

The Pennsylvania American Legion

Keystone Boys State



PROGRAM PURPOSE

The American Legion's Keystone Boys State utilizes a flexible program for training young men in the functional aspects of citizenship. It is an education plan that focuses on a proactive approach taken by "citizens". It is conducted by The American Legion's Department of Pennsylvania. Its purpose is to teach the youth of today constructive attitudes toward the American form of government. The American Legion's Keystone Boys State shows that our scheme of government has not outworn its usefulness; our republic needs an intelligent citizenry, and an honest and impartial administration responsive to the will of the people.

PROGRAM OUTLINE

The American Legion Keystone Boys State is conducted on a "*learn by doing*" basis whereby the selected "citizens" practice the procedures and operations of the various branches of city, county and state government, political parties, and a state legislature. The practical exercises and program, even intramurals, are aimed at developing a more active and intelligent interest in the duties, privileges, rights and responsibilities of citizenship. *It is a workshop about democracy in action.* Citizenship and Americanism are evident throughout this week.

The method of teaching at The American Legion's Keystone Boys State is to have the youthful citizens form and operate twelve fictitious cities, four counties, and one state; form and operate two fictitious political parties; conduct all local and state law enforcement and judicial systems; form and conduct a bicameral state legislature. The constitution, statutes and codes of the State of Pennsylvania are used as the pattern for building the structure of Keystone Boys State.

Citizens of Keystone Boys State will use knowledge already acquired and new skills that they develop during the week. *The effort to get everyone involved manifests itself* by having every "citizen" elected, selected, assigned or appointed to leadership positions throughout the week. Each "citizen" also is provided with text materials based on organizational science and personal development exercises. Much of what we do is a spin-off of the Sean Covey text, The 7 Habits of Highly Effective Teens.

As he registers, each "citizen" is assigned to a Keystone Boys State "city" and to a "political party". Such assignments are made to assure equal participation in all branches of government and political parties requiring each "citizen" to stand on his own by meeting and working with citizens from all areas of Pennsylvania. Keystone Boys State cities and counties are named after Past Commanders of the PA American Legion; the state is named "**Keystone,**" the 51st State in the Union; the parties are the "**Federalists**" and "**Nationalists**".

The curriculum calls for city government to be formed first. Political parties are then formed, county and state conventions are convened, and each participant is a "citizen". Aspirants to city, county and state offices file for a position and campaign for it individually, through their respective political parties. General elections are held and an inaugural ceremony is conducted. Following the election and installation of all officers, all branches of the city begin to function under student leadership (guidance and advice available from the city counselors), county and state government function in turn as they are set up.

EVERY CITIZEN HAS A DEFINITE AND INTEGRAL PART IN THE PROGRAM!

KBS is a practical school of government, a program of “education by participation” showing that each person has a role to play within our system of government.

As responsible adults, our roles are continually redefined by the individual

Instructors/counselors, who, by experience, know the functions and procedures of state government and its political subdivisions, guide and coach the youthful citizens. They are careful, however, to allow the citizens to function themselves. The aim and purpose of The American Legion's Keystone Boys State is thus attained – to let the citizens live the process.

From this practical school of government, the young citizen has the opportunity to learn for himself that his government is just what he makes it. He learns the part each must play under our system of government, each can run for office, each can vote for the candidate of his choice, also each has a voice and a part in shaping the policies of his government.

***** All citizens should become familiar with Parliamentary Procedures, “Roberts Rules of Order” and Covey’s The 7 Habits of Highly Effective Teens. *****

NON-PARTISANISM

The American Legion's Keystone Boys State is **non-partisan, non-sectarian and non-military**. Scenarios and case studies will be considered without reference to any existing political party, and will be free from propaganda. The sole purpose is to enable the “citizens” to grasp the meaning of some of the responsibilities he will be called upon to assume, when he becomes an adult. **It should be clearly understood** that selection and assignment of the “citizens” to parties is in no way connected with existing political parties in Pennsylvania. They are purely mythical and none of the principles typifying any of the existing parties will be assigned to the parties in Keystone Boys State.

ELIGIBILITY

ONLY Juniors in high school are eligible. “Citizens” must be 15 to 18 years of age and must **NOT** have attended previous Boys States. Candidates who have not completed the 11th grade will not be accepted. It is felt that the greatest good can be obtained from High School Juniors, since they will return home to offer leadership in the school and community during their Senior year. (In the past Boys State citizens have been Student Council/NHS officers, team captains and club officers. The frequency of various college scholarship awards has increased by completion of a Boys State program. Recently 20% of the entering freshmen at the three Military Academies have been Boys/Girls State graduates.)

The PA American Legion Keystone Boys State program will be held on the campus of Shippensburg University, Shippensburg, Pennsylvania.