

ALA NATIONAL SECURITY NEWS

National Security Committee Newsletter

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February Greetings!

We are only a few short months away from Annual Report time! This is just a reminder that you can send in your great stories and pictures any time. You do not have to wait for the end of the reporting year.

If there is more information you would like to have on any portion of this program, please send an email to National Chairman Diana Sirovina at dsirovina@icloud.com.

Salute to Servicemembers Award

Please make sure you are in contact with anyone submitting an application for this award so they submit it for consideration on time!

Established in 2003, this award has evolved from honoring women veterans to honoring active-duty women, to honoring all enlisted personnel who are currently serving our country in the Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Air Force, Coast Guard, Space Force, and the National Guard/Reserve.

One enlisted servicemember from each branch of service as well as the National Guard/Reserve will be recognized at the American Legion Auxiliary National Convention. Recipients will attend the National Convention as guests of the Auxiliary.

Application Deadline

Each American Legion Auxiliary unit may submit one entry for each branch of the service.

Beginning this year, this award is part of the National Security Program.

Visit alaforveterans.org for the Nomination form and contest rules.

Deadline to apply is June 1.

Blue Star Banner Program

It's an American tradition to display a Blue Star Service Banner in the window of a home when a loved one is proudly serving in the U.S. Armed Forces. This is the second of three articles that will explore the program in detail.

Blue Star Mothers of America, Inc.

A Blue Star Mother has or had, children serving in the military. The organization is a non-profit (501{c}3 service organization supporting each other and their children while promoting patriotism. In this article, we provide answers to some frequently asked questions about this program.

How do you become a Blue Star mother?

To join Blue Star Mothers of America, you must be the mother of an active-duty or discharged military personnel or have been the stepmother of this child(ren) before they were thirteen years of age.

What do Blue Star Mothers do?

Blue Star Mothers continues to concentrate on providing emotional support to its members, providing support to active military troops, doing volunteer work with veterans in general and veterans' hospitals, and fostering a sense of patriotism and respect for members of the military.

What is a Blue Star family?

A Blue Star Family consists of the immediate family member(s) of a service member during a time of conflict.

What is a red star family?

A blue star represented each family member in active service. ... Gold crosses set inside a blue star signified that a family member was wounded. A red star represented a captured or missing member.

What is a white star family member?

The White Star designation recognizes families who have lost a service member to suicide, whether they were military or a first responder. The purpose of the White Star Family program is to honor those service members and provide proper care and support to the families.

What is a blue star service flag?

The Blue Star Service Banner is an 8.5-by-14-inch white field with one or more blue stars sewn onto a red banner. ... Today, families display these banners when they have a loved one serving in the U.S. Armed Forces. The blue star represents one family member serving, and a banner can have up to five stars.

For more information, please visit <https://www.bluestarmothers.org>

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MILITARY FAMILY SUPPORT

Understanding the needs of servicemembers and military families is key. The scale of these needs far outpaces our ability of traditional support structures. An enormous number of government programs, military benefits, nonprofit agencies, and community groups have developed support for veterans, servicemembers, and military families. These are military and veteran-focused programs:

Military OneSource - www.militaryonesource.mil

Military OneSource is a free service provided by the Department of Defense to service members and their families to help with a broad range of concerns including money management, spouse employment and education, parenting and childcare, relocation, deployment, reunion, and the particular concerns of families with special-need members. They can also include more complex issues like relationships, stress, and grief. Services are available 24 hours a day by telephone and online.

ALA Military Family Readiness Guide – www.alaforveterans.org

It can be difficult for anyone to keep track of all the agencies, organizations, programs, and services that help servicemembers and their families. This Guide will help Auxiliary units and members match military community members in need and who for any number of reasons come to the attention of the unit/member to resources designed to ease those needs.

Department of Labor - www.dol.gov

The Department of Labor website provides extensive information on employment rights of public and private workers in general. While this information is not specific to veterans, it can be exceedingly useful to those concerned with workers' rights, hiring discrimination, disability compensation, and other topic areas that are often important to those with military backgrounds.

Department of Veterans Affairs - www.va.gov

The Department of Veterans Affairs, commonly known as the "VA," is a Cabinet-level office of the federal government responsible for administering services to veterans and their families. The VA manages a number of programs in areas such as behavioral health, home ownership, education, and employment. The VA website contains a great deal of information about available financial and social services and should be one of the first steps for those seeking information concerning national veteran programs and benefits.

Veterans Benefits Administration - www.vba.va.gov

The Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA) is one of three main elements of the Department of Veterans Affairs concerned primarily with the management of federal assistance programs, including the disbursement of financial resources such as pensions, survivors' benefits, reemployment, and educational assistance, home loan guaranties, and life insurance coverage. The VBA website provides extensive information on these benefits and may be of use in answering any questions you or your community may have.

Veterans Crisis Line - www.veteranscriisline.net - 1-800-273-8255

The Veterans Crisis Line connect Veterans in crisis and their families and friends with qualified, caring Department of Veterans Affairs responders through a confidential toll-free hotline, online chat, or text. Veterans and their loved ones can call 1-800-273-8255 and Press 1, chat online, or send a text message to 838255 to receive confidential support 24 hour a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year.

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National Security & Legislation

Have you considered how your involvement in local elections, city council meetings, school board meetings, etc., affect your National Security? Each elected official is responsible to you and your families for following the laws established by the actions of Congress, or the state legislatures, the city ordinances, or the rules governing our schools.

Do you have meetings with your member of Congress, your state representatives or senators, your Governor, or other state officials? All are available to meet with the citizens they represent. Consider having a coffee where you can host your elected officials and ask them about current legislation that affects our service members and our Veterans. With the redistricting following the recent census, many newly redrawn districts will have new people vying for our attention. Each official has their own thoughts about our National Security. Find out how they will vote concerning the issues you feel are important to support our Nation and those that defend it.

National Security is also part of the health and well-being of our communities. Being prepared for any disaster will assure that our supply chains for goods and services are not interrupted. It is imperative that the elected officials understand the need for any legislation that would interfere or add to the preparedness of our towns and cities. Many of the things we take for granted were part of a National Security strategy at one time. The interstate highway system is a sample of legislation that addressed the movement of troops and equipment. President Eisenhower experienced delays of getting the military where they needed to be and their support supplies when he was an Army officer responsible for moving them. One of his priorities when he was elected to President was to get our nation moving through a series of highways designed to move the most people and supplies as fast as possible.

One of the best resources for our members is the ALA Legislative Advocacy Guide. The purpose of this guide is to help each Auxiliary member become a competent and informed advocate. It includes tips on gathering information on legislation, making legislative contacts, and building relationships with legislators and their staff at all levels of government.

The American Legion Auxiliary has been and will continue to be a strong advocate for veterans and national security issues promoted and supported by The American Legion. Many bills pertaining to veteran's benefits, military funding and U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs funding are proposed every year. While we might not speak out about every bill introduced, ALA members must take the opportunity to make a difference for legislation of particular interest to the Legion Family.

For more information on The American Legion's Legislative priorities, you can go to www.legion.org/legislative. The Legislative Action Center is the go-to resource to find information on legislation that affects our active-duty military and our veterans.

National Security encompasses many aspects of our daily lives. Staying alert to legislation and our elected officials is another way to do your part.

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