



TRAINING TUESDAY
Digital Advocacy

John Kamin
Grassroots Coordinator
National Legislative Division

November 29, 2022

Opening Remarks

Rick Oertel

Chairman, National Legislative Council

Letter of Instruction on Grassroots Engagement

*Get together and have regular meetings and speeches. Take in everybody you can get, but as you go along, gather up all the shrewd wild boys about town. Let everyone play the part he can play best – some speak, some sing, and all hollow. Your meetings will be of the evenings; the older men, and the women will go to hear you; so that it will not only contribute to the election but will be an interesting pastime, and improving the intellectual faculties of all engaged. **Don't fail to do this.***

- Abraham Lincoln, 1848

What does “Digital Advocacy” have to do with Membership?

- Through their membership dues, members are funding America’s most powerful veterans lobby.
- Through grassroots advocacy, regular communications and engagement opportunities can be given to new members.
- Our most powerful lobbying tool is an engaged Legionnaire - “Legislative” depends on “Membership”.

American Legion Washington D.C. Office Government & Legislative Affairs

Since 1934, the Legion's Washington offices have been located on K Street, three blocks from the White House. The original brownstone building was replaced by an office building dedicated on Aug. 14, 1951, by President Harry Truman.

The Washington building also has an office for the National Commander, to support his frequent visits to the halls of Congress to discuss political issues that affect veterans, servicemembers and their families.

The building also includes offices for the executive director, as well as **Legislative, Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation, Veterans Employment and Education and National Security.**



DIGITAL ADVOCACY

**AMERICAN
LEGION**

Advocate Competencies

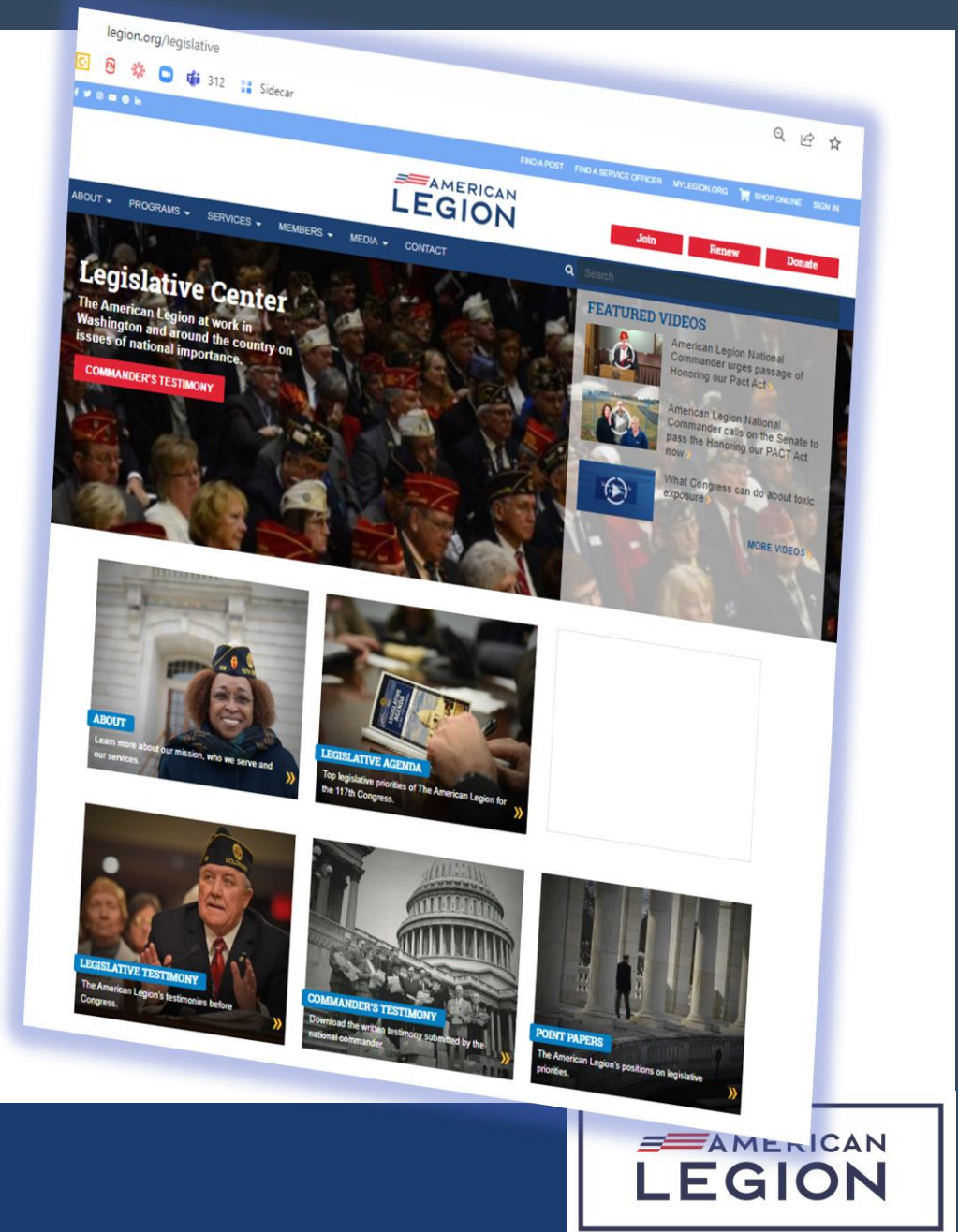
Supporting The American Legion's Legislative Priorities

Organizing Grassroots Activities

Participating in resolution process and advocate for local issues

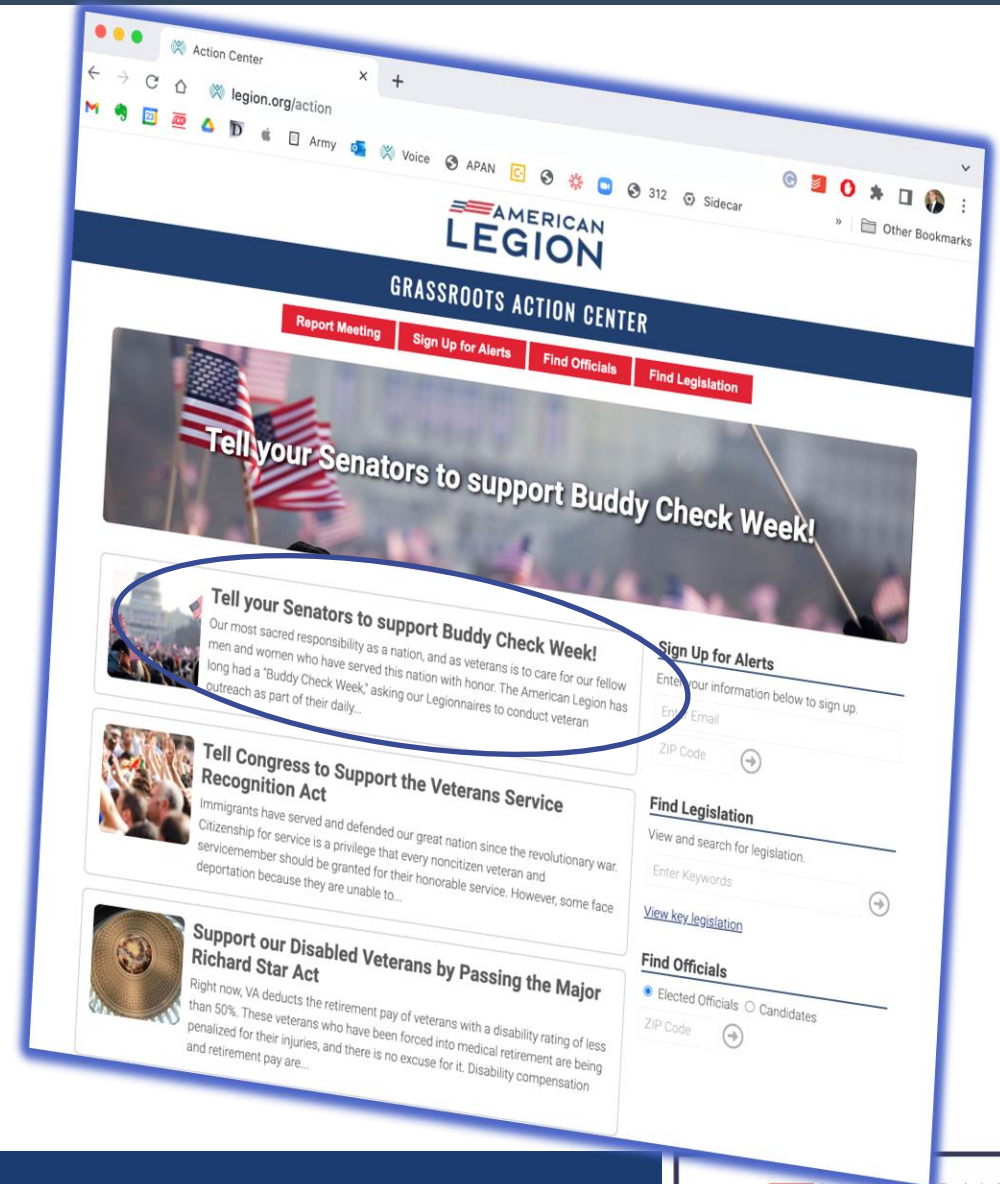
Supporting The American Legion's Legislative Priorities

- Use www.legion.org/legislative as your resource hub for all Legion legislative products.
- Download American Legion Legislative Agenda.
- Review Point Papers.



Supporting The American Legion's Legislative Priorities

- The American Legion uses VoterVoice as its advocacy platform for connecting American Legion members with members of Congress.
- The American Legion's VoterVoice page is: www.legion.org/action
- There are currently 40,955 members and supporters signed up to receive action alerts.

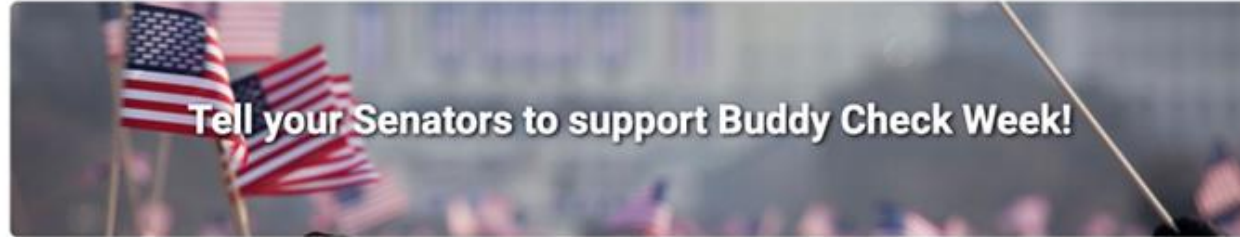




GRASSROOTS ACTION CENTER

- Report Meeting
- Sign Up for Alerts
- Find Officials
- Find Legislation

Hi John in Capitol Heights, MD!



Our most sacred responsibility as a nation, and as veterans is to care for our fellow men and women who have served this nation with honor. The American Legion has long had a "Buddy Check Week," asking our Legionnaires to conduct veteran outreach as part of their daily routine. The American Legion's "Buddy Check" program has been a great tool for membership, and we strongly support legislation that expands this program to VA.

The American Legion worked with Congress to draft a bill that would direct VA to establish a "Buddy Check Week," provide educational opportunities, materials, and references for veterans to learn how to conduct personal wellness checks, as well as require increased resources for the Veterans Crisis Line to handle any potential increased usage during the designated week. The bill is modeled after the American Legion's "[Buddy Check National Week of Calling](#)" to connect veterans to better ensure that they receive the care they need.

That text has now been included in the STRONG Veterans Act of 2022, landmark legislation that increases support for veterans mental health programs. The American Legion proudly supports this legislation, and asks that you contact your Senators and Representative and tell them to cosponsor and support the Buddy Check and the STRONG Veterans Act today!

Compose Your Message

- Senator Ben Cardin
- Senator Chris Van Hollen Jr.

Subject

The American Legion urges you to support H.R.

Message Body

Our most sacred responsibility as a nation is to care for our fellow men and women who have served this nation with honor. Only with servant leadership and direct contact with our fellow veterans can we uncover the actual needs of our warriors and avert potential crisis. H.R. 6411 - the STRONG Veterans Act- would be a landmark step forward funding innovative and tested mental health programs at the Department of Veterans Affairs.

The American Legion proudly supports this legislation, which passed the House with bipartisan backing. I and the nearly 2 million members of The American Legion ask that you support H.R. 6411 today.

Review Your Profile

Not John?

Mr. John Kamin
jkamin@legion.org

Send Message



Action Center Tips

1. Edit your messages and ask questions.
2. Forward email responses to grassroots@legion.org
3. Post on social media



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Using Social Media to Spread Message

Post on social media

Thank you for supporting passage of the Guard and Reserve GI Bill Parity Act! Please consider sharing this alert on social media by copying the following:

During the lame duck session I'm calling on the Senate to grant the National Guard the same GI Bill benefits as active duty. With the service provided over the pandemic, protests, and border security, they have earned it! Join me and contact your Senators. <https://www.votervoice.net/AmericanLegion/Campaigns/87465/Respond>

The screenshot shows the American Legion Grassroots Action Center website. At the top is the American Legion logo. Below it is a dark blue bar with the text "GRASSROOTS ACTION CENTER". Underneath are four red buttons: "Report Meeting", "Sign Up for Alerts", "Find Officials", and "Find Legislation". The main content area features a large image of soldiers in front of a building with the text "Take Action: Demand the GI Bill for Reserve and National Guard". Below the image is a "Confirmation" section with the following text: "Thank you for supporting passage of the Guard and Reserve GI Bill Parity Act! Please consider sharing this alert on social media by copying the following: During the lame duck session I'm calling on the Senate to grant the National Guard the same GI Bill benefits as active duty. With the service provided over the pandemic, protests, and border security, they have earned it! Join me and contact your Senators. <https://www.votervoice.net/AmericanLegion/Campaigns/87465/Respond> You have communicated with the following: • Senator Ben Cardin (email) • Senator Chris Van Hollen Jr. (email)". Below this is a "Share with Friends" section with buttons for Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, and Email. At the bottom, there is a link to share the campaign on a personal website: <http://www.votervoice.net/Shares/BwzYsAa1ACpWVAWkzFb7FAA> and a "Copy Link" button.

Signups

**Text LEGION to 50457
to opt into text alerts**



Creating a Launch Plan

Organize Internal Team

- Define advocacy body (Post Legislative Committee, Special Committee)
- Appoint interested volunteers
- Set assignment flows
 - Meeting schedule, advocacy objectives

Draft External Stakeholders Plan

- Who do we need to be in contact with?
- What lawmakers should we reach out to?
- Who are the local organizations who can support us?
- Who are the community centers of gravity?

**Assemble Digital
Toolbox**

Leveraging Social Media

Twitter

Pros

- Real time data collection
- Key contact engagement opportunities

Cons

- Low user engagement

Facebook

Pros

- Use as gathering space for organizing and events (FB Live)

Cons

- “Pay to play” news feed hampers external engagement

Instagram

Pros

- Most popular social media app
- Preferred medium for storytelling

Cons

- Low readability and click throughs
- Higher entry barriers

Email Distribution Lists

Email Groups

- To facilitate email to multiple recipients, email groups can be established in Google, Outlook, and Yahoo Mail.
- Make sure to make emails “bcc”
- Utilize mail merge on [Outlook](#) or [Gmail](#)

Email Marketing Platform

- Give people the ability to sign up, regardless of Legion status
- Mailchimp and Constant Contact are stalwarts
- SendinBlue, Omnisend, Moosend are advanced upstarts

Texting

SMS BOASTS A STAGGERING OPEN RATE OF 98%. EMAIL MARKETING CAMPAIGNS RECEIVE A 20% OPEN RATE.

For Teams/Chat Groups

SMS group texts have membership limitations. Apps with more compatibility (such as desktop displays) include

- Signal
- WhatsApp
- Telegram
- FB messenger

For Member Engagement

EZ Texting is a service that provides bulk SMS and Peer to Peer texting. AZ Post 145 uses to achieve membership renewals

Google Tools

Google Forms

Run polls and surveys

Google Meet

Free Zoom

Google Drive

15 GB of storage

Google Sheets

“Cloud excel”

Google Docs

“Cloud word”

Potential Advocacy Events/Goals

- **Host online action meeting**
- **Conduct issues survey**
- **Plan Congressional town hall**
- **Conduct get out the vote campaign**
- **Reach out to local news station**
- **Form a local veterans coalition on key issues**

National Legislative Council Member Goals and Tasks

Goals:

- Promote an interest in and a furtherance of The American Legion's legislative goals
- Serve as a liaison for disseminating information to elected lawmakers and staff
- Develop and maintain strong working relationships with elected lawmakers and staff
- Serve as the liaison for disseminating information on proposed and adopted veterans legislation to Posts and members of the Legion within the congressional district

Tasks:

- Routinely email, write, or call lawmakers and staff about veterans legislation.
 - Respond to all Legion Action Alerts, either through messages to the Member office or direct meetings.
 - Maintain a list of all Legion Posts within congressional district and key Legion contacts.
 - Personally engage with Congressional staff and member on behalf of The American Legion.
- Following engagements, submit Congressional Contact Report Form to HQ at:

<https://www.legion.org/legislative/aar>.

National Legislative Council Member Selection

- Each Department is responsible for making recommendations to the National Commander to fill the Council.
- Prospective members may submit their application for the Department's review using this link: <https://www.legion.org/legislative/councilinfo>
- When nominated by the Department and approved by the National Commander, per the recommendation of the Legislative Commission Chairman, the nominee becomes a Legislative Council Member, and is the Legion's liaison to a specific Member of Congress.



Discussion and Q & A