



**AMERICAN LEGION AUXILIARY, UNIT 291
215 15TH STREET, NEWPORT BEACH, CA 92663
GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING MINUTES**

Date: November 19, 2025 Time: 6:05 PM

- ❖ **CALL TO ORDER – Silence your cell phones**
- ❖ **Posting of the Colors**
- ❖ **Placement of POW/MIA Cover, Mary Ann Leonard, Chaplain**
- ❖ **Chaplain's Prayer, Mary Ann Leonard, Chaplain**
- ❖ **Pledge of Allegiance, Stacy Eickhoff, Sergeant at Arms**
- ❖ **Music , Mary Ann Leonard, Music Chair- America ("My Country 'Tis of Thee"- Verse 1)**
- ❖ **Preamble of the Constitution of the ALA**
- ❖ **Roll Call of Officers, Leslie Dinkel, Secretary**

P	President Cynthia Minucci Neal	P	Chaplain Mary Ann Leonard	E	Executive Committee Peggy Bengry
P	1 st Vice President Bobbi Renaghan	P	Historian Mary Beth Martin	E	Executive Committee Janet du Monceau de Bergendal
P	2nd Vice President Bonnie Robertson	P	Sergeant at Arms Stacy Eickhoff	P	Executive Committee Janice Flanagan
P	Secretary Leslie Dinkel	P	Asst. Sergeant at Arms Becky Cooper	P	Executive Committee Dana Johnston
E	Treasurer Laura Farr	P	Jr. Past President Mary Beth Martin	P	Executive Committee Jan Woolford

P=Present E=Excused A=Absent Quorum = 19

- ❖ **Officer Substitutions-** Dana Johnston for Peggy Bengry; Mary Ann Leonard for Janet du Monceau de Bergendal
- ❖ **Special Guest-** Installation of a new member. Motion to accept new member for membership into American Legion Auxiliary Unit 291 was made, 2nd, and motion carried.
- ❖ **Approval of Minutes** –A motion was made to waive the reading of the October 15, 2025 General Membership meeting minutes. Motion was seconded, and motion carried. October 15, 2025 GMM minutes stand approved as written.
- ❖ **This month Dimes for Times-** supporting Membership for Military Families.

REPORTS

- ❖ **President, Cynthia Minucci Neal**

Volunteer Opportunities posted:

Sign-up available on website at ALA291.com (password: Poppy#291)

- Currently open positions:
 - Front Door Concierge (Nov 22 - Dec 31)
 - Patio Gate Concierge (Nov 22 - Dec 31)
 - Holiday Boutique attendance and volunteering
 - Christmas Decorating the Post
 - Christmas Children's Party helpers
 - Wreaths Across America (Pacific View and Bayside National Cemetery)

- Decorate for New Years Eve

New Programs:

- Military Family 101 class - completed with Service Officer Corey Vigil
- Poppy making project
- Project Bearable stuffing event

Volunteers Needed:

- President's Committee – President is looking for member(s) who can assist with the computer setup for general meetings and possibly Zoom setup for general meetings

Sign-Up Genius: January opportunities will open after December 1st

❖ **1st Vice President / Membership, Bobbi Renaghan**

Current Membership Update: Seniors: 2,008; Juniors: 44; Renewals to date: 1,294,

- Membership is currently closed. Membership might reopen after March 1st, pending capacity

❖ **2nd Vice President / Fundraising, Bonnie Robertson-Upcoming Events:**

- Spring Gala: March 7, 2026 Palm Royale Gala (Palm Beach, Florida style) Raffle tickets for Spring Gala to be mailed next week
- Quartermania: April 26, 2026
- Mad Hatter Tea Party: August 15, 2026 (Saturday)
- Halloween Event: October 27, 2026
- Christmas Tea Party (date TBD)
- Boutique update: Jan Woolford – The Boutique is on November 20th from 3:00 PM to 7:00 PM

❖ Secretary, Leslie Dinkel – No Report

❖ Treasurer, Laura Farr - No Report

❖ Chaplain, Mary Ann Leonard – No Report

❖ **Historian, Mary Beth Martin**

Veterans' Day Project:

- Display in hallway: recognized positively on Legion Facebook page
- Removal scheduled for January 6th at 9:30 AM (volunteers needed)
- World War II veteran photos added for next year
- Members encouraged to create accounts with National American Legion Auxiliary for online membership payment and educational courses
- National Women's History Month event (February/March) - planning in progress

History Projects:

- Veterans' History Project (Library of Congress) - encourages veterans to record oral histories
- Remember History Project - members encouraged to record auxiliary history

Social Media Engagement:

- California Department Facebook page - currently 12 members viewing regularly
- California Department website - 16 members viewing regularly

Department Executive Committee:

- Poppy Hat Contest - seeking volunteers to create decorated hat for competition
- Previous year's winner was from Unit 291
- ❖ Parliamentarian, Peggy Bengry – No Report
- ❖ Executive Committee: Peggy Bengry, Janet du Monceau de Bergendal, Janice Flanagan, Dana Johnston, & Jan Woolford - No Report
- ❖ Junior Past President, Mary Beth Martin - No Report

STANDING COMMITTEES

- ❖ Americanism, Carol Markel – No Report
- ❖ Auxiliary Emergency Fund, Jan Woolford – No Report
- ❖ **Chair Covers, Janz Simmons**

Thanks to volunteers for Marine Corps Ball and Tea Party events. Upcoming event: December 31st, New Year's Eve at 10:00 AM (approximately 2 hours work, 3 hours credit).
- ❖ **Children and Youth- Myra Alvermann**

Halloween Party: Successful event with approximately 75 children

Christmas Programs:

 1. Christmas party at Camp Pendelton on December 20, 2025. Pajama and toy drive for 75 military children (deadline: December 15th). Please deliver unwrapped gifts to the Post.
 2. Children's Christmas party - will be held on December 7, 2025, at the Post in the main hall
- ❖ **Community Donations- Heidi Maturino for Christine Beilby**
 1. **You Are Worth It Foundation - \$1,000**
 - Supports battlefield memorial trips for veterans
 - Morale-boosting programs (barbecues, family picnics, ceremonies)
 - Transition programs and VA disability assistance

Motion: The Executive Board moves to donate \$1,000 to You Are Worth It Foundation to support their continued efforts in supporting our veterans. Motion made, was seconded: motion carried.
 2. **Veterans Association of North County - \$1,000**
 - One-stop resource center for active duty military, veterans, and families
 - Assistance with jobs, benefits, health, and wellness
 - Community meeting space

Motion: The Executive Board moves to donate \$1,000 to Veterans Association of North County to support their efforts in supporting our veterans. Motion was seconded; motion carried.
 3. **Robyn's Nest - \$1,000**
 - Support for at-risk and homeless students
 - Holiday food drive for Newport Mesa and Huntington Beach school districts
 - Keeps students in school and away from gangs, crime, homelessness

Motion: The Executive Board moves to donate \$1,000 to Robyn's Nest to support their efforts in supporting at-risk and homeless students. Motion was made, seconded; motion carried.

One of our members, Pam Thompson, stated that she will generously match that donation.

4. **San Clemente Military Family Outreach - \$2,000**

- Provides 1,000 turkeys and trimmings for enlisted families (E1-E6) at Camp Pendleton
- Annual cost: \$44,000

Motion: The Executive Board moves to donate \$2,000 to San Clemente Military Family Outreach to support their Thanksgiving meals program for enlisted members and veterans at Camp Pendleton. Motion was made, seconded; motion was carried.

❖ **Community Service- Bonnie Pollack- Project Bearable**

40 bears completed

Patterns and sewing supplies available

Stuffing and decorating event: November 24 (Friday), 11:00 AM - 3:00 PM, Fireside Room

Bears will be sent to Camp Pendleton with Christmas boxes

Delivery deadline: December 12 (after kids' party)

❖ **Constitution & Bylaws - Mary Ann Leonard for Janet du Monceau de Bergendal**

Standing Rules Amendment:

Article 5, Section 2, Subsection a: This would also include meetings held simultaneously in person and electronically. (2025)

Rationale: Allows hybrid executive board and general membership meetings (in-person and electronic simultaneously), complying with California fire safety regulations.

Motion: The Executive Board moves to add Article 5, Section 2, Subsection a to the Standing Rules- This would also include meetings held simultaneously in person and electronically. (2025) Motion was made, seconded: motion carried.

❖ **Education - Barbara Melum**

Veterans Day Poster Contest:

- Six winners from local schools
- Each winner received \$100
- Posters to be displayed at Veterans Memorial (Orange County Fairgrounds)
- Pictures will be presented at next meeting

Memorial Day Poster Contest: Scheduled for May (national contest adapted for local participation). The goal is to help students recognize difference between Veterans Day and Memorial Day

❖ **Girls State, Caroline Miller**

Girls' State Goals:

1. Building leadership and service skills
2. Developing civic education knowledge
3. Meeting new people and communities
4. Embracing free opportunity to grow and learn

5. Receiving recognition, prestige, and awards
6. Exposing yourself to new and diverse perspectives
7. Empowering yourself and women around you

Girls' State 2026 Information:

The location will be at UC Riverside Campus, from June 22, 2026 through June 27, 2026. Registration fees and program fees total \$550.00 per girl. Transportation to the event site is each student's responsibility.

Schools Participating (24 total): Del Mar, Corona del Mar, Irvine, Newport Harbor, Northwood, Portola, San Clemente, University, Woodbridge, Estancia School of the Arts, Arnold O. Beckman, Savanna, John F. Kennedy, Capistrano Valley Christian, Tesoro, Pacifica Christian, Early College High School, Laguna Beach, Trabuco Hills, Woodhill High School, Saddleback High School, Santa Margarita Catholic High School, Saddleback Valley Christian, and Laguna Hills High School

Alumni Success Story: A former Girls State participant from Northwood won National FFA award for her Girls' State presentation. She secured an internship with a district senator and authored a bill which was approved by Senator Stephen Corey's Chief of Staff for consideration in 2026 California Senate Session.

Volunteer Opportunities: Liaison and volunteer positions available at CaliforniaGirlsState.org

❖ Juniors Activities, Stacy Eickhoff – No Report

❖ **Leadership, Dana Johnston**

Looking for ideas for Women's month. Will introduce the chairs at the GMM meetings. Dana suggested a social event to be held on the West Patio where members share information about important women.

❖ Legislative, Pia Thompson, No Report

❖ Music, Mary Ann Leonard - No Report

❖ National Security, Karren Schaeffer – No Report

❖ Past President Parley, Mary Beth Martin - No Report

❖ Poppies, Bobbi Renaghan – No Report

❖ **Public Relations- Marilyn Anania for Heidi Sargeant - Wreaths Across America**

Event Date: December 13, 2025

Locations: Riverside National Cemetery and Pacific View Memorial Park (Corona del Mar)

Wreath Costs: \$17 each. Buy 2, get 3rd free. Our Unit is making an organizational donation. Members can purchase additional wreaths. Volunteers needed for wreath placement on December 13th.

❖ **Salute to Service, Julie Sanborn**

▪ Third Annual Event: Monday, May 18, 2026

▪ The purpose of this event is to honor local high school seniors entering military careers. We need a planning committee. Our meetings will be the first Tuesday of each month, from January until June. We'll meet in the Fireside Room at 3:30 PM. Please use Sign Up Genius to help with the event and the families of the students involved.

Timekeeping/Volunteer Hours- Mary Beth Martin

Important Reminders:

1. Use official name from National Auxiliary database (as appears on membership card)
2. Check hours online via volunteer page (PDF spreadsheet available)
3. Email timekeeper only for missing or incorrect hours with specific details
4. Hours updated monthly after month ends
5. Allow reasonable response time for email inquiries
6. SignUpGenius used for reservations only; actual attendance tracked via sign-in sheets

November Hours Update: Will be posted in December after sheets received

Holiday Home Tour - Balboa Island:

- Date: December 13, 2025
- Shifts: 11:00 AM - 1:30 PM or 1:30 PM - 4:00 PM
- 23 docent positions available (2.5 hours per shift)
- Preference for Newport Beach/Costa Mesa residents (area familiarity)
- Benefits: Free tour ticket, after-party at Newport Beach Yacht Club
- Wear auxiliary shirt or auxiliary attire if possible
- Email confirmation to timekeeper after signing up

Note: Auxiliary-sponsored events qualify for volunteer hours

VA&R (Veterans Administration & Rehabilitation)- Marilyn Anania

- Marilyn is looking for members to help with the various VA & R projects-the various food pantries; college food bank donations; VA hospital food programs; direct veteran assistance when needed.

Food Pantry Support:

Coastline Community College: \$612

US Vets of Orange County: \$900

VA Long Beach: Two visits (\$302 and \$38)

Heroes Landing (veteran housing): \$767

Women Veterans Social Connection Brunch: Donations of articles provided for first event at VA Long Beach Hospital

VA & R is accepting donations of unexpired food items and new or gently used winter coats.

Programs that need assistance:

- Operation Santa
- Long Beach VA
- Be The One
- Bud Chairs
- Wreaths Across America
- Honor Flight

- American Legion Tragedy Assistance Program
- Quilts of Valor
- Hats for Heroes
- National Veterans Creative Arts Festival
- Military and Veteran Peer Network
- Fisher House (Long Beach VA)

Old Business: None

New Business:

Dana Johnston-Dana is creating a new, one hour class, "Auxiliary 101", to familiarize members with how our organization works. She will include topics on committee structure; district and department organization; officer roles and responsibilities; budget and spending procedures. Look for the class in 2026.

NEXT GENERAL MONTHLY MEMBERSHIP MEETING- The next meeting will be January 21, 2026 in the Main Hall at 6:00 PM

Removal of POW/MIA Cover & Closing Prayer- Mary Ann Leonard, Chaplain

Holiday Message: Happy holidays to all members. May the season be joyful and bright.

MEETING ADJOURNED: 7:39 PM