

Script for ALA IGS orientations

Hello, my name is _____ and I am a proud member of the American Legion Auxiliary. As we go on with our orientation I will be shortening our title to ALA. I want to thank you for attending this orientation for what promises to be one of the most memorable experiences of your life.

The American Legion Auxiliary Girls State program is held in every state in the Union. Girls State began in the state of Kansas and the states continue to grow their program each year.

As a proud member of the ALA, I want to share with you a little about our organization. In 1919, when men and possibly women returned to America after WWI, they wanted to do something for their fellow servicemen and their families. From this desire, The American Legion was born. To belong one had to have served during a time of conflict. The American Legion Auxiliary is made up of female Veterans or active service military and female descendants of The American Legion. We also have the Sons of the American Legion for male descendants of Veterans. Most recently we have added The American Legion Riders. You must be a member of the American Legion family to join our riders. Even though there are many other Patriotic organizations, The American Legion family is the largest.

One of the programs I want to touch on is the Gifts to the Yanks. This is an American Legion program that provides a Christmas gift (usually clothing) to every Veteran resident of nursing homes, and VA medical facilities in Illinois. Our Christmas gift shop is a program of the American Legion Auxiliary. We set up a gift area in each VA facility for one day. Residents come in and pick our Christmas gifts for their families. These are wrapped and sent to the family members or the Veteran holds on to it and gives the gift to them when they visit. There is no cost to the Veteran or their family. Both of these programs provide an opportunity to serve our Veterans and keep them involved with their family and with The American Legion family.

We also sponsor the poppy program. Poppies are made by our Veterans for therapy as well as to help them earn a small amount of spending money where they are housed. The poppies are distributed by The American Legion family and the funds received are dedicated to helping Veterans.

The last program I want to share with you is our Children and Youth program. This is a very large program so I want to share with you one of our largest projects in this program. Each year at the Illinois State Special Olympics we host the only hospitality tent for the athletes, coaches, families, and volunteers. We serve vegies and dip, fruit,

popsicles, cookies, chips, lemonade, iced tea, etc. We serve up to 10,000 people. This event is held on the Illinois State University campus in June. All of this is donated by our American Legion Auxiliary. There is no charge to anyone.

I could go on, but that was just a quick overview of The American Legion family. If anyone would like to know more, please see me afterwards. You can also go to ALAforVeterans.org to learn more about who we are, what we do, and why it matters. We are always looking for new members like so many organizations. If you think you may be eligible, please see me after this orientation. [\(For video will not say see me afterwards\)](#).

If you have a question please feel free to stop me and ask as we go on. I know how it is to not remember what you wanted to ask if you have to wait until the end. [\(will not be said on video\)](#).

The American Legion Auxiliary sponsors ALA Illini Girls State. Remember, ALA is what we will be using as we go on. To be eligible for this program you must have a C or above average and have just completed your junior year in high school or the home school equivalent. You must attend the entire session in order to receive the full benefit of the experience as well as a certificate showing you participated in the program. As you begin to fill out college applications or military academy applications you will see that ALA Girls State is under the activities section that you complete. Many military academies STRONGLY encourage all applicants to attend a program in their state. Delegates are selected from those eligible through interviews. Each of you will be sponsored by an American Legion Auxiliary Unit, even if your fee may be paid by another organization, individual, or business. You are considered "the cream of the crop". Out of the thousands of girls eligible in Illinois, you are one of the select few (about 400) who will experience this life-changing week.

The American Legion Auxiliary is a Patriotic organization based on God and Country. It is the first sentence in our Preamble. All delegates will be expected to say the Pledge of Allegiance, sing our National Anthem, show proper respect to our flag, and to pray each in their own faith. You will be taught the proper way to raise, lower, and fold a flag. You will attend a proper flag disposal ceremony. If you have cotton flags that need retired, please bring them with you.

Once your application is received at the ALA Department Headquarters you will receive in your email or in snail mail a packet of papers about the program. There will be a section of papers that must be filled out, signed, and returned to us as soon as possible. The completed packets should be uploaded right back into the site. Many of you may

have already received your initial paperwork. If you have signed up more than 2 weeks ago, please check your email, especially your SPAM file. If you do not receive your paperwork by May 20th, contact the ALA IGS Director at 217-273-0158 or our Department office at 309-663-2966. Part of the information you receive will be about ALA Girls Nation. I will discuss this later on in the program. A list of what to bring, our dress code, dietary restrictions, health information sheet, a list of available positions to run for and their responsibilities, and various release forms will be included. Be sure you pack a light jacket, an umbrella, VERY comfortable shoes and a sweater. We walk everywhere on campus. I know it is summer, but it can be cool in our meeting rooms. You may want to consider bringing a fan as well if you have room. Don't forget your bedding. It is not provided.

If you are riding a bus from Gurnee, La Grange, Joliet, Morton, or Bloomington please arrive early. There will be an ALA member there with a list to load the bus. You must be on the list to load the bus. Please wear comfy clothes for travel. The buses do not stop on the way to EIU, so please take a sack lunch with you. When you leave the following Saturday, we will have box lunches available for you to take on the bus.

There is an emergency number that we want to share with your parents. It is 217-581-5131. This is the front desk of the main dormitory where we will be staying. I know that many, if not all of you have cell phones, but we do ask that for all home emergencies, use this number. The front desk will forward the call to the Director. The staff will find the delegate and bring her into the office where she may speak privately. We want to stress how important it is that no delegate receives bad news on her personal cell phone. It is always better to hear things in a private setting. It is also very important that we as a staff know what has happened to best care for your daughter.

In your packet you will find the snail mail address for ALA IGS at Eastern Illinois University. Please be sure you share this with your parents. We do have mail delivery each day and it is so much fun for you to receive mail.

Each year our Department President is given the opportunity to promote one or more of her favorite programs. Information on the special project and what to bring for that will be in our packet. There are donations items that you can bring to session.

We have two banquets during the week. Sunday evening and Friday evening. Attire for Friday evening is more dressy. Some girls bring their prom or homecoming dresses. Others wear a nice dress. There is no steadfast rule on this. This is where our American Legion guests as well as the Boys State Governor and Lt. Governor attend (if possible). It is imperative if you have dietary restrictions that we know as soon as possible, especially

for the banquets. You cannot wait until your arrival on Sunday to let us know. You would probably not be accommodated for Sunday night. We try to accommodate people as much as possible. Each day in the cafeteria there is a vegetarian hot entrée as well as a wonderful salad bar. The food is good, but remember it is dorm food ladies, not mom's.

Everybody who is helping as staff during this week are strictly volunteers. Each city will have a counselor. She is someone that has been in your shoes as a delegate to ALA IGS. Almost everyone else is a member of the ALA. This program is so very special and important to each of us, that we willingly give up ten days of our personal time to bring this session to you. Some of the staff have spent several years working on this program and the ALA IGS committee works the entire year planning and tweaking the program to make it the very best possible for you as delegates.

If for some reason your plans change and you will not be able to attend, please contact your sponsoring Unit or our Department office. There may be the possibility to find someone to take your place, but we can't contact that young lady if you do not contact us.

You will be assigned a city and a county, all of which are named after past Department Presidents. Please keep the name of the city and county you are assigned in an easy to get to spot of your luggage. You will need it to sign in. When you arrive at ALA IGS you will depart your bus or your family's car and go into the lobby of the main dorm to register. Volunteers will be seated under each county sign to check you in. If you have any paperwork that you need to turn in or if you need to speak with the Director, someone will be there to show you where to go. By the way, just a reminder, carrying your luggage to your room is your responsibility. We have no bellhops and no carts, so pack wisely. Please, do not drive yourselves to ALA IGS. There is no parking and you cannot drive during the week anyway.

Each day we will have speakers as an entire group or in breakout sessions. For most speakers you will be given the opportunity for questions.

We do have a shopping center filled with fun ALA IGS souvenirs and clothing. Please be sure to stop there daily to see what is going on. If you need a special size, buy it when you see it. Supplies are limited. We do take Visa and Master Card as well as cash. Ladies, we do not recommend large amounts of money. Usually \$50-\$75 is more than sufficient. We do have a bank where you can deposit your money. You will receive a bank "book" and you may withdraw your money in any increment you choose. The bank is open during every meal. Please know that while the doors to rooms may be

blocked there is no guarantee that your money will be safe. The money is your responsibility if you choose not to utilize the bank.

The chart of offices in your information packet is very important. Please read it thoroughly. See what might be a good fit for you. That being said, you don't have to make that decision before you get to ALA IGS as campaigning before you have legally declared your candidacy with a correctly filed petition could cause disqualification. Introducing yourself as Governor Smith or Secretary of State Jones is considered campaigning so be careful! However, by all means get to know those on your bus, in the line, etc just by your name. The same is true for social media. You may not think we know, but last year we had to have one delegate take down her "campaign" plans. You may bring supplies to create your posters, campaign signs, etc with you. Acceptable supplies would be markers, scissors, post-it notes, string, glue, masking tape and construction paper and poster board. You may bring scotch tape for use on the posters, but not on any walls or windows at EIU. You may not bring any prepared campaign materials, including computer generated photos, with you and you may not bring gifts or pass outs to give to the delegates. Please NO GLITTER, this is a steadfast rule of the University. Where you may hang you campaign posters will be discussed in our Monday morning workshops.

Not wanting to campaign but you really want to be involved? Perhaps Judge of Elections would be a good fit for you. There are three from each city; one from each party and a third from either party. You are busy all week as you are responsible for setting up for all elections in your city. You will get training from our elections Department and you will work with them all week. If you accept the position of Judge of Elections, you will remain in that office all week. You may not decide mid-week that you want to run for office. The one exception to this is ALA Girls Nation which I will address shortly.

City officials do not have to take out petitions to run for office. This is done on Monday afternoon in your cities only.

Our County and State Offices as well as our Representative and Senator candidates require a correctly filed petition before you can announce yourself as a candidate. If writing and debating a bill is of interest to you, perhaps the legislative branch will be of interest. You will be told where to pick up petitions and when by the staff. It will also be in your textbook you will receive on arrival in your city. If you are taking out a petition, remember, each delegate can only sign one petition per office. For instance, if Mary signs a petition for state representative for Jane, she cannot sign a representative

petition for Pat. So get your petition as soon as you can and get the required number of signatures plus one or two extra, quickly.

Oh no! You did not get the number of signatures that you need to run or you lost your Primary election, but you still believe you are the best candidate. We do have a write-in process as well, so don't worry. It may be a little more work, but a write-in can be elected.

If you are elected Governor this year, you will preside over next year's session until a new Governor is elected so please be sure you can return in 2020.

The two political parties are the Nationalist and Federalists. The Nationalist party has a panda mascot and the campaign color is pink. The Federalist party has a bunny mascot and the campaign color is yellow. This year the Nationalist party leader has chosen a super hero theme for the party convention and the Federalist party leader has chosen a red, white, and blue theme for her party convention. What party you belong to will be in your packet, so please read everything through very thoroughly. You will know which party you belong to prior to your arrival so be sure to bring fun clothing, decorations, or anything that will show your party loyalty.

What is a Party Leader? That is a person that is your cheerleader for your party. She is outgoing, exciting, and loyal to her party. You will see them on stage several times throughout the week. Be careful, their excitement can be contagious. The elected Nationalist and Federalist party leaders will also be asked to return the following year. Again, be sure you will be available in 2020.

This year we will be holding a speech contest. Watch for the topic and rules in your packet of information. If you are on a speech team or debate team, I would encourage you to take part.

There is also recreation each day. You can be outside on the quad, go to the EIU bookstore, play games in the air-conditioned lobbies of the dorms, exercise at the EIU rec center, or take a tour of the University or Dvorak Hall. There are plenty of options. Dress for this is casual, however think about your choices. Please no spaghetti straps, strapless, or tummy exposed shirts. Please no shorts that leave nothing to the imagination. Again, review the dress code thoroughly.

On Thursday and Friday evenings there is a talent show. If you sing, dance, write poetry, play an instrument, anything at all we encourage you to try out. If you have a CD for your music, you will need to bring it with you so our music department can work with the staff at EIU to have it ready for you. If you want piano accompaniment, be sure to

bring your sheet music and turn it in to the music department as soon as possible. Perhaps you are a group singer more than a soloist. We have a choir for you!

Earlier I spoke about our poppy program and our past Department Presidents. You will have the opportunity to make poppies while you are there as well as learn more about the past Department President your city is named for.

There are two scholarship opportunities for the delegates. One scholarship is the Jane and Samantha Thompson scholarship. This is given to the Governor at ALA IGS. The second scholarship is the Samsung Scholarship. Eligibility for this one requires applicants to have someone in their immediate family who has served or is serving in the Armed Forces. Several years ago the Samsung Corporation reviewed several youth programs and chose one to receive a six million dollar grant as a base for a scholarship program. American Legion Boys State and American Legion Auxiliary Girls State were chosen. Each state winner is guaranteed \$2000. All state winners will be reviewed by the scholarship committee and ten winners will be selected to receive a \$20,000 scholarship. The link for the Samsung scholarship will be sent to you in your packet and can be found on our website at ilgirlsstate.org. **All applications must be completed and turned in on-line before the start of our session. No printed applications will be accepted.**

One final thing I want to share with you is ALA Girls Nation. This program is sponsored by the American Legion Auxiliary and two delegates from every state will be elected/selected U.S. Senators to attend this prestigious program in our Nation's Capitol, Washington, DC. ALL delegates are eligible to run for this office. There are not exceptions. Do not worry about cost. There is no cost to you, including airline costs. The National ALA is so proud of this program that all expenses are paid for you. All you need is spending money for the store. By the way, no cash is accepted in the ALA GN store. Only credit, debit, or gift cards by Visa or Mastercard.

What will you do that week in July? You will hold senate sessions and debate bills that are submitted by each state. Each state may submit only ONE bill or resolution. No state is allowed two submissions so the two Senators will have to compromise and choose the best bill to send. Any successfully passed bills will be sent to the U.S. Congress for consideration. You will also have the opportunity to visit many of our National monuments, museums, and of course the U.S. Capitol where you will have the opportunity to meet with one or both of your U.S. Senators. The National organization takes care of making those appointments for you. Some years we are even able to visit our President in the White House. This is never guaranteed and should not be the reason you choose to attend ALA Girls Nation.

How do you get to be U.S. Senator. On Monday of our session you will be interviewed by a counselor and asked questions that all candidates will be asked. All will be asked the same questions. Please have an idea for a bill ready. If you are chosen as your city candidate, you will meet with the counselors and staff advisors of your county to answer more questions. Try to have your bill written in proper form. If you are chosen as you county candidate you will have a forum to answer questions on stage based on current National issues and you will visit all four counties in whistle stops to explain and answer questions on your bill. Then the four finalists will be elected by your peers. The top two vote getters will go to Washington, DC.

I am sure by now that you feel overwhelmed by all the information shared with you. That is why you have your counselor available to you. She will lead you through the week and make sure you know when and where to be. Remember, she has been where you are now. Remember to get the most out of this program, you need to get involved in the program. Run for office, campaign, join choir, any part of ALA IGS. It will only enhance your experience.

Parents-please know that we will care for your girls as if they were our own. They are not allowed off campus. The dorms we utilize are locked at all times so someone not involved in the program can enter. The EIU security force is top notch. They take very good care of us.

Ladies, when you return home, please remember to share with your friends, your school, your clubs, local businesses, everybody what you did at ALA IGS. You are our best publicity. We want to continue to grow our program each year. We also need financial support to send delegates like each of you. Also when you return, if at all possible we want you to visit the ALA sponsoring Unit and share your week with them. Take your posters, your textbook, your shopping center items and share it all.

Thank you so much for attending today. I look forward to seeing each of you in June. I hope that the information you received will enhance your experience at American Legion Auxiliary Illini Girls State.

I will be here for a while so please feel free to approach me with any questions.

Share with the Girls our social media info: Listed below

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