



AMERICAN LEGION AUXILIARY

Empowering Women, Inspiring Communities

Girls State Frequently Asked Questions

What is Girls State?

The American Legion Auxiliary believes that training our youth about the basic ideals and principles of our system of government will help to ensure the survival of our republic. Through a unique citizenship-training program, Auxiliary members teach the youth of our nation to understand, comprehend, and appreciate their roles as United States citizens. This program is called Girls State.

Girls State began as one and two-day sessions in the late 1930's and since 1948 has been a regular part of the Auxiliary's Americanism curriculum. The program has grown from a few hundred participants to nearly 25,000 Girls State delegates annually. The Auxiliary has been recognized many times by Freedoms Foundation at Valley Forge, Pennsylvania and the National Association of Secondary School Principles (NASSP) for outstanding Girls State and Girls Nation programs.

How are participants chosen?

American Legion Auxiliary Unit Girls State Chairmen evaluate potential leadership qualities of the delegates and alternates, assisted by high school principals and guidance counselors. Girls are eligible to attend if they meet the following criteria:

- have completed their Junior year in high school
- are interested in government and current events
- have high moral character
- possess strong leadership abilities
- have an above average scholastic standing
- have a desire to learn

These criteria may vary slightly from state to state. The number of girls in each state is determined by the state Auxiliary's available resources.

How are these programs funded?

The program is funded by each state's American Legion Auxiliary, with some additional support coming from other civic and non-profit organizations. The Girls Nation program is funded by the national organization of the Auxiliary, with some support from each participating state. Little or no expense is required of the citizen or her family.

What are the goals of the program?

- to develop leadership and pride in American citizens
- to educate delegates about our system of government
- to instill in delegates a greater understanding of American traditions
- to stimulate a desire to maintain our government processes

What does a typical session include?

The citizens are divided into two mythical political "parties." The parties do not reflect the two major political parties in today's system, but allow citizens to gain a special knowledge of how the system works. Elections are held to fill city and state positions. Activities include legislative sessions, campaigning, party rallies, debating, and voting. The citizens also receive instruction in Parliamentary Procedure.

This "hands on" method is unique and extremely effective. Girls State affords participants an opportunity to live together as self-governing citizens by informing them about the duties, privileges, rights and responsibilities of American citizenship and hopefully encourages their participation in the democratic process as they progress into adulthood. Additional activities include: journalism, singing, talent shows, field trips, group devotions, and patriotic ceremonies.

Who are some past participants?

Jane Pauley - national news commentator

Ann Richards - former Governor of Texas

Jessica Mitchell - Vice President of Design/Director of Apparel for Liz Claiborne

Janie Fricke - country western singer

Captain Michelle Johnson - first female Wing Commander U.S. Air Force Academy

Terri Utley - former Miss U.S.A.

Sandra Dorsey-Blades - Marketing Manager ABC Daytime Television

There are many more exciting success stories, too numerous to list here.

Are scholarships available?

Girls State citizens have the opportunity to apply for financial assistance through the Samsung - American Legion Scholarship. Qualified students who are descendants of United States wartime veterans are evaluated on their academic records, community involvement, school activities and financial need. Various other scholarships and awards are given through individual Girls State programs. Check with your local American Legion Auxiliary to see what scholarships are available in your area.