

AMERICANISM

Prepare for two youth programs: air rifle and oratorical contest

Junior Shooting Sports

The American Legion's Junior 3-Position Air Rifle Tournament for 2022-23 is now underway. This competition provides American Legion-affiliated youth competitors an opportunity to test their marksmanship skills in competition with other junior competitors throughout the nation.

The individual tournament has two phases of competition – first round is state championships and second round is qualification for national championships. The first round and second round of the individual tournament are postal matches, whereas the national championship is an individual event that is a shoulder-to-shoulder competition. The team tournament has two phases of competition – first round is state championships and second round is recognition of top teams in the nation.

Register at legion.org/jssp-club-registration. Registration ends Dec. 15.

Oratorical

During the American Legion Oratorical Conference with department program chairmen in September, Department of North Carolina Oratorical Chairman Joseph Reale Sr., shared a few ways to promote the Legion's Constitutional speech contest among high school students.

"We need to reach out to all the various school systems that are out there. And try to get in the door with all of them," he said. For homeschool students, Reale said each county should have a homeschool point of contact. "You can reach out to that individual and they have the rosters of all the homeschool students in that county. We need to use every means available to get into every type of school system that's out there."

Reale shared the following ways that can help promote the program:

- Visit high schools at the beginning of the year and bring Oratorical Contest flyers or brochures (available on legion.org/publications) to history, English and speech educators.

And discuss the scholarship money that students can earn through the program to help with college education – scholarships are available at the post, district and department level. The national competition awards over \$203,000.

- Introduce yourself to the school principal, counselors and JROTC instructors.
- Invite educators to your post oratorical competition. "They get to see it live, hopefully feel good about it, and they will then become your spokesperson at the high school level and get more interested in it," Reale said.
- Advertise in the school newspaper and the local paper and radio.
- Attend PTA meetings to share with parents the scholarship benefits of the oratorical program.
- Invite oratorical winners to speak at your post about their experience with the program. "Use them as your best sales representatives at the schools that they come from," Reale said. "No one is going to be more enthusiastic than they are to tell their friends and other students what this meant to them."
- Invite other civic organizations to your post to meet oratorical winners and disseminate program information. Or take your oratorical winner to other organizations to speak, like the Kiwanis.

Attendees at the oratorical conference also shared their best practices. They advised others to:

- Use social media to promote the program, including creating a separate LinkedIn profile just for the oratorical contest.
- Attend eighth grade graduations where parents will be to speak about the program, so they are aware of it as their child prepares for high school.
- Ask high school student government presidents to read a quick blurb about the oratorical program during morning announcements to generate more interest. This is what Department of Florida Oratorical Chairman Mary West has done in Jacksonville.



Photo by Rachel Woolf



Photo by AJ Mast

RECRUITING

Drive-by membership entices new joins

When 2022-23 American Legion Department of New York Commander Dave Riley had his personal vehicle wrapped with the Legion emblem, landmark and six branches of service to include Space Force, Riley added an additional feature – a membership QR code.

The membership QR code is on the back of his vehicle. When someone scans it, they are taken to the Department of New York's join page.

"All the younger veterans, everything is by their phones," Riley said. "They are going to scan it just to see what it is. It's the curiosity. Now, they can just scan the back of my car and join."

No verbiage such as "Join now!" appears on the QR code. Riley did that for a reason.

When veterans "see The American Legion vehicle (QR code), I wanted them to be curious to scan it. I wanted the curiosity of the QR code to get them to scan it and see what it was. They are going to scan it just to see what it is. They scan everything for the information."

The QR code was created at no cost by Department of New



York Media and Communications Chairman Bob Stronach, who made it black and white so it can be sized to fit on a variety of membership marketing tools – email, pamphlets and business cards. Riley currently has the Legion application on the back of his business card but is looking forward to having the membership QR code there one day.

"The QR code is a lot easier and more efficient," Riley said. "They can fill out an application online while you're talking to them." Once veterans are directed to the join page through the QR code, "they can put their credit card in right then and there. I don't have to worry about (asking for or handling) any money. They can join then and there." Once a new member joins, they are placed in the department's holding post.

Riley said holding post members will be contacted for renewal purposes and to place them in a local post.

"Only time will tell to see what we get from membership off of it," Riley said. "If I get one person to sign up through the QR code, I'm 100 percent ahead of myself. It's just another membership tool in the toolbox."

MEMBERSHIP

Welcome new members

American Legion National Commander Vincent J. "Jim" Troiola has set a goal of 75,000 new traditional members for the 2023 membership year. To date we have recruited 18,693 new members into the organization at the local post level.

Welcoming a new member into your American Legion post is important to help create an active member and for renewal purposes. The American Legion has a New Member Kit for \$6.95 a piece through Emblem Sales, [emblem.legion.org](https://www.legion.org), Item No. 735.501.

The kit includes:

- A welcome letter from the national commander



- Certificate of Initiation
- Gold-plated membership lapel tack
- American flag window sticker
- Legion removable window decal
- Legion key ring

The American Legion Certificate of Initiation also can be purchased through Emblem Sales alone. The item No. is 733.122.

How to conduct a new member initiation is located in the Officer's Guide and Manual of Ceremonies at [legion.org/publications](https://www.legion.org/publications). Remember

to communicate with the new member. The post commander can give a them a welcome call, and introduce them to post officers at their initiation ceremony.