

2020 - 2021 COMMANDER'S GUIDE



VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS.





June 2020

Dear Post Commander,

Congratulations on your election as Commander! This is an important position, one that requires hard work, dedication, and trustworthiness. Your Post is counting on you to fulfill your duties to the benefit of the organization, members and communities. We want to help you be successful.

Whether you are new to the job or have done it before, there is always something you can learn. This guide was created to assist you – no matter what your current level of knowledge and experience may be. This guide is a training tool to educate and assist you in your role.

The enclosed manual is periodically updated. You can find the latest version, as well as other valuable resources, at www.vfw.org by logging in as a member (Login – top bar, right side), and going to “Member Resources – VFW Training & Support.”

Other important resources include the Bylaws, Manual of Procedure, and Ritual. In particular, the Manual of Procedure, Sec 218 (a) (1) outlines the responsibilities of the Post Commander. Learn these well. Each Post is required to maintain a current copy of the Bylaws, Manual of Procedure, and Ritual; current copies are available for purchase from the VFW Store at www.vfwstore.org.

We are here to support you. If you have questions and are unable to find answers with your District or Department, call us at 833.VFW.VETS. Explain to the operator what you need, and they will transfer you to the correct person to answer your questions.

Thank you for taking on this responsibility. It may be challenging at times, but it can also be very rewarding. We wish you well!

Kevin C. Jones
Adjutant General

Debra L. Anderson
Quartermaster General

P.S. Have a suggestion to how we can improve the Commander’s Guide? We want to hear from you! Send an email to info@vfw.org, subject line “Feedback on Commander’s Guide,” with your comments. We are always looking to improve on what we do.

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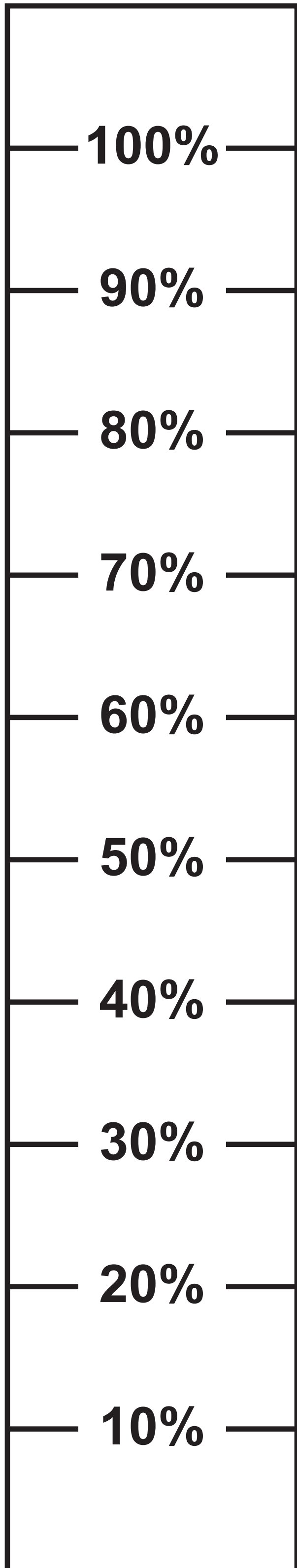
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VFW
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COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF
2020-2021
VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS

HAL ROESCH
COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF
2020-2021
VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS



OFFICER ROSTER VISITOR REGISTRY & PLANNING CALENDAR



Officer Information

List name, address and phone number:

COMMANDER _____

SENIOR VICE COMMANDER _____

JUNIOR VICE COMMANDER _____

QUARTERMASTER _____

ADJUTANT _____

CHAPLAIN _____

JUDGE ADVOCATE _____

SURGEON _____

1 YEAR TRUSTEE _____

2 YEAR TRUSTEE _____

3 YEAR TRUSTEE _____

OFFICER OF THE DAY _____

GUARD _____

SERVICE OFFICER _____

Committee Chairs



Welcome

We Are Proud To Have You Visit

During the course of the year, you may have the opportunity to visit with VFW Officers from all levels of our organization, as well as prominent citizens from your community. Enhance your year by utilizing this visitor's registry.

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JULY 2020

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
28	29	30	1	2	3	4
						Independence Day
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30	31	1
2	3					

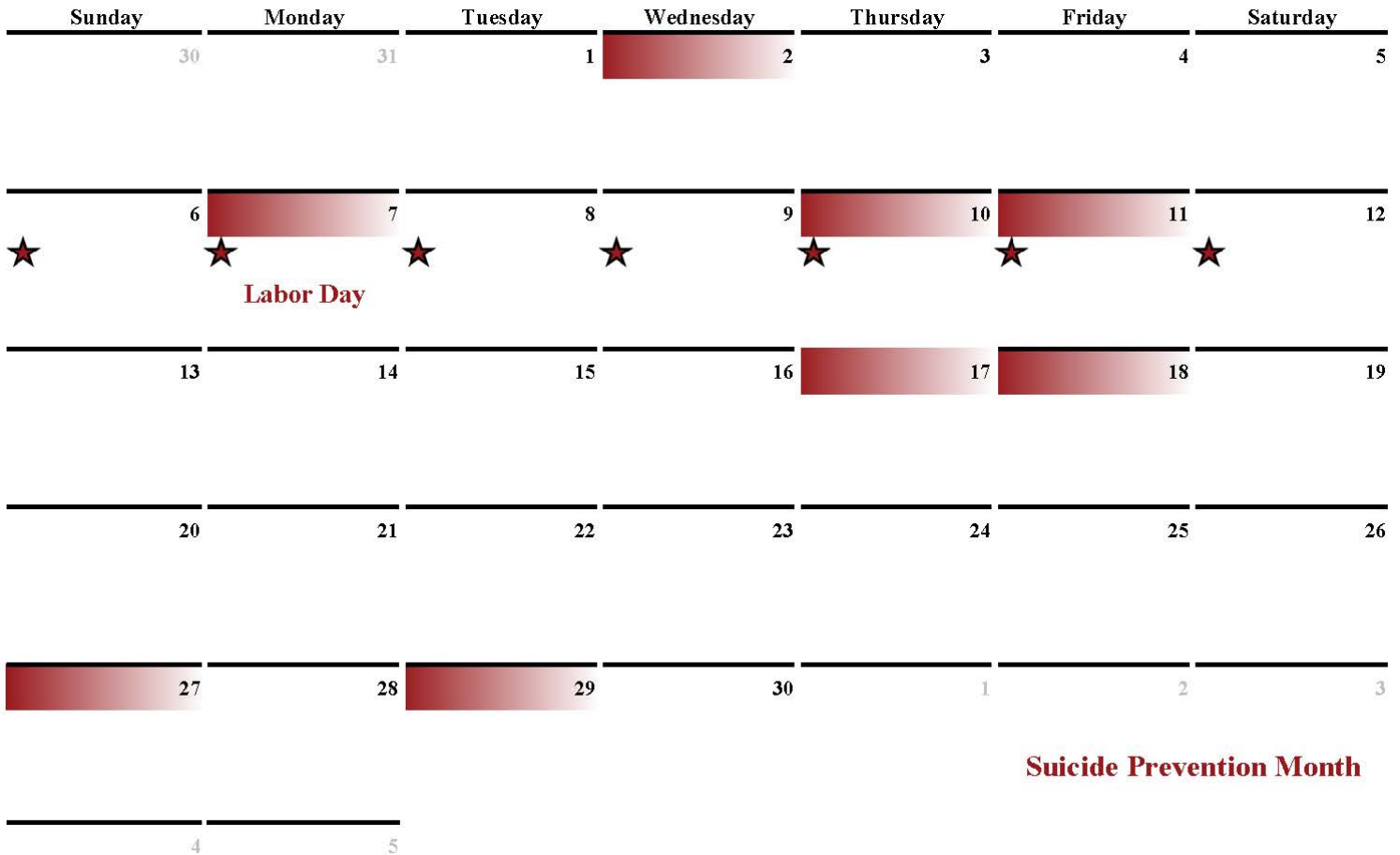
- 1** - Post Commander can recognize VFW volunteers by nominating them for the National Community Service Award
- 4** - Independence Day
- 15** - Buddy Poppy Outstanding Promotional/Public Awareness nomination forms due to National
- 24** - National Convention, Pro Forma, July 24th
- 27** - National Korean War Veterans Armistice Day
- 30** - Application for National, District and County Council Buddy Poppy Awards due to National
- 31** - Voice of Democracy and Patriots Pen District & Department reporting forms and instructions for forwarding winners emailed out to Department chairmen

AUGUST 2020

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
26	27	28	29	30	31	1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30	31					

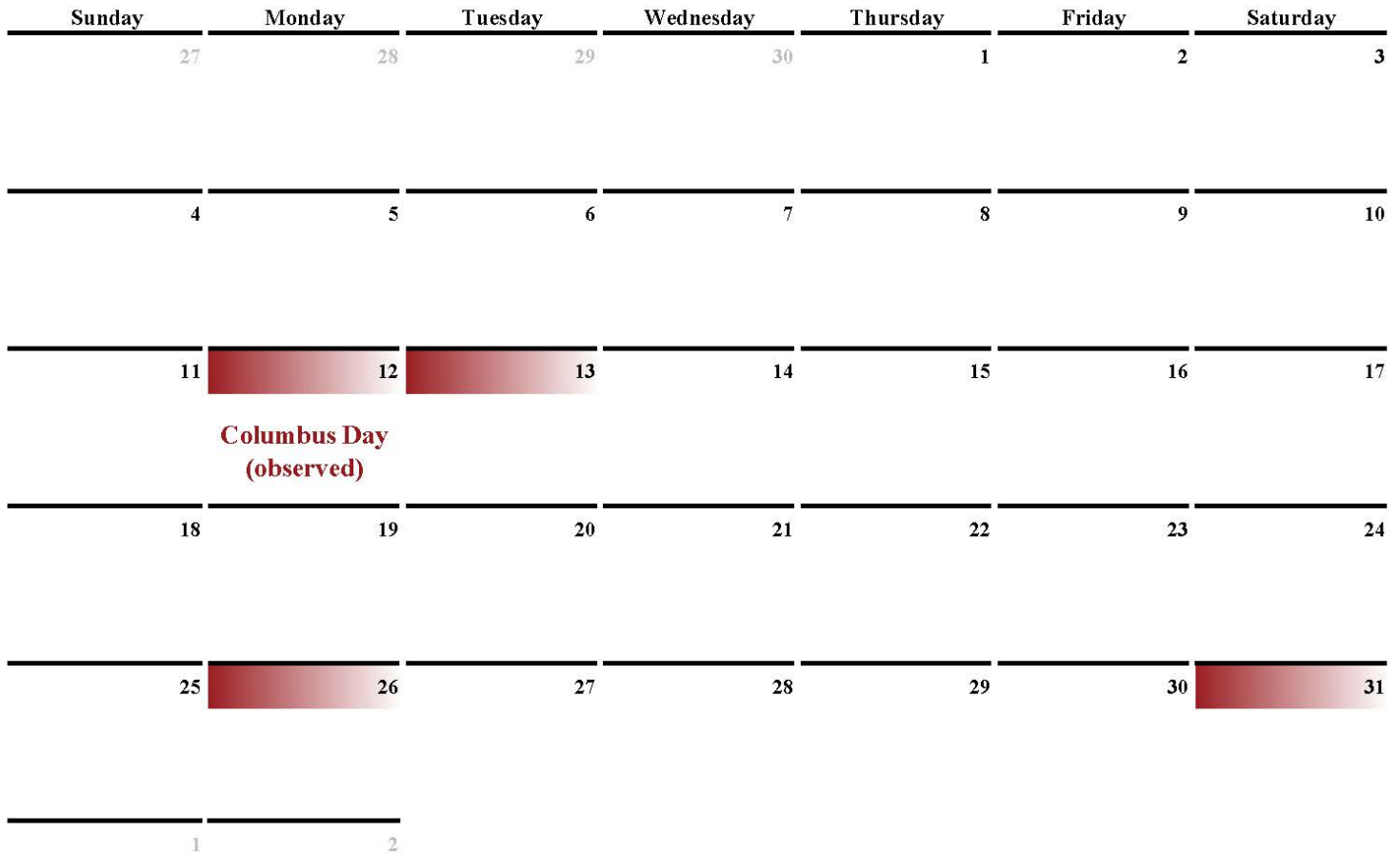
- 1** - Contact local businesses about providing funds to your Post's scholarships
- 1** - VFW's "Sport Clips Help A Hero Scholarship" application period for spring semester opens
- 4** - U.S. Coast Guard Birthday
- 14** - Victory over Japan Day
- 22** - National Council of Administration Meeting, Kansas City, Missouri, August 22-23

SEPTEMBER 2020



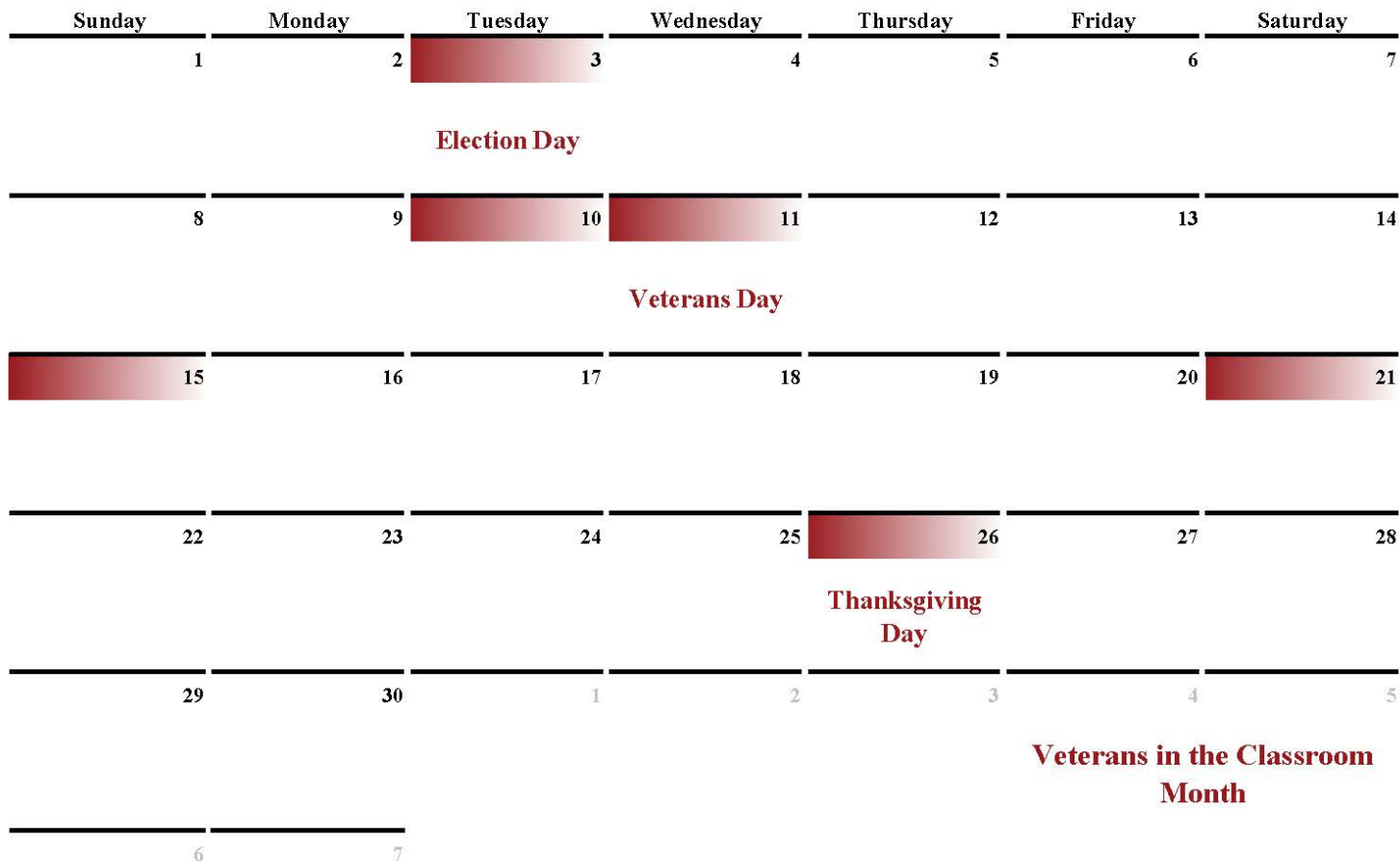
- 2** - Sport Clips Help-A-Hero 500
- 6** - National Suicide Prevention Week, September 6 - 12
- 7** - Labor Day
- 10** - World Suicide Prevention Day
- 11** - Patriot Day/ National Day of Service/ Remembrance (flag at half-staff)
- 17** - Constitution and U.S. Citizenship Day
- 18** - U.S. Air Force Birthday
- 18** - POW/MIA Recognition Day
- 27** - Gold Star Mother's/Family Day
- 29** - VFW Established 1899

OCTOBER 2020



- 12** - Columbus Day (observed)
- 13** - U.S. Navy Birthday
- 26** - National “Make A Difference Day”
- 31** - Patriot's Pen student entry deadline to Posts
- 31** - Voice of Democracy student entry deadline to Posts

NOVEMBER 2020



- 3** - Election Day
- 10** - U.S. Marine Corps Birthday
- 11** - Veterans Day
- 15** - Patriot's Pen Post judging deadline
- 15** - Voice of Democracy Post judging deadline
- 15** - VFW's "Sport Clips Help A Hero Scholarship" application period for spring semester ends
- 21** - National Family Volunteer Day
- 26** - Thanksgiving Day

DECEMBER 2020

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
29	30	1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
					Christmas Day	
27	28	29	30	31	1	2
3	4					

5 - International Volunteer Day

7 - National Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day (flag at half-staff)

15 - Voice of Democracy District judging deadline

15 - Patriot's Pen District judging deadline

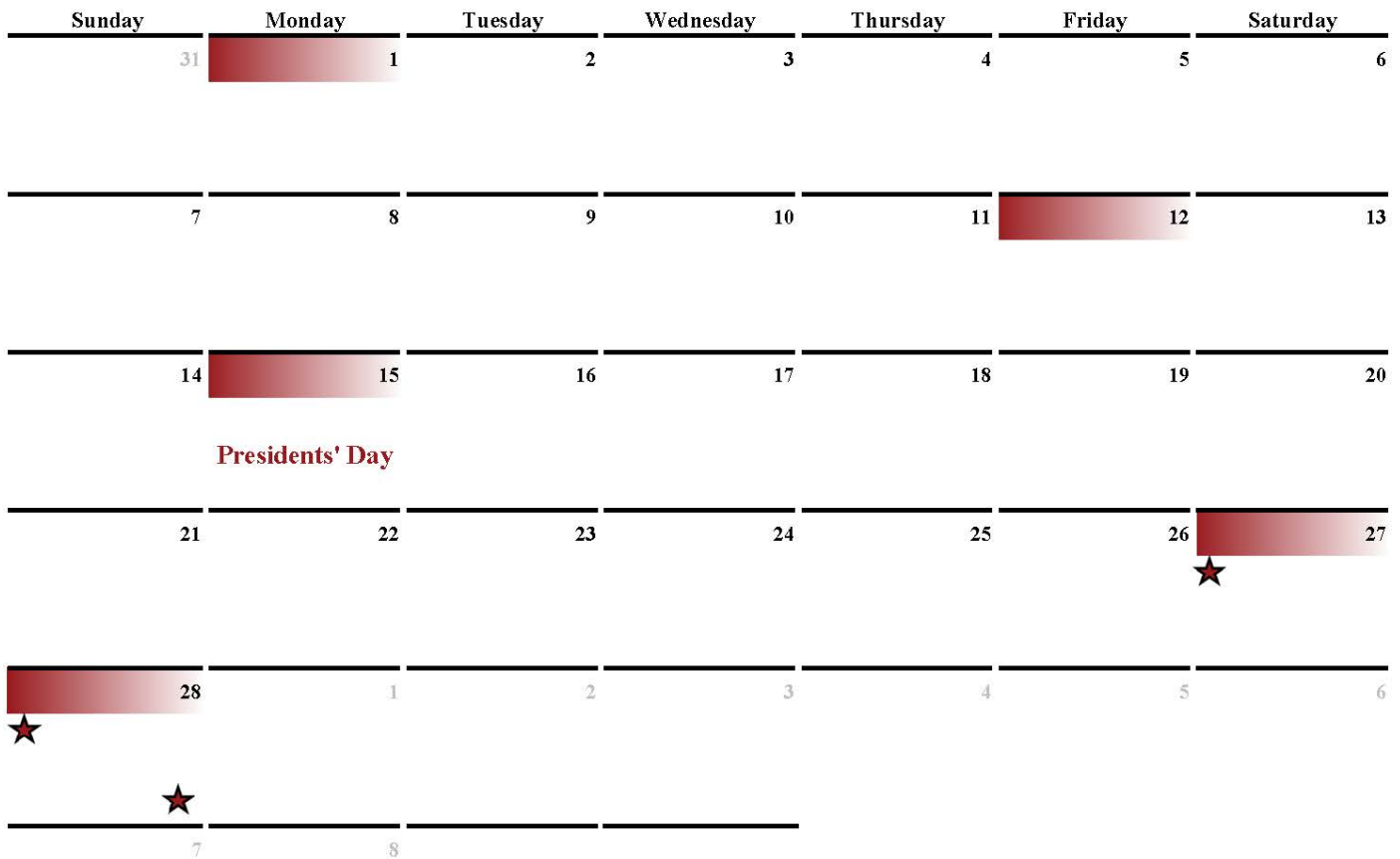
25 - Christmas Day

JANUARY 2021

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
27	28	29	30	31	1	2
					New Year's Day	
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
	Martin Luther King, Jr. Day					
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31	1					

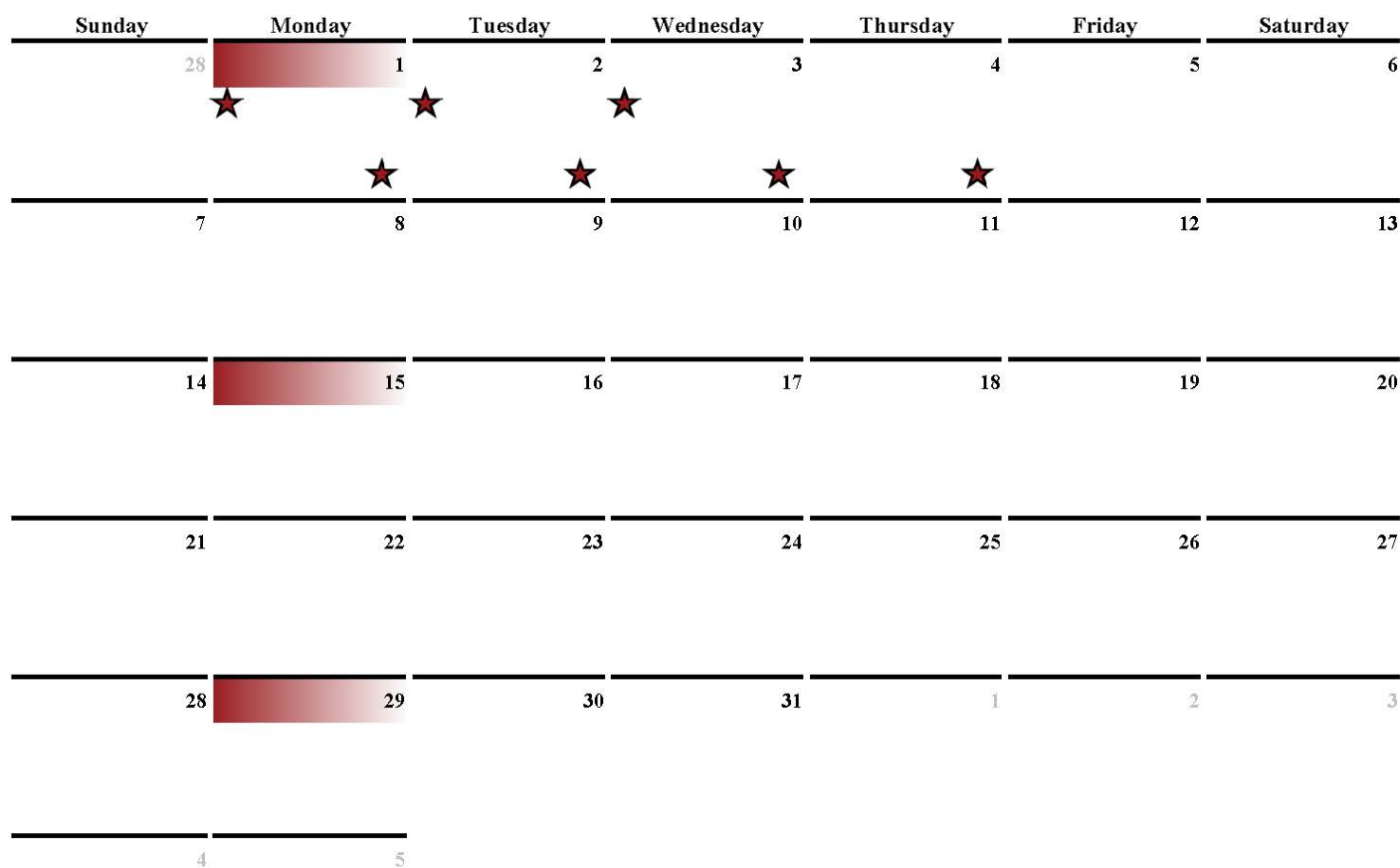
- 1 - National Awards for Public Servants Post to Department deadline
- 1 - National Awards for Smart/Maher VFW National Citizenship Education Teacher to Department deadline
- 1 - VFW's "Sport Clips Help A Hero Scholarship" application period for fall semester opens
- 10 - Deadline for completion of Department judging for Voice of Democracy and Patriot's Pen
- 15 - Voice of Democracy and Patriot's Pen winner packet due from Department to National
- 15 - District reporting deadline to Department for Voice of Democracy and Patriot's Pen
- 18 - Martin Luther King, Jr. Day
- 31 - Voice of Democracy final Department report to National deadline
- 31 - Patriot's Pen final Department report to National deadline

FEBRUARY 2021



- 1** - National Awards for Public Servants Department to National deadline
- 1** - National Awards for Smart/Maher VFW National Citizenship Education Teacher Award Department to National
- 12** - Lincoln's Birthday
- 15** - Washington's Birthday (observed) (Presidents' Day)
- 27** - Voice of Democracy Student Trip to Washington, D.C., Feb 27 - March 3
- 28** - Legislative Conference, Washington, D.C., Feb 28 - March 4

MARCH 2021



- 1** - Scout of the Year entries due to Post deadline
- 1** - Voice of Democracy student trip to Washington, D.C., February 27 - March 3
- 1** - Legislative Conference, Washington, D.C., February 28 - March 4
- 15** - Start planning National Volunteer Week (April 18 - 24) and Loyalty Day activities
- 29** - National Vietnam War Veterans Day

APRIL 2021

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
28	29	30	31	1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Easter Sunday						
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
★	★	★	★	★	★	★
25	26	27	28	29	30	1
2	3					

- 1** - Scout of the Year Post entries to District or Department. Check with your Department scouting Chairman to confirm where entries should be sent.
- 1** - Deadline for National Post Recognition Citation request to National
- 4** - Easter Sunday
- 9** - National Former POW Recognition Day
- 18** - National Volunteer Week, April 18 - 24
- 30** - VFW Special Projects entry due to National office
- 30** - Veterans & Military Support Recognition Program deadline
- 30** - VFW's "Sport Clips Help A Hero Scholarship" application period for fall semester ends
- 30** - National Outstanding Community Service Post due to National

MAY 2021

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
25	26	27	28	29	30	1
National Mental Health Awareness Month						
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30	31					
Memorial Day						

- 1 - Loyalty Day
- 1 - Scout of the Year Department entry to National from Department deadline
- 1 - Join Hands Day - 1st Saturday in May
- 9 - Mother's Day
- 15 - National Peace Officers Memorial Day (flag at full-staff this year)
- 15 - Armed Forces Day
- 31 - Memorial Day (flag at half-staff)
- 31 - Year-end Department Community Service total due to National

JUNE 2021

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
30	31	1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	1	2	3
4	5					

- 1** - Post Election Reports due to National
- 14** - Flag Day
- 14** - U.S. Army Birthday
- 20** - Father's Day
- 27** - National Post-Traumatic Stress Awareness Day

PROGRAMS



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Introduction

The purpose of this document is to help educate all elected and appointed officers of the organization about programs in the organization, from youth programs & scholarships, community service, volunteer recognition, “Buddy”® Poppy, to all programs under the Veterans & Military Support umbrella. Additionally, it will have information concerning U.S. Flag issues and a variety of special projects. Our sole priority is helping your Post, District and Department serve your community and veterans in a meaningful way. For that reason, the VFW National Organization is committed to doing everything possible to serve you and make every opportunity count for you and for the Veterans of Foreign Wars.

The purpose of this section is twofold. First, we want to familiarize you as leaders of your Post, District or Department, with the fundamentals of our VFW programs and activities. As we do that, it is our goal then to encourage you and your existing leaders to participate to build that much needed relationship with your local community. We are convinced that good programs, properly executed, will do more for your Post than anything else you do.

Your programs are often the first impression that the public has of the VFW. Therefore it’s extremely important to be prepared and more importantly appoint the right persons as the program chairman. Your VFW programs are defined under two categories; ***Community Service, Youth Scholarships and Activities*** and ***Veterans & Military Support***. Within the ***Community Service, Youth Scholarships and Activities*** category, we often refer to several program elements as our core programs. These are programs that are executed by the largest number of Posts and have the greatest impact on our organization, our communities and our veterans.

Typically, these core programs are mandated for every Post as part of your Department All State Program and are heavily encouraged and supported by the VFW National organization. These core programs within the ***Community Service, Youth Scholarships and Activities*** include our scholarship programs; Voice of Democracy and Patriot’s Pen, the Smart/Maher VFW National Citizenship Education Teacher of the Year program, Scouting, and “Buddy”® Poppy.

The second group of programs under the ***Community Service, Youth Scholarships and Activities*** umbrella, is called Special Projects and Activities, which cover Americanism, volunteer recognition, community service, awards and recognition and other miscellaneous youth activities. These programs are highly encouraged for all Posts and Departments and will be supported by the national organization upon request.

Before you can effectively execute our VFW programs, you first must know the programs. I recommend to all Post, District or Department officers and chairman, to carefully read the program chairman’s guides to familiarize yourself with the programs that best fit your Post and your available resources. As a VFW leader, you should be able to speak intelligently and authoritatively about all aspects of our great organization.

The best available resource that we have available is our VFW website (vfw.org). I would strongly encourage you as officers and program chairmen to establish a login. Doing so, will provide you access to all the information and materials concerning VFW Programs, but will also allow you to access additional information needed to help you execute your duties and responsibilities as an officer of the organization. Here you will gain access to important items such as National Bylaws, Manual of Procedure & Ritual amendments and National Resolutions to be presented at the National Convention, our monthly National Headquarters Bulletin and General Orders, and several online fillable forms.

However, the most important benefit of having a login is being able to access **MY VFW**, where you'll have access to all materials and information within our **VFW Training & Support** section. This section contains videos, promotional materials, chairman manuals and resources, and much more on all available areas of the organization.

VFW Programs Overview ***Community Service, Youth Scholarships and Activities***

Patriot's Pen

Originally created as the Youth Essay Contest, Patriot's Pen asks junior high and middle school students to write a 300-400-word essay on a new patriotic theme each year. Winners receive scholarships and begin by competing at the Post level. Winners proceed to District, Department and finally to the National level where they compete for the \$5,000 first place scholarship. The themes and additional information concerning program execution can be found at vfw.org, behind the login within the **VFW Training & Support** hub, under ***Community Service and Youth Programs***.

Voice of Democracy

Similar to Patriot's Pen, is the Voice of Democracy Audio/Essay Contest. Since 1947, the VFW has asked high school students to write and record a 3 – 5 minute essay, again on a patriotic theme selected by the VFW each year. Students may record on an audio CD or flash drive. Like Patriot's Pen, Voice of Democracy winners receive scholarships and other incentives at the Post, District, and Department and finally to the National level where they will compete for the \$30,000 first place scholarship. The Voice of Democracy theme and additional information concerning the execution of the program can be found at vfw.org, behind the login within the **VFW Training & Support** hub, under ***Community Service and Youth Programs***.

These two great youth scholarship programs provide over \$3 million in scholarships and incentives every year.

Smart/Maher VFW National Citizenship Education Teacher Award

While you're visiting a school, don't miss the opportunity to mention the Smart/ Maher VFW National Citizenship Education Teachers Award. The VFW wants to identify and recognize America's best educators in three categories (K-5, 6-8 & 9-12) who instill a sense of national pride in students. Teachers who promote civic responsibility, flag etiquette and patriotism are prime candidates. It offers commemorative citations for those worthy teachers and their schools. Posts are encouraged to submit a candidate for these awards to their Department Headquarters by January 1. The Department then selects a single candidate for each of the three awards and submits them to National Headquarters by February 1. That honor can establish a great relationship that opens the door for all of the VFW and Auxiliary programs. Additional information concerning the execution of the program can be found at vfw.org, behind the login within the ***VFW Training & Support*** hub, under ***Community Service***.

VFW Scouting

The VFW has a long relationship with Scouting. VFW Posts need to consider providing leaders, sponsoring units, offering their facility for meetings and encouraging their involvement in service projects. Posts can benefit from Scouting by having a unit do a flag retirement ceremony, help distribute Buddy Poppies, or help with clean up after events. These are just a few that would provide a benefit and generally can serve your Post. Additional information concerning the execution of the program can be found at vfw.org, behind the login within the ***VFW Training and Support*** hub, under ***Community Service***.

VFW "Buddy"® Poppy Program

Our oldest and perhaps most historically significant program is the VFW "Buddy"® Poppy program. It is important that you realize that although Memorial and Veterans Days are particularly important Buddy Poppy events, you should have poppies at every event that involves your Post and the public. Poppies can and should be distributed year-round. I'm sure you know that we never "sell" poppies. We give them away and receive donations. If someone cannot make a donation, don't deny them a poppy. Seeing the red poppy on a lapel or dress brings honor to those we have lost and recognition to the VFW.

Additionally, Section 219 of the National Bylaws and Manual of Procedure, mandates that the net proceeds from the distribution of Buddy Poppies must be credited to the Post Relief Fund. Also listed in section 219 are the purposes which funds can be disbursed from the Post Relief Fund. I would encourage officers at all levels of the organization to familiarize themselves with this section. Additional information concerning the execution of the program can be found at vfw.org, behind the login within the ***VFW Training and Support*** hub, under ***Community Service***.

VFW Recognition Programs

The purpose of the VFW Recognition Program is twofold. First and foremost, as an organization of wartime veterans and their spouses, the VFW and its Auxiliary understand the need to recognize and honor those individuals who have performed above and beyond their peers. Of particular significance are those who, like our members and veterans, have placed the safety and welfare of others above and beyond their own. Secondly, the VFW and its Auxiliary realize the value of these awards to the Post, District, Department and National organization.

It's important that VFW and its Auxiliary leaders, at every level, take advantage of every opportunity to honor worthy individuals and sometimes organizations.

With that in mind, the VFW has established a number of suggested awards. The following are suggested awards:

National Citation of Recognition

These citations are available to recognize Posts or individual Post chairmen who have demonstrated an exceptionally high level of service to their community. The Department Chairmen are given sole responsibility for identifying those Posts and individuals.

Public Servant National Awards (Law Enforcement, Firefighter, Emergency Services)

Each year, the Veterans of Foreign Wars selects emergency medical technicians (services), law enforcement, and firefighter personnel to receive VFW Public Servant Awards. Posts are encouraged to submit a candidate for these awards to their Department Headquarters by Jan. 1. The Department then selects a single candidate for each of the three awards and submits those to the VFW National Headquarters by Feb. 1.

Life Saving Awards

The Safety Chairmen at Posts, Districts and Departments are encouraged to regularly identify and honor individuals throughout the year in their geographic area who have saved a life. The VFW programs department provides the three different life saving citations (Regular, Line of duty and Valor), free of charge, for local presentation.

VFW Special Projects & Youth Activities

Our next level of programs is our special projects. These include Americanism, volunteer recognition, community service, awards and recognition and other youth activities. Equally important among our special projects is community service. Any activity done by a Post or Auxiliary that benefits the community falls under this broad banner and is supported by the VFW National Organization and encouraged for all Posts, Districts and Departments. Recognizing these exceptional efforts is provided in three ways - our

volunteer recognition programs, Outstanding Community Service Posts Awards, and the Outstanding Post Special Project Award.

The Outstanding Community Service Post Awards are given to Posts identified by their Departments for their exceptional response to VFW community service programs. Each Department determines the actual criteria for their Posts. Posts selected for this honor are invited to send a representative to the VFW National Convention for a reception with the VFW Commander-in-Chief. There they will receive a national plaque and a recognition street sign for their community. Deadline for entries in the Outstanding Community Service Post Award is April 30, each year.

Outstanding Post Special Project Awards are given each year to Posts that do a special project outside their normal VFW activities. Posts should submit their entries to their Department for review and endorsement before going to VFW National Headquarters. All submissions receive a certificate, Award of Merit plaque or an Award of Excellence plaque. Those receiving the Award of Excellence will be entered into the Fred C. Hall Memorial Outstanding Post Special Project competition. The Post receiving the Fred C. Hall award receives a plaque at the VFW National Convention and a \$1,000 service scholarship for community projects. The Post Commander (or designated representative) and a guest will receive round-trip airfare, a cash stipend and accommodations to receive the award at the VFW National Convention.

Lastly, another special project is VFW Veterans in the Classroom. In recent years, many teachers have contacted VFW Posts seeking veterans to come into the classroom and share their military experiences. VFW members may also choose to contact local youth groups and schools and express their willingness to share their experiences. VFW National Headquarters has materials available to support this activity. Many veterans have found this to be enjoyable and therapeutic. Few youth programs provide a greater benefit to a Post than involvement with Scouting, Civil Air Patrol, Naval Sea Cadet or JROTC units. These programs annually produce individuals with an appreciation of patriotism, civic responsibility and the likelihood of future military service. VFW Posts need to consider providing leaders, sponsoring units, offering their facility for meetings and encouraging their involvement in service projects. Posts can benefit from Scouting by having a unit do a flag retirement ceremony, helping distribute Buddy Poppies, or helping with clean up after events. In the case of JROTC, the same applies.

Your place may serve as a location for the JROTC Drill team to practice and, just like Scouting, they are an excellent resource for volunteers for Post-sponsored activities.

Posts are encouraged to seek out ways in which they can benefit their community. The VFW encourages any activity that benefits the community, brings recognition to the Post and honors America's veterans and those in uniform. Every program, done by your Post, results in relationships that produce good will. This good will increases public interest in your events, often enhances your fundraising efforts and can produce new members. A Post that has been identified as a community asset through its programs will seldom have a shortage of members or lack of community support. Use your VFW Programs to

establish your Post as a respected community asset. The VFW will then become the organization of choice for all veterans and will reap the rewards of public favor that cannot be purchased.

Helpful Hints for Program Execution

Each time you visit a school, conduct a patriotic event, honor a local hero, serve your community's youth or perform any kind of community service, you are creating an impression of the VFW. Hopefully, that impression is the beginning of a relationship that benefits the community and your Post. The goal of any Post should be to become known as a valuable community resource and not the local "watering hole" in the community. Posts that achieve this status rarely have problems with recruiting or fundraising.

So, how do we get young people involved? First let me say that your scholarship programs, like the "Buddy"® Poppy program, should be a part of everything you do in the community. Buddy Poppies and student entry forms for the scholarships should be present at every event where the public is involved.

We will discuss schools first, but later we will explore a variety of other opportunities to present our scholarship programs.

Contact schools, home school associations and other youth organizations early, preferably in April. This is the time of year when they begin planning for the coming fall. When you visit a school, don't go unannounced, call first to find out with whom you should meet and make an appointment.

Schools are busy places and often a secured environment. Showing up without an appointment almost ensures failure. Call, make an appointment and be on time. Conduct yourself professionally and you will be treated professionally.

Make sure you have the necessary materials to leave with the teacher, counselor, principal or administrator on everything you will discuss. Show them copies of the various brochures and identify the entry form included. If the opportunity is available, go into the classroom and present the students with the programs that directly impact them. One of the primary purposes of your visit is to leave the impression that your Post is a resource, not only for scholarships, but for veteran's history, patriotic information, and U.S. Flag etiquette. Don't forget to mention that Voice of Democracy and Patriot's Pen are on the National Advisory List of Student Contests and Activities of the National Association of Secondary School Principals.

Your chances for success are increased when you work closely with your Auxiliary counterpart. Make sure that they understand and have materials for all the VFW programs. The most successful Posts are always the ones that work hand-in-hand with their Auxiliary. Like our scholarship programs, the Teacher Awards begin at the Post level. Information and entry forms are on the VFW website at vfw.org.

A key factor in the success of your scholarship and teacher programs is your judging process. The judging sheets are included on the training website. When selecting your judges, make every attempt to find judges from outside the VFW and its Auxiliary. Local military recruiters, educators, media personalities, police officers, firefighters, church pastors and local civic leaders are excellent choices. If possible, make your life easier by using the same judges for all your scholarships and teacher's awards. Cultivate a good relationship with your judges by expressing your gratitude and inviting them when you honor your winners.

As mentioned earlier, when seeking students to participate, don't hesitate to look beyond your schools. These same programs should be presented to the leaders and sponsors of any group that deals with young people. Look around your neighborhood for community centers, athletic teams and leagues, Scout units, churches with large youth groups, home school associations, YMCA's and YWCA's - anywhere there are large groups of young people who may wish to participate.

In recent years, home school programs have produced a number of winning participants. Home school parents and their associations are generally patriotic, have broader latitude for selecting curricula and are always looking for projects that have value beyond the immediate lesson.

Veterans & Military Support Programs

To continue to detail the core programs, as mentioned earlier, Veterans & Military Support is part of the VFW's never-ending obligation to assist members of the active-duty military, National Guard and Reserves, as well as their families. These programs were established to keep the Veterans of Foreign Wars in the forefront of patriotism as the organization and its members find innovative way to show support for America and her armed forces.

The programs under the Veterans & Military Support umbrella consist of: VFW Communication Assistance, Unmet Needs, Military Assistance Program (MAP) and the VFW's "Sport Clips Help a Hero Scholarship" program. Through these programs, the Veterans of Foreign Wars provided assistance and guidance to our subordinate units in their efforts to support our military and their families. From hosting morale boosting events, sponsoring free phone time, providing financial assistance, to providing scholarships to veterans returning to school.

Unmet Needs

Unmet Needs provides financial assistance to service members, veterans, and their families. Created in 2004, Unmet Needs assists military service members, veterans, and their families who are experiencing a financial hardship directly related to their military service. The financial assistance is in the form of a one-time grant. All grants are paid directly to the “creditor” companies (such as the electric company, mortgage company, landlord, etc.) and not to the individual. The funds can be used for rent, car repairs, medical expenses, infant-care items and many other necessities. Each case is reviewed individually and acceptance determined by a committee.

For more information and details about the program, visit vfw.org. Working with a Family Support Center Coordinator, Family Readiness Director or your Department Veterans & Military Support Chairman, you can help get our service members and fellow veterans the assistance they deserve. An important note about this program is the financial grant application is only available online and must be submitted online at www.vfw.org. Applications submitted by U.S. mail, email and fax will not be accepted. Additional information concerning the execution of the program and the application can be found at vfw.org, behind the login within the ***VFW Training and Support*** hub, under ***Veterans & Military Support***.

VFW Military Assistance Program

Another troop support program under the Veterans & Military Support umbrella is the VFW Military Assistance Program. The Military Assistance Program is designed to encourage the link between the VFW and the Military community.

This program promotes VFW member interaction with the local military and opens avenues for National Sponsorships and local level involvement with all branches of service. Within this program are two unique services to help foster the relationship between the Post and the local military community, the Military Assistance Program Grant process and the Adopt-A-Unit program.

The Military Assistance Grant process is intended as financial assistance for Posts, Districts, and Departments to sponsor events for active duty military units, National Guard, and Reserves. These events are most successful when local Posts interact directly with the military unit, involving the Veterans & Military Support Chairmen, National Certified Recruiters, Veterans Service Officers, and your local and Department chain of command.

A Military Assistance Grant application must be submitted to VFW National Headquarters a minimum of two weeks prior to the event. The application must be filled out completely, including a breakdown of the event budget and the VFW involvement with the event. Additional information concerning the execution of the program and the grant application can be found at vfw.org, behind the login within the ***VFW Training and Support*** hub, under ***Veterans & Military Support***.

Another opportunity for Posts to interact with their local military community available within the Military Assistance program is the Adopt-A-Unit program. This program was developed as a means to pledge support of the Post to the service members and families of a unit from the local military community. When a Post “adopts” a unit, you make a commitment to the service members and their families to provide moral and emotional support before, during and after deployment.

Sponsoring a military unit is a great opportunity to get other community activity projects started, such as coordinating with teachers or schools to co-sponsor the unit. Additional information concerning the execution of the Adopt-A-Unit program and the application can be found at vfw.org, behind the login within the ***VFW Training and Support*** hub, under ***Veterans & Military Support***. Please remember that the objective of all Military Assistance Program initiatives is increasing the awareness of the VFW and it does not end when the troops re-deploy home. They and their families continue to need our support and assistance.

VFW's "Sport Clips Help A Hero Scholarship" Program

The last program and the newest program under the Veterans & Military Support umbrella is the VFW's Help a Hero Scholarship program. The VFW's Sport Clips Help a Hero Scholarship helps service members get the education and training needed to begin the next chapter of their life. Each scholarship will provide recipients with up to \$5,000 for tuition and fees to apply toward their education at an accredited post-secondary institution, including universities, colleges, trade schools and apprenticeships, and certification programs.

An important note about this program is the scholarship application is **only available on-line** at vfw.org and **must also be submitted online** using the form at our website. Applications submitted by U.S. mail, email and fax will not be accepted. For the application and more information, visit: vfw.org/assistance/student-veterans-support.

Student Veteran Outreach & Support

Today's veterans can face any number of obstacles while furthering their education. That's why we've teamed up with Student Veterans of America (SVA), to be there for veterans while they pursue their education. Together we're committed to ensuring our nation's veterans succeed in their educational pursuits, community service endeavors, careers and personal lives. Working side by side, SVA Chapters and VFW Posts can help our nation's veterans attain these goals.

The missions and purposes of both organizations share a great deal of synergy. SVA offers peer support for veterans transitioning back to civilian life and academia, frequently after serving one or more deployments overseas. The VFW provides opportunities for camaraderie, community service and veterans advocacy to those who have honorably served in overseas conflicts. While SVA Chapters are unique among veterans groups with their location on campus, VFW Posts are located in the same communities off campus. These two organizations can experience great and mutual success working together through several key avenues of cooperation:

- Shared access to VFW Service Officers to help file disability claims
 - Camaraderie, peer support and mentorship
 - Cooperating on community and veterans service initiatives
 - Conducting joint events, celebrations and recognition ceremonies
 - Fellowship Opportunities
 - Use of VFW facilities
 - Pooling community connections for mutual benefit
 - Combined effort on local, state and national advocacy efforts to attain the best possible outcomes for veterans
 - Access to VFW's Help A Hero scholarships
 - Direct help from VA education benefit specialists through VFW's 1 Student Veteran
- With more than 6,000 VFW Posts and more than 1,500 SVA Chapters, there are many opportunities for cooperation and engagement. What are you waiting for? Find an SVA Chapter near you to get involved today

Student Veteran Demographics

Who Are Student Veterans?

- ✓ 73%-80% of Student Veterans are male; 21-27% are female.
- ✓ With only 10-14% of military personnel being women, female Student Veterans are over represented in postsecondary education.
- ✓ Only 15% of Student Veterans are traditionally aged college students. Most Student Veterans are between the ages of 24 and 40.
- ✓ 47% of Student Veterans have children.
- ✓ 47.3% of Student Veterans are married.
- ✓ 62% of Student Veterans are first-generation students.

The majority of student veterans are enlisted (90.35) and current conflict era. The chart provided below are for reference. More information on Student can be found at studentveterans.org.

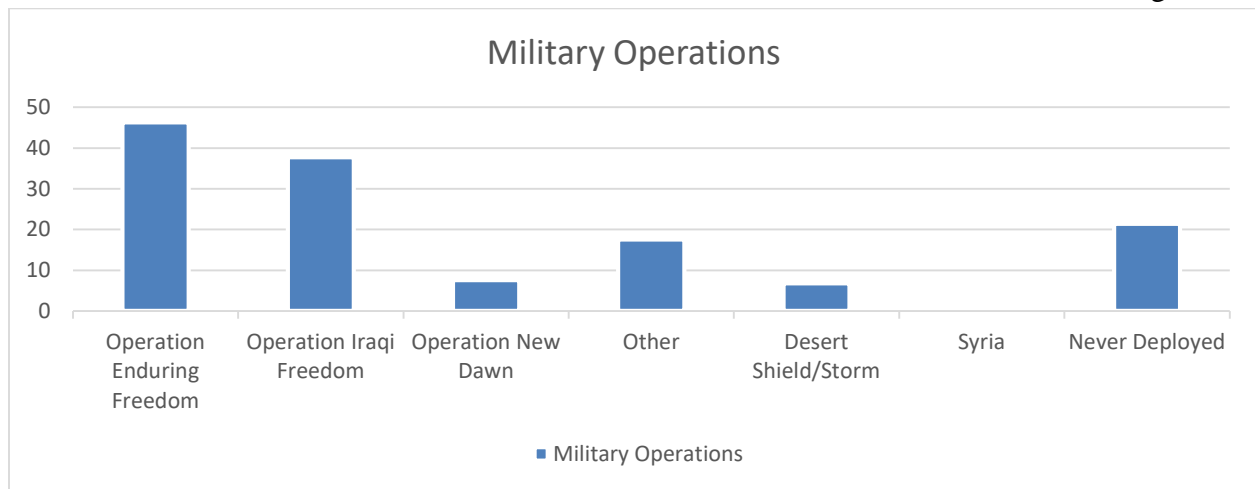


Figure 1: The sum is greater than 100 because many veterans have supported multiple operations over the span of their career.

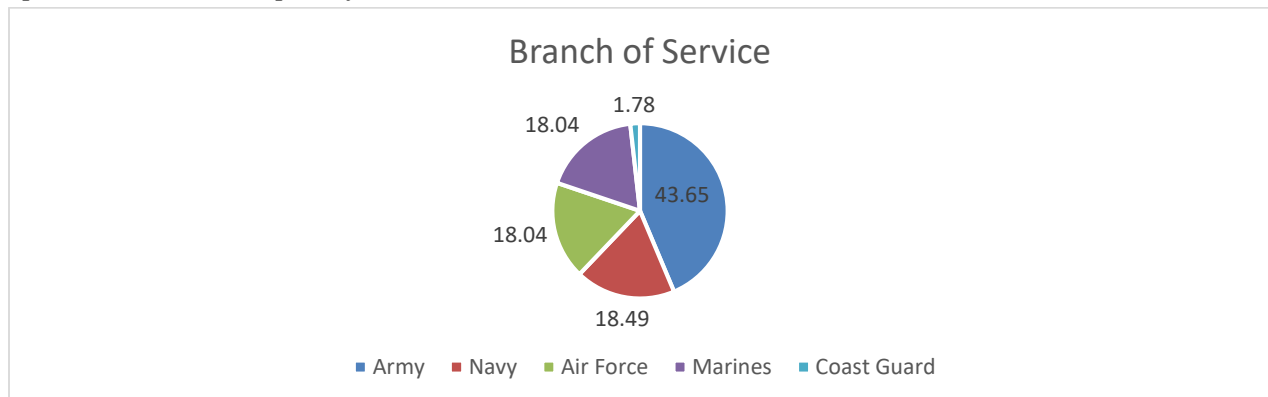


Figure 2: The rank breakdown is 90.35% Enlisted, 1.2% Warrant, and 8.45% Officer

What is VFW Student Veteran Outreach?

The VFW and Student Veterans of America have partnered under the common goal of student veteran success. The intent of the partnership is for departments to build relationships with local chapters through VFW Liaisons. As of May 2019, there are over 1,500 SVA chapters.

What Makes a Good Liaison?

- ✓ Anyone with a passion for student veterans.
- ✓ Someone that is comfortable with Social Media/Communication platforms like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, texting and emails.
- ✓ Someone willing to stay informed with VFW-SVA initiatives geared towards student.
- ✓ Must be willing to attend events on campus.
- ✓ Focuses on developing relationships, not membership- if you build it, they will come!

Getting Started

Locate your local chapters at studentveterans.org/chapter/directory and contact the POC. It is probably better to reach out to the faculty advisor because there is high student turn over. If the information is not up to date, you can try finding the chapters' social media pages or reaching out to the veteran services office at the educational institution. Not all chapters are called Student Veterans of America, for instance, the University of Kansas was called the Collegiate Veterans Association while other chapters are called simply "Veteran's Club" or "Students Affected by the Military", the latter was open to the spouses and dependent children.

- ✓ Attend SVA events on and off campus.
- ✓ Ask to be added to their mailing list so you can stay up to date.
- ✓ Engage SVA members -- invite them to your Post.
- ✓ Educate student veterans about the VFW.
- ✓ Find out how your Post can help.
- ✓ Most university's or colleges clubs are required to do volunteer work ask for their help.
- ✓ Create a VFW information package for enrollment handouts.

A lot of chapters are light on funds so a liaison can offer to purchase food like pizza for chapter meetings.

VFW Student Veteran Initiatives



- ✓ Scholarships of up to \$5,000
- ✓ Separated with or currently hold a military rank of E-5 or below
- ✓ Demonstrate a need for financial assistance
- ✓ Must be accepted or enrolled in a VA-approved program or school at an accredited post-secondary institution
- ✓ Limited to one per family per semester
- ✓ Applications for the fall semester will be accepted Jan.1 through Apr. 30
- ✓ Applications for the spring semester will be accepted Aug. 1 through Nov. 15
- ✓ Fall semester scholarships will be awarded in August, and spring semester scholarships will be awarded in January
- ✓ Scholarships must be used by the end of the school semester for which the veteran is applying or they will become null and void
- ✓ Be a citizen of the United States

The VFW and one of its major supporters, Sport Clips Haircuts, have again partnered to help our veterans and their families. The VFW's "Sport Clips Help A Hero Scholarship" will provide service members and veterans with the financial assistance they need to complete their educational goals without incurring excessive student loan debt. It's just another way to say "thank you" to those who deserve it the most. vfw.org/Scholarship/



- ✓ Resolution of wrongly denied or delayed educational benefits
- ✓ Provides expert assistance for veterans who need:
- ✓ Guidance in filing for GI Bill benefits
- ✓ Help accessing education benefits
- ✓ Answers to VA benefit questions

Today's veterans can face any number of obstacles while furthering their education. Taking advantage of all the benefits they've earned and DESERVE shouldn't be one of them. That's why the VFW, in conjunction with the Student Veterans of America (SVA), developed the ***1 Student Veteran*** program. 1 Student Veteran offers direct assistance to student veterans who have questions or are experiencing problems accessing their VA benefits.

Veterans who send a message to 1 Student Veteran (1studentveteran@vfw.org) will receive a reply from a VFW staff member who specializes in student veteran issues within 24 hours or the next business day.

If you have already confirmed your benefit eligibility through the VA's GI Bill Hotline, **888.GI.BILL**, and double-checked your enrollment verification with your school, take the next step and contact 1 Student Veteran today. vfw.org/1StudentVeteran/



In keeping with the VFW's commitment to student veterans' success, every year the VFW teams up with Student Veterans of America (SVA) to host the VFW-SVA Legislative Fellowship program, providing 10 exemplary VFW members who are student veterans the opportunity to make their voices heard on Capitol Hill and in their community.

Candidates will be evaluated based on the following criteria:

- Submission of an essay proposal based on one of four priority issues for the veterans' community
- VFW membership eligibility
- Current enrollment at an accredited college or university
- Any major is eligible to apply and some majors are eligible for academic credit

Student veterans interested in applying must complete an application package that includes an essay proposal on one of four specific legislative issues. The proposal should include a discussion of why the issue is important to the veteran community, and how the fellowship candidate plans to address the issue through federal policy solutions and community-based advocacy. Selected fellows will then be flown to Washington to ensure the veterans' voice is delivered to Capitol Hill alongside 500 fellow veteran advocates as part of the annual VFW Legislative Conference held in March.

VFW-SVA Legislative Fellowship opportunities are open to VFW members in good standing who are currently enrolled as students at accredited colleges and universities approved for GI Bill benefits. Visit vfw.org/eligibility for more information on membership. Student veterans enrolled at colleges and universities with active SVA chapters are also encouraged to apply. Visit studentveterans.org/chapter to find a chapter near you.

For the application essay proposal, applicants must select one of the following veterans' issues to write about:

- Student veteran success on campus and beyond
- Improving veteran's health care and benefits
- Transition from military to civilian life
- Challenges for service members and military families

Expenses covered for the fellowship include airfare, hotel accommodations, local transportation to/from meetings and a per diem allowance to participate in the VFW Legislative Conference.

The application period for the 2021 VFW-SVA Legislative Fellowship program will be opening soon. Please join the VFW Action Corps for weekly updates that will include notification of the opening of the application period.

LEADERSHIP AND DEVELOPMENT



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VFW Leadership and Development

Being a member of the VFW means being an agent of change.

But...

To be a leader within the VFW means connecting with those around you; inspiring them with a shared sense of mission; and through education and engagement, mobilizing them in order to accomplish a common goal.

As Gen Stanley McChrystal put it,

“I was most reinforced by the understanding that where we were, the status quo was failing, and because it was failing I knew we had to change. But instead of trying to provide an exact path ahead, what I did was I tried to inform and engage the command by saying we have to move in this general direction- help me figure it out. As people did that, we refined the direction we were going, constantly shifting, and it made more people the agents of change.”

Mission Statement: The Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States believes America is defined by how it treats those who sacrificed to protect it; we believe in protecting and fighting for those who were brave enough to fight for us. Whether on Capitol Hill or in our communities, the VFW fights and defends the rights of America’s veterans by lobbying for veteran’s rights, helping veterans get the benefits they deserve, and assisting veterans further their education with scholarships and living assistance for them and their families. To do less, would be an unconscionable betrayal of our responsibilities as Americans and veterans.

Leadership in the 21st Century in 3 Questions

[Roselinde Torres: “What it takes to be a great leader”]

1. **Where are you looking to anticipate change?** *Proactive leaders practice identifying and sharing trends that impact your team in order to course correct a strategy or to anticipate new moves. Shape your future instead of just reacting to it.*
 - a. Who are you spending time with and on what topics? Where are you traveling? What are you reading? How are you distilling all of this information into understanding potential pitfalls so you can do something right now in order to prepare?
 - i. The following questions aim to identify local focal points of change. If you answer “No” to a question, think about expanding your awareness to identify potential trends. If you answer “Yes” to a question, discuss with your team how current trends in that area may impact you or your mission- this may offer an opportunity to raise awareness within your community and engage your local leaders in a call for action or collaborative campaign for change.
 1. Local Government
 - a. Do you pay attention to local government?
 - b. Do you know who your local government officials are and their priority goals?
 - c. Are you aware of current or upcoming ballot initiatives?
 2. Educational Institutions
 - a. Do you know all of the schools in your area?
 - b. Do you have relationships with the educators and administrators of those schools?
 - c. If an institution of higher education (community college/university/vocational school), do you know the percentage of veterans in attendance? And/or if said institution is veteran friendly?
 3. Local Business
 - a. Are you aware of local business trends?
 - b. Do you know/have a relationship with the local business leaders in your area?
 - c. Have you thought about areas of mutual interest?

2. **What is the diversity measure or your network?** *Great leaders understand that having a more diverse network is a source of pattern identification as well as solutions because you have surrounded yourself with people who are thinking differently than you are.*
- a. Expand your capacity to develop relationships with people and organizations that are very different than you; find shared goals; and work together.
 - i. Name 3 other non-profit organizations in your area. (i.e. local Homeless Shelter or Food Pantry)
 - 1. _____
 - 2. _____
 - 3. _____
 - ii. Now, in 5 words or less, write 3 common goals you have with each organization above. (i.e. preventing Veteran Homelessness/ feeding veterans and their families/ providing family assistance)
 - 1. _____

 - 2. _____

 - 3. _____

 - iii. Have you already established a working partnership in a community project? Think how you might incorporate other organizations to expand the impact of that effort.

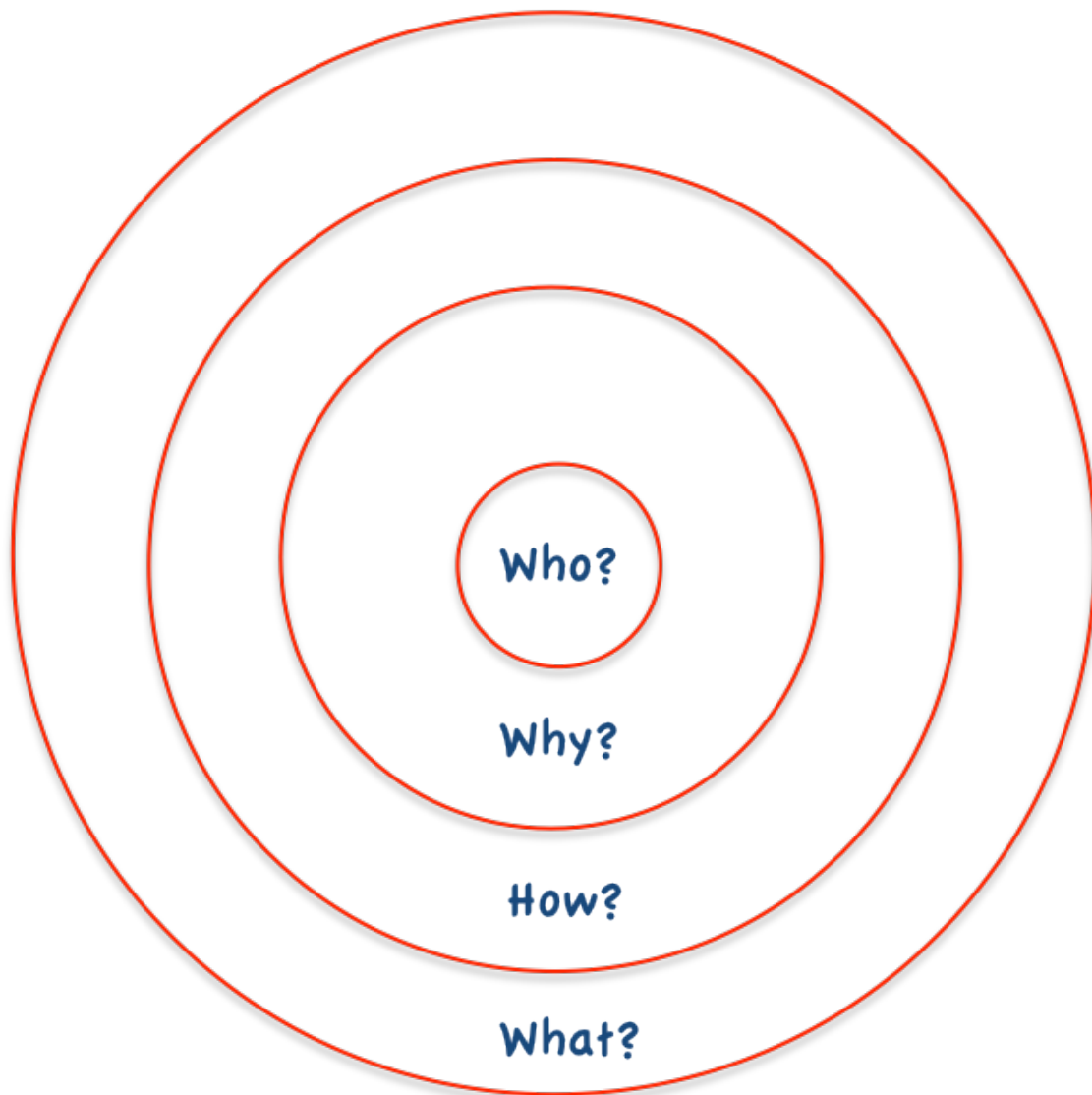
3. **Are you courageous enough to abandon the past?** *Brave leaders dare to be different: they just don't talk about taking risks they actually take them. The most impactful development comes when you have built the emotional stamina to withstand others who tell you that your new ideas are naïve or stupid. Courageous leaps are joined and supported often by people who think differently than you.*
- a. When challenging the status quo, it's easy to say "we can't change that because it's tradition!" or "why change when we've always done it this way?", but in order to succeed and to grow we must not only be willing to change we must embrace it.
 - i. Think of 3 practices within your organization that have made you successful in the past. Now, re-examine these practices by asking the following questions of all three.
 - 1. Does this practice still work? (Does it still serve its original function?)
 - 2. Does this practice impede my efforts? (Is it holding me back or preventing me from trying something new?)
 - 3. Is this practice marginalizing and excluding those who I'm trying to reach? (Am I unable to work with certain groups simply out of tradition- am I limiting my network and sphere of influence because of the past?)

It is undoubtedly hard to let go of practices that have made you successful in the past. As long as circumstances do not change, there is no reason to; however, changing times call for changing practices, and in our dynamic society this inevitably means the failure to change is the failure to thrive.

How Great Leaders Inspire Action: Who? Why? How? What?

[Simon Sinek: “Start with why”]

1. **People don’t buy what you do, they buy why you do it**, and great leaders are able to communicate why they do what they do in order to inspire action in others. The goal is not to do business with people who need what you have; the goal is to do business with people who believe what you believe.



2. **Who, Why, How, What, and why should anyone care?** No one is going to want to be a part of what you do if you can't tell them why you do it or give them a reason to care. The first step in successfully communicating what you believe is by working from the outside in and communicating from the inside out.

a. **What** does your Post do?

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

b. **How** does your Post do what they do?

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

c. **Why** does your Post do what they do: what's your cause, your purpose, your belief-why does your organization exist?

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

d. **Who** does your Post serve?

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

- e. Now, distill this into a mission statement that conveys what you believe and why anyone should care. Example:

Great Leaders Are Prepared, Informed, and Polite but Firm

1. Great leaders are prepared with great questions. [*Good Leaders Ask Great Questions: John C. Maxwell*]
 - a. Too often as leaders, we get fixated on our own point of view and spend our time trying to convince others of our opinions instead of trying to find out theirs. As English novelist and politician Edward Bulwer-Lytton asserted, “The true spirit of conversation consists in building on another man’s observation, not overturning it.” That’s where questions come into play. By asking questions and listening carefully to answers, we can discover valuable perspectives other than our own. This is valuable because we often make faulty assumptions about other people:
 - i. **We believe people are good at the same things we are good at— they aren’t.** Do you know your members? What are their backgrounds, skills, and hobbies? How can you utilize their strengths to accomplish the mission?
 - ii. **We believe people are energized by the same things that energize us— they aren’t.** Are you dismissing your member’s ideas because they are not in line with your own? Instead of dissuading your members, focus their energy in activities they’re interested in.
 - iii. **We believe people see the big picture in the same way we do— they don’t.** After presenting your mission statement to your members, ask them to tell you what it means in their own words. How does their big picture differ from yours? This may give you invaluable perspective into how your members perceive the mission.
2. Great leaders are informed and utilize the resources available to them.
 - a. VFW tools and training.
 - i. Commander-in-Chief General Orders, National Headquarters Bulletin
 - ii. Department, District, and Post Bylaws
 - iii. VFW Podium Edition (Congressional Charter, Bylaws, Manual of Procedure, and Ritual)
 - iv. VFW Training and Support (vfw.org)
 - v. Department Training Programs (Schools of Instruction)
 - vi. VFW magazine and National Publications (Checkpoint, Action Corps Weekly)

3. Great leaders are polite but firm: how to deal with difficult people. Part of being a leader is having a thick skin, patience, and understanding when dealing with difficult people. *[John F. Gwizdak, Past Commander-in-Chief]*
 - a. The 4 members of every Post.
 - i. **Comrade Helen Hammer** – Sits in the back of the meeting and complains about every piece of business.
 - ii. **Comrade Billy Bylaws** – Favorite question, “Is that in the Bylaws?” Wants to disrupt your meeting by challenging parliamentary procedure.
 - iii. **Comrade N.O. Change** – Favorite phrase, “We’ve always done it like that.” Adverse to any and every change proposed – refuses to abandon the past.
 - iv. **Comrade Henry Give ‘em Hell** – He wasn’t at the meeting, but won’t hesitate to voice his disapproval of the business conducted. Wants to subvert any progress made with gossip and misinformation.
 - b. How do you handle these people? Be professional, be polite, have character, but be speak up and be firm.

Conclusion and Review

The answers to the following questions can be found in reading above.

1. What are the 3 major focal points of change?
 - a. _____
 - b. _____
 - c. _____
2. How do you handle difficult and disruptive people? **(circle one)**
 - a. Yelling and screaming at them until they're quiet?
 - b. Ordering them not to speak unless spoken to?
 - c. Cursing them behind their backs with other members?
 - d. Politely and professionally speaking to them in a firm manner?
3. Working with people who think differently than you do... **(circle one)**
 - a. Can cause problems within your organization.
 - b. Expands the partnership capacity within your community.
 - c. Limits your ability to accomplish your goals.
 - d. Doesn't work because they don't share your values.
4. What does a mission statement convey? **(circle one)**
 - a. Who you serve.
 - b. Why you do what you do.
 - c. How you do what you do.
 - d. What you do.
 - e. All of the above.

The difference between successful and unsuccessful leaders is intent: successful leaders understand they are part of a team and make it their mission to lead their team through inspiration and education in order to help them accomplish a shared goal. Once the goal is accomplished, successful leaders recognize their team – they say “thank you.” **This organization is only able to accomplish its mission with your help and your leadership. Thank you for serving our country and thank you for continuing to serve through the VFW.**

Answers: 1) Government, Education, Business; 2) d; 3) b; 4) e

OFFICER RESPONSIBILITIES - ADMINISTRATIVE POLICY AND PROCEDURE



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Introduction

When the Veterans of Foreign Wars was first organized, it was primarily an association of individual groups all working toward common goals of veterans legislation, veterans benefits, veterans rehabilitation and patriotism. Administration was comparatively simple since the only problems were those of getting information to the members and getting them to agree as to what was to be done.

These **still** are our major goals but the interests of the Veterans of Foreign Wars have broadened and activities on the local Post level have grown far beyond the original purpose.

Youth activities, civic betterment, humanitarian projects, and community service all take a tremendous amount of individual volunteer effort and a lot of money. In the raising of that money and in providing recreation and social activities for our own members our Posts have branched into activities which have multiplied the organization's administrative challenges far beyond what our founders could possibly have dreamed.

These challenges are compounded by the fact that a VFW Post is almost a pure democracy and nearly all of its programs depend upon volunteers. Decisions are made by vote of people who are informed on the subject and are carried out by volunteers. As a result, if there is not a set of hard and fast rules to follow and a clear understanding of fields of responsibility and limits of authority there are going to be misunderstandings and irritations which create dissension and detract from the purpose of the organization.

This problem has been recognized and very sincere efforts have been made (and continue to be made) by the National and Department Organizations to provide rules and guidance for Post Officers and Committee Chairmen in carrying out the duties of their particular field of responsibility.

The **master set of rules** for the guidance of all Post activities is the VFW National Bylaws and Manual of Procedure. The Bylaws are the basic rules and the Manual of Procedure goes into further detail. These govern all activities of the Veterans of Foreign Wars and are inflexible. They are worded very clearly, and they mean just what they say. The Bylaws and Manual of Procedure, along with the VFW Ritual are combined into one document referred to as the Podium Editions (Item #4108) and is available in the VFW Store.

Because of the fact that state laws differ and there is a wide variance between Departments in their organizational make-up, most Departments have adopted **Department Bylaws** which apply only to Posts within that Department's jurisdiction. These must not conflict with the National Bylaws nor can they permit anything which is prohibited by the National Bylaws.

In most cases, Department Bylaws deal with policies to be followed at the Department or District level and do not attempt to go into detail in the operation of the Post. They can impose **more** restrictions on Posts but never **less** than are provided in the National Bylaws.

Naturally, a basic set of rules cannot contain much detail nor can it specifically provide for every possible contingency in every Post -- from the little 25 member Post which holds a meeting once a month and lives off its dues -- to the thousand member Post which owns its own home and conducts dozens of activities in as many different fields.

For that reason, **specialized** rules must be formulated and adopted to cover specific activities. The more complicated the activity, the more specific the rules must be.

These rules seek to prevent Posts from falling into the common pitfalls of poor planning, deficit financing, loss of control, and illegal operations.

Since the Bylaws are designed to cover a wide range of operations, they cannot and do not attempt to specifically detail every move of the Post. They are something like a building code. They establish certain minimum requirements but they permit you to build a lot of different kinds of houses.

As a Post grows in size and activity, there are certain steps it either should take or must take to protect itself and its officers and avoid future arguments and misunderstandings which can create problems and dissension.

Incorporation

The first steps that any Post must take before it branches into any type of community project, social activity or financial undertaking is incorporation. Most Posts are already incorporated -- the rest should be.

There are two general sets of rules which cover incorporation of a VFW Post: the laws of the individual state, and the National Bylaws of the Veterans of Foreign Wars (Section 708). To be recognized, your corporation must comply with both and must be submitted to the Commander-in-Chief for review.

In just about every Department, incorporation of a Post is a comparatively simple matter since forms which meet the requirements of state law and the National VFW are available upon request from Department Headquarters. If they are not available, this Headquarters would strongly urge that such forms be prepared, approved by the appropriate state official and the National VFW and reproduced for use by the Posts.

Incorporation is necessary for several purposes. To begin with, in many States, the Post must be incorporated before it can hold property in its own name and before any type of liquor license may be issued to it.

Secondly -- and perhaps just as important to the officers of the Post -- the act of incorporation takes individual responsibility away from the Post Officers and places it upon the Post itself. The individual officers of an incorporated Post cannot be sued for financial obligations of the Post.

It is the general policy of this Headquarters that approval will not be given to separate Holding Corporations or Club Corporations. Some of these have been approved in the past and conceivably will be permitted to exist under that approval, but there will be no more in the future. (Unless changes in laws or regulations make a change in policy necessary.)

There is no particular advantage in the pyramiding of corporations. The Post incorporation is sufficient to protect all its operations -- **if those operations are kept under control of the Post**. The general purpose of a separate Club Corporation or Holding Corporation is to take control **away** from the members of the Post. Usually it has not been done for any dishonest purpose but in the belief that more efficient operation will result from tighter control by a smaller group of people. It is the contention of the Veterans of Foreign Wars that sufficient control may be exercised -- without sacrifice of democratic processes -- by the adoption of Post Bylaws and rules.

An exception to the “no separate corporation” rule may be made in the case of sponsorship of large-scale “one- shot” activities such as an air show, a community celebration, a Department Convention, etc. It is sometimes better in these cases to incorporate the individual activity for ease in obtaining insurance, settling financial obligations, etc. These corporations have a limited existence and are dissolved after their purpose is served.

A standard Articles of Incorporation template is available through the Adjutant General’s Office or can be printed or downloaded from the training and support section of the National Headquarters website.

Post Bylaws

Every Post operating any type of activity -- particularly a Club or Post Home -- should adopt Post Bylaws. Section 202 of the National Manual of Procedure requires that such Bylaws be submitted to the Department Commander and Commander-in-Chief for review.

The **Post Bylaws** can cover the gaps left in the National Bylaws and Department Bylaws and Rules. Where the former are the **building code**, the Post Bylaws are the **house plan**. They show just what you are trying to accomplish.

The National or the Department Organizations can furnish you with a Post By-Law template. However, they are the responsibility of the Post and may be set up in the way best suited to the type of operation contemplated by the Post. They **cannot** permit anything prohibited by National or Department rules, nor can they take away any of the responsibilities or authority of Post Officers. They **can** set up general procedures and policies within the Post.

Post Bylaws may provide for the establishment of certain standing committees within the Post, state how they are to be selected and the limits of their powers and duties; they may give authority for the sponsorship of recurring activities; limit the expenditures of funds; establish the procedure for carrying out certain objectives; and provide for their own amendment.

Generally speaking, they set up the **policies** of the Post and provide for carrying them out. They protect the member against ill-conceived or hasty actions since they generally provide for prior notice and a 2/3 vote for amendment, and they promote a clearer understanding of operating procedures.

Matters of **policy** are covered in the Bylaws; **details of management** of a Post Home or Club are left to the Post Club or Home regulations.

A standard Bylaws template is available through the Adjutant General's Office or can be printed or downloaded from the training and support section of the National Headquarters website.

Officer Responsibility & Limits of Authority

If every Post Officer were familiar with their duties and responsibilities and their limitations -- and carried out their duties to the best of their ability -- there would be very few squabbles within a Post and none which would require outside intervention. The National Manual of Procedure specifically lists certain duties for each officer and, in the normal course of events, this would be sufficient. However, the complex nature of the operation of many Posts makes it necessary that we look beyond a mere listing of duties and fully understand the reasons for the division of authority. In this way we can apply them to the unusual situations which are bound to crop up from time to time.

The **Post meeting** is the center of all Post activities. Every member has a right to attend all meetings and has a voice in their proceedings. It is at the Post meeting that the Post adopts its Bylaws, its Club Regulations, decides its policies, and distributes responsibilities. Within practical limitations, the Post meeting is supreme to the Post Officers, committees and employees. The membership present may overrule decisions of the Post Commander or House Committee; they may approve expenditures, set policies, and delegate authority. The Post meeting cannot take any action contrary to the National or Department Bylaws or rules or in conflict with its own Bylaws.

It is important to understand that there **are** limitations on the authority of the Post. A member has the right to appeal any Post action to the District Commander (Section 109 of the Manual of Procedure), who will determine whether that action was proper. In extreme cases, a member can go to the courts if he/she feels that their rights have been abused by an action of the Post. The Post cannot take **unreasonable** actions at a meeting. For instance, it could not refuse payment of a legitimate bill for an item authorized for purchase at a previous meeting. It cannot direct an officer or member to do anything contrary to VFW regulations or public law. It **cannot** take away any of the authority given to individual officers through the National Bylaws.

Ideally, the Post meeting makes the rules and sets the policy for the Post; other levels of authority carry them out.

The **Post Commander** is the key officer of the Post. They, alone, represent the **judicial** branch of the organization and also have some of the responsibilities of the **executive** branch. They preside at all meetings, enforce the rules, appoint committees not otherwise provided for, and make certain that the other officers and committeemen perform their duties.

Their authority extends to the Post Home or Club to the extent of enforcing the rules of the Post and the National and Department VFW and public laws. They represent the authority of the Post between meetings, and their voice is that of the Post membership. They see that the Post Trustees conduct their audits, that the Post Quartermaster is bonded, and that the House Committee properly supervises the activities of the Post Home.

Their authority also is limited according to the rules of the organization and the bounds of common sense. They are in no sense a dictator. They cannot order nor permit the breaking of laws nor can they supersede the recognized authority of other officers or committees. They cannot, for instance, order the Club Manager to keep the clubrooms open after hours, nor can they direct the Post Quartermaster to pay an unauthorized bill.

The Commander should be familiar with all activities of the Post. They should sit in with the Trustees at their audits or, at least, have a sufficient knowledge of their procedure to know whether they are doing their job. They should attend the meetings of the House Committee, calling to their attention any discrepancies he/she may have observed or complaints they may have received. They must know that when they sign a check, it is in payment of a legitimate expenditure.

The Commander is the arbitrator of arguments and the judge in disputes. As a general rule, their decisions are considered correct until over-ruled by the Post meeting, the District, Department Commander or Commander-in-Chief.

The **Post Quartermaster** has certain definite responsibilities and duties. They are the responsible officer for all Post funds and property and his/her signature validates all checks. They keep the fiscal records for the Post and have the duty of overseeing all financial transactions. They must be bonded to the Post for all funds under their control.

In the case of a large-scale Club operation, it often becomes impractical or impossible for the Post Quartermaster to physically handle all the funds or to personally keep the detailed records of operation. It is not uncommon in these cases to require that the Club Manager or a hired bookkeeper keep a separate set of club books, subject to the control of the Quartermaster and reported to the Quartermaster at regular intervals.

The Quartermaster is the **responsible** Post Officer in financial matters -- not necessarily the Post bookkeeper. In a large corporation the treasurer does not physically handle the bookkeeping obligations but he/she is responsible that they are done properly, efficiently and accurately. This may also be true of the Post Quartermaster, depending upon the Post Bylaws and Club regulations. In any case, they must be familiar with all books of record and are responsible for all required Federal and State reports and payments.

Remember that the Post cannot take away any of the authority of the Post Quartermaster although they may be relieved of some of the **work**.

The Quartermaster only pays bills which are authorized by Post action or under Post rules. They cannot refuse to pay a legitimate and properly authorized bill except for a lack of funds. Neither can they be forced to pay one which is not properly authorized.

Quite often a controversy arises between the Quartermaster and Club Manager as to responsibility for Club funds. Sometimes a fine point arises which must be arbitrated. As a rule of thumb, the Quartermaster keeps their nose out of the cash register except for checking purposes, and the Manager hides no transactions from the Quartermaster. The Quartermaster does have the right, and the duty, to determine that all reports are correct and that all funds are handled properly. They do not have the right to assume managerial responsibilities.

The **Post Trustees** duties are probably the most misunderstood of any of the Post Officers. They are primarily the **watchdogs** of the Post funds. They make certain that no one has their fingers in the till. They audit the Post funds regularly -- at least once each quarter.

While the National Bylaws are silent on this point, it would seem logical that the Trustees also have authority and responsibility concerning the proper handling of funds. It is only reasonable that their authority should not be limited to catching a dishonest person. Equally important should be the prevention of dishonesty. Where funds are guarded carelessly or records are kept inefficiently, the Trustees should call attention to this and make every effort to correct it.

The Trustees duties extend to **every** operation of the Post. Their audits must cover all activities, including the clubrooms, the bar, bingo, or any other source of income or financial transactions. Again, it is not always entirely necessary that the Trustees do their own investigating and conduct their own audits. In most cases, the Trustees are not qualified accountants, particularly where large amounts of cash are involved and the operations are especially complex. Many Posts employ a private firm of accountants for the purpose of an audit. This is to be encouraged rather than discouraged. In these cases, the auditors report to the Trustees and the Trustees make certain that the audit is conducted correctly.

A quarterly audit of all funds and accounts is an absolute necessity. If the Trustees do not function in a proper manner, the Commander may deem it an emergency situation and appoint an auditing committee on his/her own initiative.

Regardless of the size of the Post, a quarterly audit is mandatory. Failure to conduct one may result in the cancellation of the Post Quartermaster bond and will take away all voting privileges at District and Department Conventions.

The Trustees do not have any authority over the management of the Post Home, nor is property held in their name in an incorporated Post. They cannot serve on any committee having to do with the handling of Post funds, and cannot therefore serve as members of the House Committee, Bingo Committee, etc. There is nothing to keep a Trustee from serving as a volunteer worker or in an appointive capacity where Post funds are not handled.

The **House Committee** functions only in a Post which operates a Post Home or Club. This committee may be selected in anyway the Post determines but it is generally considered advisable that it be elected by the Post membership, with the members serving staggered terms, on the order of Post Trustees. This lessens the possibility of one certain group gaining and retaining control of the Club.

The duties of the House Committee should be laid out in the Post Bylaws and/or Club regulations so there is no misunderstanding of their powers and responsibilities. The purpose of the committee is to act on behalf of the Post in making certain that the club is run in an efficient, reputable and legal manner and that the rules of the Veterans of Foreign Wars are adhered to.

It is the general procedure for the House Committee to hire all employees, set their salaries, and issue necessary instructions and orders to the Club Manager. The committee usually meets at least once a month for the purpose of discussing facility problems, taking inventory, studying financial reports, and in general, acting as an advisory, supervisory and disciplinary board. No member of the House Committee should ever be permitted to act as Club Manager or as a paid employee of the Club due to the obvious conflict of interest.

The House Committee is generally given authority to suspend the Club privileges of any member and to establish and enforce, through the Club Manager, rules of decorum and behavior. They usually, also, have the authority to suspend or discharge the Club Manager or any employee for good and sufficient cause. In any disciplinary action, discharge or suspension, there should be provision for an appeal to the Post meeting.

The committee cannot make or enforce any rules contrary to the rules of the Department, public law, or the lawful instructions of the Post. If it is elected from the Post floor, the committee is directly responsible to the Post floor and makes its reports to the Post at meetings. Refusal to comply with the rules and instructions of the Post is grounds for removal of any or all members of the House Committee.

The **Club Manager** is directly responsible to the House Committee for the management of the Post Clubrooms. They have the direct responsibility for supervising employees, enforcing rules, and accounting for receipts and expenditures. They must have enough authority to permit him/her to do so with a reasonable degree of freedom from interference. They must keep the accounts in such a manner as to justify all expenditures and verify all receipts. The Club Manager must make reports to the Post Quartermaster and to the House Committee. They enforce the rules but they do not make them.

The Club Manager keeps all payroll records, recording amount of pay to each individual and withholding the proper amount of Federal and State Income Taxes and FICA Taxes. Either the Club Manager or the Post Quartermaster must make the necessary Federal and State reports and payments for withholding taxes, Social Security and Unemployment Compensation.

The Club Manager has the right to appeal any decision of the House Committee to the Post floor for arbitration. Post members should, however, be cautious in overruling the actions of its own representatives on the House Committee, particularly in the case of frequent appeals. A dishonest Club Manager generally has no problem in bringing in enough friendly votes at a meeting to uphold his appeal.

In summary, it must be remembered that the Veterans of Foreign Wars itself is supreme in any dispute. The Department rules and the Post Bylaws and rules outline the way the Post and the Club must be run. The Post, in **all** cases, is above the Club. The Club is merely an activity of the Post and must be treated as such. **In no case is it a separate entity.**

When a Post is chartered it is granted a license or franchise for the use of the name of the Veterans of Foreign Wars in the carrying out of programs which are assumed to be of value to the entire organization. At any time that a Club or other activity is managed in such a manner as to harm the good name and reputation of the Veterans of Foreign Wars, the right to use the name can be revoked.

As a general rule, the operations of VFW Posts and their Clubrooms in the Departments are a credit to the organization and a source of pride to its membership. Through proper adherence to the rules of the VFW and the duties and responsibilities of our officers, we can avoid the many misunderstandings and bitter arguments which can break the finest Post.

Club Regulations

These, again, are left to the Post for adoption although they must not conflict with the National Bylaws, Department Post Home Rules or Post Bylaws. Suggested forms are available although they are not designed for adoption in their entirety. The variance between Posts makes it impossible to adopt a standard form for all Posts. Some operate entire buildings with activities scheduled every day of the week; others may own or rent very modest quarters and only be open occasionally. Some have a full-time paid staff of employees while others may operate entirely on volunteer help.

The Club regulations cover the details of operation. They outline the responsibilities and limits of authority of the Post membership, the House Committee, the Club Manager, and the guests. They cover opening and closing hours, decorum, enforcement of rules, hiring of paid help, financial authority and keeping of records.

For any Post operating a Club or Post Home, local regulations are a **must**. They will save many hours of argument, and remove most causes for misunderstanding and dissension.

ADMINISTRATIVE POLICY & PROCEDURE

Operation, Management & Control of Clubs and/or Canteens

The purposes of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States are stated within our Congressional Charter. The operation, management and control of clubs and/or canteens were not envisioned in the purposes of our organization. The operation, management and control of clubs and/or canteens are not provided for in our National Bylaws, Manual of Procedure and Ritual.

The first and foremost consideration of Posts shall be to the objects of the VFW which are fraternal, patriotic, historical, charitable, and educational. We must maintain our focus to preserve and strengthen comradeship among its members; to assist worthy comrades; to perpetuate the memory and history of our dead, and to assist their widows and orphans; to maintain true allegiance to the Government of the United States, and fidelity to its Constitution and laws; to foster true patriotism; to maintain and extend the institutions of American freedom; and to preserve and defend the United States from all enemies. VFW clubs and/or canteens shall be of secondary interest and concern and compatible with this stated purpose.

Rules and Regulations and Management Guides for the operation of Post sponsored clubs and/or canteens have been adopted by some Departments in compliance with state and local regulations and the applicable mandates of Section 708 and 709 of our National Bylaws which address incorporation and control of units. Also, many Posts have incorporated the above in their Bylaws or adopted Rules and Regulations for the operation, management and control of their canteens and/or clubs in accordance with the above.

Although differing laws at the local and state levels preclude the promulgation of universally acceptable rules and regulations, certain principles are essential for good management and proper control of Post sponsored clubs and/or canteens and certain policies are mandatory to insure total compliance with the National Bylaws of the Veterans of Foreign Wars both as to incorporation and control of units and to be in keeping with the objectives of the Veterans of Foreign Wars. In adopting rules and regulations for the operation, management and control of clubs and/or canteens, the following provisions of the National Bylaws must be adhered to:

Any Post owning and/or operating, directly or by reason of a holding company or other entity substantially controlled by the Post or its members, a canteen, clubroom or other facility available to members or guests must maintain general liability insurance, including, if necessary or appropriate, liquor liability insurance. Such insurance must be of a type and amount sufficient to protect the Post and must name, as additional insureds, the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States and the Department in which such Post is located.

All money, property or assets of any kind or nature, as well as all books and records owned, held or used by any activity, clubroom, holding company or unit sponsored, conducted or operated by, for or in behalf of a Post, shall be the property of the Post and must be placed in the care and custody of the Post Quartermaster.

No Post and no activity, clubroom or holding company or unit sponsored, conducted or operated by, for or on behalf of any Post may own any property jointly or in common with any individual, firm, partnership, association, corporation or other business or charitable entity, except that property may be held jointly or in common a post or unit of a congressionally chartered veterans organization, provided the arrangement allows for the prominent display of the names, trademarks, or service marks of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States and is not contrary to any provision of law or the National Bylaws.

No Post or activity, clubroom, holding company or unit sponsored, conducted or operated by, for or in its behalf, may participate in any arrangement whereby its funds are expended on property held by another entity for the joint use of such Post and other individuals, firms, partnerships, associations, corporations or other business or charitable entities, including veterans organizations, except that such arrangement may be made with a post or unit of a congressional chartered veterans organization, provided the arrangement allows for the prominent display of the names, trademarks, or service marks of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States nor is contrary to any provision of law or the National Bylaws.

Rulings & Appeals

Section 518 of the National Bylaws places, on the Department (State) Commander, the responsibility for deciding all questions of law and usage within their Department, subject to an appeal to the Commander-in-Chief. Where such questions are submitted directly to National Headquarters, it is our policy to refer them back to the Department.

Generally speaking, an appeal cannot be made nor will a ruling be given until after an action has actually taken place. For instance, a member cannot appeal a proposal that has not as yet been acted upon. The decision of a Post Commander can be appealed to the District Commander. If the District Commander upholds the Post action, an appeal may then be made, through channels, to the Department Commander. If the Department Commander upholds the District action, an appeal may then be made, through channels, to the Commander-in-Chief. The right of appeal is covered in section 109 of the National bylaws and Manual of Procedure.

A Department Commander or Department Adjutant may request information or guidance from the National Headquarters prior to entering into a contemplated action. Such requests will be honored and information provided to the best of our ability.

The Post Judge Advocate, Department Judge Advocate, or Judge Advocate General do not rule - they offer advice when asked to do so by the appropriate Commander. However, if an opinion written by the Judge Advocate in his/her advisory capacity is adopted and promulgated by the Commander, it then becomes the decision of the Commander.

Membership Eligibility

Where copies of separation documents are submitted, they are checked and information given as to whether eligibility is indicated. Where general information is asked, it is provided. We will give any and all assistance to a Post, or to the Department, in determining whether it should accept an applicant as a member.

National Headquarters has no facility for determining the eligibility of an applicant except by a check of the separation documents. We have no access to military records nor do we maintain any type of list of persons who are eligible for membership. Neither can we certify that an applicant is eligible merely because they were previously a member of another Post. All we can provide is general or routine information.

Once the applicant has been accepted as a member, however, the questions no longer are routine.

The procedure in removing ineligible is covered very specifically in Section 108 of the National Manual of Procedure. There is no short-cut to the procedure.

Members-at-Large

Section 101 of the National Bylaws makes provision for members-at-large for any eligible person by reason of location, current active military service or personal preference who does not wish to affiliate with a local Post. The eligible person may become a Department member-at-large as a matter of personal choice.

Continuity of Membership

National Headquarters cannot provide a Post with a list of its members showing the years in which their dues were recorded. Neither can we check the continuity of membership of an individual. Records are not maintained in a manner which makes it feasible to provide such information.

Complimentary lapel pins recognizing 25 or more years of continuous membership were discontinued several years ago. Where Posts wish to continue to recognize such members, the appropriate pins must be purchased through the VFW Store. These pins may be ordered by the Post Quartermaster in the same manner as other merchandise. It is not necessary to provide a list of the recipients or a sworn statement that they have earned the pin if the order is submitted by the Quartermaster or other responsible Post Officer.

National Headquarters Mailing Lists Officer List vs. Member List

National Headquarters maintains an officer mailing list of certain Department Officers and Committee Chairmen, District Officers and Committee Chairmen, and Post Officers and Committee Chairmen.

Every effort is made to keep this list current and correct. Changes and corrections are made daily as information is received. Some Department Adjutants routinely forward such changes. This service is appreciated and encouraged.

A mailing list of all members is also maintained and is constantly being updated. This computerized list is entirely separate from the officer mailing list.

A major source of confusion results from a change of address being submitted without identification of any office the member may hold. In such cases, the address may be changed on the computerized membership list but not on the officer list.

A typical letter may state "I've sent my change of address to you twice and I get my magazine correctly addressed but you keep sending my Post Commander mail to my old address." This will ALWAYS happen if the member does not indicate any office held so that it will be corrected also.

Post Officer mailing list addresses can easily be changed by the Quartermaster using the Online Membership System (OMS) Election Report feature.

Post Election Report

With the increased need for early, accurate information on new Post Officers and the amount of Post dues, a "Post Election Report" form is now being distributed to Post Quartermasters prior to Post elections. These forms are to be completed on-line through the Online Membership System (OMS) immediately following the Post election or a copy can be mailed prior to June 1st to National Headquarters, a copy to the Department, and a copy to the District or County Council. The installing officer is still required to ensure the submission of the Election Report and eligibility of each member, elected or appointed.

Of most importance to National Headquarters are the names and addresses of Post Commanders and Quartermasters and the amount of Post dues. Information regarding Post information such as location, meeting day and time, contact information, and services offered are tracked and used as part of the "Find a Post" feature on the National headquarters website.

Change of Post Name or Location

A Post cannot change its name or location without carrying out the provisions of Sections 205 or 208 of the National Manual of Procedure. We will NOT make such changes on the strength of a phone call, a letter or an email. Bitter experience has taught us that an enterprising or obstinate Post Officer may take it upon himself to make changes which have not been approved by the Post. We must have the properly signed documents on file before the change is recognized. This is true even where the name was incorrectly spelled on the muster report or the location has changed because of annexation or other legal action.

Posts ordering banners with the wrong name, location, or muster date will not receive them until the proper procedure has been followed.

Forms for Change of Name, Correction of Name, Change of Location, and Correction of Location are available without charge from the Adjutant General. Sample copies of the forms can be downloaded or printed in the training and support section of the National Headquarters website.

Change of Meeting Place

The change of a Post meeting place is covered in Section 205 of the National Manual of Procedure. Such a change requires the approval of the Department Commander but not the Commander-in-Chief.

A Post changes its location when it moves into a different political sub-division (from one city to another, from a city into a township, etc.). It changes its meeting place when it moves to another building in the same city-even if that city is as large as Chicago.

A Post could conceivably meet temporarily outside the limits of its chartered location without changing its official location, but the location should be changed when moving to a permanent home elsewhere.

Visitations—National Officers

Invitations to National Officers must be forwarded through channels to the Adjutant General with approval of the Department Commander. This applies to all National Officers, and unless the above is complied with, invitations will not be given consideration

Formation, Chartering & Instituting of VFW Posts

Pertinent points to organizing new VFW Posts (Section 201):

1. Only the Commander-in-Chief can authorize a charter for a new Post.
2. Charter application must contain the names of 25 eligible veterans; 10 must be new members.
3. A member may transfer from one Post to another provided the following conditions are met: 1) completion of the application as prescribed in Section 102 of the Manual of Procedure, 2) signing a Member Declaration, and 3) acceptance by the Post.
4. No new Post shall bear the name of a living person, other than a living Medal of Honor recipient, only after written consent from the recipient has been received, nor adopt a name already adopted by another Post in good standing in the department.
5. A Post shall not be instituted unless 10 or more qualified members are present for the institution.
6. Posts shall be instituted within 60 days of the date the charter is authorized.
7. The charter of a new Post shall remain open for up to 90 days from the date of institution of a Post.
8. The official date of charter for a Post is the date it is instituted.

Procedure in Issuance of New Post Charters

1. A letter is addressed to the Post Quartermaster about two weeks prior to the expiration of the 90-day charter period, informing that the charter period is due to close and instructs them to make up and submit a dues report covering all previously unreported members just as soon as the charter period expires.
2. About one week following the close of the 90-day charter period, an alphabetical print-out of names of members, including transfers, is mailed to the Post Commander and Post Adjutant. A cover letter requests each to certify the list, making such corrections and/or additions as necessary, and return via mail or email.
3. When certification is received, and corrections and/or additions verified, the charter is engrossed and mailed to the Post Commander. If additional names are included, a reasonable time is allowed for reports to clear so that verification can be made. If questions still remain, further correspondence is required.
4. The charter is not engrossed until the certified list is returned and verified from National Headquarters records.

The Department Adjutant receives a copy of all correspondence and is kept informed as to the problems encountered. They are also informed as to any changes in official information and are notified when the charter is mailed.

Some of the problems we have encountered in the issuance of the charters include:

1. **No dues payment reports received until long after the date of institution.** The Post Quartermaster should be assisted in making up the report. This should be ready for submission at the time of institution or immediately thereafter.
2. **Delay in submitting subsequent reports.** For obvious reasons, the Post Quartermaster must be instructed to submit a report at least once a month. Members names cannot be included on the charter if they have not been reported. This includes paid-up members transferring from another Post and transferred life members.

Charter Replacement

A Post having lost, damaged, or destroyed its charter may obtain a replacement from the Adjutant General's Office. This replacement charter will bear the same names as the original although it may be slightly different in appearance. The charge for a replacement charter is \$25.00.

Anniversary Award Certificates

The National VFW issues Anniversary Citations to Posts which have completed 50, 75 or 100 years of continuous existence. These are prepared from records at National Headquarters and are mailed to the Department Headquarters at least two weeks in advance of the anniversary with the request that arrangements be made for presentation.

These certificates are prepared automatically and do not have to be requested.

We have had requests for similar citations for 25th anniversaries, which are available upon request.

Suspension of Post Charter

The Department Commander may suspend the charter of a Post for a period of up to 90 days (and extend an additional 90 days, not to exceed a total of 180 days) for failure to comply with lawful orders and/or for violation of the laws and usages of the organization. The Department Commander must notify the Commander-in-Chief of such action within 48 hours.

Cancellation of Post Charter

Charters of VFW Posts may be cancelled under the provisions outlined in Sections 211 and 212 of the Congressional Charter and Bylaws and Manual of Procedure.

Before cancelling the charter of a Post, under Section 211, Congressional Charter and Bylaws, the Commander-in-Chief will suspend the charter, giving the Post an opportunity to appeal the suspension and possible revocation of charter.

The Commander-in-Chief may declare a Post defunct and its charter forfeited for failing to pay Department and National dues on a minimum of ten members by February 1, under the provision of Section 212 of the National Bylaws.

Voluntary Surrender of Charter

A Post may surrender its charter providing all members in good standing of the Post at the time are notified at least 20 days in advance of the proposed action and the proposition is voted on and approved by a two-thirds (2/3) vote of members present at a designated meeting where such action is considered.

Section 210 of the Congressional Charter and Bylaws and Manual of Procedure covers the requirements for such action.

Post & Member Correspondence

Letters and emails from Post officers or individual members are answered promptly and courteously. If the response requires that a decision be rendered, the letter will be forwarded to the Department Adjutant for the consideration and decision of the Department Commander. Correspondence of a general nature and questions of a routine nature will be answered directly to the individual. Posts should, however, be encouraged to carry on such correspondence with the Department rather than National Headquarters.

Where to Write for Information

In writing to National Headquarters concerning any matter, much time and effort will be saved if each letter covers **only one subject**. When a letter covers several subjects, such as VFW Store orders, Community Activities, Membership Awards, etc., a reply is unnecessarily delayed while the letter passes through the various Departments at National Headquarters for individual answers.

Letters concerning National Security, Legislation or Veterans Service Issues should be addressed to the appropriate Director, VFW Memorial Building, 200 Maryland Avenue, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20002.

Letters covering other programs and activities of the National Organization should be addressed to the Adjutant General, Quartermaster General or the appropriate Director, VFW Building, 406 West 34th Street, Kansas City, Missouri 64111.

Remember, your first source of information should be your Department Commander or Department Adjutant. These Officers are equipped to give you necessary information on most routine issues and common challenges.

PARLIAMENTARY PROCEDURE



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To Presiding Officers

The presiding officer is the servant of the organization.

All his/her acts at meetings and conventions must have the body's approval, unless a bylaw makes them independent.

Presiding officers who are ignorant of parliamentary law or who defy the body's will or deny to the members the proper exercise of their rights are a sad spectacle before intelligent assemblies and frequently cause discontent and disunity.

Capable presiding officers make good meetings.

Incompetent, abusive or obnoxious presiding officers can be censured; and their tenure of office can be shortened or abolished altogether by a 2/3 vote, and thus they may be legislated out of office at any meeting with prior notice.

You are not expected to know all the law, but you are expected to be able to at least match the members' combined basic knowledge of it.

Introduction

The object of all parliamentary procedure is to get things accomplished in an orderly manner, to take things up one at a time, and dispose of them in the shortest time possible, at the same time in a democratic fashion.

When only the Presiding Officer or Chairman knows Parliamentary Procedure, he/she can use it to their advantage, but when most of the body also understands the rules, the “Floor” actually controls the meeting, and the “Chair” simply directs it.

If you get in the habit of using the right terms, everybody will understand matters more readily. Note the expressions which appear in boldface type throughout this text.

When a meeting is called to order by the **CHAIR, AN AGENDA, OR ORDER OF BUSINESS**, is offered for approval, or should be offered. Once the agenda is approved, the meeting is technically limited to the points included. We usually take care of other matters and “beefs” under the **“GOOD OF THE VFW”**. If no agenda is offered, ask for it. If certain points you are interested in do not appear to be included, rise and either inquire about them or **MOVE** to add them to the agenda.

The business of a meeting is carried forward by **MOTIONS**. The object of all motions is to get things done in an orderly manner, and democratically. A motion is **MADE** from the **DEBATE ON THE QUESTION**.

In actual practice, there is usually some debate before the motion. Debate without a motion often becomes aimless, and should be limited.

In debating, or **SPEAKING ON A MOTION**, no member should be allowed to speak twice before others have had it once. Speaking on a motion is also called **TAKING THE FLOOR**.

Motions must be made on the subject involved, or the **POINT ON THE AGENDA**, which is being taken up. If a motion is made on some other subject, the chair is obliged to rule the maker of the motion **OUT OF ORDER** and **REFER THE QUESTION** to the proper place on the agenda.

Motions must be seconded to be entitled to debate. If the motion is not seconded, the chair is obliged to point out that there has been no second, and proceed with the meeting.

The chair is not supposed to “milk” the membership for a second because he/she wants one, but it is proper to allow enough time for a second, when required.

Debate before a motion has been made can always be stopped by someone **MAKING A MOTION**. Once a motion has been made and seconded, it must be **DISPOSED OF**, either by

being **DEFEATED, PASSED, TABLED, REFERRED, or PLACED IN COMMITTEE**. All of these are covered further in the text.

Except for certain **PRIVILEGED MOTIONS**, which will be explained later also, a motion cannot be placed while there is a **PREVIOUS MOTION** on the floor.

Recognition

In making a motion, or **MOVING**, the member should rise, face the chair, and signal or call for attention in a manner which will not disrupt the meeting. Once **RECOGNIZED** by the chair, the **SPEAKER** should first state his or her name and department, so such information can be **RECORDED IN THE MINUTES**.

In other democratic bodies, it is proper to say “Mr. Chairman,” “Madame Chairman,” etc., but in the VFW, it is more proper to say “My Comrade(s)” or “Comrade Commander”

Once a motion has been **MADE**, it is the duty of the chair to repeat it in order that everyone hears it, and also to **CLARIFY** it, if it was made in confused language.

Before we proceed further with motions, let us remove some of the misunderstanding concerning **WITHDRAWING A MOTION**.

Withdrawing

Before a motion has been **STATED BY THE CHAIR**, its maker has the right to **WITHDRAW** it, or modify the language. But, after it has been stated by the chair, the maker cannot withdraw or modify his/her motion without the **CONSENT OF THE ASSEMBLY**. After a motion has been stated by the chair, it belongs to the assembly.

It is also out of order to ask for the consent of the **SECONDER** to the withdrawal of a motion the seconder can only withdraw their second if the motion has been changed informally after they have seconded it.

It is **IN ORDER** for anyone to ask the maker of a motion to withdraw it, through the chair. But the maker does not have to comply. In brief, once a motion is made, seconded and stated by the chair, it cannot be withdrawn without the chair getting the consent of the assembly (usually by asking if there are any objections to the withdrawal). When a motion has gone that far, it must be disposed of by being tabled, referred, defeated, passed, etc., by vote.

When a motion has been withdrawn, it is treated as though it had never been made, and is not recorded in the minutes. Further, anyone can make the same motion again. The object of withdrawing a motion is to prevent it from being voted on and appearing in the minutes.

Once a motion has been duly made, seconded and is on the floor, it is subject to **AMENDMENT**. (Note: certain motions are not amendable and will be covered later on.)

The object of an amendment is to change or modify the original motion, without destroying the sense of it. For instance, if there was a motion on the floor to hold a picnic, it could be amended to add a date or a place, but it could not be amended to change the affair from a picnic to a bowling match.

Amendments should take the form of: inserting or adding words to the motion; striking out words; substituting words or sentences. The chair is obliged to rule out of order any proposed amendment which would do more than the above, and change the sense of the motion entirely.

In some cases, where a poorly worded motion is made, even the amendment does not make it a complete motion in some of the members' eyes. In such cases, an amendment can be made to the first amendment. This **SECOND DEGREE AMENDMENT** method is sometimes confusing, but it is legitimate, and it is up to the chair to clarify the motion and its amendments.

If it is too complicated for this, the chair can call for or recommend a **SUBSTITUTE MOTION**, with the consent of the assembly, which will tie the loose ends together so that an intelligent vote may be taken. A substitute motion is itself a form of amendment.

Amendments to motions are **DEBATABLE** (that is, can be discussed). Like motions, amendments also require seconding. Discussion on an amendment must be confined to the amendment itself.

In **TAKING THE VOTE**, after debate, the amendment is first voted upon, and then the motion itself is voted upon. Sometimes, the nature of the amendment is such that passing or defeating the amendment **CARRIES** or **DEFEATS** the motion also. In that event, it is not necessary to take a vote on the motion.

Before proceeding into further study on motions, it might be well to give some attention to the **MINUTES**.

The **MINUTES OF A MEETING** are simply a record of the proceedings of that particular meeting. As such, they can only be **ACCEPTED BY THE BODY**. In short, the general membership can only **ACCEPT** minutes of the membership meetings, the executive board can only accept its own minutes, etc. Upon reading of the minutes of a given meeting, they are subject to a motion to accept. Sometimes, **CORRECTIONS** are raised, and then the minutes are **ACCEPTED AS CORRECTED**.

Being simply the record of proceedings, minutes may be corrected at any time, including subsequent meetings.

Minutes shall record all main motions which were not withdrawn, all points of order, all appeals and whether lost or sustained. The makers of motions should be recorded, but not necessarily the seconds.

The date, time, and place of the meeting, as well as the time of adjournment should be in the minutes. Also the results of any **ROLL CALL** votes, and full report of **TELLERS**. (Tellers are members elected or appointed to tally ballot.)

Minutes cannot be **REJECTED**, but they can be **RETURNED FOR CORRECTION**. When the minutes of an executive board meeting are read at a member- ship meeting, it is only for general information, not acceptance or correction.

However, having been thus advised, the member- ship can take action at the meeting to censure or approve their board.

This, of course, is done through motions at the proper time on the agenda. The membership should be alerted to do this, and be certain not to allow any top body to exercise undemocratic control.

In connection with minutes, it is important to know that **ACCEPTING A REPORT** is the same as adopting it. **RECEIVING A REPORT** merely allows it to be read to the assembly. Receiving does not mean approving or adopting. Accepting does! In making motions on reports, the assembly should understand the distinction in the above two words.

Deferring

Once a matter has been duly placed on the floor through motion and seconded, it may become necessary to defer or postpone action. This can be done democratically by the assembly in several ways, in addition to withdrawing the motion, which we have already covered.

TABLING: A motion to **TABLE** is a motion to lay aside business in such a manner that it can be **RENEWED** at a later time—either at the same meeting or a later one. A motion to table requires a second. Once seconded, the motion to table cannot be either debated or amended, but **MUST BE PUT TO IMMEDIATE VOTE WITHOUT DISCUSSION**.

When it is desired to resume the matter which was tabled, the correct motion is to “**TAKE FROM THE TABLE.**” This motion must be seconded, and is also not subject to debate or amendment. When a matter is taken from the table, it is taken with all previous actions, amendments, etc., and resumed just as it was when tabled. Tabling a motion or matter does not carry a time limit. That kind of postponement is handled as follows:

- **POSTPONE TO A SET TIME:** When the object is to set a future time at which a matter or motion must be considered, do not move to table. Instead, move to **POSTPONE** to a set time, date, or meeting. A motion to so **POSTPONE CONSIDERATION** requires a second. It **CAN BE DEBATED** before being voted on, and can be amended as to the time.
- **PLACE IN COMMITTEE:** When it is desired to let a few handle a given matter, instead of tying up the whole meeting needlessly, this is done by **COMMITTING** or **PLACING IN COMMITTEE** through a properly worded motion.

- **POSTPONE INDEFINITELY:** A motion to **POSTPONE INDEFINITELY** is really a motion to **KILL** the subject. It must be seconded, can be debated, but cannot be amended.

These motions are dangerous, and must be watched with care when they come up. They can not only help to carry the meeting along—they can also wreck consideration of important subjects.

Appeals to Overrule Chair

The Chairman of a meeting or the “Chair” has certain rights, but they do not include engineering the meeting, or “railroading” certain matters through. A decision of the chair can always be subjected to change through **APPEAL**.

When a member rises to appeal a decision of the chair, their motion can be either to **APPEAL THE DECISION**, or to **OVERRIDE THE CHAIR**—they both have the same meaning.

Under such circumstances, the member should state carefully and in understandable language why he/she is making the motion. The motion requires a second.

Technically, the motion to appeal the decision of the chair is debatable when the question involved is the **BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE**, and not debatable otherwise. It is simplest, and perfectly fair, to always handle an appeal without a debate. The decision of the chair stands, until reversed by a majority vote. A tie vote **SUSTAINS THE CHAIR**.

Members should not rise to criticize the chair. If they have an objection to a **RULING**, it should always be handled through an appeal.

A sensible chairman should not take an appeal personally, but should welcome it, since it relieves them of the responsibility and places it upon the assemblage. Sustained, they are that much more confident in their chairmanship.

The chair is supposed to be the “servant of the assembly,” and as such should refrain from discussing questions before the assembly, thus maintaining an impartial attitude.

The chair cannot authorize anyone to act in their place if they are absent from the meeting. If the Bylaws do not cover that contingency, the assembly has the duty to elect an acting chairman.

The Question of Privilege

The **QUESTION OF PRIVILEGE** is often interpreted to mean “I am a privileged person, and have the right to the floor again.” The only privilege involved is the privilege of getting the attention of the chair at once to **ASK A QUESTION, MAKE A POINT OF ORDER**, or draw attention to the pressing business which cannot wait. When rising on a question of privilege, you do not wait for recognition from the chair; you **INTERRUPT** by stating “I rise to a point of inquiry (or order, or procedure).” The chair is **OBLIGED** to recognize you, answering: “state your question.”

- Rising to a “point of procedure” means that you question the procedure the chair is following—you feel they are off the track, acting contrary to **REGULAR PROCEDURE**.
- Rising to a “point of order” usually means that you feel some member of the assembly, rather than the chair is off the track, and you want the chair to take action.
- Rising on other “questions of privilege” usually involves drawing attention to conduct or misconduct of members, comfort of members, conduct of press or guests, etc. All such interruptions are loosely included in the term “question of privilege.”

If the chair sees the point you are making, they state, “the point is well taken,” and follows it. If the chair does not, they state his/her reason, and the way is open or an appeal to be taken, if necessary.

AND THIS IS IMPORTANT! Even though the chair is obliged to recognize the above questions of privilege, the assembly is not. As the book states it, “privilege of assembly outranks personal privilege.” A chronic interrupter can thus be silenced by a proper motion.

While a question of privilege requires no second, gets no debate, and is not amendable, the action desired may be deferred until the speaker is finished, and may also be tabled or postponed indefinitely. In the latter case, the question interrupted is not carried with a tabling or postponement motion.

Renewal & Reconsideration

Much confusion exists as to bringing up a point again, or trying to get a matter reconsidered. There are simple rules covering these things.

Renew a Motion

The object of this action would be to bring up a motion again after it has been defeated. The rule is:

A rejected motion cannot be renewed at the same session. It can be renewed by the same maker at a future session. Further, no motion can be introduced that is so nearly like a rejected motion that it would **PLACE THE SAME QUESTION BEFORE THE HOUSE** a second time. Also, no motion can be introduced which interferes with a motion which has been tabled, postponed, or placed in committee.

Reconsider a Motion

The object of this action would be to bring back a question for more discussion, and obtain a new vote. Such a motion can only be made by a member **WHO VOTED WITH THE PREVAILING SIDE** on the previous vote! Such a motion must receive a second, and can be debated, but not amended.

If reconsideration carries, the result is just as though the original vote had not been taken. Should such motions be brought up, and you feel the reason is a bad one, don't forget to use the "question of privilege."

It is a good thing for the most sincere members of the VFW to know the rules, and thus be prepared to keep the meeting on a true course.

Voting

Voting is normally by voice. If the result is not clear, the chair should ask for a standing vote.

Other methods of voting are: **DIVISION OF THE HOUSE, SECRET BALLOT, or ROLL CALL** of the assembly.

This short course was specifically designed to acquaint members with only the rudiments of parliamentary procedure, and is therefore, brief in coverage.

How To Manipulate Motions For Passage Or Defeat

(Read across the page. Read 1 with 1, 2 with 2, etc.)

To help defeat a motion:

1. Do not second it. Remain silent.
2. Speak against it while it is before the body.
3. Vote against it.
4. Move to postpone it indefinitely to “kill” it.
5. Amend it adversely to encumber it or complicate it.
6. Move to refer it to a committee to delay it.
7. Move to postpone it to the next meeting to delay it.
8. Move to the previous question to shut off debate on its good points.
9. Move to table it.
10. Move to recess to go after more votes.
11. If their motion wins, move to reconsider it.
12. If their successful motion remains unexecuted by a later meeting, then move to rescind it.
13. Move to adjourn, so as to prevent action on their motion at this meeting.
14. Only votes win. Get your voters to the meeting. Urge them to stay to the end and vote as you or another key leader will vote.

To help pass a motion:

1. Second it immediately. Say: “I second it.”
2. Speak in favor of it while it is still before the body.
3. Vote for it.
4. Vote against postponing it to rescue it.
5. Amend it sensibly to perfect it or improve it.
6. Vote against referring it, to achieve action now.
7. Vote down all postponements that delay it.
8. Defeat the previous question so you can continue to debate its meritorious points.
9. Vote against tabling it.
10. Defeat recess so they may not go seeking more votes.
11. Vote against their motion to reconsider your motion.
12. Execute motions promptly, so that they may not be subject to the motion to rescind at any later meeting.
13. Vote down all motions to adjourn, so as to achieve adoption of your motion now.
14. It is votes that win elections and other proceedings at meetings and conventions. Have your supporters there to help you with their votes.

Handy Phrases for Members

- Comrade Commander, or, Mr. President, or, Madam Chairman, etc.
- I doubt the quorum.
- I doubt the vote.
- I move that we ...
- I rise to a point of order.
- I move that we adopt this resolution: Resolved, That ...
- A parliamentary inquiry.
- I move to amend the motion.
- Comrade Commander, will the member yield the floor to me?
- I do not yield, or, I yield to a question only, or, I yield.

Handy Phrases for Presiding Officers

- The meeting will be in order.
- The secretary will read the ...
- The first [or, the next] business in order is...
- The Chair requests order.
- The Chair requests quiet.
- The Chair can recognize only one member at a time; all other members will be seated.
- The Chair now recognizes ...
- For what purpose does the member [delegate] rise?
- State your name, city, etc.
- The motion is [or, is not] in order.
- Do you yield the floor?
- The member will refrain from...
- The Chair wishes to state ...
- Please repeat your motion.
- It is moved and seconded that we ...
- It is moved and seconded to amend the motion by ...
- The ayes have it; the amendment is carried, now, the vote is on the motion as amended.
- Those in favor will say aye. Those opposed will say no. The ayes [or, noes] have it.
- If there is no objection, the Chair will ...

Parliamentary Procedure... at a glance, based in Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised (RONR).

Here are some motions you might make, how to make them, and what to expect of the rules.

TO DO THIS:	YOU SAY THIS:	DO YOU NEED A SECOND?	IS IT DEBATABLE?	CAN IT BE AMENDED?	WHAT VOTE IS NEEDED?	CAN IT BE RECONSIDERED?
ADJOURN MEETING	"I move that we adjourn"	YES	NO	NO	MAJORITY	NO
CALL AN INTERMISSION	"I move that we recess for ..."	YES	NO	YES	MAJORITY	NO
COMPLAIN ABOUT HEAT, NOISE, ETC.	"I rise to a question of privilege"	NO	NO	NO	NO VOTE	NO
TEMPORARILY SUSPEND CONSIDERATION OF AN ISSUE	"I move to table the motion"	YES	NO	NO	MAJORITY	NO (1)
END DEBATE AND AMENDMENTS	"I move the previous question"	YES	NO	NO	2/3	YES
POSTPONE DISCUSSION FOR A CERTAIN TIME	"I move to postpone the discussion until..."	YES	YES	YES	MAJORITY	YES
GIVE CLOSER STUDY OF SOMETHING	"I move to refer the matter to committee"	YES	YES	YES	MAJORITY	YES (2)
AMEND A MOTION	"I move to amend the motion by ..."	YES	YES (3)	YES	MAJORITY	YES
INTRODUCE BUSINESS (MAIN MOTIONS)	"I move that ..."	YES	YES	YES	MAJORITY	YES
PROTEST BREACH OF RULES OR CONDUCT	"I rise to a point of order"	NO	NO	NO	NO VOTE (4)	NO
VOTE ON A RULING OF THE CHAIR	"I appeal from the chair's decision"	YES	YES	NO	MAJORITY (5)	YES

Footnotes: (1) Unless vote on question is not yet taken. (2) Unless the committee has already taken up the subject. (3) Only if the motion to be amended is debatable. (4) Except in doubtful cases. (5) A majority vote in negative needed to reverse ruling of chair.

SUSPEND RULES TEMPORARILY	“I move to suspend rules so that ...”	YES	NO	NO	2/3	NO
AVOID CONSIDERING AN IMPROPER MATTER	“I object to consideration of this motion”	NO	NO	NO	2/3 (6)	NO (7)
VERIFY A VOICE VOTE BY HAVING MEMBERS STAND	“I call for a division” or “Division!”	NO	NO	NO	NO VOTE	NO
REQUEST INFORMATION	“Point of information”	NO	NO	NO	NO VOTE	NO
TAKE UP MATTER PREVIOUSLY TABLED	“I move to take from the table ...”	YES	NO	NO	MAJORITY	NO
RECONSIDER A HASTY ACTION	“I move to reconsider the vote on ...”	YES	(8)	NO	MAJORITY	NO
ACCEPT REPORTS OF COMMITTEES	“I move to accept the report of committee as read.”	YES	YES	YES	MAJORITY	YES
CLOSE NOMINATIONS OR THE POLLS	“I move that nominations close.”	YES	NO	YES	2/3	NO
POSTPONE INDEFINITELY (TO KILL)	“I move that we postpone the motion to ... indefinitely.”	YES	YES	NO	MAJORITY	YES
REOPEN NOMINATION OR THE POLLS	“I move that nominations be reopened.”	YES	NO	YES	MAJORITY	YES
RESCIND	“I move that we rescind the motion.”	YES	YES	YES	2/3	YES
WITHDRAW A MOTION OR SECOND	“I withdraw my motion.”	NO	NO	NO	NO VOTE	NO

Footnotes: (6) A 2/3 vote in negative needed to prevent consideration of main motion. (7) Only if the main question or motion was not, in fact, considered. (8) Only if motion to be reconsidered is debatable

GUIDE TO PROTOCOL



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Introduction

If you have ever planned a major VFW event, you know the importance of getting all the details in place. Please consider the information contained here first when planning VFW events such as luncheons, banquets or other social functions. There is a great deal to take into consideration when coordinating activities and this guide to protocol will help you every step of the way.

At all levels, protocol is critical to insure that proper relation between VFW officials and the public are conducted with maximum efficiency and without embarrassment to the organization.

Keep in mind that the information contained here should not be considered as complete.

Maintaining an Order of Precedence



One of the cardinal rules of protocol is to observe an order of precedence at VFW functions where officials and their representatives are present. This is important when making seating arrangements or organizing receiving lines.

The order of precedence for dignitaries at all levels (National, Department, District, County Council and Post) is as follows: Commander, Sr. Vice Commander, Jr. Vice Commander, Judge Advocate, Surgeon, Chaplain and Council of Administration.

Should a VFW function include a receiving line, the first person in line should be the program chairman, who introduces each individual coming through the receiving line to the host Commander, or Auxiliary President. The Commander or President, in turn, introduces each person to the guest of honor, who is next in line, with other guests following in their proper order of rank.

A receiving line should have no more than eight people and should be located away from the door by which people enter and leave the room.

Participants in a receiving line or those going through a receiving line should neither smoke nor carry food or beverages.

If the receiving line is held in a room that has a marble, tile or highly polished wood floor, it would be helpful to those people standing in the receiving line to provide a carpet runner on which they can stand.

It also is suggested that you provide chairs or a sofa immediately adjacent to or behind the receiving line for occasional rest periods for the members.

Some functions will require special seating arrangements. To this end, please review the suggested seating arrangements for different types of programs and dinners and choose the one right for you.

Making Proper Introductions



At some point during your event, you will need to formally introduce your guests of honor to the attendees.

As a means of expediting the program, guests who are not seated at the head table can be introduced during the dinner, before the head table is introduced. As another means of saving time, you can introduce people by groups rather than individually (i.e., committee members, officers, past commanders, etc.).

A standard procedure for introducing head table guests is to start at the extreme left end of the head table and introduce each guest by name and title, moving to the next guest and performing the same mission until you have introduced all of the guests to the left of the podium.

Remember there is no need to introduce guests who will be called on to speak or receive an award later in the program. You also can save time by asking the audience to hold their applause until all

of the guests have been introduced and then give them proper recognition at that time.

After you have introduced all of the guests to your left move to the opposite end of the head table and introduce each guest by name and title moving from the farthest guest toward the center of the table, again skipping the introduction of those who will be called on to speak or accept an award later in the program.

In the case of a two-tiered head table, you should introduce the guests who are seated at the lower or secondary head table before you introduce the guests at the top or primary head table.

The event “toastmaster” should be brief, laudatory and to-the-point when introducing a speaker. Introductions should be carefully planned and practiced in advance. The manner in which a speaker is introduced is very important.

The introduction should be approached in the same manner in which you would introduce a friend to a person you know by making them feel comfortable, at ease and known to each other.

Something to keep in mind is that the more important and well-known a speaker is, the shorter an introduction is required.

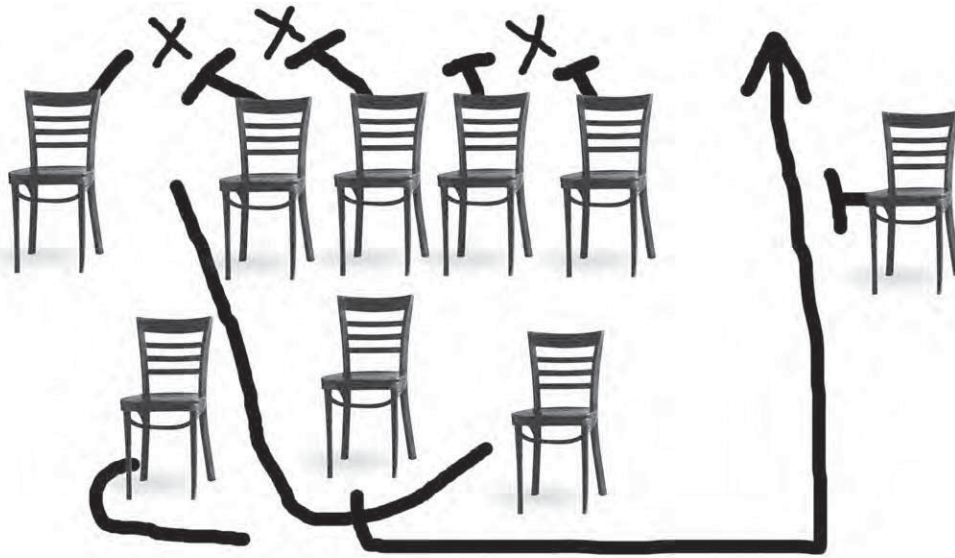
Please remember: There is no excuse for mispronouncing the names and titles of your guests.

Generally speaking, the main speaker should be introduced last. Occasionally, this conventional arrangement should be changed if there are several speakers on the program or numerous awards are to be presented at the event.

If the program does not have a keynote speaker, the guests who are called on to speak should be introduced from the lowest rank to that of the highest official present.

Plan the order of your program early. Discuss it with the people who are involved and remain flexible to changing the program to meet special needs.

Planning the Program



The following are a few suggested hints that may help you in planning your program:

1. Extend written invitations as early as possible to those you wish to invite to a particular program, advising them of the time, date, place, attire and what is expected of them (i.e., principal speaker, greetings, brief remarks, attendance, time allotted, etc.). Be sure to include information as to whether the invitation includes their spouse or other members of the family.
2. Follow up with those speaking at your program with a phone call to make sure they received the invitation. Ask for the number of those who will attend, and get their names.
3. Check back with each speaker a week to 10 days prior to the scheduled event to be sure their plans have not changed and that their guests will be present.
4. Be sure to include the spouses of guests you invite in your seating arrangements for the dinner and program.
5. Remember to give dinner tickets to the speakers and other guests of honor before the event.
6. Assign a host and/or hostess (officers, members, committee, etc.) to each guest you invite to see that your guests are properly met, escorted and introduced to other people. Your guests will appreciate your consideration.
7. Be sure to use name cards and seat your guests at reserved tables near the front so they will not have to fend for themselves in obtaining seats.
8. Notify the media several weeks ahead of your scheduled program. Follow up with a telephone call a few days prior to the event, reminding them of the occasion. Arrange for a photographer (commercial, Post member, etc.) to take pictures of the event.

What To Do When The Chief Visits

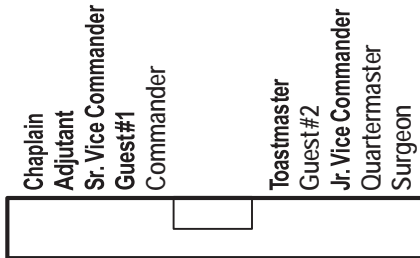


It is a very important occasion when the Commander-in-Chief of the Veterans of Foreign Wars visits a Post. The Chief is the spokesperson for the more than 1 million veterans who served their country during a time of war. Anyone dealing with the Chief's visit has important responsibilities. We suggest that these individuals be familiar with the following guidelines to make their job a little easier and the Chief's visit run as smooth as possible:

1. Contact your local radio and TV stations as soon as you have the Chief's definite arrival time. Talk shows are sometimes planned well in advance. Public Service time is free, and an interview with the Commander-in-Chief and a local VFW leader might be arranged. It is important that the scheduling does not conflict with other engagements the Chief might have.
2. Arrange a press conference for the Chief. It is usually more convenient to have it in the hotel where the Chief will be staying. A notice of the press conference to all media – newspapers, TV and radio – should be sent at least three days before the event. On the morning of the press conference, call to remind the media of the time and place of the press conference.
3. It is important to remember that the media who attend the press conference are there to interview a national leader of a major veteran's organization, not local VFW members. For that reason, it is important that Post members do not volunteer information. The best arrangement is to leave the Chief alone with the media.
4. Introduce the Commander-in-Chief to the local leaders in your community and invite them to a dinner or event at which the Chief will speak.
5. Once an itinerary has been established, follow it precisely. Make sure the Chief gets to their appointments on time. If a dinner where the Chief is to speak starts at 7 p.m., have everyone seated and start serving the meal exactly at 7 p.m.
6. Ask the Commander-in-Chief if they would like to see the local points of interest or if they have a friend in the community whom they wish to visit. Do your best to accommodate the Chief's requests. Be sure there is a good car available for the Chief at all times, to meet them at their point of arrival, to take them to their point of departure and to take them from place to place in your community. The person who will drive the car must be one who can be relied on for punctuality, courtesy and safe driving.
7. If the Commander-in-Chief is to speak where there is a bar, close the bar a half-hour before the Chief is scheduled to speak and during their talk.
8. Limit receptions before banquets and other events to one hour.
9. Do not plan unrelated activities, such as baseball games or private parties, without first consulting the Commander-in-Chief.

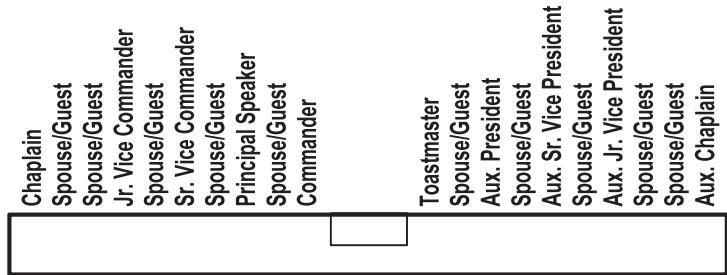
Sample Seating Charts

Adjustments should be made according to ranking VFW and Auxiliary visitors or invited guests.



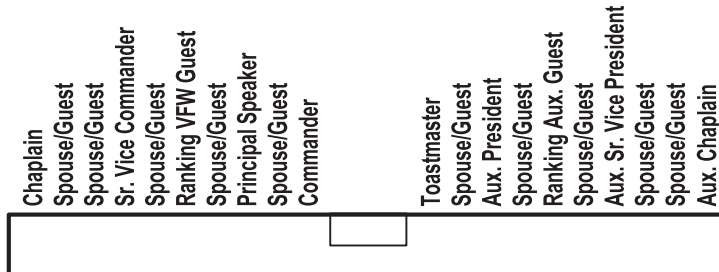
VFW Only

VFW and Auxiliary

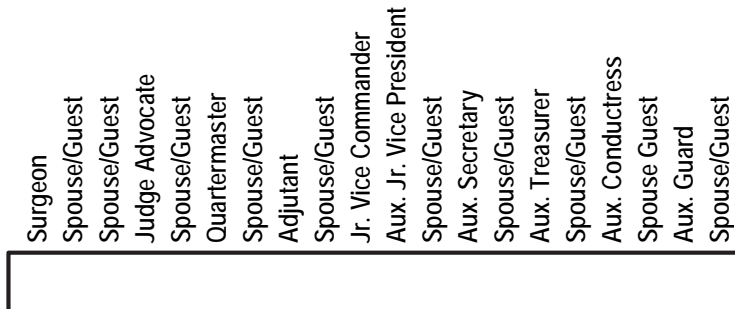


VFW & Auxiliary (Two Tier)

Top



Bottom



MEMBERSHIP



VFW National Membership Program



Hal J. Roesch II
Commander-in-Chief

Updated: March 24, 2020

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Membership Mission

To recruit, retain and mentor a stable membership base including all generations of veterans.

To cultivate a membership that is well versed in institutional knowledge and actively involved at all levels of the organization and in the local community. To establish Posts with an established vision of service, leadership and community outreach.

Introduction

Over the past several years, the VFW has been successful in recruiting new members into the organization. The only way to make this success permanent is to retain those members, recover past members, and continue to recruit new veterans into our ranks. To do this, we must improve the way we communicate with our members at all levels of the organization. Posts, Districts, and Departments need to use all methods available to convey information for news and training to our membership; newsletters, emails, social media, and outreach teams are some of the most effective ways to maintain communication with our members. We need to know who our members are and how we can address their needs and concerns. We need to focus on the basic tenets of our organization: to take care of our members, their families, and the veteran community as a whole.

Membership Goals

1. Build a strong organization for the future.
2. Work together to achieve the VFW's goals. The VFW National Headquarters staff is available to assist in coordinating programs, developing membership initiatives and building awareness among our membership and the entire veteran community.

Membership Objectives

- Recruit new and recover unpaid members
- Involve members directly in VFW functions at all levels
- Retain and mentor existing membership

- Develop new Posts and revitalize existing Posts
- Increase Life Membership
- Increase Legacy Life Membership

Membership Resources

In order to assist our Posts, Districts, and Departments in meeting the goals set out by the Commander-in-Chief in this membership program, the National Headquarters has a wealth of resources at your disposal. Many of those are available free of charge to our members.

- Membership materials ranging from applications, recruiting brochures, posters, and benefits brochures can be ordered directly from the Membership Department using the Membership Order Form (located under Membership Quick Links once you log into vfw.org)
- Resources for Post Development, Membership Campaigns, and Mentorship such as training guides, videos, and webinars are available in the Training & Support section on vfw.org
- Promotional tools such as radio spots, sample advertisements, public service announcements, and media kits are all available through the Media Room on vfw.org

See the trend? Just about anything you will need is at vfw.org, check it out.

The VFW National Headquarters staff is ready and trained to answer any questions you may have concerning membership, VFW programs, or other issues. You can contact our **Member Service Center directly at 1.833.VFW.VETS**, or the **Membership Department at 1.888.JOIN.VFW**.

Triple Crown Award

Any commander who achieves All-American at the Post, District and Department level will receive a Triple Crown pin and recognition at the National Convention.

Recruiting Awards

- **5, 10, 15** Corresponding numbered member pin
- **25** Commander-in-Chief membership coin &
- **50** citation VFW CIC Basecamp Backpack
- **75** Commemorative medallion set
- **100** Century cap and citation or \$50 VFW Store
- **150** credit \$250 VFW store gift certificate

Department “100 Percent” Incentive

Any Department that attains 100% in membership by close of business on March 31, 2021 will be entered into a random drawing. The commander plus guest and quartermaster plus guest for the Department that is selected will each receive:

- **\$2500 voucher through Veterans Travel Services (VTS) applied towards airfare, accommodations and transportation for a trip of their choice.**

Early Bird Award—VFW Legislative Conference

The top three Post commanders and quartermasters in each division on Jan. 1, 2021 will receive:

- **A \$1,000 stipend to be used toward attending the VFW Legislative Conference, Washington D.C.**

Department Early Bird Incentive

For every Department that achieves 92% in membership by Jan. 1, 2021; the Department commander will receive:

- **A Henry Golden Boy .22 Caliber Rifle or a credit voucher of equal value for use with Veterans Travel Services (VTS).**

Post Commander and Quartermaster – New & Reinstated Member Award

The top 10 Post commanders and quartermasters in each division who report more than 50 new and reinstated annual members by Jan. 1, 2021 will each be awarded:

- **A travel charger with the official VFW Commander-in-Chief logo.**

Kansas City Spree

The top two Post commanders and the top two District commanders in each division who achieve 100% membership by April 1, 2021 along with their guest will each be awarded:

- **Round-trip airfare to Kansas City, Mo. from the airport nearest the awardee's home.**
- **A fun-filled weekend (May 20-23, 2021) that may include but is not limited to touring, shopping and a complete tour of the VFW National Headquarters.**

100% Post, District & Department

A distinctive streamer will be awarded to every Post, District and State/Department that achieves 100% or greater in membership before July 1, 2021.

100% Commander Drawing

Each Post and District commander that exceeds 100% in membership by June 1, 2021 will receive an entry in this drawing. Twenty Post commanders and 12 District commanders will receive:

- **A \$1,000 stipend to be used toward attending the VFW National Convention.**

Post Commander and Quartermaster Division Challenge

For every 10 new/reinstated members recruited between July 1, 2020 and April 1, 2021 Posts will earn one entry for both Post commander and quartermaster entered into a drawing. One Post per division will receive:

- **A \$1,000 stipend each for commander and quartermaster to be used toward attending the VFW National Convention.**

Legacy Life Membership Acquisition

Each Post that achieves the designated benchmarks of 25, 50 and 75 Legacy Life Members will be awarded:

- **A Legacy Society Post Proclamation.**

Each Post that achieves the distinctive benchmark of 100 Legacy Life members by July 1, 2021, commander or Post representative will receive:

- **A \$1,000 stipend to be used toward attending the VFW National Convention.**
- **Reserved seating at the VFW National Convention joint opening session.**
- **Legacy Society Post Proclamation.**

Elite Recruiter

Any VFW member who signs up 250 or more new and/or reinstated annual members by July 1, 2021, will receive:

- **A \$1,000 stipend to be used toward attending the VFW National Convention.**
- **Distinctive cap, citation, and name badge.**

Recruiter of the Year

The VFW member who signs up the greatest number of new and/or reinstated annual members greater than 250 by July 1, 2021, will receive:

- **A \$1,000 stipend to be used toward attending the VFW National Convention.**
- **Reserved seating at the VFW National Convention joint opening session.**
- **Distinctive cap, citation, and name badge.**
- **Commander-in-Chief's Crystal Eagle.**

New Post Development Department Award

For each new Post chartered, the Department quartermaster will receive:

- **\$250 for use towards necessary materials for the new Post and a \$250 VFW Store credit for Post.**

All-American Criteria

The All-American program exists to recognize exceptional leadership and teamwork, authentic accomplishment in membership growth and VFW core programs.

All-American Post Criteria

- **Achieve your Division Qualifying Percentage (see table on page 10)**
- **Meet all the following Program Participation Criteria:**

- o Voice of Democracy - minimum of one entry advanced to District judging (Overseas Post can donate \$75 to National in lieu of entry*see last page)
- o Patriots Pen - minimum of one entry advanced to District judging (Overseas Post can donate \$75 to National in lieu of entry*see last page)
- o Buddy Poppy - must purchase five Buddy Poppies per member
- o Hold a fundraiser with the proceeds going to Veterans & Military Support Programs Services, minimum of \$100(*see last page)

All-American Post Award

- All Posts that meet the Division Qualifying Percentage and the program participation criteria will receive an All-American Post Citation, Post Streamer and be recognized in the VFW magazine.

- The Top **25** Posts in each Division will receive:

- Acknowledgment in VFW Magazine
- Acknowledgement during the All-American Awards Ceremony at the National Convention
- All-American Post citation
- All-American Post streamer
- All-American citation - commander
- All-American name badge - commander
- All-American cap (commander only, quartermaster may purchase cap)
- All-American lapel pin (commander only, quartermaster may purchase pin)
- All-American Team Post Member lapel pin (25 pack)
- The top ***five*** commanders in each division will also receive:
 - **A \$1,000 stipend to be used toward attending the VFW National Convention.**
 - **Reserved seating at the VFW National Convention joint opening session.**

All-American District Criteria

- Membership greater than 100%
- Finish in top 10 Districts in your division that meet all the following criteria
 - o Voice of Democracy - minimum of one entry advanced to Department judging (Overseas District donate \$100 to National in lieu of entry*see last page)
 - o Patriots Pen - minimum of one entry advanced to Department judging (Overseas District donate \$100 to National in lieu of entry*see last page)

All-American District Award

- All-American District streamer
- All-American District citation - commander
- All-American name badge - commander
- All-American cap (commander only, quartermaster may purchase cap)
- All-American lapel pin (commander only, quartermaster may purchase pin)
- The top ***two*** District commanders in each division will also receive:
 - **A \$1,000 stipend to be used toward attending the VFW National Convention.**
 - **Reserved seating at the VFW National Convention joint opening session.**

All-American Department Criteria

- Membership must be greater than 100%
- Must conduct two Membership recruiting events; one between July 1 and December 31, 2020 and the other between January 1, 2021 and May 1, 2021. A report of these events must be submitted to the Membership Department.
- Hold a Department Commander's Round-Up prior to Jan 1, 2021 with a report submitted to the Membership Department.
- One new post or increase the membership of three posts of 50 members or less to over 50 members by July 1, 2021. If a Department does not have 3 Posts below 50 members at the beginning of the year, raising all their Posts below 50 members to above 50 members would be required.

- **National Legislative Service**
 - Monthly National Legislative Service committee member reports submitted to National Legislative Service in Washington, D.C.
- **National Veterans Services**
- Must have a State/Department service officer and submit his or her name and contact information to National Veterans Services in Washington, D.C. by July 31, 2020
- Monthly activity report from Department Service Officer or designated NVS Committee member to NVS in Washington, D.C.
- **Programs**
 - Voice of Democracy - An entry advanced to National judging
 - Patriot's Pen - An entry advanced to National judging
 - Veterans & Military Support Programs – Must complete a State/Department fundraiser and proceeds donated to Veterans & Military Support Programs, Kansas City, Mo. (*see last page)

All-American Department Award

- All-American Department streamer
- All-American Department citation - commander
- All-American name badge - commander
- All-American cap - commander - *quartermaster may purchase cap*
- All-American lapel pin - commander - *quartermaster may purchase pin*
- \$1,000 stipend to be used toward attending the VFW National Convention
- Reserved seating at the VFW National Convention Joint Opening Session

Conference Membership Award

The State/Department leading each conference will be entrusted with the conference membership colors for the following year. The 2019-2020 Conference winners will return the colors to the membership booth at National Convention in Baltimore, MD no later than COB on Monday after the Joint Opening Session. The 2020-2021 Conference winners will then pick up the colors from the Membership Director at National Convention in July 2021 in Baltimore, MD any time after 0800 on Tuesday at the Membership booth.

The Conference with the highest membership percentage of the four Conferences will have their name and year engraved on a traveling trophy presented by the Commander-in-Chief to the Conference Chairman at the National Convention. The 2019-2020 Conference Chairman will return the trophy to the membership booth at National Convention in Baltimore, MD no later than COB on Saturday to ensure placement of the new nameplate. This trophy will be presented to the 2020-2021 Conference Chairman on stage during the Joint Opening Session**.

Post Membership Divisions and Minimum Qualifying Percentages

Division	Total Membership		Qualifying Percentage
1	951+		Over 101%
2	750	950	Over 102%
3	356	749	Over 113%
4	246	355	Over 114%
5	185	245	Over 115%
6	143	184	Over 116%
7	112	142	Over 117%
8	88	111	Over 118%
9	68	87	Over 119%
10	51	67	Over 125%
11	10	50	Over 127%

District Membership Divisions and Minimum Qualifying Percentages

Division	Total Membership		Qualifying Percentage	# Eligible
1	5,000	14,000	Over 100%	10
2	3,282	4,999	Over 100%	10
3	2,172	3,281	Over 100%	10
4	1,447	2,171	Over 100%	10
5	906	1,446	Over 100%	10
6	1	905	Over 100%	10

Post Qualifying percentage is based off prior five-year average for top 25 Posts in each Division.

Important Notes

- In order to receive stipends, awardees must be in attendance at designated events
- Only **one** National paid stipend per event (National Convention, legislative Conference, etc.)
- All awards are non-transferable
- The *Department Commander's Round-Up* program is for Department commanders to visit Posts in their Department to get face-to-face time with their Post and District leadership and assist with membership development events. For further information about the *Commander's Round-Up*, please contact the Membership Department by calling **1-888-JOIN-VFW** or by email at membership@vfw.org
- *Donations made to replace a Voice of Democracy and Patriot's Pen (By eligible overseas Post). Do not donate through your Department or by any other means. https://VFWPrograms.formstack.com/forms/vfwprogramsdonation2020_21
- Veterans & Military Support Programs Services as listed above will only be accepted only through the following link: <https://heroes.vfw.org/page/22950/donate/1>
- **For the Conference Membership Award traveling trophy, the Conference Chairman will be responsible for the return of the trophy to the Membership Department booth at the National Convention each year



NO ONE DOES MORE FOR VETERANS.®

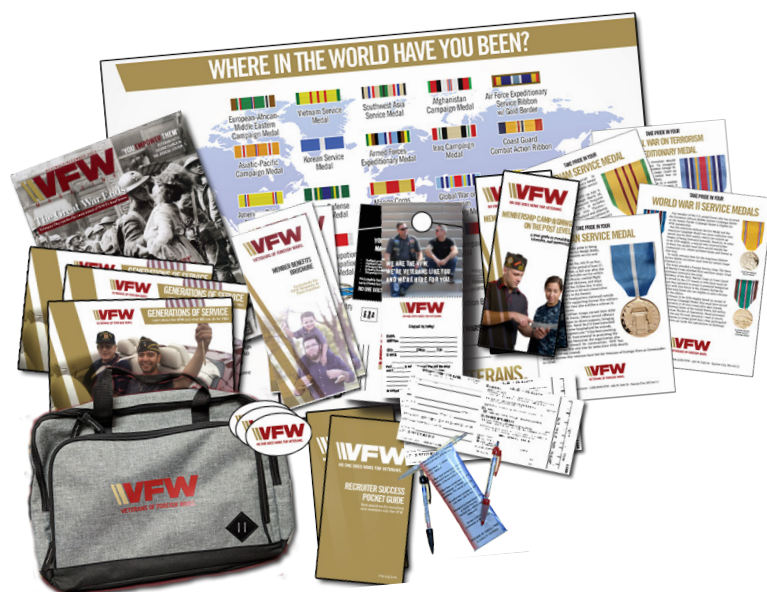
RECRUITING JUST GOT EASIER

The VFW Membership Department has everything you need to make your membership efforts successful at little or no cost.

Phone: 1.888.JOIN.VFW (564-6839)

Email: membership@vfw.org

Order online by logging into www.vfw.org



TAKE ADVANTAGE OF EASY ONLINE ORDERING!

Instead of waiting for your order to be mailed or faxed in, make sure your Post gets the materials you need quickly and efficiently by ordering your materials online!

Just follow these steps!



1) Go to vfw.org and click the “LOGIN” link in the upper right corner. Sign in when prompted.

If you have not yet created an account on the website, follow the “Sign Up With TroopID” link to do so!

2) Under “Membership Quick Links”, select the Online Membership System (OMS) option.

3) On the left side of the page, you will see an option for Membership Order Form - click that link.

You’ll see that it automatically enters your mailing information! If you need your materials shipped elsewhere, go ahead and enter the new address. (This won’t affect your address on file in our records)

4) Use the dropdown list to indicate which items you need. It will automatically calculate the cost of items and shipping. When you’re finished, click SUBMIT and it will take you to a billing page if there are any charges.

Once done, you’ll receive an email confirmation and your order will be processed and sent out!

IT’S THAT EASY!

AVAILABLE IN THE VFW STORE



VFW RECRUITING KIT

This kit contains everything needed to set up an effective recruiting booth or table to target veterans and/or active-duty service members. Included are a set of the Take Pride flyers (suitable for framing) covering all the campaign medals which qualify veterans for membership. Also included are large posters, door hanger self-mailers, VFW decals and bumper stickers, applications, brochures, flyers, copies of the *VFW* magazine, and a USB flash drive with helpful materials and videos, along with a heavy-duty nylon briefcase for transporting these items. A supplies reorder form is included for your convenience.

POST CHARTER KIT

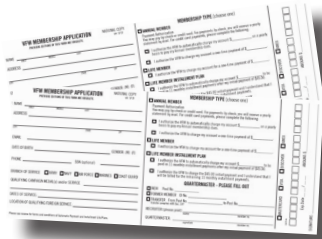
All the tools necessary for a new Post (or perhaps an existing Post that needs a fresh start) to get up and running quickly and easily. This complete kit contains everything necessary to conduct meetings, obligate members, account for members and funds, submit reports, conduct programs and more. Included are the following: an altar cloth, altar flag set (including a POW-MIA flag), Bible, gavel, eight copies of the VFW Bylaws, Manual of Procedure and Ritual, a service office guide, Post minute book, Quartermaster ledger, a pad of misc. receipt forms, draft book, receipts and disbursements pad, trustees report of audit pad, two VFW Store catalogs, a membership binder, 10 eligibility sheets, 50 VFW Cross of Malta lapel pins, 100 membership application forms, 50 VFW benefits flyers, 50 membership recruitment brochures, a "Membership Campaigning on the Post Level" booklet, 50 "Planning A Successful Buddy Poppy Campaign" brochures, 50 "History of the Buddy Poppy" brochures, one "New Post Development and Post Revitalization" manual and two copies of the absolutely vital "Report of Institution" form. Everything you'll need to ensure the success of a new Post in one convenient package.



NEW POST STARTER KIT

This "Post in a box" is designed to equip a team of up to four recruiters with everything needed to form a new Post. This comprehensive kit includes: an application for Post Charter, "Starting A New Post" guide, 100 membership applications, 100 membership recruitment brochures, 100 VFW benefit flyers, 100 door hanger self-mailers, 100 VFW decals, four Pocket Recruiter Guides, four eligibility sheets, for "Membership Campaigning on the Post Level" booklets, four "Join The VFW" Posters and 20 of the new "Post Forming Soon" Posters. All kits are available through the VFW Store by calling toll-free 1.833.VFW.VEETS (833.839.8387) or by visiting www.vfwstore.org.

RECRUITING AND TRAINING



Membership Applications

This two-part carbonless form is necessary for recruiting and reporting new members.



Women Veterans Brochure

This brochure highlights the benefits that come along with being a VFW member along with personal stories from our female members. Let them know that they served - they belong!



Door Hanger Self-Mailers

These are an exciting way to spread the word about VFW and garner new leads. Includes veterans benefit information, a reply card, and die-cut slots for a Post business card.



VFW Eligibility Fold-Up Poster

This 33" x 22" world map is the perfect addition to membership recruiting booths. Qualifying medals and badges are pictured along with space for your Post contact information.



Membership Recruitment Brochure

With a new and distinctive full-color design and updated information, this brochure is an essential part of any recruiting campaign, with info on the VFW as well as an application.



Priority Goals Brochure

Learn about what the VFW is doing and has accomplished in Washington, to include a list of the many veteran-related bills our influence on Capitol Hill has helped to pass.



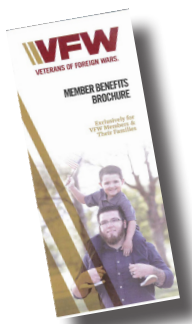
Take Pride Flyers

Learn about all the medals which qualify veterans to join the VFW! The flyers include full-color images and the history of all qualifying campaign medals from WWII to the present day.



VFW Table Cover

Bring attention to your recruiting booth with this cloth table drape, available in 6' and 8' sizes. Multiple colors available through the VFW Store by calling toll-free 1.833.VFW.VETS or by visiting www.vfwstore.org.



Member Benefits Brochure

Show prospective and current members all the amazing benefits that come with their membership. These brochures include info about insurance and other programs for our members.



Legacy Life Brochure

Leave a lasting legacy by upgrading your life membership to a bronze, silver or gold Legacy Life Membership.

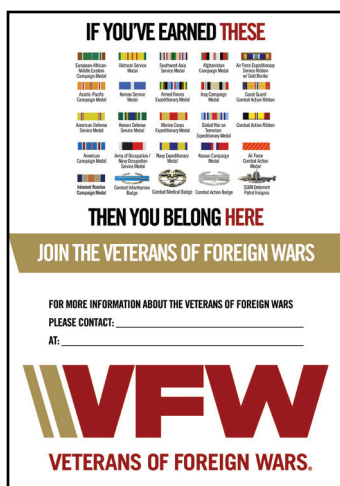
TRAINING TOOLS

Some materials are available online by logging into vfw.org and following the **Membership Recruitment & Retention Materials** link.



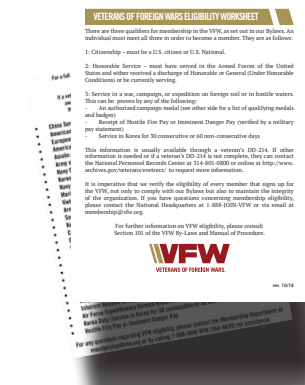
“VFW Post Forming Soon” Poster

A glossy, full-color, 33” x 23” poster announcing the formation of a new Post in your area. An up-to-date look and eligibility listing will make your next Post development effort a breeze. It includes space for contact information along with meeting times and locations.



“Join Now” Poster

Like our “VFW Post Forming Soon” Poster, this exciting tool is up-to-date and will make your next recruiting campaign easier than you thought. The poster includes space to add your contact information along with meeting times and locations. Glossy, full-color and 33” x 23”.



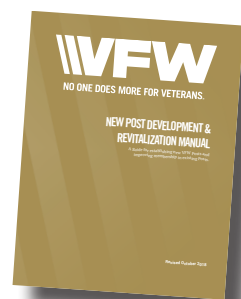
Membership Eligibility Sheet

A complete and convenient reference tool. Stay up-to-date in your understanding of eligible qualifying campaign medals. Be sure to order enough for your entire recruiting team.



Recruiter Pocket Success Guide

Learn the best methods for recruiting new members! This guide covers topics such as membership eligibility, benefits, veterans service, and VFW programs. It has an easy-to-use back cover flap to hold membership applications, along with pages of useful recruiting tips.



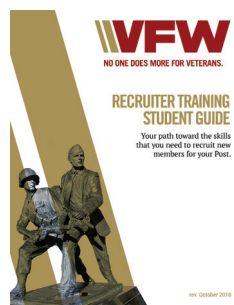
New Post Development guide

A primer for establishing a new VFW Post, this guide includes information on getting a Post Charter, recruiting members, communicating with local city and civic leadership, holding informational meetings, and an explanation of the procedures for new Post formation.



“Membership Campaigning on the Post Level” Booklet

Twenty-four pages, chock-full of information and strategies used in planning and conducting a successful membership campaign. This booklet covers the basics of planning, contact techniques (with scripts) and follow up.



Recruiter Training Student Guide

This educational guide comprises informational material that parallels the instructors guide, along with additional forms relevant to hands-on recruiting. It includes an attractive folder to make a useful “take-away” package for your next recruiter training session.

Ensure that your Post grows by using every available method and product available through the VFW because...

NO ONE DOES MORE FOR VETERANS.



Recruiter Eligibility Pens

When you're out recruiting, you can have the criteria and guidelines for membership eligibility literally at your fingertips! These ball-point pens all contain a pull-out guide to VFW eligibility, including a list of all currently qualifying medals!

PUBLIC RELATIONS



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Public Relations Introduction

Public Relations may be the most important task you and your Post will undertake. It occurs every minute of every day. It goes beyond preparing and distributing news releases. It is the underlying element that brings success or failure to your Post. All contact between your Post and the community has a public relations aspect. **Ensuring the community views your Post positively is paramount.**

The community service your Post performs will enhance the Post's reputation as a responsible, caring and energetic community service organization — one that leads by example.

Your PR Strategy

What do you want to accomplish with your PR strategy? Define your objectives. This is the critical first step.

- **Determine your audience.** This includes members, potential members and non-members. Different Post activities appeal to different segments of the community.
- **Define your message.** Sticking to one message is essential. However, your message may be presented in several ways through various outlets. Determine the best outlet for the best results.
- **Develop a strategy.** How can you best accomplish your goals? Look at the dynamics of your community. Build a relationship with the media in your area. Keep an up-to-date list of contacts for each outlet. Become the subject matter experts in your community on patriotic and veterans' issues. Make your Post visible and active on social media. Develop relationships with other local community service organizations.

When evaluating your strategy, you should listen carefully to the feedback from Post members and officers, members of the community and the media. Take this information and fine tune your strategy, if necessary. A good communicator talks and listens.

Suggestions from all sources should be considered. After all, those people see your messages from a different angle, and what might be very clear to you may not be to them. A new point of view may help get the word out more efficiently and effectively.

Development of good public relations takes time and commitment.

Building Media Contacts

As a Post officer, you will have to speak to the media and general public. Therefore, you need to be able to speak clearly and concisely on veterans' issues and VFW programs. Your ability to communicate in both the written and spoken word will benefit the Post and the community.

You should build a good working relationship with members of the media, as well as the leaders of the various VFW programs. The assistance of officers and members is invaluable when gathering information to present to the media. When your information is accurate and of interest to the community, the media will welcome your submissions.

Some basic equipment needed to accomplish this task are a computer, email address, letterhead and a style guide, such as the Associated Press Stylebook.

A camera or smart phone is a great tool when used properly. After all, “a picture is worth a thousand words,” but only when that picture is of good quality and supports your newsworthy story. Avoid taking “grip-and-grin” photos. Additionally, always look for the action shots. Remember, get close, get faces, and get a signed photo release.

Your goals are to develop a public relations strategy and make it work, establish media contacts, and increase the community’s awareness and respect for the VFW.

Building VFW Awareness by Rewarding Your Community

Know the VFW programs and how they serve the community. Our programs are the heart of our organization, beginning with community service. Tell the community about the Post service officer and the free assistance available to any veteran and his or her dependents to gain entitlements.

Our programs can reach people in the community who might not otherwise know veterans or the continuing service they offer to their communities. Through our youth and citizenship education programs we offer valuable and needed information to various groups in the community.

Establish an awards program that relates to VFW programs. Everyone loves praise. Recognition focuses the community spotlight on the individual or group being acknowledged as well as on the VFW. Award your local police, firefighters and EMTs with a certificate of appreciation during a public ceremony. Coordinate this event with a community anniversary or a national observance.

Other organizations or groups that have assisted the VFW in a community service project deserve thanks as well. Host a special event to recognize individuals or groups who further the VFW’s priorities and ideals. Include teachers, public officials, youths and members who have demonstrated support of the VFW’s values.

Deal With Bad Publicity, Don’t Avoid It

Unfavorable publicity needs to be handled promptly and with as accurate information as possible. Here are some tips for dealing with negative publicity:

- **Don’t avoid the media.** Help them get all the facts so the story will be fair and balanced.

- **Do not provide conjecture or speak before you have all the facts.** Stating "We're aware of the situation, and are investigating," can help.
- **Do not place blame.**
- **Do not discuss fault or liability.**
- **Deal with the situation and move on.** Even a bad situation can have positive aspects.

Think of this as a welcome opportunity to present the VFW's programs and projects that help the community. If you have been helpful, the media contacts you make can prove valuable in the future.

Targeting the Media with a Specific Message

Get to know the media in your area. This includes newspapers, both daily and weekly; radio, television and cable television stations; local or regional trade publications; and local and regional magazines.

Your contact list should include: name, title, address, affiliation, phone number, email address, social media handles and publication deadline dates.

Remember: your membership is diverse. Contacting various outlets ensures that your message reaches a wide audience.

Not every message will need to be sent to every contact. A news release announcing teachers and students receiving awards from the VFW would be best sent to the local media outlets as well as the school and any professional publication for teachers. A blood drive held at the Post would have a different list of media contacts. Choose carefully. A constant barrage of unrelated news releases can numb the media to your message.

A 'Thank You' Reaps Rewards

Nothing is more important than saying "thank you." A well-written thank you note to a guest speaker is imperative.

Presentation of a certificate of appreciation to an individual or a group that has assisted with a program goes a long way toward building community relationships. A brief note of thanks to a member of the media for event coverage can help keep the lines of communication open. You also may want to consider writing congratulatory letters to individual Post members when they have accomplished something noteworthy outside of the organization.

Many members belong to various community service organizations. Sending congratulatory letters to elected leaders of other service organizations is a good way to establish a spirit of camaraderie between organizations. After all, we are all trying to better our communities through voluntary public service.

In addition, you can host an annual appreciation event for local law enforcement agencies, community-safety representatives, educators and youths who deserve recognition.

Make Your Community Proud of Your Post

Make your community proud it has a VFW Post. Be the focal point in your community for all patriotic programs. Whether it's parades, school programs or voter registration, make sure the VFW has a visible presence.

Keep the Post home in good shape. Make it attractive and welcoming. Let it be an example of an organization that is proud of its history and working to make the community a better place in which to live. When the Post has a good image, it is easier to get the media involved and excited about VFW-sponsored events.

Finally, remember that you represent the VFW to every person you meet. The impression you make is one the public will associate with the VFW. Make sure it is a positive one.

Keep a Calendar

A calendar of upcoming VFW events can help simplify your job. On your calendar include important national events, anniversaries and observances. To commemorate these dates, you may want to have a letter to the editor ready for possible publication.

Also you might consider hosting an event in observance of these special days. When planning an event, it is important to consult with the local community calendar. Scheduling conflicts can be avoided with some simple checking.

Important Dates to Remember

3rd Monday in Jan. - Martin Luther King, Jr. Day
Jan. 27 - Signing of Vietnam Peace Accord (1973)
Jan. 31 - Panama Campaign Ended (1990)
3rd Monday of Feb. - Presidents' Day
March 29 - National Vietnam War Veterans Day
March 31 - Somalia Campaign Ended (1995)
April 9 - National Former POW/MIA Recognition Day
April 11 - Persian Gulf War Official Cease-Fire
May 1 - Loyalty Day
May 8 - WWII Ends in Europe (V-E Day) (1945)
May 15 - Peace Officers Memorial Day; Women's Army Corps Founded (1942)
3rd Saturday in May - Armed Forces Day
Last Monday of May - Memorial Day
June 14 - Flag Day; U.S. Army Founded (1775)
July 2 - U.S. Army Air Corps Established (1926)
July 4 - Independence Day
July 27 - Korean War Armistice Day
Aug. 4 - U.S. Coast Guard Established (1790)
Aug. 14 - Japan Surrendered, Ending WWII (1945); National Navajo Code Talkers
Day Sept. 2 - V-J Day: Japan Signed Formal Surrender (1945)
Sept. 4 - Labor Day
Sept. 11 - Patriots Day and National Day of Service and Remembrance

Sept. 14 - VFW Auxiliary Founded (1914)
Sept. 17 - Constitution and Citizenship Day
Sept. 18 - U.S. Air Force Established (1947)
3rd Friday in Sept. - POW/MIA Recognition Day
Sept. 29 - VFW Founded in 1899
Oct. 13 - U.S. Navy Established (1775)
1st Tuesday of Nov. – Election Day
Nov. 10 - U.S. Marine Corps Established (1775)
Nov. 11 - Veterans Day; Signing of WWI Armistice (1918)
Nov. 21 - Grenada Campaign Ended (1983)
Dec. 7 - National Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day
Dec. 13 - National Guard Established (1636)
Dec. 15 - Iraq War Ended (2011)
Dec. 31 - Official End of WWII (1946); Kosovo Campaign Ended (2013)

News Releases and Promotion

A News Release Must Be Newsworthy

The most fundamental way, although not the only way, to get your message out to the media is through a news release.

An effective news release relates information that is newsworthy. **It should be clear, concise, error-free and answer the "Five Ws" in the first paragraph: who, what, where, when and why.**

Try to keep the news release to one page, two at the most. If more information is needed to better explain your news release (fact sheets, biographies or program information), it can be attached. Be sure the contact person's name, phone number and the date of the release are clearly indicated.

Include quotes from the head of the organization, the Post Commander or the officer responsible for the program. It is best to use quotes that sound natural and express an opinion or position.

Press releases can be written on events, programs, awards, election of VFW officers or national issues. Be sure to highlight the local aspect no matter what the subject. Localization makes for easier placement.

Avoid buzzwords and organizational acronyms. Assume that readers know nothing about the organization — chances are they don't.

As you are writing, think about simplicity. Be brief. Forget flowery adjectives — they will most likely be cut anyway. And don't be insulted if your release is changed or cut, as long as it gets the main points across. The editor's job is to do just that — edit.

Know the media deadlines. Allow enough time for editors to call with questions, but not too much time for the interest to lag.

Make the reporter's job easier by emailing the news release to them. Follow-up with a phone call.

When you have completed your news release, go back over it again. Check that you have answered the "Five Ws" in the first paragraph. Did you give the release a point of local interest? Are the sentences short and clear? Is the release written in a consistent manner? Is it typed and error-free? Nothing is more irritating to an editor than having to rewrite a release.

If a photo is included with the release, be sure to provide the names of everyone in the photo and a brief explanation of the event. Make sure the photo is of good quality and suitable for publication.

Control Interviews with Facts and Research

If reporters call, determine why they are calling and the subject to be discussed. Ask if the reporter is on deadline, and assure the reporter you will call back before the deadline. Remember, you have little control over the interview, but if the reporter asks an off-topic question, bring them back to the agreed topic. Here are tips designed to help as you prepare for the actual interview:

- Jot down likely questions and appropriate answers.
- Know what you want to communicate. Plan to make your points accordingly.
- Do your research. Provide background or expanded information.
- Never lie or mislead a reporter.
- Offer your conclusion first, briefly and directly. Back it with facts.
- Avoid organizational jargon and acronyms.
- Short answers are better than long. Use complete sentences.
- Don't accept a reporter's facts or figures as true; don't respond to a hypothetical situation; and do respond to negative-leading questions with positive statements.
- Keep cool. Don't allow yourself to be provoked.
- Remember when talking to a reporter there is no such thing as "off the record."
- If there are any skeletons in the closet, be prepared for them to come up in the interview.
- Be prepared to state all your positive points completely in response to the first questions asked.
- State clearly when you can release information and why.
- If you don't know the answers, say so, and offer to find out.

The interview will be brief. A reporter has only a few minutes to get your full story. Don't ask to approve the story before it is published or broadcast.

Notifying the Media When the Chief Visits

The VFW National Commander's visit to your area is an important event for several reasons. First, they are the chief spokesman for our organization. They are widely traveled, aware of the concerns of veterans and their families across the nation, and have the responsibility to meet with the president and key congressional members to express the interests and needs of the nation's veterans.

For these reasons, the local media will be interested in their views on veterans' issues, national security and foreign affairs. It benefits the VFW and veterans in general if the Chief's visit is well-covered by the media.

Ahead of the Chief's visit to your Post, VFW National Headquarters will supply a media alert template, bio and suggested interview questions to the Department Commander and Adjutant. If the Department hasn't announced the visit, take the opportunity to publicize the event yourself. Your media plans for the Chief's visit should include:

- **Media Alert.** If your Department has already announced the Chief's visit, ask for a copy. Then, forward it to the news editors in your community. If the Department has not distributed a media alert, write one yourself.
- **Interviews.** Contact your local TV and radio stations in your community and ask if they would like to have the VFW's National Commander as a guest. Of course, be sure the Chief will be in your area long enough to take part in this type of interview. Most Post visits are scheduled for 30 minutes. Such interviews work best at the beginning of a visit or at the end. In any case, coordinate with your Department headquarters to determine what time works best for the Chief's already-established schedule.
- **Interviewees.** The media is there to interview the Chief. Conduct the interview in such a manner so others cannot interrupt. The Chief, the Post/District Commander and the Department Commander are the only VFW members who should attend the interview. Post, District and Department Commanders are there only to provide information on veterans' issues on a local or state level. Do not put the Chief into an interview by themselves where the media are going to concentrate on local veterans' issues. The Chief talks only on relevant national and international issues.
- **News Conference.** Since the amount of time the Chief can spend at a Post is limited, it is usually a good idea to invite the media for a specific time. Then, turn the Chief over to them for a news conference-type interview.
- **Place.** Where you conduct the interview is very important. Do not conduct interviews in the Post canteen. Use your meeting room or an area that is clean and quiet.
- **Time.** The best time to conduct an interview at the Post is as soon as the Chief arrives. Reporters have deadlines to meet and they do not have time to stand around while the Chief visits with members. Get the interview started when they arrive. The Chief can visit with members later. The only exception to this rule is when the Chief will be at the Post for a luncheon or dinner. For these visits, ask the media if they would like to eat with members, listen to the Chief's remarks afterward, and then conduct the interview. Quite often, the Chief's remarks to the group after the meal give the media ideas for questions.

- **Follow-up.** If there are questions that can't be answered during the interview, be sure to get the name and phone number of the reporter, and provide an answer as soon as possible.

Good PR Helps Retain Members

Post officers have an additional responsibility to members of the VFW to ensure that Post activities are enjoyable, interesting and diverse. This promotes membership retention. Members who show pride in the organization and the community service they perform attract potential members.

Remind members to wear VFW-branded apparel. Make sure new members feel welcome and offer them the opportunity to get involved in a VFW program or project that captures their interest. Getting a new member off to a good start, or involving an existing member in a new program, is in everyone's best interest. A happy member is the best PR the VFW can have.

Supporting VFW activities through meaningful PR is the key to supporting members in their efforts to help the community. Members will recognize your contribution to the success of the VFW and its many projects and programs. There is no substitute for teamwork.

Advertising

There are significant differences between public relations and advertising.

With advertising you control the timing and content but not the cost. **In public relations you have no control on the timing or content but pay nothing.** Resources will determine which method you use most frequently.

Talk to local radio and TV stations about advertising or donated public service announcement (PSA) time. The cost of placing a 30-second spot can be minimal depending on your location. Explore these mediums for effectiveness of messaging (how many of your target audience you reach) and cost comparison.

VFW National Headquarters has produced 30 and 60-second videos and radio spots. They publicize the VFW's mission and promote our free assistance programs. Some solicit membership so they cannot be used as PSAs, which are free.

Additionally, if you advertise to solicit members, be mindful of the environment at the Post. Make sure the prospective member feels welcome and respected.

Be Creative with Publicity Options

We have talked about the printed word in the form of a news release and the possibilities available through radio and video, but there are other options to investigate as well.

- **Social media** offers a broad spectrum of free and paid services that are incredibly useful. Social media platforms allow you to connect with people anywhere in the world, almost instantly.
- **Outdoor advertising** ranges from bumper stickers to welcome signs as people drive through your community. Take every opportunity to keep the community aware of the VFW's presence. In this age of mobility it is important to remember that the population in your community can change daily.
- **Exhibits** in shopping areas, community social events and other public forums are excellent ways to bring the VFW story to the community. Information on VFW activities and programs can entice eligible veterans to join the organization and favorably influence others in the community.

Social Media

The Age of Social Media

Simply put, social media allows people to create, share or exchange information, ideas, and pictures/videos in virtual communities and networks.

Establishing a social media presence allows your Post to engage a vast and diverse audience to include members, prospects, donors, potential donors, supporters, etc., while building the VFW's brand and credibility.

Social media is useful to share information about meetings and events, opportunities for support and to strengthen your Post's relationship with your online community. It is a place to share success stories and to ask for support if needed.

There are numerous social media sites available for use. The key is finding the sites that are a good fit for your audience.

When looking into building a profile on a new social media site, be aware of the sites' strengths and weaknesses, the opportunities and the risks.

Using social media can have an extremely positive impact on your Post. Engaging with your audience by posting regularly and being responsive to questions and comments is the key to success!

Dos and Don'ts of Social Media

DO:

- Post regularly.
- Use correct spelling, grammar and punctuation.
- Reply in a timely manner.
- Be customer-service oriented.
- Answer questions.
- Use pictures and videos for eye-catching content.

DON'T:

- Be argumentative when someone disagrees with the VFW's position.
- Share articles from untrusted news sources.
- Keep the password to yourself. Instead, make sure that more than one person has access to the Post's social media accounts
- Post polarizing content. Instead, stay nonpartisan and in line with VFW positions.

Using the Internet for Publicity and Outreach

The internet is a world of endless possibilities. It contains more information than most people will ever need. When researching for the most up-to-date information on a particular topic, it can't be beaten. **It provides you with the opportunity to communicate instantly with VFW members and others who visit your Post's website.**

Your Post's website is a window into the Post's character. A calendar of current activities, showing what, when, where and how to get involved, is an incredibly useful tool. A listing of diverse activities carried out by the Post allows numerous people to find the "perfect fit" for their interests and abilities.

Tell your Post's story.

- Is the VOD program in full swing? If so, what schools are participating? How many students are participating? What are the awards for the top students?
- Did you adopt a local military unit?
- Have you recently recognized local citizens for their efforts to better the community? Seize this opportunity to tell your story on your website.

The prompt placement of news releases on current actions of veterans' legislation, or breaking news on issues of interest to veterans on your Post's website is vital because members need to be aware of current events so they can contact their local, or national elected officials, and voice their opinions.

Numerous issues concerning veterans can be researched on the internet. Find out how your congressional representative or senator voted on a particular bill. Biographical and contact information on that individual is available in an instant. Use this tool to keep yourself and your members informed. The VFW provides a list of current, veteran-related bills before Congress and their current action at <https://votervoice.net/VFW/bills>.

If your community has a website, ask if they will allow a link to the Post's site. This would be an excellent opportunity for nonmembers in the community to become further acquainted with the VFW and the many programs and projects it performs that benefit the community. Be sure to include information on how to join and a local contact at the Post.

If you keep your members informed they will feel connected to the organization and take pride in its accomplishments. Feeling proud and connected may encourage them to become more involved in Post activities. Increased involvement leads to more program participation. It is a win/win situation for the member, the Post and the community.

In addition, it's important for the Post website to continually be updated. A website that isn't being updated or maintained will deter visitors from your site. In this day of "instant access," people demand that information on websites be current. Otherwise you could lose credibility in your community.

VFW Website Solution Program

The VFW Website Solution program is geared to assist Posts and Departments in establishing a viable, easy-to-manage website. The template-based platform offers Posts and Departments an affordable opportunity to stake their claim of the web, making pertinent information easily accessible to members, as well as the public. Further, the website templates being offered adopt a consistent look and feel, working to reinforce the official VFW brand and messaging.

These websites boast many manager-friendly functions, and feature an "integration" component which allows the national website, and Department and Post websites to share information, both manually and automatically. This includes a system which allows the Post to efficiently submit reports directly to the Department. In addition, website developer DrivePath offers each Post and Department ongoing support with each website.

This is a great opportunity for Posts and Departments. Additional details are provided on the following flyer. Apply today at <https://vfwprograms.formstack.com/forms/websolutionapp>!



Additional Resources: From Public Service Announcements (PSAs) and social media guides to sample media alerts and press releases, additional public relations resources are available behind the member login at vfw.org in the Communications & Public Affairs section of Training & Support. Log in at vfw.org, and select the VFW Training & Support link under Member Resources.

**The following pages comprise the
Website Solution Program
flyer and VFW Press Kit.**



WEBSITE SOLUTION PROGRAM

V2.0

by PIXELBIT | DrivePath



The easy-to-use online solution to helping you grow VFW membership.

CONTACT US FOR
MORE DETAILS:

248.232.1293

WEBMASTER@VFWNATIONAL.ORG

VALUE

- Our control panel allows you to easily manage the content of your site 24/7. This helps you keep News, Events and resource information current.
- Makes it easier for potential new members to get the info they are looking for regarding membership.

FEATURES

- Sync your Calendar & News with VFW District, Department & National websites.
- Edit all of the content on the site including managing officers / staff via our dedicated control panel.
- Social media integration.
- Editable Photo Gallery, Newsletter Email Engine and more...

NEW FEATURES

- Mobile Friendly Responsive Design.
- Create Pages on the Fly and Control where those pages appear in the dropdown navigation.
- Turn On/Off Modules on every page & rearrange Modules to appear in a specific order.
- Full Screen Calendar - Recurring Events.
- Sliders - You Control!
- Search Engine Optimization built in.
- New Pages - TAPS, HONOR GUARD, M.O.C & More...

1st Year FREE

with VFW National Grant. Ask for Details.

COST

ONLY **\$360⁰⁰** per year*

* Cost Includes one domain and hosting. Additional domains are \$35 each.

* Cost is FREE w/ Site Sponsor Program - Ask for details.





VFW at a Glance

The VFW is a nonprofit veterans service organization comprised of eligible veterans and military service members from the active, Guard and Reserve forces. The VFW and its Auxiliary are dedicated to veterans service, legislative advocacy, and military and community service programs.

Origins

In 1899, the American Veterans of Foreign Service (Columbus, Ohio) and the National Society of the Army of the Philippines (Denver, Colo.) were organized to secure rights and benefits for veterans of the Spanish-American War (1898) and the Philippines War (1899-1902). These two organizations merged in 1914, creating the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States. The VFW was chartered by Congress in 1936.

Membership Eligibility

Those serving honorably in the U.S. Armed Forces in a foreign war or overseas operation recognized by a campaign medal, in Korea after June 30, 1949, and recipients of hostile-fire or imminent danger pay. Veterans of World War II, Korea, Vietnam, Lebanon, Grenada, Panama, Persian Gulf, Somalia, Kosovo, Afghanistan, Iraq and other smaller expeditionary campaigns, as well as occupation duty, qualify.

Partner Organization

A national volunteer service organization, the Auxiliary of the VFW was founded in 1914 and is the backbone of many local VFW volunteer efforts.

Membership Size

More than 1.6 million VFW and Auxiliary members in all 50 states, and many foreign countries.

Organizational Structure

Thousands convene each year at the VFW's national convention to elect officers, adopt resolutions and discuss business affairs. Leading the organization are the elected commander-in-chief, senior vice commander-in-chief and junior vice commander-in-chief. The National Council of Administration serves as the VFW's board of directors.

More than 6,200 Posts worldwide comprise 52 Departments in the 50 states, the Asia/Pacific Areas and Europe. Posts form the basic local chapter.

Priority Issues

- **Budget:** Secure full funding for programs and services for veterans, service members and their families by ending sequestration.
- **Health Care:** Ensure veterans have timely access to high quality, comprehensive and veteran-centric health care, and secure sufficient funding for the VA Health Care System.

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- ***Women Veterans:*** Expand women's health care services to all VA medical centers to ensure the growing number of women veterans have access to gender-specific services.
- ***Suicide Prevention & Homelessness:*** Work with VA, DOD and Congress to reduce the rate of suicide and homelessness among veterans.
- ***VA Benefits & Compensation:*** Ensure veterans and their dependents have timely access to earned benefits.
- ***Seamless Transition:*** Improve education, employment and transition programs so veterans have an opportunity to obtain meaningful employment after leaving military service.
- ***Military Quality of Life:*** Fight to maintain a quality and comprehensive benefits and retirement package that is the backbone for an all-volunteer force.
- ***Education & Employment:*** Fight to sustain GI Bill benefits and insist on strengthening USERRA. Continue to improve licensing and credentialing for military skills.
- ***Defense & Homeland Security:*** Fully support the troops and their mission in the war on terrorism, and to secure U.S. borders against all enemies, both foreign and domestic, who are intent on doing us harm.
- ***POW/MIA:*** Achieve the fullest possible accounting of America's 83,000 MIAs from World War II forward.

VFW Community Achievements

The VFW takes great pride in its history of service to its communities both stateside and abroad.

Annually, VFW and Auxiliary members donate nearly nine million hours to community service projects, relief efforts and local VA facilities each year.

- 1915 VFW Post 2100 helped sponsor a Boy Scout troop in Everett, Wash.
- 1916 First national VFW essay contest held
- 1922 "Buddy"® Poppy program began
- 1923 Entered the war on drugs by printing a resolution calling for an international conference
- 1927 Provided \$10,000 to Mississippi Valley flood victims
- 1930 First VFW scholarship award (\$300) goes to a Boy Scout
- 1936 Boy Scout-VFW plan of cooperation was signed
- 1938 Supported the National Foundation for Infantile Paralysis
- 1940 VFW Junior Rifle Clubs are formed with National Rifle Association
- 1942 VFW Aviator Cadet Program began
- 1950 Cooperative disaster-relief plan developed with the Red Cross
- 1952 The Dunn family (Kansas flood victims) won a \$75,000 farm in Washington courtesy of the VFW
- 1953 VFW National Teen-er Baseball: First tournament was held in Hershey Park, Pa.
- 1956 150,000 kids took part in the national VFW marble competition
- 1958 Became full partner with Voice of Democracy (VOD)
- 1959 Minnesota VFW/Auxiliary raised \$325,000 for dedication of the VFW Cancer Research Center at the University of Minnesota (Minneapolis)
- 1961 Assumed primary sponsorship of VOD — within four years 262,000 students participated
- 1962 Lite-a-Bike program: A \$300,000 project with 3-M Co. of St. Paul, Minn., provided "Scotchlite" reflector tape — 50,000 VFW members from 4,500 Posts participated
- 1964 VFW/Auxiliary provided nearly \$100,000 to earthquake victims in Anchorage, Alaska
- 1970 Drive-to-Survive program began
- 1973 Drug Awareness program began
- 1979 VFW Political Action Committee formed
- 1980 Minnesota VFW Posts sponsored the U.S. hockey team in the Winter Olympics
- 1983 Agreed to permit the Red Cross to use VFW facilities as shelters and relief centers during national disasters and emergencies
- 1986 Donated \$122,000 to the Statue of Liberty Restoration Fund
- 1990 Provided \$49,000 to California earthquake victims
- 1992 Provided \$197,000 to relieve victims of Hurricane Andrew and other disasters
- 1993 Relief funds totaled \$500,000
- 1995 Youth Essay Contest (7th-8th grades) began

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- 1997 "Buddy"® Poppy celebrated 75th anniversary
- 1998 VFW Posts raised \$100,000 for the March of Dimes
- 1999 VOD gave \$2.5 million in scholarship monies to high school students
VFW donated \$50,000 and 25,000 reprints of its war chronology to Vietnam Veterans Memorial's Young American Vietnam War Era Studies Project
- 2000 Distributed 60,000 audio books to armed forces worldwide through *Operation Yarnspinner*
- 2002 Donated \$110,000 to diabetes research
Equally distributed \$120,000 among families of active-duty personnel killed in the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attack on the Pentagon
- 2003 Partnered with USA Freedom Corps homefront initiative
- 2004 Established relationships with the National Council for Social Studies (NCCS) and National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP)
- 2005 Provided \$560,000 to Gulf Coast veterans after Hurricanes Katrina and Rita
Distributed 5,000 copies of CD entitled, "Vietnam: A Nation Remembers"
Established VFW Military Scholarship program
Expanded Patriot's Pen Essay Competition
- 2007 Radiothon raised nearly \$100,000 for Unmet Needs
- 2010 Donated over \$648,000 toward construction of the Vietnam Veterans Education Center
Increased Voice of Democracy National Scholarships to \$150,000
Provided over \$20,000 to assist service members with family in Haiti following the January earthquake
- 2011 Pledged \$500,000 toward the construction of the Veterans Hall in the National Museum of the United States Army
Provided over \$145,000 in emergency financial relief to military families living in tornado-stricken areas
- 2012 Provided over \$120,000 for Hurricane Sandy victims on the East Coast
- 2013 Provided \$30,000 for the Moore, Okla., tornado victims and over \$30,000 for the flood victims in Colorado
- 2015 Provided \$10,000 to the Pacific Areas for typhoon relief
- 2016 Provided \$25,000 for flood relief in Louisiana
- 2017 Provided \$621,300 in aid for victims of Hurricanes Matthew, Irma, Harvey and Maria, and \$19,000 for victims of the California wildfires
- 2018 Provided \$139,000 in aid for victims of Hurricanes Michael, Irma and Florence, and \$35,000 for wildfires in California and Colorado. Provided \$55,000 for Pacific area victims of Tropical Cyclone Gita, and victims of the Mount Kilauea volcanic eruptions, and \$20,000 for disaster relief efforts in Saipan.

VFW Diverse Endeavors

The VFW honors veterans through memorial fundraising efforts, sponsorship of special events for disabled vets, and by recognizing volunteer service. Donations also help victims of natural disasters and less-fortunate children.

Special Events

- ***Honoring Disabled Vets***

Sponsors special trips for Purple Heart recipients. Past events include “Return to Vietnam” and other events.

- ***“Run for the Wall”***

Supports the annual “Run for the Wall,” a cross country motorcycle ride to the Vietnam Memorial in Washington, D.C. The VFW sponsors refueling for all participating riders during a scheduled stop near the VFW National Headquarters.

- ***Disabled Veterans Hunt***

Annually pays for an all-expense-paid trip for disabled war veterans to go to South Dakota for a VFW Pheasant Hunt.

- ***Purple Heart Antelope Hunt***

The *VFW* magazine annually sponsors an all-expense-paid antelope hunt in Broadus, Mont., for significantly wounded Purple Heart recipients.

Memorials

In fulfilling its pledge to remember the nation’s war dead, the VFW promotes national memorials for veterans of all wars. Additionally, thousands of memorials have been constructed across the nation through local VFW Posts.

- ***National WWI Memorial***

Gave the memorial a \$350,000 grant to help expand the Liberty Memorial Museum, which houses the nation's most comprehensive collection of World War I historical materials. In 2017, the VFW was proud to sponsor the World War I Centennial Commemorative Ceremony at the National World War I Museum and Memorial in Kansas City, Mo. The VFW donated \$100,000 to preserving the history of the Great War.

- ***National WWI Memorial***

Donated \$300,000 to the U.S. World War I Centennial Commission for the creation of the World War I Memorial, in Washington, D.C.

- ***National WWII Memorial***

Reached its five-year fundraising goal of \$6 million for the memorial’s construction in only two years. The donation ranks as the largest from any veterans group, and second overall.

- ***Korean War Memorial***

Members donated \$600,000 toward the construction of the Korean War Memorial. The donation ranked among the highest.

- ***Vietnam Veterans Memorial***

Donated over \$300,000 toward building “The Wall” — all 58,000 Americans who died as a result of the Vietnam War are listed. The VFW was the first major organization to contribute.

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- ***Women in Military Service to America Memorial***

Donated \$70,000 toward construction costs.

- ***Disabled Veterans for Life Memorial***

Donated \$100,000 toward construction costs.

- ***Vietnam Veterans Education Center***

Donated over \$648,000 toward the construction of the Education Center.

- ***National Museum of the United States Army***

Donated \$500,000 toward the construction of the Veterans Hall in the museum.

- ***National Desert Storm Memorial***

Donated \$400,000 toward its \$500,000 pledge for the construction of the National Desert Storm Memorial.

Awards

Outstanding police officers, firefighters, EMTs and other first responders are recognized annually by the VFW for their work in the community.

National Home for Children

Children, youth and family of VFW and Auxiliary members who have nowhere to turn find a safe haven on this 629-acre VFW campus in Eaton Rapids, Mich. The privately funded facility is a living memorial to VFW and to all veterans.

VFW Programs & Projects

Since its founding, the VFW has been a staple in the community. Troop support, youth activities, volunteering and scholarship programs are a few of the ways the VFW shines in the many communities and cities where Posts are located.

Youth Scholarship Programs

- ***Voice of Democracy***

This audio-essay competition annually awards nearly \$2 million in scholarships to students in grades 9-12. First-place winner receives a \$30,000 scholarship.

- ***Patriot's Pen***

More than \$1.2 million is awarded annually to students in grades 6-8 in this essay contest. First-place winner receives \$5,000.

- ***Teacher of the Year***

The VFW annually recognizes one exceptional elementary, junior and high school teacher for their outstanding commitment to teaching Americanism and patriotism to their students. Awards include a commemorative citation for them and their school.

Educational Outreach

- ***Echoes From the Wall***

The VFW partnered with the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund to distribute a curriculum, Echoes From the Wall, to 25,000 public and private high schools and donated \$50,000 to the project.

- ***Educational Brochures***

The VFW produces and distributes a flag brochure and poster.

- ***Veterans in the Classroom***

November is officially known as VFW Veterans in the Classroom Month. Members demonstrate flag etiquette and share their wartime experiences with America's youth.

Youth Activities

Locally, VFW Posts sponsor various youth sporting programs such as baseball and ice hockey. In addition many VFW Posts sponsor Boy and Girl Scout troops, Junior Olympics, bike safety, JROTC units, drill teams, color guards and a variety of other programs to build good citizenship and exemplary character in America's youth.

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Community Volunteerism

Each year, VFW members volunteer nearly 9 million hours of service to various community endeavors.

- ***Veterans Affairs Voluntary Service***

The VFW was a charter member in 1946. VFW volunteers donate millions of hours of service annually at VA medical facilities.

Troop Support

- ***Military Assistance Program (MAP)***

The link between the VFW and the military community has provided over 4,000 grants to VFW Departments and Posts for morale-boosting events since 2005, hosting more than 2.3 million military members and their families at these events.

- ***Adopt-a-Unit***

More than 2,900 units and ships have been adopted through VFW Posts since 2007. VFW National Headquarters adopted the USS Cole in 2002.

- ***Care Packages***

Posts across the country show their support of America's military by collecting and distributing much-needed personal items for adopted units.

- ***VFW Unmet Needs***

This program administers emergency financial grants to military families to help cover basic expenses like mortgage payments, childcare, food and more. Since 2004, more than 9,600 grants have been issued totaling more than \$10.8 million.

- ***VFW "Sport Clips Help A Hero Scholarship"***

Introduced in 2013, this program awards scholarships of up to \$5,000 to qualifying veterans and service members. The program has provided more than 1,287 scholarships totaling \$5.7 million.

- ***1 Student Veteran***

Enacted in 2013, this program offers direct assistance to student veterans who have questions or are experiencing problems accessing their VA benefits.

- ***VFW Communication Assistance***

Introduced in 1996 and expiring in 2018, this program initially began with calling cards for deployed and hospitalized troops, and included several days throughout the year where deployed service members could call home for free. To date, the VFW has provided more than 10 million free connections for service members and their families.

Legislative Victories

The VFW played an instrumental role in virtually every significant piece of veterans' legislation passed in the 20th century, as well as bills enacted in the 21st century. Note: In each case, this is the year an act was passed or an institution established.

For more information, contact the VFW National Legislative Service at vfwac@vfw.org.

- 1917 War Risk Insurance Act Amendments
- 1918 Vocational Rehabilitation Act (P.L. 178)
- 1919 Census Act Rider on Veterans Preference Discharge Allowance
- 1920 Widows and Orphans Pension Act (Spanish-America War)
- 1921 Veterans Bureau Act
- 1923 Veterans Preference Point System
- 1924 House Committee on Veterans' Affairs
World War Adjusted Compensation Act
- 1925 Senate Subcommittee on Veterans' Affairs
- 1926 Spanish-American War benefits
New Johnson Act (WWI benefits)
- 1930 Veterans Administration (VA) World War Service Disability Pension Act (P.L. 522)
- 1931 Bacharach Amendment (P.L. 743) allows borrowing on WWI bonus certificates
- 1933 Wagner-Peyser Act: Veterans Employment Service
- 1934 Pension for widows of WWI vets
- 1936 VFW congressional charter signed by President Roosevelt
Bonus bonds (\$2.4 billion) to WWI vets redeemable
- 1938 Armistice Day (Nov. 11) legal holiday
- 1940 National Service Life Insurance
Selective Service & Training Act
- 1943 Benefits to WWII veterans (P.L. 10)
Disabled Veterans Rehabilitation Act
- 1944 GI Bill of Rights (P.L. 346)
Veterans Preference Act
- 1946 Veteran Emergency Housing Act
- 1947 Bureau of Veterans Re-employment Rights (BVRR)
- 1950 Vocational Rehabilitation Act
- 1951 Servicemen's Indemnity & Insurance
- 1952 Veterans Readjustment Assistance Act (Korean War GI Bill)
- 1954 Veterans Compensation Act
Nov. 11 declared as Veterans Day (P.L. 380)
- 1962 Veterans Benefits Act (Cold War GI Bill)
- 1966 Veterans Readjustment Benefits Act (P.L. 89-358) (Vietnam War GI Bill)
- 1970 Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs
- 1972 Vietnam Era Veterans Readjustment Assistance Act

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1973 Federal court agrees veterans preference applies to state jobs
 1974 Vietnam Era Veterans Readjustment Assistance Act (vocational rehabilitation)
 1976 Veterans Education & Employment Assistance Act
 1977 Post-Vietnam Era Veterans Educational Assistance Act
 1978 Veterans preference preserved
 Veterans & Survivors Pension Improvement Act
 Veterans Day returned to Nov. 11
 1979 Vietnam Veterans Outreach Program (creates Vet Centers)
 1980 VFW calls for Agent Orange study
 Veterans Rehabilitation & Education Amendments
 1981 Former POW Benefits Act
 Veterans Health Care, Training & Small Business Loan Act
 1982 Veterans Employment and Training Service (VETS)
 Vietnam Veterans Memorial dedicated
 1983 Emergency Veterans Job-Training Act
 1984 Montgomery GI Bill Veterans Dioxin & Radiation Exposure Compensation Standards Act
 (P.L. 98-542): Agent Orange & Atomic Exposure
 1987 New GI Bill Continuation Act
 1988 Radiation-Exposed Veterans Compensation Act
 Department of Veterans Affairs Act
 Veterans Judicial Review Act
 1989 VA becomes a Cabinet department Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims
 1990 Agent Orange service-connection
 1991 Agent Orange Act (P.L. 102-4)
 Persian Gulf War Veterans Assistance Act (P.L. 102-25)
 1992 Veterans Health Care Act
 1996 Veterans Health Care Eligibility Reform Act
 1999 Veterans Millennium Health Care and Benefits Act
 2003 Concurrent receipt for military retirees rated 50% disabled or more
 2004 Full concurrent receipt for military retirees rated 100% disabled
 Traumatic Injury Insurance supplemental created
 2005 Protestors banned from military funerals
 Stolen Valor Act signed into law
 2006 VFW calls for VA/military health care system review after Walter Reed outpatient debacle
 2008 Record VA discretionary budget approved
 GI Bill for the 21st Century signed into law
 2009 Advance Appropriations for VA becomes law
 2010 Family Caregiver Legislation signed into law
 Ensured all VA and DOD health care programs met minimum health care coverage standards
 2011 VOW to Hire Heroes Act
 VFW stopped TRICARE premiums from increasing annually
 2012 Honoring America's Veterans and Caring for Camp Lejeune Families Act
 Extended USERRA protections to veterans working for TSA
 2013 Reinstated military Tuition Assistance programs
 New Stolen Valor Act signed into law
 Stopped Creation of Distinguished Warfare Medal (Drone Medal)
 2014 Veterans Access, Choice and Accountability Act of 2014
 In-State Tuition for Post-9/11 GI Bill eligible veterans
 Advance Appropriations for VA Benefits
 2015 Clay Hunt Suicide Prevention for American Veterans (SAV) Act
 Eliminated 1% COLA reduction penalty on future military retirees
 Created government match to military Thrift Savings Plan accounts

- 2016 Toxic Exposure Research Act to evaluate impact on descendants
Enhanced fertility treatment and adoption services
- 2017 Forever GI Bill gives veterans a lifetime to use GI Bill benefits
Veterans Appeals Improvement and Modernization Act of 2017
VA Accountability and Whistleblower Protection Act
Global War on Terrorism Memorial
Improved VA hiring and retention authorities
Veterans Choice Program improvements and expansion
Declassifying toxic exposure documents
Prevented significant copayment increases for TRICARE
- 2018 Expanded caregiver benefits to veterans of all eras
Consolidated community care into one improved program
Established a process to evaluate and improve VA facilities to better serve veterans
Defeated proposed cuts to Individual Unemployability
- 2020 Elimination of the Widow's Tax
Valor Medals Review Task Force
Secured presumptive Agent Orange disability benefits for Blue Water Navy veterans



VFW Service to Veterans

From lobbying Congress and monitoring the Department of Veterans Affairs to assisting veterans filing claims, the VFW remains a dedicated advocate for America's veterans, service members and their families.

National Veterans Service (NVS)

The NVS is responsible for accrediting and training VFW's global network of professional service officers. NVS provides annual training to VFW Service Officers. NVS staff represents veterans at the Board of Veterans Appeals in Washington, D.C. Each year NVS provides \$1.9 million to VFW Departments in support of their veteran service programs.

- **Department Service Officers (DSOs)**

A global network of highly trained and accredited service officers helps veterans navigate the complicated VA claims process. Department of Veterans Affairs statistics show that for 2018, the VFW helped recoup \$8.3 billion in earned benefits. This amount includes \$1.6 billion in new claims, submitted on behalf of 107,000 veterans.

- **Tactical Assessment Center (TAC)**

The VFW's TAC operates a toll-free hotline for veterans with questions or concerns about VA health care and benefits. The number is 1-800-VFW-1899. Veterans can also email vfw@vfw.org.

- **Health Screenings**

The VFW hosts a health fair at its national convention. Attendees can receive health screenings, eye exams, cholesterol checks, respiratory function testing, blood pressure screening and blood glucose testing. Many lives have been saved thanks to these free screenings.

- **Pre-Discharge Program**

Introduced in 2001, the VFW's pre-discharge program (formerly known as Benefits Delivery at Discharge) provides claims assistance to separating military personnel on more than 24 military installations and military populated regions throughout the country.

National Legislative Service

The NLS educates Congress and advocates for policies that improve the lives of veterans, active duty military and their families.

- **Action Corps**

This grassroots lobbying effort has more than 300,000 volunteer advocates who write, call and visit lawmakers to discuss issues related to veterans. Also, Action Corps members receive the VFW *Action Corps Weekly*, an e-newsletter relating to current legislation and events.

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National Security and Foreign Affairs

The welfare of active duty, Guard and Reserve personnel and their families is of a prime concern to the VFW.

- ***POW/MIA***

The VFW national officers visit Asian and European countries to meet with host-country officials to stress the importance of conducting MIA investigation and recovery operations, as well as gaining access to documents and archival research facilities.

Employment Services

The VFW is a strong supporter of veterans' preference in government positions. The Washington Office actively works to advance veteran-specific employment legislation.

WASHINGTON OFFICE



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Introduction

VFW Washington Office Mission

To prevail upon Congress and the Administration to fulfill our nation's commitment to care and provide for her defenders and their families, and to ensure that the United States of America remains forever vigilant and secure.

Philosophy

The Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States was founded in 1899 by Soldiers, Sailors and Marines from the Spanish-American War and later, the Philippine Insurrection, who returned home to a government that provided virtually no healthcare or rehabilitation programs for their service-connected wounds, illnesses or injuries. Our forefathers banded together to create an organization to change the way our nation treats those she sends to war, and in 1919, the VFW Washington Office was opened to ensure the veterans' voice was clearly heard on Capitol Hill.

Today, your VFW works with Congress, the Administration, and its agencies and departments to protect and create legislation and programs to enhance the quality of life of 22 million American veterans, 2.2 million active-duty military, Guard and Reserve members, and all their families.

To the VFW, a nation that creates veterans has a sacred obligation to care for them when they return home. Using that as our guiding principle, the VFW Washington Office's philosophy is to:

- Directly assist and help ensure veterans are provided all the care, support and compensation they earned through their honorable service in a prompt and compassionate manner by the Department of Veterans Affairs and other federal organizations.
- Promote legislation in Congress to create and enhance the VFW's pro-veteran, pro-military and national security goals, and to defeat those proposals we deem detrimental to our veteran and military communities.
- Help ensure veteran and military spouse employment opportunities are supported by lawmakers, the private sector, and all concerned government entities through the enhancement of veterans' preference legislation, training, education, and interstate licensing and certification portability programs.
- And to strongly advocate for national security and foreign affairs policies that guarantee our security as a nation, promotes our democratic ideals and interests abroad, seeks the fullest possible accounting of our missing comrades, and backs a strong military that provides for the wellbeing of military service members, retirees and their families.

Continuing Commitment

Since our founding the VFW has helped to create, protect and enhance virtually every quality of life program provided by the Departments of Defense and Veterans Affairs—from improved healthcare and benefits to disability compensation and pensions, military pay raises, new GI Bills, traumatic injury insurance, hazardous substance exposure compensation, family caregiver support, and better services for women veterans, among many others. But more still needs to be done, especially in this era of serious federal budget reductions and cost-shifting proposals.

Of tremendous assistance to our national legislative effort is the grassroots support provided by tens of thousands of VFW Action Corps members who reside in the home states and districts of all 535 members of Congress. So, too, is a strong membership, because on Capitol Hill, membership is the measure of influence and organizational strength.

When the VFW Commander-in-Chief testifies before Congress or meets with the president or other federal officials, it is well understood that he represents the largest organization of combat veterans in the nation, an organization and its Auxiliary with a total membership of more than 1.5 million. And with such influence comes responsibility, and your VFW Washington Office—consisting of National Legislative Service, National Veterans Service, and an Action Corps—is committed to the VFW’s principles of serving the nation and those who serve her in uniform, and to help ensure that “No One Does More for Veterans” than our VFW.

National Legislative Service

The VFW National Legislative Service represents the organization before the United States Congress to advance legislation that is beneficial to veterans, our military, and their families and to work toward the defeat of legislation that would harm them.

In our mission we:

- Testify before congressional committees and subcommittees.
- Educate Congress on VFW Priority Goals to advance veteran-friendly policies.
- Secure the introduction and passage of legislation favorable to our membership.

The issues we advance are derived from the resolutions passed at our National Convention. The members of the National Legislative Committee take these resolutions and establish our Priority Goals. These Priority Goals, in turn, become our key issues and let Congress know what we most strongly support. They are our mandates for action.

For the 116th Congress, our Priority Goals focus on:

- Blue Water Navy
- Veterans' Health Care
- Burn Pits
- Concurrent Receipt
- Transition
- Among many others, for a complete list visit: www.vfw.org/advocacy/national-legislative-service.

We encourage all of our members, and ask you to encourage all of your fellow members to become educated on these issues. **You have a strong influence in Washington, and you should to use it.**

VFW Action Corps

Action Corps is the grassroots network of the VFW. Our members and non-member advocates are encouraged to contact their legislators on a wide variety of VFW-supported issues, working hand in hand with National Legislative Service.

Former Speaker of the House Tip O'Neill famously said, "All politics is local." Your legislators truly care about what you think. They depend upon us for support and votes. It is up to us to educate our legislators so they know what we believe in and what we expect from them.

What Can We Do For You?

- Action Corps members receive frequent legislative updates and calls-to-action on key issues.
- We assist you, as a VFW leader, by providing materials to help educate your members on the important issues and how to play a larger, more active role in the political process.
- We provide information and resources on how to effectively communicate the VFW's message to those in Congress.

How You Can Help Us?

- Stay Informed. Know the Issues.
- Participate by responding to action alerts and surveys.
- Be an instructor to your members. Let all your members know about the issues and Action Corps.
- Be an educator to your legislators. Let Congress know our Priority Goals and what we want them to do.
- Encourage others to help. Sign up to be a veterans' advocate and join Action Corps. If every veterans' advocate could email, write or call their legislators, we would be an unstoppable force.
- Anyone who cares about veterans can join Action Corps for free. You do not need to be a VFW member. The more advocates we have, the stronger our voice will be on Capitol Hill. Sign up new advocates for Action Corps any chance you get (see next section To Get Involved).

To Get Involved:

Sign up for the Action Corps: visit **vfw.org/advocacy/grassroots-efforts**.

Through Action Corps, you will be able to directly email your legislators. Please be reminded that the majority of information – Action Alerts, email updates and other breaking news – are sent via email. The speed with which legislation now moves requires the kind of instant action that only email can provide.

What's the Best Way to Communicate with Your Legislators?

- **Personal Visits-** This is the most effective way to communicate our message. Legislators make frequent visits to their district offices. Call their local office and ask for an appointment. When meeting, be organized and concise. Feel free to leave a fact sheet or a copy of the VFW Priority Goals for their future reference, which can be found at: vfw.org/advocacy/national-legislative-service.
- **Town Hall Meetings -** Organizing a town hall meeting is an excellent way to get our issues in the forefront and discussed. Congressional leaders and candidates are always looking for places to host events and audiences to speak to. Local VFW Posts are perfect for this type of event. For more information about hosting/planning a town hall event, contact Action Corps at 202.608.8368.
- **Telephone Calls-** A short phone call, especially to the local district office, gives a clear indication of what our members think. Ask to speak to the person who handles veterans' issues and let them know what issue you are calling about, how you feel about it and how it would affect you personally. Five minutes of your time can lead to big results down the road. You can find phone numbers by visiting: <https://votervoice.net/VFW/Address>.
- **Email Messages-** Through Action Corps you can send letters and other information directly to your legislators with just a click of the mouse from your computer. We provide sample letters that you can customize and personalize, and because you are sending from our website, the information sent to the congressional offices identifies you as a constituent – critical in today's high tech world of spam and viruses.
- **Personal Letters-** A brief, clearly organized letter that focuses on one issue and why it's important to you lets them know how their constituents feel. Always be polite and professional. Be sure to specifically ask for a reply in your letter. Custom letterheads, envelopes and business cards with the VFW Logo are available from the VFW Store at 833.VFW.VETS (833.839.8387) or www.vfwstore.org.

When Writing Your Representatives Use This Form:

The Honorable Joe Smith
United States House of Representatives (or Senate)
123 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515 (or 20510)

Dear Representative Smith: (or Dear Senator Smith:)

Working with Congressional Staff

When you contact a legislator's office, you will most frequently be working with their staff. Convincing the staff to support our legislative priorities is often as, if not more, important as convincing your legislators themselves. Working and developing a personal relationship with the staff member is the key to accomplishing great things in Washington.

We're Here to Help

As always, we're happy to help you with whatever you need. If you have questions, need information, or need any assistance, just contact us. We'll help you in any way we can. You can call the Action Corps at 202.608.8368 or email us at vfwac@vfw.org.

National Veterans Service

Philosophy

The founding principle of the VFW is to ensure the provision of needed services to veterans by a grateful nation. For more than a century our organization has worked tirelessly to ensure that veterans are provided all the health care and benefits they have earned through their service and sacrifice in defense of our nation in a prompt and compassionate manner by the Department of Veterans Affairs and other federal departments and agencies.

The contents of this section are organized as follows:

- ***VA Health Care***
- ***VA Benefits Delivery***
 - A. VFW Department Service Officers
 - B. VFW “Guide for Post Service Officers”
 - C. VFW Pre-Discharge Claims Program
 - D. VFW Training and Quality Assurance
- ***Post/District Service Officers***
- ***VAVS & Community Volunteer Programs***
 - A. Department of Veterans Affairs Voluntary Service Program (VAVS)
 - B. VFW Community Health Care Volunteer Program

VA Health Care

You may have the opportunity to attend high-level briefings or meetings with VA network or hospital directors and their staff during your year as Commander. We are available to help. At your request, NVS personnel are prepared to brief you over the telephone about VA health care issues. We can also prepare a list of customized questions for you if you know what topics will be discussed. Questions pertaining to the VFW position on VA health care issues or questions pertaining to a problem at a VA medical center should be addressed to James Moss, Assistant Director, Veterans Health Policy, at 202.608.8371 or via email at jmoss@vfw.org.

VA Benefits Delivery

The VFW is dedicated to assisting veterans, their dependents and survivors at the community and national level to ensure that our nation never forgets the sacrifices made by its citizen soldiers. The VFW has played a major role in every legislative measure to establish veterans' benefits which have been enacted into law. However, the most tangible way in which we demonstrate this commitment to service is through the daily efforts of your Department Service Officers (DSO).

A. **Department Service Officers:** A VFW DSO is located in every VA regional office. In many departments, Assistant DSO's and Claims Consultants are found at VA medical centers and other out-based locations. These dedicated individuals are VFW-certified and VA-accredited to ensure veterans and their families receive professional representation in the submission of VA claims. These highly trained individuals stand ready and willing to provide whatever assistance is required. Those who serve in leadership positions are encouraged to meet with their Department Service Officer as a demonstration of interest and support. Get to know what the DSO does for you. More importantly, get to know what they do for others. The National Veterans Service provides support through a comprehensive training program and a communication system that enables the DSOs to provide world-class assistance and representation to those who place their trust in them.

Department Service Officers and their staff assist any veteran who seeks help regardless of whether they are members of the VFW. Consequently, DSOs are often the first contact veterans have with the VFW. Accordingly, DSOs should be one of the Department's top recruiters. They have access to a veteran's records that indicate if the veteran is eligible for membership. Once a DSO has provided a veteran with assistance in applying for VA benefits and entitlements, he/she should be encouraged to ask the veteran to join and provide him/her with the benefits of membership with the VFW.

(Actively soliciting VFW membership in a VA building is not permitted. However, we will work with your DSO to provide acceptable methods for obtaining memberships.)

While many service officers are very busy, there may be opportunities to conduct focused outreach to their local Guard and Reserve units to ensure that they are aware of the benefits and services to which they are entitled. Outreach can enhance the Department Service Officer's recruiting efforts.

The DSO is further supported by a National Veterans Service (NVS) staff of nine Appeals Consultants and a supervisor who represent individual veterans and other claimants who appeal VA decisions to the VA Board of Veterans Appeals (BVA) in Washington, D.C.

NVS has a staff of three quality assurance specialists who are used to review VFW service offices on a regular basis, as well as to assist new service officers in the weeks or months before they come to NVS training. The ultimate goal of these positions is to ensure the VFW is providing quality claims representation. In 2016, the Quality Assurance team visited nine Department Service Offices to review service office practices, provide training, and both share and gather best practices from service officers. Department leaders should contact the Director, NVS to arrange for a site visit to their service office.

The VFW Accredited Service Representative of the Year Program, established in 2015, is designed to provide annual VFW National recognition to an individual who is accredited by VA to represent claimants on behalf of the VFW before the Department of Veterans Affairs, to include VFW-accredited employees of State veterans' agencies.

B. **VFW “Guide for Post Service Officers”**: Every VFW member involved in service work, at all levels from Post through Department, should have the latest edition of the VFW “Guide for Post Service Officers.” This handbook, published biennially by your VFW National Veterans Service located in our Washington Office, comprehensively summarizes veteran’s benefits and entitlement programs provided by the Department of Veterans Affairs and other federal agencies. It is a handy ready reference useful in assisting and informing veterans of their entitlements under existing law. Questions pertaining to VA benefits should be directed to Mike Figlioli, Deputy Director, National Veterans Service, at 202.608.8373 or via email at mfiglioli@vfw.org. See the VFW Store website vfwstore.org or call toll-free at 833.VFW.VETS (833.839.8387) for the current edition of Guide for Post Service Officers available in print (#04107) or CD (D4107). The *Guide’s* 37th edition is also available for phone, tablet, and eBook via Amazon (amazon.com) and Barnes & Noble (barnesandnoble.com).

C. **VFW Pre-Discharge Claims Program**: The VFW plays a critical role in the military’s Transition Assistance Program (TAP) alongside our partners in the departments of Defense, Labor, and Veterans Affairs. TAP is designed to ensure that separating service members – to include members of the Guard and Reserve – and their families receive information and assistance in qualifying for and obtaining VA benefits, VA health care, education, and post-military employment. The VFW’s cadre of highly-trained National Pre-Discharge Claims Representatives offers personal counseling and assistance to service members to submit complete VA claims prior to separation from active duty.

We consistently update the skills of our Pre-Discharge Claims Representatives by providing more than 80 hours of training each year, and giving special attention to emerging issues like post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), traumatic brain injuries (TBI), military sexual trauma, and toxic exposure. Our presence on military installations continues to be well received as indicated by our BDD Client Satisfaction Survey, through which more than 99 percent of the VFW’s Pre-Discharge clients report that they would recommend the VFW to a fellow service member. As a result, we have become the service organization of choice by officers and enlisted at the military facilities we cover. It is our goal to increase interest in membership by demonstrating excellence in service work. Currently, we have a supervisor, an assistant supervisor and 24 National Pre-Discharge staff located at:

Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton, CA	Ft. Bragg, NC
Naval Base San Diego, CA	VA Regional Office, San Juan, PR; Ft. Buchanan
Ft. Carson, CO	Ft. Hood, TX
Ft. Stewart, GA	VA Regional Office, Salt Lake City, UT
Ft. Riley, KS	Ft. Belvoir, VA
Ft. Campbell, KY	Joint Base Meyer-Henderson Hall, VA
Joint Base Andrews, MD	Marine Corps Base Quantico, VA
Walter Reed National Military Medical Center, Bethesda, MD	Joint Base Lewis-McChord, WA
Las Vegas, NV, VA Medical Center; Nellis AFB	Joint Base Anacostia-Bolling, Washington, DC
Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune, NC	Ft. Drum, NY
VA Regional Office, Winston-Salem, NC	Naval Station Norfolk, VA (opened August 2016)

Additional information on the Pre-Discharge program can be found at www.vfw.org/pre-discharge. Questions regarding our participation in the Pre-Discharge program should be directed to Dawn Jirak, Deputy Director, at 202.608.8346 or via email at djirak@vfw.org.

D. **VFW Training and Quality Assurance:** The National Veterans Service focuses on expanding training initiatives and assessing the true quality and level of skill of VFW accredited service officers. We are responsible for the design and delivery of all training to VFW-accredited representatives who work in VA regional offices. We also perform quality assurance by interacting with your Department Service Office staff and offering advice on more complicated claims issues. NVS periodically reviews the quality of the VA regional office decisions and the level of advocacy provided by VFW. A system has been put in place to evaluate and validate the skill level and quality of advocacy for VFW accredited service officers. Testing is a vital element in that system.

VFW-accredited Department Service Officers are required to attend NVS training twice annually and all other VFW-accredited staff located in a VA regional office are required to attend at least once annually. In order to ensure that training is effective we test all students at the conclusion of training. You will be notified of your service office staff's test scores. We maintain a database of all scores so that we can determine an average grade. This is used to determine progress and/or difficulty in understanding the work. This is vital information we use in the mandatory five-year reaccreditation process. Our commitment to professionalism and quality has produced a higher standard of quality in the everyday work of your service offices. Questions regarding NVS training and quality assurance should be directed to Lauren Barefoot, Manager, Training & Quality Assurance, at 202.608.8360 or via email at lbarefoot@vfw.org.

Post/District Service Officers

VA is making extensive outreach efforts to veterans. Indeed, veterans can now file a claim for disability compensation directly from their home through the Internet. As a result, it is not unusual for veterans to visit local VFW posts asking for information on veteran's benefits from anyone at the post. That "anyone," of course, should be the Post Service Officer (PSO).

The Post Service Officer is integral to our mission of veterans' representation. Indicative of this is the mandate in the National Veterans Service *Policy and Procedure* that Department Service Officers must provide a training session for the PSOs in the Department at least once annually. The "Guide for Post Service Officers" is focused toward educating and providing a handy reference for the Post Service Officer. PSOs should always make a report at every official Post meeting. Department Service Officers should report to their supervisor or Department service committee when Post Service Officer training was completed.

It is important to note that VFW Post and District Service Officers *are not* accredited by the VA. As a consequence, their ability to assist veterans and other claimants prepare claims for submission to VA is limited. Post/District Service Officers should be familiar with the basics of the compensation (for service connected disabilities) and pension (for non-service connected disabilities) program.

However, the PSO should fill out forms for the claimant only when requested. In this capacity, the PSO is not a claim preparer but rather someone who merely records information provided by the claimant. The application should be immediately returned to the veteran to submit through proper channels such as the DSO or a VFW-accredited state or county service officer. Under no circumstances should a PSO retain any veteran's personal information for any length of time, as this is a violation of the law. Further, under no circumstances should the PSO provide any personally identifiable information concerning a claimant to any member of the VFW who is not a VFW accredited service officer (e.g., DSO, Assistant DSO or Claims Consultant).

VA Voluntary Service (VAVS) and Community Health Care Volunteer Programs

The VFW conducts a multifaceted volunteer program which includes the Department of Veterans Affairs VAVS Program and our Community Health Care Volunteer Program. Our network of more than 6,000 regularly-scheduled volunteers provides more than 700,000 hours of service each year to our nation's veterans in federal, state and community hospitals and nursing homes.

A. Department of Veterans Affairs Voluntary Service Program (VAVS): The VAVS program is locally managed by the VFW VAVS Representative who is appointed by the Department Commander for each VA health care facility in your state. They are the cornerstone of our organization's efforts to serve our nation's hospitalized veterans.

The service of volunteers is recognized in the form of certificates and/or lapel pins presented to those who have completed the number of hours prescribed for such awards (see the VFW Volunteer Program manual for further details). VFW members who want to volunteer at a VA health care facility should contact the VFW Representative or VA Volunteer Service Program Manager at the VA health care facility of their choice.

VA has an extensive network of Community Based Outpatient Clinics (CBOC's). Members interested in volunteering at their local CBOC should contact the VAVS Program Manager at the VA hospital which manages the local CBOC.

We urge Department Commanders and their leadership team to encourage their members to recruit new volunteers, and we are developing resources on the VFW national website to better promote the program, such as our web page located at www.vfw.org/VolunteerService.

A volunteer can be nominated for the VAVS National Advisory Committee (NAC) Volunteer of the Year Award. This award recognizes volunteers who have given extraordinary service to our nation's veterans. Two award recipients, one male and one female, are selected each year by the Executive Committee of the VA Voluntary Service National Advisory Committee.

B. VFW Community Health Care Volunteer Program: This program was designed to provide recognition and awards to VFW members who volunteer their time at state, military, or community-based medical care facilities but who are not on official VAVS assignments.

The local coordinator of this program, the Post Hospital Chairman, is responsible for the recruitment and placement of volunteers, maintaining records of hours served by each post volunteer and requesting awards from the Director, NVS, through the State Hospital Chairman. This program should not be confused with the VAVS volunteer program. For more information pertaining to awards, see your VFW Volunteer Program manual.

Questions pertaining to VAVS and Volunteer Programs should be directed to James Moss, Assistant Director, Veterans Health Policy, National Veterans Service, at 202.608.8371 or via email at jmoss@vfw.org.

Guidelines

VFW Accredited Service Representative Of the Year Program

OBJECTIVE:

This program is designed to provide annual VFW National recognition to an individual who is accredited by VA to represent claimants on behalf of the VFW before the Department of Veterans Affairs, to include employees of State veterans agencies, who meets the below criteria.

ELIGIBILITY:

Eligible nominees include:

- Department Service Officers
- Assistant Department Service Officers
- Claims Consultants/Representative/Analysts/Reviewer
- Veterans Service Officers/Representatives

Individuals not eligible for this award are:

- VFW National Staff
- VFW Contractors

- VFW accredited representatives whose primary employer is other than the VFW or a State veteran's agency

SELECTION CRITERIA:

1. Nominees for the annual award must have demonstrated exceptional efforts in assisting veterans and their families during the 12 months preceding the April 30, deadline.
2. A brief summary (no more than 2 pages) submitted to NVS which explains the who, what, when, where, and how the nominee's efforts are considered exemplary. Suggested items for consideration (but not limited to)
 - # of individuals with VFW POAs assisted
 - Community outreach conducted
 - Excellent customer service provided
 - Use of VetraSpec or another electronic claims processing system (specify system)
 - Submission of **TIMELY** monthly reports (if located in a VA regional office)
 - # of VFW members recruited

AWARDS:

Each Department Commander may nominate one eligible individual for this award. The individual who is ultimately chosen as the recipient of the award will be furnished round-trip travel (for the winner and one guest) and two night's hotel accommodations to attend the VFW National Convention where the award will be presented. A stipend in the amount of \$599.00 will also be given to the recipient to cover out-of-pocket expenses incurred in connection with the trip.

Nominations may be sent to the Director, VFW National Veterans Service, either by mail (200 Maryland Ave., NE, Washington, DC 20002 ATTN: Service Officer Award), faxed to 202.547.3196 (ATTN: Service Officer Award), or scanned and emailed to taldana@vfw.org.

Nominations must be received not later than April 30.

GUIDELINES

DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS VAVS NATIONAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE (NAC) VOLUNTEER OF THE YEAR

OBJECTIVE: The NAC Volunteer of the Year Award Program allows the NAC to honor members who have given extraordinary service to our Nation's veterans.

SELECTION CRITERIA: Nominees for this award must participate in established VAVS assignments, serve as a volunteer and meet one of the following criteria:

- a. Volunteer with hospitalized veterans
- b. Volunteer with veterans at outpatient clinics
- c. Volunteer with veterans in nursing homes
- d. Volunteer with homeless veterans

- e. Volunteer with veterans and veterans groups in the community
- f. Host veterans' functions in the lodge, post, chapter, i.e. Memorial Day, July 4th and Veterans Day observances, etc. that qualify as a VAVS assignment
- g. Host veterans' functions outside the lodge, post, chapter, i.e. fishing trips, day at the races, sporting events, etc. that qualify as a VAVS assignment
- h. Visit veterans confined to their homes as a VAVS assignment
- i. Adopt-A-Veteran

Those eligible for the award are: NAC member organizations (such as the VFW) with emphasis on VAVS Representatives, Deputy Representatives, members who visit the VA medical centers, nursing homes, etc., or work at the lodge, post, or chapter veterans' functions either within or outside the lodge, post or chapter.

Nominees must participate in established VAVS assignments and serve as a regularly scheduled volunteer. There will be two recipients per year; one male and one female.

Nominations must be submitted in narrative format with name and NAC organization in the upper left hand corner.

The narrative is not to exceed 500 words and must be submitted to the Director, National Veterans Service by November 30 of each year. VA staff making recommendations for this award must send the nomination for preliminary judging to the National Representative of the organization to which the nominee is a member. Failure to do so will invalidate the nomination.

The selection committee, with the assistance of the Executive Committee, will select the winners. The awards will be presented at the annual meeting of the NAC.

The male and female winner of the NAC Volunteer of the Year Award each receive an all-expense paid trip to the Annual VAVS National Advisory Committee meeting where they will be given an award.

FOUNDATION



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Introduction

WHO WE ARE

The Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) Foundation, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit established in 1996, is the official charity of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, America's largest and oldest combat veterans organization.

Our mission (the solemn promise) of the VFW Foundation is to support programs and services that secure, manage and distribute resources to improve the lives of veterans, military service personnel, their families and the communities where they live.

We are especially proud of our low administrative costs. The VFW Foundation is reviewed and ranked annually by various nonprofit watchdog groups such as GuideStar, the Independent Charities of America, and the Better Business Bureau. We are currently ranked "exceptional," 4-out-of-4 stars, by Charity Navigator, the nation's largest and most-utilized evaluator of charities.

WHO WE HELP

The VFW Foundation seeks to make veterans, military service personnel and their families feel appreciated for their service to our country. After all, these individuals have often personally sacrificed much for America. So too, we conduct a variety of fundraising activities in direct support of VFW national programs and services such as Unmet Needs, National Veterans Service and Voice of Democracy.

We also financially assist VFW Posts, Departments and Auxiliaries through our own grant process to fund their important causes in local communities.

WHAT WE DO

The VFW Foundation raises money through a variety of strategic ways, including:

- Grants from corporations and foundations
- Corporate sponsorships and cause marketing agreements
- Employee matching gifts
- Employee giving campaigns such as the Combined Federal Campaign (CFC) and the United Way
- Non-cash donations of cars, RVs, boats, real estate, etc.
- Individual contributions including major gifts, estates and bequests
- In-Kind Gifts of product donations

VFW Community Support Grant

For over 120 years, VFW Posts have been pillars of support in their communities. From building local playgrounds and organizing clothing drives, to military support events and disaster relief efforts, we take great pride in our long history of service.

VFW community service projects continue to make a significant impact on local communities. In an effort to support VFW Posts and Auxiliaries in these endeavors, the VFW Community Support Grant has been established to help bolster the important work you do on the ground.

Available to any VFW Post or Auxiliary in good standing, a VFW Foundation Post/VFW Auxiliary Community Support Grant will provide up to \$1,000 for the performance of qualifying outreach projects in your community. With an easy and streamlined application process, Posts and Auxiliaries can expect to receive a decision within thirty (30) days of the application submission. Once a decision is made, you will be notified via email and you should receive your award within six (6) weeks

To be eligible to receive the grant your Post must:

- Have a completed election report on file at VFW National Headquarters
- Not owe any outstanding grant reports to the VFW Foundation
- Not be on suspension or in financial arrears
- Have a qualifying project

Qualifying projects include:

- Direct services provided by the Post such as purchasing school supplies for students, food for a community dinner, promotional materials for a veterans service event, etc.,.
- Making a donation to a local 501(c)(3) charity in your area
- Building repairs/additions that sustain or create the facilitation of improved service to your community.

Additional funding beyond the initial \$1,000 maybe available by working with one of the VFW's corporate supporters. A list of qualifying partners and ideas for conducting such a project can be found at <https://www.vfw.org/grants-supporters>

Once your project is complete you are obligated to fill out and return a two-page report form along with proof of how the money was spent.

For further information on this opportunity, please visit www.vfw.org/grants

FUNDRAISING IDEAS FOR VFW POSTS

Below are some ideas that might be beneficial to help your Post increase fundraising activities.

- **Your first task is to decide what you need funding for and how much is needed.** Is funding required for building improvement, handicapped accessible ramps, programs, etc.? Do you need \$5,000 or \$50,000? If it's a building project, you might want to get "free" construction estimates from contractors so as to have a "ballpark" idea of costs. Also, especially if you are expanding or changing the footprint of your building, you will want to check with your city/county to make sure that this is allowable.
- **Unfortunately, there are few if any federal grants that are applicable to VFW Posts.** Even if there were federal grants, the application process would most usually be overwhelming and entirely too complicated. Federal grant money is also closely monitored which might require the hiring of a full-time staff member just for compliance. Thus, do not consider federal grants as a fundraising option.
- **Some states provide assistance to veterans groups so check with your local elected state representatives.** There might be funds for building improvement, "green" technology or energy saving innovations applicable to your building, etc.
- **Keep track of how other Posts in your state have successfully raised money.** Imitation can often be a good thing.

Now:

(1) Where is your Post located? Is it in a rural or urban area? If urban or near a larger city, go to your local Chamber of Commerce, local community foundation or even your library (Reference Librarian) to get a free list of the largest nongovernmental employers/companies in your county. With this you can create a potential donor list.

(2) Think of the companies that the Post already has a relationship with such as private utility companies (gas, electric, water, cable TV, etc). Does the Post have a canteen? If so what about the beverage distributor? What about your bank that holds the Post's funds? Ask for a donation from all of these companies. You might only get \$50 but some Posts have actually received donations of \$5,000 or more.

(3) A bank is also a good place to speak to an individual called a Trust Officer. He/She might handle foundation money. For instance, if someone died in your community back in the 1950s or 1960s in the provisions of their will they could have set up a local foundation. Perhaps, they appointed family members (spouse, children, sibling, etc.) to the foundation Board. Now, those individuals might have passed as well. The money then is typically managed by a bank (through a Trust Officer). Sometimes the money is managed by a law or accounting firm but

again it's usually a bank. And that Trust Officer is almost always the decision maker each year on what nonprofit organizations get that money. Trust Officers are more common at banks in urban areas especially at the main bank headquarters (not a branch).

(4) Use your Post members as a resource. Perhaps, they know individuals with financial resources or persons who hold high positions in local companies who might consider donations. These might be neighbors, friends, other family members, people they go to church with, etc. Your Post members might be able to provide an introduction to the potential donor so that you can speak to them directly. Also, promote your Post to your members as an organization that can be designated in their wills.

(5) Are there any casinos within 50 miles of the Post? Contact regular and Native American casinos and ask to speak to a person who most usually has a title of "Public or Community Affairs Manager." Ask for a donation. Even though (non-Native American) casinos are usually directed by the state to give a certain portion of their earnings to specific community causes (especially education) they often donate to other groups as well.

(6) The Home Depot. Once again in 2020 The Home Depot has a grant that provides up to \$5,000 to improve community gathering spaces especially veteran's buildings like VFW Posts. The VFW Foundation has designed a step-by-step guide that will walk one through the application process and can be emailed to Posts. Post members also might want to approach a local Home Depot or Lowe's store manager and ask for product donations. Several Posts have received building materials to remodel their Posts in this manner. One of the easiest products to ask for is "oops paint" or paint that has been returned by customers because the tint might be slightly off. Several Posts have completely repainted (for free) the interior of their building with "oops" paint.

(7) Assemble a one-page sheet (some Posts do a brochure) that lists all the activities that your Post does for its community. This insert can be included with any fundraising letter that you send out or something to bring with you when talking to a potential donor directly. The reality is that most people have no idea what a VFW Post does for its community. Thus, list all the activities such as:

- Does your Post send care packages to local troops in Afghanistan?
- Does your Post help out homeless vets?
- How about a food pantry or food distribution to the needy?
- Do Post members regularly visit the VA to see patients?
- Do you allow the use of your Post building to other community groups such as the Boy or Girl Scouts?
- Does your Post participate in Patriot's Pen or Voice of Democracy? If so, how much money have you given to local students over the past 10 years (the amount might surprise you!).

(8) OK, here is an issue that might come up. Most VFW Posts are classified by the Internal Revenue Service at 501(c)(19) not the more common 501(c)(3). A 501(c)(19) is still a nonprofit designation but it is specific to a “...group of past or present members of the American Armed Services” whereas a 501(c)(3) is simply “...a general nonprofit.” Regardless, a donor such as a company or individual, would almost always get the same tax benefit contributing to a 501(c)(19) as they would to a 501(c)(3). With that said, in most instances a corporation, foundation or individual only wants to donate to a 501(c)(3) as they are not familiar with the 501(c)(19) designation. If this is the case, we can usually still make a donation possible. The donor can make the grant/check out to the VFW Foundation. We highly advise that you call and consult us (phone number below) before running a gift through the Foundation so our staff can keep an eye out for it. Once the grant check is received, the Foundation will cash it and send your Post a check for 100% of the original gift!

Here are two points to emphasize to the donor (and once they understand this they usually will go ahead and make the donation).

1. 100% of their money with no administrative or other costs will return to the Post as the VFW Foundation does this as a service to VFW Posts/Departments;
2. The donor will receive a tax receipt not from your Post/Department but from the VFW Foundation which is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit. The VFW Foundation has a variety of pre-made letters for this purpose that we can send your Post.

So we can effectively track potential donations, please call us for further guidance before proceeding.

NOTE: The VFW Foundation cannot pass through government funds (federal, state, county or city). Moreover, each donation also must be in excess of \$500.

(9) Here are two other important things that the VFW Foundation can also do for VFW Posts and Departments:

- I. Provide a variety of fundraising template letters that you can edit and make specific to the needs of your Post/Department. These are in Microsoft Word format and can be emailed to you.
- II. The Foundation has access to a national database that facilitates detailed research for all foundation gifts made in every single U.S. county (including yours). Depending on the size of the county (whether it's urban or rural) usually determines the amount of foundation activity. Thus, with that said a county for a large urban city such as Pittsburgh, PA, might have substantial foundation activity whereas a county in the middle of Kansas might have none. One never knows until it is researched in the database. When identifying potential foundation donors, information is sent to the Post/Department that will include the name, address, contact person, telephone #, etc. If a foundation is interested in possibly funding your Post/Department, they

might send you an application to fill out. If so, contact the Foundation for assistance. By the way, getting grant money is entirely possible. For example, several Posts have received grants in excess of \$25,000 with information provided. To receive this information, please send an email (address below) requesting research along with the name of the county and state your Post is located in.

We know it's often difficult to raise money these days. To succeed you will have to dedicate yourself to this cause and naturally expend a fair amount of effort. A wise man once said that nothing good ever happens by chance without commitment and determination. We are here to help so do not hesitate to contact us with your fundraising questions or concerns.

CONTACT US: vfwfoundation.org, foundation@vfw.org or call 816.968.1174.

CEREMONIAL RIFLES, AMMUNITION, AND EQUIPMENT (TACOM)



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POLICY AND INSTRUCTIONS FOR CONDITIONAL DONATION OF MILITARY EQUIPMENT, CEREMONIAL RIFLES AND BLANK AMMUNITION TO VETERANS ORGANIZATIONS

MILITARY EQUIPMENT

Regulations, procedures, and prices for obtaining blank ammunition, surplus rifles, and other military equipment available for donation are subject to change without notice.

Be advised all requests for surplus military equipment must first go through the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) National Headquarters in Kansas City, Missouri to verify the legitimacy of the Post making the request.

The VFW National Headquarters is only authorized to handle requests from chartered VFW Posts in good standing. Once verification has been made, the VFW National Headquarters sends requests to the appropriate agencies for processing. When requests are made to Congressional offices or other military departments, without the proper verification and endorsement, the acquisition process is greatly slowed down. Separate letters must be sent for each type of equipment being requested. If both rifles and ammunition are needed, separate requests should be forwarded to the VFW National Headquarters as two different agencies, the US Army Joint Munitions Command in Rock Island, Illinois and the US Army Tank-Automotive and Armaments Command (TACOM) in Warren, Michigan will be handling the items.

Requests are to be made on Post letterhead and contain the following:

Post name and number

Address (not a PO Box number)

Telephone number

Email address

Post Commander, Adjutant or Quartermaster must sign request.

These are requirements set forth in new policies and procedures established by the Army. Any correspondence lacking any of these items will be returned to the Post causing a delay in processing. Posts are reminded equipment donated by the Department of the Army to VFW Posts remain the property of the United States Army. Transfer of any equipment obtained through the Ceremonial Rifle and Static Display Program is unauthorized without the written permission of the **US Army Tank-Automotive and Armaments Command (TACOM)**.

Posts receiving surplus equipment, rifles, static display items, etc. can expect periodic (ceremonial rifle inventories are conducted at the time of issue and every three years or as requested; static displays are conducted at the time of issue and every year or as requested) inspections to assure accuracy of information provided by the donor and compliance with the terms of this Conditional Deed of Gift, proper storage and handling, etc. This program is to be at no cost to the government, and even though Posts may have to pay (or have paid) for handling, shipping, packaging, crating, etc., the items are "on conditional loan" from the Department of the Army.

For additional information and the respective forms, please visit the Army Donations Program Office (ADPO) website at tacom.army.mil/ilsc/donations

BLANK AMMUNITION

A written, formal request must be completed and signed by the current Post Commander, Adjutant or Quartermaster, one of who needs to be the contact person. The written request must include that contact person's residential mailing address (street number) and phone number, not the Post's and an email address if available. Address the request to the Adjutant General, VFW National Headquarters, 406 W. 34th St., Kansas City, MO 64111. The approved request is forwarded by the National Headquarters to the Commander, US Army Joint Munitions Command in Rock Island, Illinois for processing.

The .30 caliber blank ammunition (1,240 rounds) is sent in a metal can in a wooden box. Quantity is limited to two (2) boxes (2,480 rounds total) and is provided free with no shipping charges. Clips are also available and are issued in increments of 25 with a maximum of 100.

Between six (6) to eight (8) weeks after Rock Island processes the request, the blank ammunition is shipped via FEDEX Ground from Lake City Army Ammunition Plant, Independence, Missouri. The recipient will be notified of the tentative ship out date by letter from the US Army Joint Munitions Command in Rock Island, Illinois. Normal FEDEX Ground delivery is Monday thru Friday between 9 a.m. and 5 p.m. Prefer the blank ammunition be shipped to a residence and not to the Post. A signature is required upon delivery. If absolutely necessary to be delivered to the Post, an Officer's signature is required. Delivery to the Post will be addressed on a case-by-case basis with the US Army Joint Munitions Command.

Blank ammunition is authorized for use ONLY in conditionally issued US Army owned ceremonial rifles. Blank ammunition is not authorized to Posts who receive rifles through any other source. The use of blank ammunition obtained from sources other than the US Army Joint Munitions Command is prohibited as it may result in damage to the rifles. More importantly, it could cause harm or serious injury to the user.

NOTE: The US Army Joint Munitions Command will contact the ADP office to confirm that the respective Post has qualified for US Army owned ceremonial rifles and that the Post is up to date on all the mandatory reporting requirements.

RIFLES

Under the provisions of Public Law 1028, Title 10 United States Code (USC) 7683, the Secretary of the Army, under regulations prescribed, may conditionally lend or donate excess M-1 rifles (not more than 15), slings, and cartridge belts to any eligible organization for use by that organization for funeral ceremonies of a member or former member of the U.S. Armed Forces, and for other ceremonial purposes. The Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) is only authorized to handle requests from chartered VFW Posts in good standing. The Army Donations Program Office (ADPO) in Warren, Michigan is responsible for issue and management of rifles for ceremonial use. Title 10 USC 7683 allows conditions to be imposed on the use of the rifles as may be necessary to ensure security, safety, and accountability. The Secretary of the Army may impose such other conditions as considered appropriate.

A VFW Post with more than 15 ceremonial rifles is required to return to the US Army the balance of the rifles in order to be in compliance with federal law. If this situation exists, the VFW Post will request disposition instructions from the ADPO. No further ceremonial rifles or ammunition will be issued until the VFW Post is compliant.

A VFW Post wishing to obtain rifles for ceremonial use should forward its request through the VFW National Headquarters. Address the request to the Adjutant General, VFW National HQ, 406 W. 34th St., Kansas City, MO 64111. The request should be on Post letterhead with a street address (not a PO Box number), contact person with telephone number, email address and the number of active organization members. It should be signed by the Post Commander, Adjutant or Quartermaster. State the number of rifles desired up to a maximum of 15. The request is endorsed by National Headquarters stating that the Post is chartered and in good standing and eligible to participate in the ceremonial rifle program, then forwarded to US Army TACOM, 6501 East 11 Mile Road, ATTN: AMTA-LCL-IFD, MS:419D, Detroit Arsenal, MI 48397-5000 for processing. An email address is: usarmy.detroit.tacom.mbx.ilsc-donations@mail.mil. The ADPO may be reached by calling (586) 282-9861. You are required to leave one voice mail message. Due to the high volume of inquiries, allow 30 days for a response. Email requests cannot be processed, as the signed original must be forwarded.

Once the ADPO receives the endorsed request, forwarded by the VFW National Headquarters, processing will begin and an eligibility package will be sent to the Post. This package will include the checklist and forms required for completion by the Post Commander, Adjutant or Quartermaster. Return the original forms to the ADPO. Presently it takes approximately ninety days for rifles to be shipped after receipt of the eligibility requirements from the Post.

Currently, M1 Garand rifles are available for ceremonial use on a conditional basis. These rifles are shipped from the Civilian Marksmanship Program. Normal Overnight FEDEX Ground delivery will be Monday through Friday between 9:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. **Ceremonial rifles remain the property of the United States Government. The rifles cannot be loaned, sold, transferred, or given to anyone else without the written approval of the ADPO.** If for any reason the Post no longer requires the use of the conditionally loaned rifles, submit a written request to US Army TACOM, 6501 East 11 Mile Road, Attn: AMTA-LCL-IFD, MS:419D, Detroit Arsenal, MI 48397-5000. **NEVER** return any weapons to TACOM.

In most cases, the ADPO will request prepaid shipping labels to assist with the return of rifles. After the rifles are returned, provide a copy of the receipt to the ADPO for validation of the return. Upon request, they will send a letter to absolve the Post of the responsibility/accountability for the returned rifles.

If rifles are no longer in the possession of the Post, it is a requirement to state what happened to them. Either a notarized statement signed by the commander describing the circumstances surrounding their loss and the action(s) taken to recover the rifles or a police and/or fire report is required. Send this information to the ADPO for review. After review, a determination is made as to the liability for the missing/lost/stolen rifles. The Post will be notified if reimbursement costs are required. An inventory is required every three years from the date of issue or upon request. Care and maintenance of the conditionally loaned rifles is the responsibility of the Post.

Slings are not provided through the ADPO. The Post may order them from Amherst Arms or Fulton Armory. Contact Amherst-Arms at 941.475.2020 or amherst-depot.com or Fulton Armory at 301.490.9485 or fulton-armory.com. The Army does not endorse any specific commercial source for rifle accoutrements.

STORAGE AND SECURITY OF CEREMONIAL RIFLES

Storage of the loaned ceremonial rifles is at the discretion of the Post, as long as they comply with local/state/federal regulations. Organizations are to provide the storage location of the weapons by submitting a Certificate of Arms Storage form. If the location changes a new form must be resubmitted to the Army Donations Program Office (ADPO). This form must be completed and signed by the Commander, Adjutant or Quartermaster.

DAMAGED OR UNSERVICEABLE M1 RIFLES

If M1 Garand rifles are no longer functioning, the Post is required to have a licensed gun dealer or an armorer certify the serviceability of each weapon in question. The Post must provide a report by model, manufacturer, and serial number detailing what is wrong with each rifle and how much it costs to fix it with respect to shooting blank ammunition. The Army Donations Program Office (ADPO) will determine if the cost to repair exceeds the cost to refurbish and ship replacement rifles to the Post. If it does not, the Post is required to pay for the repair costs.

POLICY AND PROCEDURE FOR ACQUISITION OF COMBAT EQUIPMENT FOR DISPLAY AND MONUMENTAL PURPOSES

The Army Donations Program office (ADPO) may also conditionally provide obsolete or condemned Army combat equipment under the provisions of Public Law 100-456, Title 10 United States Code 2572. Equipment is for static display only and is not in working condition. This program does not have jeeps or vans for driving. Jeeps are no longer available to the public.

All requests for tanks, field artillery pieces, mortars, etc., should be directed to Adjutant General, VFW National Headquarters, 406 W. 34th St., Kansas City, MO 64111. This headquarters is only authorized to process requests from VFW Posts. Requests are to be made on Post letterhead and contain the following: Post name and number, address (not a P.O. Box number), email address, name of contact person with telephone number and number of active organization members in the Post. All requests must be signed by the Post Commander, Adjutant or Quartermaster.

Conditional donations of obsolete, condemned combat equipment for display are made at no expense to the government. The costs for **construction of a display site, limited demilitarization and removal of radiological material** (when applicable), release and transportation costs, must be paid by the requesting organization. (Do not prepare a pad until notified in writing by the ADPO.) Once the VFW National Headquarters receives the request for a piece of equipment, it will be verified that the Post is chartered, in good standing and eligible to participate in the program. The request is forwarded to the ADPO at TACOM in Warren, Michigan. The VFW National Headquarters does not have any forms or information as to what is available. Once the ADPO receives the request, they prepare an official packet and sends it to the Post. The Post then reviews all rules, regulations, requirements, and can make a final decision if the equipment is still desired. Unfortunately, at this time, Army equipment is not readily obtainable for use as a conditional static

donation. It is recommended your Post submit the initial eligibility requirements to the ADPO to remain in an open status for a period of three years. If an asset does not become available within three years, the request is cancelled and your Post will have to reapply.

The Post has the responsibility to maintain and display the Army asset in such a way that honors and upholds the image of the United States, our military forces and veterans. The Post is required to submit an annual certificate and a photograph of the displayed item on the anniversary date of the conditional issue. In the event your organization no longer has a requirement to display the item, you are required to contact the ADPO for turn-in procedures. Posts are not authorized to loan, sell, transfer, move, abandon or give the asset to any other individual or organization.

TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

- 1) It is not necessary to notify TACOM when transferring rifles to another Post.

__True
__False
- 2) How often is it required to turn in the Ceremonial Rifle Inventory to TACOM?
 - A. Every year from date of issue
 - B. Every ten years from date of issue
 - C. Every three years from date of issue
 - D. It is not necessary to send an inventory list
- 3) How much blank ammunition is distributed?
 - A. As much as you need
 - B. Six boxes
 - C. Twelve boxes
 - D. Two boxes
- 4) Clips are also available through the Joint Munitions Command.

__True
__False
- 5) I can order military jeeps and/or vans to drive in parades.

__True
__False
- 6) Blank ammunition can be ordered for personal rifles.

__True
__False
- 7) What is the procedure if the rifles are no longer in the possession of the Post?
 - A. There is no procedure
 - B. Contact the police/or fire dept. if required
 - C. Contact TACOM
 - D. B and C

ANSWER KEY

- 1) **False** - Ceremonial rifles remain the property of the United States Government. The rifles cannot be loaned, sold, transferred or given to anyone else without the written approval of the Army Donations Program office.
- 2) **C** – A triennial certification of ceremonial rifles is due every three years to TACOM from the date the rifles are issued. TACOM will provide the form(s) with instruction at the time of issuance. **Failure to update this form every three years can delay blank ammunition requests.** The same procedure applies to Posts reporting static display equipment only the form/certification and photograph is due every year.
- 3) **D** - .30 blank ammo (1,240 rounds) is sent in 2 metal cans in a wooden box with no shipping charges.
- 4) **True** - Clips are issued in multiples of 25 (100 is the maximum).
- 5) **False** - Equipment is for static display only and not in working condition. Jeeps are no longer available to the public.
- 6) **False** - Blank ammunition is authorized for use in the United States Army issued ceremonial weapons only.
- 7) **D** - If rifles are stolen or in a fire, get a report from the police/fire department and forward to TACOM with a notarized statement signed by the Commander describing the circumstances surrounding their loss. If rifles are lost, send the notarized statement signed by the Commander only.

AMENDMENTS AND RESOLUTIONS



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PREPARING A PROPOSED AMENDMENT TO THE NATIONAL BYLAWS, MANUAL OF PROCEDURE OR RITUAL

Bylaws: Any member in good standing, a Post, a District, or a Department, may propose an amendment to the National Bylaws; provided, however, before consideration at the National Convention, the proposed amendment must be approved by a Department Convention. Immediately following a Department Convention, the proposed amendment(s) must be forwarded to National Headquarters.

Manual of Procedure and Ritual: Any Post, District, or Department may propose an amendment to the Manual of Procedure or Ritual; provided, however, before consideration at the National Convention, the proposed amendment must have been forwarded, through channels and have been properly approved.

In order to meet National Bylaw/Manual of Procedure Article XIV requirements, to provide fifteen (15) day notice to all Posts of all amendments, the Adjutant General requests all amendments be forwarded to National Headquarters no later than five (5) working days following the close of the Department Convention.

Bylaw, Manual of Procedure or Ritual changes not in proper form, unclear as to meaning, or concerning matters clearly not within the scope and purpose of the Veterans of Foreign Wars cannot be considered by the National Convention.

A proposed change to the National Bylaws, Manual of Procedure or Ritual must be submitted as such, not as a resolution. Proposed amendments must be definite and specific as to the verbiage to be deleted or added. Use of the most recent amended copy of the National Bylaws, Manual of Procedure and Ritual is encouraged, as proposed changes considered by Convention delegates cannot be amended on the floor.

EXAMPLE 1

Proposed Amendment to National Bylaws proposed by Department of _____.

Section 202 – Bylaws.

Amend Section 202, National Bylaws, by deleting the words “two-thirds (2/3)” in the first sentence of paragraph one, and inserting, in lieu thereof, the following:
“majority”.

EXAMPLE 2

Proposed Amendment to National Manual of Procedure proposed by Department of _____.

Section 518 – Officers: Duties and Obligations.

Amend Section 518, Manual of Procedure, by deleting paragraph (a) (1) d. in its entirety and inserting, in lieu thereof, the following:

“Plan and organize all social functions.”

EXAMPLE 3

Proposed Amendment to National Ritual proposed by Department of _____.

Amend the Ritual by deleting on page 48, in the last sentence of the Member’s Obligation, the words “and a citizen of our great republic.”

Further amend by placing a period after the word “comrade” in the same sentence.

If you require help composing a proposed change to the Bylaws, Manual of Procedure or Ritual, please contact Administrative Operations at National Headquarters for advice and assistance in properly preparing a proposed amendment to be voted upon by your department convention.

PREPARING A RESOLUTION TO BE CONSIDERED BY THE NATIONAL CONVENTION

The policy of the Veterans of Foreign Wars is established by resolutions adopted by the delegates attending Department and National Conventions. Most resolutions originate at the Post level and are passed through the District and Department before being acted upon at a National Convention. Many times, an otherwise worthy idea gets nowhere merely because it is not correctly presented.

A resolution contains two separate parts; a statement of the problem to be solved, and the proposed solution to the problem. The problem is outlined in the “*WHEREAS*” clauses, and the proposed solution is given in the “*RESOLVED*” section.

The “*RESOLVED*” section of a resolution should be complete in itself without depending on the “*WHEREAS*” clauses to give it meaning.

EXAMPLE

WHEREAS, the rising cost of living has created an intense hardship on those disabled veterans whose only income is a meager pension check; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, that we petition Congress to enact legislation which would provide a substantial increase in non-service connected pension rates.

If a resolution deals with a local problem, it needs no action on a level higher than that of the Post. If the problem concerns an area larger than that served by the Post, it should, after Post approval, be presented before the District or County Council. All resolutions of statewide, regional or national concern must be acted upon by the Department Convention. Those resolutions approved by a Department Convention, which affect persons or matters outside the state boundaries, must be forwarded to the National Convention for final disposition.

When submitting a resolution to the Department Convention, a notation on the bottom should show the previous action taken, such as, approval by Post and, if applicable, by the District. A Post or District submitting a resolution to its Department Convention must follow guidelines established by the Department, which may require submitting the resolution to the Department Adjutant prior to the convening of the convention.

Resolutions not in proper form, with unclear meaning, or concerning matters clearly not within the scope and purpose of the Veterans of Foreign Wars cannot be considered by the National Convention.

Resolutions approved by a Department Convention, which affect matters outside state boundaries, must be forwarded by the Department Adjutant to the National Convention for final disposition. Approved resolutions should be sent to National Headquarters at the close of the Department Convention. The Adjutant General requests all resolutions be forwarded to National Headquarters no later than five (5) working days following the close of the Department Convention. A resolution disapproved by the Department Convention or not acted upon by the Department Convention will not be considered by the National Convention.

Resolutions may also be originated by Department officers or by the Department Convention itself and acted upon by the Department Convention. A National Officer may originate a resolution concerning National affairs and submit it directly to the National Convention without Department action. Likewise, a National Convention Committee may originate a resolution and present it for approval during the National Convention.

Policy set by the National Convention is binding upon all subordinate units of the Veterans of Foreign Wars. No Post or Department is permitted to take any individual action or espouse any cause contrary to the National Bylaws or to the actions of the National Convention except that it may propose changes in policy by the preparation of a resolution for consideration as outlined herein.

TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

- 1) Any member in good standing may propose a National Bylaw, Manual of Procedure, or Ritual amendment directly to the National Convention delegates.
☐ True
☐ False
- 2) Article XIV of the National Bylaws and Manual of Procedure require the Adjutant General to provide ____ day notice to all Posts on any proposed amendment to be decided by the delegates of the National Convention.
A. 10
B. 15
C. 20
D. 30
- 3) National Bylaw, Manual of Procedure, or Ritual amendments are submitted to the Adjutant General in the form of a resolution.
☐ True
☐ False
- 4) A resolution adopted by the National Convention sets policy which is binding for all subordinate units of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States.
☐ True
☐ False
- 5) In a resolution the “WHEREAS” represents the issue and the “BE IT RESOLVE” proposes the solution.
☐ True
☐ False
- 6) Resolutions approved by a Department Convention that affect matters outside its geographical boundary must be forwarded to the National Convention for final disposition.
☐ True
☐ False

1) False – An amendment must be approved by a Department Convention (or be submitted by a National Officer) before it can be considered by the National Convention; 2) 15 days; 3) False, the amendment must be specific; 4) True; 5) True; 6) True

DISTRICT COMMANDER: LEADERSHIP, DUTIES & RESPONSIBILITIES



VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS.

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Introduction

Being a member of the VFW means being an agent of change.

But...

To be a leader within the VFW means connecting with those around you; inspiring them with a shared sense of mission; and through education and engagement, mobilizing them in order to accomplish a common goal. As Gen Stanley McChrystal put it,

“I was most reinforced by the understanding that where we were, the status quo was failing, and because it was failing I knew we had to change. But instead of trying to provide an exact path ahead, what I did was I tried to inform and engage the command by saying we have to move in this general direction- help me figure it out. As people did that, we refined the direction we were going, constantly shifting, and it made more people the agents of change.” (Leadership and Development Manual, vfw.org)

There is no one who can have a greater effect on the success or failure of the Posts in a District than the District Commander.

A successful District Commander is enthusiastic, dedicated, well-informed, available, and operates under the guise of 3 motivational elements [The puzzle of motivation, Dan Pink]:

1. **Purpose**: *“A yearning to do what you do in service of something larger than yourself.”* Motivate Posts and their Commanders by helping them define the VFW’s mission in their own words, and in doing so giving them ownership over their mission.
2. **Autonomy**: *“The urge to direct our own lives.”* Motivate Posts and their Commanders by giving them the ability and freedom to accomplish their mission in their own way.
3. **Mastery**: *“The desire to get better and better at something that matters.”* Motivate Posts and their Commanders by encouraging them to get better at accomplishing their mission with engaging and useful Schools of Instruction and educational training.

History of Districts

During the early years of the Veterans of Foreign Wars, Posts were directly responsible to the National Organization. The first mention of a “Department” appears in the National Bylaws following the 1920 National Encampment (National Convention).

Districts appear to have come into existence in an evolutionary process, probably because of the need for an intermediate body between the Post and the Department. The first mention of “Districts” appears in the 1931 Bylaws which provided that District representatives on the Department Council of Administration be elected at the Department Encampment. Districts finally gained a section of their own in the Bylaws following the 1938 National Encampment but were denied any legislative or taxing power. It was only with the complete revision of Bylaws in 1948 that Districts gained full recognition under a special article devoted only to that subject. The Department holds Jurisdiction over Districts and determines its boundaries; however, the Commander-in-Chief issues District Charters.

Districts popularity probably stems from the flexibility of their boundaries to meet specific conditions, plus the fact that the National Bylaws grant them representation on the Department Council of Administration.

Districts have earned a very definite place in the VFW structure. Their size is such as to permit direct supervision of Posts within their jurisdiction. Not the least of their value is the pride, loyalty and comradeship developed among the Posts within their boundaries. Anyone who has attempted to re-district a Department knows of the fierce loyalties of a Post to its District.

Stay Educated and Informed

In order to be able to educate the Posts within the District you must utilize the resources available to stay educated and informed. The following list of VFW resources is not all encompassing, but it's a good start.

- Commander-In-Chief General Orders, National Headquarters Bulletin
- VFW.org and VFW Training and Support
 - The Training and Support section contains a wealth of knowledge and training materials to help you and assist you in Schools of Instruction.
- Department Training Programs
- Department Publications
- Department, District, and Post Bylaws
 - You should know the Department and District Bylaws, and be able to reference each Post's Bylaws within the District.
- VFW Podium Edition (Congressional Charter, Bylaws, Manual of Procedure, and Ritual)
 - The governing rules of our order. Advanced knowledge is imperative in answering questions and, when properly engaged, settling disputes.
- Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised (RONR)
 - Any procedural matter not covered in the National Bylaws and Manual of Procedure shall be governed by RONR. This manual will aid you in running meetings and, when properly engaged, settling disputes.
- VFW Magazine and National Publications (Checkpoint, Action Corps)

Duties and Obligations

The National Bylaws and Manual of Procedure address the duties and obligations of the District Commander, but in practice of course the District Commander has a great deal of responsibility beyond what is listed in the Manual of Procedure.

The District Commander who properly performs all the duties assigned to him/her is the busiest person in the VFW. In addition to representing their District on the Department Council of Administration, they are expected to maintain constant contact with their Posts, promote the programs of the VFW, help coordinate efforts of the Posts, create enthusiasm, mediate Post squabbles, instruct and advise Post Officers, assist struggling Posts, and organize new Posts. They must also plan and conduct District meetings, organize District functions, carry out membership drives, and keep the Department informed of what they are doing.

All this must be done without permanent office, without a paid staff and, in most cases, without an adequate allowance for expenses.

Only through proper planning and organization, through full use of your subordinate elected and appointed officers, and through a thorough understanding of the rules, regulations and programs of the Veterans of Foreign Wars, can you achieve the goals you have set for yourself as District Commander.

Appointments

Each of your appointments should be carefully considered and based on an individual's qualifications and ability to do the job. Of all of your appointments, the most important is your Adjutant, Chief of Staff, Inspector, and Service Officer.

Your wisdom in selecting an Adjutant can directly affect your accomplishments. His/Her value extends far beyond their ability to record the minutes of District meetings. The Adjutant can aid you with your correspondence, help you arrange your travels, advise you on procedures, plan and arrange your meetings and functions, and provide you with invaluable feedback when you need it.

A Chief of Staff should be a respected Past District or Department Officer with a sharp eye and keen judgement. You can't be everywhere at once, so it is important that you have an available Chief of Staff who can represent you and handle problems in a firm but professional manner.

Inspectors are more than data collectors, they are observers and educators. They are not enforcers, but informed guides who are good listeners and great teachers. An active and engaged Inspector can help you recognize Post issues and identify solutions.

District Service Officers should be well-versed in veteran's resources available in the District and impart that knowledge to Post Service Officers. The Department Service Officer is the only accredited Service Officer who has the training to help veterans file their claims; District and Post Service Officers exist to provide resource information and direct veterans with VA claims issues to the Department Service Officer.

You should appoint a Committee Chairman to match each Department Committee. Each District Chairman will be expected to work with the Department Chairman in the promotion and advancement of their particular activity. This should include, but is not necessarily limited to, "Buddy"® Poppy, Employment, Student Veteran Liaison, Community Activities, Legislative, Membership, National Home, and Youth Activities.

Preparing for District Meetings

Meetings serve a very useful purpose in creating enthusiasm, exchanging ideas, instructing Post Officers in their duties, and familiarizing members with the programs of the VFW.

To accomplish its purpose, a District meeting must be well planned and well carried out. The following reminders may help you in doing so:

1. Set the time, place and date at a previous District meeting. Posts wishing to host the meeting should be required to be present at the previous meeting to confirm their invitation and must be able to assure the members that proper facilities are available and that proper arrangements will be made.
2. If the Auxiliary meets at the same time, notify the President immediately of the decision.
3. Notify the Department Adjutant of your meeting schedule.
4. Notify, by letter, all District Officers and all Post Commanders of the time, place and date of the next meeting.
5. Make certain that District colors, the Bible, flag, gavel, etc. are present at the meeting.
6. Inform your officers of the part they are to play in the program.
7. Any invited guests should be informed of the time which will be allotted to them. Any guests who ask to appear must provide you in advance with an outline of their purpose in appearing.
8. If a Department representative is assigned, discuss their appearance in advance, and tell them what is expected.
9. Obtain all possible information concerning the progress of the Posts from Department Headquarters in advance.
10. Make up your meeting schedule in advance, making note of any particular business to come before the meeting. There is no reason why you cannot have someone primed to make necessary motions.
11. Be prepared to recognize the success of Posts or individuals performing to a higher standard.

Running a District Meeting

The order of business of a District Convention or meeting is outlined in Section 1003 of the National Manual of Procedure. This should be used as a guide but is flexible. You will probably have a Department representative who must be scheduled on the program and worked in somewhere. Don't make them wait until just before the closing ceremonies. You may want to take some action based upon their statements.

Open the meeting on time and keep it moving. If you open the meeting half an hour late, the members will be that much later at the next meeting. Don't let discussions get out of hand. If a matter is brought up which has no place in the meeting, cut off the discussion. Individual Post problems generally have no place on the District floor; these problems are best solved in a private setting rather than open to the opinions of the entire District.

Proper procedure in conducting a District meeting is essential. You are setting an example for the Posts and you cannot expect them to operate any better than you do yourself. Familiarize yourself with parliamentary procedure and with the Bylaws, Manual of Procedure and Ritual of the VFW. The appointment of a well-qualified member as a parliamentarian can help you, but remember that you are running the meeting.

Power & Authority

The National Bylaws charge the District Commander to “enforce strict observance of the laws and usages of this organization,” but this does not mean you should insert yourself into every Post squabble. It does mean you should watch, listen, and be aware of Post conflicts and ready to provide guidance when asked.

When properly engaged in an appeal (Section 109), the District Commander shall investigate the matter and make a determination; otherwise, questions of discipline are not channeled through the District Commander but are handled directly between the Post and the Department.

In order to be properly engaged, the appeal must be submitted by the aggrieved member, must be in writing, must contain the four criteria as outlined in Section 109 of the Manual of Procedure, and must be submitted within thirty (30) days of the appealed action. Your determination on the appeal may be appealed to the next higher authority.

The District Commander should keep the Department Commander aware of matters concerning Posts within their jurisdiction. Quite often, the Department Commander will authorize the District Commander to take actions in his/her behalf. This should be done in writing by Special Order.

The District Commander cannot suspend the charter of a Post nor can he/she authorize the consolidation of a Post or the revocation of its charter. They can, however, make recommendations and should consult the Department Commander when such actions are contemplated.

Working with Posts

Personal contact with your Posts is crucial to keep Posts motivated, clear up misunderstandings, and build trust between Post and District Officers. As District Commander, you should know every Post Commander by their first name and they should be willing and able to come to you for feedback and advice.

A good way to establish contact is by organizing District events that encourage Posts to work with one another. Organizing District membership drives, stand downs, community service events, and fundraising efforts for District Programs are great ways to build camaraderie while displaying the VFW’s value to the community.

There’s no better way to show that you care like grabbing another District Officer and dropping in on a Post’s event to lend a hand. Utilize District Officers, Chairmen, and Past Officers to help Posts with their own membership drives and programs as this encourages participation and helps create an active District.

Hold schools of instruction for Post Officers. If they don’t come to the schools, bring the schools to them. Make sure the officers understand their duties and responsibilities. Once they know what they are

to do and how to do it they will become more active. Encourage the Posts and their officers through activity, engagement, and a shared sense of mission.

Post Problems

Even active good Posts develop problems. Sometimes these are such that the Post itself cannot solve them without outside help. Factional disagreements can get out of hand and involve even those members who take no side with either group. A little diplomacy can work wonders, if it is applied before the breach becomes too wide.

Post inspections are the best means of finding out what is going on in a Post. Copies of inspection reports are being provided to District. When you receive your copy of the reports, study them carefully, check any discrepancy, and follow them up to be sure that corrective action has been taken where necessary.

“Post Inspections are on-site interviews between the Inspector and Post leadership where the Inspector acts as an advisor to ensure the Post is operating pursuant to the provisions of the VFW Bylaws and that the Post operates for the purposes defined in our congressional charter. By collecting data, assessing operations, and lending best practices, the Inspector acts as a diligent instructor who imparts knowledge and guidance of Post operations. After inspection, the Inspector brings their findings and recommendations to their Leadership’s attention in order to create a standard for the Post and to ensure a strong foundation for the future.” (Inspector Phase I Trainer Guide, vfw.org)

Such things as illegal operations of Clubs, issuance of social cards to non-members, gambling in Post Clubrooms, etc., are not to be tolerated. Report illegal activities when seen before they get out of hand.

After addressing any issue, it is important to submit a detailed report to your leadership for review. Make sure you follow-up with Post to ensure deficiencies have been addressed in a timely manner.

Post Development

You are in the best position of anyone to know where a new Post can be put in. Keep the Department informed of your intentions and your progress. Contact the Department or National Headquarters for materials.

Don’t hesitate to organize a new Post just because a Post in a neighboring area objects. The extra interest engendered by a new Post will help them, not hurt them.

The institution of a new Post should be as big an event in the District as a new baby in your own family. They Commanders of other Posts should be invited to bring a delegation to the institution. In some Districts, it is customary for each existing Post to present the new Post with a cash donation at the institution. What better way to welcome the new Post into the family?

Don't let a new Post die on the vine. Have someone at each meeting for at least the first six months. Encourage the Post to take an active part in District affairs and make it feel that it belongs. Support this effort even after you leave office and encourage other officers and Past Officers to do the same.

Department Council of Administration

The District Commander serves in a dual capacity. In addition to their other responsibilities, they serve as a member of the Department Council of Administration and, as such, is a high ranking officer of the Department. When they appear at a Post meeting they represent the Department as well as the District. They are expected to uphold the actions of the Department and promote its programs.

The Department Council of Administration is in charge of the working interests of the Department between Conventions. It sets the budget, fixes salaries of the Department employees, audits accounts and disposes of the property of defunct Posts. As a member of the Council, you have a responsibility to the entire Department, not just the District. It is extremely important, therefore, that you be full acquainted with all the workings of the Department – particularly its financial structure.

VFW Training & Support (vfw.org)

The Veterans of Foreign Wars prides itself on the many volunteers who strive to further the purpose of our organization: our success as an organization depends on members like you. It is important that the member Posts of every District take steps to become educated leaders. The first step in developing leaders within our organization is ensuring that training is being received down to the lowest level. VFW Training & Support behind the member login at vfw.org was created to provide resources for training and education. It is up to you not only to access these resources, but utilize them to help create educated leaders within each Post in the District.

13 Steps to Success

For most of us, becoming District Commander took years of preparation by moving up through the chairs of a Post and then the District while chairing certain Committees, but that doesn't mean once you assume District Commander you automatically know what to do.

As a good Commander you must:

1. Remember your role as a leader, mentor, educator, and promoter of the VFW's mission and its programs.

Remember that the future Department and National leaders are coming from your ranks. Conduct your affairs just as though you are educating and mentoring the next Commander-in-Chief.

2. Realize that each Post is different and will often have very different ways of accomplishing our mission; and your role in helping a Post is to provide it with the education and resources to solve its problems and realize its own success.
3. Stay educated and informed so you can educate the Posts within the District.
4. Appoint a Chairman for every VFW program based on their personality and their ability to do the job rather than because you like them.

Make sure each Chairman, like each Post, has the resources and motivation to be successful. A Chairman must know the program, be interested in it, promote it actively, and be able to sell it to others. If the Chairman isn't willing or isn't able to do the job, remove them and appoint a new one.

5. Use your District Officers and delegate responsibility. You can't do everything yourself, which is why it is important to ensure everyone on your team knows their role, is educated, and realizes they are vital to the team's success.
6. Keep in constant contact with each Posts through regular emails, bulletins, telephone calls, personal notes and visits.

Know every Post Commander by first name and familiarize yourself with their interests and backgrounds. Make certain that Posts conduct regular audits, hold regular meetings, conduct membership drives, order and distribute Buddy Poppies, and carry out the VFW's mission and its programs.

7. Visit each Post at least once. There is no substitute for personal contact. The District Commander should be the first person the Post Commander thinks of when help or advice is needed.

The best way to let a Post and its members know that the District cares about their success is by visiting them at a community service event or helping them with a Post function.

8. Ensure District meetings are well planned and well conducted.

A meeting must be interesting and educational or you won't have attendance at the next one. Here is where Post Officers get their direct information and their inspiration. In many cases, these will be the only higher level meetings some of the Post Officers and members will attend during the year. The impression they receive here will determine their attitude toward the entire organization.

9. Schedule and hold Schools of Instruction, whether they are in connection with a regular District meeting or standalone instruction in local areas within the District. If the Posts won't come to you, bring the Schools of Instruction to them. Send out notices well in advance and call the Post Commander ahead of time to remind him/her to be present.

The first step in developing leaders within our organization is ensuring that training is being received down to the lowest level. This means also providing specific training for program Chairmen, Trustees, and even for active leaders in the Post who may not hold an office.

10. Identify, instruct, and educate struggling Posts. Show a concern for their problems, assign a junior or respected past officer to help with their membership drives and program initiatives, suggest programs and methods of carrying them out, encourage other Posts to help their neighbors.

Identifying struggling Posts and knowing where each one struggles is important because they will need much of your attention. Personalized instruction that give guidance on a Post's weak areas are imperative to helping it correct its deficiencies.

11. Organize new Posts or help revitalize an older one with new members. Every District has some areas where the VFW is not represented. New Posts and new members bring new and innovative ways of thinking and energy to our organization.

New Posts increase the diversity of your network, foster new ideas, and can energize a District. New Posts can shift the paradigm and introduce a new model of doing things. New Posts can change the culture of your District.

12. Work with the Auxiliary. An active Auxiliary is great help for a Buddy Poppy drive, Community Activities, Voice of Democracy and many other programs. Treat them as partners – not subordinates.
13. Know your role as a member of the Department Council of Administration.

Among other duties, you are responsible for administering the affairs and transacting the business of the Department between Department Conventions. (Section 522, National Bylaws)

Here are some things you shouldn't do:

1. Don't knock the National Organization, Department, or Past District Officers. You can't keep respect for the District if you make the members feel that the rest of the VFW is bad.

The best way to discourage people within the organization is by telling them their leaders are no good and don't care about them. As District Commander, your main role is as motivator, educator, and mentor – inspire great leaders by being one.

2. Don't embarrass Post Officers. Respect them as you would want to be respected.

Great District Commanders are polite but firm: part of being a leader is having thick skin, patience, and understanding when dealing with difficult people. Be professional, be polite, have character, but speak up and be firm.

3. Don't be afraid to admit you don't know something.

It's okay to say, "I don't know, but I'll find out and get back to you." In fact, people will respect you for it. The District Commander isn't expected to know everything, but they are expected to have the tools and knowledge to find the answer and the character to follow-up.

4. Don't get discouraged.

District Commander is one of the toughest positions in the VFW. The job requires a great amount of knowledge, but even a greater amount of patience and determination. If you get stuck, ask a former District Commander for assistance – you should be able to lean on past District leaders for help.

Conclusion

“Leaders are people who hold a position of power: those who lead inspire. We follow those who lead not because we have to, but because we want to.” – Simon Sinek

As stated in the introduction, leadership is primarily the ability to get people to work together to accomplish a common goal. A good leader must create enthusiasm, provide direction, and encourage initiative. He/She must be able to set goals, plan their accomplishments, and obtain the cooperation of others to achieve them.

Your role as a mentor, educator, and promoter of the VFW’s mission and its programs doesn’t begin and end with Posts. A successful District Commander embraces this role, but a successful District has a Commander who educates and inspires each District officer and Chairman to do the same.

As District Commander, you represent the VFW in the District. The entire organization is judged by your actions, your appearance, and your personality. Likewise, your own membership will be inspired or turned off by the image you convey. It is very important that your personal conduct be above reproach.

Realize that each Post is different, but also realize that each one of the District officers and Chairmen is different as well. You must also provide them with the education and resources to realize their own success. To do this, you must constantly keep yourself educated by utilizing the tools and resources available to you through vfw.org and the Department.

You will be able to better assist the Posts in your District if you make yourself available. Emails, bulletins, and telephone calls are great, but nothing beats personal visits. Before you or another District officer visits a Post, you should educate yourself on their successes and shortcomings; be prepared to congratulate their success and give constructive feedback to help them going forward.

The better you know your District the more likely you will be able to spot communities that are ripe for a new Post. New Posts increase the diversity of your network, foster new ideas, and can energize a District. Your role as their mentor shouldn’t end once your term of office is over.

Plan your travels. Whenever possible, let a Post know when you are coming. Make full use of your subordinate officers. Coordinate their travels with yours. It is inexcusable to have three District Officers at one Post and none at another.

Know your people. Take an interest in their activities. Give credit where it is due. If someone needs a reprimand, do it privately. Don’t embarrass anyone in public. You are working with volunteers. Even if you disagree with their actions or beliefs, give them credit for sincerity. You will get better results with persuasion rather than with coercion. Don’t win an argument at the expense of losing a volunteer.

Finally, your role as Council Member is vital in keeping the Department leadership honest and transparent. Do not take this role lightly; especially, when it comes to the Department’s finances.

Review

Utilize the reading and your experience to answer the following questions. Multiple choice questions have one correct answer.

1. What problems does our organization currently face and how are these problems alleviated by displaying you care about a Post's and its members' success?

2. You should appoint an Officer/Chairman because...

- a. You cannot find anyone else to do the job.
- b. They are motivated, informed, and engaged.
- c. They are your good friend.
- d. You promised them an appointment.

3. How do you handle difficult and disruptive people?

- a. Yelling and screaming at them until they're quiet.
- b. Threatening them, their position, or their Post.
- c. Politely and professionally speaking to them in a firm manner.
- d. Cursing them behind their backs with other people.

4. How do you motivate Post Officers and their members?

- a. Make yourself available as a mentor and educator.
- b. Be prepared to praise success and provide feedback.
- c. Remind them of the purpose of our organization.
- d. Give them the autonomy to accomplish their goals.
- e. All the above.

5. What are your duties on the Department Council of Administration?

- a. Approve an annual budget for the Department.
- b. Assist in Department audits.
- c. Transact business between Department Conventions.
- d. All of the above.

6. The Department Council of Administration ensures the Department...
 - a. Maintains its fiduciary responsibilities and remains transparent.
 - b. Approves Department Officer compensation.
 - c. Votes to fill elective Department Officer vacancies.
 - d. Makes disposition of all properties in accordance with Sections 210 and 410.
 - e. All of the above.

7. List three things you should do before visiting a Post.
 - i. _____
 - ii. _____
 - iii. _____

8. What are some ways you can establish contact with Posts and encourage their involvement?

9. List three reminders to help you prepare for a District meeting.
 - i. _____
 - ii. _____
 - iii. _____

10. In your own words, what is the District Commander's role?

Thank you for serving our country and thank you for continuing to serve your brothers and sisters through the VFW.



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