



AMERICAN LEGION RIDERS

DEPARTMENT OF CALIFORNIA

JAMES ADAMES, PRESIDENT CHRISTOPHER COLEMAN, VICE PRES.
STEVE WEBER, SECRETARY ROBERT STOVER, JUDGE ADVOCATE

MARCH 6, 2015

To ALL AMERICAN LEGION RIDERS DEPT. of CALIFORNIA MEMBERS,

We are a veterans program, devoted to the aims and purposes of the American Legion and our fellow veterans and the citizens of these UNITED STATES OF AMERICA. You carry the honor and prestige of the AMERICAN LEGION on your back each time you wear your vest. Whether it's just to go get gas in your bike or when you participate in an event.

It has come to the attention of the Department Executive Committee that certain members and/or chapters are not complying with the spirit, goals and terms of our program as directed by the American Legion Department of California and National American Legion. The perpetuation of personal and/or chapter agendas is and has been an ongoing problem in our program. These actions of a few unthoughtful and unreasonable members have placed our entire program at risk.

Over the past few years, members acting like and associating with 'MOTORCYCLE CLUBS' i.e. riding with them in ALR regalia, frequenting their clubhouses in ALR regalia, lending the ALR emblem on event posters with motorcycle clubs, wearing of support patches, posing in ALR regalia for photos with clubs or other suspect groups. Members conducting themselves in the fashion of a motorcycle club rider: i.e., wearing weapons in public view, wearing patches with territory designation, wearing patches and regalia that are similar in content to motorcycle club regalia and/or in the same style as negatively perceived motorcycle groups/clubs.

These actions and similar activities not in keeping with the principles of the AMERICAN LEGION are regularly perceived as negatively. The general public perceives these actions ***as motorcycle club activities and by association is regularly making the conclusion that the AMERICAN LEGION RIDERS are a negative group and/or motorcycle club also.*** This public perception has resulted in things as serious as a member being charged with a Penal Code 186.22 gang enhancement because of his ALR membership. It has also been alleged by some and there is some action through the California Department of Justice to list the ALR as a negative motorcycle club.

This ongoing negative perception has come to the attention of our parent organization; the **AMERICAN LEGION DEPARTMENT OF CALIFORNIA**. The AMERICAN LEGION has advised the American Legion Riders of California Program that it will not stand for, nor tolerate any action that **brings, tends to infer or will bring any adverse or negative perception** on to the *proud name and traditions of the AMERICAN LEGION*. We have been advised that if these negative issues are not resolved ***immediately***, the California Riders program will be suspended and/or cancelled.

This program was created to promote the American Legion. We need to remember as the motorcycle enthusiasts of the AMERICAN LEGION; our sole purpose is to support the AMERICAN LEGION and the long standing and respected position and ideals therein. We ride solely to promote the aims and purposes of The American Legion as a family oriented motorcycling activity for members of The American Legion, The American Legion Auxiliary, and The Sons of The American Legion. It has always been and is the stated aim and purpose of the ALR to separate the activities of our organization and members from the public perception of a "MOTORCYCLE CLUB".

With this promise and with a stated allegiance to this principle the NATIONAL AMERICAN LEGION created the AMERICAN LEGION RIDERS PROGRAM. You are invited to re-read (or perhaps for the 1st time read) Resolution 35 which is a long awaited result of the hard work of a lot of LEGIONNAIRES to create our program.

Legion Riders Resolution No. 35

American Legion Riders as a National Program

NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF
THE AMERICAN LEGION
INDIANAPOLIS, INDIANA
October 17-18, 2007

WHEREAS, American Legion Riders (ALR) was established in 1993 as a Post level activity at Garden City American Legion Post 396, Department of Michigan; and

WHEREAS, Today there are more than 700 The ALR groups at the Post, District and Department levels whose membership consists of members of The American Legion, The American Legion Auxiliary or Sons of The American Legion who share a common interest in motorcycle ownership and pleasure riding for veterans' causes; and

WHEREAS, The ALR groups exist in at least 48 states and three foreign countries and evidence a growth pattern over the last five years that reflects a genuine interest in ALR for both current and potential members of The American Legion Family; and

WHEREAS, **the purpose of ALR is to use their common interest and association to promote the aims and purposes of The American Legion as well as the promotion of motorcycle safety and awareness; and**

WHEREAS, During the 2006 and 2007 calendar years, ALR raised more than \$500,000 for The American Legion Legacy Scholarship while at the local level ALR groups contributions were valued at more than \$75,000 in contribution or volunteer hours to support the programs of The American Legion; and

WHEREAS, Membership growth in The American Legion has increased in many Posts that have supported ALR and in some cases these members now serve in leadership positions within The American Legion; and

WHEREAS, ALR support those serving in uniform today through participation in such activities as the Patriot Guard, which was founded by the Department of Kansas ALR to provide escorts for our fallen heroes returning from war and taking care of the needs of the families left behind; and

WHEREAS, Many Posts and Departments of The American Legion have already acknowledged their ALR groups as a program and have established guidelines for ALR to follow; and

WHEREAS, In April 2007 an Ad-Hoc Committee appointed by the National Commander met in Indianapolis to discuss the future of ALR as a program based on guidelines developed by the Internal Affairs Commission in 2003; and

WHEREAS, These guidelines, which were validated with minor additions by the Ad-Hoc Committee, will serve as the standard under which all current and future The ALR groups will operate; and

WHEREAS, As The ALR groups continue to increase in number it would be beneficial to both The American Legion and ALR to establish basic guidelines for consistency in all aspects of The ALR groups; and

WHEREAS, The ALR status has been reviewed by the Internal Affairs Commission, which recommends the ALR become a National program; and

WHEREAS, National Finance Commission has reviewed ALR and the need for funding and insurance for the National organization for this program, recommends this program to the National Executive Committee; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The National Executive Committee of The American Legion in regular meeting assembled in Indianapolis, Indiana, on October 17-18, 2007, That The American Legion adopt American Legion Riders (ALR) as a national program; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That all The American Legion Rider groups must be a program supported by a Post or Department of The American Legion and shall uphold the declared principles of The American Legion as well as conform to and abide by the regulations and decisions of the Department, Post or other duly constituted Department governing body; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That the following guidelines are recommended for The ALR program of The American Legion:

1. All members of The American Legion Riders shall be current members of The American Legion, American Legion Auxiliary or Sons of The American Legion
2. Each ALR member shall own a motorcycle
3. Each ALR member shall be properly licensed and insured as required by state law
4. All ALR members shall strive to maintain the image of The American Legion, at all times upholding The American Legion name and emblem, which symbolizes the integrity and principles of this great organization.
5. All The ALR groups shall avoid the perception of being a "motorcycle club" or biker club".
6. The only recognized The American Legion Rider logo is that which is copyrighted and sold through The American Legion National Emblem sales.
7. All Members will obey the motorcycle laws of their state.
8. No use of rockers with the ALR patch because touching the patch violates trademark laws of the ALR patch.
9. Sponsoring organization (Post and Department) will review liability insurance coverage to ensure that adequate coverage is available to cover the organization to include coverage for any specific special riding events; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That American Legion Rider groups shall abide by The American Legion Constitution and By-laws as well as the established Post and Department directives; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion National Headquarters and the respective Departments shall maintain general oversight of ALR Program as regards to proper use of the name and emblem of The American Legion, ALR and The American Legion Legacy Run, and compliance with the National Constitution and By-Laws of The American Legion.

Based on the guidance provided by AMERICAN LEGION Resolution No. 35, American Legion Riders as a National Program, passed by the National Executive Committee, Indianapolis, Indiana, October 17-18, 2007,

The Department of California American Legion Riders was established as a program of the American Legion in compliance and furtherance of Resolution 35

AMERICAN LEGION RIDERS DEPT OF CALIFORNIA, BYLAWS PROVIDE:

For God and Country, we associate ourselves together for the following purposes: To uphold and defend the Constitution of the United States of America; to maintain law and order; to foster and perpetuate a one hundred percent Americanism; to preserve the memories and incidents of our associations in the Great Wars; to inculcate a sense of individual obligation to the community, state and nation; to combat the autocracy of both the classes and the masses; to make right the master of might; to promote peace and good will on earth; to safeguard and transmit to posterity the principles of justice, freedom and democracy; to consecrate and sanctify our comradeship by our devotion to mutual helpfulness. To promote the purposes of the American Legion Family and programs as member motorcycle riders and enthusiast; To participate in parades and other ceremonies which are in keeping with the aims and purposes of the American Legion; to promote motorcycle safety education programs and to provide a social atmosphere for American Legion members with the same motorcycle interests. To consecrate and sanctify our association by our devotion to *mutual helpfulness*.

As an authorized Program of The American Legion, The American Legion Riders will can an asset in promoting and supporting all programs within the American Legion.

Purpose

The American Legion Riders is formed to promote the aims and purposes of The American Legion as a family oriented motorcycling activity for members of The American Legion, The American Legion Auxiliary, and The Sons of The American Legion.

Conduct and Appearance

The ALR is a program of The American Legion and is not a “motorcycle club,” and as such, members are representatives of The American Legion. It is required that members dress in a manner that promotes a positive image for The American Legion, particularly when operating in group activities or interacting with the community.

No Pins or Patches showing support for motorcycle clubs or their support organizations shall be worn on the American Legion Riders vest or jacket. Patches and pins containing profanity or representing lewd, sexual, and violent or other such behavior or subjects will not be worn by members when they are engaged in an ALR activity or when wearing the ALR emblem.

It is IMPERATIVE at members recognize and return to our roots remembering that we *are the motorcycle riding members of the American Legion Family no more and no less; and are all AMERICAN LEGION MEMBERS FIRST AND FOREMOST* with the *SOLE* purpose to support the *AMERICAN LEGION* and the long standing and respected position and ideals therein. We ride to promote the aims and purposes of The American Legion as a family oriented motorcycling activity for members of The American Legion, The American Legion Auxiliary, and The Sons of The American Legion.

It is unfortunate that the negative actions of a few have impacted the positive actions of the many. However, it means that action to stop these negative activities is necessary to insure the continued existence of our program.

As responsible members of this program and LEGIONNAIRES, you are all tasked to review your own conduct and the conduct of your chapter. Look at your vest. What does it say, not just to you but to those outside in the general public. Look at yourself what are you doing that could be incongruent with the tenants of the AMERICAN LEGION. You are reminded to review and reaffirm your actions to conform to the aims of the LEGION. Remembering that

“In 1919, The American Legion was founded on four pillars: Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation, National Security, Americanism, and Children & Youth. Each of these pillars encompasses a variety of programs that benefit our nation’s veterans, its service members, their families, the youth of America and ordinary citizens. These programs make a difference in hundreds of thousands of lives each year.

Our organization’s positions and programs are guided by resolutions passed by American Legion National Convention delegates, and committee and commission members who represent 2.6 million wartime veterans and their families. These programs, and the men and women who take the time to perform them, are what allow The American Legion to make a difference locally, and on the state and national levels. “

You are reminded that nowhere in these tenants does it say ‘me’ ‘I’ or “individual”. It is service to veterans and their families and the public that we are and should be concerned with. It’s who we are and what we do. In order to keep doing it we must be sure that the confidence and perceptions of the AMERICAN LEGION MEMBERS is always positive.

We must face the issue that your vest is a symbol of the American Legion, and ***shall not*** be used for personal comment, political comment, or non-American Legion activities. We must face the issue that what you do and who you do it with while wearing the American Legion emblem reflects on and is attributed to ALL LEGION MEMBERS and ***must be beyond reproach***. We must face the issue that some

members have personal agendas that they place before their commitment to the LEGION and therefore *must change or be removed* from our program. We must face the issue that 'look alike' actions and patches *must change or be removed*.

We have been given until our CONVENTION in April 2015 to make necessary and in some ways significant changes to how we maintain our program and regulate ourselves as Riders. Today, you can and must take action. Area Vice Presidents will be available to assist you along with the other members of the Department Executive committee and your Area committee representatives. Don't wait; if you see a problem fix it or report it. If you might be part of the problem fix it. Cut off the patches that may even have a perception of negativity; change what you are doing. We are all one Riders Program; identification of chapters shall be limited to the back patch flares. Individual chapter or location identities are unnecessary and create a negative perception.

All of these issues will and must be raised, resolved and in place by the end of the Convention. We urge you to take action sooner and do it now. 100% attendance at the convention by every chapter is essential. The resolutions of the delegates to the convention are binding on each and every member and 100% compliance by every member is not negotiable. **The continued existence of our program is at stake.**

This is an organization that you chose to be a part of with responsibilities you pledged to uphold. Please join your fellow members in addressing these problems, revamping our program and acknowledging that we must remember that it is not about personal agendas or individual recognition but a rededication to our promise to uphold the ideals and goals of the American LEGION. *Failure is not an option, because failure means there will be no RIDERS program in California.*

Signed,

James Adames, PRESIDENT
Chris Coleman, Vice President
Steven Weber, Secretary
Patrick Patricio, Sgt at Arms
Albert Villa, Junior Past President
Bob Perryman, Area 1 VP
Ignacio Alvarez, Area 2 VP
J. D. Bennett, Area 3 VP
Mick Sobczak, Area 5 VP
Dan Dale, Area 6 VP
Jake Jacobson, Historian
Mary Estrada, Chaplain
Patrick Tafoya, Quartermaster
Don Christolear, Treasurer
Robert Stover, Judge Advocate