



AMVETS OFFICERS, MANUAL

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OFFICERS' MANUAL

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The History of AMVETS

Truly, AMVETS was born in the midst of war, for it was in August 1943, with victory still two years away, that a new organization, later to be known as the American Veterans of World War II, had its beginning. Overseas, the tide of battle was turning. The Allies had swept through North Africa and Sicily. In the Pacific, fighting raged in New Guinea. Thousands of Americans had made the supreme sacrifice. Hundreds of others were being mustered out of uniform with battle wounds and medical discharges. These men who fought in history's greatest war found it natural to seek each other's company. They were united by similar experiences in jungles, in the Arctic, in deserts, in mountains, at sea and in the skies. Thus, out of such comradeship, AMVETS came to be.

Formed in Washington, D.C., two independent veterans clubs, one on the campus of George Washington University, the other of veterans employed by the government, joined together to sponsor a servicemen's party. By September 1944, other such veteran's clubs organized throughout America. In California, Florida, Louisiana, New York, Oklahoma, Rhode Island, Tennessee and Texas. On Nov. 11, 1944, a Veterans Day article entitled "12,000,000 in search of a Leader" appeared in COLLIER'S. This story, written by Walter Davenport, introduced the clubs and outlined their three mutual aims: to promote world peace, to preserve the American way of life, and to help the veteran help himself. In December 1944, 18 leaders, representing these nine groups, met in Kansas City, Mo. There, a national organization was formed and on Dec. 9, 1944, the name "American Veterans of World War II" was chosen. The word AMVETS, coined by newspaper headline writers, soon became the official name. The white clover, a flower that thrives in freedom throughout the world, and is symbolic of the struggle during World War II, became the adopted flower of AMVETS.

In October 1945, two months after the end of World War II, the first national convention was convened in Chicago. In 1946, AMVETS petitioned Congress for a federal charter. AMVETS, having displayed dignity and a sound approach to national problems, won the deep respect of Congress and on July 23, 1947, President Harry S Truman signed the AMVETS charter. The words of the Senate Judiciary Committee echoed throughout the land, "The veterans of World War II are entitled to their own organization, and AMVETS, being organized along sound lines and for worthy purposes... having demonstrated its strength and stability is entitled to the standing and dignity which a national charter will afford." President Truman also commented, "Were I a veteran of this war, I would prefer to have a veteran of World War II looking after my affairs, than a veteran of some other war."

When the war broke out in Korea and again in Vietnam, AMVETS requested Congress to amend the charter so that those serving in the U.S. Armed Forces would be eligible for membership. On Sept. 14, 1966, President Lyndon B. Johnson signed the bill redefining the eligibility dates for AMVETS membership, stating "Any person who served in the Armed Forces of the United States of America, or any American citizen, as an American citizen, who served in the armed forces of an allied nation of the United States at anytime after Sept. 15, 1940, and on or before the date of cessation of hostilities as determined by the government of the United States is eligible for regular membership in AMVETS, provided such service when terminated by discharge or release from active duty be by honorable discharge or separation." On May 7, 1975, President Gerald R. Ford signed Proclamation 4373, terminating the Vietnam era and announcing the cessation of hostilities. Effective May 8, 1975, the armed forces became a peacetime service.

For nearly 10 years, AMVETS did not accept into membership servicemen and women who served after May 7, 1975. On May 31, 1984, President Ronald Reagan signed Public Law 98-304, which amended AMVETS' congressional charter to open membership to those who served honorably and actively after May 7, 1975. AMVETS is now the only congressionally chartered veterans service organization that recognizes the sacrifices of these veterans and service persons by extending membership eligibility to them.

At the 46th and 47th national conventions, the contributions made by the National Guard and Reserve forces were recognized and membership eligibility was extended to include all ready reserves. Membership in AMVETS is now open to any person who has served or is serving in the U.S. Armed Forces during and since World War II, including all National Guard and Reserve personnel. At the 49th National Convention in 1993, the eligibility of merchant marines who served this country in time of war was addressed and approved. Merchant marines who are considered veterans and eligible for VA benefits (and have received a DD-214 from either the Navy or the Coast Guard) are eligible for AMVETS membership.

Group Tax Exemption

AMVETS enjoys tax-exempt status under Internal Revenue Service (IRS) Code, Section 501(c)(19), and its subordinate organizations at all levels may enjoy the benefits that this status offers, provided that the IRS mandates are fulfilled. All business entities are required to have employer identification numbers (EIN). In compliance with IRS regulations, every AMVETS post or subordinate organization must have its own EIN. The Application for Employer Identification (IRS SS-4 Form) is used to apply. The assigned EIN is used to identify the post when filing its annual IRS 990 Form.

In 1970, Section 501(c)(19) was added to the Internal Revenue Code, providing a new category of tax-exempt organizations expressly limited to veterans organizations and their subordinate groups, including local posts. To qualify as a Section 501(c)(19) organization, access to the clubroom facilities is limited to members and their guests. Then, income from sales of food and alcoholic beverages should not be subjected to federal income taxes. Treasury Regulation 1.501(c)(19)-1(c)(8) provides that one exempt purpose for which a (c)(19) may be operated is to provide "social and recreational activities for its members." Accordingly, it has been held that income from a restaurant and cocktail lounge operated by a veteran's organization was tax exempt. The result, however, would have been different if those facilities had been open to the general public.

Organizational Structure

AMVETS has been continually growing since its beginnings. Our many members and posts located throughout the free world are proof that AMVETS programs, goals and efforts are worthy of support. The annually elected and appointed officers at the national, district, department (or districts within the state department) and local levels work together to accomplish the AMVETS mission.

Each year, representatives from these levels attend the AMVETS national convention held in August at a time and place selected by delegates to a previous convention to make decisions on issues affecting veterans and the organization.

National Headquarters

AMVETS National Headquarters is located in Lanham, Maryland, just minutes outside Washington, D.C. As the senior functioning administrative agency of the organization, the national headquarters is staffed by the national commander, the executive director, legislative director, membership director, programs director, communications director, finance director, service director and support staff. In addition, the national headquarters houses the AMVETS National Service Foundation and the AMVETS National Auxiliary Headquarters.

AMVETS National Headquarters is located at 4647 Forbes Boulevard, Lanham, MD 20706-4380. Normal business hours are from 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Eastern Time, Monday through Friday, except for holidays. The telephone number is (301) 459-9600, or toll free 1-877-726-8387, the FAX number is (301) 459-7924 and the email address is amvets@amvets.org. Email addresses for individual staff members are derived by the first initial and last name accompanied by @amvets.org. For example, John Smith's email would be jsmith@amvets.org. The AMVETS Internet web site may be accessed at www.amvets.org.

National Executive Committee

The administrative power between national conventions is vested in the National Executive Committee (NEC). The NEC is composed of the national commander, past national commanders, the national first and second vice commanders and all other elected national officers, including national district commanders and one NEC person or an alternate from each chartered department.

National Districts

Post and department delegates meet annually at the national convention to coordinate activities and elect a national district commander and other national district officers. The six national districts of AMVETS are divided geographically as follows:

- DISTRICT I: Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Rhode Island and Vermont
- DISTRICT II: Delaware, District of Columbia, Maryland, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, Virginia and West Virginia
- DISTRICT III: Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, South Carolina and Tennessee
- DISTRICT IV: Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kentucky, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Ohio and Wisconsin
- DISTRICT V: Colorado, Kansas, Montana, Nebraska, North Dakota, Oklahoma, South Dakota, Texas and Wyoming
- DISTRICT VI: Alaska, Arizona, California, Hawaii, Idaho, Nevada, New Mexico, Oregon, Utah, and Washington

Departments

Departments are chartered and governed under the provisions established in the AMVETS National Constitution, Article IX. The AMVETS national commander may grant a charter to a new department, which has a minimum of five posts and 300 members. Then, at the next scheduled NEC meeting, the NEC ratifies the commander's actions. All departments must maintain a minimum of 500 members in good standing (except departments whose charters were issued within the past two years). Departments that fail to meet these minimum standards will have their charter revoked. A revoked charter must be returned within 30 days of notification from national headquarters. Departments are organized and function similarly to the national organization; however, their jurisdiction is limited to state boundaries (including boundaries of the District of Columbia, territories or Allied countries). Each department must hold a convention (meeting) between May 15 and June 30 and complete its revalidation prior to July 15 each year.

Each department will have a NECman and an alternate to serve as liaison between the national organization and the state department (and posts). Each NECman should carefully review Article VII of the AMVETS National Constitution to become familiar with his/her responsibilities. For the purpose of determining voting eligibility at an NEC meeting, each department must be revalidated with the national headquarters and meet its minimum membership requirements.

In addition to the NECman and alternate, each department will elect and/or appoint officers in accordance with Appendix E and its Bylaws. Appendix E to the National Bylaws is the standard constitution for all departments. A complete staff of officers includes a commander, a minimum of two vice commanders, adjutant (or executive director), finance officer, judge advocate, provost marshal, inspector general, public relations officer, service officer, employment officer, insurance officer, historian, chaplain, VAVS representative, women veterans representative, and (up to three) deputy representatives.

Posts

Posts are the fundamental units of AMVETS. Members who desire to expand their involvement and express their views in state and national affairs may also seek appointments to department and national committees. A minimum of 10 eligible veterans may form an AMVETS post. Application for a post charter customarily is made to the department and, on approval, is forwarded to National Headquarters. Where organized departments do not exist, post charter applications should be forwarded directly to the national organization. Each post charter is issued in accordance with Article X of the AMVETS National Constitution. Posts are governed by their constitution and bylaws as well as by their chosen or elected officers and committees. Each AMVETS post shall be the judge of its own membership, subject to the provisions of the constitution and bylaws of the national and state organization.

Membership

Eligibility

To be eligible for AMVETS membership, you must have served anytime after Sept. 15, 1940, or be currently serving in the U.S. Armed Forces. Additionally, when discharged or released from duty, your separation must have been by honorable discharge, honorable separation or general discharge under honorable conditions. If you are an American citizen, you are also eligible for membership if you served as an American citizen in the armed forces of an Allied nation, providing you served any time between Sept. 15, 1940, and May 8, 1975, and your service was terminated by honorable discharge or honorable separation. All members of the National Guard or Reserves, currently serving or honorably discharged since Sept. 15, 1940, are also eligible for AMVETS membership, providing termination by release from duty was by honorable discharge or honorable separation. Membership eligibility was extended to include wartime merchant marines who are eligible for veteran's benefits and have secured a DD-214 from either the Navy or the Coast Guard.

No person who is working to overthrow the U.S. Government or who is a member of an organization trying to do so shall be privileged to become or continue to be a member of this organization. Honorary membership shall not be granted. In lieu of this, certificates of merit may be awarded to those rendering distinct service to the community and the American veterans who have served or are serving in the Armed Forces of the United States during and since World War II. Posts, intermediate administrative groups, departments, the NEC, the national headquarters or the national convention body may make such awards. Awards requested by posts and intermediate administrative groups must be approved by the departments' executive committees. No AMVET is entitled to receive a certificate of merit. Membership is based on the fiscal year, September 1 to August 31, and no member may be affiliated with more than one post at the same time.

Members-at-Large

An eligible veteran may join AMVETS as a member-at-large (MAL). This means the veteran will become a member of an AMVETS department, without affiliation to a local post. Any AMVETS member classified as a member-at-large cannot hold an elective or appointive office at any level in the organization.

Procedures

Discipline

Guidelines for the suspension or expulsion of a member are identified in the Uniform Code of Procedure of the AMVETS National Bylaws, Appendix B. A post can suspend or expel any member showing just cause, such as disloyalty, neglect of duty, dishonesty, or conduct unbecoming a member of AMVETS. The post's charges should be committed to writing and presented to the member. According to the National Bylaws, Appendix B, any member who has been disciplined has the right to appeal his suspension or expulsion to the department executive committee. The decision of that committee shall be final.

Nominations and Elections

The AMVETS National Constitution mandates that posts hold their annual officers election between May 1 and June 30. Within 30 days of the election, posts must forward, to the department and National Headquarters, documentation stating the names of their newly elected officers. Post revalidation must occur no later than July 15. Elected and appointed officers may be installed and assume office no later than July 15.

Balloting

The election of officers to the department and the selection of delegates for the national convention should take place during the regular annual meeting. Some posts may find this impossible; therefore, regular polling days can be set up to ensure that the election is carried out in a fair manner.

To qualify as a voting delegate or act as an alternate at the national convention, an AMVET must be in good standing with his post or be a member of a post to which he has been transferred for at least six months prior to the convention.

Most post bylaws recommend that candidates running for office receive a simple majority (more than half) of the votes cast to be elected. When more than two candidates run for office and neither receives a majority on the first ballot, the run-off election is usually between the two candidates receiving the highest votes. Each candidate should be given the opportunity to decline the nomination. When nominations and elections are held during the same meeting, the following procedure should be used:

Chairman: "Nominations are now in order for the office of post adjutant."

First Post Member: "Mr. Chairman, I nominate AMVET Jones."

Second Post Member: "Mr. Chairman, I nominate AMVET Smith."

Third Post Member: "Mr. Chairman, I nominate AMVET Gray."

Note: Nominations do not require a second.

As nominations are made, the chairman will ask each nominee if he will accept the nomination.

Chairman: “Are there any further nominations? Are there any further nominations? Are there any further nominations? Hearing none, nominations are closed.”

Note: There may be a motion to close nominations, in which case it must be seconded and passed by a majority. A motion to close nominations cannot be debated; such a motion is not in order until a reasonable time has been allowed.

The chairman then reads the list of nominees who have accepted and announces: “We will now proceed to the election of post adjutant. AMVETS Miller and Brown will serve as tellers.”

The tellers with the assistance of the post provost marshal will distribute, collect and count the ballots. After the votes have been tallied, the tellers will report the results to the chairman who will announce those elected as well as the count.

Officers and Their Duties

Commander

The commander, as the senior executive officer of the post, shall preside at all meetings of the post and executive committee but may delegate a vice commander to serve as a temporary substitute when needed. The commander is an ex officio member of all committees. The commander directs and supervises the activities of all elected and appointed officers and committees. Together with the adjutant and finance officer, the commander is responsible for all monies received by the post. He also has automatic access to the online data base. He may view a roster 24/7 and update the contact/address information for any post member. The Commander may add new members online and renew members online.

The commander will ensure that the post meets regularly on the appointed dates unless otherwise dictated by the post membership. It is the commander’s responsibility to disseminate, to the membership, all pertinent information that is sent from the department and National Headquarters.

In addition to announcements at post meetings, all information should be displayed on post bulletin boards and published in the post newsletter. The commander, or a member appointed by him, shall represent the post at memorial services and community functions, where it is customary that AMVETS or a veteran’s organization be represented.

The commander shall be the official post spokesman on all matters of public interest concerning post activities. The public relations officer (PRO) may be called on to assist with press releases, position statements and speech preparation. The position of commander is filled in regular elections as prescribed by the post’s constitution and bylaws.

Vice Commander(s)

Posts may determine the number of vice commanders they wish to elect and the duties of the vice-commanders shall be prescribed by the post constitution. It is customary to elect two vice commanders who may be assigned duties by the commander or post executive committee. The first vice commander serves as the membership chairman and the second vice commander is responsible for programs and their promotion. In the absence of the commander, the vice-commanders in order of their rank shall preside at meetings and represent the commander. Like the Commander, he too can access post member information online. He has the same privileges as the commander.

Adjutant

The adjutant provides the administrative support for the post and is charged with taking minutes and maintaining all records (in conjunction with the finance officer). He is also responsible for correspondence and handles the routine business of the post. The adjutant is the official contact person for the post and serves as the liaison officer between the post and its community, the department and National Headquarters. Among the adjutant responsibilities:

- Maintain the Post's electronic Roster. Ensure service dates, birthdates and e-mails are current for all members and leaders. Each member's file should provide all the information given on the original application: name, address, branch of service, home and work phone numbers and date of acceptance into AMVETS;
- Maintain records of current and past officers. Forward a new list of officers to the department and national headquarters within 30 days of the election. Any changes made on the post level must be documented and forwarded to the headquarters no later than July 15;
- Update a member's record when addresses or e-mails change. E-mail membership when a member passes;
- Keep the membership informed of all post functions and activities. Ensure that all members are notified in advance of the time, place and date of post meetings. Take particular care to ensure that all members are properly notified at least 30 days in advance of all elections of officers, change in CBL, etc.;
- Be present at all meetings (or have an assistant in attendance) to record all business transacted and report on the minutes of the previous post meeting or executive committee meetings;
- Present all communications and correspondence at regular post and executive committee meetings;
- Keep a complete record of the post's property, including a description of the item, its estimated value, its location and any other pertinent information deemed necessary. Trustees of post homes and clubs are sometimes held responsible for the safety and maintenance of post properties. This, however, should not be interpreted as being in conflict with procedures already established by the post for custody of the property;
- Apply to the IRS for an employer identification number (EIN), by completing SS-4 Form and filing IRS 990 Form as required;
- File all correspondence according to the subject matter. Keep copies of all letters sent to the department and National Headquarters; and
- Maintain separate files for members, correspondence, D&R Forms as well as for post publicity and fund-raising programs and any other topics relating to post activities.
- Like the Commander, he too can access post member information online. He has the same privileges as the commander.

For information concerning membership processing, address changes, transfers, membership cards or other matters, please refer to the AMVETS MEMBERSHIP MANUAL.

Finance Officer

The post finance officer is the treasurer. Responsibilities include receiving membership dues, banking, disbursement of monies and accounting for all post funds. The finance officer and one other post officer, usually the commander, sign and countersign all post checks only after payment is authorized. Credit card management and use rules are essential to conducting digital business.

The post finance officer should collect all monies due the post and keep an account of receipts for each member. All members in arrears should be notified personally. He should see that all post funds are secured in a bank account.

Before a new post finance officer assumes his duties, his predecessor must have been given a "clean opinion" by the auditors, the audit committee or the finance committee. (The new finance officer does not want to become involved in any problems that existed prior to his appointment.)

The finance officer should make a financial report at all regular meetings (to be included in the meeting minutes) and prepare a complete financial statement and budget to report at the annual post meeting. He should also report to the post on all receipts collected and on all bills outstanding and paid. Major expenditures, and those not within the current budget, should first be reported to the executive committee and at a post meeting.

The finance officer may be assisted and guided by a finance committee of three or four members appointed by the commander with the approval of the post executive committee. The primary duty of a finance committee is to provide an annual audit of the books and assist in the preparation of the annual budget. The commander, being a member of all committees by virtue of his office, may assist the finance committee.

An important function of the finance officer is to coordinate his duties relating to membership with the adjutant or membership contact. The finance officer receives and dispenses all money and should work with whoever is responsible for issuing membership cards. At least once each month, he shall transmit to the department (or in the case of a non-department state, to the national headquarters) any monies collected from annual dues during the preceding month. Transmittal or remittance forms provided by the AMVETS National Headquarters shall accompany such payment.

The finance officer should handle all dues revenues and membership cards. Although the actual issuance of the membership cards may be done by or in conjunction with the membership contact, the finance officer should handle the funds and account for the cards. The cards are an important investment and should be inventoried upon delivery and then locked up in a fireproof container. The finance officer may be given permission from the Post Commander (via email or telephone call to the National Membership Director) to obtain access all the online capabilities.

AMVETS Accounting System for Posts and Departments: Because an elected finance officer may have little or no bookkeeping/accounting experience, an easy and efficient accounting system must be adopted. The "double entry bookkeeping" system requires little experience, time and effort.

For this system to work, each and every financial transaction must be recorded. The finance officer uses an income voucher or disbursement voucher to authorize every transaction. When an income voucher is written and posted to the general ledger, the money that is deposited in the bank should agree with the voucher and general ledger. Likewise, when a disbursement voucher is written, the voucher should agree with the invoice and the check.

A double-entry bookkeeping system requires at least two entries, a debit and a credit for every transaction. When funds are received, there is a debit (or increase to the cash account) and a credit (or increase to an income account such as membership dues.) When monies are paid out there is a credit entry made to the cash account to decrease its balance and a debit entry to another account such as national membership dues, when these monies are paid to AMVETS National Headquarters. One ledger sheet per month can be used to show all transactions. There should be a separate column for each account. The account balances at the end of each month should be carried forward as the beginning balance of the next month. Reconciliation of your bank statement to your cash account is required. The balance in the checking account should always agree with the total cash balance recorded in the general ledger.

The post must have a bank account, which requires two signatures on each check. When officers are changed, the newly authorized signatures must be given to the bank via appropriately completed signature cards. The officers who will sign the checks on the account must sign the signature cards.

Many banks will give a veterans organization an account that will be free from service charges and other fees, and the finance officer should inquire about the bank's policy toward veterans groups.

When opening a new account, the finance officer must take the adopted resolution, which instructs that a post bank account is to be opened to the local bank along with the post's federal I.D. number. The resolution may read as follows:

Be It Resolved: That the finance officer of AMVETS Post (number), Department of (state), be instructed to open a checking account in the name of the above post at a local bank of his choice. Checks on the above account must have the signature of the finance officer and the signature of either the commander or adjutant of the above named post.

All posts are required by the bylaws to have the finance officer bonded in a sum at least equal to the amount of the liquid assets for which he may be accountable. The bond does not take the place of insurance in any way. It pays only for loss due to fraud or dishonest acts of the person bonded.

Budget: Every post, small or large, should have a balanced budget. A balanced budget means that income (or all cash received) and expenses (or all cash disbursed) are equal. This is the only way to handle the finances of the post or department.

When it is time to prepare the annual budget for the post, the finance committee meets to review all income and expenses during the past year and recommend a budget for the coming year. In developing a budget, consideration must be given to the long- and short-range goals of the post.

The post finance committee should meet at least two months prior to the annual meeting to set up a budget. Copies of the recommended budget should be distributed to the membership during the finance report at the annual meeting. It is every member's right to know where money is being spent.

After the adoption of the budget by the membership, it is the finance officer's responsibility to insist that the post limit its expenditures to the budgeted items within the anticipated income. This will provide stability and build a financial reserve for unanticipated expenses while maintaining a balanced budget.

The Internal Revenue Service: Under the provisions of a Bureau of Internal Revenue Ruling all AMVETS posts are entitled to exemption from federal income tax under Section 501(c)(19). For this reason, AMVETS maintains a group exemption that helps to expedite coverage. You must annually file information returns on the IRS 990 Form if required by current IRS regulations. This form may be obtained from the Internal Revenue Service and is required to be filed on or before the 15th day of the 5th month following the close of your accounting period. The "Post Revalidation Form" must be marked indicating whether or not your post is required to file IRS Form 990.

Bonding: Bonding is mandated in the AMVETS Bylaws, Article VII, Section 1: All national, department and post officials handling AMVETS funds in excess of \$5,000 shall be properly bonded with a good and solvent bonding and surety company, acceptable to the United States Treasury, as surety to cover the average amount of AMVETS funds, handled by such individual in a single year. In case of delinquencies in the payment of accounts due the department or National Headquarters, action shall be taken at once by the proper officials to bring about an immediate and complete settlement. The National Executive Committee shall approve the bonds provided by national officials, and the department executive committee shall approve those provided by department and post officials.

Changeover: Prior to the annual meeting, the post's books must be in good order so that an adequate financial report can be made and the books turned over to the newly elected finance officer. In the transition, the new finance officer should provide a written receipt to the retiring officer on the surrender of the post books and monies.

Judge Advocate

The post judge advocate is responsible for drafting the post's constitution and bylaws (CBL) for presentation to and adoption by the general post membership. The original post CBL, together with any changes, additions or corrections must be sent to the department judge advocate for review, approval and forwarding to the national headquarters. The National Membership Department maintains a permanent file of important documents on each post. A post may adopt its own CBL, provided the provisions are not in conflict with the department or national constitution and bylaws. A sample post CBL is provided as an addendum to the Officer's Manual (last item in this section).

Historian

The historian shall compile and maintain complete historical records of post activities and will submit a full historical report annually, or as requested.

Provost Marshal

The provost marshal is responsible for keeping order at post meetings, for the care of post colors and for carrying out other duties as assigned.

Service Officer

General duties of an AMVETS post service officer include the following:

- Sharing information about veteran's benefits at post meetings and other AMVETS functions.
- Referring veterans to an AMVETS national service officer, AMVETS state service officer, county veterans service officer or an accredited representative for assistance in filing for veterans benefits
- Becoming familiar with the application forms necessary to assist in the preparation and the proper filing of claims for benefits.
- Being familiar with requirements for veterans in need of medical attention to obtain VA hospitalization and medical care, both under emergency and normal conditions.
- To successfully assist in the development and presentation of any claim, the post service officer must safeguard all confidential information.

Under authority of Public Law 844, Section 200, the Department of Veterans Affairs has recognized and granted authority to AMVETS to present claims and assist veterans in the prosecution of their claims against the department. This law states that no fee or compensation whatsoever shall be charged veterans or dependents for services rendered in connection with any claims in which AMVETS (or other recognized organizations) holds power of attorney. Under Public Law 346, Sections 301 and 302, the 78th Congress similarly accorded recognition to AMVETS in acting as counsel in the presentation of petitions for review of discharges and for other matters before the Army and Navy departments.

Only those persons recognized by the secretary of veterans affairs as AMVETS accredited representatives or national service officers may present claims and act on behalf of the veteran.

Before VA, however, will recognize AMVETS to represent any veteran's claim, it is necessary for the claimant to execute a power of attorney in favor of AMVETS by completing the Appointment of a Service Organization as Claimant Representative Form (VA Form 22-23). Only one organization will be recognized as the claimant's representative at any one time. Once the claimant has completed the form in favor of a veteran's organization, he cancels all claims with previously appointed representatives.

Public Relations Officer

AMVETS as an organization is an international "brand" that is shaped and characterized by its very members. The value of the AMVETS brand within our communities is bolstered by an informed and engaged public of the special and outstanding activities sponsored by AMVETS.

Equally, the members themselves must know of the issues and activities occurring within AMVETS. It is the job of the public relations officer (PRO) to be the conduit between the members, the organization and community, and to enhance the prestige of the Post and AMVETS. This role requires someone who will stay informed and actively help keep others informed and engaged both within the Post and AMVETS, as well as the community. There are many communication avenues and tools available and the AMVETS COMMUNICATIONS MANUAL serves as a guide for the PRO.

Chaplain

The chaplain is a member of the commander's staff and acts as advisor and consultant to the commander in all matters relating to religion, morals, and morale as affected by religion. The chaplain assists the commander and his staff with integrating the principles of good moral conduct and citizenship in the post. He represents religion which teaches fortitude, reverence and justice, as well as kindness, sympathy and humility.

Quartermaster

The quartermaster on the post level acts as a liaison between the members and National's resource for quartermaster items.

The national quartermaster is not a lending agency; therefore, all purchases from departments, posts and individuals must be made by credit card, check or money order.

No items will be shipped until the quartermaster receives payment. Remember, all applicable taxes, shipping and handling charges apply.

Women Veterans' Representatives

AMVETS departments should appoint a women veterans' representative who will report on the department level all subjects pertaining to women veterans. Duties of the women veterans' representatives are as follows:

- Try to make all women veterans aware of their "rights" as veterans.
- Tour state VA hospitals, whenever feasible, to observe the individual VAMC facilities for women veterans. Contact local VA women veterans' coordinators.
- Report to the respective department at every SEC meeting and state convention as to information, progress, etc.
- Try to make all women veterans aware of their "rights" as veterans.
- Tour state VA hospitals, whenever feasible, to observe the individual VAMC facilities for women veterans. Contact local VA women veterans' coordinators.
- Report to the respective department at every SEC meeting and state convention as to information, progress, etc.

Revalidation

As a tax-exempt veterans' service organization, the national department, each recognized department and all posts must observe federal, state and local laws as well as our own constitution and bylaws. Our document mandates that each entity complies with the annual charter revalidation process outlined in the AMVETS National Constitution, Article X, Section 3:

Every post shall be required to revalidate its charter annually prior to July 15. Such charter revalidation shall be evidenced by an appropriate device to be issued by National Headquarters. In order to revalidate such charter, and to receive a Certificate of Revalidation of its charter, each post, aside from any other requirements imposed in the constitution and bylaws, shall—

- a) Furnish National and its department headquarters with a fully completed and certified Post Revalidation and Officers form;
- b) File Internal Revenue Form 990, 990M or 990EZ for the post calendar or fiscal year with the United States Internal Revenue Service as required by current IRS regulations, and note same on the Revalidation form;
- c) Furnish National Headquarters with a copy of the post's current constitution and bylaws or a certification stating the copy previously submitted has not been amended;
- d) Be fully paid up in all post accounts with National Headquarters;
- e) If required, have complied with Article VII, Section 3(c), of AMVETS National Bylaws;
- f) Have at least 10 members in good standing at the time of revalidation; and
- g) Provide National Headquarters a copy of the post articles of incorporation and certificates of good standing. If required, comply with AMVETS National Bylaws Article VII, Section 3(d), and provide National Headquarters with proof of compliance.

Meetings

Before the Meeting

Well in advance of the meeting, the commander should check with the adjutant to ensure that all post members have been notified of the time, date, place and tentative agenda of the meeting. He should also check that any planned programs following the meeting were announced. He should review, condensing where possible, all the material that will be presented at the meeting, organizing it according to the "Order of Business."

The post meeting is called to order when the commander raps the gavel three times. Usually two raps signal the membership to rise once. One rap directs the membership to be seated. Also, at the end of the meeting, one rap means the meeting is adjourned. Memorial services for departed members are an important part of the annual post meeting, department convention and national convention.

During the Meeting

The post commander is the chairman of all post and executive committee meetings. In his absence, the vice commander acts as the chairman. If neither of these officers is present, another officer can call the meeting to order. A temporary chairman should be elected to preside until the commander or vice commander arrives. The chairman is in charge of the meeting and must see to it that the meeting starts on time and that the business is carried out in an orderly fashion (without moving too fast or too slow). He must keep order, explain matters that are not clear, and see that each member has a fair chance to participate in the discussions and decisions. Most posts' bylaws state that a certain number of members, known as a "quorum," must be present before a legal meeting can be held.

The chairman calls the meeting to order by rapping the gavel three times and announcing, "The regular meeting of AMVETS Post (number) will now come to order." He should then proceed with conducting the meeting's agenda in the following order:

- Posting the Colors
- Pledge of Allegiance
- Invocation
- Preamble to the AMVETS Constitution
- Roll Call of Officers
- Minutes of the Previous Meeting and the Executive Committee Meeting
- Bills and Communications
- Introduction of Guests
- Applications for Membership and Initiation of New Members
- Reports of Officers, Committees and Delegates
- Unfinished Business
- New Business
- Good and Welfare
- Benediction
- Retiring the Colors
- Adjournment

Every meeting may not have business under each of the items. The above agenda is rather a guide for the chairman to ensure that all necessary business is conducted correctly and efficiently.

The chairman must listen carefully when the adjutant reads the minutes of the previous meeting, so that he can note those items, which must be acted on either because they were left unfinished or because reports are expected from committees or officers. When he can, the chairman should also note items of new business that he knows should be conducted.

When special items of business come before the meeting, the chairman may suggest changes in the agenda or the omission of certain items such as the reading of minutes, in order to save time. This may be done only with the body's consent. Post meetings should be limited to one hour. In special situations, a two-hour meeting may be allowed or necessary; however, long meetings discourage members from coming back.

Posting the Colors: If the colors are posted with only the United States flag, there should be a guard on both sides of the flag bearer. If both the U.S. flag and the post standard flag are used, the post standard flag is carried to the left of the U.S. flag, with a guard on the outer side of each flag (or to the front and rear of the flags when it is necessary to walk single file in a narrow aisle or area).

The U.S. flag is always to the fore, top or right of any other flag or pennant and the post flag should never cross in front of it.

Never have an armed guard without uniform caps. When the color guard is unarmed but wearing uniform caps, the command is "salute" and the color guard gives the regular military salute, while the bearer dips the post colors. The U.S. flag is at "Carry" and is never dipped. If the color guard is unarmed, without caps, and the order "salute" is given, each member of the guard salutes by placing his right hand over his heart. When civilian hats or caps are worn, the salute is given by removing the hat or cap and placing it against the left shoulder, with the hand placed over the heart. If the color guard is armed, the command given is "present arms" and the command following is always "order arms."

When the command from the provost marshal to the color guard is "Forward march," guard members should start to shoulder arms on the first step and complete it on the third step. Depending on the room or area where the marching begins, the guard could also start with shoulder arms before the command "Forward march" is given. The color guard should march from the rear of the room until it reaches the front row of seats where it should halt.

The next command is "Advance and post the colors." When the color bearers reach a point directly in front of the flag stands, they should halt while the color guard executes "present arms." Both flags should then be posted simultaneously. When both are in position, the color bearers should take one step back, face the U.S. flag and execute the hand salute. (Whenever the guard is unarmed, its members should execute the hand salute at the command "Present arms.") After approximately five seconds, the provost marshal should command:

"Order arms."

"Right (or left) face."

"At trail arms; forward march."

Invocation: the chaplain should give the invocation and may substitute their own prayer appropriate to the meeting or say the invocation as follows:

“Our Father Who art in Heaven, may Thy name ever be hallowed by the people of America, whom Thou hast blessed as Thou has blessed no other people. May Americans ever adore Thee and thank Thee for those blessings guaranteed to us by law established. Much in us has not been such as to indicate appreciation of those blessings, and we are sorry tonight (this morning/this afternoon) as we gather together in devout and patriotic assembly. Bless all nations; we beseech Thee, that they may dwell together in peace and justice. Bless our nation that she may ever be strong and generous, right and victorious, among the family of nations on this earth. Bless us banded together for good in this organization, that we may serve our nation and our fellow men well, in peace as in war. Bless, we beseech Thee, our fallen comrades, and those whose price of patriotism causes them to suffer today from mental and physical disability. In Thy holy name, most humbly do we pray. Amen.”

Pledge of Allegiance:

“I pledge allegiance, to the flag, of The United States of America, and to the Republic, for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.”

Preamble to the AMVETS Constitution: The chairman may read The AMVETS Preamble or the entire post can recite it as follows:

“We, the American veterans who have served or are serving in the Armed Forces of the United States during and since World War II, fully realizing our responsibility to our community, to our state and to our nation, associate ourselves for the following purposes: to uphold and defend the Constitution of the United States; to safeguard the principles of freedom, liberty and justice for all; to promote the cause of peace and goodwill among nations; to maintain inviolate the freedom of our country; to preserve the fundamentals of democracy; to perpetuate the friendship and associations of these veterans; and to dedicate ourselves to the cause of mutual assistance, this by the grace of God.”

Roll Call: When the roll call of officers begins, all officers should stand. The adjutant then reads the names of each officer and the provost marshal responds, “Present,” or “Absent,” as the case may be, when each name is called. Once counted present, the officer can be seated.

Reading the Minutes: The minutes of last post meeting and any executive committee meetings held since that meeting should be read. The minutes should be an accurate account of what business was conducted, including:

- The kind of meeting (regular, special or executive committee).
- The date, time and place of the meeting.
- The name of the chairman and adjutant and, where the bylaws require it, the roll call of officers.
- The action taken on the minutes of the previous meeting.
- Summaries of committees and officer reports and the action taken on them.
- The text of all motions made and seconded, the name of the maker and the action taken on the motion. When the vote is by show of hands, roll call or secret ballot, the exact vote for and against the motion should be entered. It is not necessary to record the debate, although some adjutants include the main points made for or against important motions.
- The time of adjournment.

The minutes should be typed or written in ink and bound in a book with strong covers. To get all important business recorded, the adjutant should take notes during the meeting or tape record the meeting and then copy the minutes into the permanent minutes book. This should be done as soon as possible so that notes do not get "cold." The adjutant should sign the minutes of each meeting. If the minutes are bound in a loose-leaf binder and are longer than a page, the adjutant should sign each page.

Bills and Communication: At each meeting, important correspondence should be read to or summarized for the members. The finance officer should also give a report, including a statement of the post's financial condition, complete with itemized income and expenditures and the post's banking balance.

Introduction of Guests: When the chairman introduces a guest speaker, he should include in the introduction, the name of the speaker, his title or qualifications and the subject of the speech. The chairman may call on a committee chairman to make the introduction, especially when the talk has specific reference to that committee. Remember, the shorter the introduction, the better.

Membership Report and New Member Initiation: The first vice commander gives the membership report. The report identifies the paid-up members and addresses the efforts being made to secure renewals and new members. During this report, applications for membership are voted on and new members are introduced to the post. It is acceptable to call a short recess so that a proper welcome may be extended to the new members.

Other Reports: The sick call committee reports all the names of sick and needy AMVET members, veterans and veterans' dependents. Events such as marriages, births and deaths in members' families should also be noted. The post service officer should report on his work since the last meeting. He should share information on proposed legislation pertaining to veterans on the state and national level and recommend follow-up action. The entertainment committee, athletic committee and the Americanism committee should also give reports. The public relations officer should report on any promotional programs AMVETS has participated in or publicity the organization has received since the last meeting. All publicity should be preserved as valuable history of AMVETS and the post.

Unfinished Business: Any pertinent issues that were left unresolved in previous meetings or considered important to the post's welfare can be discussed at this time.

New Business: Any important business that has yet to be discussed in the meeting can be mentioned at this time.

Good and Welfare: During the "good and welfare" announcements, the members may bring up matters pertaining to the welfare of veterans that require no action to be taken. Educational and entertainment features are often presented during this portion of the meeting rather than waiting for a formal adjournment.

Benediction: the chaplain should make the benediction. He may substitute his own prayer appropriate to the meeting or say the following benediction:

“Let us pause this moment that each of us, in the faith of his own heart, may hallow the memory of those, our fallen comrades, who made the supreme sacrifice, and gave their lives on the altar of patriotism to a great and grateful America.” (Pause 30 seconds.) “God of all consolation and all mercy, may those comrades ever sleep in the bosom of Thy love. And do Thou bless us, our loved ones, our comrades, and our fellowman everywhere, now and evermore.
Amen.”

The following is the official AMVETS prayer:

“Almighty God, the Father and Guide of our great nation, we beseech Thee to give us the light and strength faithfully to uphold and defend our constitution, to safeguard our principles of liberty and justice, to promote the cause of peace throughout the world, and to strengthen the bonds of friendship and mutual assistance among our fellow citizens.
Amen.”

On more solemn occasions, the chaplain prays as follows:

“Give Thy blessing to our world, to our nation, to our loved ones, and to our lives, that all may dwell in charity, in justice, and in peace under Thy loving care. Grant that we may serve our country well, in peace as in war; and that she may ever prevail as good and great, right and victorious among the family of nations on this earth. We beseech Thy special blessing on ourselves, banded together for good in this organization, and on all who have served our nation by suffering and sacrifice in time of national emergency, particularly those who today suffer from mental and physical disability. Most humbly do we ask these graces of Thy bounty, Amen.”

Other prayers may be substituted so long as they are nondenominational.

Retiring the Colors: Nearly the same procedure used in posting the colors is used when retiring the colors. Simply substitute the command of “Retire colors” for the command “Post colors.” Also, the command “Present arms” is given when the color guard arrives in front of their respective colors. The color bearers should then salute. The command “Right shoulder arms; take colors,” is given and the guard should stand at attention and secure the flag. Next, the command “Assemble march,” is given, at which time the guard should execute the same marching order, as was done returning from posting the colors. The guard is retired in the same fashion as in posting the colors, except for the last command, which should be, “dismissed.”

Adjournment: The chairman adjourns the meeting by rapping the gavel once and saying:

“I now declare this meeting of AMVETS Post (number) of the Department of (state) adjourned. Our next meeting will be at (time) on (date).”

After the Meeting

The period immediately following the meeting is an ideal time for committee members to meet and discuss their efforts, and for the commander and other officers to organize the notes they took during the meeting. These officers should also use this time to identify what matters should be addressed at the next meeting. Guest speakers and social events can also be scheduled for this time.

Committees

There are two general types of committees; a standing committee and a special committee. A standing committee is one that continues to function throughout the year and deals with all matters that come up within its jurisdiction. One of the most important standing committees is the executive committee, which has the responsibility of carrying on the post's business between meetings and planning the post's activities. This committee is primarily made up of the post's elected officers, although it may also include appointed officers. Its duties are generally outlined in the bylaws of the organization. Other standing committees deal with special needs such as the membership, programs or legislation.

Conducting Business

Once a committee is selected, the post may elect a chairman or the committee can choose its own chairman. The committee should also select a secretary and, if the group is large, a vice or co-chairman.

It is impossible for the entire committee body to accomplish all its business at regular meetings; therefore, committees should meet regularly to conduct their business and organize their efforts.

The chairman is responsible for the proper functioning of the body, seeing that it meets regularly, that the members are notified of meetings, that reports are made properly and so forth. In committee meetings, the chairman also plays an important part in the discussions.

One of the advantages of a small committee is its informality. In large committees, it is nearly impossible to enjoy informal procedures and it becomes necessary to use the rules of parliamentary procedure. In a small group, the rules of parliamentary procedure are liberalized. There can be discussion without a motion; a member may speak as often as he desires, and it is not necessary for him to rise when speaking. This informality makes it possible to discuss each matter thoroughly and reach a mutual agreement. All motions should be put to a vote unless there is a unanimous agreement.

Reports

Committee reports should be written clearly or typed, especially when they are important or recommend action. The committee secretary usually writes the report; however, the chairman gives the report. Progress reports without any specific recommendations can be made orally by the chairman or by a selected committee member.

Acting on the Report: After a committee has given its report, the post members attending the meeting may vote to "accept" the report if they are satisfied with it. When the report of a committee includes several suggestions, or recommendations for action, the members may act on all recommendations at one time, or on each recommendation separately through the motion process. The body also has the option to "reject" the report, in which case the matter is left as it was before the committee acted. If the members are not satisfied with the report but feel that the committee can do better, they may "commit" the report, with or without instructions to the committee.

Majority and Minority Reports: When a minority of committee members does not agree on a report, they may submit a "minority report." The members, however, should listen to the minority report; if there is any objection, the matter should be put to vote without debate. The body acts on the report of the majority, unless a motion is made to substitute the minority report for that of majority, in which case the discussion proceeds on the minority views. If such a motion is defeated, the body then acts on the majority report.

Subordinate Organizations

AMVETS Ladies Auxiliary

AMVETS recognizes a subordinate organization known as the AMVETS Ladies Auxiliary. To form an auxiliary, an AMVETS post must have the approval of two thirds of its members present at a scheduled meeting. Notice of the proposed auxiliary formation must have been given to the entire post membership a minimum of 15 days prior to the meeting.

Eligibility for membership in the AMVETS National Ladies Auxiliary is limited to the mothers, wives, grandmothers, regardless of age, and to the daughters, sisters and granddaughters, not less than 18 years of age, of regular members of AMVETS; and to mothers and widows, regardless of age, and daughters, sisters and granddaughters, not less than 18 years of age, of deceased veterans who would have been eligible for membership in AMVETS; and female veterans who served honorably in the armed forces of the United States after Sept. 15, 1940, or in the armed forces of Allied countries as an American citizen after that date, who maintain their AMVETS membership unless they meet the established eligibility criteria. The term mother shall be construed to include any female member of the family of, or any female guardian of such person or deceased veteran who has exercised or is exercising the care and responsibility for the rearing of such person or deceased veteran.

Information and assistance on the formation of an auxiliary within the post is available from the state and national auxiliaries.

Junior AMVETS

AMVETS recognizes a subordinate organization known as Junior AMVETS. A Junior AMVETS post can be sponsored by any AMVETS post following the guidelines established in the Junior AMVETS Constitution and Bylaws available through Junior AMVETS coordinators. The general requirements for setting up a Junior AMVETS post are.

- Eligibility: From the age of 7, to and including, 17 years, sons and daughters, brothers and sisters, and grandchildren of AMVETS, deceased members of AMVETS, members of the auxiliary and deceased servicemen who would have been eligible for AMVETS membership, including all children for whom they are the legal guardians.
- Parental consent.
- Ten members necessary to form and maintain a charter.
- Dues not less than \$5, of which \$5 goes to national. State and post dues are left to the discretion of these organizations.
- All D&R Forms are submitted to the department if a Junior AMVETS department exists or, if one does not exist, directly to AMVETS or AMVETS Ladies Auxiliary Jr. AMVETS.
- Two or more posts that have a minimum of 10 members each may form a Junior AMVETS department.



Sons of AMVETS

Any AMVETS post following the guidelines established in the AMVETS National Constitution and Bylaws may sponsor sons of AMVETS squadrons. The general requirements are:

- Eligibility: Limited to all male descendants, grandsons, adopted sons and stepsons, fathers, husbands, widowers and brothers of members of AMVETS and deceased members of AMVETS, or service personnel who died and would have been eligible for membership in the parent AMVETS organization, and are at least eighteen (18) years of age and not eligible for membership in the parent organization. This is not to include in-laws of any type.

Eight members are necessary to charter a squadron. Contact the Sons of AMVETS national commander for additional information.

AMVETS Riders

AMVETS recognizes the subordinate organization known as the AMVETS Riders. Posts can apply for a chapter through the National Riders, <http://www.amvetsridersnational.org/>

Uniforms and Insignia

The AMVETS uniform for males consists of a navy blue blazer, medium-gray trousers, white dress shirt, black belt, navy blue necktie and appropriate black footwear. The AMVETS uniform for females consists of a navy blue blazer, medium-gray slacks or medium-gray skirt, white dress blouse and appropriate black belt and neckwear and black footwear. (Resolution 00-73)

Official AMVETS caps are different, depending on the title of the member:

- POST OFFICERS AND MEMBERS: Green with gold piping and lettering
- STATE OFFICERS: White with green piping and lettering
- STATE DISTRICT OFFICERS: Green band, white top with gold piping and lettering
- NATIONAL OFFICERS: White with gold piping and lettering
- NATIONAL COMMANDER: Gold with white piping and lettering

Members may wear the cap of the highest office they held, provided that the year they served is indicated on it.

The AMVETS uniform and cap should be worn at all AMVETS functions. Additionally, they should be worn at all patriotic events and when cooperating with, or participating in observances of other veterans military organizations. The cap should be worn indoors and outside; however, it should be removed when entering a church, unless worn by a member (or the commander) of an armed honor or color guard. To properly hold the AMVETS cap during prayer, simply grasp the cap lengthwise in the right hand with the insignia showing, insert four fingers inside the cap and place it over your heart.

Post Constitution and Bylaws

The post CBL is the most important document that a post develops and adopts. It lays out the ground rules for post members to follow. The rights and responsibilities established must be fair and understood by all the members. The national CBL mandates that each post CBL be consistent with the national and department CBLs. A prototype CBL is provided, together with instructions for customizing your post's CBL, in the Membership Reference Manual. It is also available on the AMVETS website.

The post judge advocate is responsible for writing, maintaining, interpreting and updating the post CBL. The CBL must be forwarded to the department judge advocate for review and approval after which it is sent to AMVETS National Headquarters for placement in permanent files.

Why Parliamentary Law?

Because AMVETS meetings are conducted according to the newest edition of "ROBERT'S RULES OF ORDER," each post should have a copy of this publication available at every meeting. The highest ranking officer, usually the post commander, serves as the meeting's chairman.

- The chairman must maintain an orderly meeting, so that all business transacted is discussed and follows proper sequence. No member should speak unless first recognized by the chairman.
- The post commander, when presiding, always accedes to the will of the majority of the members present. It is not his place to insist on points against the decision of the members. Rules for meetings enable the business of the post to get done efficiently while at the same time protecting the rights of all the members.
- Only one issue at a time is addressed.
- All members can freely debate each proposal presented to the post.
- All members have equal rights.
- The will of the majority is carried out, yet the minority has the right to present its case.
- The motions put forward should serve to accomplish organizational goals and promote the welfare of AMVETS.

A separate section of this manual discusses Roberts Rules of Order in more detail (page 45)

Flag Etiquette

When wearing the cap, give the hand salute in the same way as when the military uniform is worn. During the posting and retiring of the colors or the Pledge of Allegiance, stand at attention and give the hand salute.

When wearing the U.S. flag, certain rules apply. The following information was published by the Institute of Heraldry, United States Army, as revised Oct. 20, 1976:

- Wearing a flag pin: The lapel flag pin, being a replica, should be worn on the left side near the heart.
- Wearing a flag patch: When worn on the right shoulder sleeve, it is proper to reverse the design so that the uniform is to the observer's right to give the effect of the flag flying in the wind as the person passes. When worn on the left shoulder sleeve, it is customary to position the flag with the union (blue field) uppermost and to the observer's left. In other words, the union is always forward when it is displayed flat against a surface.
- The flag patch is to be worn on the left shoulder with the top 2 inches below the shoulder seam with the blue field uppermost and forward on a white shirt.

There shall be no other patches worn on the shirt except the POW-MIA patch (optional), which shall be worn under the American Flag in a proportional manner or centered. AMVETS collar insignia shall be the same as that of the color guard, worn on each side of the collar, vertical from the tip of the collar.

Official AMVETS flags are prescribed as follows:

- POSTS: Blue with gold fringe and lettering
- STATE DISTRICTS: Green with gold fringe and lettering
- STATE DEPARTMENTS: Red with gold fringe and lettering
- NATIONAL DEPARTMENT: White with gold fringe and lettering

AMVETS Ceremonies

Each commander should understand and make full use of AMVETS ceremonial rituals. All ceremonial functions should be carried out with dignity. Those participating in the rites should study and rehearse the procedures and memorize their lines. Singing or playing the National Anthem should open all-important AMVETS functions. The AMVETS emblem should be placed in the center of the wall directly behind the commander's station.

If observing the room from the rear of the hall, the U.S. flag should be posted to the left and the post colors to the right. The colors should be placed towards the back of the officers. Stations, in the front of the meeting hall.

Before the opening ceremony or the exemplification of any AMVETS ceremony, the provost marshal must ascertain that only AMVETS members or honored guests are present. He should then report his findings to the commander. Any AMVET entering the hall after the meeting has opened shall take a seat at the rear.

Activation and Dedication

The complete activation ceremony, used at formal inaugurations of new posts, is divided into three parts: activating the post, dedicating the post, and installing the officers. The ceremony may be slightly changed to allow the former officers of a post to install the elected officers. The ceremony for installing officers should be used for all annual post installations.

The state or national activation committee should be comprised of three persons:

- The commander (or officer authorized to conduct the ceremony).
- The provost marshal (or officer to act in that capacity).
- The chaplain.

The state chaplain does not have to attend the ceremony if a local member of the Clergy is to become the new post's new chaplain. The first two officers will meet the minimum requirements for this duty.

At a scheduled time and place, the activation committee should meet publicly with the new post's members and elected officers and conduct the ceremony. Prior to opening the meeting, the colors must be placed in their proper position; all ceremonial equipment is placed on a stand or small table located near the speaker's rostrum or the altar. If symbols of office are not used, the portions of the ceremony referring to them should be omitted. The use of symbols, however, is recommended.

Activating the Post: The activation officer should make a short address about AMVETS and its aims and purpose. On conclusion of the address, a messenger, usually the elected adjutant, steps to the speaker's platform and presents the activation officer with the new post's petition for activation. The messenger should address the activation officer as follows:

"Sir, I have been instructed to inform you that AMVETS Post (number) of (city, state) has received authority from AMVETS Department of (state) and is desirous of becoming a duly activated and dedicated post and that the officers of this post be designated and recognized by AMVETS National Headquarters and AMVETS Department of (state). We are now gathered together for this purpose and await your pleasure."

He hands the petition to the officer, who states:

"Fellow veterans, kindly inform your brothers-in-arms that the wishes of your post of AMVETS will be complied with without further delay, and that the post will be activated and dedicated and its officers installed; and for the members of your post to present themselves for this purpose immediately."

The messenger then retires and returns with the elected officers and members of the new AMVETS post. (During the messenger's absence, a short musical selection may be played.) Members neatly arrange themselves before the speaker's stand in rank and file up with the elected officer in the front rank. The messenger and the elected commander then step before the speaker's platform and the messenger informally introduce the commander to the activation committee.

The elected commander then addresses the activation officer in the following manner:

“Fellow brothers-in-arms. A number of veterans and brothers-in-arms have worked to establish an AMVETS post in (city, state). We have made application to the AMVETS national department and have been granted a charter. We now elect to be duly installed in accordance with the rules and regulations of the AMVETS organization.”

He hands the charter to the activation officer who, after looking over the charter, responds:

“With the greatest of pleasure, sir, I will proceed to comply with your request.”

The provost marshal reads the charter for all assembled to hear. (The elected commander should hand the charter to the acting provost marshal and retire to his group.) All are seated while the acting provost marshal reads the charter. Then the activation officer says:

“Brothers-in-arms, (All members of the post rise.) I have found your request to be reasonable and in order, your charter is granted and approved by duly recognized authorities and you have complied with all regulations. Therefore, I now charge that this post of AMVETS become active and enjoy the benefits to be derived from such activity; that the post will hold meetings at regularly stated intervals, all in accordance with the constitution and bylaws of AMVETS and of this charter; and that you will perform such duties as are required thereby. I now return your charter.” (He returns the charter.) “Preserve it well and perform with all seriousness the tenets contained therein. I now declare this post of AMVETS to be duly activated. The chaplain will now offer a dedicatory prayer.”

Dedicating the Post: The chaplain (or clergy engaged for the occasion) offers the following dedication or a suitable prayer of his own composition:

“Almighty God, Father of all men in all lands, we entreat Thee to lead us in the path of brotherhood and righteousness; in the cause of mercy and a fuller understanding of the principles of service to others in Thy name. Keep before our eyes the purpose of this organization, which is fulfilling Thy divine will through aid to the sick and infirm, temperance to the strong and gentleness to the unkind and unworthy. Divest us of thoughts and acts of strife among ourselves, as well as ourselves and others. Give us strength of heart to overcome the passions common to men who face opposition to ideals and to truth. These things we ask in Thy name. Amen.”

At the conclusion of the prayer, the installation officer responds:

“I now declare the post of AMVETS on (date), in (city, state), to be duly dedicated. We will now proceed to install the officers of the post.”

Installation

Before the officers of a new post can be installed, preparations must be made for the ceremony, with responsibilities carried out as follows:

The post commander should

- Meet with the public relations officer to discuss who will be the guest speakers and how long each will speak (the PRO should make sure that press releases are sent out and media coverage is arranged);
- Send an invitational letter to the speakers and officers being installed;
- Send invitations to elected officials, civic leaders; allied veterans organizations; AMVETS post, department and county officers; AMVETS Auxiliary department and county officers;
- Make detailed plans to include flowers, gifts and refreshments.

The installing provost marshal should

- Compile a list of names and positions of elected officers;
- Review and prepare for the ceremony;
- Explain to both the officers and the elected officers just what he will do and what is expected of them (read the AIMS AND PURPOSES of AMVETS to the elected officers) and
- Tell the installing officer what has taken place and give him the list of elected officers.

The installing officer should

- Review the ceremonial procedures with the commander and elected commander; and
- Be prepared to notify the department and the national headquarters after the ceremony is completed and to send in the completed officers form to the respective headquarters.

The Installation Program

OPENING CEREMONIES

- Escort and seat the distinguished guests at the head table.
- Advance or salute the colors. (All stand.)
- Advance the Bible. (Remain standing.)
- Chaplain says the opening prayer. (Remain standing.)
- Recite the preamble. (Recited by the commander or in unison, while standing.)
- Commander thanks the officers and members. (Audience is seated.)

AUXILIARY INSTALLATION

- Commander turns the gavel over to the auxiliary president.
- President thanks the officers and members.
- Advance the auxiliary installing team.
- Turn the gavel over to the auxiliary's installing officer.
- Install the auxiliary.
- New president seats the installing team and makes a short speech.

AMVETS INSTALLATION

- President turns the gavel over to the post commander.
- Commander advances the installing provost marshal.
- Install the post.
- New commander makes a short speech. (Bible is removed.)

PROGRAM

- Commander turns chair over to the master of ceremonies (MC).
- MC introduces guests, with the exception of the speakers.
- Auxiliary and post make presentations.
- Speakers make their presentations. (It is recommended that speakers be limited to one civic leader, the auxiliary president or the installing officer for the auxiliary, and the department commander or his representative.)
- MC turns the gavel back to the post commander.
- Post commander thanks the assembly.
- Retire or salute the colors. (All stand.)
- Chaplain says the closing prayer. (All stand.)
- Announce refreshments
- Escort distinguished guests from the hall. (All stand.)
- Close the meeting.

Procedures and Oath: Guests should always be invited to AMVETS installation ceremonies. AMVETS has no secret ceremonies or rituals; therefore, the public, prospective members and the families of members, should never be kept in the dark as to the aims, purposes and principles of AMVETS. The installing officer should be a department or national officer, or a duly authorized officer of another post, district or department. The retiring commander assumes his position in the center of the platform or stage with the incoming officers seated to his left. The retiring officers, installing officer, honored guests and speakers are seated to the left so that when they rise to recite the AMVETS oath they will be facing the U.S. flag, which is to the right of the platform.

When the retiring provost marshal has everyone in the assembly seated, the retiring commander raps his gavel three times and says:

“Will everyone in the assembly please rise? Will the provost marshal please order the color guard to come forward and post the colors?”

The provost marshal says:

“Color guard, advance the colors. Forward march!”

From the rear of the hall, the color guard and color bearers should advance to the front, stop about 12 to 15 feet in front of the commander and stand at attention. The provost marshal then has the colors posted. While the assembly remains standing, the commander introduces the post chaplain and asks that the invocation be delivered.

The chaplain can say his own prayer or use the following invocation:

“Our Father, Who are in Heaven, may Thy name ever be hallowed by the people of America, whom Thou has blessed as Thou has blessed no other people. Bless all nations; we beseech Thee, that they may dwell together in peace and justice. Bless our nation that she may ever be strong and generous, right and victorious, among the family of nations on this earth. Bless us, banded together for good in this organization, that we may serve our nation and our fellow men well, in peace as in war. Bless, we beseech Thee, our fallen comrades and those whose price of patriotism causes them to suffer today from mental and physical disability. In Thy holy name, most humbly do we pray. Amen.”

The assembly should remain standing if The Star Spangled Banner is sung or played after the invocation or if the Pledge of Allegiance is recited. One rap of the gavel signifies that the audience is to be seated. The retiring commander then speaks to the assembly and gives a report on past activities of the post and the duties that the new officers and members are to assume.

The post provost marshal leads the installing officers to the rostrum. The installing provost marshal retires the post provost marshal and returns to the front of the rostrum. After welcoming the installing officer, the post commander presents him with the gavel. Thanking the post commander, officers and post members for their fine work during the past year, the installing officer raps the gavel once, signifying the start of the installation:

Installing Officer: “Provost marshal, are the elected officers of AMVETS Post (number) prepared to take their oath of office?”

Provost Marshal: “They are, commander.”

Installing Officer: "Have they read and do they understand our AIMS AND PURPOSES?"

Provost Marshal: "Mr. Commander, they have read and they do understand our AIMS AND PURPOSES."

Installing Officer: "Then you will lead them before the rostrum to be installed."

The provost marshal returns, leading the officers in front of rostrum, left arm to rostrum. He does an about face, leads the roll call, gives the officers a left face, and presents them to the installing officer in this manner:

Provost Marshal: "Commander, I present to you the officers-elect, with the exception of the commander and the chaplain of AMVETS Post (number), Department of (state), for the purpose of installation. "

Installing Officer: "Fellow AMVETS, you have been chosen by the members of your post to represent them in your respective capacities. Are you prepared to take your oath of office?"

Assembled Officers: "I am. "

Installing Officer: "Raise your right hand, and repeat after me, using your name where I use mine, the AMVETS oath of office." (Raps gavel three times; all stand)

Assembled Officers: (repeating oath): "I (name)/solemnly swear/that I will support and defend/the Constitution of the United States/that I will defend and support/the United States from all enemies/both from within and without/and that I will support and obey/the Constitution and/The Principles of AMVETS/and that I will carry out/the duties of my office/to the best of my ability/so help me God."

Installing Officer: You may lower your hands.

Installing Officer: "Provost marshal, you will lead the commander to this rostrum so that he may be installed."

Provost Marshal: (He leads the commander to the rostrum.) "Mr. Commander, I present to you to be installed, (name), the commander-elect of AMVETS Post (number), Department of (state)." (He salutes and takes two steps back, covering the commander.)

Installing Officer: "You have been chosen by your fellow AMVETS to lead them for the following year. The responsibilities will be great. Knowing this, are you willing to assume your duties and take your oath of office?"

Incoming Commander: "I am."

Installing Officer: "Then you will raise your right hand. Repeat after me, using your name where I use mine, the AMVET Oath of Office: I (name), solemnly swear/that I will support and defend/the Constitution of the United States/that I will defend and support/the United States from all enemies/both from within and without/and that I will support and obey the Constitution and/The Principles of AMVETS/and that I will carry out/the duties of my office/to the best of my ability/so help me God." (Gavel is rapped once; all are seated.)

Installing Officer: "Provost marshal, you will escort the commander to the rostrum". (The provost marshal complies.) "You have been elected to the highest office that this post can bestow upon any member. This office exemplifies authority. Use it wisely and with discretion. Congratulations." (The installing officer hands the gavel to the new commander, and then faces the provost marshal.) "Provost marshal, issue the proclamation." (He does an about face.)

Provost Marshal: "Having complied with our rules and regulations, with the power vested in my authority, I hereby declare AMVETS Post (number), Department of (state), duly and legally installed for the years 20____ and 20____." (The provost marshal salutes, does an about face, salutes the installing officer, does an about face and retires.)

Once this has been done, the installing officer thanks the post and audience, and expresses his pleasure at performing the ceremony. The provost marshal and the chaplain (if a part of the installing party) also extend their thanks. The installing party then retires to places of honor on the platform and the newly installed post commander takes the chair and completes the meeting. The first act of the new commander is to post the colors of the new post, which should be followed by lively patriotic music. Listed below is the suggested order of business to complete the meeting.

- Post the colors
- Play patriotic music
- Deliver the inaugural address
- Induct the new AMVET members
- Listen to the guest speaker
- Introduce the entertainment
- Make motion for adjournment
- Retire the colors while playing Taps
- Play music as the departures are made

The chaplain gives the benediction.

"Give Thy blessing to our world, to our nation, to our loved ones, and to our lives, that all may dwell in charity, in justice and in peace under Thy loving care. Grant that we may serve our country well, in peace as in war, that she may ever prevail as good and great, right and victorious among the family of nations on the earth. Most humbly do we ask these graces of Thy bounty. Amen."

Oath of Obligation

The national or department commander may take the following oath:

“As I stand humbly before my God, and before the comrades who have called me to this high office, more than ever mindful of the honor that has been mine in sharing the military service that has preserved and advanced the United States of America to the place she holds today as the greatest nation in the world, I pledge myself, my fortune, and my sacred honor, in peace as in war, to God, to America, and to the ideals of AMVETS, (the American Veterans who have served or are serving in the Armed Forces of the United States during and since World War II), I promise to extend myself to the utmost of my strength and ability, to lead my comrades in AMVETS in the furtherance of international peace, American betterment, and in all that is for the welfare of veterans and their dependents. With the help of God, and the cooperation of my comrades, I pray that I may succeed in all that is expected of me through my term of office.”

Induction Ceremony for AMVETS Candidates

Candidates should be assembled at the rear of the hall and not be seated with regular members until after the Pledge and Oath of Obligation are given. At regular meetings, this induction ceremony should be given immediately after the roll call of officers, and before any other business is transacted by the post. Special dates may be arranged on which to induct candidates if so desired.

Use the same ceremony that would be used to induct candidates after the annual installation of officers or the activation of a new post. While at the rear of the hall, the candidates should be able to hear the proceedings. The membership committee or the induction board, (made up of no less than two members), is responsible for the group.

The chairman takes the position of command while the remaining members ace a guard position at the rear of the group. When ready to proceed, the chairman will call the group to attention and ask the following questions of each of the candidates before inducting and accepting them.

Chairman: “Do you seriously declare, on your honor, before your brothers-in-arms, all of whom have served and are serving our great country and many of whom have fought in along, beside and with you, that unbiased by mercenary and ulterior motives, you freely offer to become a candidate for induction into AMVETS?”

Candidates:

“I do.”

Chairman: “On your honor, do you seriously declare before your comrades and fellow beings that you seek induction into AMVETS because you do believe in the fellowship of mankind, and that you do desire to be of greater service to your brothers-in-arms less fortunate than you?”

Candidates:

“I do.”

Chairman: (He addresses the commander.) "Mr. Commander, the candidate(s) has (have) successfully and satisfactorily passed the test required of all AMVETS. I can recommend that we proceed with his/her/their induction into this post of AMVETS as (a) full member(s) and in good standing."

Commander: "We will proceed with the induction ceremony. The judge advocate will give the required instruction." (The judge advocate steps to a position in front of the candidates and to the right of the commander and reads the Preamble to the AMVETS Constitution and the Aims and Purposes of AMVETS. When completed, the judge advocate retires to his position.)

Chairman: (He addresses the commander.) "The candidates are now ready to take the Pledge of Allegiance and Obligation." (The commander steps down from behind the lectern to a position directly in front of the candidates to administer the Pledge of Allegiance and Obligation. All rise. Candidates face the flag while giving the Pledge of Allegiance.)

Commander: (He steps down from behind the lectern.) "Please join with me in the Pledge of Allegiance to our flag. Attention! Hand salute. I Pledge of Allegiance to the flag of the United States of America, and to the republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all. Order arms. At ease." (Candidates face the commander.)

Commander: (Chaplain moves to the right of the commander.) "Please raise your right hand and repeat after me, using your name where I use mine, the AMVETS Obligation. Attention!" (He begins the Obligation.) "I, (name), in the presence of God and my brothers-in-arms, both living and dead, swear that I have read or had read to me The Principles of AMVETS, and that I accept and adopt them as my own, and will ever strive toward their accomplishment. I solemnly promise to defend the Constitution of the United States, and to support the American democratic principles on which it and my country were founded. I will aid every worthy veteran to the best of my ability, and do all in my power to preserve and further the ideals for which my brothers-in-arms gave their lives on the battlefields of the world. I will abide by the constitution and bylaws of my post, and the state and national departments, and their rules and regulations, so help me God. We fought together; now let's build together for a better America. At ease."

Chaplain: "Let us now bow our heads. We beseech Thee, Almighty Father of the universe, to grant that these candidates may dedicate and devote their lives to Thy service, and to helping their fellow man in solving the problems of their very existence. May the blessing of heaven rest on us and our comrades entrusted to Thy care. Heal the wounds of mind and battle suffered by those among us, and especially those wounds suffered by our brave comrades lying in hospitals throughout the world. This we ask in Thy name. Amen."

Commander: (He places an AMVETS lapel pin on the coat lapel of each new AMVET and congratulates each with a hearty handshake and a word of welcome.) "Gentlemen, I salute you on your decision to become AMVETS. May we have many pleasant associations together?" (He salutes. The salute is returned by the new AMVETS.) "The provost marshal will now introduce the new AMVETS to our membership."

The provost marshal introduces the new members to the post and audience. He then escorts the new AMVETS to the seats previously reserved for them, and the post membership will, in single file, offer their welcome and personal congratulations before being seated.

Presentation and Dedication of new Colors

Commander: "Provost marshal will advance the colors."

Provost Marshal: "Color guard, forward march!" (The colors advance from the rear of the room to within 12 to 15 feet of the commander. The guard halts. If the guard is armed, the rifles will automatically be brought to order arms.. The flag will be at carry.) Post Colors! (After the colors are posted, the bearers return to their original position): "Present arms." (If the guard is unarmed, but wearing uniform caps, the provost marshal commands .salute. and the traditional military salute is given. If the guard is without caps, at the command .salute. the right hand of the guard is placed over the heart. An armed guard is never without head cover.) "Order arms. Right (or left) face. Forward, march." (The guard retires to the rear of the assembly room. If a bugler is available, "To the Colors" is sounded before the colors are posted. The commander introduces the post chaplain, and asks him to deliver the invocation.

Commander: "On behalf of all the members, I dedicate these colors in the name of Post (number) of AMVETS, American Veterans who have served or are serving in the armed forces of the United States during and since World War II. Under this glorious U.S. Flag, heroes of all creeds and colors have fought and died to preserve a freedom cherished by people from all over the world. Let it always be the symbol of those who want freedom of thought and speech; and freedom to worship God as they desire. Let no man defile it; let no man fear to defend it."

"And I dedicate this standard of AMVETS, the American Veterans who have served or are serving in the Armed Forces of the United States during and since World War II, as a guard and sentinel to the U.S. flag. The golden wreath around the AMVETS emblem is a crown of honor for those who served their country so well, and the alert eagle the guide who shall hover over us and lead us to loftier heights."

"The colors are dedicated to the principles of AMVETS, and to the belief that all men are equal under God and that, with the help of God, all men shall be given justice and the right to live as free people according to the Constitution."

After the dedication, the program proceeds. At the end of the program, the colors are retired. Before the guard retires to the rear, Taps is sounded, if a bugler is available. Otherwise, 30 seconds of silence is observed in memory of fallen heroes. The meeting is not adjourned until the guard marches to the rear.

Funeral Rituals

Military funerals should follow the rituals as prescribed in the authorized publications of the various U.S. military services. Funeral services should be simple and in accord with the solemnity of the occasion

Preparation: When the remains are to be interred in a local cemetery, the burial ritual should be conducted at the gravesite. Church or home services are best left in the hands of the family or spiritual advisor. If the post chaplain conducts the church or home service, the sermon is left to his discretion.

Grave Site Ritual: All personnel at the gravesite except the active pallbearers follow the example of the officiating chaplain. If he uncovers, they uncover. If he remains covered, they remain covered.

Color Guard and Color Bearers:

- Remain covered at all times (including at the church), so long as the colors are actually in the hands of the color bearers.
- Execute parade rest and attention with members.
- Make sure the national colors are never dipped or lowered to the ground while in the cemetery.
- Dip the post colors whenever the casket is being carried, during the sounding of Taps and when the firing squad executes "present arms." If the colors are at order, the senior color bearer commands: "Carry colors," and both of the colors will come to the carry position just before the salute is to be rendered by the post colors.
- Come to "present arms" whenever the post color is dipped.

Post Members:

- Uncover when entering the home or church.
- Stand uncovered with the headdress over the left breast during the sounding of Taps and whenever the casket is being carried. (If inclement weather necessitates covering the head, give the right-hand salute instead of uncovering.)

Order of March for Funerals

- Colors and guard.
- Band (if any).
- Firing squad.
- Chaplain.
- Caisson or hearse.
- Honor squad and pallbearers. (An honor squad should stand on each side of the hearse or caisson.)
- Post members.
- Mourners. (A designated member shall take charge of the pallbearers, guard of honor and firing squad.)

Burial Ritual

- Arriving at the grave, the post halts and opens order.
- The firing party forms in a single rank about 10 yards behind the foot of the grave and about 5 yards to left of the grave.
- The body bearer's form in two files, facing the road and ready to receive the casket. The bugler stands a few paces behind the head of the grave. All personnel stand at ease.
- When the hearse comes into view, the commander calls the burial detail to attention.
- When the hearse is parked, the body bearers step forward and take the casket from the hearse.
- As soon as they have lifted the casket, the commander brings the firing party and bugler to the position of "present arms."
- The body is brought to the bier.
- The post colors are dipped. (Never dip the U.S. flag.)
- The post forms around the gravesite and the chaplain pays tribute to the deceased.
- The commander brings the bugler and firing party to the order. With inclined heads, the bugler and firing party assume the position of parade rest.
- The body bearers lift the flag from the casket and hold it over the grave at waist height, holding it taut so that it will not sag.
- The chaplain invokes the Divine Blessing.
- When he finishes, he steps to one side and the bugler takes his position at the head of the grave.
- When the bugler is in position, the commander brings the firing party to attention and the bugler comes to the position of "present arms" at the same command.
- The commander orders, "Firing party, ready, aim, fire."
- The post colors are dipped over the grave.
- The firing party fires three volleys and remains in the position of load until Taps is played. (When the last volley is fired, the bugler comes to attention and plays Taps)
- During the playing of Taps, the officer in charge of the firing party executes the hand salute. At the conclusion of Taps, the commander brings the firing party to order.
- As soon as he has completed playing Taps, the bugler steps back a pace, salutes, about-faces and join the firing party.
- The body bearers fold the flag, hand it to the superintendent of the cemetery or the commander, face the foot of the grave and march off to the rear of the firing party.
- The firing party, body bearers and post members move off at quick time at the commander's order.

Chaplain's Tribute: At the grave or at the home, the chaplain can recite the following:

"As chaplain of Post (number), Department of (state), of the American veterans who have served or are serving in the Armed Forces of the United States during and since World War II, I bring to the next of kin, to the family and friends of our departed comrade, assurance of our heartfelt sympathy in their hour of sorrow, and assurance of our sincere appreciation of the service this departed veteran has rendered to our country and to us."

"Every veteran stood one day in solemn pledging of himself to service of his God, his country, and his fellow men, in time of war, in time of peace. That pledge was to last as long as life, for the good of all. Our departed comrade one day left home and loved ones to go out across the world, over land and sea as ordered, to fulfill that sacred oath. He (she) offered himself (herself) on the altar of patriotism for the nation he (she) loved.

Only those who have suffered the wounds of war, physical and mental, can know the cost of sacrifice that is often necessary in fulfilling such an oath.”

“In the time of national emergency, America has never lacked the brave, devoted sons and daughters to go out and do battle for her sacred cause. America cannot, and will not, forget those brave veterans who in time of war saved her, and in time of peace have preserved for all her way of life.”

“I speak for America and for every American today, when I say America would not be the America we know and love, were it not for the patriotic sacrifice of men and women like our departed comrade. It is a glorious thing to die for America. It is also a glorious thing to live for America. Our departed comrade speaks to us today and bids us to live for America as God-fearing, honorable citizens, ready to be of service at all times to our country and to our fellowman. “

“I speak for every AMVET, for every veteran, and for the United States Government, when I say that the patriotic service of this man (woman) will never be forgotten, and that we stand ready to be of help, in every possible way, to the family and dependents of this or of any other of our fallen comrades.”

“One day each of us must go the way of all mortals, into the eternity of God. May that God deal kindly with His veterans, and may our ranks of comradeship once again form on the eternal shores of heaven and go marching on into the kingdom of God’s blessed and everlasting peace.”

Divine Blessing: The chaplain may write his own prayer or invoke the following Divine Blessing:

“Blessed Lord God, we invoke Your presence with and blessing on us as we commit to Your grace and Love AMVET (name). We thank you, Lord, for the life of AMVET (name). We pray AMVET (name) will live with You in life everlasting. Amen.”

or:

“Lord God Almighty, maker of all that exists, we invoke Your blessing and peace on us as we entrust to You the soul of AMVET (name). Lord, Your grace be on us now and always. Amen.”

Memorial Prayer: The chaplain may say his own prayer or the following:

“Loving God, eternal in heaven, our hearts are lifted to You in prayer. We do so, Lord, in thanksgiving for the life of AMVET (name). We thank You, Lord, for the love of AMVET (name) for You, for our country, and for family and friends; a love that has enriched all of our lives. We are most grateful that by the service of AMVET (name) in the armed forces of the United States of America, we are truly a free people in a free land. Your holy and infinite blessings be with the family and loved ones of AMVET (name) in all of time. Lord, receive AMVET (name) as Your own. Bless AMVET (name) with life everlasting. Amen”.

Benediction: The chaplain may give his own benediction or the following:

“The peace and blessing of the Lord be with us always. Amen.”

or:

“The love of God, which brings to comfort and peace from our Lord, be with us always. Amen.”

The post should drape its charter for 30 days after the death of a post member. Each post in the department drapes its charter for 30 days after the death of a department officer. All posts drape their charters for 30 days after the death of a national officer.

Memorial certificates are signed by the national commander and forwarded to the post for the commander's signature and presentation to the next of kin. It is important that the Deceased Member Notification Form be prepared by the post and forwarded, through the department, to the national headquarters.

Ritual for Retirement of Unserviceable Flags

This ritual provides for the retirement of unserviceable U.S. flags in a dignified manner.

- Participants, wearing their AMVETS caps, take their places as outlined below. The participants will consist of the commander, vice-commander, provost marshal, adjutant, chaplain, color guard and additional members as needed.
- The provost marshal, with two persons acting as his aides, collects all the flags to be retired and makes a list containing the names of the donors.
- The adjutant and the provost marshal make sure that the following items are in place: the commander's table, the vice commander's table, the adjutant's table, the altar and the necessary number of chairs. (At the conclusion of the ceremony, the adjutant must see to it that the above named items are returned to their original locations.)

The commander calls the ceremony to order and instructs the officers to take their places. The provost marshal posts the colors.

Commander: "Mr. Provost Marshal." (The provost marshal walks to the center of the area and salutes.) "Do you have the flags of our country whose physical condition necessitates their retirement?"

Provost Marshal: "Mr. Commander, we have flags presented to us by (the provost marshal reads the list of donors) for our inspection and retirement."

Commander: "Gather the flags that have become faded and worn in a tribute of service and love." (The provost marshal salutes, retires and, with an aide on each side of him, collects the flags. He returns to the center of the area and salutes for himself and his aides.)

Provost Marshal: "Mr. Commander, the flags have been gathered, and I have them in our possession."

Commander: "Present the flags and your list to the adjutant for his inspection."

Provost Marshal: (He does an about face to the adjutant.) "Mr. Adjutant, we present these flags and this list of donors to you for your inspection."

Adjutant: (He takes and looks over the list and flags.) "Is the condition of these flags due to their usual service emblematic of our beloved country?"

Provost Marshal: "These flags have become worn, torn and faded, due to ceremonial handling, flying on the staff and being displayed correctly and proudly for all to see."

Adjutant: "Present these flags to the vice commander for his inspection." (The adjutant keeps the list and returns the flags to the provost marshal to show to the vice commander for his inspection.)

Provost Marshal: (With his aides, he turns and walks to the vice commander.) "Mr. Vice Commander, we present (number of) flags, ready for retirement, for your inspection."

Vice-Commander: (He looks at the flags.) "How is it that these flags are presented to me in such conditions?"

Provost Marshal: "It is due to time, wear and tear. These flags have been ceremoniously handled and proudly displayed in honor of our beloved country and in tribute to our honored dead. They have been patriotically replaced."

Vice Commander: "Present these flags to the commander for his final inspection."

Provost Marshal: (With his aides, he turns, walks to the commander, stops and salutes.) "Mr. Commander, we present (number of) flags for your inspection and proper retirement".

Commander: "Have these flags been inspected by the adjutant and the vice commander?"

Provost Marshal: "They have, sir".

Commander: "Mr. Adjutant, (he salutes) what say you as to your inspection of the donor list and of these flags?"

Adjutant: "These flags have reached their present state in a proper service of tribute, memory and love to our beloved country and our honored dead. I recommend that they be honorably retired from further service."

Commander: "Mr. Vice Commander. What say you as to your inspection of these flags?" Vice Commander: "A flag may be a flimsy bit of printed gauze, or a beautiful banner of finest silk. Its monetary value may be small or great; but its real value is beyond price, for it is a precious symbol of all that our fellow veterans and we have worked for, lived for and died for a free Nation of free men. Let these faded flags of our country be retired with respectful and honorable rites and their places taken by bright new flags."

Commander: 'My fellow AMVETS and Americans all, we have found (number of) flags to be unserviceable. They and their replacements represent a symbolic value most precious to all of us who served and to those of us who died while in honorable and patriotic service.'

'Let these flags be retired with respect, knowing that their .Old Glory. replacements will continue to fly and forever wave in freedom and love of our country.'

(The commander raps three times and those who are assembled, stand.) "Provost Marshal, assemble your unit to be ready to proceed with the ceremony."

Provost Marshal: (He forms the ceremonial unit color guard on the outside, aides inside, provost marshal in the center as a squad in the area facing the altar.)

Commander: "The chaplain will offer a prayer."

Chaplain: "Almighty God, commander over all, we beseech you to bless and to consecrate this solemn ceremony. We thank you for our heritage, for our country and for its flag. And for the liberty for which it stands. We ask your divine blessings as we submit these flags, worn, torn and frail from faithful service. Make us strong, so that we may go forth with renewed vigor in patriotism, Americanism and in AMVETS fellowship. Amen."

Provost Marshal: "Present arms." (He and his aides place the flags on the altar. They stand back to the side and salute. If possible, a spotlight will be thrown on the U.S. flags and the "Flag Speaks" recording will be played. If there is no recording, have a bugler play "To the Colors.")

(The flags should be burned privately subsequent to the ceremony.)

Commander: "Provost Marshal." (The provost marshal faces the commander.)
"Dismiss your unit." (The aides and color guard are dismissed. He salutes.)

Provost Marshal: (He places his unit in position.) "AMVET Ceremonial Unit, dismissed."

Commander: (At this point, the commander may introduce guests.) "God bless all of us, and thank you."

The POW/MIA Remembrance Ceremony

Table Set-up:

- One small, round table should be placed front and center of room.
- Table should be dressed with a white tablecloth and a black napkin.
- Complete dinner setting for one person.
- A lemon wedge on the bread plate with salt on the remainder of plate.
- A water glass inverted.
- A glass vase with a red rose and a red ribbon tied around the base.
- A salt shaker next to the bread plate.
- The chair should be tucked under the table with the POW/MIA chair cover visible to the audience.

Procession:

- Lights should be off or dimmed. If off, a spotlight should be used to follow procession to the table.
- Procession should begin at the most prominent door into the room, usually rear center door.
- Amazing Grace played on bagpipes is the best music for this ceremony.
- Person should be wearing dress uniform and holding a folded American Flag.
- March is a funeral honors pace.
- Once the person has reached the table, the folded flag should be slowly placed upon the dinner plate on the table.
- Before recessing from table, the person must salute.
- Recessional march should be at the same funeral honors pace.
- Music should be played throughout ceremony – either a recorded copy of a live bagpiper will suffice.

If candle ceremony is conducted, the names of the POW/MIA's can be obtained from www.dtic.mil/dpmo/. The database on this page will allow you to search by military conflict: Cold War, Vietnam War and Korean War. Then, you can search by: Crewman's Last Name, or Crewman's Home State. Simply follow the instructions on how to download the information.

While there is no "official" POW/MIA Remembrance Ceremony script, the Defense Prisoner of War/Missing Personnel Office of the Department of Defense provides a suggested ceremony courtesy of the National League of Families. Some of their verbiage has been borrowed and combined with language that has been traditionally used by AMVETS while performing the ceremony. The following is read by the podium speaker:

Speaker:

"As you entered the ballroom this evening, you may have noticed a small table in a place of honor near our head table. The table is set for one. This is our way of symbolizing the fact that members are missing from our midst. They are commonly called POW/MIA; we call them 'brothers.' They are unable to be with us this evening, so we remember them because of their incarceration.

The table set for one is small—symbolizing the frailty of one prisoner alone against his oppressors.

The tablecloth is white, symbolizing the purity of their intentions to respond to their country's call.

The single rose displayed in a vase reminds us of the families and loved ones of our comrades-in-arms who keep the faith awaiting their return.

The red ribbon tied so prominently on the vase is reminiscent of the red ribbon worn upon the lapel and breast of the thousands who bear witness to their unyielding determination to demand a proper accounting of our missing.

A slice of lemon is on the plate to remind us of their bitter fate.

There is salt upon the bread plate—symbolic of the families' tears as they wait.

The glass is inverted—they cannot toast with us this evening.

The chair is empty—they are not here.

Remember—all of you who served with them and called them comrades, who depended on their might and relied on them, for surely they have not forgotten you.

Present the honored guest.”

Amazing Grace begins to play softly in the background. A designated representative (who may be a uniformed serviceperson or an AMVETS member wearing his hat) enters the room carrying a folded U.S flag and marches forward, at funeral pace, towards the small table. He/she places the flag on the table, takes a step backwards, and renders a hand salute while facing the table, and retreats from the room, again at funeral pace, while the music continues to play. The music stops as the representative exits the room.

Programs

As they assume office, one of the first duties of the post commander and second vice commander is to review post-sponsored programs. They must develop a master plan complete with committee assignments), set goals, establish timetables, promote existing programs to their fullest potential, and consider and adopt new programs. These commanders should begin by looking at national and department programs modified to fit the posts needs. See AMVETS PROGRAMS MANUAL.)

Successful programs not only help the community but also involve members in structured activities. A well-organized program that demonstrates an answer to a need will generate interest plus stimulate media coverage, while it increases involvement and promotes membership. The public relations officer should contact the newspaper, radio and TV stations to advise them about what is being planned, who is involved and what will be accomplished before, during and after the program. Remember to acknowledge and thank those who helped; a little recognition goes a long way. As each program progresses, document all pertinent information for future reference. Good records ensure continuity; therefore, additional copies should be made and given to the designated AMVETS record-keeper to put on file.

To get volunteers, personally call on some members who were active before or who haven't been active at all. Tell them you need their help and get them involved. Look beyond your post membership to the auxiliary, Sons of AMVETS and Junior AMVETS who can provide assistance. Identify individuals who have similar interests and concerns. Also look to other community service-oriented organizations and individuals like the Scouts, Jaycees or chamber of commerce. Get your entire community to rally behind your cause.

Lastly, if a program works, share it with other posts, departments and National Headquarters. It may be adopted nationwide. Keep in mind, however, that it may take weeks or months to plan and develop each program. Make it a success; plan the program well.

ROBERT'S RULES OF ORDER

Meetings shall be conducted according to your Bylaws, the National Constitution as well as Robert's Rules of Order. It is the duty of the Auxiliary Commander to maintain an orderly meeting, and to conduct the meeting in such a manner that all business transacted or discussed shall follow in proper sequence.

The Commander, when presiding, always accedes to the will of the majority of the members present and it is not for him to insist on points against the decision of the members.

He should not allow discussions between members across the floor. No member may speak unless first recognized by the Commander. Each AMVET Post should have a Robert's Rules of Order at each meeting, so there should never be a doubt as to procedures or decisions.

The rules of parliamentary law did not develop out of thin air, nor are they devices to complicate the business of AMVET meetings, as the new member sometimes thinks, when a barrage of "points of order," or "previous questions" confronts them.

Like the other rules, which govern modern society, those of parliamentary law are based upon actual experience. If each one of us made up our own traffic regulations, no one would be able to drive a car. In the same way there are rules for football games, for the payment of taxes or the drawing of unemployment compensation, the building of houses, and almost every other activity in which we take part.

Rules for meetings enable the business of the AMVETS to get done with speed and efficiency, while at the same time protecting the rights of all of the members. To the newcomer they may seem confusing, until he/she learns them.

Just as you can't play baseball unless you know that three strikes are out, so you can't play your proper role in the functioning of the rules, which control its actions.

These might be stated briefly as follows:

1. Only one subject can come before the meeting at one time.
2. Each proposal coming before the AMVETS shall be freely debated.
3. Each member has rights equal to those of every other member.
4. The will of the majority shall be carried out, yet the minority shall have the right to present its case.
5. The desires of the membership should be brought together in such a way that the welfare of the organization as a whole is served.

HOW BUSINESS GETS DONE

Unanimous Consent

The Commander should remember that a great deal of the business of the meeting can be accomplished by unanimous consent. For example, when the secretary adjutant has finished reading the minutes, the Commander will ask, "Are there any corrections?" and then if none are made, "If there is no objection the minutes will stand as read, "or "as corrected," if corrections have been made.

This same procedure may operate with regard to communications and reports. In those instances in which communications do not require action, the Commander may say, "If there is no objection, the letter will be received and filed," or in the case of a report, which contains no recommendations, "If there is no objection, the report will be accepted."

Many a meeting has been killed by a large pile of longwinded communications, read in a monotonous voice by an adjutant who isn't at all interested in what they have to say. This can be avoided by having communications go to the executive committee, which decides which of them shall be read to the membership, or by having the adjutant summarize the less important ones.

Motions

Whenever a body desires to take action on any problem it does so through the passage of some motion dealing with that question. Almost all of the activity of a meeting, therefore, revolves around motions and what happens to them, whether they are adopted, amended, defeated or postponed for future action.

Getting the Floor

No one has a right to talk at an AMVETS meeting unless he/she has first been recognized by the Commander, that is, has been "given the floor." A member desiring to present a motion, or to speak on any question, arises and addresses the chair as "Commander."

Ordinarily the Commander recognizes the first member to arise, but when two or more arise at the same time he/she may use their own judgment. When a member has the floor the remainder of the group should sit quietly until he/she has finished. The Commander recognizes a member by nodding or pointing to them, or by calling out their name or position. Thus: "AMVET Brown," or "the member in the third row."

Making the Motion

Every motion should begin with the words "**I move that,**" not "I make a motion that," or "I move you that."

Motions should be stated positively, that is in such a manner as to require some action.

Thus it is not necessary to pass a motion "not to hold a picnic."

A motion cannot be made while there is another motion on the floor, with the exception of certain types of motions, which will be noted later.

Every motion must be “seconded” before it can be discussed. This is to insure that at least two people in the meeting are interested in the motion. In some instances a member desiring to make a motion will ask the privilege of explaining the subject matter and intent of his their motion before making it. If there is no objection from the body, the Commander may allow them to do this. Otherwise no motion may be discussed before being seconded.

In most AMVET meetings all that is required for a motion to second is for a member to call out “Seconded” in a loud voice, while remaining seated.

Stating the Question

When a motion has been made and seconded the Commander should repeat it clearly, so that all members will know what is before the body. If the motion is awkwardly worded or confusing, the Commander, with the permission of the maker, should reword it so that its meaning will be clear. If the Commander believes the motion is “out of order” he/she should say so as soon as it is made. In repeating the motion the Commander may ask the secretary adjutant to read it.

Discussion

When a Commander has finished stating a motion he/she should ask for discussion, thus: “A motion has been made and seconded,” or “It has been regularly moved and seconded that this AMVETS should put into effect the AMVETS MEMBERS juvenile opportunity program. Is there any discussion?”

The maker of the motion is usually given the first opportunity to speak since he/she is the one who can be expected to give the best arguments for it. A member who has not yet spoken on the motion is given preference to one who has; in fact, except for the maker of the motion further explaining its meaning, no one should speak twice on a motion so long as there are some desiring to speak who have not done so.

It is a good practice for the Commander to alternate speakers for and against a motion. If he/she does not know on which side members wishes to speak, he/she can ask, “For or against?” and should be guided accordingly. A member who seldom talks should be given preference over one who speaks frequently. Discussion should be strictly limited to the matter before the meeting.

The Commander has the right to speak on a motion, but should not make a practice of long speeches from the chair, or otherwise dominate the meeting so that the members fear to express their own opinions.

It is best that the Commander speak only when he/she feels that there are certain implications in the motion, which have not been brought out by others, or feels that the matter is so important that he/she wants their position known before the vote is taken.

Amendments

Suppose the AMVETS is considering a motion, which the members would like to see, changed a little. That’s the time when the amendment is used. The amendment may be offered at any time after the motion has been seconded and before the vote is taken. The mover of the amendment must get the floor in the same fashion as one wishing to speak on the motion, and the amendment must be seconded before it can be considered.

The maker of the amendment should state clearly what their amendment is, and to which section of the motion it applies. For example, the body is acting on a motion that “a picnic be held on August 15, with tickets at \$1 a couple.” The maker of an amendment wishing to change the date would say, “I make an amendment that the date of the picnic be August 22 instead of August 15.”

No Amendment can be made which is directly contrary to the motion. For instance an amendment not to hold a picnic would be out of order.

Amend the Amendment

Just as it is possible to amend a motion, so it is also possible to change an amendment. Suppose the motion is that “the executive committee, investigate the possibility of organizing a new AMVETS in Smithville.” An amendment might be made that “ a special committee be appointed to investigate, etc.”

Some members might feel that the committee should be elected, and so would move “ an amendment to the amendment, providing that the committee be elected.”

That is as far as the situation can go, for there can no amendment to an amendment to amendment.

When during the discussion it would appear that neither the original motion, nor the motion as amended will be satisfactory, the best plan is to offer a “ substitute for the whole, “ that is one motion to replace the original motion and the amendments.

It is important to note that while there can be an amendment to an amendment; there cannot be two amendments to a motion before the meeting at the same time. In the instance cited above, after the amendment had been made to appoint a special committee to make the investigation, it would be out of order to make another amendment asking, that the committee also investigate the possibilities of organizing another AMVETS.

Once an amendment is before the body the discussion is limited to the amendment until it is disposed of. A Commander can sometimes save time by calling upon the maker of the motion and the second and asking whether they would be willing to accept the amendment as part of the original motion. If they agree, and no other members objects, this can be done, saving time and energy.

Voting

When it appears that there has been sufficient discussion, the Commander may say, “Are you ready for the question?” And if no one desires to speak the vote is taken. So long as anyone desires to debate the Commander himself cannot close the debate. This can only be done by a majority vote of the body (see “Previous Question”).

Before putting the matter to a vote the Commander should make it clear just what the members are acting on—the motion, the amendment, the amendment to the amendment, or the motion as amended, as the case may be.

Amendment First

When a motion with an amendment is before the body, the vote on the amendment comes first. If the amendment is passed the body then acts upon the motion as amended.

If the amendment is defeated, the vote then is on the original motion. Another amendment may be offered when the first has been disposed of. When a "substitute for the whole" is offered voted upon first. "If adopted, the substitute then takes the place of the original motion, and becomes subject to debate.

In certain cases it is not advisable to use the normal order for voting on amendments. There may be a motion to set up a committee of five, an amendment to make it seven, and an amendment of the amendment to fix the size three. The best procedure is to vote on the largest figure first, with next largest, and so on.

In most instances the members will first vote vocally by saying "Aye" or "No" in chorus with position seeming to have the most voices winning. The form is this: The Commander: " All those in favor of the motion say aye...those who opposed, no...the aye's have it and it is so ordered."

Show of Hands

When there is any doubt in the mind of the Commander or the membership as to which side has the majority, a vote should be taken by a show of hands. The phrase the Commander uses are:

"The chair is in doubt. We will vote by show of hands." Any member may call for a vote by show of hands by calling "division" from his seat. The chair should grant this request.

In voting by show of hands the members raises their right hand as the Commander calls for the ayes and nos. If the group is a large one the Commander may appoint tellers who will count hands on each side. Otherwise the secretary adjutant and the Commander can do the counting. The hands should be counted unless the results are so obvious as to be without question. In large meetings voters are often asked to stand rather than to show hands.

Vote by Ballot

On very important questions, such as elections, voting may be by ballot, so that each member may keep his vote secret. Unless otherwise specified in the by-laws, a vote by secret ballot may be called by a majority of the members of the meeting; such a motion is not debatable. Tellers are chosen; who are responsible for distributing the ballots, seeing that the vote is correctly counted. They report the total to the Commander, who announces the results to the meeting.

The Commander has the right to vote when the vote is by ballot, or when his vote will affect the decision. Thus he/she may vote with the minority to make break a tie, and prevent the approval of a matter, or he/she may vote with the majority to break the tie, and provide the passage of a measure. Under no circumstances may he/she vote twice.

Acting on a Motion

Let's try to fill in the outlines we have given of motions, amendments, discussion and voting, by taking an actual instance of a local AMVETS taking action on a problem that has been brought before it.

The Commander: "Is there any new business?"

AMVET MEMBER Grady is given the floor.

"Commander, we have a very nice AMVETS home here, but we don't make enough to use of it. What's the use of paying for a hall?"

Making the Motion First

The Commander interrupts, "AMVET MEMBER Grady, if you have any suggestion to make regarding the use of our home, please put them in the form of a motion. Unless there is a motion before the body you cannot speak."

"Then Commander," says AMVET MEMBER Grady, "I move that the Commander appoint an educational committee to organize activities for our members in the home. The reasons why we need such a committee ____"

Getting the Second

Again the Commander interrupts. "Is there a second to the motion that I appoint an educational committee?" Several cries of "Second" are heard. "All right, AMVET MEMBER Grady, now you may speak on your motion."

"I only wanted to say," Grady finally asserts, "that it's a shame to have a home as nice ours and not use it more regularly. At the same time it's obvious that an educational committee could plan classes, and other affairs, which would be helpful to the AMVETS. It looks like I could use a class in parliamentary law myself."

An Amendment

AMVET MEMBER Lucia gets the floor. "I agree with AMVET MEMBER Grady that we ought to have an educational committee but I don't see much point in renaming one unless we give it some money to spend. If we are going to have worth - while program we will have to be willing to pay for it. I, therefore, move to amend the motion that we appropriate \$200 for the use of the committee."

"Is there a second to the amendment?" There is a cry of "Second!"

"We will now discuss the amendment that we appropriate \$200 for the use of the educational committee. AMVET MEMBER Cuneo."

One thing at a time

“There are a lot of activities that we ought to start. For example, this AMVETS has never sponsored a dance which would benefit the member’s greatly_____”

“Just a minute, AMVET MEMBER Cuneo, you are out of order a dance is a fine idea, but this isn’t the time to discuss it. We are now deciding whether or not we should appropriate \$200 fro for the educational committee. AMVET MEMBER Horn, did you want to speak?”

“Yes. I noticed that the motion doesn’t provide any size for the committee, so I would like to offer another amendment that the committee be composed of five members.”

“Only one amendment at a time, AMVET MEMBER Horn, Your amendment is out of order and cannot be accepted now. It is now proper only to offer an amendment to the amendment, such as that the amount to be voted be \$100 rather than \$200. Your amendment will be in order after we have acted on the present amendment.”

A confused murmuring arises in the hall. “Quiet please,” the chairmen calls out.

AMVET MEMBER Robinson is recognized. “I don’t think we should appropriate any money for the committee until we see what plans they have. Let’s wait until they report back to us the next meeting.”

AMVET MEMBER Schwartz arises. “I don’t want see why we want to bother with this educational business at all, after all it’s_____”

Vote on the Amendment

The Commander: “AMVET MEMBER Schwartz, you are out of order; you are talking on the main motion while we are discussing the amendment. Is there any further discussion on the amendment?”

“There being none we shall vote on the amendment?”

“There being none we shall vote on the committee. All in favor say aye...those opposed...no...the chair is in doubt. We will vote by a show of hands. Will the adjutant please act as teller? All in favor of the amendment will please raise their hands...those opposed...”

The provost marshal counts and turns the results over to the Commander.

“The amendment is lost 76 to 60. The original motion is now before the house. AMVET MEMBER Horn, you may now make your motion as to the size of the committee.”

AMVET MEMBER Grady rises. “I’ll accept the motion as part of my original motion.”

“If there is no objection, the amendment will become part of the original motion. Is there any further discussion? We will now vote on the motion that the Commander appointed an educational committee of five to organize activities for the AMVETS home. All those in favor say aye...opposed, no. The ayes have it and the motion is carried.”

“I will name Grady, Horn, Stupek, Conrad, and O’Brien as members of the committee. (In some cases the Commander may desire to name the committee at a later time after giving the matter some thought). Is there any further new business?”

Keeping the Order

When a football player violates the rules the game he/she is penalized. In the same fashion a AMVETS member who does not abide by the parliamentary rules of the meeting finds themselves unable to function.

You have seen how he/she may be restrained and prevented from making motions or amendments. If he/she persists in being out of order the Commander may have them removed from the hall.

However, the rules of parliamentary procedure are not all simple, and it is not likely that every member will know all of the fine points. Therefore, it is the duty of the presiding officer, the Commander, to see that the rules are lived up to by calling them to the attention of the members as they are violated or are needed.

Thus we have seen that he/she has forbidden a member to speak on a motion until it had been seconded, he/she has forced members to speak on the question before the house, has seen to it that only one motion was before the body at a time, and otherwise seen to it that the rules of procedure were lived up to.

The Point of Order

However, there are times when someone violates the rules without the Commander noticing it. Or else the Commander may make a ruling which is felt to be wrong. In such a case a member of the body may call it to the attention of the chair by raising a "point of order"

A member wishing to call the attention of the chair to some violation of the rules of order does so by standing up in his place and saying, "Commander, a point of order." Or simply, "Point of order." He/she may do this even though he/she interrupts someone else who has the floor. The Commander must recognize them, and ask them what is their point of order. The form is this:

"Point of order, Commander." What is your point of order?"

"AMVET MEMBER Smith is not speaking on the question before the body."

"Your point is well taken. AMVET MEMBER Smith, will you please confine your remark to the question before the house?"

Or if the Commander disagrees:

"Your point of order is not well taken. AMVET MEMBER Smith's remarks have a direct bearing on the question before the body. You may proceed, AMVET MEMBER Smith."

It should be remembered that one of the worst enemies of a well-conducted meeting is the "point of order pest," that is, the member who regards themselves as the expert on the parliamentary procedure and looks for opportunities to prove it. It is much better to keep quiet when the Commander has missed a minor infraction of the rules than to disrupt the meeting.

A point of order is not:

- An excuse to slow down a meeting.
- A convenient way to interrupt a speaker.
- An excuse to make a speech.
- An excuse to criticize the Commander.

Appeal from the Decision of the Chair

In most instances the best thing a member can do when ruled out of order, or when their point of order is not recognized by the chair, is to keep quiet about it, and abide by the decision of the Commander. When, however, he/she feels that a grave injustice has been done them, or that the decision of the Commander was a definite violation of the rules of procedure, or that the best interests of the AMVETS will be served, the member has a right to “appeal from the decision of the chair,” and have the whole membership decide if they or the Commander was right.

The appeal can be taken only immediately after the ruling has been made. It may be made by the member called to order, or any other member. The member announces:

“I appeal from the decision of the chair.”

After discussion, if any, the question is put to a vote by the chair in this fashion:

“All those in favor of upholding the ruling of the chair, say aye...Opposed, no...the chair is sustained.”

Or if the vote is the other way:

“The chair is overruled.” Immediately upon the decision of the appeal the business of the meeting is continued.

Point of Information

A member who feels that he/she needs certain information, either about the meaning of a motion, or its effect, or other facts to enable them to vote intelligently, has the right to ask for it at any time. He/she simply gets up and says, “Point of Information.”

The Commander should recognize the questioner but he/she cannot interrupt another speaker. The questioner states their problem, and the Commander should answer it as well as he/she can. Sometimes the questioner desires information from another member. In such a case, the Commander should ask the one who had been speaking whether he/she will yield for the purpose of the question. He/she cannot be forced to do so. The questioner must address their question to the chair even though he/she wanted information from another member, thus:

“Commander, I wonder if AMVET MEMBER Jones can tell us how many World War II veterans work with them.”

Parliamentary Inquiry

When the information that the member seeks has reference to the rules of parliamentary procedure this is known as a “parliamentary inquiry,” – for example:

“Is it in order now to make a motion with reference to the problem of unemployed World War II veterans?”

The Commander’s answers to such questions do not constitute decisions that can be appealed. Only a decision he/she would make after such a motion had been brought up would be subject to appeal.

How to Do What You Want to Do

We have seen how a AMVET acts in the normal course of events in dealing with motions and amendments. However, there are times when some unusual action is desired. This is accomplished by what is known in parliamentary law as “subsidiary” motions. They are intended primarily to help the handling of the business rather than to deal with it directly. Many of them differ from the motions for action which we have discussed in that they can interrupt a speaker, require no second, cannot be debated, or require more than a majority of the votes cast to be carried.

Prevent Something from Coming Before the Body (To Object to the Consideration of a Question)

On occasion a motion is made which deals with a matter the very discussion of which, it is felt, will cause ill feeling or friction, or be otherwise harmful to the body. A member who feels this way will arise immediately after the motion has been made, but before discussion has started, and say, “Commander, I object to the consideration of the question.”

The Commander must reply: “There has been an objection to the consideration of this question. Will the assembly consider it?”

The matter is then immediately put to a vote. There can be no discussion. If two-thirds of the members vote against considering the question, then it cannot be brought up again during that meeting.

A member desiring to “object to the consideration of the question” may interrupt another speaker. No second is required for the objection. It should be remembered, however, that this motion should be used only in exceptional cases:

Take Back Something You Have Started (Withdrawing a Motion)

After a motion has been made and seconded it becomes the property of the body, and cannot be withdrawn without its consent. The maker of the motion asks the Commander for permission to withdraw his motion, and the Commander puts the question before the members thus: “If there is no objection the motion will be withdrawn.” When an objection is raised the question of withdrawal must be put to a vote. It requires no second, cannot be debated, and requires a majority vote to pass.

Drop the Matter for the Present (“To Table” “To Lay on the Table” or “To Defer” “To Defer Indefinitely”)

Sometimes a member may feel that a motion under discussion is taking up too much time, or that the motion is unwise and should be gotten out of the way without spending any more time debating its merits. In such a case he/she makes a motion to “table the Motion,” or “to lay the motion on the table.” THIS IS AN IMPROPER MOTION!

This motion is intended to postpone action on a matter, in order to take up more pressing business. The proper motion to delay action on or dispose of a motion in these circumstances is to move to “defer the motion” or to “defer the motion indefinitely.” If more information is needed before a motion can be decided, the member would ask for recognition and, upon being recognized, state, “I move to defer the motion until we can receive additional information as to _____.”

If the object is to drop the matter altogether, the member would say, "I move to defer this indefinitely. The Commander then asks for a second, and if the motion is seconded, puts the question of deferring to a vote.

A motion to table discussion on a motion in order to discuss an urgent matter is stated, "I move to table this motion in order to determine _____." The commander then asks for a second, and if a second is made, puts the question of tabling to a vote. There is no discussion on a motion to table.

A motion which has been tabled can be "removed from the table" as soon as some other business has been transacted. A member making the motion "to remove from the table" is recognized in the usual manner, and again the question is decided without debate, and by a majority vote..

The use of the "motion to defer" as a means of killing a measure to be discussed; can be overdone by a reckless majority. It is a much wiser policy to close debate in the regular fashion (see below) and then defeat the motion, if that is the end desired.

To Limit or to Extend Debate

Only by action of the members themselves can debate on a motion be stopped so long as some of the members desire to speak. The body, however, can limit the amount of debate which shall be allowed, or stop it altogether. Motions to do this are made in the usual fashion, require a second and are not debatable. They may be amended and are debatable only when they come before the body as a general rule for all questions.

Debate may be limited by setting a time when the motion before the house shall come to a vote, by limiting the number of speeches and the time for each speech, or by allotting a certain amount of time for each side of the question. In the latter case, members on the same side may get together to divide the time. In some auxiliaries it is the practice to have a standing rule in the by-laws fixing the maximum amount of time that a member may speak on any motion.

When there is a standing rule fixing the time for debate, or when the body has acted to limit debate, and it is found advisable that the time for debate be extended, this may be done by a motion similar to that limiting discussion.

In both cases, the maker of the motion to limit or extend debate must get the floor in the usual manner, and cannot interrupt someone who has the floor.

Stop Discussion and Take a Vote (The Previous Question)

When it is desired to cut off debate entirely, and come to a vote at once, the motion is the "previous question." For the "previous question" to be moved it is necessary for the mover to be recognized by the Commander in the usual manner. The motion requires a second, and like the motion to limit debate it is not debatable and requires a two-thirds vote. The form is "I move the previous question," or "I move that we close debate and vote on the question." Immediately after the motion is made and seconded the Commander must put it to a vote thus: The previous question has been called for. Will those in favor say aye...opposed, no...."

In some organizations it is the practice to close debate when several members call out "Question" from their seats, showing that they are tired of the debate, and want to vote. This practice is proper in most cases, but should not be used when there are members who desire to speak. Then the motion for the "previous question" is the proper one.

Change a Previous Decision of the Organization (To Reconsider)

When it is felt that a body has acted hastily on some matter, or later events or new information indicate that the decision was unwise, the organization may decide to “reconsider” or “rescind” the action.

The motion to “reconsider” is used when it is desired to bring the whole matter up anew for discussion and action. It must be made on the same day that the vote to be reconsidered was taken. It must be made by someone who voted with the majority in the original instance, but any member may second it. When the vote has been by secret ballot, any member may move to reconsider.