



American Legion Auxiliary, Department of Maine
A Community of Volunteers Serving Veterans, Military, and their Families
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Good morning Senator Hickman, Representative Supica and the Honorable Members of the Veterans and Legal Affairs Committee.

My name is Carol Roach, and I am here on behalf of **the Department of Maine American Legion Auxiliary in support of LD 662 "An Act to Fund Military Sexual Trauma Liaisons."**

I am the 2024-2025 Auxiliary Public Relations Committee Chairman. We are a community of volunteers serving veterans, military, and their families. We have more than 6,000 members in 178 units located across this great State of Maine. A primary purpose of the Auxiliary is to support and advocate for veterans, military, and their children. Our children and youth program is built upon the pledge to maintain the integrity of the American family. Not a child living, and certainly no veteran's child, should be without the necessities of life. Consistent with our mission and vision we strongly support the purpose and aims of the Sisters in Arms Center.

Members of the American Legion Auxiliary are passionate about supporting women veterans, military, and their children.

An example of this support involves a veteran, a mother of three young children, who became unhoused just before Christmas. She found a safe haven at the SiAC. She asked only for warm winter clothing for her children, nothing for herself.

On behalf of this young mother, the Center's Executive Director reached out to Rose Dyke, ALA Homeless Veterans Committee Chairman, and past president of my unit, Rumford Unit 24. Unit members responded quickly, voting to make a \$300 donation for the purchase of the requested children's items and did not stop there. A call to action went out across the State to include our American Legion and Sons of the American Legion family members for material and monetary donations for this family. In the meantime winter jackets and boots, and snow pants for the children were purchased and delivered to the Mom at Sisters in Arms Center, along with a banana box filled with personal items for her, arts and crafts, story books, toys for the children, new Cuddle Down flannel sheet sets for the kids beds, other miscellaneous personal and household items, and Christmas decorations and candy, donated by my husband, a Vietnam Veteran, and me. The mom told us she wasn't a crier but as she reached out with a warm hug her eyes were filled with tears. She humbly expressed sincere gratitude.

And, the story doesn't stop there, on 12/19/2024 three vehicles were loaded up with wrapped and unwrapped gifts, 3 bicycles, gift cards, and cash donations for this female veteran and her children all donated by community organizations and individuals, **and** American Legion family members across Maine. Folks like you and me hoping to bring joy, love, and peace into their otherwise upside down lives. Why am I sharing this experience with you? Because none of this would have been possible without the center providing a safe haven, outreach, and resource networking by the Sisters in Arms Center.

Other ways the American Legion Auxiliary supports veterans, military, and their children is by placing in-house collection boxes for non-perishable food, household goods, and personal care items, including the most often requested item, toilet paper, or ordering these items from Amazon for direct delivery to the Sisters in Arms Center.

As her administrative year project, President Pat Grant chose to raise awareness of contributions of Women Veterans acknowledging their COURAGE, HONOR, and SCARIFICE. She addressed State and National Officials of the American Legion and Sons of Legionnaires at their annual convention. At District and Unit meetings she talked with Auxiliary members and guests about resources needed to support female veterans and women serving in the armed forces who might have suffered abuse or harassment while in the military. She wrote a regular article on these subjects for the Auxiliary's monthly newsletter, The Chatter. President Grant passionately advocated for transitional housing, supportive services, and resources for women veterans and their children, and raised funds and material donations for the Sisters in Arms Center.

Thank you for allowing me to address you today and for your favorable consideration of LD 662. I am happy to answer questions.

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