



For God and Country

★ NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS ★ PO BOX 1055 ★ INDIANAPOLIS, INDIANA 46206-1055 ★  
(317) 630-1200 ★ FAX (317) 630-1223 ★

OFFICE OF THE  
NATIONAL COMMANDER

**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 100<sup>th</sup> 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](http://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](mailto: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.

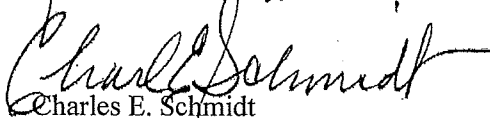
Inactive posts may require a little help in joining the project. But what better method is there than having the department committee help them to index and catalog the memorials in their communities? The interaction with their community just might revitalize their post. This is also a great opportunity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

Att.

**NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE  
OF  
THE AMERICAN LEGION  
INDIANAPOLIS, INDIANA  
OCTOBER 12-13, 2016**

**Resolution No. 10: Veterans Memorial Identification Project**

**Origin: Internal Affairs Commission**

**Submitted By: Internal Affairs Commission**

WHEREAS, One of the tenets of The American Legion, as expressed in the Preamble to the organization's constitution, is "... To preserve the memories and incidents of our associations in the Great Wars ..."; and

WHEREAS, Many communities across America, and the United States government itself, have established veterans monuments and memorials to honor those who have served and sacrificed in the U.S. Armed Forces, and The American Legion has traditionally assisted in the establishment, maintenance, care, or defense of those veterans monuments; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion supports the Pritzker Military Library & Museum and the U.S. National WWI Centennial Commission in the promotion and execution of a nationwide grant-availability campaign, which ends July 15, 2017, to restore World War I monuments and build public awareness of the WWI Centennial by the "100 Cities/100 Memorials" (NEC Resolution No. 19, May 2016); and

WHEREAS, There are several databases in states and local communities which contain information on veterans memorials, but there is not one central location to identify all these memorials; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion via its national website has been collecting some of this information on its Honor & Remembrance platform; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion is uniquely positioned to collect and document memorial information through its vast grassroots organization, with dedicated members and posts around the world; and

WHEREAS, The entire American Legion Family and community groups connected to it can be engaged in providing detailed information on memorials and monuments of all wars and military experiences; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion through its department leadership can communicate with counties, districts and posts to promote a project to identify and document military and veterans memorials and monuments throughout the United States and beyond; and

WHEREAS, Members of The American Legion, Sons of The American Legion, American Legion Riders and American Legion Auxiliary can effectively reach out to their local communities through scouting, athletics, education, government and local media; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion's 100th Anniversary serves as an excellent opportunity to conduct a major initiative to identify, develop a database and promote the care, maintenance and if necessary, restoration of military and veterans memorials and monuments; and

WHEREAS, This database would become the premier nationwide source of information on veterans memorials and monuments of all eras; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion has a historical relationship with Alliance Defense Fund and Liberty Legal Institute (NEC Resolution No. 11, October 2006) both of which provide legal assistance to communities in their defense of veteran memorials with symbols of America's

religious history and heritage such as the Mojave Desert WWI veterans memorial and the Bladensburg Cross in Maryland to name a couple; and

WHEREAS, This database could be used to access information in order to adequately support and defend veteran and military memorials located on private land or land owned by federal, state or local governments against efforts to substantially change, destroy or remove these memorials; and

WHEREAS, This resolution has been reviewed and approved by The American Legion Media & Communications Commission, which will be tasked with developing the digital infrastructure to support the database and promote the restoration program; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED, By the National Executive Committee of The American Legion in regular meeting assembled in Indianapolis, Indiana, on October 12-13, 2016, That departments, districts, counties, posts, Sons of The American Legion detachments/squadrons, The American Legion Riders chapters and American Legion Auxiliary departments/units are encouraged to engage in this American Legion-wide project to identify veterans memorials in communities across the nation and beyond in order to expand the organization's existing memorials database maintained at National Headquarters; and, be it finally**

**RESOLVED, That this memorial identification project be promoted in all media channels deemed appropriate and any resources needed for this project at National Headquarters be handled through the normal budgeting process.**