One of Connecticut’s many nicknames, the Constitution State, resonates strongly with The American Legion, whose members swore to protect and defend America’s founding document. From the time of its 1919 founding, members of the Legion – the nation’s largest veterans service organization – have been committed to grassroots volunteerism through sponsorship of youth programs in communities, advocating patriotism and honor, promoting a strong national security, and continued devotion to servicemembers and veterans. With more than 17,700 members in more than 150 posts across the state, the Department of Connecticut works every day to make the state a better place to live. Along with the American Legion Auxiliary and the Sons of The American Legion, the department envisions a strong second century of service to community, state and nation.

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Arthur J. Connell served as national commander of The American Legion from 1953 to 1954, he was one of the last World War I veterans (Navy) to hold that office. He served as post commander from 1933 to 1934, and department commander from 1941 to 1942. He died in 1962.

Richard W. Anderson, a member of Post 105 in Cromwell, has been chairman of the national American Legion Americanism Commission since 2013. He also served as department commander from 1982 to 1983, post commander from 1995 to 1996, and on the National Executive Committee from 1987 to 2013.

The Connecticut Soldiers, Sailors and Marines Fund was established by the state General Assembly in 1919 as a $2.4 million trust using money donated by doughboys; the interest, after investment, was to be used for the benefit of needy veterans and their families.

The legislation that created the fund gave The American Legion Department of Connecticut administrative power over its activities and “soldier relief work” – a relationship that continues today, governed under the department’s bylaws. The Legion’s department treasurer also serves as administrator of the fund; many municipality fund representatives are Legion volunteers. The trust fund principal is $69 million, and the annual assistance budget is $2 million.

Temporary assistance is available in a number of areas. Applicants (who can be from any service branch) must be residents of the state of Connecticut at the time of application for assistance and while in receipt of assistance. Visit [www.alctssmf.org](http://www.alctssmf.org) to learn more.

**Nutmeg State Attractions**

The War Memorial Tower on Fox Hill in Rockville was built in the late 1930s by Works Progress Administration (WPA) employees, and is dedicated to local veterans of all wars. A drum corps from the Willimantic Veterans of all wars. A drum corps from the Willimantic

Palmer Field in Middletown is the home field of Milardo-Wilcox Post 75. It has played host to eight Northeast Regional tournaments, and two World Series tournaments, in American Legion Baseball.

Fort Trumbull State Park in New London is the site of the fort that saw action from the American Revolution to the Cold War. Facilities from the 1800s and beyond are restored for visitors, the visitor’s center features interactive history exhibits, and one of the piers is available for fishing.

The Soldiers and Sailors Memorial Arch, part of Bushnell Park in Hartford – dedicated in 1886 as a tribute to local veterans of the Civil War – was for many years the starting point for American Legion parades during state conventions.

The uniform cap Connecticut Legionnaires wear has a distinctive “colonial buff” styling on the top. The World War I doughboys who established the state organization wanted to pay tribute to Connecticut’s history as the “Provision State.” An embroidered Charter Oak was added to the cap in the 1990s, symbolizing freedom.

**Connecticut Legionnaires**

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in February in Stamford and numbered about 300 by its end. The Army and Navy Association of the Great War, which had organized in 1919 from the combination of the Legion organization and the Legion’s staffed Connecticut civil defense and aircraft warning stations.

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The park is open year-round. The American Legion State Forest was donated by Waterford Hotels. The veteran residents, at-risk veterans referred there by the state Department of Veterans Affairs, receive support services such as job counseling, career placement and mental health resources. The local bank sets up cost-free savings and checking accounts for residents, who can also receive financial advice from the bank.

A decade and $6.26 million in the making, The American Legion Veterans Housing Inc. (TALVHI) was an idea first floated by Bill Czmyr, a former Post 15 adjutant. The facility opened, Avery Tillinghast, fundraising chief for TALVHI, said he had heard from more than 15 individuals nationwide who were inspired to start similar projects. “It really is a national model because the Legion gave up its building,” he said.

Today, 18 residents call TALVHI home. A house next to the facility has been bought and demolished, and a courtyard is being constructed. And progress shows no signs of slowing as Post 15 and The American Legion Veterans Housing Inc. continue making differences for their comrades in arms.

Did you know?

Every year since 1982, the department has conducted Nathan Hale Day at the Connecticut State Capitol in Hartford: the Revolutionary War spy was named State Hero in 1985. The department chaplain and members of the department Americanism Commission are in attendance to speak and lay a memorial wreath.

Contact The American Legion of Connecticut

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Join The American Legion
www.legion.org/join