CIVIL AIR PATROL
U.S. AIR FORCE AUXILIARY

Civic Leadership Academy (CLA) Fact Sheet

The Civic Leadership Academy stands as a pinnacle experience within the Civil Air Patrol's commitment to fostering cadet officers' civic growth. With a primary focus on enhancing leadership skills, instilling a sense of civic responsibility, and cultivating a profound interest in the democratic process, CLA is a transformative 1-week program held annually in Washington, DC.

Program Objectives:
The goal of CLA is to empower Civil Air Patrol cadet officers, aged 16-20, to become dynamic Americans and aerospace leaders. This is achieved through a carefully curated curriculum designed to elevate leadership skills, nurture a strong civic ethos, and deepen their understanding of the democratic framework.

Distinctive Features:
Unlike traditional “field trips” to Washington, CLA is an academically-focused activity that immerses cadets in an array of behind-the-scenes experiences. Participants connect with government officials in exclusive engagements and briefings at iconic institutions such as the Capitol, the Supreme Court, State Department, the Pentagon, CIA, and Arlington National Cemetery. The week encompasses seminars, readings, and collaborative group projects, culminating in the highlight event, Civil Air Patrol’s National Legislative Day, where cadets engage with elected leaders on Capitol Hill.

Selection Process:
With a competitive selection process, only 20 cadets across the country out of the 32,000 cadets annually are chosen for this esteemed program. Eligibility criteria include age (16-20), outstanding performance in pre-selection academic assignments, and the attainment of the Billy Mitchell achievement, a recognition earned by the top 15% of CAP cadets.



Cadets in the State Department courtyard after conducting a diplomatic simulation

National Significance:
Civil Air Patrol plays a vital role in shaping the future leaders of the nation, as the official volunteer auxiliary of the United States Air Force. The Civic Leadership Academy embodies this commitment by providing a unique and unparalleled opportunity for cadets to deepen their civic understanding and engage with the democratic process in a meaningful way.



Cadets prior to entering the U.S. Capitol to interact with their elected representatives

About Civil Air Patrol:
Founded in 1941 and established as the official civilian auxiliary of the U.S. Air Force seven years later, Civil Air Patrol is chartered by Congress as a nonprofit organization for the purposes of youth development, aerospace education, and to promote general aviation. In an auxiliary role as a Total Force partner of the Air Force, CAP operates the world’s largest fleet of single-engine aircraft for search and rescue, disaster relief, training, and education. Civil Air Patrol is dedicated to serving America’s communities, saving lives, and shaping futures.