Topic	Guideline
National Commander's Visitation to the District	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The district organization is the host for these visitations. Coordination with The Department Commander and The Department Adjutant is essential. Because this visit will take place in a county within the district it is important to involve both the district and county visitation committees in the planning and execution. • R S V P, letters of invitation, with itinerary and complimentary ticket(s), if applicable, should be sent to: See Department Commander's Visitation invitee list, above, plus any media representatives as applicable

Site Selection Guidelines

Site selection should provide the maximum suitability and convenience for the attendees of the function with the goal of maximizing participation. This is especially important for National Commanders' Visitations and Department Commanders' Visitations.

Topic	Suggestions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Geographic Location 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Central to applicable region (district, county) considering population distributions. • Accessible to transportation, e.g., airport for National Commander's Visit. • Media presence, if applicable. • Points of interest for tour, if applicable. • Complete addresses for all events for those using GPS.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Large enough to handle an anticipated audience. • Parking (including reserved spots for Honored Guests). • Food preparation, serving capacity. • Separate luncheon facility, if applicable • Press Conference area, if applicable
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rooming 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Suitable hotel/motel accommodations (small suite for National Commander, if applicable). • Consider all potential guests in the visiting the party. • Provide tax exempt certificates.

Itinerary Planning Guidelines

These are the essential support activities that will enable the overall function to run smoothly and problem-free. Visitors from outside the area will experience the results of proper itinerary planning. Paying attention to the details pays off with satisfactory results.

Topic	Suggestions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Finalize list of visitors (from R.S.V.P.'s) with arrival times, departure times, rooming requirements, transportation requirements, if any.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agenda 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop detailed activities plan to include arrivals of visitors, luncheon, tour, press conference, dinner, other related activities, breakfast next day, departures, etc. • Coordinate plans with Communications Chair and other event committee chairs. • Coordinate agenda with Department Commander/ Adjutant and other Department-level organizations (Auxiliary, S.A.L.) as applicable.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rooming 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National Commander should be in a small suite. • National Commander's Aide located near the Commander. • Department Commander located near National Commander • Consider spouses accompanying guests. • Advise guests of financial arrangements for room charges and other miscellaneous charges to the room. • Room charges for National Commander and Aide should be paid by the host organization. • Other guest room charges are absorbed at the discretion of the host organization.

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Transportation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Establish Welcoming Committee:<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The Department Commander and distinguished guests should be greeted by the Department Vice-Commander for the Area, Department Sergeant-at-Arms/Aide from the Host County, District Commander, County Commander, plus other(s) upon arrival at the motel or other designated location.• The National Commander should be greeted by Department Commander, Department Adjutant, Department Vice Commander for the Area, and District Commander plus other(s) at the discretion of the host organization.• Coordinate airport pick-up, if applicable• Use private autos/vans and carpool if appropriate.• Arrange for reserved parking for visiting dignitaries.• Usually, reserved parking spots are provided for National Commander, Department Commander, Department Auxiliary President, and S.A.L. Detachment Commander.• Consult with Riders for motorcycle escort or motorcade escort.
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Dinner Planning Guidelines

Proper planning will ensure a smooth-running function and support the necessary protocol. The following are guidelines which may help in planning the dinner and associated activities.

Topic	Suggestions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facility Selection 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish preliminary estimate of attendance, usually based upon experience. • Adequate parking available? Reserved parking spaces? • Will it support room layout? (See Appendix "A") • Public Address System - Conduct system check before the event. • Kitchen facilities - serving capability to manage anticipated attendance expeditiously. • Note that Department dinners and events involving special guests should have dinner served on dinnerware as in China dishes with metal utensils. (No paper plates or plastic utensils)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Menu & Refreshments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Time - social hour, dinner service, ceremonies • Dinner selection • Hors D'oeuvres • Open bar vs. cash bar • Cost calculation, per person and total (consider cost of complimentary tickets and other non-food costs)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tickets 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop list of distinguished guests (free tickets) if funds are available, suggested recipients of complimentary tickets would be: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Department Commander and their Aides</i> • <i>Department Vice Commander from host org.</i> • <i>District Commander</i> • <i>Department President</i> • <i>District President</i> • <i>Detachment Commander and his Aides</i> • <i>Detachment District Commander</i> • <i>NEC and/or Alternate NEC, if invited.</i> • <i>Spouses of Guests receiving complimentary tickets</i> • <i>Others as host organization desires</i> • Develop cost per ticket (note costs like decorations.) • Develop advertising strategy, invitation letter. • Design/print tickets (see Appendix "C") <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continued.....

Dinner Planning Guidelines (Continued)

Topic	Suggestions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tickets (continued) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish ticket sales team, distribute tickets, record numbered blocks if applicable, develop sales records system. • Distribute complimentary tickets (indicate “Complimentary” on the ticket)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Room Layout 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coordinate with banquet facility (see Appendix “A”) for head table location, distinguished guests table(s), etc. • Table tent cards, head table place cards • Head table arrangement (see Appendix “B”)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Programs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Usually printed just prior to function to accommodate last-minute changes. • Should list guests and agenda (see Appendix “F”)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decorations, etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Room decorations • Flowers (at head table, other tables?) • Corsages/boutonnieres for head table guests • Banner(s)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Program Order 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The order of the program is up to the discretion of the hosting organization. Please note that all elements of the program need to be included. For instance, the hosting organization may wish to change the speakers to the first part of the program and have the dinner after.

Communications Planning Guidelines

Getting the word out is essential. Most American Legion functions require communication both within the American Legion Family and to the general public.

Topic

Suggestions

Topic	Suggestions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Notification & Coordination 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Department Commander's Visitation - use form as shown in Appendix "I-1 & I-2" • National Commander's Visitation - date will be advised by Department Adjutant. Coordinate all details closely with Department Commander and Department Adjutant. • Coordinate with Department Auxiliary, and Sons of The American Legion,
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Invitations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Letters of invitation to Distinguished Guests, local dignitaries, news media, etc. See Appendix "H". Include complimentary ticket(s) with invitation, where applicable. List should include: • Department level - Commander, Adjutant, NEC and/or Alternate NEC, Vice Commander (for the affected District), Sergeant-at-Arms, If joint visitation: Auxiliary President, and S.A.L. Detachment Commander. • District level - Commander, Vice Commanders, Adjutant, Treasurer, Judge Advocate, Historian, Chaplain, Sergeant-at-Arms, Executive Committee, and Aides. • County level- Commander, Vice Commanders, Adjutant, Past Department Commanders, Past Department Presidents, and Past Detachment Commanders from the host county, County Auxiliary Officers (if not a joint visitation), County S.A.L. Commander, County S.A.L. Officers. • Advise guests who will be seated at Head Table that they will be seated there and whether they will be speaking. • For those who will participate in an itinerary, describe what will be done on the tour, etc. • Advise rooming arrangements as applicable.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Publicity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • News releases to local TV, Radio, print media (See Appendix “G”) • Usually, a National Commander's Visitation will include a press conference. • Determine invitation list and suitable site. • Posters to advertise event. • American Legion Post Newsletter article(s)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Obtain biographical data for honored guest(s) for use in news releases and programs. Edit as appropriate. Obtain pictures if they are available for news releases and/or programs. • Gift(s) for honored guest(s)

Speaking Protocol

Protocol helps to make American Legion functions proceed smoothly and expeditiously. All speeches should be brief with a simple and clear message. This will help to keep the interest of the audience.

Topic	Guideline
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Speaking Order 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The main speaker/guest of honor speaks last as he/she will receive the longest speech of introduction and their address will conclude the speaking portion of the program.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Speeches of Introduction 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Should be brief, to-the-point. No preaching, i.e., membership, programs, etc. • Refrain from reciting biographical data, use anecdotes when appropriate. • Length of speech of introduction varies with respect to the rank of the individual being introduced; the highest-ranking guest receives the longest speech of introduction.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction of Head Table 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Generally done by the Master of Ceremonies. • The order of introduction starts with speaker's extreme left, working toward the center, then with speaker's extreme right, working toward the center. • Introductions should be brief - names and titles/functions. • Refrain from lengthy introductions of any individual.
	<p>Page 11</p>

- **Order of Introductions**

- Are generally done in order of rank within the organization, from low to high:
 - *Local dignitaries, non-American Legion guests,*
 - *S.A.L. Officers - Local, District, Department, National*
 - *Auxiliary Officers - Local, District, Department, National*
 - *American Legion Officers - Local, District, Department, National*

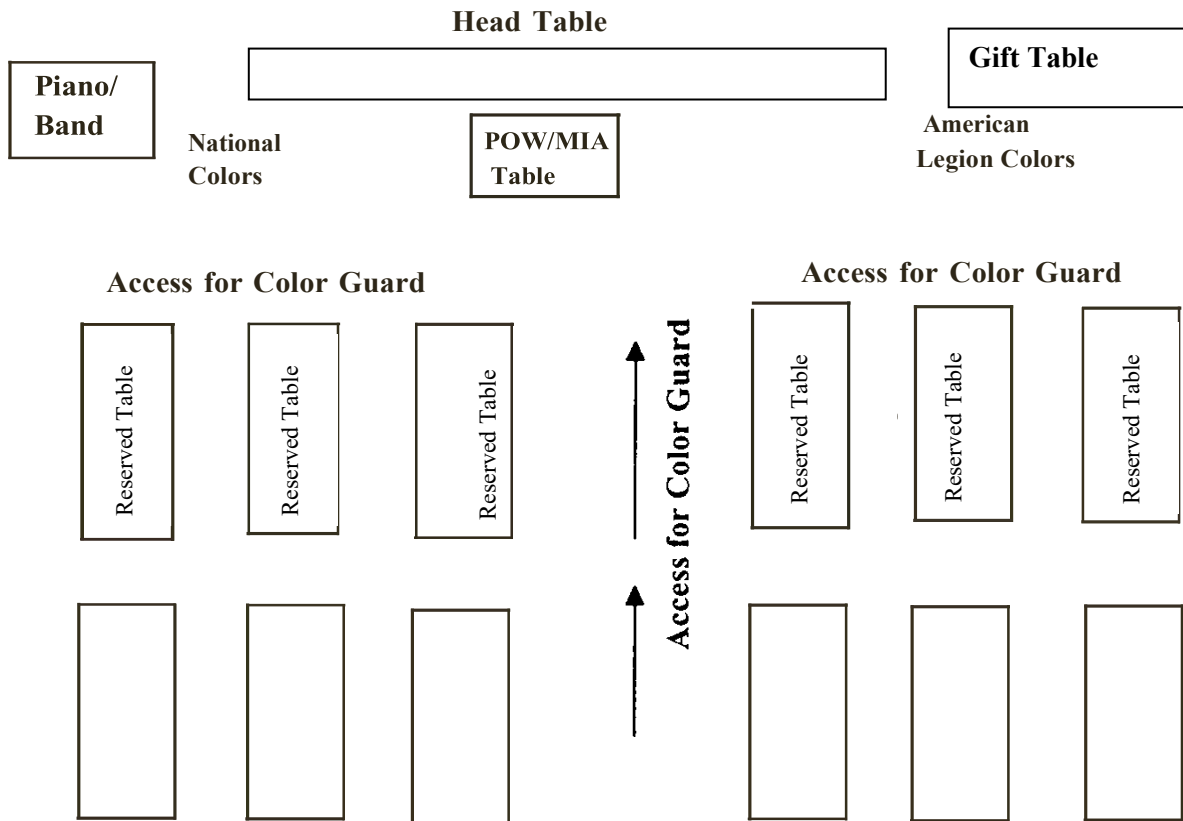
American Legion Officers are usually introduced in the order by which they are installed into office:

- *Sergeant-at-Arms*
- *Service Officer*
- *Historian*
- *Judge Advocate*
- *Chaplain*
- *Treasurer*
- *Adjutant*
- *Vice-Commander*
- *Commander*

Note: If the NEC or Alternate NEC is present, this officer should be introduced just prior to the Department Commander

Room Layout Guidelines

A proper room layout enables the audience to participate fully and serves to establish an appropriate atmosphere for the occasion. The total number of guests at the head table is up to the host organization however a good rule of thumb is that at a minimum the head table should accommodate the following:
National Commanders visitation to the District: no one lower in office than the District Commander, the District President, the District Detachment Commander and the District Chaplains should be seated.
Department Commanders visit to the county: no one lower than the County Commander, the County President, the County Detachment Commander, and the County Chaplains should be seated.



Reserved Tables

Department Commander's Visitation:

- Past Department Commander(s)*
- Past Department President(s)*
- Spouses of Guests at Head Table*
- Host Post Commander/Spouse*
- Host Unit President/Spouse*
- Other honored guests at discretion of Committee, e.g.,*
- Past Department Officers, District Officers, etc.*

National Commander's Visitation:

- Past Department Commander(s)*
- Past Department President(s)*
- Spouses of Guests at Head Table*
- Host County Commander/Spouse*
- Host County Auxiliary President/Spouse*
- Other honored guests at discretion of Committee,*
- e.g., Past Department Officers, etc.*

Notes

If the Head Table is raised, must have a front skirt or drape. A front skirt or drape is preferable in any case.

Need wide aisle ways for Color Guard if Colors are to be posted.

Designated No-smoking areas should be indicated.

The reception/registration table to collect tickets/money should be located outside of the main function room.

Tent Cards will indicate Reserved tables.

Place cards indicating guest's name should be at each place on the Head Table.

Allow enough space between the wall and seated guests at the Head table to allow for easy passage of speakers/presenters.

Head Table Configuration Guidelines

The Head Table is a place of distinction. Placement of guests at the Head Table is indicative of their rank within the American Legion and protocol should be followed explicitly.

(See note on page B-1 for exceptions and other suggested configurations)

For Department Commanders Visitation to the County:

- A- County Chaplain
- B- Department Vice-Commander
- C- NEC (if room at Head Table)
- D- District Commander
- E- County Commander
- F- Department Commander
- G- Master of Ceremonies
- H- Lectern
- I- Auxiliary Department President
- J- County Auxiliary President
- K- District Auxiliary President
- L- Department Detachment Commander
- M- County Detachment Commander
- N- District Detachment Commander
- O- County Auxiliary Chaplain

Head Table

A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O
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Audience

For National Commanders Visitation to the District:

- A- District Chaplain
- B- NEC
- C- Department Vice-Commander
- D- District Commander
- E- Department Adjutant
- F- Department Commander
- G- National Commander
- H- Master of Ceremonies
- I- Lectern
- J- Auxiliary Department President
- K- District Auxiliary President
- L- District Detachment Commander
- M- Detachment Vice-Commander
- N- Department Detachment Commander
- O- District Auxiliary Chaplain

Head Table

A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O
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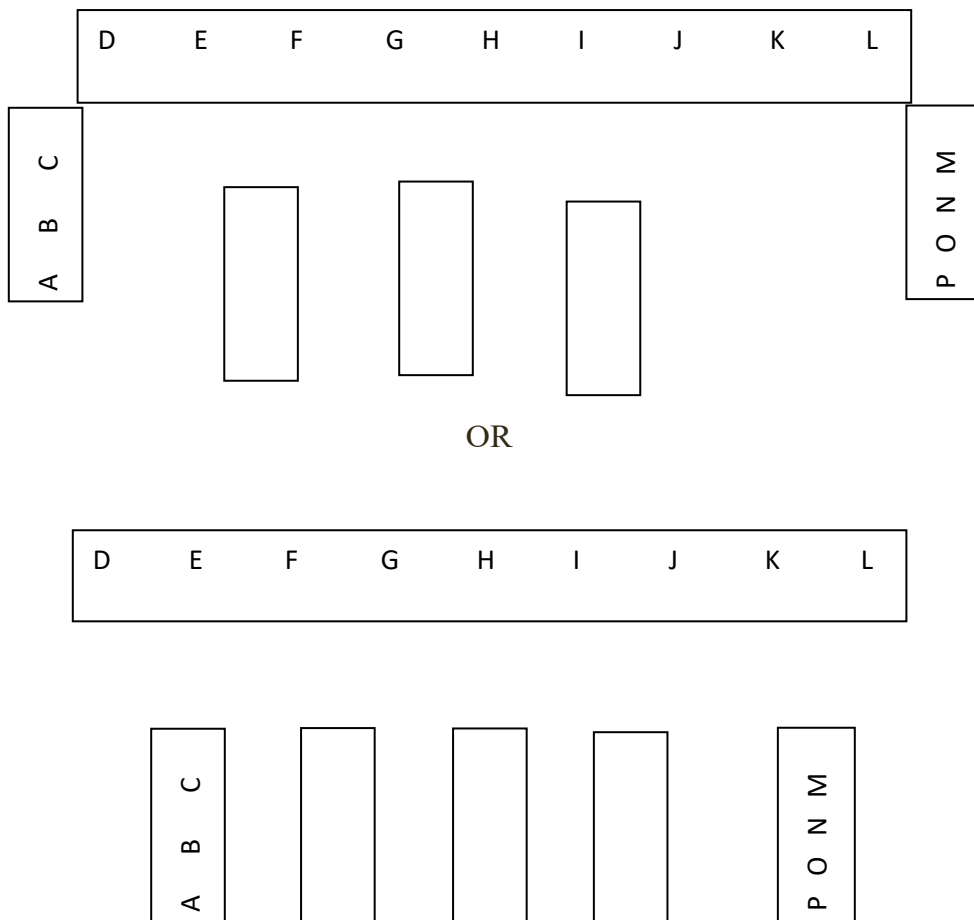
Audience

Head Table Configuration Guidelines (Continued)

Adjusting Head Table Configuration due to space constraints or adding guests to the head table.

- Depending on space constraints, such as a dinner at a restaurant or smaller dining area at a legion post, reducing the head table configuration is warranted.
 - Dignitaries may be seated by adding tables on either end of the head table forming a U shape or reserved tables directly in front of the head table.
- Other distinguished guests may be located at the Head Table if there is room, and the head table configuration isn't altered.
- An alternate seating arrangement may be followed as shown below.
- Other Distinguished Guests may be located at reserved tables at the discretion of the Committee.

For National and Department Commanders Visitation to the District or County:



Sample Ticket Layout

Tickets should provide essential information for event attendees and provide a means to record sales and receipts.

Joint Visitation Dinner	
<i>In honor of</i>	
Department Commander John Doe	
Department President Jane Smith	
Detachment Commander William Simpson	
January 26, 2024	
Hyatt Regency, Waterloo, NY	
Social Hour: 5 PM - Dinner: 6 PM	
Donation \$30.00 each	No. 174

Ticket blanks are 2.25" x 3.75"

OR

Name _____	Number of Guests _____	Cost \$30/per guest
Phone _____		
Meal Choice: Chicken _____	Pork _____	
	Check no. _____	Total Enclosed _____
<i>(may be used at the bottom of a flyer/invitation)</i>		

Notes:

- *The word "Complimentary" should be written on complimentary tickets.*
- *Tickets should be serialized to enable record keeping and provide the best possible estimate of final audience size.*

Program Activity	Comment(s)/Suggested Wording
Call to Order	<i>May I have your attention please? (...pause...)</i>
Entrance of the Head Table and Honored Guest(s)	Distinguished Guests at the Head table may be escorted into the function room at the beginning of the event as a group, reserving the Honored Guest(s) for last. <i>Please rise for the entrance of the Head Table, escorted by (name, title).</i> Then individually introduce the guest(s) of honor... <i>Let us welcome our Honored Guest(s) for this evening (name, title), escorted by (name, title).</i>
Salute Colors (if the colors are in place)	<i>Please rise to salute the Colors of our Nation. (...pause...)</i> <i>Right hand salute! (...pause...) Ready, two!</i>
Posting Colors (if used)	<i>Please rise for the posting of our Nation's Colors. (...pause...)</i> As the colors begin to move, <i>Right hand salute!</i> Salute is held until the Colors are posted, then <i>Ready, two!</i> Allow color guard time to leave.
Invocation	<i>We will have the Invocation delivered by (_____), Chaplain of (_____). Please uncovered. After Invocation is delivered.... Thank you, (_____).</i>
Pledge of Allegiance	<i>Placing your right hand over your heart, please recite with me the Pledge of Allegiance to our Flag. (Remain uncovered)</i>
National Anthem (if used)	<i>Please join (_____) in the singing of our National Anthem. Render a hand salute or place your hand over your heart) (Remain uncovered.)</i>
POW/MIA Remembrance Service	MC may conduct POW/MIA Service, or it may be conducted by another. <i>Please remain uncovered while we conduct a service of remembrance for our POW's and MIA's. This Service will be conducted by (_____)</i>
Welcome	Appropriate brief welcoming remarks by MC

Program Activity**Comment(s)/Suggested Wording**

Introduction of Head Table	<p>Brief introduction of Head Table, names, and titles/positions only.</p> <p><i>We are pleased to have with us tonight several distinguished guests seated at our Head Table.</i> Begin at far left of speaker.... <i>On my far left we have</i> (1, 2, 3, 4, etc.).</p> <p>Then introduce the head table from speaker's right. <i>Starting at my far right, we are pleased to have with us</i> (1, 2, 3, 4, etc.).</p>
<p>*DINNER <i>Note: Introductions and Remarks may precede dinner depending on committee)</i></p>	<p><i>Thank you. Please enjoy your dinner.</i></p> <p>Optional - you may wish to remind Legionnaires that they should uncover during the meal.</p>
Introduction of Distinguished Guests	<p>Brief introductions of those seated at Distinguished Guests Table(s), such as spouses not seated at Head Table, Guests not participating in the program, etc. <i>May I have your attention, please? We have several Distinguished Guests with us tonight. I ask that you please stand when I announce your name.</i></p> <p><i>Please hold any applause until all our Distinguished Guests have been introduced.</i></p>
Welcoming Remarks by County or District Commander (depending on what visitation is)	<p>MC will introduce County or District Commander for brief welcoming remarks. <i>We are pleased to have you with us this evening.</i></p> <p><i>(Name/title) who will offer welcoming remarks.</i></p>
S.A.L. District Commander	<p>MC will introduce the S.A.L. District Commander who will in turn introduce the S.A.L Detachment Commander</p>
S.A.L. Detachment Commander Remarks (if applicable)	<p>After S.A.L. Commander's remarks, <i>Thank you, (name)</i></p>
County Auxiliary President (If Dept. to County)	<p>MC will introduce County Auxiliary President who will in turn introduce District Auxiliary President</p>

Program Activity	Comment(s)/Suggested Wording
District Auxiliary President	Who will in turn, introduce Department Auxiliary President
Department Auxiliary President's Address	After Department Auxiliary President's Address, <i>Thank you, (name).</i>
County Commander (If Dept. to County)	MC will introduce County Commander who will, in turn, introduce the District Commander
District Commander	District Commander introduces Department Vice Commander who in turn will introduce the Department Commander
Department Commander	If this is a Department Commander's Visitation, the Department Commander will make address here. If this is a National Commander's Visitation, Department Commander will make a speech of introduction for The National Commander.
National Commander (if applicable)	Address by National Commander. Then MC assumes the podium. <i>Thank you (National Commander, name)</i>
*DINNER (If introductions/remarks precede dinner)	<i>Thank you. Please enjoy your dinner.</i> Optional - you may wish to remind Legionnaires that they should uncover during the meal.
Presentation of Gifts	If gifts are presented during the function, the order of presentation is S.A.L Detachment Commander, Department Auxiliary President, Department Commander or National Commander (if applicable).
Benediction	<i>Please stand and uncover for the Benediction to be delivered by (name/title)</i> Benediction Thank You (name).
Salute Colors (if not posted by Color Guard)	<i>Please cover and remain standing as we salute the Colors of our Nation (...pause...) Hand salute! (...pause...) Ready, two!</i>
Retiring of Colors (by Color Guard)	<i>Please cover and remain standing as we retire our Nation's Colors.</i> As the Color Guard removes the flags from the standard <i>Hand salute!</i> Remain at hand salute until Colors reach the back or leave the room. "Ready, two".

Program Activity	Comment(s)/Suggested Wording
Singing of “God Bless America”	<i>Please remain standing and join hands for the singing of “God Bless America”.</i>
Closing	<p><i>This concludes our program for this evening. Thank you for joining us tonight.</i></p> <p>May add remarks about any pertinent upcoming events, thank you to involved committees, reminder to drive home safely and soberly, etc.</p>

***Please note that the hosting organization has the option to have the honored guests speak first then have the meal after.**

POW/MIA REMEMBRANCE SERVICE

The following is a suggested POW/MIA Remembrance Service to be used at American Legion meetings, banquets, luncheons, or memorial gatherings in conjunction with the POW/MIA flag draped over an empty chair. The service can be adopted or modified appropriately. Members should remove their caps during this service, however the option to have the audience remain standing while the service is conducted is at the discretion of the host organization.

Those who have served, and those currently serving in the uniformed services of the United States, are ever mindful that the sweetness of enduring peace has always been tainted by the bitterness of personal sacrifice. We are compelled to never forget that while we enjoy our daily pleasures, there are others who have endured and may still be enduring the agonies of pain, deprivation, and imprisonment.

Before we begin our activities, we pause to recognize our POWs and MIAs.

We call your attention to this small table which occupies a place of dignity and honor. It is set for one, symbolizing the fact that members of our armed forces are missing from our ranks. They are referred to as POWs and MIAs.

We call them comrades. They are unable to be with their loved ones and families, so we join together to pay humble tribute to them, and to bear witness to their continued absence.

The table is small, symbolizing the frailty of one prisoner, alone against his or her suppressors.

The tablecloth is white, symbolic of the purity of their intentions to respond to their Country's call to arms. The single rose in the vase signifies the blood they may have shed in sacrifice to ensure the freedom of our beloved United States of America. This rose also reminds us of the family and friends of our missing comrades who keep faith, while awaiting their return.

The red ribbon on the vase represents an unyielding determination for a proper accounting of our comrades who are not among us.

A slice of lemon on the plate reminds us of their bitter fate.

The salt sprinkled on the plate reminds us of the countless fallen tears of families as they wait.

The glass is inverted, they cannot toast with us at this time.

The chair is empty. They are NOT here. The candle is reminiscent of the light of hope, which lives in our hearts to illuminate their way home, away from their captors to the open arms of a grateful nation.

The American flag reminds us that many of them may never return – and have paid the supreme sacrifice to insure our freedom.

Let us pray to the Supreme Commander that all our comrades will soon be back within our ranks.

Let us remember – and never forget their sacrifice.

May God forever watch over them and protect them and their families.

Let us remember.

EXAMPLE OF PROGRAM

2018-2019 Steuben County American Legion Welcomes



Gary M. Schacher
Dept. Commander



Marie Mock
Dept. President



James Coates
Det. Commander

Distinguished Guests

American Legion

Gary M. Schacher, Department Commander
Thomas Schreck, Department Vice Commander
Tim Collmer, 7th District Commander
Jean Williams, Steuben County Commander

American Legion Auxiliary

Marie Mock, Department President
Debi Hammon, 7th District President
Colleen McDaniels, Steuben County President

Sons of American Legion

James Coates, Detachment Commander
Ron Kuczenski, Detachment Vice Commander
Jim Daly, 7th District Detachment Commander
Colin McDaniels, Steuben County Detachment Commander

Program

Welcome and Advancement of Distinguished Guests
Hon. Joseph Latham, Master of Ceremonies

Invocation (remove cover)
Marjorie Wilson, Steuben Co. Chaplain

Pledge of Allegiance
William Crane, Past Department Vice Commander

POW/MIA Remembrance Service
George Mulhair, Past District Commander

Welcome and Introduction of Head Table
Hon. Joseph Latham, Master of Ceremonies

Dinner (remove cover)

Remarks
Benediction (remove cover)
Steuben County Auxiliary Chaplain

Respect to the Colors

God Bless America (sang by all)

In this example the visitation is the Department to the county. If the visitation is the National Commander to the District, you would replace all the county officers with District officers and include any NEC Members who may be attending. You may wish to include NEC Members at the head table for any visitation if there is room, but always for a National Commanders visit.

Press Release
Seneca County American Legion
Fred Percy, Commander
Box 10
Ovid, New York 14521

For Immediate Release
Contact Sharon Rayno
Phone: (315) xxx-xxxx

American Legion New York State Commander, Auxiliary President, and Detachment Commander Visit Seneca County

Seneca County will host a joint visit by Department Commander Timothy J. Collmer, Auxiliary President Karen St. Hilaire and Detachment Commander Peter DeAngelis on Friday, January 26, 2024. During the visit, the Legion Family leadership will have lunch at the Kirk-Casey American Legion Post 366 in Seneca Falls NY, tour the National Women's Rights Park and attend a dinner at Manning-Lila Post 463, Ovid, NY. The travel party are in town to meet and address the Seneca County American legion membership to share the American Legion message of veteran advocacy and community involvement.

U.S. Army veteran Timothy J. Collmer of Nunda, NY, is the 2023-2024 state commander of the American Legion Department of New York, elected at the 105th Annual Department Convention, held in Tarrytown, N.Y., July 20-22, 2023. During his one-year term, Collmer visits sixty-two counties across the state.

He served 21 years in the Army & Reserves, serving in Korea and Texas as a morse code interceptor while on active duty, and then as a drill instructor and later as a commissioned officer in the reserves. A retired corrections officer, Collmer also worked as a service officer with Livingston County Veterans' Services. A member of Daniel Goho American Legion Post 87 in Dansville, Collmer has served in leadership positions on the Post, county, district, and state levels. Most recently he has been dean of the American Legion College of New York. Active in the community, Collmer is a member of the Nunda Fire Department and the Dansville Moose, plus the Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 6780 in Dansville and the AMVETS Post in Hornell.

Commander DeAngelis is originally from Brooklyn, NY. Peter's eligibility for the Sons of The American Legion is from his father Prisco "Pete" DeAngelis, who served in the US Army during the Korean conflict 1952 to 1954 where he received two Purple Hearts. Peter's vision for the future will be to continue to support The American Legion Family programs and the local communities.

Karen St. Hilaire is a 49-year member of the Mattydale American Legion Auxiliary Unit #1832 in Onondaga County. She is eligible through her father John Allen, a WWII Army Veteran. Her late Husband Jerry was also an Army Veteran who served in Viet Nam. Karen is active in her community as a retired Firefighter and is a retired Registered Nurse.

Focusing on service to veterans, service members and communities, The American Legion evolved from a group of war-weary veterans of World War I into one of the most influential nonprofit organizations in the United States. If you have served at least one day of active military duty since December 7, 1941, and were honorably discharged or you are still serving active military duty honorably, you are eligible for membership with The American Legion. Today, membership stands at over 2.4 million in 14,000 posts worldwide. The posts are organized into fifty-five departments: one each for the 50 states, along with the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, France, Mexico, and the Philippines.

The American Legion Auxiliary, established in 1919, is the world's largest women's patriotic service organization. Membership in The American Legion Auxiliary shall be limited to the grandmothers, mothers, sisters, Male or Female Spouse, and direct and adopted female descendants of members of The American Legion, and to the grandmothers, mothers, sisters, Male or Female Spouse, and direct and adopted female descendants of all men and women who were in the Armed Forces of the United States.

The Sons of The American Legion was created in 1932 as an organized program within The American Legion. The S.A.L. is made up of boys and men of all ages whose parents or grandparents served in the United States military and became eligible for membership in The American Legion.

Sample Letter of Invitation

A letter of invitation is a courtesy to prospective guests. It should encourage them to attend and describe the event(s) that will take place and define the role, if any, that the invitee will have. Consider a separate letter for those invitees who will receive a complimentary ticket or for guests who will be requested to participate.

Organization Stationery

_____ County American Legion
c/o Commander/Adjutant or Event Coordination
Address
City, State Zip

November 15, 2023

For general invitations, address invitations by title, e.g., Past Department Commanders, County Commanders, etc. for general mailing. See General Visitation Protocol for suggested invitees by position. For invitees receiving complimentary tickets, seated at Head Table or who are to speak at the event, suggest individual letters.

Ms. Jane Smith
Vice Commander
Address

Dear _____:

We are pleased to announce that **the organization** will host **an event** on **date** at **location**. We would be honored if you would attend.

For those receiving complimentary tickets -

For your convenience, we have enclosed complimentary tickets for you.

For those not receiving complimentary tickets you will need to describe the meal and the cost of the tickets.

For those guests staying in our area overnight, we've planned at:

Hotel, Street, City, State, ZIP

Phone

As applicable - Please contact the hotel directly to make reservations for the nights you wish to stay.

As applicable - As an Honored Guest, we have arranged for you to be seated at our Head Table,

As applicable - and we would like you to **describe speaking responsibility**.

*Please help us to plan for this event by filling out the attached response form, indicating the activities taking place that day you will be attending, and your meal choice(s) no later than **date** to:*

Name, Event Coordinator

Address

Phone

For those Guests being greeted upon arrival - Please advise us of your arrival and departure plans to enable us to coordinate local transportation. If you have any questions, contact the Event Coordinator.

We look forward to seeing you at **the event**.

Sincerely,

Event Coordinator

Appendix H

The American Legion

Department of New York

1304 Park Blvd Troy, NY 12180

(518) 463-2215

Department Commander's County Visitation Summary		
<i>County</i>		<i>Visitation Date(s)</i>

County Contact(s)		
Commander	<i>Name</i>	
	<i>Street</i>	
	<i>City/State/Zip</i>	
	<i>Home Phone</i>	
	<i>Work Phone</i>	
Other/Alternate	<i>Name/Position</i>	
	<i>Home Phone</i>	
	<i>Work Phone</i>	

Itinerary		Joint Visitation? Y/N
<i>Event</i>	<i>Time(s)</i>	<i>Location/Phone</i>
<i>Lunch</i>		
<i>Press Conference</i>		
<i>Tour</i>		
<i>Dinner</i>		

Lodging		
<i>Hotel/Motel</i>	<i>Name</i>	
	<i>Street</i>	
	<i>City/State/Zip</i>	
	<i>Phone</i>	
<i>Arrival Date:</i>		<i>Departure Date:</i>
<i>Has reservation been confirmed? Y/N</i>		<i>Confirmation Number:</i>

COUNTY: _____

COUNTY LEGION PROVIDES THE FOLLOWING			
---------------------------------------------	--	--	--

	<i>(Yes or No)</i>		
	ROOM	LUNCH	DINNER
<i>Department Commander & Guest</i>			
<i>Department Vice Commander & Guest</i>			
<i>District Commander & Guest</i>			
<i>District Vice Commander & Guest</i>			
<i>Department Commander's Aide</i>			
<i>Department Photographer</i>			

COUNTY AUXILIARY PROVIDES THE FOLLOWING			
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	<i>(Yes or No)</i>		
	ROOM	LUNCH	DINNER
<i>Department President & Guest</i>			
<i>District President & Guest</i>			
<i>Others:</i>			

POST OR COUNTY SQUADRON PROVIDES THE FOLLOWING			
-------------------------------------------------------	--	--	--

	<i>(Yes or No)</i>		
	ROOM	LUNCH	DINNER
<i>Detachment Commander</i>			
<i>SAL District Commander</i>			
<i>Others:</i>			

Send copies of this completed summary to:

James W. Casey - Department Adjutant – jim@nylegion.org
Kristine Delap – Program Coordinator/Admin – kdelap@nylegion.org
Department Vice Commander (your district)

Once received at Headquarters we will distribute all information to the Traveling party. Thank you.

Legion Cap Etiquette

The American Legion Cap is both symbolic and illustrative to Legionnaires and conveys a distinct message to the public about American Legion membership. The cap should be decorated in accordance with the guidelines of Resolution 31, July 1967, of The Department of New York. It must be neat and orderly in its appearance.

Female Legionnaires may wear their caps in the same manner prescribed for male Legionnaires. This is suitable for most situations, but taste and common sense should prevail. By American Legion tradition, a female Legionnaire may leave their cap on during the Pledge of Allegiance, the national anthem, prayer, and meals.

Male Legionnaires may always wear the Legion Cap during Legion functions except for:

- Religious segments of functions such as Invocations and Benedictions and other prayer
- Memorial to Departed Comrades
- Recital of the Pledge of Allegiance
- As routine courtesy during dining
- During the POW/MIA Remembrance Service

Masters of Ceremony or Meeting Chairs should remind attendees to uncover during the above activities.

For uniformity when uncovered, each Legionnaire should hold the Legion cap by inserting the fingers of their right hand into the cap, leaving the front of the cap at the top and placed over the heart with the Legion emblem facing outward.

The Cap should be worn in church only by the Honor Guard or Color Guard while in marching order or standing guard. When returning to or while seated in pews, the Cap should be removed. Legionnaires not in formation will remove the Cap while in church.

Legionnaires will hold their Cap over their heart in the following instances:

- If marching in formation into church, until seated in the pew and as exiting the church.
- Approaching a casket. (Note that the Cap over the heart is a form of salute. If a Legionnaire desires to render a hand salute at the casket of a Departed Comrade, he/she may cover, salute, and then uncover).
- At the graveside, the cap should be held in the right hand over the heart during the entire service. In cold and inclement weather, the cap should not be removed.
- Religious segments of Legion functions such as Invocations, Benedictions, and other prayers.
- Pledge of Allegiance (Female Legionnaires will place their hand over their heart if covered)
- National Anthem (Female Legionnaires should render a hand salute if covered)
- Memorial to Departed Comrade(s)
- POW/MIA Remembrance Service

Legion Cap Etiquette (continued)

A Legionnaire wearing a cap should behave in proper accordance as to salutes, the same as if wearing a military uniform. If not wearing a cap, observe ordinary rules of etiquette for civilian dress. Members of the Armed Forces not in uniform and veterans may render the military salute in the manner provided for persons in uniform.

Cap Embellishments:

Pins, patches, and other items should be kept to a minimum and are never placed on the left side (side with the Legion Emblem) of the cap.

References:

*American Legion Officers Guide 2022 - [27IA0722 Post Officers Guide.pdf \(legion.org\)](#)
[Uniform Cap Etiquette - American Legion Flag & Emblem](#)*

Flag Etiquette

Our Nation's Colors are one of the most revered symbols for Legionnaires. We must pay proper respect to the Flag whenever it is encountered. As we approach the Flag or as it approaches us, it is appropriate to render a salute. The following are general guidelines. Much more detailed information can be found on the website. <https://www.legion.org/flag/code>

When the flag is passing in a parade or in review, (20-30 feet away) render the appropriate salute, holding the salute until the Colors pass. Those present in uniform should render the military salute. Members of the Armed Forces and veterans who are present but not in uniform may render the military salute. All other people present should face the flag and stand at attention with their right hand over the heart, or if applicable, remove their headdress with their right hand and hold it at the left shoulder, the hand being over the heart.

At outdoor American Legion functions during the ceremony of hoisting or lowering the flag or where the Colors are flying, a hand salute is rendered at the beginning and conclusion of the function.

During indoor functions, when our Nation's Colors are to be posted, a hand salute is ordered by the Master of Ceremonies while the Colors are being posted at the beginning of the function and when they are retired at the end of the function.

During indoor functions while Colors are already posted, Legionnaires should render an appropriate salute when exiting and re-entering the meeting room. This should be done at the center of the room or, if that is not practical, at the point closest to the exit while still in view of the flag. Travel to and from the head table should be done around the end opposite the Nation's Colors. This is important for those called to the podium to speak or to receive awards or recognition. Never pass between the Colors and the Commander's station (cutting the flag).

The order of march and order display from left to right is the Army, Marine Corps, Navy, Air Force, Space Force, and Coast Guard.

The Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag should be rendered by standing at attention facing the flag with the right hand over the heart. When not in uniform people should remove any non-religious headdress with their right hand and hold it at the left shoulder, the hand being over the heart. Persons in uniform should remain silent, face the flag, and render the military salute. Members of the Armed Forces not in uniform and veterans may render the military salute in the manner provided for persons in uniform.

National Anthem

- Individuals in uniform should give the military salute at the first note of the anthem and maintain that position until the last note.
- members of the Armed Forces and veterans who are present but not in uniform may render the military salute in the manner provided for individuals in uniform; and
- all other persons present, should face the flag, and stand at attention with their right hand over the heart, and if applicable, should remove their headdress with their right hand and hold it at the left shoulder, the hand being over the heart; and
- when the flag is not displayed, all present should face toward the music and act in the same manner they would if the flag were displayed.

Presentation of Gifts

Utilize the form located on the web site in the resources area (Dept Commander's Gift Form) to record all gifts received at the event. It is advisable to obtain this information prior to the start of the event so that the MC knows if gifts are going to be presented to all the honored guests. This will prevent them from being called to the podium for receipt of a gift when there is not one.

[Microsoft Word - Gift Form.doc \(nylegion.net\)](#)