

AMERICAN LEGION AUXILIARY

Americanism Plan for 2023-2024

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Welcome to your 2023-2024 year in our Department Americanism Program! Not much has changed in the Americanism program for this year. Here are the highlights of what you need to know:

The **Essay** Title/Theme this year is, “What does freedom mean to me?” Your due dates are as follows:

Due Dates: To the Unit President by March 1st, To the District President by March 15, and To the Department Americanism Chairman by April 1st. NO EXCEPTIONS. Cover sheets can be found on the SD Auxiliary website: <https://www.sdlegionaux.org/americanism-education-poppy-forms/>

The **Poem** Title/Theme this year is, “Embracing our Veterans”. Your due dates are as follows:

Due Dates: To the Unit President by March 1st, To the District President by March 15, and To the Department Americanism Chairman by April 1st. NO EXCEPTIONS. Cover sheets can be found on the SD Auxiliary website: <https://www.sdlegionaux.org/americanism-education-poppy-forms/>

The **Star-Spangled Kids** program has been moved to Americanism. This is where we put extra emphasis on teaching our children and youth the history of the United States from the aspect of patriotism, Americanism and the U.S. Constitution. We’ve been asked to pay special attention to this program. You can check out: <https://www.legion-aux.org/Member/Committees/Americanism/How-to-Promote-Star-Spangled-Kids>

Moving on to **Flag Etiquette**, I would encourage you to check out this link: <https://www.legion.org/flag>. The National Legion Website has several credible weblinks that have great information on etiquette and FAQs, along with resources that include both downloadable/printable and “for purchase” publications that will assist you in teaching this very important topic to our youth and even other civic organizations. The South Dakota American Legion website also has several links that may be of interest as well: <https://www.sdlegion.org/flag-advocacy/>.

According to our National American Legion Auxiliary Office, key program statements of the Americanism Program include not only being knowledgeable on all things flag and increasing participation in the essay contest, but also that we are to “**Participate in the promotion of The American Legion Americanism Programs**”.

We have in the past, included the American Legion leaflets in our fall mailing. This year, we’re going to give you the links for these programs and materials and you can print them as you need to. You will find these on both the SD Legion website under the programs tab, as well as on our SD Auxiliary website. Please check out information on the following programs:

Boys State - <https://www.sdlegion.org/boys-state/> Boys State runs May 27-31, 2024, and is accepting applications until May 1st.

Youth Trooper Academy - <https://www.sdlegion.org/sd-youth-trooper-academy/> YTA runs June 24-28, 2024, and is accepting applications until March 22.

Oratory - <https://www.sdlegion.org/oratorical-scholarship/> Post contests must be done by January 14th, 2024, District contests must be done by January 28, 2024, and the Department contest is February 18, 2024.

Let’s not forget American Legion Baseball, Boy Scouts, and Shooting Sports. If your Post offers these programs, check with them and see how you can support them. Offer to take tickets or work concessions at a ball game or to help host a scout meeting or shooting sports event by providing water, snacks, or even just an extra pair of hands. Check out the programs tab on <https://www.sdlegion.org/> for more information on individual programs.

Let’s get ALL of our information out to our schools and youth. It shouldn’t matter if it’s our essay project or the Legion’s oratory project, etc. If you are a “widow” unit or a “widower” post, let’s get familiar with each other’s programs and deliver both sets of information to our schools so that our youth can make an informed choice as to what they what to participate in. Give them the opportunity to at least know what’s out there!

Let’s take the responsibility of teaching not only our youth, but our communities as well, under our wing and nurture the ideas of patriotism and Americanism and what it has cost so many families to ensure that we may do so. Some ideas would include continuing to present flags and teach flag etiquette in our schools, publish a monthly, quarterly… or patriotic holiday column in your local newspaper to include days that the flag should be flown, or at your unit meetings, vote on giving a flag away to a community member or business that needs a new one, model proper respect during the National Anthem or at parades when the flag detail passes by and encourage others around you to do so, and give a simple thank you to those that are flying the flag, standing at attention or leading by example. Make it your own and do what works in your community – every little thing matters!

Let’s have a great year and share what you’re doing – somebody else may find success with it too. And REPORT! There are no numbers from the Year End Impact Report Forms that I can use when reporting what we do to National for Americanism. I really need to have those narrative reports! You will find a new guide that I’ve put together for determining if something you’ve done falls under Americanism. Jot down what you did, how many were involved, how many hours, and amount spent on a narrative form and then snap a picture. Email it to me (please use original picture format, i.e., jpeg). If you don’t do computers, drop it in the regular mail. I KNOW you are doing a lot of things that aren’t getting reported. I’d really like to let National know what South Dakota is doing to support our Veterans and our Communities. Please don’t hesitate to contact me with questions!

Remember - The kids and Veterans need you! Thank you for all you do for our American Legion Family – you are appreciated!