

## PLANNING GUIDE FOR DISTRICT/DIVISION CONVENTION

When the time and place of your District Convention is determined, the District Commander should meet with the officers of the host Post and its Convention Committee about sixty days prior to the date of the convention. At this meeting you should organize the convention in every detail.

The District Commander should supervise the entire program of the convention with the exception of selecting the speaker to make the address of welcome. The host Post should make this speaker selection.

Your District President of The American Legion Auxiliary should be informed by you of the time and place of the Convention and should be invited to attend the planning session mentioned in the first paragraph. You should especially discuss the joint session with her. The host Post should invite the host Auxiliary Unit to have representatives present.

It should always be kept in mind by the host Post that its primary function is to provide facilities for the Convention, as well as local committees to take care of the many details of housekeeping, comfort of visitors, and registration that should not have to be the function of visitors. The program itself is the responsibility of the District Commander. He will select all speakers and extend necessary invitations. Much misunderstanding can be avoided if this will be adhered to.

The District Convention call and delegate certification forms to the District Convention will be mailed by Department Headquarters to all Post Adjutants at least one month prior to the Convention.

Traditionally, District Conventions have been held on the weekend, Saturday and Sunday, usually with an open house on Saturday afternoon, a dance Saturday night, a joint session Sunday morning and the business session Sunday afternoon. This pattern of a Convention was set up in the early days of the Legion when we had dirt roads and transportation was much slower than it is today.

It is therefore suggested that you make a study of your District Conventions. You might find it more advantageous to have an afternoon and evening Convention on a Saturday rather than on Sunday.

Here are some of the disadvantages of the Sunday convention: Many of our members are active participants in churches and they are obligated to participate in their houses of worship on Sunday, consequently, they will not attend a District Convention on Sunday. Many persons have do-it-yourself programs at home, such as yard work, repairs to the house and matters of that kind to which they devote their Sundays. It is difficult to get this group out to a Convention. Another phase that has entered into the picture is the forty-hour week. Many persons are off on Saturday and Sunday and they spend these days for recreation with their families. If they own a boat and if they are not in church or not at home with the other projects, they are out on the lake in their boat skiing and enjoying themselves with the family.

These and other activities are highly competitive with The American Legion. Argument for the Sunday Convention, and it is usually made by those who attend on Sunday, is that Sunday is the only day they have to go to a Convention. Our problem is to get as many as possible to attend.

An afternoon and evening Convention could very well be held and would probably be a large one if it started about 3:00 or 4:00 P.M. with separate business sessions for The American Legion and Auxiliary. The joint session could be a dinner meeting at 6:30 or 7:00 P.M. A dance or social could follow the joint session.

A number of Districts have found it to be quite successful to start the convention with an open house, Mini-College and/or Rehabilitation Workshop on Saturday afternoon and a banquet that evening which serves as a joint session. This is followed with a dance. The banquet provides a fine opportunity for a dress-up affair. Then on Sunday morning a joint Memorial Service is held about 9:30 A.M. and then separate business sessions for the Legion and Auxiliary to be completed about noon.

We never recommend that the convention be recessed on Sunday for delegates to go to separate churches for services. This sets too many delegates adrift who do not wish to attend church services.

Also, we do not recommend that a convention plan to recess for the purpose of a noon meal and let delegates eat at a place of their own choosing. It is much simpler to get a caterer to bring food in and this helps hold your convention together, especially on Sunday.

Many Districts find a Commanders and Adjutants breakfast on Sunday morning to be useful. This gives these Post Officials an opportunity to discuss mutual problems.

#### GUIDE FOR THE HOST POST

1. **Bids to host** the Convention should be presented by the Post at the District Convention previous to the one desired for their consideration. If selected, work closely with the District Commander in setting the date of the Convention. Try to avoid conflict such as Department Meetings, Easter, Mothers Day, Veterans Day, American Legion Birthday, State Fair and other nearby Conventions and other such occasions.
2. **The Host Commander should appoint a Convention Chairman** with the consent of the District Commander. He should then work with the Convention Chairman in appointing committees as follows: Host Committee, Entertainment Committee, Registration, Committee, Food Committee and Housing Committee. Other committees should be appointed as necessary.
  - a. **The Host Committee** should be composed of men who are good greeters of visitors at the place of registration and at the hotel or motel. It would be well if these are men who personally know most of the visitors. They should know who the distinguished guests are, greet them, and be sure they are properly registered. Department Officials and Guest Speakers should not be required to pay a registration fee as a matter of courtesy. Be sure your outdoor Post flags are flying. If you

have bunting, decorate the outside entrance to the Post Home.

- (b) b. The Entertainment Committee should arrange for a dance band and arrange for other entertainment in cooperation with the District Commander. They should make arrangements for the reception and/or hospitality hour if one is to be held. They should help decorate the registration area as well as the convention hall, place for the dance and the reception.
- (c) (Be sure head table is draped to protect ladies' knees.) Your Auxiliary Unit will likely volunteer to decorate the hall and registration area.
- (d) c. The Registration Committee should plan for the printing of the convention program as well as its layout after the District Commander has completed his planning. If advertising is to be sold for the program, the Convention Chairman may wish to appoint a separate committee for this purpose. Registration badges should be obtained well in advance. The Host Post and the Host Auxiliary Unit should work closely on registration. Usually it works nicely if the ladies will agree to work the registration desk as they are usually more adept at handling typewriters and other details of actual registration. Besides, a nice friendly smile from a lady always makes a visitor feel welcome. Those working the registration desk should be fully advised as to who should or should not be required to pay a registration fee. (Be sure they have money to make change.) Registration Badges should be typed up in advance for Distinguished Guests and Speakers. Souvenir programs and meal tickets should be handed out at the place of registration.
- (e) other details of actual registration. Besides, a nice friendly smile from a lady always makes a visitor feel welcome. Those working the registration desk should be fully advised as to who should or should not be required to pay a registration fee. (Be sure they have money to make change.) Registration Badges should be typed up in advance for Distinguished Guests and Speakers. Souvenir programs and meal tickets should be handed out at the place of registration.
- (f) d. Food Committee - This committee should work with the Auxiliary if food is to be prepared at the site of the convention and if part is to be brought in by the ladies. If the meal is catered, and this has proved to be the most popular recently, it is the Food Committee's responsibility to arrange for the caterer and menu in cooperation with the Convention Chairman and District Commander. Often it is necessary that chairs and tables be set up before the meal is served and this is part of this committee's function. They may need other volunteers at this critical time especially if the meal is being served in the same room where the convention is being held. If the meal is served in a room separate from the meeting and the tables can be set up in advance, it is always good to call on the Auxiliary to help with the decorations.
- (g) e. The Housing Committee: The function of this committee is to arrange for housing for all visitors. Usually if the committee will let it be known what hotel or motel is being used, visitors will make their own reservations. This committee should be sure that Distinguished Guests and Speakers have adequate housing and they are notified in advance where reservations have been made. If the Department Commander is to be present, it's not uncommon for the Host Post to arrange for a complimentary room or suite for his convenience. This is true for other Department Officials, if possible.
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3. Select a good speaker to give the welcome address. This should never be more than 5-10 minutes in length. It is preferable to ask the Mayor or his designate to do this. Others

who could do this would be the President of the Chamber of Commerce, the County Judge or perhaps the School Superintendent. Other prominent local citizens or Legionnaires who are good speakers could do just as well. He should be a cheery person who can truly make the visitors feel welcome to the community.

4. Work with the District Commander and District President in arranging and printing of the Convention Program.

5. Work with the District Commander and District President in setting the registration fee and complimentary registrations.

6. Be sure your Post Home is in tip-top condition prior to the convention. If the convention is being held at places other than Legion Home, plan to invite visitors out to the home at times when it will not conflict with the convention program.

7. NEVER allow your bar to be open during business sessions. This should be strictly prohibited. Should this happen, the District Commander will be perfectly within his rights to order the Sergeant at Arms to see that it is closed.

8. Unless the District has its own Colors and U. S. Flag, they will want to use the Post flags and stands. Be sure these are clean and in top shape.

9. Be certain that you have a Public Address System in good working order. **DOUBLE CHECK.**

10. Be sure your outdoor flag is flying throughout the convention. Ask local businesses to fly their flags as well. An Avenue of U. S. Flags in front of the Legion Home is quite attractive.

11. Arrange for committee meeting rooms during the convention. Committees such as the Credentials, Rules, Convention City, and Resolutions, as well as others, will need a place to meet.

12. Provide an adequate auditorium for the Joint Session and for separate Legion and Auxiliary business meetings. Be sure the Auxiliary has a nice place to meet.

13. Arrange for advance press coverage. Arrange for publicity following the convention. It is important that you let the local press know what actions were taken at the convention. Perhaps you can arrange for your principal speaker's address to be carried on the local radio station.