

## **PUBLIC RELATIONS**

### **Dennis Henkemeyer , Chairman**

A couple of weeks ago, I traveled to Indianapolis for the annual American Legion fall conference of the national executive committee. Like I have done over the past three years, I decided to travel early and participate in the Sons of The American Legion fall conference, particularly the public relations commission meetings. Unfortunately, it was really a waste of time. Rather than coming away with some new and fresh ideas about public relations, I learned absolutely nothing.

The American Legion came out with a new public relations toolkit and I found that to be quite interesting. Please allow me to share with you some of the information provided in the excellent publication.

#### **What is Public Relations?**

As the term implies, public relations (PR) requires that you relate to the public in some manner. The question is, what is a 'public' and how do we relate to it? Several 'publics' require our attention as Sons of The American Legion public relations practitioners. These include but are not limited to: our members, the media, local and national elected officials and decision makers and the public. You can narrow it further to specific target audiences, such as participants in the Sons of The American Legion programs and recipients of our support and charitable contributions.

*HOW* you relate to the public depends on which public it is and what your message is. In a nutshell, public relations is primarily about IMAGE. And every member of the Sons of The American Legion plays a role in communicating our image to the various publics to which we relate. The positive and the negative things seen and heard at every level of the organization affect peoples' perceptions of the Sons of The American Legion is and what we stand for. Perception is reality for most people.

In many ways, the public relations function is the most important function at any level of the Sons of The American Legion. It is our job to inform, enlighten, persuade and convince our many publics of our beliefs, events and goals.

#### **Publisher's Note:**

The 'PR Toolkit-Legion(NEW)' is available for download under:  
[Forms / Pubs|Forms & Pubs(Handbooks and Manuals)] on this Detachment Website.  
It is a 122 page PDF document which also contains 'links' to other available media.