



TO: Governor Chris Sununu and the Covid-19 Task Force

FROM: Rick Harvey – Chairman, Department of New Hampshire American Legion Baseball

DATE: 4/26/2020

RE: **Playing Legion Baseball in a Covid-19 Pandemic Time**

Governor Sununu and all,

On behalf of the Department of American Legion and the American Legion Baseball Program, I wish to thank you for the opportunity to submit this proposal regarding the possibility of establishing a policy, which would allow our baseball program to continue its operation in the summer of 2020. Understanding the time that we are in, I hope this policy would allow us to operate our program and still keep the parents and players safe during the Covid-19 pandemic.

**Legion Baseball Overview:**

American Legion Baseball is a national institution, having thrived through a world war, several national tragedies, and times of great prosperity as well as great despair. The league still stands behind the traditional values upon which it was founded in 1925. American Legion Baseball has taught hundreds of thousands of young Americans the importance of sportsmanship, good health and active citizenship. The program is also a promoter of equality, making teammates out of young athletes regardless of their income levels or social standings. American Legion Baseball has been, and continues to be, a steppingstone to manhood for millions of young men who have gone on to serve their country or community, raise families or play the sport at the highest level.

For the first time in its long history, our national organization was forced to cancel our World Series which is held in Shelby, NC and all eight Regional Series Tournaments, which are held throughout the United States. Some of the reasons for making this decision were that almost all participants in these tournaments travel by plane to these events and stay in hotels, four players to a room. These types of logistics did not seem logical and safe in these times.

Our National Chairman, Steve Cloud left it up to the individual states as to whether or not to have a regular season and their state tournaments. Unlike these national events, we travel to and from our games in cars and players typically do not stay overnight in hotels during our tournaments.

Please find the following facts and figures regarding the 2020 American Legion Baseball season that have been established and also some proposals to keep our players and parents safe during the summer of 2020.

## **Season Schedule:**

**Pre-Season:** Our pre-season would begin on Monday, June 1<sup>st</sup> and last until Friday, June 19<sup>th</sup>. Normally we do not have the luxury of a pre-season. We usually start our regular season games one day after all the High School State Tournaments have been completed. This year because the high school season was cancelled, we must allow a time period of spring training for our players to get their arms and bodies into baseball readiness. This time period will consist of try-outs, practice and maybe some exhibition games to get our players into baseball shape.

**Regular Season Schedule:** Our regular season schedule for all three of our programs will begin on Saturday, June 20<sup>th</sup>. Here is the overview of each program.

**Prep Program: Ages 13-15.** These 5 teams will play a 14-game regular season schedule that will end on Wednesday, July 22<sup>nd</sup>. This is the first year for this program at this age level. They will finish their season with a two-day single elimination state tournament on Monday, July 27 and Tuesday, July 28<sup>th</sup>.

**Junior Program: Ages 17 and under.** The 13 teams will play either a 17 or 18 game regular season schedule depending on the district the team belongs to and their regular season will end on Saturday, July 24<sup>th</sup>. They will finish their season with a five-day double elimination tournament starting on Friday, July 31<sup>st</sup> and ending on Tuesday, August 4<sup>th</sup>.

**Senior Program: Ages 19 and under.** The 14 teams will play an 18-game regular season schedule that will end on Saturday, August 1<sup>st</sup>. They will finish their season with a five-day double elimination tournament starting on Friday, August 7<sup>th</sup> and ending on Tuesday, August 11<sup>th</sup>.

**Legion Baseball Showcase:** This will be the fourth annual showcase that our New Hampshire American Legion Baseball program offers. It will be held on Tuesday, July 21<sup>st</sup>. This showcase for 40 players who are not committed to a college baseball program and will be entering their senior or junior year in high school in the fall of 2020. We invite over 100 college coaches to attend. We have averaged about 14 coaches during our first three years. I believe it is an especially important event this year for our players since they did not have a chance to show their skills in a high school baseball season this spring.

**Facilities:** Each team has to confirm their own home facility each year. Teams use either a high school field or a town/city field for the summer. All our State Tournaments and the Showcase will be held this year at Gill Stadium in Manchester, NH. Every team in our program is required to purchase insurance from K&K Insurance Company which carries an accident and liability policy. All teams are required to provide their insurance certificates to the proper authorities who maintain and oversee these facilities.

## **Safety proposals/ideas for safe playing conditions under Covid-19:**

Understanding all the rules and guidelines regarding safety that our National and State Governments have set for the Covid-19 pandemic, we wish to propose a set of guidelines that our program would follow to enhance as much safety as possible for our players, parents and spectators during our 2020 season.

**Is a Player Sick?:** Our program would require each team to have a "team mom or dad" to take the temperature of all players and coaches at the park before each game or a practice. If a player or coach has a temperature of 100.4 or more they will be required to go home until their temperature has gone away. If a player or coach is confirmed with Covid-19, proper protocols shall be taken not only for their team but for the entire program.

**Sanitizer:** Each of our teams will be required to have hand sanitizer in their dugout for use throughout the game. It will be especially important to use on the players hands since players do share bats.

**Masks:** If at the time our season begins, masks are still required, we wish to propose that each player wear a mask in the dugout. Once a player is on the field, they can take it off, but when they are returning to the dugout, they must put it back on. Coaches should have masks on at all times. Base umpires must wear a mask, I am honestly not sure if it is feasible for the plate umpire to wear one while he wears his protective face mask too and be able to breath correctly?

**On Field Protocol:** Many types of meetings happen on the field during a game. Discussions between players. A trip to the mound by the catcher to talk to the pitcher or a trip to the mound by a coach to talk to a pitcher. We would require all players to use their glove as a protective mask and talk into the glove while holding discussions on the field and also follow the six-foot social distancing rule too.

**Player Responsibility:** Although I am sure it will be tough to do at first, we will be request that players not to spit during a game. No gum chewing while be allowed. We will not allow sunflower seeds to be chewed. Water and sports drinks will not be shared out of a single cooler. All players and coaches shall be responsible for their own water or sports drinks. We will stress that if a player coughs or sneezes they do so into the inside curve or their elbow. Also, a player rostered on a NH Legion baseball team will not be allowed to participate in any other baseball organization during our active season.

**Social Distancing:** It will be stressed to all parents and spectators that the social distancing protocol be recognized. Please be made aware that most regular season games have between 50 – 100 people in attendance as spectators. At our state tournaments, we will have between 100 and 200 in attendance. There is plenty of space at all our venues that social distancing can be practiced. For safety reasons, players are required to sit in their respective dugouts. But there is a rule that players can sit outside the dugout going towards the outfield. We could use that rule if need be.

**Outside/Inside State Travel:** During the active time of our season, 6/1/2020 to 8/13/2020, players or teams will not be allowed to travel outside the State of New Hampshire to participate in any type of baseball event. Also, players or teams that reside outside the State of New Hampshire cannot participate in any baseball event in our State.

**Conclusion:** I hope our program has addressed many of the concerns your committee would have regarding the playing of Legion baseball this summer. Of course we are open to any other ideas your committee or the Department of Public Health and Safety might have. I thank you once again for allowing our program to be part of your discussion regarding recreation activities this summer in our State of New Hampshire.

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