



GUIDE TO ORGANIZING A NEW UNIT OF THE ALA

Department of Georgia
American Legion Auxiliary

December 2024

Table of Contents

Welcome.....	1
About this Document.....	1
Check List: Initial Steps	2
Reference Materials: Initial Steps.....	2
Initial Steps – Additional Information.....	3
Check List: Information Meeting	4
Reference Materials: Information Meeting	4
Informational Meeting – Additional Information	4
Between Meetings	7
Check List: Organizational Meeting	9
Reference Materials: Organizational Meeting	9
Organizational Meeting.....	9
Immediately Following the Organizational Meeting	10
Roles & Responsibilities	12
After the Charter is Approved	14
Getting Set Up and Running	14
Vision and Mission are First.....	17
List of Documents	18
Sample Letter: Invitation to Informational Meeting.....	19

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Department of Georgia

*Based on the
National ALA Document:
How to Organize a Unit of the
American Legion Auxiliary
September 18, 2023*

Welcome

Thank you in advance for your dedication to form or re-form an American Legion Auxiliary UNIT!

Organizing a unit of the American Legion Auxiliary (ALA) (Department) is rewarding and is a commitment of time and passion to support the mission of the organization.

People, paperwork, patience, and persistence are the guiding principles. The Department President will appoint a **Department Auxiliary Representative** to assist with all steps during formation and may appoint a mentor to the new Unit President for the first year.

Please consider this guide as a **valuable time-saving resource**. The time spent following this guide will equip new unit organizers with the knowledge to significantly reduce frustration and complications. The time you invest in reading this guide and the [National ALA Unit Guide Book](#) will prove to be well worth it.

Starting off on the right foot is crucial, and this guide, along with the support of the Department Auxiliary Representative assigned to your forming unit, will ensure a successful launch.

About this Document

This document is a compilation of best practices for starting a new unit of the ALA and aims to help unit organizers and those assisting/guiding them to make informed decisions along the way.

Included are the content and steps outlined in the National American Legion Auxiliary's document "How to Organize a Unit in the American Legion Auxiliary" and the steps relevant to the Department of Georgia. This "how to" does **not** replace the [National ALA Unit Guide Book](#) or any other document available from the National American Legion Auxiliary nor does it offer guidance on financial or legal aspects.

Unit leaders and members must make their own governance and operational decisions based on the unit, department, and ALA national governing documents, and their individual judgment, knowledge, and expertise. Nothing the unit does or includes in its governing documents may conflict with the National or Department governing documents.

The Headquarters staff, Officers, and Chairpersons of the Department of Georgia disclaim all liability for the accuracy or completeness of this guideline, and disclaim all warranties, express or implied, to their incorrect use. The [GUIDE TO ORGANIZING A NEW UNIT of the ALA Department of Georgia](#) either the printed or the online version, may not always be complete or accurate.

For steps that include the words "shall," "must," "need," or "legal," it is important to note that these steps are mandatory as outlined by the IRS, the official code of the State of Georgia, or the National ALA governing documents, which include the ALA Department Operations Guide and the ALA Department of Georgia governing documents. These requirements ensure compliance with and adherence to regulations and guidelines.

It is the joint responsibility and authority of the Department Secretary/Treasurer and Department President to update this document, as needed. These updates may be prompted by changes at the National or Department level, as well as insights gained from the experiences and feedback of New Unit Organizers or Department Auxiliary Representatives as they mentor New Unit Organizers. Document established August 2024 and updated December 2024.

Check List: Initial Steps

This checklist should be followed in order unless noted otherwise. Please see details provided on the next page.

- Post Commander The American Legion Post's General Membership who **must** vote in favor of organizing an Auxiliary Unit.
- Post Commander Notify the Department President and the Department Secretary that the Post has approved an Auxiliary Unit.
- Post Commander Provide contact information of the Unit Organizer to the Department Secretary.
- Department Secretary Send the "New Unit Kit" to the designated Post officer and/or the New Unit Organizer.*
- Department President Assign and Inform the Department Auxiliary **Representative** who will support the forming unit.
- Department Secretary Provide pertinent contact information to the Representative.
- Department President Convene a special meeting of the Department Executive Committee (DEC) to approve the formation of the Auxiliary Unit.
- Representative** **Initiate contact with the Post Commander and Unit Organizer to establish dates for the Informational and Organizational meetings. Provide dates to the Department President and Secretary.**
- Post Commander Send letter to all Post members announcing formation of the Unit.
- Post Commander Publicize the meetings related to organizing the Auxiliary Unit.
- Department Secretary Send letter to ALA members in the area.
- Post Commander Prepare space for the Informational Meeting.

It is important to note that the unit does not complete and submit paperwork until **after the organizational meeting is conducted.*

Reference Materials: Initial Steps

- Guide: [GUIDE TO ORGANIZING A NEW UNIT OF THE ALA Department of Georgia American Legion Auxiliary](#) (This document.)
- Form: Application for Unit Charter (ALA National Document) to refer to (Completed and signed **at the conclusion** of the Organizational meeting.)
- Guide: American Legion Auxiliary **Unit Guide Book 2024** (Available in pdf format free from the ALA website. Department Auxiliary Representative should send this as a pdf to the new unit organizer. This book is also available for purchase at <https://emblem.legion.org/Unit-Guide-Book/productinfo/355.200/>)

Initial Steps – Additional Information

Careful attention to the information provided in this guide and details on the “Application for Unit Charter” will ensure success in engaging in serving our mission.

Each new or reforming Unit must have a Post to which it is attached. Those wishing to organize a Unit of The American Legion Auxiliary must coordinate with The American Legion Post to which the Unit wishes to attach to. The new or reforming Unit **must take the same name, number, and location** as The American Legion Post to which the new Unit will be tied (attached) to.

The Post Commander must obtain approval from The American Legion Post’s General Membership who must vote in favor of organizing a UNIT of the American Legion Auxiliary.

The person taking the action steps to organize the Unit is the “Unit Organizer” and must collaborate with the Post Commander, the Department Secretary, and the Department Auxiliary Representative during the formation process.

New Unit Organizers and their respective Post Officer/s are strongly encouraged to leverage the experience provided by the **Department Auxiliary Representative**. This experienced member will be an invaluable resource to help coordinate and navigate the necessary steps and ensure the smooth and successful establishment of a new unit.

After the Post votes to organize the Unit, the Post Commander or Adjutant shall notify the Department President or the Department Secretary that the Post has voted to approve starting new or reforming Unit and shall provide contact information of the Unit Organizer.

The Department President shall appoint the Department Auxiliary **Representative** upon receiving notification from a Post about starting a new unit. The Representative may be the District President or another dedicated volunteer leader who possesses comprehensive knowledge and experience in guiding the development of a new unit. The role of the Representative is to mentor and support the organizing members throughout the process, ensuring that all necessary steps are followed and offering insights to successfully establish the new unit.

As part of the process, the Department Secretary is responsible for sending a "New Unit Kit" to the designated Post officer and/or the New Unit Organizer. This kit will include this guide and other essential information and forms necessary to establish a new unit.

The Department President is to convene a special meeting of the Department Executive Committee (DEC) at which the DEC will vote to approve or deny the formation of the unit. Approval at this meeting is conditional on the unit successfully completing all necessary steps. It is important to note that if the forming unit fails to complete and submit the ALA Application for Unit Charter within six months from the date of the Special DEC Meeting, the approval will be automatically withdrawn. This time limit ensures that the process moves forward efficiently and allows for timely decision-making.

The Post, the Department Auxiliary Representative, and the Unit Organizer shall confirm dates for first, an Informational Meeting **and** then for an Organizational Meeting. The Organizational Meeting should be held three to four weeks after the informational meeting. The Department Auxiliary Representative will chair these meetings.

Once the time and location of the informational and organizational meetings have been agreed to the Post Commander shall send a letter to all Post members signed by the Post Commander and Adjutant and will serve as an official invitation to attend these meetings. A sample of this

letter is enclosed to provide guidance and ensure consistency in communication. This letter aims to inform and engage Post members, encouraging their participation and support in the formation or reforming of the ALA Unit.

Posts are encouraged to publicize the meetings in local media, reaching out to all potentially eligible individuals potentially interested in joining the ALA. This broader outreach helps to create awareness and attract individuals who are eligible and interested to join the ALA.

The Department Secretary will send a letter to Auxiliary members in the community who are part of the Department Headquarters Unit. This letter will inform these members about the formation or reforming of a new unit and extends an invitation for them to attend the informational and organizational meetings. This communication aims to engage and involve existing Auxiliary members in the community, fostering a sense of unity and collaboration in the establishment of the new unit and serves as an invitation for these members to transfer into the new unit.

The Post Commander and Post Adjutant should attend the Information and Organization meetings to assist with the organization of the Unit. Other Post members are welcome to attend.

Check List: Information Meeting

This checklist should be followed in order unless noted otherwise.

- Post Commander Arrange for meeting location, time, setting
- Representative Confirm attendance, coordinate with Post Commander and New Unit Organizer.
- Department Secretary Send letters to all members in the area informing them of the information meeting.
- New Unit Organizer Invite all people interested in joining.

Reference Materials: Information Meeting

- Brochure: American Legion Auxiliary Membership Brochure
- Form: Membership Application
- Form: PUFL Application
- Form: ALA Department of Georgia Member Data Form (facilitate transfers)
- Reference: Roles & Responsibilities of Unit Leaders

Informational Meeting – Additional Information

The Department Auxiliary Representative shall chair this meeting.

The purpose of the Informational Meeting is to present organization information about the formation of the unit and to engage Post members encouraging their participation and support in the formation or reforming of the unit. It is also a way to connect with current ALA members that may live in the community who may wish to transfer into the unit.

Information about coordinating the date, time and location and issuing invitations to this meeting was covered in the previous section.

To facilitate the meeting, it is strongly suggested the Department Auxiliary Representative leverage the template “Unit Meeting Agenda” found in the ALA Unit Guide Book to demonstrate best practices to the forming unit leaders and members including opening and closing protocols.

The following topics MUST be on the agenda and explained by the Department Auxiliary Representative during the informational meeting. The Representative may use the details below as the script for conveying accurate information.

Membership Eligibility:

Membership in the American Legion Auxiliary shall be limited to the:

- Grandmothers, mothers, sisters, spouses, and direct and adopted female descendants of members of The American Legion; and
- grandmothers, mothers, sisters, spouses, and direct and adopted female descendants of all men and women who served in either of the following periods: April 6, 1917, to November 11, 1918, and any time after December 7, 1941, who being a citizen of the United States at the time of their entry therein served on active duty in the Armed Forces of any of the governments associated with the United States during either eligibility periods and died in the line of duty or after honorable discharge;
- grandmothers, mothers, sisters, spouses, and direct and adopted female descendants of all men and women who were in the Armed Forces of the United States during either of the following periods: April 6, 1917, to November 11, 1918; and any time after December 7, 1941, who served on active duty in the Armed Forces of the United States during either eligibility periods and died in the line of duty or after honorable discharge; and
- to those women who of their own right are eligible for membership in The American Legion.

A point of clarity, while most members of the ALA are female, MALE SPOUSES of female or male veterans are eligible in the same manner described above. The ONLY ELIGIBLE MALE members **are spouses of veterans/active duty soldiers** as previously described.

Membership Classes:

The National Constitution provides for two classes of membership: Senior and Junior.

- Senior membership shall be composed of members aged eighteen and over. A member who is married and under the age of eighteen shall be classed as a Senior member.
- Junior Membership shall consist of those members under the age of eighteen years under the supervision of Senior members. Junior members do not have voting rights in unit meetings.

Membership Application:

- All new members must complete and submit an individual membership application.
- Only the official ALA membership application forms will be accepted – units may not create their own form.
- Application forms must be accurate, complete (accurate birth date), and fully legible.
- Applicants must provide proof of eligibility.
 - If the veteran for whom the ALA applicant is attached is living, the veteran **must** be a member of The American Legion (any post) and proof of membership is required.

- If the veteran is deceased, proof of eligibility can include the veteran’s DD214 form. If this form is not readily available, the applicant can seek this proof of service at this website: <https://www.archives.gov/veterans>.
- If the Legionnaire member is living **and** an active-duty soldier, a copy of the soldier’s orders is sufficient provided it shows current active duty status.
- The applicant must sign the application.
- The application must be signed by the Post Adjutant or other Post officer as delegated. The signature of the Post verifies the person applying for membership is eligible to join the American Legion Auxiliary.
- All current members wishing to transfer into the forming or reforming unit must complete and submit a “ALA Department of Georgia Member Data Form.”

Dues:

The Department Auxiliary Representative will explain the national and department membership dues structure and that the unit will set unit dues for Senior and Junior members.

Key Points include:

- TOTAL UNIT DUES per member must include three parts:
 - The National portion: \$18 per Senior and \$2.50 per Junior member. *(August 2024)*
 - The Department portion: \$16 per Senior and \$2.50 per Junior member. *(August 2024)*
 - The Unit portion: amount per Senior/ Junior the unit membership votes to approve.
- Senior membership dues include an annual subscription to the ALA Magazine (if paid up).
- Membership dues are paid annually **OR** for life.

Obligations and Assessments

- The below checks need to be submitted with the charter paperwork. For tracking purposes, the Post (if the post is writing the initial checks for the new unit) will need to write up to four checks as listed below.
 - Required – **Membership Dues** owed for National and Department at the current rate per member, both senior and junior.
 - Required – one check for the **Charter Fee** of \$10 *(August 2024)*
 - Optional but suggested – **Charter Roll Fee** \$10 *(August 2024)*. This \$10 **may** be included in the check that contains the Charter Fee.
 - Required – a separate check for the **Fidelity Bond Fee** of \$10 *(August 2024)*
 - Optional – ALAMIS fee per the ALAMIS form.
- In addition to submitting membership dues each year, the unit will be required to submit mandatory obligations and assessments to the Department and the District in which the unit is located. (Reference the Department Mandatory Obligation Form)

Unit Charter Members:

- A **minimum** of **10 Senior** members is necessary to form a Unit. Any combination of new, existing, or former senior members or senior members transferring into the new unit may be designated as charter members and shall comprise a minimum of 10 Senior members.
- Junior members may be considered charter members but are **not** included in the minimum of 10 Senior members.

Review Next Steps

- Continue to recruit members.
- Consider who will serve as unit leaders.
- Reach consensus for the date, time, and place of the monthly Unit meeting for the next several months. The general practice is that units meet on the same nights as the posts they are attached to, space and time permitting.
- Encourage all organizing members to attend the Organizational Meeting which is extremely important as critical decisions by the charter membership will be made at that meeting.

Between Meetings

Between the Informational and the Organizational meetings, future members should **discuss and research** the following topics. Decisions will be made at the Organizational Meeting.

The Unit organizer and prospective members should collaborate on the following.

- Continue to **recruit** and obtain applications **and confirm eligibility** of potential members.
- **The unit will need leadership.** The Unit Organizer and prospective membership should review the roles & responsibilities of unit leaders and review information about conducting unit meetings, managing unit records, and facilitating the required actions following the Organizational Meeting described later in this document. Serving as a unit leader does not require specific training or experience – simply a willingness to learn, collaborate, and implement actions per the guidelines, recommendations, and the law. **A leadership role in a unit is a rewarding experience.**
- The unit should determine which officer positions will be elected and which will be appointed by the elected Unit President. *It is recommended that all appointments be approved by the unit membership. In the Department of Georgia, the elected positions commonly include President, 1st Vice President (Leadership), 2nd Vice President (Membership), Secretary, and Treasurer at a minimum. The Georgia Secretary of State requires (law) each non-profit corporation to list a CEO (President), CFO (Treasurer), and Secretary: it is strongly recommended that these three positions be elected, not appointed.*
- Reach consensus for the date, time, and place of the monthly Unit meeting for the next several months. *The general practice is that units meet on the same nights as the posts they are attached to, space and time permitting.*
- The Unit Organizer and prospective membership should reach consensus of the rate of membership dues for all members- Seniors and Juniors.
- **The Unit Organizer should discuss options with the Post Commander for a temporary process for collection of ALA membership dues and writing the check to the Department that must accompany the Application for Unit Charter.**

NOTE: The unit may **not** establish a bank account at the time of application, only after the National ALA approves the charter application, the EIN is obtained, and the minutes of the organizational meeting with decisions reached pertaining to banking relationship and identifies the individuals on the account. Many times, the Post will agree to collect the dues from the charter members and deposit into a designated fund then write the initial check for the charter made payable to the Department of Georgia to include all membership and charter fees.

- Determine with the Post Commander if the Post will fund (at no cost to the forming unit) the fees associated with chartering the unit with the ALA, the first year of mandatory obligations due to the Department, District and fees associated with setting up the unit as a Georgia non-profit corporation. (The Post will **NOT** do the tasks, simply determine if the Post will assist in funding the start-up fees that could add up to \$350.)
- Prospective members of the new unit should review the basic steps for running and documenting a unit meeting and common parliamentary procedures. Refer to the National Unit Guide Book:
 - Chapter 5: UNIT OFFICERS (see page 49 regarding recommendations for minutes)
 - Chapter 6: UNIT MEETINGS (see page 56 for example order of business and page 110 for unit meeting terminology)
 - APPENDIX B: FUNDAMENTALS OF PARLIAMENTARY PROCEDURE.
 - *TIP: The more members familiar with conducting business as a unit, the higher the quality and shorter the unit meetings will be. Note also, minutes of the Organizational Meeting will be required to be presented to the bank when establishing an account.*
- **IRS:** Review the information about how to obtain an EIN from the IRS. Determine who will be the lead person to do this, there should be one incorporator/point of contact. <https://www.irs.gov/businesses/small-businesses-self-employed/how-to-apply-for-an-ein>. Note – many web sites advertise and are misleading – there is NO COST to obtain an EIN.
- **Georgia Secretary of State:** Review the information about how to and the fees to register as a Georgia non-profit corporation. <https://sos.ga.gov/how-to-guide/how-guide-register-domestic-entity>
 - **Articles of Incorporation:** Review and discuss terms for Georgia Articles of Incorporation. Determine who will be the lead person to do this, there should be one incorporator/point of contact. A recent example is American Legion Auxiliary Chickamauga Memorial Unit 217, Inc. As all of this is a public record, reviewing this unit’s materials could be helpful. Search by name (*contains Unit 217 is all that is needed*) at this site: <https://ecorp.sos.ga.gov/BusinessSearch>
 - The Unit Organizer will want to search the site noted above to ensure that the name of the new unit is not already in the system.
 - **NOTICE OF INTENT TO INCORPORATE:** Verify the “official organ of the county of the registered office” for which the Notice of Intent to Incorporate must be submitted. Example, the Marietta Daily Journal is the official organ (publication) for Cobb County.
- **Banking:** Determine what bank the unit will use for the non-profit corporate account. Investigate fee free banking for non-profits.
- **RECEIPT BOOK:** Obtain a basic two-part receipt book so that the treasurer or any officer receiving funds in any form of payment can create a written record of who paid what amount and note the specific purpose. Leadership has found that when there are no receipts, it is difficult to account accurately for funds.
- Encourage attendance by all prospective members at the Organizational Meeting. It is extremely important for as many to attend as possible as critical decisions by the charter membership will be made at that meeting.

Check List: Organizational Meeting

This checklist should be followed in order unless noted otherwise.

- Post Commander Arrange for meeting location, time, setting
- Representative Ensure New Unit Organizer is Ready to conduct business
- New Unit Organizer Prepare the necessary paperwork that will be signed following the meeting.

Reference Materials: Organizational Meeting

- Form: Application for Unit Charter
- Form: UNIT DATA FORM
- Form: UNIT OFFICERS FORM
- Form: Membership Application
- Form: PUFL Application
- Form: ALA Department of Georgia Member Data Form (facilitate transfers)
- Reference: Roles & Responsibilities of Unit Leaders
- Brochure: American Legion Auxiliary Membership Brochure

Organizational Meeting

In Georgia Corporate Law, this is considered the official “Formation Meeting.”

The Department Auxiliary Representative shall chair the opening of this meeting and will facilitate the business until relinquishing the gavel to the newly elected Unit President.

The Representative should come prepared or coordinate with the Unit Organizer **preparation of an agenda and ballots** for officer elections. Bring also copies of the preamble to the constitution of the ALA for all to participate in the opening protocols.

The agenda should include items listed below.

1. **Opening Protocols.** (*Prayer, pledge, preamble.*)
2. **Introductions:** Department/District Auxiliary officers and Post Commander who introduces other Post officers.
3. **Meeting Record:** Determine who of the prospective ALA members will serve as secretary for the meeting and publish meeting minutes within two weeks of the meeting.
4. **Election of Officers:** Department Auxiliary Representative shall conduct the election of Unit officers following the protocol for elections of Department Officers in the Department Constitution, Bylaws and Standing Rules. Nominations shall be from the floor and if more than one nominee for a position, secret ballot.
5. The District President or Department Auxiliary Representative will conduct the **Installation of the new unit Officers.** If the District President is not present, the highest-ranking Department

officer present conducts the installation. After installation, the newly elected officers assume their duties.

6. The Department Auxiliary Representative welcomes the Unit President to the podium and turns over the gavel.
7. The Unit President delivers short comments.
8. The Unit President appoints non-elected officers and committee chairpersons and entertains a motion to approve as appointed. The membership votes.
9. The Unit President entertains the following motions that must be seconded, discussed as needed, and voted upon. Motion to:
 - i. establish the Senior and Junior membership dues rates. The rate must include all three components, National, Department, Unit.
 - ii. establish the day of week, the week of the month, and the time and place of regular monthly Unit Executive Committee meetings and of regular monthly Unit General Membership meetings.
 - iii. determine the bank at which the unit will open an account.
 - iv. name of officers who will be on the unit bank account.
 - v. determine if a debit card/s will be issued to those on the bank account.
 - vi. define what a debit card can be used for (this can be done at a subsequent meeting).
 - vii. determine who will be the Registered Agent and Incorporator of the Unit for purposes of filing for a Federal EIN and Georgia Secretary of State non-profit registration.
 - viii. determine where the Unit mail will be delivered.
 - ix. Determine if the Unit will seek ALAMIS Access and at what level.
10. Announcements and Closing Comments as deemed appropriate.
11. Closing Protocols.
12. Adjourn to Action Items

Immediately Following the Organizational Meeting

1. **Post Commander and Post Adjutant should remain available after adjournment to sign the Application for Unit Charter** and any membership applications not already signed/eligibility verified.

Application for Unit Charter: The **Unit Secretary** shall ensure both pages of this document are completed through the Second Endorsement.

- Department Name.
- Location of Unit (Post)
- LEGAL Name of The American Legion Post to which the Unit is attached.
- The Post number and name of Department.
- Signature and complete address of Unit President, Secretary, and Treasurer.
- List the names of the additional members, at least ten senior members should be listed first, with their complete address. Attache a list of additional names and addresses that do not fit on the page (notate as such).
- On the last line in this section, type in Name of Unit President, Unit mailing address and the Unit President signs and date.

- Second page: the First Endorsement is to be completed and signed by the Post Commander and attested by the Post Adjutant.

CRITICAL: All documentation shall be submitted to the Department Secretary or Department President for the Department President to complete the Second Endorsement. The Department Secretary will process the application and submit it and supporting materials to obtain the Third and Fourth Endorsements.

2. **Membership Chair (possibly the 2nd VP) and Treasurer:** Collect dues from **charter members** according to the rates approved during the meeting. All funds should be made payable as developed by the Unit and the Post prior to this meeting.
3. **Unit President** with help from Department Auxiliary Representative, complete the UNIT DATA FORM and the UNIT OFFICERS FORM.
4. **Unit Secretary**, with help from Department Auxiliary Representative, ensures the following documents are completed, properly signed and ready for transmittal.
 - The **Application for Unit Charter** is outlined in item one above.
 - Fully completed **New Membership Applications** signed by Post Adjutant or other Post officer that verifies eligibility.
 - Accurately completed **Member Data Forms** for members transferring to the new unit. Remember, transferring members may not have to pay at the time of formation if they have already paid their membership dues for the year.
 - Ensure there are at least ten senior applications or transfer forms.
 - Ensure payment for the **fees** listed below **and membership dues** for the National and Department portions is ready. Normally the Post will collect and account for the funds for the unit and write these initial checks (one check per item below unless otherwise noted)
 - **REQUIRED – Membership Dues** owed for National and Department at the current rate per member, both senior and junior.
 - **REQUIRED – Charter Fee:** \$10
 - **OPTIONAL – Charter Roll Fee:** An additional fee is charged to have an inscribed Charter Roll. This \$10 **may** be included in the check that contains the Charter Fee. Note, a complete list of names is required for the Charter Roll. \$10
 - **REQUIRED – Fidelity Bond Fee:** \$10
 - **Unit Data Form:** This form is used to obtain the contact information of the person to be listed on the National renewal notices. This person must be a member. The dues amount for Senior and Junior dues is to be listed on the form.
 - **Unit Officer Form:** This form lists the names and basic contact information for all elected unit officers.
 - **Unit Dues Form:** This form lists the dues rate for the Unit.
5. **Department Representative:** Review all materials and if agreed by the new unit, accept the materials to deliver to the Department Secretary or the Unit shall send the materials by mail to the Department Secretary.
6. **Department Secretary:** Accept the packet and process accordingly. Inform Department President and new unit when is approved by National.

Roles & Responsibilities

The American Legion Post Commander:

- Obtain the approval of the Post membership to form an ALA Unit.
- Inform the Department of Georgia ALA Secretary and President of new unit formation.
- Coordinate and invite people to Informational Meeting.
- Attend the Informational and Organizational Meetings.
- Sign the Application for Unit Charter and new membership forms verifying eligibility or designate accordingly.

Unit:

- Review this document.
- Collaborate with the Commander of The American Legion Post.
- After the Post votes to organize the Unit, ask the Post Commander or Adjutant inform the Department President or the Department Secretary of the decision to move forward with a new Unit.
- Review the materials in the New Unit Kit received from the Department Secretary (generally sent to the Post officer).
- Obtain Charter Application online at <https://www.legion-aux.org/About/Units>
- Confirm with the Department Secretary who the designated Department Auxiliary Representative is (and contact information) that will be working with the Post in organizing the Unit.
- Collaborate with Commander to set dates for informational and organizational meetings.
- Determine who the ten (at least) **senior** members will be to form the unit.
- Follow the steps for the informational meeting and organizational meeting found in this document.
- Following the organizational meeting, fully complete the charter application and other paperwork and prepare payment to the Department to include having the application signed by the Post Commander and attested by the Post Adjutant.
- Facilitate getting all paperwork and payment submitted to the Department.
 - o Completed form or letter indicating the Unit's total annual dues amount for each Junior and Senior member.
 - o Charter application fees - national fees are \$10 for the charter and \$10 for a scroll.

Department

- Upon notification that a Post has approved to establish a new ALA Unit, the Department Secretary will send a New Unit Kit that includes information needed to form the Unit to the Post officer.
- The Secretary/Treasurer shall inform the Department President that a new unit is forming.

- The Department President will assign a Department Auxiliary Representative to assist the new unit formation.
- The Department President will obtain approval from the Department Executive Committee for establishing the new unit.
- The Department Secretary will provide to the Post and the Unit organizer the name and contact information of the designated Department Auxiliary Representative that will be working with the Post in organizing the Unit.
- The Department Secretary or Representative will Inform the unit of the critical Department forms that must be completed.

*When Charter the **Application for Unit Charter** packet is received, the Department Secretary will make sure it includes:*

- The application - fully completed and signed.
- All new unit member applications/transfer forms are included verifying eligibility and that the correct number of senior member applications or transfer forms are included.
- Dues payment for each member for the National and Department portion (National Dues are \$18.00 per Senior, \$2.50 per Junior AND Department Dues are \$16 per Senior, \$2.50 per Junior). (*August 2024*)
- Payment for charter and other fees.
- All other forms previously listed.

Then:

- The Secretary/Treasurer shall have the Department President sign the charter application.
- The Secretary/Treasurer then shall upload charter application, member applications, via the ALAMIS and complete all information required. (National will call with the total due and take a credit card for payment over the phone)
 - o If the Department would prefer to mail everything, it shall prepare check for national portion of dues only; make check payable to "National Treasurer" (National Dues are \$18.00 per Senior, \$2.50 per Junior), send check and all documentation required.

After confirmed by National:

- The Department President will coordinate a time for presentation of the charter.

The National Organization shall:

- Verify that Department has a fully completed and signed charter application, member applications, unit dues information, payment for national portion of dues, and charter fees payment.
- Compare the names of each membership application to the names listed on the charter application.
- Calculate the total national dues required to make sure dues payment is correct. (Call for payment if needed)

- Verify that payment for charter application and roll fees is correct.
- Check that the charter packet includes information on the Unit's dues amount for both Junior and Senior members.
- Create the new unit in the database (ALAMIS) and enter all charter members into the new unit.
- Have the National President & Secretary sign the new charter.
- Affix seals to the charter and send to the Department Headquarters.
- Note:
 - New member applications will be returned to the Department along with the Charter and roll.
 - *National HQ will send new membership cards to each member of the new unit.

After the Charter is Approved

Department will:

Assign a mentor if not the same person as the Department Auxiliary Representative

Introduce the unit organizer to other recent unit organizers to network and build relationships throughout the department.

Ensure the Unit has all necessary DEPARTMENT paperwork turned into the department.

Assist with a Charter Presentation Ceremony at the Unit.

The Unit will receive a copy of the charter application bearing the endorsement of National and Department officers, membership cards, form SS-4 (IRS EIN Application), instructions for form SS-4, and compliance/tax information for units.

Unit will ,with Department Auxiliary Representative's or Mentor's assistance:

Become familiar with the materials provided by the National Organization to be a unit in good standing with the ALA, the IRS, the State of Georgia Secretary of State, and the ALA Department of Georgia.

National ALA reference – best practice is to follow in order and entirety. <https://member.legion-aux.org/member/committees/audit/important-compliance-information>

Getting Set Up and Running

- **After obtaining approval from the National Organization, the Unit should consider the following actions.**
- **Federal EIN number.** The unit should do this in the name of the unit AFTER approved by the National President – the POST should NOT do this.
 - Use for ALA National compliance and banking.
 - DO NOT USE THE POST's EIN. The Unit must establish its own for the Unit.

- EIN Must be used for Annual filing of taxes.
- Must set a “date” for the tax year. The Department and most units are 7/1 to 6/30 to coincide with the elected officer’s administration year. MANY units do not know their actual fiscal year with the IRS and are filing on what they THINK, not what is actual. The fiscal year should be defined in the bylaws consistent to what is filed with the IRS. Tax filing would then be due November 15th every year – five months and fifteen days after the close of the fiscal year.
- Process for “IRS Responsible Party.” Many units have OLD information in the system thus are falling out of compliance because the IRS does not have correct contact information for the unit.
- **WARNING** – there are websites that charge fees for EIN numbers. There is no fee charged by the IRS to obtain an EIN number. **Be sure you use the IRS website.** Address: <https://www.irs.gov/charities-non-profits/employer-identification-number>
- **Constitution & Bylaws.** The basics in the Constitution are the basics for the Articles of Incorporation with the Georgia Secretary of State.
 - The Unit President should consider appointing a committee to develop the Constitution, Bylaws, and Standing Rules. The Department Auxiliary Representative or Department Constitution and Bylaws Chair may mentor the new unit to offer guidance. (Sample documents can be found in the Unit Guide Book of the American Legion Auxiliary.)
- **Georgia Secretary of State:**

Determine if the Unit will register with the Georgia Secretary of State as a nonprofit corporation (recommended) or as unincorporated association. This is a serious decision. The unit should vote on this. The Post should not do this for the unit. Consider the following from the National organization:

There is no alternative to incorporation that affords any protection from liability to the Unit. An organization is either incorporated, or it is not. While there is no requirement for ALA entities to incorporate, the national organization strongly recommends that units and intermediate bodies handling funds do so to protect members from lawsuits. Unfortunately, even individuals and organizations who are responsible and well-intentioned may find themselves being sued. Without the limited liability protection that incorporation affords, all the members of a unit could be put at risk by the actions of one member.

- INFORMATION: <https://sos.ga.gov/how-to-guide/how-guide-charities>. This site also has basic steps outlined: <https://www.501c3.org/state-nonprofit-guide/how-to-start-a-nonprofit-in-georgia/>
- Steps may include:
 - File the Articles of Incorporation
 - File a Notice of Intent to Incorporate and a publication fee to the newspaper which is the official “legal organ” of the county in which the organization will be located. To access a list of legal organs, please go to the website: www.sos.state.ga.us/elections. **Note** this must be done no later than the next business day after filing the Articles of Incorporation.

- After approval, file an Initial Annual Registration Form with the Secretary of State. There is a filing fee, possibly \$30. For more information, Website: http://sos.ga.gov/index.php/corporations/corporations_annual_registration_terms_and_conditions **Note** it must be filed within 90 days of Incorporation.
- **Establish bank account** BANKS will generally require three people (CEO, CFO, Secretary – AKA Unit President, Treasurer, Secretary) all be present at the same time. The Federal EIN must be used to set up the accounts. Individuals will have to give SS# and show proof of USA citizenship. Also, many/most banks are now requiring copies of GA Corporation (or association) Registration, Constitution and Bylaws, and the MEETING MINUTES that show that the MEMBERSHIP voted to open the bank account, voted to have the named three (or number) people on the bank account – the minutes must list the names. Bank accounts should NEVER use an individual’s social security number or be “personal” accounts.
- **Other Payment Methods:** Many units accept donations, payments, etc. via PayPal, Square, Zelle, etc. Unit members should vote on this and develop a policy as to who does what in the unit managing these accounts. This policy should come before the accounts are set up to be on the best pathway. Include back-up roles and establish a Risk & Compliance team of at least two – they will not hold office, they will internally audit.
- **National ALA Non-profit classification – Letter of Inclusion – Unit must fill out form and submit.**
- **Tax Exempt and Deductibility status – understand that neither is automatic.** Units must investigate the paperwork required for each and decide if it will pursue this.
- **Insurance:** Both incorporated and non-incorporated units should evaluate the need to purchase insurance as needed, based on the recommendation of an attorney or insurance advisor knowledgeable in insurance matters so that the unit has coverage for any judgments based on the history of judgment. It is suggested that units consider and obtain advise of legal or insurance professionals regarding director’s and officer’s liability insurance, fidelity

Keep up with it all each year!

Units may want to include in the standing rules of the unit (usually attached to the Constitution and Bylaws) details about:

- the annual steps for filing the IRS 990 (multiple types of forms) defining who will do it and by what date (based on fiscal year);
- maintaining/updating the contact information with the IRS each year as leaders change;
- sending in annually a copy of The 990, 990EZ or 990PF to the Georgia Department of Revenue, P.O. Box 740395, Atlanta GA 30374-0395 (filing GA taxes is done in this way);
- reinforcing the permanent and ongoing record keeping as recommended in the ALA Unit Guide Book;
- and more – who is on the bank accounts, where the files are kept...
- SUCCESSION PLANNING is key!

Vision and Mission are First

Organizing a unit of the ALA takes some effort by not only the unit, but also the post and the ALA Department to ensure a successful start-up.

Leading a unit of the ALA is fulfilling and allows members to actively engage in **Service Not Self**, delivering on the vision and mission of the ALA, which is why we start units in local communities.

The **vision** of the American Legion Auxiliary is to support The American Legion while becoming the premier service organization and foundation of every community providing support for our veterans, our military, and their families by shaping a positive future in an atmosphere of fellowship, patriotism, peace, and security.

In the spirit of Service, Not Self, the **mission** of the American Legion Auxiliary is to support The American Legion and to honor the sacrifice of those who serve by enhancing the lives of our veterans, military, and their families, both at home and abroad. For God and Country, we advocate for veterans, educate our citizens, mentor youth, and promote patriotism, good citizenship, peace, and security.

The basic organization of the American Legion Auxiliary is the **local unit**. All Auxiliary members must hold membership in a local unit, which implements the work of department and national programs. Through local units, the Auxiliary develops volunteers for the ALA's mission of serving veterans, active-duty military, and their families, and providing support for The American Legion Family and the community.

The **primary purpose** of an Auxiliary unit is **to aid The American Legion post to which it is attached in accomplishing American Legion Family projects in the community**. The unit is auxiliary to The American Legion post and takes its name, location, and number. A unit can be organized only at the request of, and in connection with, an American Legion post. However, if a post is no longer active, a unit may continue to function as a "widow unit" and in all such instances the department adjutant of The American Legion should make certification, which would otherwise be made by a Legion post officer.

Leaning into the above and seeking guidance from the assigned Department Auxiliary Represented and following the steps listed in this guide are key elements to a successful start-up of a new unit or for a reforming unit.

New units should be aware that status as a nonprofit can be lost and reviewing and understanding the steps to regain nonprofit status should be reviewed as motivation to take the small amount of time annually to stay current. Units that have lost their status with the IRS can use this guide and the steps available on the ALA National Website to get back on track.

<https://member.legion-aux.org/member/committees/audit/important-compliance-information>

List of Documents

- Brochure: American Legion Auxiliary Membership Brochure
- Form: **Membership Application** (one for each new member, signed by Post Adjutant or other Post officer that verifies eligibility).
- Form: **PUFL Application** for members wishing to become lifetime members.
- Form: **Department of Georgia Member Data Form** (facilitate transferring members)
- Form: **Application for Unit Charter**
- Form: **Unit Data Form:** This form is used to obtain the contact information of the person to be listed on the National renewal notices. This person must be a member. The dues amount for Senior and Junior dues is to be listed on the form.
- Form: **Unit Officer Form:** This form lists the names and basic contact information for all elected unit officers.
- Form: **Unit Dues Form:** This form lists the dues rate for the Unit.
- Form: Department Mandatory Obligations (Annual)
- Form & Fee: ALAMIS Unit Access
- Fees: See page 6, Obligations and Assessments
- Form: Letter of Inclusion – Unit must fill out form and submit it to the National organization AFTER all set up steps are complete.

Sample Letter: Invitation to Informational Meeting

Sample Letter to Post Legionnaires/Membership Concerning Forming a New ALA Unit.

*It is recommended this letter be composed and distributed on Post stationery
And signed by the Post Commander and Post Adjutant*

Date

Dear Legionnaire,

Time and again it has been demonstrated that the most successful Posts are the ones who work cooperatively with their Auxiliary Units. Our Post is very interested in forming an Auxiliary Unit as we realize the positive effect a Unit can have on a Post. We hope to build a family organization of Legion and Auxiliary members volunteering together to enable us to do more for our veterans, our youth, and the community.

Do you have family, relatives, friends and even co-workers who enjoy volunteering? Would they enjoy helping the Auxiliary in the betterment of our veterans, youth, and our community? Are they eligible for membership in the American Legion Auxiliary? If so, will you please share this information in this letter with them?

People eligible for membership are the spouse, daughter, mother, granddaughter, sister and grandmother of a Legionnaire or a deceased veteran having served during the eligibility dates. Women who of their own right are eligible for membership in The American Legion are eligible to join the American Legion Auxiliary.

There will be an informal meeting of interested individuals and Post members on (insert **date**) at (insert **location**) at (insert **time**).

Auxiliary representatives from the District/county will be present at this meeting to provide information on programs and activities, dues, meeting date, officers etc. They will also be there to answer any questions you may have.

Having a strong Unit to work closely with our Post will strengthen our commitment to this community.

Post Commander

Post Adjutant