

**American Legion Auxiliary
Department of Michigan
Americanism Guide
2026-2027**

‘A BEACON FOR VETERANS’

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Through the Americanism Program, we teach love of this great country and honor for the men and women who fought to give us freedom.

The Americanism Essay Contest

The essay contest is an excellent opportunity for our youth in the democratic process. The topic for the 2026-2027 year is “How can I be a Beacon of Light for our Veterans”. Note: This is especially relevant to the state of Michigan with our 129 Lighthouses (which is our National President, Dr. Coral May Grout’s Motto “A Beacon for Veterans”)

The cover sheet must accompany each essay. Cover sheet is below. The essay must be submitted to the Americanism Department Chair by **March 30, 2027**. Please note that the essays do go to the Districts. Don’t hesitate to reach out to your local schools and youth organizations to promote the program.

Department Awards are given in each class. 1st Place - \$75, 2nd Place - \$50, 3rd Place - \$25.

Promote patriotism

To promote and encourage participation, host booths or informational tables at local events, schools, farmers markets and community gatherings. Some ideas of handouts or for purchase: patriotic rubber ducks, wristbands, flag pins, ball caps and/or distributing booklets with the Constitution and Bill of Rights.

Get Out and Vote!

Hold a Candidate Night, be sure to invite all political parties. The American Legion Auxiliary is non-partisan. Think of ways you can help people get to the polls. Voting is a critical part of our Democracy.

Flag Education

Flag etiquette and respect for the flag are integral to Americanism. Teaching our youth (and adults) to respect the flag and what it stands for is a priority. Contact your local schools and ask them to do a flag education program. Join with the American Legion to get Veterans into the schools. Talk about how and why we salute the flag and what the colors, stars, and stripes stand for. Include the Pledge of Allegiance and The Star-Spangled Banner. Hand out flags, coloring books and flag pins.

The list of ways to promote Americanism in our community is vast. Here are a few but use your imagination to come up with new ideas.

- Fly your flag
- Wear patriotic clothing
- Observe Patriotic Holidays
- Check out Star Spangled Kids www.alaforveterans.org/StarSpangledKids
- Have a flag retirement Ceremony on Flag Day, Monday, June 14th
- Making Pocket Flags

Year-End Reporting

Keep records of all your activities in Americanism throughout the year so that you have all the information for your annual report. A short narrative describing your activities is very helpful.

Remember, reports are due to your District Americanism Chair by April 20, 2027, and the District Chair needs to submit them to the Department Chair by May 15, 2027.

Please consider writing a narrative and applying for Department awards. Please share the outstanding programs that you have had this past year.

Awards

EVA Spalding Citation - presented to the most outstanding Americanism targeted to children and youth. This entry must be typewritten in a narrative form and not to exceed 1000 words. Describe what/how your unit involves children and youth regarding Americanism and send entries to the Department Chair by May 15, 2027.

Mary Ripley Citation - presented to the Unit with the greatest percentage of Americanism. This entry should describe your Unit's Americanism and Patriotism efforts and events. Please include what you did and how you did it. How many members and how many cumulative hours? Unit

entries must be judged at the District. The District should send their 1st place entries to the Department Chair by May 15, 2027.

Donna Baley Citation - presented to the District Chair for promoting the most outstanding Americanism Program. The entry must be typed and written in a narrative form and not to exceed 1000 words. It may include no more than five pictures and five news articles. The District Chair must send the winning entry to the Department Chair for judging by May 15, 2027.

Dorothy Pearl - presented to the Unit that reports the most outstanding Americanism Program. This entry must be typed and written in a narrative form and not exceed 1000 words. This entry may include no more than five pictures or five news articles. The winner will be sent to ALA National for the DOROTHY PEARL CITATION.

As we begin the 2026-2027 American Legion Auxiliary year, be sure to keep accurate records of your events and activities, including the number of hours worked, the number of people attending, and the amount of money spent. This will make your reporting very easy.

National Americanism Program Awards Deadlines and Submission Requirements

All award submissions must include a narrative (either a PDF or Microsoft Word document) explaining why the Department or Unit your nominating should receive the award. The narrative can also be the Department Chair's report. You may also upload other supporting documentation that will give the committee a full picture of the important mission work, your Department or Unit has accomplished this year. These files can be photos (JPG, JPEG or TIF's no larger than 14MB) or PDF documents. If you have more than three supporting files, please email the committee at the email address listed in the form.

National Awards Form Link: <https://www.legion-aux.org/National-Awards-Form>

National Americanism Chair 2026 – 2027

Marcy Jorae (#153 – 8th Dept of MI)

Website: <https://member.legion-aux.org/member/committees/americanism>

Email Address Amerianism@ALAforVeterans.org

Facebook Group: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/818779828161560>



AMERICANISM ESSAY CONTEST

Contest Rules

The American Legion Auxiliary's Americanism Essay Contest is for students in grades 3-12, including students with special needs, divided into six classes. One award in each class will be presented in each division. Winners will receive a \$50 check, and a \$50 donation in the student's name will be made to the Spirit of Youth Scholarship Fund.

Essay Title: *"How can you be a beacon of light for our veterans?"*

Essay Classes:

Class	Grade Level	Word Requirement*
I	3 and 4	150-250
II	5 and 6	250-300
III	7 and 8	350-400
IV	9 and 10	450-500
V	11 and 12	450-500
VI	Students with special needs	Word count should correspond with student's grade level

1. The Americanism Essay Contest cover sheet must be filled out **legibly** and **completely**. Failure to do so will result in disqualification.
2. Student or Parent/Guardian contact information is required in order to notify winners.
3. Departments (states) will determine the deadline for the local unit contests.
4. Essays are due from the state department chairs to the Americanism Division chairs by April 15.
5. Essays received after the contest deadline will not be accepted.
6. Submissions become property of the American Legion Auxiliary. Through submission of an essay, contestants and their legal guardians grant non-exclusive reproduction and publication rights to the works submitted and agree to have their names and writing published for commercial use without additional compensation or permission.
7. The essay shall be the work of only one individual.
8. Use of AI in writing essays is not allowed. Essays will be checked for use of AI. Any essay determined to be 30% or more AI written will be disqualified.
9. Essays will be scored using the following rubric:

Word Count	Essay does not comply with applicable word count = 0 Essay complies with applicable word count = 5	5
Cover Sheet	Cover sheet is incomplete = 0 Cover sheet is fully complete = 5	5
Topic/Theme	Essay does not address topic = 1 Essay thoroughly addresses topic = 25	25
Content - Original thought	Essay does not display original thoughts = 1 Essay displays original thoughts = 25	25
Grammar	Essay is not written well grammatically and contains many spelling errors = 1 Essay has no grammatical or spelling errors = 10	10
Clarity/Coherence	Essay is not easily understood = 1 Essay is clearly stated and easily understood = 10	10
Organization	Essay is not organized = 1 Essay is organized = 10	10
Correct Word Usage	Essay does not use correct word choices = 1 Essay uses correct word choices = 10	10
	TOTAL POSSIBLE SCORE	100

THE DECISION OF THE JUDGES SHALL BE FINAL.



AMERICANISM ESSAY CONTEST 2026 Cover Sheet

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Essay Title:

"How can you be a beacon of light for our veterans?"

Essay Classes:

Class	Grade Level	Word Requirement*
I	3 and 4	150-250
II	5 and 6	250-300
III	7 and 8	350-400
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THE DECISION OF THE JUDGES SHALL BE FINAL.

Essay Checklist:

- ☐ Class competing in _____
- ☐ Sponsoring ALA unit _____
- ☐ Typed or neatly written essay conforming to the word requirement for class
- ☐ Completed essay cover sheet as first page of essay
- ☐ Word count of essay _____
- ☐ Due date for student to return to ALA unit _____

To be completed by the student and parent/guardian:

** Please write legibly in ink.*

Student Name: _____

Parent/Guardian Name: _____

Student or Parent/Guardian Address (Street, City, State, ZIP): _____

Student or Parent/Guardian Email Address: _____

Student or Parent/Guardian Phone: _____

Parent/Guardian Name and Signature: _____

School Name: _____

Teacher Name: _____

School City/State: _____

Auxiliary Use Only (Must be completed for entry to be considered.)

Sponsoring Unit Name/Number: _____

Signature of Unit Americanism Chair: _____

Unit Winner Due to Department on: _____ Department: _____

Signature of Department Chair: _____

Department Winners Due to National Americanism Division Chair by April 15, 2027