

GIRLS STATE



The American Legion Auxiliary believes that educating youth about the basic ideals and principles of government will help to ensure the survival of democracy. Girls State is a unique citizenship training program in which Auxiliary members guide the youth of our nation toward an understanding, comprehension and appreciation of their roles as United States citizens.

What is Girls State?

Girls State offers training in the practical processes of self government and good citizenship as practiced in a democratic society.

Each summer, approximately 20,000 enthusiastic young women participate in Girls State sessions across the nation. At Girls State, the “citizens” study local, county and state government processes. They do this by setting up their own miniature city, county and state governments and administer them according to the laws of their particular state.

After arriving at Girls State, the citizens are divided into two political parties, often named the Nationalists and the Federalists. These parties do not reflect the two major political parties in today’s system of government. The parties allow citizens to gain knowledge about the operation of a two-party system.

Girls State citizens participate in these instructional political parties, and elections are held to fill city and state positions. Activities include legislative sessions, campaigning, party rallies, debating and voting. The citizens also receive special instruction in parliamentary procedure.

Girls State affords participants an opportunity to live together as self-governing citizens by informing them about the privileges, rights and responsibilities of American citizenship.

This learning experience better familiarizes the young women with their duties as United States citizens and encourages their participation in the democratic process.

Girls State History

Girls State began as one- and two-day sessions in the late 1930s. Washington, D.C. and Delaware are credited with first launching the program. In 1939, Girls State was expanded to a week-long government education program. Since 1948, it has been a regular part of the Auxiliary’s Americanism curriculum.

For more than 60 years, the American Legion Auxiliary has succeeded in giving young women the finest citizenship training program possible. The program has grown from a few hundred participants to nearly 20,000 Girls State delegates annually.

The Auxiliary has long been recognized by Freedom’s Foundation at Valley Forge, Pa., for the Girls State and Girls Nation programs. Girls Nation has been recognized by the National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP), and has been placed on the National Advisory List of Contests and Activities.



Program Objectives

Members of the American Legion Auxiliary have structured the Girls State program in order to meet the following objectives:

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

Selection Process

Girls are eligible to attend Girls State if they meet the following criteria:

- completed Junior year in high school
- interested in government and current events
- have high moral character
- have strong leadership abilities
- have an above average scholastic standing

Selection Criteria

Girls State delegates are a diverse group of women who share a common desire to learn. From small towns to urban areas, the delegates’ varying backgrounds add spirit to the program.

Delegates to the Girls State program are selected by American Legion Auxiliary Units working with local high school educators who assist in evaluating potential leadership qualities of the delegates.

The number of Girls State citizens in each state varies greatly and is determined by each state’s American Legion Auxiliary available resources.

The program is funded by the American Legion Auxiliary, with some additional support coming from other civic and non-profit organizations. Little or no expense is required of the young woman and her family.

Scholarships

If eligible, Girls State citizens have the opportunity to receive financial assistance through the Samsung American Legion Scholarship.

This scholarship will be awarded to qualified students who are descendants of United States wartime veterans. Selection criteria includes academic record, community involvement, school activities and financial need.

Various other college scholarships are offered through the American Legion Auxiliary. Check with your local American Legion Auxiliary Unit to see what scholarships are available in your area.

Additional Activities

To encourage creativity and fellowship, many activities are offered as a part of the Girls State program. Some activities which may be offered include:

- ★ Journalism
- ★ Public speaking/debate
- ★ Singing
- ★ Talent Shows
- ★ Field Trips
- ★ Group devotions
- ★ Patriotic ceremonies
- ★ Judicial court system



Girls State has provided a valuable learning ground for hundreds of thousands of accomplished women.

It has instilled in these women a deeper understanding of government operations.

PAST PARTICIPANTS OF GIRLS STATE

Jane Pauley

NBC Broadcast Journalist

Ann Richards

former Governor of Texas

Jessica Mitchell

VP of Design/Director of Apparel for Liz Claiborne

Captain Michelle Johnson

1st Woman to serve as Wing Commander at the U.S. Air Force Academy

Sandra Dorsey Rice

Vice President, Eastern Region, Emma Bowen Foundation

Kate Shindle

Miss America 1998

Ericka Dunlap

Miss America 2004

Lynne Cheney

Wife of U.S. Vice President Richard Cheney

United States Representatives:

Jennifer Dunn, Washington

Constance A. Morella, Maryland (former)

Barbara Cubin, Wyoming



Girls State sessions are conducted in 49 states. Each American Legion Auxiliary Department (State) is responsible for the operation of its Girls State program. Most are held on college or university campuses, which offer dormitory accommodations.

AMERICAN LEGION AUXILIARY

Founded in 1919, members of the American Legion Auxiliary support and serve the nation's veterans and their families. Auxiliary programs encompass many humanitarian and social concerns, including the welfare and care of veterans, children and youth, women's issues and service to the community. Year after year, members donate more than \$18 million and 6 million volunteer hours to communities nationwide.



For more information on Girls State, contact:

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American Legion Auxiliary

Girls State

A Youth Citizenship Program for Young Women



*Whatever path the future holds,
taking full advantage of the chance to
develop leadership skills, confidence
and poise will give young women a
lasting foundation for success in their
personal and professional lives.*