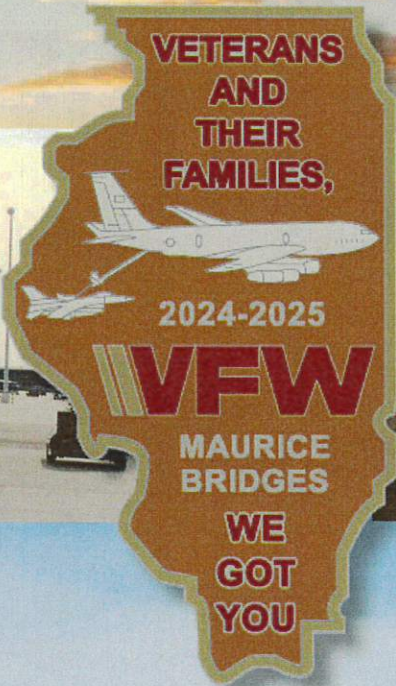


ILLINOIS

COMMANDER'S LEADERSHIP MANUAL



VETERANS AND THEIR FAMILIES - WE GOT YOU
MAURICE BRIDGES, STATE COMMANDER, 2024-2025

NATIONAL COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF 2024-2025
AL LIPPARDT
BELIEVE IN WHAT YOU DO - DO WHAT YOU BELIEVE IN



YOU ARE THE LEADER

This book has been published to assist you and your Program Chairpersons during your term of office as the Post or District presiding officer. We have outlined all of our State VFW Programs and awards with words of encouragement from our State Commander Maurice Bridges.

As a District or Post leader, it is your responsibility to read this book carefully so you are aware of the contents of each program, especially the 2024-2025 Membership Program. You are asked to bring this book to each of your meetings so you can answer any questions which may come up regarding specific programs, program deadline dates and program awards. Remember, the Commander's Leadership Manual is available to all members. You are encouraged to share the contents of this book with all of your key people.

Make photocopies of each of the programs contained within the ***Veterans and their Families, We Got You*** Manual so you can give each Program Chairperson a copy of his/ her program. Having this information at an early date will enable that person to start working on the program as soon as he/she receives the information. The Leadership Manual will be available online at <http://www.vfwil.org>. Check this site for updates to the Commander's Leadership Manual for any changes that have to be made. You will also be able to print out programs from the manual for distribution to your Program Chairperson.



STATE HEADQUARTERS

3300 Constitution Drive

Springfield, Illinois 62711

Phone: (217) 529-6688 • Fax: (217) 546-3415

E-mail: vfwil@vfwil.org • State Website: <http://www.vfwil.org>

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THE VFW MISSION

To foster camaraderie among United States veterans of overseas conflicts. To serve our veterans, the military, and our communities. To advocate on behalf of all veterans.

The Mission Statement is a concise description of our intention—derived from the purpose—that guides our activities by providing focus; it enables us to establish priorities and make decision on what we should and should not be doing. It helps us to put our purpose into action. It also creates a sense of identity for our members and for the public. The Mission Statement describes what we do.

THE VFW VISION

Ensure that veterans are respected for their service, always receive their earned entitlements, and are recognized for the sacrifices they and their loved ones have made on behalf of this great country.

The Vision Statement is what we want the future to look like. It is the target on which we align our Mission Statement. The Vision describes where we want to be someday.

THE VFW CORE VALUES

- Always put the interests of our members first
- Treat donors as partners in our cause
- Promote patriotism
- Honor military service
- Ensure the care of veterans and their families
- Serve our communities
- Promote a positive image of the VFW
- Respect the diversity of veteran opinions

Core Values are the principles of how we interact with each other and with our communities. They are a foundation for a healthy environment in our Posts, at our meetings, or anywhere in which we gather. They help to form the culture that we build in our Posts and Districts. Core Values are meant to shape where we work.

**CONSTITUTION
OF THE VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS
OF THE UNITED STATES
SECTION 230102 - Purposes**

The VFW Purpose

Per the Congressional Charter, the purposes of the corporation are fraternal, patriotic, historical, charitable, and educational, and are:

- (1) to preserve and strengthen comradeship among its members;
- (2) to assist worthy comrades;
- (3) to perpetuate the memory and history of our dead, and to assist their surviving spouses and orphans;
- (4) to maintain true allegiance to the Government of the United States, and fidelity to its Constitution and laws;
- (5) to foster true patriotism;
- (6) to maintain and extend the institutions of American freedom; and
- (7) to preserve and defend the United States from all enemies.

The Mission, Vision, and Core Values are all based upon the purpose of the VFW. Our purpose establishes why we exist.

Veterans of Foreign Wars Posts, just as individuals do, sometimes lose sight of their objectives. As individuals most of us take inventory now and then to make certain that we are staying on the track and heading toward our objectives. The good Veterans of Foreign Wars Post will follow this same practice to ascertain its current status.

STATE COMMANDER

Congratulations to all newly elected and appointed officers for the 2024-2025 term. As the Commander of the Department of Illinois, it is very important that information flows up and down the chain of command. We must continue to reevaluate our processes for improvement and eliminate outdated processes.

As we took our oath and promised to faithfully discharge to the best of our ability the duties of the office to which we have been elected or appointed to, we must continue to work hard for Veterans and their families.

The VFW operates assistance programs aimed at addressing the unique needs of veterans, such as those struggling with homelessness, mental health issues, or disabilities. These programs may provide financial assistance, counseling services, or referrals to other support organizations. The VFW is actively involved in local communities across the country, organizing events, fundraisers, and volunteer activities to support veterans and promote patriotism. This includes initiatives such as veteran outreach programs, scholarship programs, and youth education programs.

The Veterans of Foreign Wars provides a wide range of support services to veterans and their families. The Commander's Leadership Manual is designed to assist the Illinois District Commanders and team in leading their Districts and Posts effectively. It typically covers a wide range of guidance to include the "Five Pillars of VFW Community Service": "Veterans Assistance", "Youth Programs", "Legislative Advocacy", "Illinois Specific Programs" and "Important Dates and Deadlines". The Commander's Leadership Manual is a comprehensive guide for Veterans of Foreign Wars leadership and team members. This manual reflects some changes that have been made for the 2024-2025 term. The Department Dashboard has been revised and re-sequenced, to follow along with the new Dashboard. Among other changes, the Post must have one nomination in any of the following programs: Teacher of the year or Public Safety (police, fire, EMT, dispatchers, EOD). There is one recruiting event required instead of two. In addition, the Yellow Ribbon and the Veteran of the Month programs have been eliminated. Employee of the year is no longer a requirement under "Program Nominations" on the Post Dashboard. I'm happy to announce a new Program this year. The program is titled "Women Veterans". Please refer to the complete Commander's Leadership Manual for all requirements.

In closing, the VFW's mission is to ensure veterans receive the support, recognition, and resources they deserve for their service to the nation. Through advocacy, support services, community engagement, and fellowship the VFW strives to improve the lives of veterans and their families and uphold the legacy of patriotism and military service.

Please use this manual as a reference and keep it readily accessible. It is downloadable from the Department of Illinois website, under "Resources."



Maurice Bridges
State Commander

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Remember, ***Veterans and Their Families – We Got You***

STATE ADJUTANT



Joe Bartley
State Adjutant

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Thank you to all the officers and members that worked so hard during this last year. It is because of your efforts that Illinois did so well. You also worked hard on your community service, assistance to veterans, youth activities, and supporting legislative efforts. I appreciate your efforts in reporting your activities as you do them. Congratulations to all of the Posts and Districts that qualified for All-State and All-American.

I encourage you to continue that hard work in the upcoming year. Congratulations to all the newly elected and appointed incoming officers that have agreed to serve this upcoming year. I want you to know that Headquarters is here to assist you in the performance of your duties. The department service officers are doing an outstanding job in supporting and assisting veterans. We are extending our ability to service veterans with claims and benefits through outreach events.

I hope you enjoy some of the changes we made for the State Convention this year. We want you go back to your Posts and have information that will make your Post better. If there is something else you would like to see, please let me know as planning for next year starts in the very near future.

Again this year, the dashboard contains all of the items required for All-State honors so you can readily know if you qualify. We have reorganized this year's Commander's Leadership Manual so that the programs are grouped in the same order as the dashboard. We want to make sure it is easily identifiable as to what you need to do in order to get credit for each program. The purpose of this manual is to assist leaders at all levels in making a difference in their post and community. It outlines each and every program that we have. If you don't know

or understand how to accomplish the program, ask and you will be helped. Your success is our success.

Every program is important but we can't lose focus on membership. Our membership goal is 102%. We must work on membership every day, week, and month of the year. We can't wait until the last 90 days of the year to focus on membership. Membership is the responsibility of every member. All of us need to find new members, ask them to join the VFW, and then retain them by keeping them engaged in our mission of helping veterans. We have a lot of potential for growth. Membership numbers have a direct correlation to our ability to help veterans and to influence legislation that is a benefit to all veterans. It also impacts the amount of money that each Post and State HQ receives in per capita membership payments.

We are all here for the same reason and must continue to work hard to meet the goals. Let our actions and activities show "VETERANS AND THEIR FAMILIES, WE GOT YOU" I look forward to working with you during the upcoming year to support our veterans. Thank you for being a part of the 2024-2025 Team!

CHIEF OF STAFF

First, I extend heartfelt gratitude to Commander Bridges for entrusting me with the role of Chief of Staff for the 2024-2025 year. Also, congratulations to all our newly elected and appointed officers at the Department, District and Post levels. Your dedication and commitment are the backbone of our organization! I am eager to embark on this journey of service with each of you to bring about even more positive changes within our organization.

The title of "Chief of Staff" implies a "...behind the scenes leader..." I stand ready to expand my "behind the scenes" efforts from my Post and my District to all our Districts and Posts this year. I know there are Districts and Posts struggling. I know what it's like to learn without the aid of a mentor. No one in this organization should be left to learn on their own. We must work together, share information and ideas, we all learn, and we all get better. I have found that every time I reach out to mentor another member or post, that in return, I learn something too! We, as an organization, need to mentor our peers and help them grow in knowledge and confidence to fill our leadership positions and keep our VFW growing! And they, in turn, must be willing to ask for help.

We must continue to recruit new members and a thorough understanding of VFW programs not only equips us to assist other members but also enhances our ability to articulate the significance of our mission to other eligible veterans. I tell our posts, "Keep recruiting!" Recruit until you get the help you need. Sometimes it only takes one new member to light a fire in your membership!

As the VFW Illinois 2024-2025 Chief of Staff, I pledge my unwavering commitment to serve! I embrace the challenge ahead and eagerly anticipate the opportunities for progress and unity as we grow our organization bigger and stronger for the future! Together, let us rise to the occasion and ensure that our VFW remains a beacon of support, advocacy and camaraderie for all who served.



Nancy O'Connell
Chief of Staff

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Post 4226-13

STATE INSPECTOR



Cathy Stubbs
Inspector

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Belleville, IL 62221

Phone: 618-830-9142

Email:
CStubbsVFW@gmail.com

Post 7710-14

Congratulations to all the new Commanders and Quartermasters serving at the District and Post levels.

As stated in the National Manual of Procedures, ARTICLE V - DEPARTMENTS, Section 518: "The Department Inspector shall ensure that each District, County Council (if applicable), and Post are inspected in accordance with Department and National guidelines."

Those responsibilities and requirements are as follows but not limited to:

- Books and records are inspected.
- That the National, Department, District, County Council and Post by-laws be enforced.
- That the opening and closing of meetings, the order of business and rules of order be followed and the initiation of recruits and other ceremonies are conducted as prescribed by the by-laws, Manual of Procedure and Ritual.
- A report on the decorum of meetings.
- Submission of a detailed report concerning the Post or District finances, records and property at time of inspection.
- Make sure that the District and Post has filed it's 990 Form direct with the IRS.
- Ensure the District and Post is bonded in an amount sufficient to cover it's liquid assets.

These are the guidelines and procedures in addition to those items listed on the Post Inspection Forms that will be followed with all inspections. When notified of a scheduled inspection, please be sure that all necessary records are prepared, up to date and readily available for your inspector. There should be no reason for the absence of any record on the day of your inspection. Ensure all Trustee audits are filed on time.

Commanders and Quartermasters should ensure that their Posts are incorporated under the laws of the State of Illinois. This removes the members and the Post Officers from the liabilities and debts of the post in unforeseen litigation.

Adjutants at all levels should ensure that proof of eligibility for all officers, both elected and appointed is on file pursuant to Section 216. Ensure all Ceremonial Rifle Deeds of Gift, Storage Certification, Notarized Annual Utilization Certification and Tri-Annual Inventories are current and accurate in accordance with National VFW Policy and Instructions for Conditional Donation of Ceremonial Rifles, Ammunition & Military Equipment and U.S. Army AR 700-131, Chapter 6, Loan, Lease, and Donation of Army Materiel.

Trustees should pay particular attention to their duties prescribe in Section 218 of the National By-laws.

DISTRICT COMPENSATION AND INCENTIVE PROGRAM

Each District will be compensated at the time the District becomes 100 percent inspected and approved by the Department Inspector. If 100 percent completed by December 31, District will receive \$20 per Post. If 100 percent completed by April 30, District will receive \$10 per Post. District will receive no Compensation or Incentive if 100 percent complete after April 30.

STATE SERVICE OFFICE

The State of Illinois VFW Department Service Office is headquartered at the VA Regional Office in Chicago. The Department Service Office is organized under the authority of the Department By-Laws and provides services under the supervision of the Department Veterans Service Committee. All Service Officers employed by the VFW of Illinois are members of the VFW. All Service Officers and Claims Consultants are accredited by the VA through the VFW and perform their duties in accordance with the National Policy and Procedure Manual of the VFW National Veterans Service.

The mission of the Department Service Office is to assist all veterans of Illinois, their dependents, and their survivors in the pursuit of all benefits administered by the US Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to which they may be entitled. This mission is pursued through the development of supportive relationships with County Veteran Assistance Commission (VAC) Offices, Illinois Department of Veterans Affairs (IDVA) Offices, VA Social Workers, and a state-wide network of volunteer VFW Post and District Service Officers. From these sources claims for benefits are received, prepared, and submitted to the VA.

The Department Service Office is under the direction of the Department Service Officer, Sean D. Conner, an Iraq War Veteran. Currently, the Service Office staff includes four Assistant Department Service Officers, two working in Chicago, one stationed at the Marion VAMC, and one stationed at the Danville VAMC. We also have a part-time Assistant Department Service Officer in the Metro St Louis area. Field service coverage is also provided at various locations as indicated in the schedule listed below. The Regional Office staff includes one Claims Consultant and one clerical support staff member.

Activities of the Service Office staff include case management of claims submitted to the VA from all state-wide sources to include representation for appeals pending at the Board of Veterans Appeals. Staff members provide training to Post and District Service Officers and participate in training seminars for IDVA and VAC staff and local volunteers. The staff also provides guest speakers on issues pertaining to VA benefits to VFW Posts and Districts, local civic groups, military Reserve and National Guard units, and college student organizations upon request.

The hours of operation and contact information for the Department Service Office are listed below. Members with questions about existing claims or requesting information about VA benefits are encouraged to contact the Department Service Office during hours of operation or by e-mail.



**Sean Conner
and George**
State Service Officer

1900 E Main St
Bldg 98, Room 1012
Danville, IL 61832

Phone: 217-554-4502

Fax: 217-554-4361

E-mail: sean.conner@va.gov

Department Service Office Contact Information

VFW Service Office
2122 West Taylor St., Chicago, IL 60612
Room 105
Phone: 312-980-4284
Fax: 312-980-4680

Email: vso@vfwil.org
Website link: www.vfwilserviceoffice.com

Office Telephone Hours
Monday - Thursday
8 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.
Friday 8 a.m. to 12 p.m.

Office Walk-In Hours
Monday - Thursday
8 a.m. to 11:30 a.m.
12:30 p.m. to 3 p.m.
Friday 8 a.m. to 12 p.m.

VFW Service Office Staff

Sean Conner
Marine Corps, Iraq
Director of Veterans Service
Danville VA Medical Center
sean.conner@va.gov

Zach Brooks
Army, Korea
Assistant Department Service Officer
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Receptionist
Chicago Regional Office
edith.giles@va.gov

Field Office/Outreach Locations

-Southern Illinois-

Marion VA Medical Center
AmVets Building, Room 110
2401 W. Main St.,
Marion, IL 62959
Phone: 618-997-5311 ext. 158230
FAX: 618-997-8219
Monday-Friday, 8:00 am - 3:00 pm

O'Fallon VFW Post 805
Every Tuesday
223 West 1st St.
O'Fallon, IL 62269
618-624-6575
11 a.m. to 7 p.m.

Metro East Vet Center
Every Wednesday
228 West Pointe Drive
Swansea, IL
8 a.m. to 4 p.m.

-Central Illinois-

Illiana Health Care System

Danville VA Medical Center
Bldg 104, Room 127
1900 E. Main St., Danville, IL 61832
Phone: 217-554-4502
FAX: 217-554-4361
Monday-Friday, 8:00 am – 3:00 pm

Mattoon VA Clinic

First Tuesday of the month
501 Lake Land Blvd., Mattoon IL
9 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Dow Stepp Memorial Post 5975

First Thursday of the month
112 North 5th, Marshall, IL
9 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Crawford County Post 4549

Second Tuesday of the month
712 E. Main St., Robinson, IL
9 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Decatur VA Clinic

Second Thursday of the month
792 North Sunnyside Rd., Decatur, IL
9 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Peoria VA Clinic

Third Tuesday of the month
7717 N Orange Prairie Rd., Peoria IL
9 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Busey-Fletcher-Stillwell Post 630

Third Thursday of the month
1303 E. Main St., Urbana, IL
9 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Bloomington VA Clinic

Fourth Tuesday of the month
207 Hamilton Rd, Bloomington IL
9 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Springfield VA Clinic

Fourth Thursday of the month
5850 South 6th St., Springfield, IL
9 a.m. to 2 p.m.

-Chicagoland-

Hines VA Medical Center

Every Thursday & Third Friday of the month
5000 S. 5th Ave., Hines, IL 60141
Building 1, Room 109
Phone: 708-202-2562
9 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Frisbie Senior Center

First Monday of the month
52 E. Northwest Hwy., Des Plaines, IL 60016
9 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Judd Kendall Post 3873

First Tuesday of the month
908 Jackson Ave., Naperville, IL 60540
10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Benjamin O. Davis Post 311

Every Monday & Tuesday and First & Second
Wednesday of the month
(except 1st Monday & Tuesday)
22341 S. Governors Hwy., Richton Park, IL 60471
Phone: 708-679-0995
9 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Chicago Vet Center

First Friday of the month
8658 S. Sacramento Ave., Chicago, IL 60652
9 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Aurora Vet Center

Second & Fourth Friday of the month
750 Shoreline Dr. #150, Aurora, IL 60504
9 a.m. to 2 p.m.

MEMBERSHIP



Dustin Dixon
Chairman

355 Locust St
East Alton, IL 62024

Phone: 618-960-9594
Email: dixd10@yahoo.com

Post 1308-12

I would like to thank State Commander Maurice Bridges Sr. for giving me the opportunity to serve as your Membership Chairman for the 2024-2025 VFW year. I look forward to working with all the posts and districts to meet Commander-in-Chief Al Lipphardt's membership goal of 102%.

To meet this goal, it is imperative that we get out into our communities and talk to potential members and find out what their needs are. Recruiting members is easy, but listening to a new member, mentoring them, and making sure they are receiving the VA medical care and benefits that they deserve.

If we just recruit a member to get a number and a hat then we are doing a disservice not only to the new comrade, but we are also doing a huge disservice to our organization. Getting them slowly involved in the post, invite them to post functions and events, explain to them what we do, the services we offer and answering questions on why we do the things we do will go a long way into developing future leaders and comrades of our organization.

Another way to meet this goal is to use the technology in our current era to make our positions easier and more efficient. We should have online accounts on OMS to be able to access our rosters, input new comrades, or upgrade a comrade to a life membership or legacy memberships. There are several training guides, documents and videos on the VFW National website that are helpful for us to be successful. Use these tools.

There are a lot of membership tools available and most of them are no cost to the unit but using the tools will assist you greatly in recruiting and retaining member. Everyone that is a current member is a Recruiter, anyone can sign up a new member, or contact an expired member and ask them to reinstate. We all need to support

the activities in our Post and encourage and mentor the new members.

I am asking that each District Commander appoint a membership recruiter for their District. The purpose of the membership recruiter is to work with the District Officer Team and myself to maintain contact with the units in their District and support any membership drive or event that is scheduled.

If you need assistance from me, please let me know. Let's use every tool we have to meet the Commander's Goal of 102% strength during the 2024-2025 year. Commander Bridges reminds us we are all "Veterans and their Families, We Got You" Growing our membership and keeping the II VFW strong is the best way to guarantee we can live up to that.



Illinois Membership Program

2024-2025

Maurice Bridges

State Commander

"Veterans and their Families, We Got You"

ILLINOIS MEMBERSHIP PROGRAM 2024-2025

VFW MEMBERSHIP MISSION: Our goal is to perpetuate our organization for current and future veterans into the next century. Posts, Districts, and our State must coordinate and implement a successful program to retain current members, recruit new ones, and reinstate those who have let their dues expire. Our District and State leaders should be prepared to promote a well-organized membership campaign in addition to working other VFW programs. Our State Headquarters offers technical, logistical, and financial resources to assist in retention and recruiting. In addition, our National organization offers incentives to help us achieve these goals. It is our responsibility to use these assets to implement and achieve a successful Membership Program.

VFW MEMBERSHIP VISION: The starting point for our Membership Program will be the standings at the end of the previous year. From this point, our goal is growth-or at the very least, maintaining an equivalent number of members from the previous year. We need to welcome veterans and their families from all conflicts. We must not stereotype any of our future members regardless of sex, color, or personal beliefs. If a member qualifies, bring them in. 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. There are still many veterans eligible to join and at all ages. However, our focus needs to be on our Post-9/11 veterans, for they will be our future. Let's not forget about our female veterans. They are the fastest growing sector for membership.

OUR GOAL THIS YEAR IS 102%

Whether we like it or not, our elected representatives look at our numbers when we lobby for the rights of veterans at the National or State level. Large numbers gain their attention. Therefore, the VFW is either perceived as a strong, viable organization, or one that is deteriorating. Each of us needs to do our part and recruit at least one new member. Think about it. If we all recruit one each, we would show substantial growth in membership in just one year. If we repeated the same scenario again next year and the year after, we could easily be back over 50,000 members strong. When you are out there recruiting, remember the message from National Commander in Chief: "Believe in What You Do - Do What you Believe in" It is our job to keep our VFW strong!

This membership year, you will again see the requirements for a membership drive/event. Membership materials, brochures, and posters can be ordered from the Membership Department using the Membership Recruiting Brochure Order Form in OMS on vfw.org. Resources for Post Development, Membership Campaigns, and Mentorship are available in the Training & Support Section of vfw.org. Promotional tools such as radio spots, advertisement, public service announcement, and media kits are in the Media Room on vfw.org. A membership drive or event can be any activity taken by the Post with the purpose being to sign-up new or reinstated members. This membership drive or event can be conducted in conjunction with other events as long as there is a specific effort and designated area where the Post is promoting membership eligibility in the VFW and speaking with individuals about completing and submitting a membership application.

All awards will be presented based on the membership numbers that are posted on the National Membership Report on the morning following the specified cut-off date. no exceptions!

MEMBERSHIP CHALLENGES

During the membership year, Membership Challenges will be issued and published, along with the incentives that are being used to reward Posts or Members that meet the challenge. The Membership Challenge will be sent out by email and included in the General Orders for the respective months.

RECRUITING AWARDS

All members of the Veterans of Foreign Wars who sign up:

- Each Quarter, any member that has recruited 5 new or reinstated members for the year will be placed into a drawing for a set of six specially engraved glasses
- 25 new or reinstated members will receive a VFW coin
- 50 new or reinstated members will receive a personalized engraved plaque
- 75 new or reinstated members will receive a \$100 gift certificate to VFW Store
- 100 new or reinstated members by June 1, 2025 will be awarded \$500 to attend the 2025 National Convention. This award is transferable and will be presented to the winners at the National Convention.
- TOP Recruiter Award – The Top Recruiter in the State will receive a specially engraved trophy.

MEMBERSHIP AWARD

- Posts achieving at least 98% membership by Dec 31, 2024 will receive a specially engraved plaque
- Posts achieving at least 100% membership by Feb 28, 2025 will receive \$150 Visa gift card for a post membership celebration meal recognizing the posts efforts.
- Posts achieving at least 100% membership by June 30, 2025 will receive 100% Membership Pennant

POST AWARD

The Post having the largest increase in Legacy Life Membership, with a minimum of 4 new Legacy Life Memberships by April 30, 2025, will receive a \$100 gift certificate from the National VFW Store.

DISTRICT AWARD

Districts who are 98% in membership by February 1, 2025, will receive a \$500 cash award. Districts who are 100% in membership by April 1, 2025, will receive an additional \$500 cash award. (Up to \$1000 can be awarded to the District)

CRAMER-SODEN AWARD

The District Commander who has the highest numerical increase from their 2023-2024 year to their 2024-2025 year and their membership is 100% or greater will be the recipient of the Cramer-Soden Award. This plaque is sponsored by our fellow Illinois Past National Commanders-in-Chief, George R. Cramer, and the late Ray R. Soden. The deadline for this award is April 30, 2025.

ALL-STATE AWARD PROGRAM

The 2024-2025 All-State Program is designed to recognize exceptional leadership and teamwork. Not only in Membership but in overall Post/District development and VFW Programs. If a Post qualifies to be "All-state," ALL Post members will be recognized for this achievement because: THEY ARE A TEAM!

- The program runs through June 15, 2025.
- To receive All-State awards at the State Convention, the deadline for completion of All-State criteria is April 30, 2025.

ALL-STATE AWARD PROGRAM CRITERIA

- Membership greater than 101%
- Posts must hold 1 membership drive/event and submit report to Program Reporting Dashboard
- Posts must be 100% reported on the Department Programs Reporting Dashboard ..
- Posts must have submitted all 4 quarterly Trustees Audits and audits were approved.
- Posts must be in compliance with all questions on the National and Department Inspection Sheets (for example: a post that is not incorporated shall not be eligible until proof is provided that they are in compliance)
- Posts must order at least 3 poppies per member with a minimum of 1,000 poppies.
- Posts must have one nomination for each of the programs of Patriot's Pen and Voice of Democracy submitted to District for judging. Donations to Voice of Democracy and Patriot's Pen as stated in this manual will be accepted if a Post does not have a nomination.
- Posts must have one nomination in any of the following programs: Teacher of the Year or Public Safety (police, fire, EMT, dispatcher, EOD). Donations to any of these programs DO NOT receive credit towards All State Awards.
- Posts must have representation at all properly called District Conventions or meetings.
- Posts must have representation at any of the Commanders Calls. (Roll Call will be taken)
- Posts must make a \$50 donation to the Service Office Support Program (SOS) This is separate from the Red, White, and Blue Program donations.
- New Posts need a minimum of 35 members to achieve-All State.

ALL-STATE POST AWARDS

- There will be no limits on the number of Posts that can achieve All-State status.
- All-State Post Commanders will receive: All-State Post Commander's Cap and a Distinguished Service Lapel Pin.
- All-State Post Quartermasters may purchase an All-State Post Quartermaster's Cap and will receive a Distinguished Service Lapel Pin.
- All-State Post Members may purchase an All-State Team Post Member Cap.

ALL-STATE DISTRICT CRITERIA

- Membership greater than 101%
- Districts must have 100% of Posts inspected and the inspections must be cleared by the State Inspector by April 30, 2025
- Districts must hold a minimum of one School of Instruction and submit a report to State Headquarters.
- Districts must hold or participate in 1 membership drive/event and submit report to Programs Reporting Dashboard
- Districts must submit 1 of each of the following to Department Headquarters for judging.
 - o Patriot's Pen
 - o Voice of Democracy
 - o Teacher of the Year
 - o Public Safety of the Year (Police, Firefighter, EMT, Dispatcher, EOD)
- Districts must forward a record of the Roll Call of Officers and Posts of each District meeting to State Headquarters

ALL-STATE DISTRICT AWARD

- There will be no limits on the number of Districts that can achieve All-State status.
- All-State District Commanders will receive: All-State Commander's Cap and a Distinguished Service Lapel Pin.

OPERATION: ALL IN



NATIONAL MEMBERSHIP PROGRAM 2024-2025

SITUATION

Commander's Introduction

Alfred J. "Al" Lipphardt was elected Commander-in-Chief of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the U.S. at the 125th VFW National Convention in Louisville, Kentucky.

Al served in the United States Army from 1965 to 1979, earning his VFW eligibility by serving in Vietnam from 1967 to 1968, and from 1970 to 1971. In recognition of his heroic service in combat, he received the Combat Infantryman's Badge, Bronze Star with "V" device, Bronze Star Medal for Meritorious Service, Purple Heart Medal, Vietnam Campaign Medal with Silver Star and two Bronze Stars, among many others.

He joined the VFW in 2002 at Post 12002 in North Fulton, Georgia, where he maintains his Gold Legacy Life membership. Al is also a Triple Crown Commander, having been named as an All-American Post Commander in 2006, District Commander in 2010, and Department Commander in 2015.

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.

Specific Membership Numbers:

Our requirement this year is to continue growth and achieve at least 102% in membership. In the simplest of terms, we look at the prior year's total (which is how many individual members paid membership dues last year) and want to see a 2 percent increase. If a member has been lost due to passing away or not renewing their dues, then that means we must fill that gap in addition to recruiting new members to meet the 102% goal. This should serve as an example to prove that we must maintain our focus on retaining and mentoring our existing members as well as bringing in new members to the organization. Bring in the members we need, keep the members we have.

MISSION

Membership

1. Build a strong organization through recruiting new members while retaining our current membership, creating a solid baseline for the future.
2. Work together to achieve 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.

Requirements

- Achieve 102% in Membership
- For everyone to recruit at least one new member and then mentor that member.
- Increase membership drives and/or events.
- Develop new Posts and/or revitalize existing Posts.
- Increase Life Membership and Legacy Life Membership

WHO: All VFW Members, including Post, District, Department, and National leadership.

WHAT: To meet the goals of increasing membership through recruiting, retention, and mentorship. To develop a spirit of camaraderie and service to all veterans. To strengthen the Veterans of Foreign Wars through a solid membership base.

WHERE: Across the globe with Posts in all 50 states and in overseas countries and territories.

WHEN: Beginning on July 1st, 2024 and continuing through the end of the membership year on June 30th, 2025.

WHY: To serve our comrades and their families, to remember and honor those who have come before us, and to live the words of our motto, that **NO ONE DOES MORE FOR VETERANS.**

EXECUTION

Commander's Intent:

"Efforts are to be appreciated. Achievements are to be celebrated."

To incentivize the necessary tasks of recruiting and retention, which are essential to the continued growth and strength of the Veterans of Foreign Wars, a series of award programs will be established and overseen by the Membership Department under the direction of the Adjutant General. These programs will be directly related to membership growth and program participation, and awards will be assigned to those individuals as well as Posts, Districts, and Departments that show excellence above and beyond the standard.

How To Achieve Tasks:

Focus on the three pillars of membership: Recruiting, Mentorship, and Retention

1. Recruiting: We need to bring in new members and recover lapsed members. To do this, we must not only reach out to veterans in our community but also build our VFW Posts into places where veterans can feel at home, find the support and camaraderie they deserve, and be provided with the best service for their family and community.
2. Mentorship: We must engage our membership and keep them active. We must be training the leaders of the future, but also communicating and serving every member of our Posts
3. Retention: We must retain the members currently on our rolls. This means putting an end to cliquishness, welcoming eligible veterans of all generations, backgrounds, and walks of life.

SERVICE AND SUPPORT

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.

Department Leadership: Department officers will provide resources, support, and training where available including Schools of Instruction, Unpaid/Relocated lists, and other tools and incentives to enable membership growth and the mission of recruiting, retention, and mentorship.

National Headquarters: The VFW National Headquarters staff is ready and trained to answer any questions you may have concerning membership, VFW programs, or other issues. National Headquarters staff will be available for remote training when necessary, feel free to contact the Membership Department to schedule.

You can contact our Member Service Center directly at 1.833.VFW.VETS or msc@vfw.org, or the Membership Department at 1.888.JOIN.VFW or membership@vfw.org.

COMMAND AND CONTROL

In order to incentivize growth and provide motivation and recognition for those individuals, Posts, Districts, and Departments that go the extra mile to strengthen and grow the organization, the Membership Department will issue membership awards designated by the Commander-in-Chief.

Awards Program Notes:

- Awards and stipends given to a Post will be transferrable to another member of that Post.
- No more than one stipend will be awarded to an individual for a given event.
- Post/District/Department: Membership must be a minimum of 102% in order to receive any award or stipend. This does not apply to the Early Bird award.
- NOTE: Reimbursement for travel expenses paid by the VFW will be reported to the Internal Revenue Service on Form 1099 if the total of payments made to you during any calendar year equals \$600.00 or more. Travel expenses paid for a guest or spouse for the award will also be reported to the IRS. The reimbursement you receive from the VFW will be deemed by the IRS to be taxable income. Since the circumstances of each individual are different, it is recommended that you consult your tax advisor to determine the effect these payments may have on your personal tax situation. It is your responsibility to keep receipts and other records as you and your accountant and/or tax advisor deem necessary in order to document your expenditures.
- Employees and officers of the VFW National Headquarters are excluded from receiving stipends unless otherwise authorized by the Adjutant General and Quartermaster General.

- Individuals receiving a 5-night hotel stay for either the VFW National Convention or the Legislative Conference must confirm attendance with the VFW Membership Department. Individuals confirmed who do not attend will be invoiced for half the cost of the reserved room.

ALL-AMERICAN PROGRAM

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

ALL-AMERICAN POST CRITERIA

- Membership must be at least 102%
- Post-Election Report must be submitted to National Headquarters
- Meet all the following Program Participation Criteria by Jan. 31, 2025:
 - o Voice of Democracy - minimum of one entry advanced to District judging (Overseas Post can donate \$125 to National in lieu of entry)
 - o Patriots Pen - minimum of one entry advanced to District judging (Overseas Post can donate \$125 to National in lieu of entry)
 - o Donate to Veterans & Military Support Programs Services, minimum of \$125.
- A Post must submit a community service report quarterly to their department for submission to the All-American Dashboard. The quarters are July-Sept, Oct-Dec, Jan-March, and April-June. One of these community service activities must be for the VFW Day of Service. Learn more at <https://todaysvfw.org/vfw-day-of-service/>
- Must purchase a minimum of 500 Buddy Poppies

ALL-AMERICAN POST AWARD

All Posts that meet the Qualifying Percentage of 102 percent and the program participation criteria will receive an All-American Post Citation, Post Streamer and be recognized in the VFW magazine.

The Top 15 Posts in each Division will receive:

- Acknowledgment in VFW Magazine
- Acknowledgment 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, adjutant, and Post members may purchase cap)
- All-American lapel pin (commander only, quartermaster may purchase pin)

The top five commanders in each division will also receive:

- Five nights paid hotel stay* at the VFW National Convention and reserved seating at the VFW National Convention Joint Opening session.

Division Captains and Co-Captains: The commander of the top Post in each membership division will be designated as the Team Captain, with the 2nd through 5th place commanders designated as Co-Captains. The All-American caps for these Captains and Co-Captains will bear a special designation.

ALL-AMERICAN DISTRICT CRITERIA

- Membership must be at least 102%
- District-Election Report must be submitted to National Headquarters.
- Meet all the following Program Participation criteria by Jan. 31, 2025:
 - Voice of Democracy - minimum of one entry advanced to Department judging (Overseas District donate \$125 to National in lieu of entry)
 - Patriots Pen - minimum of one entry advanced to Department judging (Overseas District donate \$125 to National in lieu of entry)

ALL-AMERICAN DISTRICT AWARD

All Districts that meet the Qualifying Percentage of 102% and the program participation criteria will receive an All-American District Commander Citation, All-American Streamer and be recognized in the VFW magazine.

The Top 10 Districts in each Division will receive:

- 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)
- Acknowledgement during the All-American Awards Ceremony at the National Convention

The top two District commanders in each division will also receive:

- Five nights paid hotel stay* at the VFW National Convention and
- Reserved seating at the VFW National Convention joint opening session.

Division Captains and Co-Captains: The commander of the top District in each membership division will be designated as the Team Captain, with the 2nd place commander designated as Co-Captain. The All-American caps for these Captains and Co-Captains will bear a special designation.

ALL-AMERICAN DEPARTMENT CRITERIA

- Membership must be at least 102%.
- Department must submit Department legislative chairman reports monthly through the Program dashboard tool.
- Must conduct two Membership recruiting events, report of these events must be submitted through the All-American dashboard.
- Meet all the following Program Participation criteria by Jan. 31, 2025:
 - Voice of Democracy - An entry advanced to National judging
 - Patriots Pen - An entry advanced to National judging
 - Veterans & Military Support Programs - Must complete State/Department fundraiser and proceeds donated to Veterans & Military Support Programs, Kansas City, Mo.

ALL-AMERICAN DEPARTMENT AWARD

- Acknowledgement during the All-American Awards Ceremony at the National Convention
- All-American Department streamer
- All-American Department citation - commander
- All-American name badge - commander
- All-American cap - commander - quartermaster, and adjutant may purchase cap.
- All-American lapel pin - commander - quartermaster may purchase pin.
- Five nights paid hotel stay* for the 2024-2025 Commander attending the VFW National Convention
- Reserved seating at the VFW National Convention Joint Opening Session

All-American Notes:

- Any member in a Post that achieves All-American status can purchase a "Post Member" cap. Those members must be in the Post during the membership year. Adjutants may purchase a cap. Quartermasters may purchase a cap and/or Quartermaster Pin. Commanders who were not in the top 15 in their Division may purchase a cap, Commander's Pin, and/or Post Commander Citation.
- Donations made to replace Voice of Democracy and Patriot's Pen by eligible overseas Posts, Districts, or Departments must be made through the All-American Dashboard, not through any other means.
- Veterans & Military Support Programs Services Donations for Post/District/Department as listed above will only be accepted only through the All-American Dashboard.

INDIVIDUAL RECRUITING AWARDS

- 1, 5, 10, 15 members recruited: recruiting pin
- 25 members recruited: Commander-in-Chief's Coin
- 50 members recruited: Commander-in-Chief backpack
- 75 members recruited: Commander-in-Chief's Medallion Set
- 100 members recruited: Century cap **or** \$50 VFW Store credit & Citation

Recruiting Awards will be sent out five times during the year to the Post, to be given out at a Post meeting to those members who have recruited new members. Mailings will take place near the end of October, January, March, May, and then after the end of the membership year.

EARLY BIRD AWARD

The top two Posts in each division on Jan. 1, 2025, will each be awarded a 5-night hotel stay for the VFW Legislative Conference in Washington D.C. One room will be booked per award/Post.

NEW MEMBER AWARD

Each Post that brings in a total of 15 New members will each be awarded a travel charger with the official VFW Commander-in-Chief logo. A Post may receive this award up to five times during the year!

OPERATION: ALL IN AWARD

The top two Post commanders and the top two District commanders in each division who achieve 102% membership by June 30th, 2025, will each be awarded a five-night hotel accommodation at the National Convention.

102% POST, DISTRICT AND DEPARTMENT

A distinctive streamer will be awarded to every Post, District and State/Department that achieves 102% or greater in membership by June 30th, 2025.

105% ABOVE AND BEYOND DRAWING

Each Post and District commander that meets or exceeds 105% in membership by June 30, 2025, will receive an entry in this drawing. Twenty Post commanders and Twelve District commanders will receive a \$1,000 stipend to be used toward attending the VFW National Convention.

POST DIVISION RECRUITING CHALLENGE

For every 10 new members recruited between July 1, 2024, and June 30th, 2025, Posts will earn one entry to be entered into a drawing. One Post per division will receive a \$1,000 membership grant deposited into the Post account.

LEGACY LIFE MEMBERSHIP ACQUISITION

Each Post that achieves the cumulative 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, 250, or 500 Legacy Life members by June 30th, 2025, commander or Post representative will receive a 5-night hotel accommodation at the VFW National Convention, reserved seating at the VFW National Convention joint opening session and a Legacy Society Post Proclamation.

TOP DEPARTMENT RECRUITERS

The top Recruiter in every Department by June 30th, 2025, will receive an engraved Cavalry Saber. Note: Minimum of 25 new members required to win this award.

ELITE RECRUITER

Any VFW member who signs up 250 or more new members by June 30th, 2025, will receive a 5-night hotel accommodation at the VFW National Convention and a distinctive cap, citation, and name badge. In the event that an Elite Recruiter has already received a 5-night hotel accommodation from another award, a \$1,000 stipend will be issued at the National Convention.

RECRUITER OF THE YEAR

The Elite Recruiter who signs up the greatest number of new members greater than 250 by June 30th, 2025, will receive an additional \$1,000 stipend, reserved seating at the VFW National Convention joint opening session, a distinctive cap, citation, and name badge, and the Commander-in-Chief's Crystal Eagle trophy.

LIFE MEMBER RECRUITER AWARD

Any VFW member who recruits at least 75 New Life members by June 30th, 2025 will receive a special citation from the Commander-in-Chief and a Recruiter Satchel with the Commander-in-Chief's logo.

NEW POST DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT AWARD

For each new Post chartered the Department Quartermaster will receive a \$250 credit from the VFW Store to be used towards necessary materials for the new Post. Department Commanders and Quartermasters may apply for this grant directly through the National Membership Department.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF'S CHALLENGE

To emphasize the importance of Life Membership as the backbone of our membership strength, the Commander-in-Chief is issuing the following challenge to all VFW Posts. Each month through the year, Posts will accumulate points as follows:

- New Annual Member: 1 point
- Annual or Lapsed Member converts to Life Member: 5 points
- New Life Member: 10 points

Each month, the Post that leads their membership division in points will receive a special award designated by the Commander-in-Chief. In addition, at the end of the year every Post who has led their division in the monthly challenges will be featured on a video display at the National Convention to recognize their achievements.

TRIPLE CROWN AWARD

The Triple Crown is one of the most prestigious membership awards that an individual can achieve. It requires being named as an All-American Commander at Post, District, and Department level. Leaders who attain this level of excellence will be recognized at an Awards Banquet at the National Convention with a special Triple Crown pin.

POST MEMBERSHIP DIVISIONS

Division	Minimum Membership	Maximum Membership
1	951+	
2	750	950
3	356	749
4	246	355
5	185	245
6	143	184
7	112	142
8	88	111
9	68	87
10	51	67
11	10	50

DISTRICT MEMBERSHIP DIVISIONS

Division	Minimum Membership	Maximum Membership
1	5000+	
2	3282	4999
3	2172	3281
4	1447	2171
5	906	1446
6	10	905

DEPARTMENT MEMBERSHIP DIVISIONS

Division	Minimum Membership	Maximum Membership
1	29000	above
2	15750	28999
3	12000	15749
4	7000	11999
5	2000	6999

PUBLIC RELATIONS/ILLINOIS VFW NEWS



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Post 3455-15

One of the best kept secrets of the Veterans of Foreign Wars is the great works our Posts, Districts and the Department does in support of the communities in which we live and work and on behalf of our military service members, veterans and families.

How our Posts and Districts market themselves within their communities and with local media organizations could set the stage for success in the years to come.

Media Advisories, Calendar Notices, Social Media posts and News Releases can serve to communicate the message of the Veterans of Foreign Wars, promoting the good work of our Posts, Districts and Departments, and engaging the communities in which we live and work.

Public Relations not only works to improve our credibility and accessibility, but also aids in marketing our organization to potential members, donors and supporters. Today, Public Relations is much more than just distributing press releases. It's about taking advantage of a number of ways to best engage, educate and influence our audience.

When developing your Public Relations program, you will need to define your objectives and decide what you want to accomplish.

- Determine your audience. Who do you want to reach with your message? Different VFW 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 way to present your message for the various outlets.
- 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. You may have better results if you have one person at each news media outlet as you go to contact. Become the best source of information in your community on patriotic and veterans' issues.
- Make your Post, District and Department visible and active on social media.

From time to time you may need to evaluate your strategy. Listen carefully to feedback from members and officers, members of the community and the media. Take this information and fine tune your strategy, if necessary. Just remember developing a good public relations takes time and commitment.

There ways to promote your Post, District and the Department within the community. Media advisories, News Releases, and Social Media Posts are some of the most important ways you can promote what the organization is doing within your community. If you need help in developing a Media Advisory or writing a News Release, please contact me. I will be glad to answer questions or offer suggestions.

The Illinois VFW News – the official publication of the Illinois Veterans of Foreign Wars – is published quarterly - September, December, March and June. It is mailed to the Illinois VFW membership, select members of the VFW Auxiliary, and distributed to the Veterans Administration facilities in Illinois. The Illinois VFW News is also uploaded on our website.

Articles, news, and other items for the *Illinois VFW News* can be submitted via e-mail. If you do not have access to a computer, you can also mail the information to the editor at the above address. If sending via U.S. mail, please include name and telephone number of the person submitting the item; type or print news item legibly; and send original photographs. The deadline for submitting items will be the 1st of the Month preceding publication (August, November, February and May), but is subject to change.

2024-2025 State Publications Contest

Editors of District and Post newsletters are invited to enter one issue of their publication in the 2024-2025 State of Illinois Publications Contest. All entries must be provided as a paper copy and mailed to either the editor at the above address, or to State Headquarters. The entry must have been published between January 1, 2024 and December 31, 2024.

Publications will be judged using the following categories:

- Post Publications published 1-4 times per year
- Post Publications published 5 or more times per year
- District Publications published 1-4 times per year
- District Publications published 5 or more times per year

Editors of post and district publications are responsible for submitting their own entry to the National Publications Contest.

State Publications Contest first place winners will receive a beautifully engraved plaque. Awards will be given out at the State Convention in June 2025.

An independent panel will judge all entries in the Publication Contest. Publications sent to State Headquarters for inclusion on the website will not be considered entered into the State Publications Contest. It is the responsibility of the newsletter editors to choose, and submit, one publication into the contest.

All entries **must** include the following:

- Name of Newsletter
- Editor's name and contact information
- Frequency of publication (1-4 times per year or 5 or more times per year).

All entries must be received not later than **February 28, 2025**.

Media Professional of the Year

Posts and Districts are invited to nominate a Media Professional in your community for the State of Illinois News Media Professional of the Year competition. There is no entry form - please type a one-page nomination letter highlighting how your nominee has best told the VFW story or your Post's or District's work in your community. You may also include newspaper clippings and/or weblinks with your nomination. The deadline for nominations is **April 30, 2025**. The Media Professional of the Year will be recognized at the Illinois State Convention in June. All nominations should be mailed to the Editor, Illinois VFW News.

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