

TENNESSEE AMERICAN LEGION BOYS STATE

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AMERICAN LEGION CELEBRATES 51 YEARS AT TENNESSEE TECH, 76 YEARS IN STATE

On the week surrounding Memorial Day, more than 600 young men will converge on Tennessee Tech University's campus at American Legion Boys State to remember, celebrate, learn and appreciate lessons in freedom, sacrifice and leadership.

The program ranks as the best in the country because of the opportunities given to high school juniors from across the state. During the week they will receive instruction and advice from the state's governor, military leaders and government officials.

Beginning Sunday, delegates will be immersed in learning state government by running a mock 51st state, Boys State. They will organize political parties and establish city, county and state governments by election, complete with primaries and political campaigns. American Legion posts across the state sponsor delegates and fund the activities held at Tennessee Tech.

This year's session also will feature an address from Lt. Gov. Ron Ramsey. Tennessee Secretary of State Tre Hargett will be the featured speaker at Saturday's inauguration of this year's new ALBS governor.

For the 11th consecutive year, Boys State will host the SCALES program, the Supreme Court Advancing Legal Education for Students, during which the Tennessee Supreme Court will hold a special session to hear oral arguments in two actual Supreme Court cases.

Rafiq E. Malek, 2014 Tennessee ALBS governor, will participate in the opening orientation and memorial service. State Rep. Ryan Williams, State Rep. Kelly Keisling and State Sen. Paul Bailey will lead a discussion on major political issues in Tennessee on Monday. Major Gen. Max Haston, Tennessee adjutant general, will be a guest speaker on Thursday.

"Boys State promotes a respect for our government, our leaders and our military," said Marc Burnett, TNALBS director and TTU's vice president for student affairs.

Meet your 2014 Governor Rafiq Malek

Rafiq Malek beat the odds by becoming Boys State Governor as an independent candidate. However, his key to a successful campaign can be found in his advice to future Boys State delegates.

“Come and identify yourself as someone who is outgoing, friendly and respectable,” Malek said.

Malek, son of Cathy and Navil Malek, attends Chattanooga High School Center for Creative Arts, where he majors in acting. He is pursuing an Eagle Scout rank. Like many delegates, Malek did not know what to expect from the week or the demands on candidates. He says he found campaign momentum was key.

“I think people fall into following the majority,” he explained. “Once you have a big enough following, I think there is a peer pressure that is very advantageous.”

The governor says he worked toward adding more sports, particularly soccer, to the week’s activities. He also suggested exploring ways to lower the cost of attendance to Boys State.

“We need to allow more people access to Boys State,” he said. “Some students have the cost covered by others, but some don’t get to participate because of the cost.”

After high school graduation, Malek is considering applying to the nation’s military academies and says he has multiple options on the table for the future. His lasting impression of the week was of the delegates whom he admired.

“I’m impressed by the amount of competitive people who strive to do as much as they can,” he said.

AMERICAN LEGION

The American Legion was chartered by Congress in 1919 as a patriotic, mutual-help, war-time veterans organization. A community-service organization which now numbers nearly 3 million members -- men and women -- in nearly 15,000 American Legion Posts worldwide. These Posts are organized into 55 Departments -- one each for the 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, France, Mexico, and the Philippines.

The American Legion's national headquarters is in Indianapolis, Indiana, with additional offices in Washington, D.C. In addition to thousands of volunteers serving in leadership and program implementation capacities in local communities to the Legion's standing national commissions and committees, the national organization has a regular full-time staff of about 300 employees.

