

American Legion Auxiliary Department of California Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation

April 2023

Bulletin #8

Dear VA&R Chairmen,

I have been thinking and praying for our Legion Family members who have been impacted by so much rain and snow that has caused so much flooding over the last few months. As I write this bulletin, I hope we are near the end of such severe weather events and will soon be in a drying out period. I am, however, looking forward to the expected super bloom. Our hills are full of beautiful California poppies as well as purple and yellow flowers. What a wonderful time of year to travel the tracks of our Friendship Train to serve the veterans throughout the State.

As you know, Veteran suicide is the leading issue facing the American Legion. TAL has asked Congress to:

- ✓ Support the funding, implementation, and expansion of the VA and community-based mental health services through Veterans Centers, whole health innovations and transitional support.
- ✓ Increase access to alternative therapies by decreasing the barriers to their use.

Besides asking Congress to implement and expand services, we can help through the American Legion's "Be the One" campaign. The campaign encourages the American Legion Family to take action if we believe a veteran is at risk of committing suicide. Please:

- ✓ "Be the One" to ask veterans in your life how they are doing;
- ✓ "Be the One" to listen when a veteran needs to talk;
- ✓ "Be the One" to reach out when a veteran is struggling.

While looking at the National website for information to share with you, I found the following that will be useful to you when filling out your Tracking Forms for the Impact Reports.

"MISSION OUTREACH VS. MISSION AWARENESS: We'd like to provide some clarity on recent questions we've received about counting volunteer hours:

Wearing an article of clothing does not count toward volunteer hours, much like hours spent flying a flag in your front yard doesn't count. Volunteer hours should reflect direct mission service and direct impact in your community. Wearing red on Fridays to show your support of our military and veterans is important and encouraged, but it ultimately has little to do with direct mission outreach. Volunteer hours are reported to Congress via The American Legion. Our impact numbers (aka your hours) need to reflect our actual hands-on mission outreach, as Congress uses those numbers when considering funding in the veterans' realm. So, by reporting non-service (i.e., wearing a shirt for 8 hours), it misrepresents the actual hours serving veterans' needs in your community and could ultimately hurt further federal funding as it looks like we are meeting the needs without that additional funding.

Being branded or wearing red on Fridays is truly for awareness of veterans and the mission of the ALA, but it's just not something that should be reported in your volunteer hours.

Questions? Because each situation re: volunteer hours is unique, please email programs@ALAforVeterans.org so we can answer your questions thoughtfully and on an individual basis."

I gave you the wrong information about who receives the Tracking forms and Impact Reports. Please note that you, the VA&R Chairmen, are **not** responsible for filling out the Impact Reports. The Unit and District **presidents** fill them out. The presidents, however, do need the information that your use of the forms provides them as they prepare their reports.

Report Deadlines Reminder:

- ✓ Unit End-of-Year Reports are due to the District VA&R Chairman by April 14
- ✓ Unit Impact Reports are due to the District Presidents by April 14
- ✓ District End-of-Year Reports are due to the Department Chairman by May 1
- ✓ District Impact Reports are due to the Department Secretary by May 1

I wish you and your families a very Happy Easter.

"God Bless This Endeavor. God Speed the Train. God Speed the Peace."
**--Rev. Clarence H. Parlous of St. Mark's Episcopal Church regarding
the Friendship Train of 1947**

Yours in Service,

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