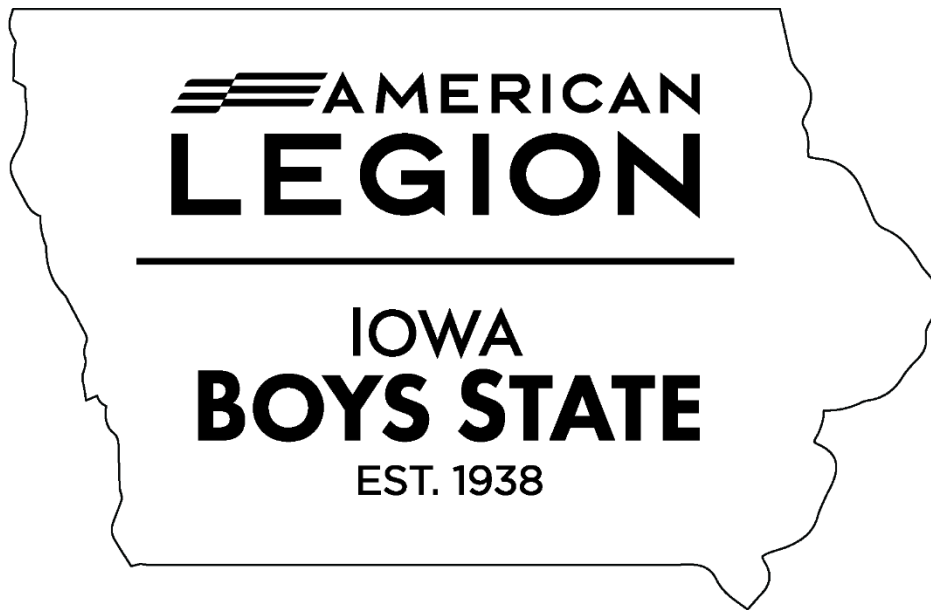


The American Legion of Iowa Boys State

Iowa's Premiere Civic Education Program



A Guide for Boys State Chairmen

American Legion of Iowa

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Timetable and Deadlines

October 15

Post Reservations Open Online Only

Post reservations for Boys State open online at www.iowaboysstate.org. The cost is a flat fee of \$600 per delegate regardless of when the reservation is made. Posts now have the option to be billed only after a delegate has completed registration, which helps reduce the need for refund processing.

December 15 Posts emailed unique delegate registration code

Each post that has successfully created a reservation will be emailed a unique delegate registration code. This code is specific to that post and must be given to each candidate for registration. It is important that posts keep this email until all selected delegates have registered.

January 15 Delegate Registrations Open Online Only

Delegate registration officially opens online and requires the unique code provided to each post in December. Registration will remain open until midnight on April 1. Posts should ensure their delegates have received the code in order to complete the process. At this time, scholarship opportunities are also available. The Samsung Scholarship application is offered through National Headquarters at legion.org/scholarships/samsung, while additional scholarship information can be found at www.iowaboysstate.org.

April 1 Delegate Registration & Post Refund Deadlines

April 1 is the deadline for both delegate registration and post refund requests. All delegates must be registered online by this date, and any registration submitted afterward must be approved by a District Board Member. Refund requests for posts that have prepaid may be submitted online at www.ialegion.org/refunds between January 1 and April 1. **NO REFUNDS OR REGISTRATIONS AFTER APRIL 1**

April - May

In April and May, posts should make sure that their delegates and their parents or guardians participate in an orientation—either by attending the live online session or by watching the recorded version. The Boys State Handbook and additional preparation resources will be available at www.iowaboysstate.org/for-delegates/. District orientation details will be shared by email and posted online, but it is the responsibility of each post to ensure that delegates and their families receive all orientation and transportation information from their District Chairman or Board Member.

June 21-26

The American Legion of Iowa Boys State Program

TO: American Legion Post Boys State Chairmen & District Chairmen

FROM: Boys State Director, Michael Vaughn

RE: The American Legion of Iowa Boys State

The registration fee for Boys State is a flat rate of **\$600 per delegate**, regardless of when a post submits its reservation.

The American Legion of Iowa Boys State will be held **June 21–26, 2026**. All post reservations must be completed online through the Department's website at **www.iowaboysstate.org/post-reservations**. Posts may now pay online through Boys State's new reservation software.

In December, each post that has made a reservation will receive an email confirmation with instructions for delegate registration. This email will include a **unique registration code** for your post, which must be provided to your delegates. Do not discard this email until all delegates have registered online. It is the responsibility of each Post Boys State Chairman to ensure that delegates follow the instructions and complete online registration no later than **April 1**. Registrations after this deadline need to be approved by your District Board Member.

Refund requests for unfilled reservations may be submitted online between **January 1 and April 1** of the program year. It is the responsibility of the post to fill its reservations or request a refund. Any prepaid tuition not refunded by April 1 will be applied toward program expenses for the current year.

Those interested in serving on the Boys State staff for the upcoming session may apply online at **www.iowaboysstate.org/for-counselors**. The application process includes submission for a background check. Serving as a staff member or counselor is a rewarding volunteer experience—while Boys State is known as “a week that shapes a lifetime,” it is the dedication of staff that makes that possible.

For more information regarding the reservation and registration process, please first contact your **District Chairman, District Board Member, or District Commander**. If further assistance is needed, contact Department Headquarters at **1-800-365-8387** or by email at **director@iowaboysstate.org**.

For God and Country,

Michael Vaughn

Director

The American Legion of Iowa Boys State

History of The American Legion Boys State

Iowa's Premiere Civic Education Program

The American Legion Boys State program traces its origins to 1935 and the vision of Hayes Kennedy, an instructor at Loyola University School of Law in Chicago and the Americanism Chairman for The American Legion Department of Illinois.

At the time, Kennedy grew concerned about the rise of “Young Pioneer Camps,” programs promoted by the Communist Party to attract high school students. These camps taught the supposed virtues of communism and dismissed democracy as ineffective. Believing that America’s youth needed a strong counterbalance, Kennedy proposed a program that would emphasize the importance and value of democracy and help preserve it for future generations.

The Department of Illinois approved Kennedy’s idea, and in June 1935 the first Boys State program was held on the grounds of the Illinois State Fair. The concept quickly spread, and by 1941, 34 states were hosting Boys State programs of their own.

Today, Boys State is conducted in 49 states nationwide. The District of Columbia sends delegates to either Maryland or Virginia programs, and Hawaii remains the only state without a Boys State program.

The American Legion of Iowa Boys State: Tradition and Experience

The American Legion of Iowa Boys State is deeply rooted in the history and traditions of The American Legion. The program's cities are named after Past Department (State) Commanders of The American Legion of Iowa, while its counties honor Past National Commanders and other prominent Legionnaires. This connection to Legion history reinforces the program's mission of preparing young men for civic leadership while honoring those who have served before them.

Iowa hosted its first Boys State session in 1938 and has continued the program every year since, with the exception of 1945, due to World War II gasoline rationing, and 2020, due to the global pandemic. The majority of sessions have been held at Camp Dodge in Johnston, Iowa.

Boys State is a six-day, immersive course in government where participants learn how city, county, and state governments function in Iowa. Delegates gain this knowledge through hands-on experience. They are divided into eight cities, with two cities forming a county and four counties comprising Boys State. Within each city, delegates are assigned to either the Nationalist or Federalist Party, where they participate in caucus meetings, conventions, campaigns, and both primary and general elections. Elected delegates then appoint staff, assume their roles, and begin governing within their jurisdiction.

Beyond elected office, Boys State offers a variety of opportunities. The Boys State Public Relations (PR) Team provides delegates with the opportunity to cover and promote the week's activities. Delegates serve as reporters, editors, photographers, and digital content creators, producing daily updates, capturing photos, and managing official communications for the program. The PR Team plays a vital role in documenting Boys State, sharing highlights with delegates, staff, families, and the broader American Legion community. A fully functioning court system, General Assembly (House and Senate), and law enforcement which allows delegates to experience the responsibilities of governance in every form. For musically inclined participants, the Boys State Band and Chorus provide the chance to perform at major functions throughout the week.

Athletics are an important part of the Boys State experience, giving delegates the chance to compete, build teamwork, and develop camaraderie outside the classroom. Throughout the week, delegates can participate in a variety of sports such as flag football, softball, ultimate frisbee, volleyball, and other recreational activities. These events not only provide a healthy outlet for competition but also help strengthen friendships and promote the spirit of cooperation that Boys State is known for.

The program is guided by a dedicated staff of volunteers that includes members of The American Legion, the Boys State Board of Directors, the Iowa State Patrol, state agencies, the Iowa National Guard, U.S. military services and academies, professional fields such as law and education, and former Boys State delegates. Together, they create an environment where delegates can explore leadership, practice citizenship, and experience democracy in action.

Where Your Post Fits In

Now that you have some background on The American Legion Boys State, it is important to understand how your post fits into the overall planning and success of the program. This guide provides proven recommendations on what your post should do, when to do it, and how to do it in order to ensure a positive Boys State experience. These methods have been developed and refined through years of experience, and posts that follow them are consistently rewarded by sending delegates who not only benefit personally but also return to strengthen their communities.

Your post should commit to following these recommendations as closely as possible. While each American Legion Post is autonomous and may adapt the selection process to its own needs, the responsibility for selecting and registering delegates ultimately belongs to the post itself. Schools may provide valuable input, but the final decision must rest with post members. Stay engaged in the process—The American Legion has worked too hard to build and maintain this program to allow its heritage to be diminished by leaving delegate selection entirely in the hands of others.

Your post is not limited to sending only one delegate. If you determine there are multiple qualified and interested candidates, we strongly encourage you to consider sponsoring more than one. Each delegate will benefit from the Boys State experience, and the impact will be multiplied when more young leaders return to your community with the skills, knowledge, and confidence gained during the program.

If funding is a concern for your post, consider reaching out to other organizations, businesses, and civic groups in your community to help share in the cost of sending a delegate. Many community partners are eager to support opportunities that develop strong future leaders, and they recognize the value of investing in a young citizen who will return and contribute to the community. By working together, your post and local supporters can ensure that financial limitations never prevent a deserving delegate from attending Boys State.

American Legion Post Commander

If you are the Post Commander, we recommend appointing a member of your post to serve as the Boys State Chairman or forming a Boys State Committee. Involving more members in this work not only strengthens the program but also allows you, as Commander, to be more effective by sharing responsibilities across the post.

When selecting a Boys State Chairman, focus on finding someone who will get the job done, not just someone who might say yes. The right person may not always be a regular at post meetings could be a teacher, coach, scout leader, newspaper reporter, or another community member who has the time and commitment to identify and recruit strong delegates.

Once you've identified the right person, make personal contact. Ask them to serve as the Boys State Chairman and explain why you believe they are a good fit for the role. Let them know the value they bring and the impact they can make by helping guide future leaders through Boys State.

Post Boys State Chairman

As Boys State Chairman, you have the opportunity to help shape the future leaders of your community, state, and nation. Former Boys State citizens have gone on to become leaders in government, the military, business, and professional life—including a President of the United States. You should take pride in the responsibility you’ve been entrusted with on behalf of your post. Proper planning and consistent follow-up are the keys to success in this role.

Begin your efforts as early as possible. Make personal contact with a wide range of community leaders who work with young people. This includes local high school administrators, counselors, government and social studies teachers, and clergy. Don’t limit your outreach to the traditional school system—many excellent Boys State candidates are also active in other youth organizations. Reach out to leaders in 4-H, Boy Scouts, FFA (Future Farmers of America), church youth groups, and homeschool associations. Athletic coaches, music directors, and leaders of debate teams or student councils may also know motivated students who would thrive at Boys State.

By broadening your network, you ensure your post identifies a diverse pool of potential delegates—students who may not otherwise be nominated through their schools but who have already shown strong leadership, community involvement, and character through other programs. This approach not only strengthens Boys State but also builds goodwill and stronger partnerships within your community.

Schedule a time to meet with them, show them the Boys State website and direct them to social media platforms to learn more about the week’s activities. These individuals may provide valuable recommendations, but it is essential that your post conducts interviews and makes the final decision on which candidates will be sponsored.

As chairman, you should be thoroughly familiar with the program yourself. Take time to familiarize yourself with the resources available at the Boys State website and discuss any questions with your District Chairman or Commander. You may also contact Department Headquarters at 1-800-365-8387.

Your post holds the final responsibility for selecting delegates. Many posts choose both primary delegates and alternates to ensure every reserved spot is filled. Delegates must have both the ability and desire to attend the entire six-day program, and each candidate should understand what Boys State is about before being selected.

Boys State recommends having a list of potential candidates ready by December. This gives your post time to schedule interviews and finalize selections well before the registration deadline. A sample questionnaire is included in this guide for candidates to complete, or you may create your own. Collect written information on each applicant so your Post Selection Committee can review it in advance, and use the grading form provided to help evaluate candidates fairly and consistently.

Remember that the delegates you select represent both your post and your community. Choosing the right young men for this honor has the potential to change their lives—and yours—for the better. When forming your interview committee, select members who have experience working with youth, who can assess attitudes and responses thoughtfully, and who are committed to making sound, well-considered decisions.

Resources to Help Posts Recruit Delegates

To make the recruitment process easier, The American Legion of Iowa Boys State provides a variety of ready-to-use resources available online at www.iowaboysstate.org/for-legion-posts. These tools are designed to help posts connect with schools, parents, and potential delegates while promoting the value of the program within their communities.

Available resources include:

- **Printable flyers and brochures** to share with schools, civic groups, and parents.
- **Sample letters and forms** to assist with outreach and communication.
- **Promotional videos and presentations** that explain the Boys State experience.
- **Logos and graphics** for newsletters, websites, or social media posts.
- **Guides and handouts** that outline the program structure, expectations, and benefits for delegates.

By using these materials, your post can save time, present a consistent message, and increase interest among high school juniors. These resources also help ensure that families, schools, and community partners understand the importance of Boys State and the opportunities it provides.

Guidelines for Selecting Boys State Delegates and Alternates

A candidate **MUST** have completed the 11th Grade (Junior year) and have at least one semester left prior to graduation.

Candidates should have good scholastic ranking, but this should not be heavily relied upon.

Candidates should possess qualities of leadership, scholastic perseverance, good citizenship, and a willingness to participate.

Candidates shall be citizens of or lawful permanent residents of the United States. Exchange students will not be accepted.

Candidates should demonstrate an interest in United States History, Government, and Civics. Candidates need to be willing to speak before their peers on topics that they believe in for policies. The ability to debate or speak in public are helpful assets to candidates but not a requirement.

Candidates are required to be in attendance for the entire program to receive a certificate of completion. They will not be excused for sports activities. If any candidate attends but does not complete the program for any reason other than illness or emergency, fees will not be reimbursed to the post.

Candidates **MUST** believe in United States citizenship and the ideals on which our nation and The American Legion were founded.

Boys State Interview Score Sheet – For Post Use Only

This is NOT an application for the program. DO NOT GIVE TO BOYS STATE OR DEPT HEADQUARTERS.

Candidate's Name _____
Parent/Guardian _____
Full Address _____
Phone Number _____
E-Mail Address _____
School _____ Home Schooled? _____

Rate each candidate on a scale of 1 to 10 with 1 being the lowest and 10 the highest. Use the space to make any notes as well.

Leadership

Scholarship Potential

Public Speaking

Self-Confidence

Citizenship

Boys State Post Evaluation Form

This is NOT an application for the program. DO NOT GIVE TO BOYS STATE OR DEPT HEADQUARTERS.

The Boys State registration application link is received in an email after your post makes it reservation online and need to be given to delegate finalists.

Student Name: _____

Parent/Guardian Name: _____

Student Date of Birth: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ Zip: _____

County: _____ Phone (mobile preferably): _____

Home Schooled? (Yes or No) _____

School Name: _____

Grade Point Average: _____

Favorite Class & Why? _____

Student Government: _____

Musical Instrument: _____

Extracurricular Activities: _____

Community Activities: _____

Awards/Achievements: _____

Why would you like to attend American Legion Boys State?

Online Registration

Once your post has made the final selection of delegates and alternates, the young men will need to register online. DO NOT send headquarters the names of your selections as they will be collected through the online registration. Instructions on how to do that will be provided in an email confirmation to the sponsoring post after a reservation is made online.

The Boys State Handbook and Orientation are critical to each delegate that registers online. If the delegate is not able to attend one of the orientations scheduled, you should direct him to the website to at least view the orientation video. Your post is still responsible for providing specific transportation as outlined by your District.

It will be your responsibility to see to it that each delegate selected by your post registers online **BY APRIL 1ST** and reads through the handbook. The delegates will learn about The American Legion Boys State program and what will be expected of them, what to bring, as well as what they can expect upon arriving at Camp Dodge on Sunday.

What Was Boys State Like?

A Post Follow-Up

After Boys State concludes, your post will naturally want to know what was gained from the investment. For many posts, Boys State represents the single largest program expense of the year. The staff of The American Legion of Iowa Boys State is confident the program is well worth the cost—especially when posts have carefully selected strong candidates and ensured they were properly prepared before attending.

Most importantly, you will want to hear directly about the experiences your delegates had during the week. Share those experiences with your entire membership and your community, while also creating valuable publicity for both your post and The American Legion.

One effective way to do this is by hosting a fall dinner after delegates have returned to school. Invite your delegates and their parents, as well as school officials, civic leaders, the mayor, city council members, and representatives from local media outlets such as newspapers, radio stations, and television. When planning the event, avoid scheduling conflicts with major community activities like football games to maximize attendance. If your post has an Auxiliary Unit, involve them in planning, cooking, and serving to showcase how Legion families work together for the common good.

When contacting your delegates about the dinner, explain that each will be asked to give a short report about their Boys State experience. Keep formal speeches to a minimum—the spotlight should belong to the young men. The purpose of the event is to let them share their stories and for the community to show its pride in their achievements.

The American Legion and your post have much to be proud of in supporting Boys State. Don't keep that pride to yourselves—share it widely, and let the community see the value of this premier program.

The Next Time: Planning for the Future

Once your post has selected strong delegates, ensured they were properly registered, and supported them through the full six days of Boys State, the rewards quickly become clear. After returning home, delegates are eager to share their enthusiasm and experiences with friends, classmates, and community members. Their excitement builds momentum—soon, every junior in the community will want the chance to be chosen. That positive energy starts with the work you and your post put into the program.

To keep that momentum going, involve last year's delegates or other former Boys State participants from your community in the selection process. Their firsthand experience adds valuable insight and inspires new candidates.

Be sure to review the suggested forms and letters provided with this guide, and use them as needed to support your efforts. Posts within the Department of Iowa are welcome to reproduce any of the materials in this guide for their own use.

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