



AMERICAN LEGION AUXILIARY, UNIT 291
215 15TH Street, Newport Beach CA 92663
GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING MINUTES
Date: January 21, 2026 Time: 6:18 PM

- ❖ **CALL TO ORDER – Silence your cell phones**
- ❖ **Posting of the Colors**
- ❖ **Placement of POW/MIA Cover** - Janet du Monceau de Bergendal for Mary Ann Leonard, Chaplain
- ❖ **Chaplain's Prayer** - Janet du Monceau de Bergendal for Mary Ann Leonard, Chaplain
- ❖ **Pledge of Allegiance** - Stacy Eickhoff, Sergeant at Arms
- ❖ **Music**– Mary Ann Leonard, Music Chair – No selection
- ❖ **Preamble of the Constitution of the ALA**
- ❖ **Roll Call of Officers** – Leslie Dinkel, Secretary

P	President Cynthia Minucci Neal	E	Chaplain Mary Ann Leonard	P	Executive Committee Peggy Bengry
P	1 st Vice President Bobbi Renaghan	P	Historian Mary Beth Martin	P	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	E	Asst. Sergeant at Arms Becky Cooper	E	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** - Janet du Monceau de Bergendal for Mary Ann Leonard, Chaplain
- ❖ **Approval of Minutes** – Motion was made and seconded to waive the reading of the minutes for the GMM held on November 19, 2025. Minutes stand approved as corrected with typographical corrections noted by Constitutional Bylaws Chair, Janet du Monceau de Bergendal.
- ❖ **This month Dimes for Times** – Legislative for National Security Programs

REPORTS

❖ **President-Cynthia Minucci Neal-UPDATE**

- The meeting was live-streamed online with over 40 members attending remotely.
- Meeting format has returned to tables and chairs. Remember to sign up for a space.
- The Unit will continue offering classes for Front and Back Door Access online. Sign up on SignUpGenius.
- Open Chair positions - Americanism and Troop Shipping. Interested members should contact president@ala291.com

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

- Induction of new member

❖ **2nd Vice President / Fundraising, Bonnie Robertson - UPDATE**

Palm Royale Gala- March 7, 2026-Raffle tickets are available for \$10.00 each. Raffle prizes range from \$1,000.00 to \$5,000.00. Dinner tickets are \$65.00 per person. Theme: Palm Beach, Florida casual. RESERVATIONS REQUIRED through SignUpGenius.

November Holiday Boutique- was a huge success, raising almost \$5,000.00, thanks to excellent vendor participation.

Upcoming events- Mad Hatter Tea Party- August 22, 2026; Fall Boutique October 22, 2026 (to cover Halloween, Thanksgiving and Christmas)

- ❖ Secretary, Leslie Dinkel – No Report
- ❖ Treasurer, Laura Farr - No Report
- ❖ Chaplain, Mary Ann Leonard – No Report
- ❖ **Historian, Mary Beth Martin – UPDATE-** Veterans' Day Project received excellent feedback. We're already organizing pictures for this year's event. Members are encouraged to submit photos of Vets from Post 291. Include the following information: Veteran's name; city of residence; branch of service; 3 sentences on their overall feeling about their time of service.
- ❖ Thank you to Sue Lindsay for taking pictures of the project
- ❖ 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- REPORT-** The unit received its first nursing scholarship application in several years! Deadline for additional applications is the first Friday of April.

STANDING COMMITTEES

- ❖ Americanism - **OPEN**
- ❖ Auxiliary Emergency Fund- Jan Woolford – No Report
- ❖ Chair Covers-Janz Simmons – No Report
- ❖ **Children and Youth-Myra Alvermann- REPORT-** The Christmas Party at Camp Pendelton was a big success. Approximately 75 children attended, each receiving gifts and pajamas. Mrs. Claus attended and provided entertainment.
- ❖ **Community Donations-Christine Beilby** – Presented by Heidi Sargeant

1. Infinite Hero Foundation

Suggested Donation: \$1,000

Infinite Hero Foundation exists to connect our military, veterans and military family members with innovative and effective treatment programs for service-related injuries. They have served 85,000 of our nation's heroes and family members at no cost to them. They believe in what's possible. Five Pillars- Physical Rehabilitation; Leadership Development; Brain Health; Family Support; and Suicide Prevention.

MOTION: The Executive Board moves to donate \$1,000.00 to Infinite Hero Foundation to continue their valuable work for our military and family members who are struggling with service-related injuries.

Motion was 2nd. Motion carried

2. Tierney Center for Veteran Services

Suggested Donation: \$1,000

Goodwill of Orange County founded the Tierney Center for Veteran Services in 2016. The Tierney Center for Veteran Services has served over 11,500 veterans since its inception. They are a comprehensive resource center serving veterans and their families at no cost. This is a service for veterans, created by veterans. The service helps with housing, basic needs such as food, clothing, health services, legal assistance, employment assistance, behavioral health services, emergency financial assistance. They also provide peer support services.

MOTION: The Executive Board moves to donate \$1,000.00 to Tierney Center for Veteran Services to support their continued efforts to help veterans in need. Motion was 2nd. Motion carried.

3. Paralyzed Veterans of America, California Chapter Suggested Donation: \$1,000

Paralyzed Veterans of America, CA Chapter is based at Long Beach VA . They have an in-patient spinal cord injury unit with 12 members + hospital-based and outpatient paralyzed veterans that they support. They have a list of about 400 members. The donation will help PVA CA Chapter provide a Super Bowl party in February and for other services that support paralyzed veterans who either live at or are served by the PVA CA Chapter at Long Beach VA.

MOTION: The Executive Board moves to donate \$1,000.00 to PVA CA Chapter at Long Beach VA to support their efforts to work with veterans. Motion was 2nd. Motion carried.

❖ Community Service-Heidi Sargeant -UPDATE

Heidi is forming a Community Service committee of 2-4 members (2 hours per month commitment).

Responsibilities include:

- Community outreach and awareness
- Distributing flyers to businesses
- Photography at events
- **Project Bearable, Bonnie Pollack**
 - Members are making teddy bears for Orangewood, cancer centers (St. Jude's; St. Joseph's; CHOC). Sign up on Sign Up Genius. Next meeting is Monday, January 26, 2026 in the Fireside Room to complete the bears. Bears can be made at home for service hours, or at the Monday sessions. This month, bears will have hearts for Valentine's Day and are headed to St. Jude's.

❖ Constitution & Bylaws-Janet du Monceau de Bergendal – No Report

❖ Education- Barbara Melum – No Report

❖ **Girls State-Caroline Miller- UPDATE**

Girls State is a hands-on civics program for HS senior girls. Participants learn about city, county, and state government, political party systems, and courts. 2026 Session Details

- Dates: June 22-27, 2026
- Location: UC Riverside
- Visitors welcome; contact Caroline for observation day schedule
- Enrollment Update Currently 464 applications from schools. Unit 291 has 24 schools participating with 164 anticipated attendees.
- Participating Schools - Corona del Mar, Estancia, Irvine, Newport Harbor, Northwood, Portola, Sage Hill, University, Woodbridge, Orange County School of the Arts, Harlan Beckman, Saddleback, Savannah, Pacifica, John F. Kennedy Early College, Pacifica Christian, Brea Olinda, Santa Margarita, Valley High School, Pacific Academy, and Pacifica .

❖ **Juniors Activities-Stacy Eickhoff-UPDATE**

The Juniors will be stuffing bags for Valentines' Day for veterans on January 25, 2026 from 9AM-12PM

- ❖ Leadership -Dana Johnston- No Report
- ❖ Legislative- Pia Thompson – No Report
- ❖ Music- Mary Ann Leonard – No Report
- ❖ **National Security- Karren Schaeffer-UPDATE-** Presidents' Day Blood Drive-Monday February 16, 2026. Sign up on the Red Cross website. Contact Karren for assistance with online sign-up.
Next blood drive- Monday, October 12, 2026 (Columbus Day)
- ❖ **Junior Past President -Mary Beth Martin – UPDATE-** The Unit has received its first nursing scholarship application in several years! Deadline for additional applications is Friday, April 3, 2026.
- ❖ **Past President Parley- Mary Beth Martin- UPDATE-** Past Presidents will be having a luncheon and meeting on Saturday, April 4, 2026, in the Fireside Room, starting at 11:30 AM. Invitations will be sent out to all past presidents. They will review the applications for the nursing scholarship and select a winner.
- ❖ Poppies- Bobbi Renaghan
- ❖ **Public Relations-Heidi Sargeant – - Media Coverage**
 - Three articles were published this year in Media: Children's Christmas Party, Wreaths Across America, and Girls State.
 - Wreaths Across America Partnership
 - Established partnership with Wreaths Across America. For every wreath purchased through Unit 291's website/QR code, the unit receives \$5 back. 500 wreaths were purchased this year, generating approximately \$2,500 for the unit. Wreaths can be purchased year-round in honor or memory of loved ones, perfect for Fathers' Day, Veterans Day, or Christmas gifts.

- Cemetery Locations
 - Current participating cemeteries: Pacific View and Riverside. Additional cemeteries can be added if members commit to both fundraising and physical wreath placement. Members interested in adding cemeteries should contact Heidi Sargeant.
- Wreaths must be ordered by November for shipment from the East Coast. Promotional campaigns will begin in July and October.

❖ **Salute to Service-Julie Sanborn – Update-**

- Planning is underway for the 3rd Annual Salute to Service honoring high school students who are enlisting in the military, attending ROTC programs, or military academies upon graduation. Dinner date is May 18, 2026, in the Main Hall.
- Contact President Cynthia Minucci Neal or Julie Sanborn for volunteer opportunities.

❖ **Timekeeper- Mary Beth Martin - UPDATE**

2025 Final Statistics

- Total volunteer hours donated in 2025: 10,607 hours (compared to 3,300 hours reported in 2024).
- Important clarifications:
 - No rollover of 2025 hours to 2026; fresh start
 - Members without access cards cannot earn them in 2026 by completing 20 hours
 - Members turning 80 in 2026 automatically receive access cards without volunteer requirement
 - 2026 volunteer report will be posted in mid-February after final membership roster is confirmed
- Recognition Awards for members:
 - First to Complete 10 Hours (June 2025): Anne Davis
 - Last to Reach 10 Hours (December 2025): Marianne Marks
 - Most Hours for 2025: Kim Fillhart with 82 hours
 - Special Recognition: Cheryl Young (over 90 years old) completed 8 hours
- Outstanding Achievement
 - Julie Collins completed her first 2 hours on January 1, 2026 via ALA courses
 - Charlene Ashton completed 6 ALA courses, demonstrating exceptional dedication to learning about ALA

❖ **Troop Shipping- OPEN**

❖ **V A and R- Marilyn Anania-UPDATE**

The VA& R committee stocks pantries for colleges and veterans' organizations: Long Beach VA, US Vets, Orange County, Santa Ana College, and Heroes Landing.

- VA & R Committee needs members who can assist with research from home via computer.
- Committee received donations of:
 - 307 brand-new Bombas socks donated (distributed among all locations)

- 80 handmade knit beanies
- 4 blankets for Avalon housing unit apartments
- 23 used coats donated to US Vets and Coastline Community College (VA only accepts new coats with tags)

SPECIAL COMMITTEES

- ❖ Old Business - None
- ❖ New Business - None

NEXT GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING – The next meeting is Wednesday, February 18, 2026, in the Main Hall at 6:00pm.

NEXT DISTRICT MEETING –

- ❖ **Closing Prayer & Removal of POW/MIA Cover – Janet du Monceau de Bergendal for Mary Ann Leonard**

ADJOURNMENT – Time: 7:48 PM

Minutes respectfully submitted
Leslie Dinkel, Secretary
American Legion Auxiliary Unit 291
215 15th Street Newport Beach, CA 92663