

## Service Officer

A good service officer should be retained. The value of a post service officer increases with length of service. As the service officer's reputation grows, so will the prestige of the organization in your community. The job calls for a competent and dedicated person, preferably one who lives and works nearby and is readily available to those needing assistance. He or she is responsible for bringing to the attention of all veterans and their dependents the rights and benefits granted them by law – law The American Legion helped craft.

The service officer must know how to access and utilize the expert services available through Legion channels and other community agencies. The job requires timely submission of information to full-time professionals so that every veteran and his or her dependents are adequately represented. The service officer's report should be a standard part of every meeting.

Beyond the post, The American Legion maintains a full staff of appeals representatives in Washington. A small mobile staff of field representatives provides a constant flow of information concerning conditions in VA hospitals, domiciles and regional offices. Other Legion representatives assist veterans who petition Department of Defense boards for review of less than fully honorable discharges or dismissal from the military. They also help veterans obtain deserved decorations and medals.

Department service officers can provide necessary claims forms. Additional information comes through department publications, National Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation bulletins, memorandums and VA pamphlets. Many departments conduct training schools for post service officers to add to their knowledge and contacts, and all have trained service officers in VA regional offices and hospitals.

With most of today's veterans population composed of those who served during the Vietnam, Persian Gulf, Iraq and Afghanistan wars, the work of the post service officer continues to be vital. Even more than older veterans, these men and women are likely to not be fully versed in veterans benefits and programs. Meanwhile, older veterans need advice on how to integrate possible benefits into their retirement plans. Dependents should be visited as soon as feasible after a veteran's death.

Every Congress considers legislative matters of importance to veterans and to The American Legion. Working in cooperation with the post legislative committee, the post service officer can aid in the post's support of the national organization's efforts.