



# EVERY DEPARTMENT HAS A STORY

THE AMERICAN LEGION OF

# OHIO

*The American Legion's Department of Ohio, with more than 95,000 wartime veterans serving communities through 522 local posts across the Buckeye State, has impacted the lives of veterans, students, military personnel, athletes and patriotic citizens since 1919. The department was instrumental in establishing the state highway patrol, helped guide five future astronauts in their careers and was on the ground floor of the movement to create VA.*

## OH Legionnaires



**Father John E. Duffy**, a Bataan Death March survivor, had been bayoneted and left for dead after he was taken prisoner during World War II. He was a Catholic priest, commander of Post 292 in New London and national chaplain of The American Legion in 1952.

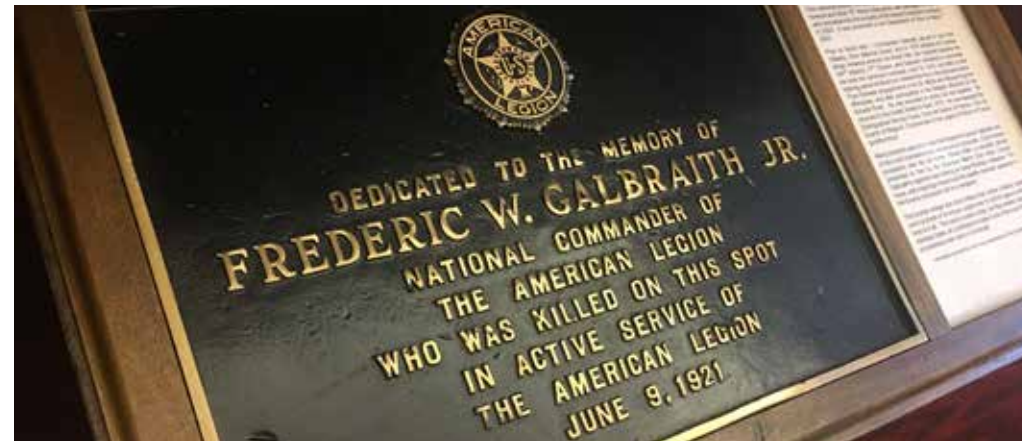


**John Sommer** served many years as American Legion National Headquarters-Washington, D.C., executive director, having gotten his start as a service officer in the Buckeye State. He was later instrumental in obtaining VA recognition of combat-related post-traumatic stress disorder and Agent Orange.



**U.S. Army veteran Jean Wilson**, American Legion Department of Ohio 2nd Vice Commander for 2018-19, has served in every office of Yeager-Benson Post 199. A former county and district commander for the organization, she is also a member of the national

American Legion Americanism Commission. She has also been appointed to several state boards and is an active leader in support of the Cincinnati Fisher House.



## FREDERIC W. GALBRAITH, Pioneer in veterans benefits

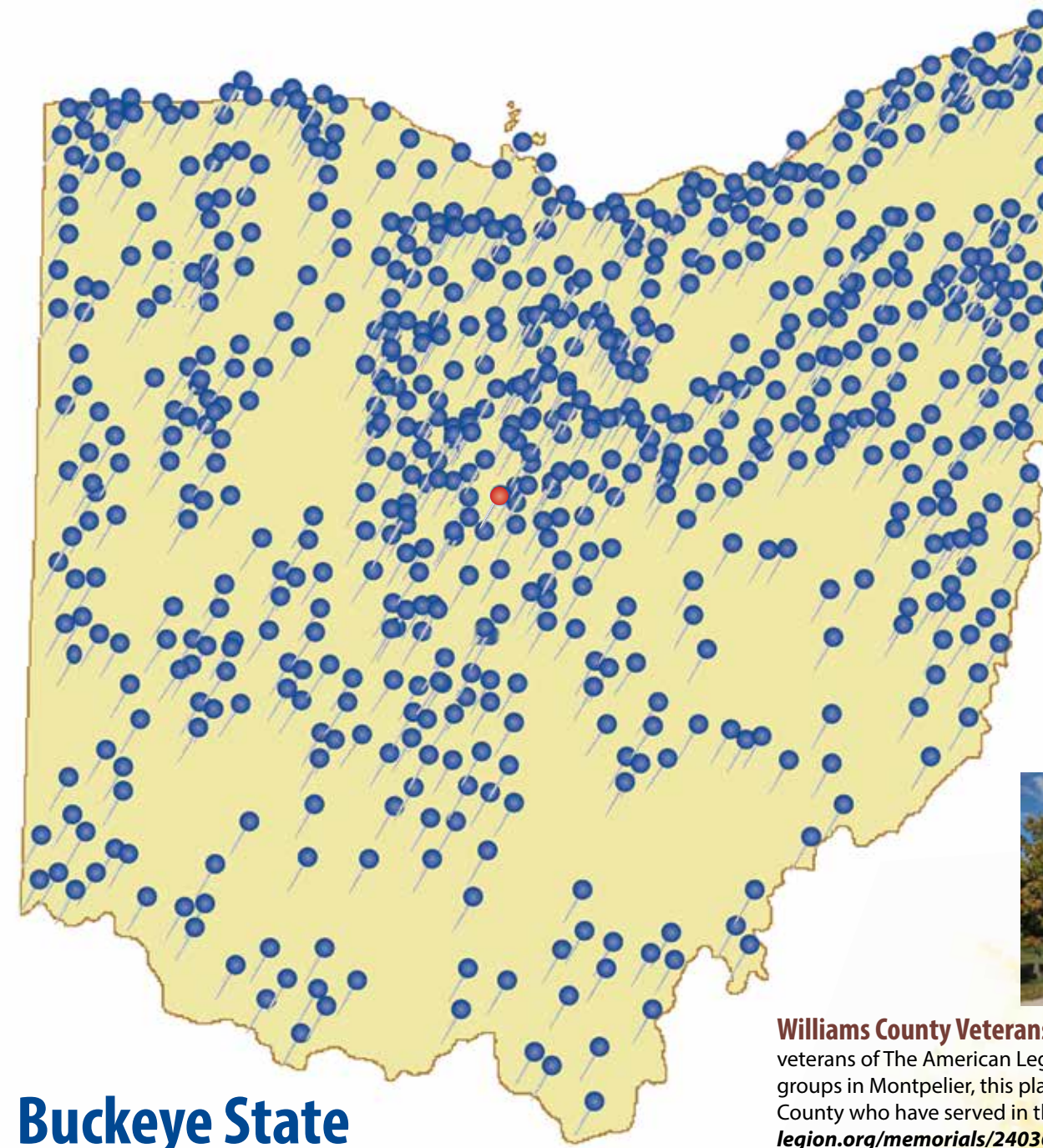
One of The American Legion's most influential founders was Frederic W. Galbraith of Cincinnati, first commander for the Department of Ohio. A combat-wounded and highly decorated officer of the 147th Regiment, U.S. Army's 37th Division, he had enlisted in the Ohio National Guard at the age of 40 to join the fighting in Europe.

He served as a delegate to the Legion's formative St. Louis Caucus in May 1919 after Theodore Roosevelt Jr. personally selected him to lead the new American Legion Department of Ohio in 1919.

As department commander, he led Ohio Legion leaders to Washington, D.C., in December of the organization's first year and successfully fought for an increase from \$30 per month to \$80 per month for 100-percent disabled war veterans. He carried that mission into his time as national commander of the organization after he was elected at the 2nd National Convention, in Cleveland. From his office, he fought for the consolidation of federal veterans services into one Veterans Bureau, which became the VA in 1930.

He once told a congressional committee, "The discharged veteran must be afforded medical treatment and hospital care as long as his physical condition can be improved thereby; cash compensation for the financial loss his disability occasions him and his dependents; and vocational training to enable him to overcome as far as possible the vocational handicap imposed by his disability."

As he was making the Legion's case for better treatment of disabled veterans, he lost his life in a June 9, 1921, automobile crash in Indianapolis. His death made national headlines, thousands attended his funeral in Cincinnati, and a memorial shrine was erected in Eden Park there in his honor, in 1923. Representatives from seven foreign countries attended the dedication ceremony of the memorial.



■ **Five national commanders from Ohio:** In addition to Frederic W. Galbraith, second American Legion national commander, four others have held the organization's highest office: John R. McQuigg of Post 71 (1925-26); Milo J. Warner of Post 132 (1940-41); James M. Wagonseller of Post 11 (1974-75) and Roger Munson of Post 104 (1992-93). Each has a meeting room named in his honor at department headquarters.

**Legend**  
 ● Legion posts ● OH Legion Department Headquarters



**Williams County Veterans Memorial:** Installed by Williams County veterans of The American Legion, Veterans of Foreign Wars and other groups in Montpelier, this plaza honors more than 13,500 from Williams County who have served in the military since the Revolutionary War. [legion.org/memorials/240363/williams-county-veterans-memorial](http://legion.org/memorials/240363/williams-county-veterans-memorial)

## Buckeye State Attractions



**Galbraith Memorial** at Eden Park, Cincinnati, was dedicated in 1923 to honor the second national commander of The American Legion, who was killed in an Indianapolis automobile accident in 1921.



**National Veterans Memorial and Museum:** The 50,000-square-foot, 2018-opened museum showcases the history, stories and legacy of U.S. military veterans, in downtown Columbus. [nationalvmm.org](http://nationalvmm.org)

**American Legion Department Headquarters:** The recently built state office of The American Legion at Delaware, Ohio, is filled with historic art, artifacts, photographs and a library. **60 Big Run Road, Delaware, Ohio.**



**US Air Force Museum:** The four hangars of the National Museum of the U.S. Air Force near Dayton are filled with a dazzling and massive collection of aircraft and artifacts, from the Wright Flyer to unmanned aerial drones and presidential airplanes. [nationalmuseum.af.mil](http://nationalmuseum.af.mil)

1920

**Cleveland** is the site of the second American Legion National Convention, and Frederic W. Galbraith of Cincinnati is elected to serve as the organization's second national commander.



1921

**Edith Hobart of Milford** is elected first national president of the American Legion Auxiliary after the organization's convention Nov. 1-2, 1921, in Kansas City.

1936

**American Legion Buckeye Boys State** begins with 440 participants who learn about U.S. government from cattle barns at the Ohio State Fairgrounds.

1944

**Cincinnati Post 50** defeats Albemarle, N.C., by a score of 3-2 for the first of its five American Legion Baseball World Series titles, most by any team through the Legion's first century. Post 50 also took home championships in 1947, 1952, 1957 and 1958.

1948

The American Legion Department of Ohio receives its first **William F. Lenker National Services Trophy** as the department that most excels in the provision of assistance to war veterans and their families. Ohio would be so honored again in 1968, 1974, 1979, 1982, 1986, 1995, 1996, 2004 and 2015.

1952

Catcher **Russell Nixon** of Post 50 in Cincinnati is named American Legion Baseball Player of the Year. He goes on to spend 55 years in pro baseball as a player, manager and coach. He is the first of seven players from Ohio to be named Legion Player of the Year.

1957

**Charles H. Carey Post 56** in Salem wins the Arch M. Cantrall Trophy for first place in the national American Legion band competition.

1963

The American Legion and American Legion Auxiliary of Ohio kick off an **Americanism & Government Test Program** that grows to involve some 60,000 students and 500 high schools statewide. Each winner receives a trip to visit historical sites in Gettysburg, Pa., and Washington, D.C.



# LEGION BASEBALL IN OHIO



Many professional baseball stars learned sportsmanship and citizenship by playing for American Legion teams in Ohio over the years.

Former Minnesota Twins pitcher **Allan Anderson** played Legion ball from 1981 to 1982 for Coach Al Beavers with Post 11 in Lancaster. He pitched for the Twins from 1986 to 1991, posting the American League's lowest ERA (2.45) in 1988.

**Tim Belcher** played on the 1980 Department of Ohio State Champion Ashley Post 518 team. During his 14-year pro career, Belcher pitched for seven different ballclubs and was a member of the 1988 Dodgers team that won the World Series.

Named 1988 American Legion Baseball Graduate of the Year, Major League star pitcher **Roger Clemens** helped his Spring Woods High School Legion team win the 1979 Ohio state championship.

**Jim Leyland**, who as a manager led the Florida Marlins to a Major League Baseball World Series championship in 1997, played for the Pemberville Post 183 Legion team. As a pro, he was named Manager of the Year three times.

Baseball Hall of Famer **Phil Niekro** won 318 games in a pro career spanning 20 seasons. He played Legion ball in Bridgeport.



## The Ohio American Legion's bond with Special Olympics

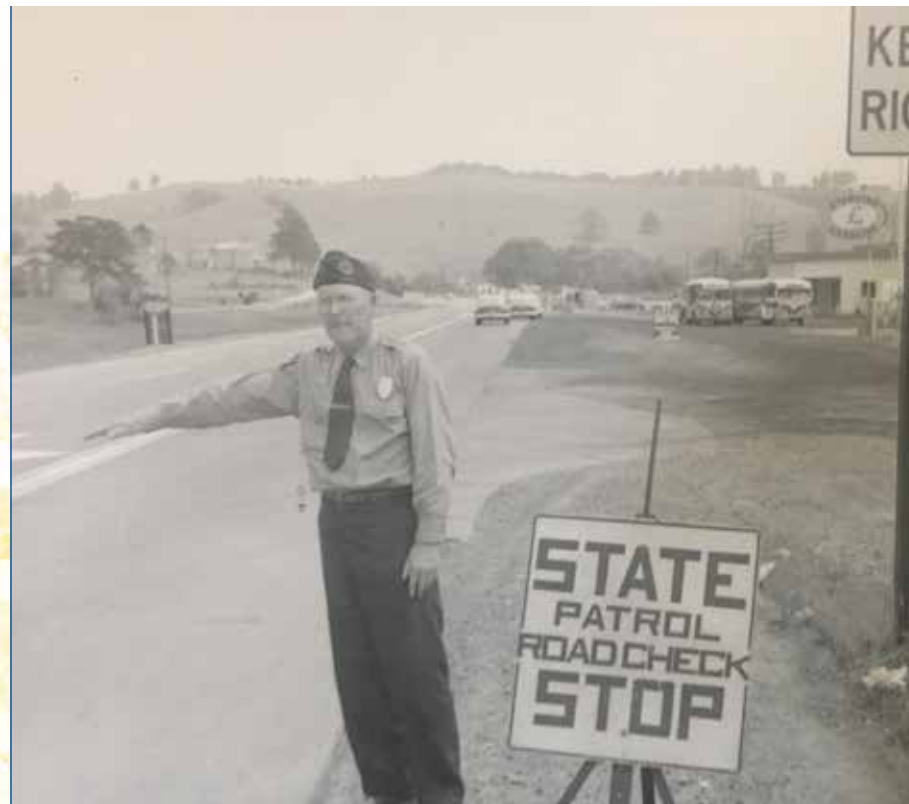
The American Legion's Department of Ohio and Special Olympics have had a close relationship since the early 1970s. American Legion, Sons of The American Legion and American Legion Auxiliary members from across the state have volunteered thousands of hours of time, served breakfast for participants and contributed upwards of \$25,000 a year to help with the state summer and winter games in Ohio.

Legion Family members have distributed U.S. flags to athletes and staffed "tent town" staging areas for athletes, coaches and parents at the games.

For more than 35 years, Legionnaire Robert Mendoza of Oregon, Ohio, was a leader and chairman of the committee that provided support for Special Olympics in Ohio.

At its summer convention, The American Legion Department of Ohio annually recognizes an **Educator of the Year** after nominations are submitted from 14 districts throughout the state.

The American Legion of Ohio sponsors **135 Scouting units** across the state, with more than 2,600 participants. The department also presents a \$500 state Eagle Scout of the Year Award, which offers



## Support for the Ohio State Highway Patrol

The Ohio American Legion was a driving force behind the establishment of a state highway patrol and – during World War II – staffing that highway patrol with an auxiliary team of trained veterans and those willing to take the necessary training, to fill in while others were at war.

As the second half of the 20th century rolled along, and new war eras began, American Legion advocacy assumed new shapes.

When American Legion National Commander Brett P. Reistad, a former law-enforcement officer, made his official visit to the Department of Ohio in March 2019, he was greeted by a state highway patrol escort from the airport.



▪ **Help for Child Welfare Foundation:** In 2015-16 alone, the American Legion in Ohio raised more than \$50,000 for the organization's national Child Welfare Foundation, which assists non-profit groups that help kids facing challenges, from abuse to autism.

## Did you know?

For more than 45 years, The American Legion Family of Ohio has led a Dayton National Cemetery grave-decorating program involving multiple community groups, including Scouts, who place American flags at some 40,000 headstones. The American Legion also sponsors an "Avenue of Flags" there where 425 U.S. flags are flown from Memorial Day until Veterans Day.



### The Sprague-Cole connection

Ohio State Treasurer Robert Sprague, guest speaker at the Department of Ohio's centennial gala in March 2019, is an alum of American Legion Buckeye Boys State. He is also the great grandson of Ralph D. Cole, who helped establish the organization in 1919 in Paris, France. Lt. Col. Cole had served three terms in the U.S. House of Representatives before World War I. "My great grandfather was willing to lay down his life for his country, but he actually lost his life in service to The American Legion," Sprague told the crowd at the gala. "He was a state commander (in 1932) and was traveling to northeastern Ohio to make a speech one evening and was in a car accident and lost his life. But I know that if he were here today, he would have told you that it was worth it – the service and the sacrifice was worth what you have done."

# Post-9/11 OH LEGION

**I'm trying to show people that age is not a factor in how you make a difference in your community. We all need mentors. We need to find our tribe and stick together. There's power in numbers.**

**Ashley M. Gorbulja-Maldonado**, Akron Post 808, Ohio Army National Guard, 2011 - present



## From Ohio to the stars

Five NASA astronauts – including first man on the moon Neil Armstrong – were participants in American Legion Buckeye Boys State. Armstrong, who participated in the program in 1946, was followed by Terence Henricks in 1969, Carl Walz in 1972, Michael Gernhardt in 1973 and Gregory Johnson in 1979.

Twenty-five astronauts have come from Ohio, notably John Glenn of New Concord, first American to orbit the earth in 1962; at age 77 he became the oldest American to travel into space in 1998. Jim Lovell of Cleveland participated in four space flights. Judith Resnick of Akron was a mission specialist aboard the space shuttle Challenger when the Orbiter exploded 73 seconds after liftoff killing all seven crew members.



▪ In honor of The American Legion's centennial, the Department of Ohio struck a special coin bearing the image of an astronaut, a Wright Flyer and all American Legion Family logos.

## Contact The American Legion of Ohio

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740.362.7478 [www.ohiolegion.com](http://www.ohiolegion.com)



## Join The American Legion

[www.legion.org/join](http://www.legion.org/join)

1971

The American Legion **Department of Ohio Scholarship Program** is established to assist high school students and veterans in their pursuits of higher education.

1983

First baseman/ designated hitter **Andre Thornton** of the Cleveland Indians is named American Legion Baseball Graduate of the Year.

1986

**Springfield's Clark Post 362** is judged the national champion American Legion color guard.

1989

**Thomas Christian Workman** of Ohio is elected American Legion Boys Nation president. He later serves in the Army and becomes a Wall Street investment manager.

1993

**Post 371 in Wellston and Post 526 in Fairborn** are both recognized with national American Legion Enhance the Lives of Disabled Persons Award.

1993

Legionnaire and former astronaut and U.S. Sen. **John Glenn** of Ohio receives the Legion's Distinguished Public Service Award in Washington, D.C.



2008

**Abigail Stanec of Copley**, sponsored by Post 473, wins the American Legion Junior Shooting Sports national championship in the Precision category.

2015

**Sarah Sutton** of Black Swamp Junior Rifle Club, sponsored by Post 114 in Oak Harbor, wins the national American Legion Junior Shooting Sports championship in the Precision category.

2016

**C. Michael Fairman**, a member of Post 276 in Columbus, wears an American Legion patch on his parka in a climb to the top of Mount Everest to raise awareness about veteran suicide.