

Opinion on Vendor Tables at a National Encampment
Ed Norris, PCinC - National Counselor
Opinion No. 5, 2022-2023
July 29, 2023

Commander-in-Chief Bruce D. Frail requested an Opinion regarding usage of vendor tables that may be considered a form of political or sectarian discussion at a National Encampment.

It is the opinion of the National Counselor, based on the research of material, any organization can purchase a vendor table at a National Encampment. If a Brother is to represent a political or sectarian organization at the vendor table, the Brother must not wear any badges, ribbons, symbols, etc. which would identify the Brother as belonging to the Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War. The vendor table can not display anything that might be construed as being associated with the Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War.

Research

The above opinion is based upon the fact that the Charter, Constitution, Regulations, National Policies, National Digest, Hosting a National Encampment of the Allied Orders of the Grand Army of the Republic handbook, Allied Orders National Encampment Vendor And Display Table Order Form, and National website do not state any rules or guidelines on what is permissible at a vendor table.

The Constitution contains this statement, "ARTICLE IV. Religion and Politics - The Order being strictly non-sectarian and non-partisan, the introduction or discussion of sectarian or partisan topics is strictly prohibited."

The above Article applies to our business meetings. As part of the National Encampment, we have the vendor room, a tour or tours, a campfire, a banquet, the SVR breakfast, and other activities. For all of these we allow non-Brothers to attend. There are no conditions on the forms or statements at the beginning of events that state there is to be no discussions of sectarian or partisan issues.

Commander-in-Chief Brian C. Pierson's General Order #14, Series 2020-2021 states, "8. Rights of Brothers as Private Citizens. Brothers are free to communicate as private citizens with their local, state, or national representatives on any legislation; however, in this case, they must refrain from mentioning or otherwise implying they are representing the SUVCW, nor may they use letterhead of the SUVCW National Organization, Department, Camp, or SVR Military District or Unit."

The above General Order addresses lobbying. The person at the vendor table is not addressing their local, state, or national representatives. But, because sectarian or partisan information is being provided and photographs and written statements can go beyond the vendor room thus implying the Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War is endorsing a political or sectarian issue, the guidelines in the above cited General Order must be followed.