



# Sons of The American Legion

## Squadron Officers Training Guide



The best way to find yourself is to  
lose yourself in the service of  
others.

## **We're Part of The Family**

The S.A.L. is a program of The American Legion and exists to support the programs of The American Legion.



## **A Brief History of The S.A.L.**

On September 15, 1932, the establishment of The Sons of the American Legion was authorized by the 14th National Convention of the American Legion at Portland, Oregon. It was created to assist The American Legion in carrying out its commitment to helping veterans and their families through the four pillars of The American Legion, which are Americanism, National Security, Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation, and Children and Youth.

In 1939 membership had reached a high of 72,633. By 1953 membership dropped to a low of 5,631. The numbers rebounded, and by 1963 the S.A.L. had 17,000 members. In 2022 the membership total was over 317,000!



# **MEMBERSHIP IS THE LIFEBLOOD OF OUR ORGANIZATION!**

**It's everyone's responsibility.**



# 2 Out of 4

It is important to recruit new members and retain current members because there are two things that are going to happen to everyone of us:



We are going to age out OR burn out OR move on to something else AND everyone of us is going to die!



Therefore, it is imperative that we teach others how to do the job we are doing. If there is no one to take over for us, our organization will cease to exist. It will become extinct.



## Moving Up



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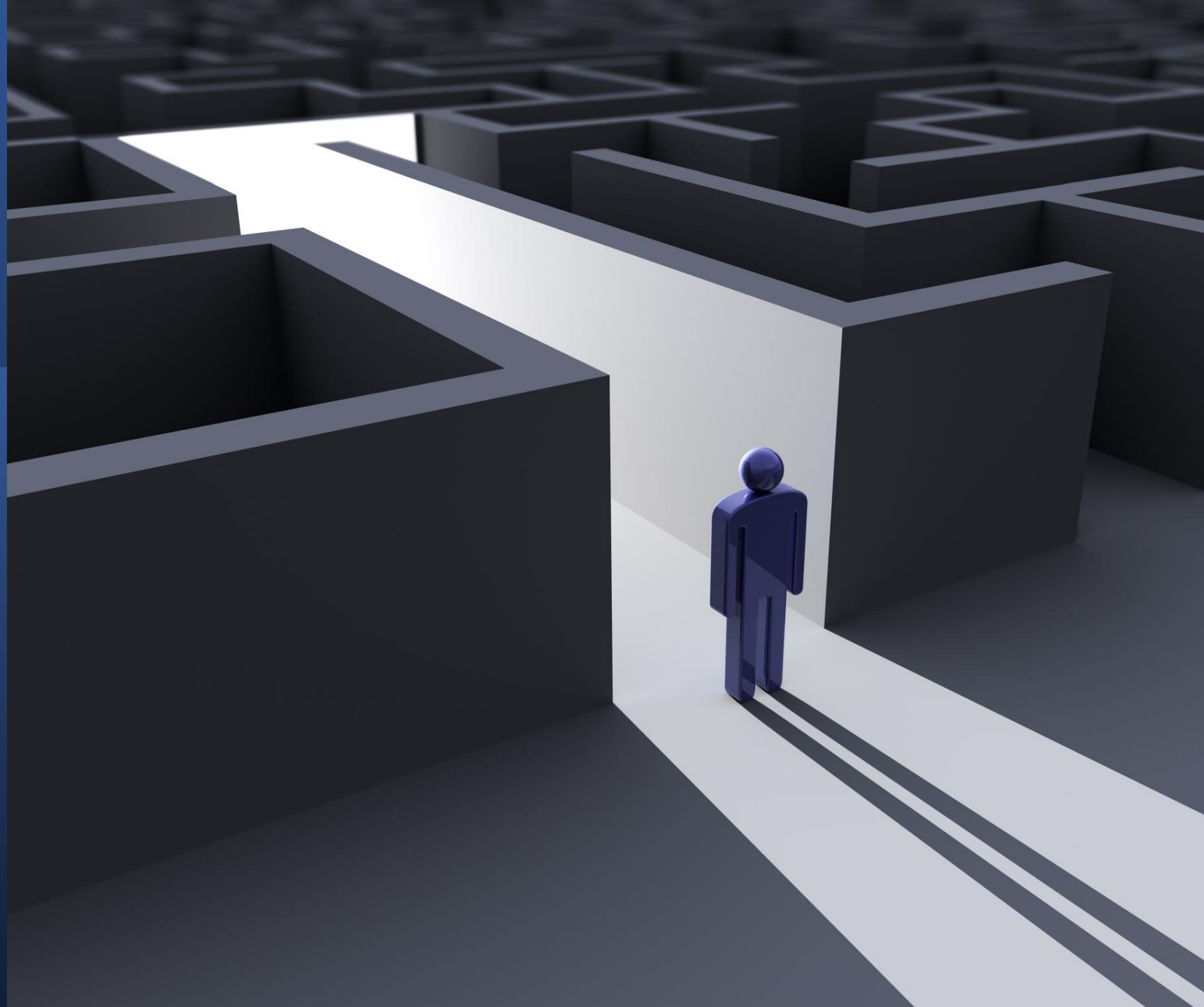
The five levels of the S.A.L. are:

- Squadron
- District
- Division
- Detachment
- National

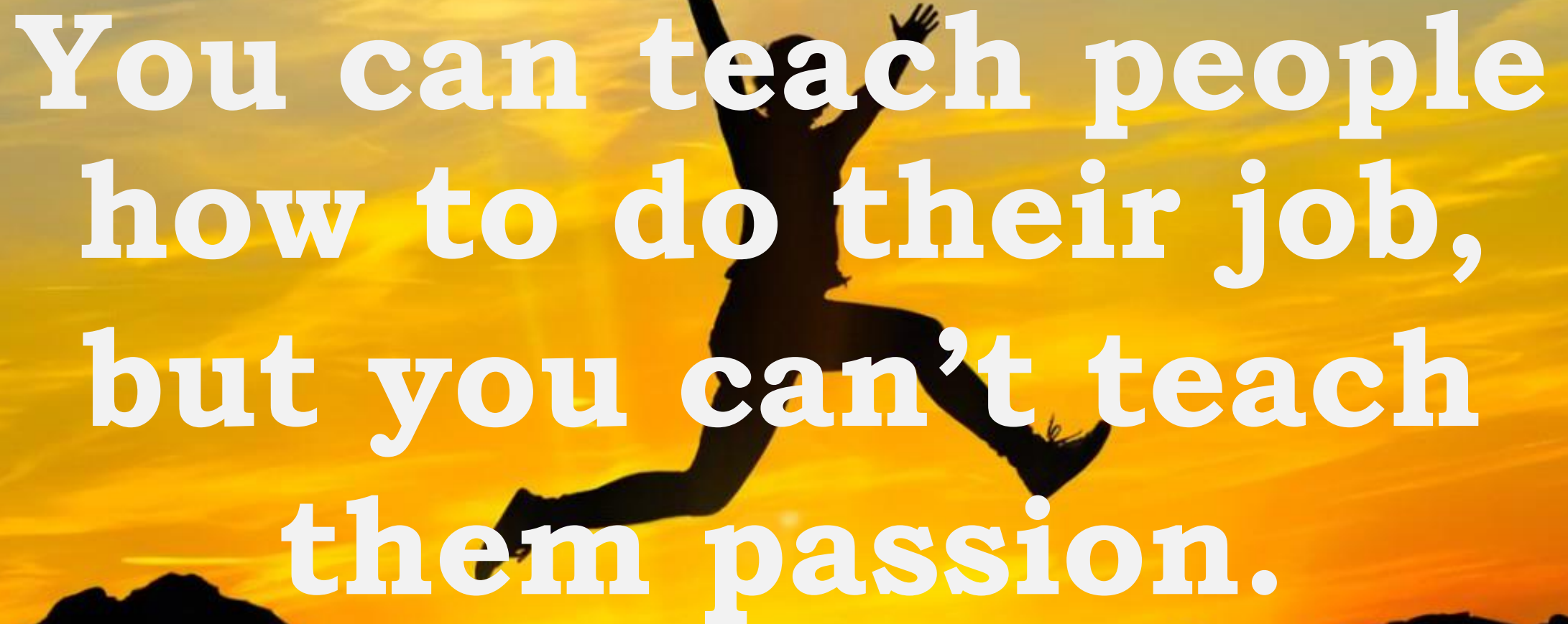
As a member in good standing, you are qualified to hold an elected position at any one of these levels. However, it is best to begin your upward journey at the squadron level.

Learn as much as you can at each level and as you move up, take others with you. Mentor them.

Mentorship is  
teaching your  
successors  
how to create  
their own  
path.





A silhouette of a person jumping over a canyon at sunset. The person is in mid-air, with arms raised and legs spread, against a bright orange and yellow sky. The canyon walls are visible in the foreground as dark silhouettes.

**You can teach people  
how to do their job,  
but you can't teach  
them passion.**

# Officer Elections

Congratulations, your fellow S.A.L. members have elected you to a one-year term for one of the following positions of responsibility:

1. Commander
2. 1<sup>st</sup> Vice-Commander
3. 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice-Commander
4. Adjutant
5. Finance Officer
6. Sergeant-at-Arms
7. Chaplain
8. Historian
9. Judge Advocate
10. Service Officer
11. Member-at-Large

*What do you do now?!*





You jump in with  
both feet,  
determined that  
you are going to do  
this job better than  
it's ever been  
done!



# Attitude

Hopefully, you sought the nomination for the position you have been elected to fill. This means that you care, and you want to do the job. You have passion. Good for you and thank you! The more members you have in your squadron, the greater your choice of candidates each election cycle, so get out there and recruit!

If you accepted the position because there was no one else to do the job, don't resent it. Embrace it. Do the best you can because you are doing it for your squadron, your post, your community, and most important, those who benefit from the programs of The American Legion. TAKE YOUR JOB SERIOUSLY AND DO IT TO THE BEST OF YOUR ABILITY!

The Sons of The American Legion exists to support the programs of The American Legion. We are here to assist in carrying on for God and country. We are here to help.

# Commander

You are the squadron leader. You set the goal for what your administration will accomplish during your term of office. Even though you are the Commander, you are but one member of the team. All things are accomplished by consensus. Every member of your squadron has a voice.

You will create the monthly agenda and run the meeting. Running a meeting is not always as easy as it may look. A couple of days before the meeting, familiarize yourself with the agenda. Rehearse it in front of your wife or children or dog or mirror. Be polished, confident, and ready to roll when you rap the gavel to begin the meeting.

- Familiarize yourself with your squadron's constitution and by-laws and Robert's Rules of Order.
- Keep your agenda short and clean. You don't have to bog it down with 12 months worth of items on one page. Prioritize – you have time. Once an item has been voted on, remove it from the agenda.
- Stick to the agenda. Keep the meeting moving along so that it does not drag on endlessly. You want your members to keep coming back. Recognize all members who wish to be heard but keep them on topic. Only agenda items can be voted on during the meeting.
- An item can be discussed only after a motion and a second are made. After discussion, the item can be approved or not. A motion may be rescinded or tabled for later discussion.



## Commander

- Treat every member of your squadron with the utmost of respect. Each one, like you, is a volunteer. You cannot ever yell at volunteers, nor mistreat them.
- You cannot lead from the back nor push a rope. People will follow a leader. Lead by example. Be a good example. After all, you, as the Commander, are the face of the squadron.
- Know the resources available to you. If you need help or information you can turn to past squadron commanders, commanders from other squadrons, and your district and division commanders. Learn who these people are and exchange phone numbers and email addresses with them.
- Online resources and helpful literature are available through [www.legion.org](http://www.legion.org)
- The Sons of The American Legion detachment headquarters in Austin can help too, but it is recommended strongly that you contact them through your district and division commanders. This is ESPECIALLY true if you feel the need to contact National Headquarters in Indianapolis. You must go through the Detachment of Texas before contacting National.





## **First Vice-Commander**

The First Vice-Commander acts as the representative of the squadron commander in the commander's absence, and on all matters referred to you. If the Commander is unable to fulfill his duties or complete his term of office, the First Vice-Commander ascends to the position of Squadron Commander.

The First Vice-Commander is specifically in charge of membership. You are to keep concise and accurate records and give a report during the Officer Reports segment of the monthly meeting.

When a new member joins, or a current one renews, transmit the information as soon as possible to Detachment so that the numbers hit the incremental goals on time.



## **Second Vice-Commander**

The Second Vice-Commander acts as the representative of the Squadron Commander in the absence of the First Vice-Commander, and on all matters referred to him. You perform other duties as are usually incidental to the office or as directed by the Squadron Commander.

You are specifically in charge of squadron activities such as steak night, burger burns, entertainment, dances, social events, and other special events sponsored or coordinated by the squadron.

Creativity and enthusiasm are helpful traits for this position.

The background of the slide features a large, faded, circular seal of the American Legion. The seal has a sunburst outer ring, a central emblem with a shield and a figure, and the words "AMERICAN LEGION" around the bottom half. The text "SQUADRON ADJUTANT" is written across the top half of the seal.

## **Squadron Adjutant**

In the military, an adjutant is an officer who acts as an administrative assistant to the commanding officer. The Squadron Adjutant is charged with the administrative duties required in carrying out the policies and mandates of the National, Detachment, and Squadron Executive Committees. This position requires attention to detail and being aware of deadlines for submitting specific forms to the Detachment of Texas. Go online at [www.legion.org](http://www.legion.org) or contact your district commander for the forms you will need to be aware of.





## **Squadron Adjutant**

The three most important forms are the Consolidation Squadron Report (CSR), Squadron Data Report (SDR), and the Officer Certification Report (OCR).

The CSR is the one that gets reported to the U.S. Congress. It lets Congress know how much time and/or money members donate throughout the year. Send this information to the Detachment Adjutant before the July deadline.

The SDR is information that will be published in the Blue Book so that others can know about your squadron officers, location, and meeting times. It is due before April 15<sup>th</sup> each year, even if the information has not changed from the previous year.

The OCR requires the name of your Squadron Commander, Adjutant, and Legion Advisor. This information certifies your squadron and assures your squadron will receive its membership cards after the Detachment Convention. It is due immediately after the election of squadron officers.

Accurate information and timely submission of forms, keeps Detachment and National up to date with your squadron status and the overall status of the District, Division, and Detachment, and it makes your squadron eligible for recognition and awards.

The background of the slide features a large, faint, circular seal. The seal has a sunburst-like outer ring. Inside the ring, the words "SAL" are prominently displayed in a large, stylized font. Below "SAL", the words "Squadron Adjutant" are written in a smaller, circular arrangement. The entire seal is rendered in a light, semi-transparent style against a solid light blue background.

## **Squadron Adjutant**

As Adjutant you will call the roll at the beginning of the meeting and determine if a quorum is present.

You will record the minutes of the meeting. You can write down everything by hand, use a laptop, or scribble notes on the agenda, or use a voice recorder. Whatever method you use, the information must be transcribed onto paper (or stored in a computer for later printing) and kept on file and be available upon request. Make sure to record the date, time, and location of the meeting.

You will keep track of the monthly volunteer hours and write that information on your annual CSR. A spreadsheet is the easiest way to keep track of the hours your members donate to the S.A.L. each month.



## **Finance Officer**

This is a position of extreme trust! You are the custodian of the squadron's money. You must keep thorough and accurate records of how much money goes out, how much comes in, and how much is in the account every month. You will be required to give a report to the membership at each meeting. You may disburse money only with the authorization of the executive committee.

If you are a math whiz or enjoy basic bookkeeping, this is the position for you!



## **Sergeant-at-Arms**

Your job is to maintain order during the meeting and ensure that all attendees show respect to the speaker by giving him their attention. You must remain firm in your resolve to do your job without being rude or overbearing.

At the start of the meeting the Commander will instruct you to secure the hall (meeting room). Close the doors and say, "Commander, the hall is secure!"

The Commander will instruct you to post the colors. The squadron flag should already be set on the left side of the podium before the start of the meeting. Move the U.S. flag into place on the right side of the podium. While you are doing this, the Commander will say, "Hand salute!" When you have placed the flag take a step back and render a salute. At this point, the Commander will say, "Two!" and all hands come down. Once the colors are in place the line between the two flags becomes hallowed ground and no person or object shall pass between the two flags.

## **Sergeant-at-Arms**

Now the Commander will instruct you to drape the POW/MIA flag on the empty chair set in an area in front of the podium. This is a ceremony of respect and remembrance. As the Commander is speaking, hold the POW/MIA flag in both hands just forward of your body so that all can see it. Don't drape it your forearm – it's not a waiter's towel. Approach the empty chair. Once in front of the chair, turn to the U.S. flag and render a sharp salute. Turn back to the chair and carefully drape the flag over the back. Come to attention and bring your hand up slowly to salute. Silently count to 5 and lower your hand slowly. Turn to the U.S. flag and salute again and return to your seat. At the end of the meeting the procedure is basically the same except you render the slow salute before undrapping the chair.

You will remind everyone to silence their electronic devices and collect a donation from any member whose device makes noise during the meeting if your squadron has authorized such an action.

You will escort any person summoned to the podium. Walk them to the U.S. flag side, stop, render a salute, and instruct that person to walk onto the platform around and behind the flag. You go to the other side and wait for him. He'll exit the platform to your side. You both render a salute, and you escort him back to his seat. You will observe this rule each time you deliver an item from the podium to the floor or from the floor to the podium.

Make sure that anyone leaving the room (while colors are in place) salutes the flag before exiting and salutes the flag upon entering the room.



## **Chaplain**

The Chaplain is the nonsectarian spiritual advisor to the commander and the squadron. You provide the opening and closing prayer at each meeting and other squadron events.

You will give a monthly report on the well-being of members who may be experiencing health or other issues. You will report on the passing of members and may assist the Post Chaplain during the Post Everlasting ceremony. You might preside over the funeral service of a comrade.

If your office has a budget that has been approved by the executive committee, you may use funds to send flowers or cards to those that may benefit spiritually from such a gift.

Keep in mind that the Chaplain is not there to report only sad news. You should encourage the members to share good news such as the birth of a baby, a job promotion, a wedding, etc.

As Chaplain, you must be a good listener, have empathy, and be available when needed.



The background features a large, faint, circular seal of the Sons of the American Legion. The seal has a blue outer ring with the words "SONS OF" at the top and "AMERICAN LEGION" at the bottom. Inside the ring is a gold-colored circle containing a central emblem, likely the American Legion's logo, which includes a torch and a wreath. The seal is slightly blurred and serves as a decorative background for the text.

## **Historian**

As Historian you keep a photographic and written journal of the squadron's activities throughout the year.

You may use your own camera, your phone's camera, or ask others to send you pictures they've taken of events. You can and should put together a yearbook and submit it to Detachment for the chance to receive an award for your squadron.



## **Judge Advocate**

The Judge Advocate shall ensure that parliamentary procedures are adhered to at all squadron meetings. This requires being familiar with Robert's Rules of Order and your squadron's constitution and by-laws.

You shall be the presiding officer during squadron elections.

Remember that you are not an attorney. You cannot offer or provide legal advice or services of any kind to any member at any time. You are not the designated legal representative of the squadron in any court of law or governmental agency that may summon the squadron or any member for any legal appearance.

## **Member-at-Large**

The Member at Large duty is to be the voice of the General Membership to the Executive Committee. Any ideas or issues that any member brings to a Member at Large, must be expressed to the Executive Committee at the next regular meeting for discussion.

If a member approaches you with a concern or complaint, you must do your best to keep that member's identity confidential. The information you receive from the member and the executive committee must be relayed accurately in both directions.

Remember that you are the messenger, and you know what usually happens to the messenger.



# **THINGS TO REMEMBER**

You are here because you care.

Do not ever lose your passion.

You can and do make a difference.

It's all about mutual helpfulness.

Your District, Division, and Detachment officers are here to help you.

AND,

We are the proud possessors of a priceless heritage!