

This is the first in a series of Post 38 Commander's Newsletters. They're focused on American Legion activities that affect the welfare of our members

March 2026 – Welcome to Haddonfield Post 38 – ‘Why is American Legion Membership diminishing?’



Commander Rodney Thomas served 8 years in the USAF. Worked for 11 years in the automotive industry, 10 years in healthcare and 8 years with Apple Inc. supporting customer needs. He currently is a senior executive for a private firm focused on oncology services and supporting those during their survivorship.

Some information about why legion membership is declining:

- American Legion membership reduced by 700,000 members over the past decade.
- We have challenges attracting younger veterans.
- **Generational Gaps:** Younger veterans from Iraq and Afghanistan do not find the traditional, in-person, "bar-like" atmosphere of some posts appealing.
 - They prefer online or more active, community-focused, and family-oriented, shorter-duration events.
- **Aging Membership & Attrition:** Many longtime members are passing away, and posts are closing or consolidating as they cannot replace them.
- **Struggle for Relevance:** Some veterans feel the organization has not adapted fast enough to modern needs.

However, with some cohesive education, younger veterans could better understand the benefit of joining the legion. Who wrote the GI Bill?



[Harry W. Colmery](#), a former American Legion national commander and World War I veteran, is credited with writing the first draft of the GI Bill (Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944). He drafted the legislation in late 1943, partly on Mayflower Hotel stationery in Washington, D.C., to provide education, housing, and unemployment benefits.

The Post-9/11 Veterans Educational Assistance Act of 2008 was primarily written, introduced, and guided to passage by U.S. Senator [Jim Webb](#) of Virginia. Introduced on his

first day in the Senate in January 2007, the bill aimed to provide comprehensive educational benefits similar to the original WWII-era GI Bill.

This is good stuff and younger veterans should take note. The American Legion continues to be influential, such as its role in passing the PACT Act in 2022 to assist veterans exposed to toxins; like burn pits.

We need younger veterans to join the legion and continue the mission to support future causes like healthcare, benefits, and other 'must haves' to live comfortably.

My first newsletter is intended to be brief and to serve a greater picture. When I was in my 30's, 40's or even early 50's, I never thought I could benefit from being a legionnaire. I was SO wrong. I'll close this newsletter with these key points of why a younger veteran should join the legion:

- Crucial networking with seasoned and successful business people who were veterans.
- Career development – nothing like a little coaching.
- Legislative advocacy because we never know what's around the corner.
- Access a supportive community of peers – back to networking, which is a key way to build important relationships.
- Influence the organization's future direction. We need younger veterans to carry on.
- Younger generation needed to fight for future rights and benefits.

Thanks for reading and stay in touch.

Rodney Thomas
Commander, Haddonfield American Legion Post 38

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