The American Legion  
Department of Kentucky  
Strategic 5-Year Membership Plan

Introduction

The Department of Kentucky has developed several membership plans over the past ten years that focused many times on increasing our membership rolls by an average of 5-percent per year. These goals were, for the most part, in line with National objectives. However, membership in many national Veteran and fraternal originsations have declined in recent years. Unfortunately, The Department of Kentucky has not been immune to this trend. Even though our goal last year was set by Commander Rohan at just 17 members more than our final number from 2017, we still missed our goal. I offer no excuses for this lack of performance. However, it is our intention to stop this downward trend this year and put The Department of Kentucky on sound footing to raise our numbers over the next five years.

Mission Statement

The Department of Kentucky will revise existing membership and marketing plans at the Department, Area, District, and Post levels to develop methodologies during Legion year 2018-2019 that will stop the downward trend in total membership numbers. Our extended membership plan will continue our efforts to prevent any decline in membership while setting realistic and achievable goals over the following four years to increase our membership rolls.

Short Term Goals – Immediately to Two years

Legion Year ending 2019 -- Maintain a minimum number of members equal to what Kentucky had at the end of Legion Year 2017 plus one. Recruit enough new members to offset, at a minimum, the number of member losses that are beyond our control.

In addition to the National Membership Goal for each Post of the number of members at the end of 2018 (June 30, 2018) plus one, each Post must also allow for members who have died or moved away. Per National guidelines, Kentucky loses an average of 565 members each year because if death. Accordingly, each Post needs to recruit an average of 5 new members to account for this loss. The number of members lost due to moves out of the State or other reasons is dependent upon each Post. However, based upon these scenario’s, each Post will always need to recruit some new members just to remain the same as the previous year.

Legion Year ending 2020 -- Increase total membership by 1-percent over ending membership numbers from Legion year 2019. Attention still needs to be placed on those members passing away, moving, etc.
Narrative:

Like many Departments, Kentucky has been losing members by an approximate 10-percent per year for several years. Causes for this decline in members include the loss of members because:

- Members dying;
- Members moving away;
- Members too busy or family restrictions on time;
- Members unhappy with their Post; and
- Members don’t see value in belonging anymore.

Associate causes for this membership decline include a lower number of new members due to:

- The Post not actively recruiting members;
- A limited available of potential members in some rural areas
- Post politics;
- Lack of community involvement; and
- Younger Veterans not understanding the value in joining.

However, we do have many Veterans available to join The Kentucky American Legion. There are opportunities for recruitment due to the war in and around the Middle East for almost 30 years and the active expeditionary units assigned to Fort Campbell, KY. However, we also lost major recruitment opportunities because of the unit drawdown at Fort Knox, KY. Additionally, Kentucky has several National Guard and Reserve units that have potential American Legion candidates if properly recruited.

Weighing these two scenarios, we believe it is certainly possible to reverse our Department’s downward slide in membership numbers if we incorporate the right retention programs coupled with aggressive recruitment initiatives.

To address these conditions and reverse the negative direction of our membership numbers, we are proposing the following:

- Develop a Department Membership Team consisting of the following:
  - Department Membership Director
  - Department Area Vice Commanders
  - Department Area Membership Directors
  - District Commanders
  - District Membership Chairpersons

  THIS WAS ACCOMPLISHED BY AUGUST 1\textsuperscript{st}, 2018

- Highlighting membership and marketing tools available from National Headquarters and making these available at Post levels. Included among other tools will be the national Revitalization Guide, Door/Vehicle hangers, and Post 200 listings.
• Updating our Department “Recruit, Retain, and Revitalize” Guide. This will be supplied to each Area Vice Commander and District Commander early in the year and be available for download on the Department Internet website. We will encourage the use of this Guide at every Post. See Appendix B to this Membership Plan.

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• Updating our Department New Member Guide. We will provide this to all Area and District Commanders and have it available for download on our Department Internet website. We will also encourage the use of the National New Member pamphlet. These initiatives will be aimed at retaining new members in subsequent years. See Appendix C to this Membership Plan.

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• Increased emphases and responsibility placed upon our eleven District Commanders and our three Area Vice Commanders to work closely with each of their Posts on membership goals. Included in this effort will be:
  o Having all present members renew their annual membership no later than December 31st of each year;
  o Personally, contacting every member who has not renewed by December 31 to find out why;
  o Assisting in member recruitment initiatives, including setting up recruitment tables at stores and community events, hosting Post open houses, and advertisements in local newspapers and other media.

• Publish membership achievements monthly on the Department Internet website. Contact Area and District officers for increased assistance to Posts when they fall short of their expected goals.

• Use promotion of the Legionnaire Insurance Trust Program in Recruiting efforts and membership renewal by December 31st of each year.

• Promote increased participation in National's American Legion Boot Camp program. We will be looking at statistics of how many take this course and possible awards for high participation. This is specifically geared toward educating and involving new members and increasing member retention.

• Hold District training sessions. We envision holding training prior to District meetings to promote National and Department objectives while also holding specific training of topics requested by Posts. We hope to increase attendance and availability to this training by presenting it as part of District meetings.
• Increase emphasis on completion of National Basic Training Course. This can be accomplished either individually or in group settings (as authorized by National during July 2018). Districts should work with their Posts in promoting this program to increase understanding of what the Legion is and what the Legion does, including our history. Through this program, Legionnaires will obtain a better understanding of our programs and as a result become more involved on their Post.

• Holding at least two District-wide Revitalization events
  o One Post to host event and several, if not all, Posts helping at the event;
  o Department officers and some funding will be available during the event; and
  o National will provide personnel, logistics support, and handouts for the event.

• Continue Department membership award programs:
  Please see Appendix A to this Membership Plan for a detailed listing of Department of Kentucky membership awards.

• Initialization of the Department Commander’s District Membership Award
  o The Department Commander for 2018-2019 will host a dinner to every District Commander and their guest that achieves their 100-percent goal by May 31st, 2019.
  o This award dinner will also include each Area Vice Commander and their guest that achieves the 100-percent goal for a majority of their Posts within their area.
  o Every Post that achieves their 100-percent goal by May 31st, 2019 will receive a chance at winning $100 cash. All Posts achieving their goal will be placed in a drawing; with three Posts winning the $100 prize.
  o These awards will be from the 2018-2019 Department Commander personally out of his own personal funds. Continuation of these Department Commander Awards in future years will be at the discretion of each Department Commander.
**Long Term Goals – Years Three, Four, and Five**

Legion Year ending 2021 – Increase total membership by 2-percent over ending membership numbers from Legion year 2020.

Legion Year ending 2022 – Increase total membership by 3-percent over ending membership numbers from Legion year 2021.

Legion Year ending 2023 – Increase total membership by 4-percent over ending membership numbers from Legion year 2022.

**Narrative:**

The narrative for our long-term goals and our short-term goals are, for the most part, interchangeable. Most of the conditions for membership decline may remain, as will the potential opportunities for membership growth. Important factors that will help us achieve long term success is the increased training and improved recruitment/retention practices that were developed and practiced during the previous two years.

All the practices contained in our short-term goal narrative will be constantly reviewed for effectiveness and continued through year 5 of this plan. The Department will continually look for new membership and marketing initiatives from National and from within our Department structure and use them as needed to achieve our membership goals.

Our Department-wide Membership Team will conduct strategy sessions at the end of each Legion year to assess what initiatives worked well and if there are initiatives that may need restructuring. Afterward, this membership Plan will be updated accordingly.

It is the Department of Kentucky’s goal that after this five-year plan is completed we will be back on track to achieve a 5-percent annual increase in our membership every year.