



For God and Country

Date: November 9, 2016

Memorandum to: Past National Commanders
Department Adjutants
National Executive Committeemen
Alternate National Executive Committeemen
Department American Legion Riders Chairmen
Department Centennial Chairmen
Daniel Wheeler, National Adjutant
Jeff Stoffer, Director, Marketing, Media & Communications
Jack Querfeld, Director, Internal Affairs
Billy Johnson, Director, Membership

From: Charles E. Schmidt, National Commander

Subject: Veterans Memorial Identification Project

NOTE: Individual letters were sent separately to Department Commanders, along with Resolution No. 10.

“To preserve the memories and incidents of our associations in the Great Wars.”

Part of the Preamble to The American Legion Constitution and By-laws we recite at every Legion meeting.

Our World War I founders, men and women who wrote and adopted that Preamble at the first Legion national convention, formed posts throughout our country. They led their communities in planning, building and dedicating WWI memorials to their fallen buddies.

Our 100th Anniversary Observance Committee has found that there is no central catalog, index or database of these WWI memorials. The same is true for memorials to the fallen from the Revolutionary War, the Civil War, World War II, Korea, Vietnam and all others.

Memorials have also come under legal attack from individuals and groups demanding the removal of religious wording and symbols. Defending these legal challenges is daunting for communities and many times the cost is prohibitive; therefore, the memorials go undefended. The American Legion has an agreement with the Alliance Defending Freedom and the Liberty Institute to defend these memorials, if a legal action is taken against wording or religious symbols, at no cost to the community or the Legion post.

It is for these reasons we are asking you and your department leadership to help us create the only national database of all veteran and military memorials.

Our national committees and commissions have discussed this memorials project and the NEC approved Resolution No. 10: Veterans Memorial Identification Project during the Fall Meetings in Indianapolis Oct. 12-13, 2016. (See attached.)

I would like to share with you some of that discussion.

First, we want simple tools to document the memorials on the national database. A picture of the memorial, location, who built and maintains it and a narrative (story) transmitted by smart phone or other electronic device. The web platform for that is now live with easy-to-use instructions. The address is www.legion.org/memorials on the national website. We would like to have a point of contact in your department and suggest your department centennial chairman. You may wish a different contact as you develop your organizational plan. You can advise me at Memorials@legion.org

We ask that you organize your committee for this project to include all department leadership, centennial committee members, Legion Riders, Americanism, membership committee chairman as well as vice, zone or area commanders and district commanders. We ask you to involve the whole Legion family, The American Legion Auxiliary and Sons of The American Legion. The military and veterans memorials in a community speak to our history as a country. The values and sacrifice to defend our freedoms by and through the men and women in those communities who went to war must be preserved and advanced to new generations.

We suggest involvement of Boy Scouts, middle and high school students as well as community leaders, civic and military associations, churches, the news media and others as we catalog and index the memorials in their communities.

We also strongly suggest Legion Riders involvement, to work with your committee and travel with members to visit posts in areas and districts to help catalog these memorials. The Legion Riders are always looking for meaningful rides. They are great ambassadors for The American Legion Family and the national Legion Riders Committee has fully endorsed this project.

We believe active American Legion posts will join this memorials project and assist in helping to catalog and index the memorials in their community. We are also sure that they would welcome the assistance of your department committee.

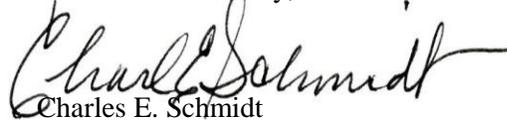
Inactive posts may require a little help in joining the project. But what better method is there than having the department committee help them to index and catalog the memorials in their communities? The interaction with their community just might revitalize their post. This is also a great opportunity to make sure local media outlets understand the project and the Legion's role.

In communities where no Legion posts exist, the committee can, as in the two examples above, enlist the help of community leaders, civic organizations and local historical societies in finding and identifying the memorials. This interaction could and should lead to new Legion posts.

Thank you in advance for joining this noble cause. This is who we are in The American Legion. I have little doubt we will find some of these memorials needing a bit of maintenance and renovation. I am optimistic that the Legion post and the involvement of the community will remedy that situation.

I also have no doubt that the community will learn a bit more about its history and the cost and sacrifice made by local citizens in defending our country. The Legion will be taking "the point" in maintaining and defending these memorials by having all of them catalogued and indexed.

For God and Country, I am



Charles E. Schmidt
National Commander

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