



# American Legion Auxiliary

## Poppy Program

### Frequently Asked Questions

**Q: Why did The American Legion adopt its May 2013 Poppy Resolution No. 20? What's the background and rationale?**

**A:** The American Legion Internal Affairs Commission submitted Resolution No. 20, adopted in May 2013, in response to a reported shortage of veteran-made paper poppies which the Legion buys from departments or units and sells through Emblem Sales to other members for distribution. The background included other significant obstacles facing departments including a) quality issues with poppy kits – from limited availability of the red crepe paper produced in China that the kitmaker imports -- to glue issues with the labels; b) that fewer veterans are able and willing to make the crepe paper poppies; c) that departments have trouble getting Legion Family members to commit the time needed to oversee poppy production for their department; and d) fewer members participate in distributing the paper poppies.

Please read the “*Whereas*” clauses of The American Legion Resolution No. 20 for more insight. The final approved version is available through the Legion’s digital archives:

<http://archive.legion.org/bitstream/handle/123456789/2493/2013S020.pdf?sequence=1>

**Q: How do The American Legion’s new Poppy Program rules affect the American Legion Auxiliary, and what is the Auxiliary doing to address the new rules?**

**A:** The new Legion Poppy Program rules still require that poppies or poppy items be made by veterans when possible, but where veterans are not available to make poppies, poppies or poppy items can be commercially made, which also means that volunteers can make them. Poppy flowers can now be made from any material, and other poppy items can now also be produced for distribution to raise funds for the Poppy Program.

Prior to passage of The American Legion’s Resolution No. 20, 2012-2013 Auxiliary National President Peggy Thomas appointed an ad hoc committee to review the future of the Auxiliary’s Poppy Program, including exploring issues and options regarding poppy production. Their recommendations are being incorporated now.

Over the years, Auxiliary National Headquarters staff have researched and explored using different vendors and materials for poppy kits, but the options available had always been very limited given the restrictions of the previous Auxiliary Poppy Program resolutions and limited vendors offering solutions.

Departments have long been reporting that fewer veterans are available to make poppies, and that younger veterans generally are not interested in making poppies. Other departments have reported that veterans are willing to make poppies, but that they did not reside in areas where the Auxiliary has poppy production. As of 2013,

only half of ALA departments have programs in place to coordinate the production of veteran-made poppies. An ALA national Poppy Program how-to sheet has been developed for Legion Family members willing to take on the responsibility of poppy production manager for their department.

**Q: How does The American Legion's Poppy Resolution No. 20 impact existing Auxiliary or department poppy resolutions?**

**A:** The American Legion Auxiliary exists to support the Legion, so *any* Auxiliary poppy resolutions that are in conflict with the Legion's Resolution No. 20 are no longer valid. The new Legion resolution supersedes all previous Legion and Auxiliary Poppy Program resolutions. The national organization is also required to officially remove all obsolete Auxiliary poppy resolutions.

**Q: Does the resolution's new rules change who can make poppies?**

**A:** Yes, it broadens who can make poppies; however, the resolution clearly states that it is preferred that veterans make the poppies or poppy items. When demand for poppies is greater than can be provided by veterans, the other options for making or manufacturing the poppies or poppy symbol items are available when it is not practical for them to be made by veterans. It is now an option for volunteers to make poppies, or for commercial vendors to make poppies or poppy items that conform with the proper use of the names and emblems of The American Legion or American Legion Auxiliary.

For many years, the Illinois American Legion has used a fabric poppy manufactured by a veteran-owned business. This poppy looks different than the traditional Auxiliary red crepe paper poppy, but it is attractive, conforms to the Legion's specifications, and it is easy to assemble.

The new Legion Poppy Program rules also allow that items other than the crepe paper poppy can be made for distribution to promote and raise funds for the Poppy Program.

**Q: Can Auxiliary members now make poppies?**

**A:** Yes, Auxiliary volunteers may now make poppies if it is necessary due to a shortage of veteran poppymakers, but, Auxiliary volunteers are not to be paid. If poppies are not made by veterans, the traditional tag must be altered or a new tag created so donors are not misinformed.

**Q: Can Auxiliary departments print their own poppy labels?**

**A:** Yes, but only if the labels conform to emblem use guidelines and standards.

Please note that some departments that tried making their own labels have found that it is less expensive to purchase the labels through National Headquarters, and that purchasing their own labels did not solve the occasional problems of labels not sticking. A bad batch of labels from the national vendor caused problems a couple of years ago, but a new printing company was selected. Since that time, required spot-check reports of production runs show that a very small percentage of the 8 million labels National Headquarters purchases had this problem. Sometimes the issue is the glue itself, but the problem also can be that the labels were stored too long

before using them, or they were stored in excessive heat or cold which can diminish glue adhesion.

**Q: Can The American Legion be involved in poppy distribution?**

**A:** Yes, all Legion Family members are welcomed to join in poppy distribution. The American Legion's Poppy Fund rules have always encouraged posts and Sons of The American Legion squadrons to be involved with their Auxiliary units in the publicity and distribution of poppies within the procedures established by their department.

**Q: Who is considered part of “a veteran’s family”? Can poppy funds be spent on family members who do not live with the veteran? What if the veteran is deceased?**

**A:** When reference is made to “veterans and their family,” it means immediate family and dependents. Immediate family consists of wife, husband, daughter and son who live with the veteran. If a grandchild lives with the veteran, that child could be considered immediate family. A case can be made for a sibling or parent who lives with and is caring for the veteran. Remember: Poppy funds are to help veterans and their families and active-duty military and their families **where financial and medical need is evident.**

If the veteran is deceased, then poppy funds cannot be used for his/her family. In such circumstances, other avenues to pursue include the Auxiliary Emergency Fund, if applicable, department funds, or special Auxiliary or Legion Family fundraising projects. Poppy money cannot be used for a family member who does not live with the veteran.

**Q: Who distributes the poppy money collected? Does it get mailed to the district or department to distribute, or do individual units collect the money and distribute it to their local veterans in need?**

**A:** Unless a department imposes restrictions, each unit can decide where they want their poppy funds used, as long as it follows the National Poppy Committee guidelines. Poppy funds must be used only for the welfare of veterans and their families and active-duty military and their families when a financial or medical necessity exists. Poppy funds may also be used for a local veterans creative arts festival, since the purpose of this U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs program is to provide rehabilitative therapy to veterans through various forms of art therapy. Units may also send their poppy money to their department headquarters earmarked for a state veterans creative arts festival, or units may send their poppy money to the American Legion Auxiliary National Headquarters earmarked for the National Veterans Creative Arts Festival.

**Q: Can veteran-made poppies be purchased wholesale with poppy funds?**

**A:** If a unit cannot afford to buy poppies for distribution out of their general fund, they may purchase veteran-made poppies only with their poppy funds, since veterans are benefitting from this purchase.

**Q: Are we allowed to consolidate Poppy Day funds with other groups (the VFW, for example)?**

A: No. While working with like-minded groups for the benefit of veterans is a good thing since we share a common mission, funds donated to the ALA for poppies are “restricted use” funds. Auxiliary members who collect funds for another organization are simply doing so as a good member of the community. If the funds collected are not going to the ALA Poppy Program, then members should not represent themselves as Auxiliary members, which is misleading to donors. If you are working beside a VFW member and the money dropped in your container will go to the ALA Poppy Program, then you can wear your ALA shirts. Or, if the local VFW plans to donate their Buddy Poppy funds to the Auxiliary knowing how we use the funds, then certainly you may accept their donations. If your VFW friends are helping you raise money for the ALA Poppy Program, then you may dress in your ALA attire.

**Q: The allowable use of funds seems to be open for interpretation. Who has the authority to decide what is allowable and what is not?**

A: National Headquarters issues guidelines for the use of poppy funds, and the uses must clearly fall within The American Legion’s poppy fund rules. Departments and units are responsible for interpreting the rules and making expenditure decisions following the national guidelines. Sometimes, decisions are impacted by state laws which differ for each department. It is up to each department or unit to use poppy funds appropriately, in keeping with the wording and intent of the Legion’s poppy fund rules.

**Q: If I am aware of misuse of poppy funds, who should I notify?**

If you suspect an Auxiliary unit is misusing poppy funds, then a written allegation report should be submitted to the department secretary and a copy sent to the department Poppy chairman. If you suspect a Legion post is misusing poppy funds, then you should provide a written report to the post adjutant who can consult the Legion department judge advocate or the Legion’s national Internal Affairs Division if necessary.