

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 LIPPHARDT

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 some-day.

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

Russell Meredith
Navy, Iraq
Assistant Department Service Officer
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Edith Giles
Navy
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
- 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, 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:
 - o Voice of Democracy - minimum of one entry advanced to Department judging (Overseas District donate \$125 to National in lieu of entry)
 - o 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 your 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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VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS

5 PILLARS VFW SERVICE



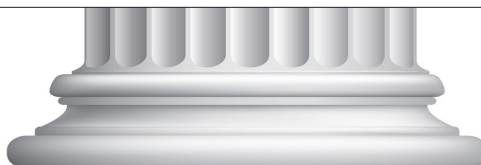
COMMUNITY SERVICE

VETERANS ASSISTANCE

YOUTH PROGRAMS

LEGISLATIVE ADVOCACY

ILLINOIS SPECIFIC



DEPARTMENT OF ILLINOIS VFW

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COMMUNITY SERVICE

COMMUNITY SERVICE

Community Activities

- Community Service Programs
- Disaster Relief
- Participation in or sponsorship of community activities

Americanism/Honor Guard/Flag Honors

- Americanism
- Flag Etiquette
- Display of US or POW/MIA Flag
- Honor Guard
- POW-MIA

Safety

- Safety Program Activities
- Public Service Recognition
 - ◆ Firefighter
 - ◆ Law Enforcement
 - ◆ Emergency Medical Technician
 - ◆ Emergency Dispatcher
 - ◆ EOD Technician
 - ◆ Life Saving Award

COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES PROGRAM

Community Activities are an important part of the Veterans of Foreign Wars way of life and has proven to be a win-win situation for the VFW and the community. Our support of community activities by volunteering, supporting community activities and organizations, or participating in events is a great benefit to the community. Your community activity raises awareness of the VFW within the community and supports our programs. Everyone develops their own perception of their community by what they see going on immediately around them. Your work within your community and with other non-for-profit organizations can help your Post accomplish our goal.

You will notice some changes in the manual this year on the community service pillar. There are only 3 sub programs under the Community Service Pillar this year. Any community activity that you do as a Post or District should fall within one of those 3 sub-programs. This year, Community Service and Americanism is consolidated under one program Chairman

Look over your Community Activity Programs and appoint an Activity Chairperson for each of the categories. Remember that all programs in the Veterans of Foreign Wars are important to Commanders at all levels. A Post that is strong in Community Activities not only earns respect in the community, but will also be strong in membership.

Commanders must report on-line or on the Community Activities Report Form by March 15, 2025 in order to qualify for a National Certificate of Recognition. Each Post must report in each of the following categories to qualify:

- a. Community Involvement
- b. Cooperation with other organizations
- c. Aid to others or Disaster Relief
- d. School and Church assistance

Community activities clearly benefits the people in the local community and involves the Post members to build a positive image for the Veterans of Foreign Wars.

When taking on a project, inform your local newspaper or TV station about your plans and if possible, document your efforts by taking photos as you work at or on your Community Activities.

Membership and community involvement will increase your Post and our goal. Your community activities will show **Veterans and Their Families – We Got You** . We must continue to work within our communities because “No One Does More For Veterans”. Commanders at all levels should review the Department Programs Dashboard on a weekly basis by checking out our website at www.vfwil.org.



Steve Eller
Chairman

420 Stone River Rd
Belleville, IL 62221
Telephone: (618) 567-9296

Email:
spe9296@yahoo.com.au

Post 7710-14

Here is one VERY IMPORTANT thing about reporting your Community Service Activities. If your Post is working towards becoming an All-American Post for 2024-2025, the requirements include that you submit a minimum of 1 community activity report per quarter in order to qualify - and one of those activities must be for the VFW Day of Service. My advice is to input your community service reports immediately following the event. Don't wait until May and input 10 months of activities because it will prevent you from winning a National award but it may result in you losing notes or forgetting about activities resulting in underreporting your activities.

Please feel free to call me if you have any questions.....

Remember to report your dollars spent, hours, and total number of volunteers for each project. Please make sure that the dollars reported **reflect only those amounts donated or expended in the performance of their community activities.**

Our goal is to be 90% reported by December 31, 2024.

Report it when it happens on-line or to the:

State of Illinois Veterans of Foreign Wars
3300 Constitution Dr.
Springfield, IL 62711

Community Activities Recordbooks Award

The top Community Activities Recordbook in each Membership Category will receive a \$50.00 Cash Award at the 2025 State Convention.

Membership Category 1 - Up to 150 members
Membership Category 2 - 151 to 300 members
Membership Category 3 - 301 members and up

RULES FOR THE RECORDBOOKS ARE AS FOLLOWS:

1. Community Service Projects completed between May 1, 2024 and April 30, 2025.
2. Book size should be no larger than 12 x 16 inches and no thicker than 3 inches. You may use as many volumes as necessary.
3. Book to be separated into 4 Sections, A- B - C & D describing each project. Show money spent, and volunteer hours for each project. Also, show total of dollars spent and hours used at the end of each Section
4. Clippings or photographs should show dates and captions from newspapers and any other information
5. Checks and Photostats should show what the money was spent for, also, total number of volunteer hours for each project.
6. Your book must be in State Headquarters by May 2, 2025 for judging on May 5, 2025.
7. The Community Activities Record Book Entry Form must be filled out and attached to the inside cover of the record book.
8. Pages must be numbered.

By reporting your out of pocket expenses, volunteers and hours for each project, we can continue to show

Veterans and Their Families – We Got You



Community Activities Record Book Entry Form

- 1. This Form must be filled out and attached to the inside cover of the Community Activities Record Book that your Post enters in the Department Community Activities Record Book Contest.**
- 2. All Record Books submitted for Department Judging will be returned to the Post Commander following judging.**
- 3. The Post Commander must sign this form.**
- 4. Your book must be in State Headquarters by May 2, 2025 for judging on May 5, 2025.**

Post # _____ City: _____, State: _____ Zip: _____

Total Projects	Total Hours	Total Funds
----------------	-------------	-------------

Since 5/1/24 _____ Volunteered _____ Used/Donated \$ _____

COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES CHAIRMAN:

Post Chairperson _____ Auxiliary Chairperson _____

JUDGES, NOTE THE FOLLOWING PROJECTS:

Page # _____, Project Name _____

Page # _____, Project Name _____

Page # _____, Project Name _____

Page # _____, Project Name _____

Post Commander Signature _____

Post Commander's Name (print) _____

Address: _____

City: _____, State: _____ Zip: _____

Deadline Dates

National VFW Post Special Project Program Deadline is April 30, 2025

"VFW Member Community Service Volunteer of the Year" Award Deadline must be in Department Headquarters by April 1, 2025

NATIONAL COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES CONTEST

- Department selects Posts based on their own criteria and National guidelines
- Number of Awards based on Department size:
 - Up to 200 Posts 1 selection
 - 201 to 400 Posts 2 selections

- Department selection due to National by May 1.

- Award presented to Post Commander at National Convention
- Each Post Commander receives \$599.00 to assist with Convention expenses
- National Award Plaque
- Post Recognition Street Sign

AMERICANISM PROGRAM

“AMERICANISM”...is the unfailing love of Country, loyalty to its institutions and ideals, eagerness to defend it against all enemies, undivided allegiance to the Flag, and a desire to secure the blessings of liberty for ourselves and for posterity”. As American citizens and members of the Veterans of Foreign Wars, we know what Americanism stands for. It was, and is still, our responsibility to defend the United States in a time of peace as it is in time of war, foreign or domestic. By practicing Americanism we show our love of Country and must do so.

As veterans we should promote and participate in Americanism every day of every year. There are many things a Post, a District and an individual can do to promote Americanism. Here are just a few ideas. I am sure you can think of many more.

- Fly the American Flag and or POW/MIA Flag every day at your Post Home.
- Present Flags to different organizations or if you see a tattered flag, donate a new one
- Hold flag etiquette sessions with various other organizations
- Encourage your membership to be informed by studying political issues and get out the vote.
- Furnish Color Guards/Honor Guards for civic programs, athletic events, veteran funerals, and Memorial Service
- Remember Memorial Day, Independence Day, Patriot's Day, POW/ MIA Recognition Day, Pearl Harbor Day, Loyalty Day, Memorial Day, Flag Day and other memorial military days from our Nation's past.
- Conduct flag retirement ceremony for tattered flags

Reporting Americanism is easy: fill out the VFW of Illinois on line Reporting Form or if you don't have a computer then you may contact State Headquarters (217-529-6688) to request the form and fill it in and mail it back to State Headquarters, 3300 Constitution Dr., Springfield, IL 62711. Remember reporting dates are July 1, 2024 through June 30, 2025.

There are three (3) categories to report: Be sure to report all hours, money spent, and number of members participating in an event. You should report every time you have an event. The more you report the better chance you have of winning awards. One very important note about credit for flying/displaying the American Flag and/or POW/MIA Flag is that you can only get credit for 1 hour per day for each of the flags. If you fly or display both flags, maximum credit is 60 hours per month or 720 hours per year. If you only fly one of the flags, maximum credit is 30 hours per month or 360 hours per year.

DISTRICT AWARDS:

The Districts with the highest number in hours, money, and members participating in the following three Membership Categories will receive a \$30.00 Cash Award at the 2025 Department Convention.

- Membership Category 1 - Up to 2,500 Members
- Membership Category 2 – 2,501 to 3,600
- Members Membership Category 3 – 3,601 Members and Up

POST AWARDS:

Posts with the highest number of hours, money and members participating in the following three Membership Categories will receive a \$30.00 Cash Award at the 2025 Department Convention.

- Membership Category 1 - Up to 100 Members
- Membership Category 2 – 101 to 300 Members
- Membership Category 3 - 301 Members & Up

“Loyalty Day May 1, 2025”

Loyalty Day or May Day is always May 1.

A truly inspired Holiday, Loyalty Day was created by the VFW Organization in 1921. It was through the efforts of the Veterans of Foreign Wars that in 1958 Loyalty Day was officially established by an act of Congress.

The reason we have Loyalty Day is to continually encourage loyal Americans to speak out. It is a Day upon which patriotic citizens should:

- 1) Hold parades
- 2) Conduct Flag ceremonies
- 3) Sponsor public meetings
- 4) Conduct school programs
- 5) and other American activities

Loyalty is an intangible thing, but it causes people to form a Government, to obey its laws and rules and to willingly defend their country against its enemies.

If your Post does not hold a Loyalty Day parade, maybe your District will

- 1) Invite civic leaders to participate and to speak
- 2) Encourage neighborhoods to join in
- 3) Invite the youth to march, or play in bands
- 4) Give out flags
- 5) Hold your VFW Buddy Poppy Donation Day

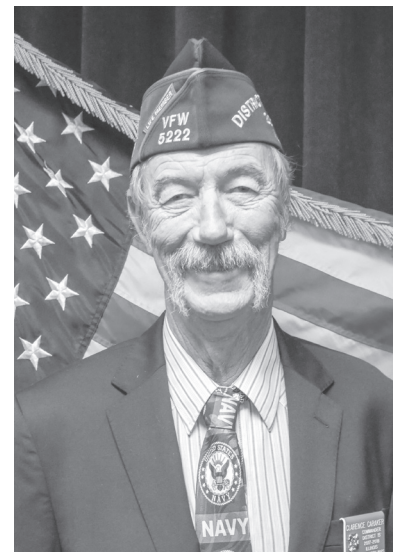
POW/MIA PROGRAM

We have not fulfilled our goal for a complete accounting of all our lost. What about our MIA or KIA's? We must continue to work for all the families to receive closure of their loved ones.

Now here are a few ways to get your credit on the dashboard under Americanism/Honor Guard/Flag Honors.

- The third Friday of September is National POW-MIA Recognition Day. Plan and carry out a POW-MIA service and invite your Post & Auxiliary members and the general public to attend.
- Display the POW-MIA missing man table & chair cover & recite the POW- MIA prayer at your meetings. (The prayer can be found in the manual procedure & ritual book)
- Carry the POW-MIA flag in a parade or fly or display it at your Post home or donate flags to local schools, village buildings or even nursing homes. If you fly the POW/MIA flag at your Post, you can get credit for 1 hour per day.
- Make a presentation at a local school and explain the importance of the POW-MIA Program to the students

REPORT REPORT REPORT !!!!



Clarence Caraker
Chairman

241 Paradise St.
PO Box 325
Olmsted, IL 62970
Cell: 618 771-6265

Email:
cecaraker@gmail.com

Post 3455-15

MEANING OF THE POW/MIA TABLE

The table is set for five, representing the five branches of our Armed Forces, the Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps, and the Coast Guard. The military is filled with symbolism and this table is a way of symbolizing those that are missing from our midst, who are commonly called POW/MIA'S.

The table set for five symbolizes the frailty of the prisoners alone against their oppressors.

The tablecloth is white, symbolizing the purity of their intentions to respond to their country's call to arms.

The single rose displayed in the vase is symbolic of the families and loved ones who keep the faith waiting for their return.

The red ribbon tied so prominently on the vase is reminiscent of the red ribbon worn upon the lapel and breast of thousands who bear witness to their unyielding determination to demand a proper accounting of our missing and the return of all live POW'S and all those left on foreign soil.

The slice of lemon on the bread plate is to remind us of their bitter fate.

There is salt on the bread plate which is symbolic of the families tears as they wait.

The chairs are empty, they are not here.....

POW / MIA PRAYER

Our Heavenly Father, At such time and place as we know not, there are Comrades being held against their will in hostile circumstances. Prisoners of war and those missing in action who did not return. We plead for assistance in our efforts to bring them home. Our hearts bleed for the families of these veterans, may we not forget their sacrifice and be reminded by this vacant chair of our duty toward them. (Amen)

AWARD

The **Dennis Nelson Memorial POW-MIA Award** will be awarded to the VFW Post that demonstrates the most outstanding POW/MIA Recognition Program within their community.

Flying the POW/MIA flag or displaying the Missing Man Table at your Post does not count towards the POW-MIA award. The award is intended to recognize a Post that has an outstanding POW-MIA program within their community. What has the Post done to promote the POW-MIA issue within their community?

Let's make sure this year we put our renewed commitment into action as we continue to show
"Veterans and Their Families - We Got You"

SAFETY PROGRAM

The Safety Programs of the Veteran of Foreign Wars continues to provide and promote programs designed to safeguard our communities. This long-standing commitment to safety has grown through the years to include every possible program or event associated with safeguarding people. Be creative and develop a safety activity and REPORT all accomplishments on the Department of Illinois Program Reporting Form. The six basic categories in the National Program are as follows:

- | | |
|------------------------|----------------------|
| 1. Highway Safety | 2. Pedestrian Safety |
| 3. Recreational Safety | 4. Home/Fire Safety |
| 5. Drug Awareness | 6. Recognition/Other |

1. **HIGHWAY SAFETY:** Any activity intended to improve individual driving skills and awareness or activities associated with improving safety in our vehicles and on our roadways.

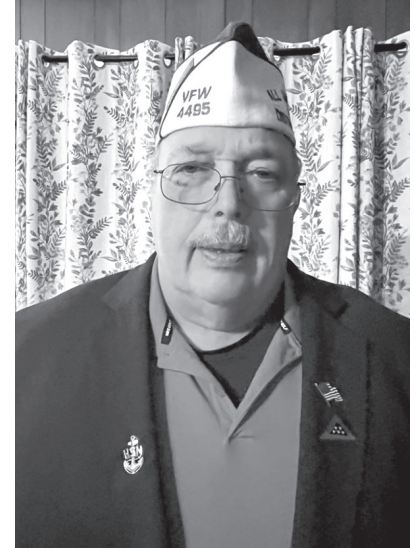
2. **PEDESTRIAN SAFETY:** Any worthwhile activity intended to improve individual awareness and visibility or non-motorized vehicle riding skills, awareness and responsibility

3. **RECREATIONAL SAFETY:** Any organized activity associated with improving the skills and responsibilities of those individuals engaged in recreational activities with children and adults.

4. **HOME/FIRE SAFETY:** Activities designed to promote and inform individuals within the community about protecting their homes, possessions and lives are reportable.

5. **DRUG AWARENESS:** Any program designed to inform and protect your community from the influence of substance abuse including prescription drugs.

6. **RECOGNITION/OTHER:** A program to bring public recognition to the people of the community who spend their work day protecting the lives and property. Recognizing the heroism/or safety achievements of individuals in the community. This category may be used to report an activity that does not fit any of the above categories including cooperation with other groups and organizations besides the V.F.W.



Glen Goodrich
Chairman

105 N. Broad St.,
PO Box 273
Mt. Auburn, IL 62547
Cell: 217 820-2038
Home: 217 676-5571

Email:
navy5858@hotmail.com

Post 4495-11

POST AWARDS

A Special Plaque will be awarded to the top Post in the following Membership Categories who reports the largest amount of hours, dollars, and members. These Awards will be presented during our State Convention.

- Membership Category 1 - Up to 150 Members
- Membership Category 2 - 151-300 Members
- Membership Category 3 - 301 Members and up

Report all completed work to the Department on the Department Program Report form. Good luck to all participating Posts.

PUBLIC SERVANT RECOGNITION

Each year, the Department of Illinois recognizes the great efforts of public servants throughout Illinois. Unless otherwise noted, the deadline to State Headquarters is April 30 for award nominations in the following categories:

- Outstanding Legislator of the Year
- Law Enforcement Officer of the Year (Jan. 1 for national consideration)
- Firefighter of the Year (Jan. 1 for national consideration)
- Paramedic/EMT of the year (Jan. 1 for national consideration)
- Emergency Medical Dispatcher of the year (Jan. 1 for national consideration)
- EOD Technician (Jan. 1)
- Outstanding Patriotism of the Year
- Outstanding Governmental Service of the Year
- Clergy of the Year
- News Media Professional of the Year (Public Relations program)
- Outstanding Citizen of the Year

For most of these awards, there is no special form to fill out to nominate an individual. Just submit a short nomination letter as why the individual deserves to be recognized. Include the name and address of the individual submitted in the appropriate category and the sponsoring Post and/or Auxiliary and the Post/Auxiliary contact person.

PUBLIC SERVANT RECOGNITION (NATIONAL)

PUBLIC SERVANT AWARD CITATIONS FOR EMERGENCY MEDICAL TECHNICIANS, LAW ENFORCEMENT PERSONNEL, EOD TECHNICIANS, EMERGENCY MEDICAL DISPATCHERS, AND FIREFIGHTERS

Each year, the Veterans of Foreign Wars selects emergency medical technicians, law enforcement, 911 dispatchers and firefighter personnel to receive VFW Public Servant Awards. Post Safety Chairmen are encouraged to submit a candidate for these awards to their Department Headquarters by Jan. 1. The Department must select a single candidate for each of the four awards and submit those to VFW National Headquarters by Feb. 1.

NOTE: The only item the National VFW Programs Department requires is the “VFW Department Public Servant Award Citation Request Form” which is now available on the VFW website. You can locate this form by logging in to vfw.org and searching under “My VFW” in the Training & Support section.

VFW National Emergency Medical Technician Public Servant Citation:

Any individual, who actively gives emergency medical treatment, provides rescue service or civil disaster assistance as a member of any public or volunteer company organized to give emergency medical care, provide rescue and civil disaster assistance to our nation's citizens.

VFW National Law Enforcement Public Servant Citation:

Any individual who serves in a municipal, county, state or federal unit tasked with enforcement of the laws pertaining to their area of responsibility. This award does not apply to individual employed by private companies or security services.

VFW National Emergency Medical Dispatcher Citation

Any individual who is employed by a 911 Dispatch Center

VFW National Firefighters Public Servant Citation: Any individual who actively fights fires as a member of any public or volunteer company organized to fight fires and give assistance to our nation's citizens.

EOD Technician

Criteria for these awards – Candidates must have demonstrated:

- 1) Recognition by their colleagues or those they serve.
- 2) Consistent excellence in the performance of their duties.
- 3) Consistent dedication to their official responsibilities over a period of years and continuous growth in responsibilities and skills within their profession.

Documentation required for all Candidates:

- 1) Nomination letter containing the candidate's name, title, address, telephone and identifying the award for which the individual should be considered.
 - a. Include justification outlining background in field, accomplishments and awards.

Note NEW (not required) One (1) page VFW Public Servant Award Citation Post Entry Form is now available on the VFW website. You can locate this form by logging in to vfw.org and searching under “My VFW” in the Training & Support section.

If you have any questions contact Tammy Beauchamp at 816.756.3390 Ext. 6287, e-mail tbeauchamp@vfw.org .



VFW Public Servant Award Citation Post Entry Form

NOTE: VFW Point of Contact should fill out their section below prior to distributing this form.
This will provide individuals from outside of the VFW with the needed information to submit their packets successfully.

To be filled out by VFW representative

Sponsoring VFW Post #: Sponsoring District #:

Date of Presentation: MM/DD/YY (if available)

VFW Post POC

Full Name:

Phone: Email:

Address: (where to mail entry)

City: State: Zip:

Individual Submitting Nomination

Full Name:

Phone: Email:

Nominee Information

Choose appropriate citation: (EMT, Firefighter or Law Enforcement)

Full Name: (please list as you wish it stated on the citation)

Occupation Title: (if any) (please list as you wish it stated on the citation)

Employer Name: (please list as you wish it stated on the citation)

Address of Employer:

City: State: Zip:

Employer Phone: Employer Email: (if available)

Please complete this form and submit to your local VFW Post using the information provided above. Ensure to include all required documentation that is outlined on the instructions sheet provided with this form. All post entries must be received by their **Department Headquarters no later than January 1st**. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact Tammy Beauchamp at 816-756-3390 x 6287, e-mail tbeauchamp@vfw.org



VFW Life Saving Award Citation Entry Form

NOTE: Please attach and send with this form all documentation of the event (newspaper clippings, articles, etc.).

To be filled out by VFW Representative

Sponsoring VFW Post #: VFW Department:

Date of Presentation: MM/DD/YY (if available)

VFW POC

Full Name:

Phone: Email:

Address: (for mailing citation)

City: State: Zip:

Nominee Information

Choose appropriate citation: (Regular, Line of Duty or Valor)

Full Name: (please list as you wish it stated on the citation)

Gender:

Occupation Title: (please list as you wish it stated on the citation or N/A)

Employer Name: (If available)

Address of Employer: (If available)

City: State: Zip:

Employer Phone: Employer Email: (if available)

Please complete this form and submit to VFW National Headquarters, Attn: Tammy Beauchamp at Fax# 816-968-1149 or E-mail to tbeauchamp@vfw.org or Lynn Rolf at lrolf@vfw.org. Ensure to include all required documentation that is outlined above in reference to the event. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact us.

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VETERANS ASSISTANCE

VETERANS ASSISTANCE

- **Veterans Assistance**
 - **Military Assistance Program (MAP/UnMet Needs)**
 - *Adopt a Unit*
 - *UnMet Needs/Relief*
 - *Sport Clip Help a Hero Scholarship*
https://webportalapp.com/sp/login/help_a_hero
 - **Homeless Veterans (\$50 donation)**
 - *Stand Down Participation*
 - **National Home for Children (\$50 Donation)**
 - **Student Veterans Liaison**
 - **Claims and Benefits**
 - **VFW Mental Wellness**
- **Support of VA Hospital or State Veterans Home**
 - *Support of VA Hospital and CBOCs*
 - *Support of IL Veterans Homes*
- **Buddy Poppy Drive**

MILITARY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (MAP)/UNMET NEEDS

The Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) is in the forefront of patriotism as the organization and its members find innovative ways to show support for America's veterans and her armed forces. The VFW Veterans and Military Support Programs are designed to give support to veterans, soldiers and their families. The keystone of this program is the involvement of local Posts with the military family or unit. This is especially important now that deployments are winding down.

ADOPT-A-UNIT: The Adopt-A-Unit program was developed as a means to pledge VFW Post and Auxiliary support to the service members and families of a unit from the local military community. When a Post "adopts" a unit, they make a commitment to the service members and families through moral and emotional support before, during and after deployment. To Adopt-A-Unit, fill out the Application for Sponsorship and submit it to VFW National Headquarters. A Certificate of Adoption will be mailed to the Post in approximately four weeks. An annual report is required.

MAP GRANTS: The MAP Grant program is intended as financial assistance for Posts, Districts, and Departments to sponsor events for military units of the Active-Duty, National Guard, and Reserves. These events are most successful when local Posts interact directly with the military unit, involving National Certified Recruiters and Veterans Service Officers. A MAP Grant Application should be submitted to VFW National Headquarters a minimum of three weeks prior to the event. The application must be filled out completely, and include a signature by the Commander or Quartermaster, an itemized event budget, description of VFW involvement with the event, Federal Tax ID number, and IRS tax-exempt status.

UNMET NEEDS: This program was created to assist military service members and their families who are experiencing a financial hardship directly related to military service. The financial assistance is in the form of up to \$2,500 in grants that do not need to be repaid. All grants are paid directly to the "creditor" companies (such as the electric company), and not to the individual. Each case is reviewed individually and acceptance is determined by a committee. Since the program began in 2004, over 3,500 military families have been assisted and over \$4.8 million has been disbursed in aid.

Some cases need even more immediate attention. There are procedures now in place for the State Headquarters to assist families with urgent needs. The Department must verify eligibility, need and get pre-approval from the Veterans and Military Support Programs Department Director to ensure reimbursement. A completed application along with copies of checks and the applicant's bills must be submitted to State with the reimbursement request.



Robert Welch
Chairman

P O Box 2069
Hammond, IN 46323
Phone: (815) 549-9406

E-mail:
b.welch.vfwil@gmail.com

Post 2791-16

VFW Unmet Needs also proudly stands ready to assist our service men and women when they are burdened by circumstances out of their control after state-declared natural disasters such as tornadoes, hurricanes, fires or floods. Service members must have served on active duty within the past 36-months and complete a one-page application. Assistance is limited to natural disasters which have damaged or forced the service member to vacate their primary residence. One time grants for \$300 or \$500 are available.

VFW's Sport Clips Help-A-Hero Scholarship: This program will provide scholarships of up to \$5,000 to help our veterans complete their educational goals. Contact HelpAHero@vfw.org with questions. Applications are available only at www.vfw.org/Scholarship. Eligibility requirements include:

- Active duty, retired or honorably discharged or a member of the National Guard/Reserves;
- Military rank E-5 or below;
- Demonstrate a need for financial assistance;
- Participate in, be accepted to or currently enrolled in a VA approved program or school

Applications for the Help-A-Hero Scholarship can be submitted at https://webportalapp.com/sp/login/help_a_hero

DONATIONS are needed for all these programs and VFW National Headquarters is encouraging Posts to donate to Veterans and Military Support Programs. Posts giving \$100 or more will receive a certificate of recognition. All Posts must donate a minimum of \$50.00 to the VFW Department Headquarters for the Military Assistance Program in order to receive credit on the State Dashboard.

Please remember the objective of all Veterans and Military Support Programs initiatives is to increase awareness of the VFW. This does not end when the troops re-deploy home. They and their families continue to need our backing and assistance.

Make them welcome in your posts. They are the future of our organization!

HOMELESS VETERANS PROGRAM

Homeless veterans are fast becoming a major portion of our “street people”. Vietnam veterans make up a lot of these street people and Desert Storm veterans are not far behind. Women make up one-tenth of the armed forces. One in every 10 homeless veterans on the street is a woman veteran, many with children. This is becoming a big issue, because a lot of homeless veterans shelters don't have the facilities for women veterans, much less for the children. We are working on that problem.

We need to identify and help these veterans with food, clothing, and support such as Stand Downs, shelters, and Vet Centers with medical and group therapy. We need to support stand-downs that are conducted within our areas. Stand Downs might seem like short term solutions, but it shows our veterans we care. It gives them some dignity and compassion, which is things they don't get too often and things that we take for granted.

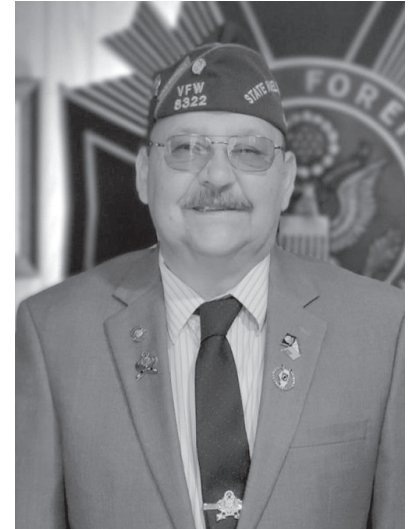
We have to go out in our neighborhoods to feed and clothe our veterans, not just on holidays, but everyday. These veterans are our other M.I.A.'s (Missing in America)! You know where they are in your area; a minute or two of conversation and a smile works wonders.

All Posts are reminded that in order to receive credit on the Department dashboard, they must send in a minimum \$50 cash donation to the VFW State Headquarters. You can also donate with a credit or debit card on the department's website at www.vfwil.org.

We are going to give out awards this year for 1st, 2nd, & 3rd place. All Post Commanders or Homeless Veterans Chairmen need to keep track of all monies, clothing, food cards, backpacks, or items you spend on the homeless program. Please keep track of your hours, miles, and all items so they can be added up for the end of our reporting period.

Contact your local V.A. Hospital, Outreach Clinic, or your local Vet Center and ask what you can do. I go out in the streets every week, so if you have any questions, call me. Remember, we need to embody our Commander's motto:

Veterans and Their Families – We Got You



Paul Bezazian
Chairman

6952 W. Wolfram
Chicago, IL 60634
Phone: (773) 637-2469

E-mail:
pbezazian@sbcglobal.net

Post 8322-3

NATIONAL HOME FOR CHILDREN



Kyna Simpson
Chairman

720 Carnation Ln
Matteson, IL 60443
Phone: (708) 977-5083

E-mail: fog4kat@me.com

Post 311-16

Line is staffed Monday-Friday 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. by caring professionals who can provide information and connections for services wherever needed in the United States. The help line can also serve as the first step to living in the National Home community.

Funding: The VFW National Home receives no government funding. The Home is funded solely through donations.

Governed by: The National Home is governed by a 17 member Board of Trustees - 12 are elected, 5 are ex officio members (including the VFW Commander-in-Chief, Adjutant General, Quartermaster General, VFW Auxiliary National President and National Secretary-Treasurer).

Illinois Day at the National Home is Saturday, September 21, 2024

History: The Veterans of Foreign Wars established The National Home for Children in 1925 to care for the children and families of World War I veterans. The home has grown through the years and now also provides care for our nation's Iraq and Afghanistan veterans and their families as well.

Mission: For families touched by the stresses of deployment and war, it can be difficult to provide a safe and loving home...perhaps a mother struggles to financially provide for her family or a father needs to work through the things he saw and dealt with while serving in Iraq or Afghanistan. The children might not be doing well in school and need a caring adult to monitor and guide them. The National Home offers struggling military and veterans families a chance to heal and grow, a chance to work on moving forward.

Families in Residence: The families living at our National Home have a chance to rebuild their lives. They are able to receive case management services, on site licensed child care, life skills training, and other services designed to help them heal and grow.

Facilities: The VFW National Home is located in Eaton Rapids, Michigan and has 42 single family homes on 629 acres. There are playgrounds, a community center, a licensed daycare facility, recreational areas, a guest lodge, chapel and an administrative building. Our VFW Department of Illinois sponsors 2 homes - Illinois #1 and Illinois #2.

Helpline: (800) 313-4200: Dedication and service to veterans, active duty members and their families goes beyond the campus through the Military and Veteran Family Help Line at (800) 313-4200. The Help

Program Credit

*****Requirements for Program Credit*****

In order to receive credit for participating in our National Home Program, you must complete your project and report it on Programs Reporting for credit on the Dashboard. A minimum of \$50.00 is required. For example, your monetary donations may be earmarked for a specific purpose or to the National Home's General Fund; also you may purchase life memberships or commemorative bricks for example. Please note, it is recommended that donations be sent through Illinois VFW Headquarters. Indicate your Post Number on your check. You must submit a program report to receive credit.

This donation can be sent to State HQ and marked as National Home to get credit on dashboard. If you send a donation direct to the National Home that is \$50 or greater, send proof of the donation to State HQ and you will get credit on dashboard.

Awards

The top three Posts with the most dollars donated will each receive a beautifully engraved plaque. Citations will be awarded to all Districts that are 100 percent reported by April 30, 2025.

Address

The VFW National Home for Children
3573 S. Waverly Rd.
Eaton Rapids, MI 48827
Phone: (800) 424-8360 • Fax: (517) 663-3727
Email: info@vfnationalhome.org

Remember - No One Does More For Veterans

STUDENT VETERANS LIAISON



Georges Sanon
Chairman

20 Corinth Ct.
Tinley Park, IL 60477
Home: (708) 633-7625
Cell: (773) 350-7849

E-mail:
geosanon1@gmail.com

Post 311-16

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 6,200 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.

CLAIMS AND BENEFITS ASSISTANCE

VA Claims & Separation Benefits

As the largest organization of combat veterans, we understand the frustrations that can arise when transitioning out of the military or filing a claim with the Department of Veterans Affairs. The claims process can be confusing and one that service members and veterans shouldn't try to navigate alone. That's why the VFW's National Veterans Service (NVS) was established to help all veterans, service members and their families.

NVS consists of a nationwide network of VFW Accredited Service Officers and Pre-Discharge Representatives who are experts in dealing with the VA and are the key to your success. Our cadre of highly-trained and professional advocates help veterans cut through bureaucratic red tape. VA reports veterans represented by the VFW have recouped more than \$9.7 billion in earned benefits, including \$1.4 billion in new claims in fiscal year 2020 alone.

VFW Accredited Service Officers are trained experts, helping veterans develop their case with ease by reviewing and applying current law, pertinent legislation, regulations and medical histories. As skilled professionals, we assist in filing for disability compensation, rehabilitation and education programs, pension and death benefits, and employment and training programs. Furthermore, we won't hesitate to request hearings before the VA and the Board of Veterans Appeals to present oral arguments when needed.

VFW Accredited Service Officers are with America's veterans every step of the way once they're ready to file a claim. This is a service the VFW is proud to offer -- free of charge -- to anyone seeking assistance with the claims process.

For information about the Illinois VFW Service Office, contact the VFW State Service Office at (312) 980-4284, State Service Office Director Sean Conner or Dick Taylor at the Illiana Health Care System, Danville VAMC, Bldg. 98, Room 1012, 1900 E. Main St., Danville, IL 61832, at (217) 554-4502, or Zach Brooks at the Marion VA Medical Center, AmVets Bldg., Room 103, 2401 W. Main St, Marion, IL 62959, at (618) 997-5311 ext. 158230.

VFW MENTAL WELLNESS

The purpose of the VFW Mental Wellness project is to educate VFW and VFW Auxiliary members, veterans and communities about the important topic of mental health and wellness, and offer proven tools to intervene on behalf of veterans in crisis.

In order to help bring this complex set of issues to light for our members, veterans, the military and our communities, it is essential that the VFW and VFW Auxiliary work hand-in-hand on every level to bring the needed awareness and education to everyone.

Mental health issues for veterans and the military community are complex, often unseen, and affect more than just the service member or veteran. With 1.6 million members, the VFW and VFW Auxiliary are uniquely positioned to offer the support and educational base camp in more than 6,000 communities nationwide.

Here are some ideas of activities that will earn credit on the Dashboard for Veterans Assistance - Mental Wellness. This list is not all inclusive and Posts/Districts are asked to coordinate with facilities in your area and inquire on their specific needs.

- Volunteer at your local Vet Center with support groups or peer to peer counseling
- Volunteer or donate to veterans PTSD programs like Road Home at Rush
- Volunteer or donate at veterans retreats like Morraine R&R
- Volunteer or donate to organizations that provides service dogs
- Volunteer or donate to specialty programs like equestrian programs
- Assist a comrade in distress to seek help

Join VFW in opening our hearts, homes and Posts to those who defended our freedoms. Program Goals

- Build partnerships to serve the needs of service members, veterans, and families suffering from invisible injuries
- Provide training and resources to VFW personnel who provide direct services to veterans
- Create templates for VFW Posts and Departments to raise awareness and host community-based events
- Offer opportunities for VFW members to share experiences and leverage partner resources
- Contribute to research efforts that advance the dialogue on brain health and foster the development of new evidence-based treatments
- Advocate for federal legislation to improve access to mental health care and transitional benefits

Know the Five Signs of Emotional Suffering

- Personality Change: Sudden or gradual changes in the way someone typically behaves.
- Agitation: When someone seems uncharacteristically angry, anxious, agitated, or moody.
- Withdrawal: Withdrawn or isolated from other people; pulling away from family and friends.
- Poor Self-Care: Has stopped taking care of themselves and may engage in risky behavior.
- Hopelessness: Seems overcome with hopelessness and overwhelmed by their circumstances.

If you recognize that someone in your life is suffering,
CONNECT, REACH OUT, INSPIRE HOPE, and OFFER HELP!

Resources

Veterans Crisis Line 1.800.273.TALK (8255)
www.veteranscrisisline.net

Give an Hour providers www.giveanhour.org
Click on "Search for a Provider"

Substance Abuse & Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) www.samhsa.gov
1.800.622.HELP (4357)

Patients Like Me online network www.patientslikeme.com

VA Health Care 1.877.222.VETS (8387)
www.va.gov/health

PTSD Coach Online Apps www.ptsd.va.gov/PTSD/apps/ptsd-coachonline

Defense Centers of Excellence for Psychological Health & Traumatic Brain Injury www.dcoe.mil

VA Vet Center Program www.vetcenter.va.gov/

National Suicide Prevention Hotline - 988

HOSPITAL/VAVS PROGRAM

You will notice a major change to the Hospital/VAVS Program. There is not a separate Hospital/VAVS Chairperson this year. All of the programs under Hospital/VAVS are under the duties of the State Surgeon. State Commander Maurice Bridges's theme "VETERANS AND THEIR FAMILIES, WE GOT YOU" should remind each of us to take a good hard look at the Veterans of Foreign Wars Hospital & VAVS Program. Veterans in VA Hospitals, Veterans Homes, and Nursing facilities need our help because in many cases, they cannot help themselves. Hospitals may provide the medical treatment for veterans, but it's the volunteers that can help them cope with the daily routine.

Volunteers can provide that extra ray of sunshine or smile to those less fortunate. All veterans are not in Federal or State facilities; they can be confined to private facilities in the community or even at home. As volunteers, we provide that service to show the community that we care and have not forgotten the people that are less fortunate. Volunteers also provide valuable service to ensure that facilities are providing adequate care for our men and women.

Post/District Hospital Chairmen should coordinate with Directors of State Veterans and Community Health Care facilities to identify the activity the volunteers can provide for the Veterans. Hospital Chairmen ensure the volunteers are registered at our VA facilities and others to receive proper recognition. As Chairmen, he/she needs to include the responsibility for recruiting volunteers, maintaining records of hours served by the Post volunteer, and requesting appropriate certificates and/or pins from the State Hospital director.

If you are planning activities or visits at facilities and you would like a State Representative there, you can contact State HQ at 217-529-6688 or email vwil@vwil.org describing your activity or visit, with dates and times, and they will coordinate a State Representative with you. Remember as much advance time as possible is always helpful. If, during your visit, you encounter something that needs to be corrected, please bring this to our attention. Sometimes, we can help to change things...NOT ALWAYS, but SOMETIMES.

The Hospital & VAVS Program starts July 1, 2024 and continues through June 30, 2025. Please use the Programs Reporting Form "online" to report the hospital work that you and members of your Post are involved in. Please report HOURS, DOLLARS AND MEMBERS keeping in mind that you can include the actual cost of items you purchased to donate to our various Hospitals and Nursing Facilities. Each year, Post and Districts lose valuable credit for their efforts because nobody takes the time to report. Convention awards will be determined based on reports received by April 30, 2025.

Here are some ideas of activities that will earn credit on the Dashboard for Support of VA Hospitals or State Veterans Homes. This list is not all inclusive and Posts/Districts are asked to coordinate with facilities in your area and inquire on their specific needs

Support to VA Hospitals or Community Outpatient Based Clinics (CBOCs)

- Provide transportation to veterans for VA Hospital visits
- Hospital Visits for hospitalized veterans
- Food or Clothing Donations for veterans
- Support Christmas activities with cards or gifts
- Support the Activity funds
- Volunteer to serve in VA Hospital

Support to IL Veterans Homes

- Visits to the residency and spend time with veterans
- Food or Clothing Donations for veterans
- Support Christmas activities with cards or gifts
- Support the Activity funds
- Volunteer to serve in VA Hospital
- Assist a veteran in applying for residency
- Host a picnic, bingo, or other event for residents

POST AWARDS

The "Top Post" in each membership category will receive a plaque.

- Membership Category 1 - Up to 150 members
- Membership Category 2 - 151 to 300 members
- Membership Category 3 - 301 members and up

DISTRICT AWARDS

All Districts who achieve 100% in Post participation in the Hospital/VAVS Program by April 30th, 2025 will be awarded \$50.00 CASH to be used in the continuation of their Hospital/VAVS Program.

V.A. HOSPITALS

- | | |
|---|--|
| <p>1. VA Illiana Health Care System
1900 E Main St.
Danville, IL 61832
Phone: (217) 554-3000</p> <p>3. Marion VA Medical Center
2401 W. Main St.
Marion, IL 62959
Phone: (618) 993-5311
Fax: (618) 993-4155</p> <p>5. Jesse Brown VA Medical Center
820 S. Damen Ave.
Chicago, IL 60612
Phone: (312) 569-8387, Ext. 56109</p> | <p>2. Hines VA. Medical Center
5000 S. 5th Ave.
Hines, IL 60141
Phone: (708) 202-8387
Fax: (708) 202-2246</p> <p>4. Capt. James A. Lovell Federal
Health Care Center
3001 Green Bay Road
North Chicago, IL 60064
Phone: (847) 688-1900</p> <p>6. St. Louis VA Medical Center
#1 Jefferson Barracks Drive
St. Louis, MO 63125
Phone: (314) 652-4100</p> |
|---|--|

VETERANS HOMES

- | | |
|---|--|
| <p>1. Illinois Veterans Home at Manteno
1 Veterans Dr.
Manteno, IL 60950
Phone: (815) 468-6581, Ext. 259</p> <p>3. Illinois Veterans Home at LaSalle
1015 O'Connor Ave.
LaSalle, IL 61301
Phone: (815) 223-0303, Ext. 259</p> <p>5. Illinois Veterans Home at Chicago
4250 N. Oak Park Ave.
Chicago, IL 60634
Phone: (773) 794-3763</p> | <p>2. Illinois Veterans Home at Quincy
1707 N. 12th St
Quincy, IL 62301
Phone (217) 222-8641, Ext. 386</p> <p>4. Illinois Veterans Home at Anna
792 N. Main St.
Anna, IL 62906
Phone: (618) 833-6302, Ext. 125</p> |
|---|--|

BUDDY POPPY DRIVE

Since 1922, the Buddy Poppy has been an integral part of the VFW community. As the VFW's official memorial flower, the poppy represents the blood shed by American service members. It reiterates that the VFW will not forget their sacrifices.

The poppy movement was inspired by Canadian Army Col. John McCrae's famous poem, "In Flanders Fields." Poppies were originally distributed by the Franco-American Children's League to benefit children in the devastated areas of France and Belgium following World War I.

Today, disabled veterans assemble poppies and the VFW pays them for their work. In most cases, this extra money provides additional income for the worker to pay for the little luxuries that make hospital life more tolerable.

Another reason poppies are so important is because all proceeds from distribution are used for veterans welfare or for the well-being of their needy dependents and the orphans of veterans.

More than 1,300 children of veterans have been, or are being cared for in the VFW National Home for Children in Eaton Rapids, Michigan, thanks to a portion of poppy funds.

PLAN TO SUCCEED

There are two critical components to conducting a successful campaign: planning and enthusiasm.

Planning ensures nothing will be left to chance and there will be plenty of poppies for distribution. The more enthusiasm you demonstrate, the greater your chances are of inspiring others to help make this year's campaign a true success.

Here are some important things to consider when preparing for your "Buddy"® Poppy distribution. Identify potential volunteers within your Post and Auxiliary and gather them together for an informational meeting explaining the purpose of the Buddy Poppy campaign.

Plan on each volunteer distributed 200 poppies. It sounds like a lot, but the right placement in the community, 200 will go fast.

Choose distribution dates. Memorial Day is always a popular time, but you can distribute this memorial flower throughout the year. Request from your Department headquarters an order form to purchase your poppies.

Multiply the number of volunteers by 200 and that's approximately how many poppies you should order. Be sure to place your order at least three months before your first distribution date.

Stake out key distribution venues in advance. Choose high traffic areas and determine the number of workers you need to cover the locations. Ideal locations include storefronts, office or factory entrances and recreational areas.

Make sure you get permission from the business owners before setting up shop.

Photocopy the Buddy Poppy flyer found in your Post's VFW Programs Chairmen's Guide (or order one from VFW Supply) and post it around town in key areas such as post offices, coffee shops or gas stations. It will let people know when and where they can get a Buddy Poppy.

If your town newspaper has a community calendar section, be sure to let the editor know about two weeks in advance that you'd like to place your poppy announcement in the calendar. Send a news release to let the media know about your campaign.

Encourage your volunteers to smile and be enthusiastic during the distribution. If they appear friendly, it will project a good image for the VFW. Furthermore, make sure they wear their VFW caps.

Remind your volunteers that they are not "selling" Buddy Poppies, but "distributing" them with the hope of getting donations. If you follow these simple steps, your Buddy Poppy campaign is sure to be a success.

ALTERNATE DISTRIBUTION

Many factors lead to poor Buddy Poppy distributions. Perhaps you live in a bustling city like Chicago or New York where folks aren't as eager to stop on the streets. Or maybe you live in a town with only 600 people and you'd be lucky to hand out 200 poppies in a week. Or perhaps your members are primarily older or in failing health and can't be out distributing.

If any of these sound familiar, perhaps you should work with the Auxiliary or try a different approach to handing out the poppies and raising funds for needy veterans. Below is a list of alternative methods for distributing Buddy Poppies:

Sell coat hanger wreaths made out of poppies. Use a child-size wire coat hanger and bend it into a circle. Straighten the hook to make a ground stake. Wind the stems of about 50 poppies around the wire to complete your wreath. Popular around Memorial Day.

Make a "Wall of Remembrance" at your Post. Patrons can request a poppy in honor of a loved one who has died. Their name gets placed on the wall with a poppy hanging next to it. Honorees' names can be typed on note cards with the poppies stapled to them.

Use poppies to make table centerpieces that can be raffled off at Post suppers.

Contact another civic organization in your community and ask if you can give a small presentation on the Buddy Poppy. Be sure to have plenty with you, as you'll likely get several "takers."

Set up a booth at county fairs, public forums and school events. Let your imagination and that of your volunteers guide you in distributing these beautiful red flowers.

WOMEN VETERANS



Evamarie Duff
Chairman

1207 Avenue K
Sterline, IL 61081
Home: (815) 716-1839

E-mail:
evamarie.duff@gmail.com

Post 2868-4

I want to start by saying thank you to Commander Bridges for appointing me as the first Women Veterans Chairperson in the IL VFW. This is the first step in acknowledging the contribution of women veterans and our fight to support them and their families.

Women veterans is one of the fastest growing groups in the VFW. Currently, women comprise 15 percent of the active-duty military and 18 percent of the Guard and Reserve. With the steady increase of women wearing our nation's uniform and their increased role in military operations, it has never been more important that we ensure women veterans are recognized for their service. We need to remember that when we meet veterans on the street or in public, there is a good chance that the female(s) in the group may be veterans.

As we fight for VA benefits for veterans, we need to ensure that our fight includes equal and inclusive treatment for female veterans. We need to ensure women veterans have a VA that is ready and able to care for them when they transition back to civilian life. The overwhelming majority of women veterans want VA to expand access to women-specific health care, which includes hiring more VA health care professionals who are able to identify and treat their unique health care needs. More specifically, women veterans want the opportunity to receive their health care from women health care providers.

Women veterans with children who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless face much different barriers than homeless veterans without children. In fact, homeless and at risk veterans with children report the lack of childcare services impact their ability to receive the VA health care and job training services they need.

I encourage every Post Commander and District Commander to appoint a Women Veteran Chairperson. I ask that you become familiar with the resources in your area that serve women veterans and work with them to support the women veterans in your community. Since 1987, Congress has declared March as National Women's History Month. A special presidential proclamation is issued every year which honors their extraordinary achievements to include those who have or are serving in the armed forces. Plan an event in March to celebrate and recognize our women veterans.



YOUTH PROGRAMS

YOUTH PROGRAMS

Youth Activities

- Voice of Democracy**
- Patriot's Pen**
- Youth Programs**
 - *JROTC/SROTC*
 - *Civil Air Patrol*
 - *Navy Sea Cadets*
 - *Support of Community Youth Activities*
 - *Youth Recognition Programs*
 - *Post Scholarships*
 - *VFW in the Classroom*
- Teacher of the Year**

Scouting

- Scout of the Year**
- Scouting Awards**
 - *Eagle Scout*
 - *Girl Scout Gold Award*
- Support of Scout Troop or activities**

VOICE OF DEMOCRACY

The 2024-2025 Theme is
"Is America Today Our Forefathers' Vision?"

Program Overview

The Voice of Democracy Scholarship Competition is especially designed for high school students from grades 9 through 12 including home school students. It is a valuable educational experience for students and a wonderful opportunity for positive publicity for students, teachers, schools, and for the VFW in your community. The program dates back to 1946 and continues to be one of the VFW's most exciting programs. The VFW annually commits \$3 million in scholarships and incentives at the Post, District, State and National levels. Participants write and then record a three to five minute audio-essay on a patriotic theme selected annually. The Voice of Democracy Program is endorsed by the National Association of Secondary School Principals and is designed to foster patriotism in the participants and to enhance their written and oral communication skills. In addition, this program demonstrates the VFW's willingness to partner with local schools and the community.

Key Information for Posts

You may make this a joint effort with your Post Auxiliary. Prior planning ensures a high level performance. Start early! In August, send press releases to local newspapers announcing the 2024-2025 topic. Shortly after school starts, bring or send Voice of Democracy materials to local principals or a previously developed contact within the school. Remember that there are many home schooled students that cannot be reached through the local schools, this makes media presence even more critical to the success of this program. Furthermore, please remember that entries need not come from schools (even if the student entering is NOT homeschooled). No Post "owns" any school for the purpose of Voice of Democracy entries, however, District Chairpersons should work with their Posts to ensure efforts are not duplicated, resources are not wasted and "turf wars" don't start.

Make sure you have a core group of judges identified, selected, and groomed well in advance of the Post judging. Always check your equipment before the judging begins to ensure it functions properly.

Once the Post judging is completed, Chairpersons and Commanders should ensure that the winner's materials are properly submitted to the District Voice of Democracy Chairperson. Please follow the District Chairperson's instructions regarding where, when and how entries are to be submitted. Unless otherwise directed, you will need to submit items 1-5, that are listed below under Key information for Districts. Note that there is a link provided there to access those documents. Do not forget to heap loads of recognition and praise on your Post Winner(s). Completing a press release for the local paper with a picture, as well as some prize for the winner(s) would be most appropriate.



David Darte
Chairman

173 Yaeger Lake Trail
Litchfield, IL 62056
Cell: (217) 273-2218
Email: ddarte@yahoo.com

Post 3912-12

Posts may advance their "winner(s)" based on the following schedule. Please follow any additional guidance that the District Chairperson may provide.

1-15 essays – One (1) entry to District 16-30 essays – Two (2) entries

31-45 essays – Three (3) entries

(NOTE: Each additional 15 essays, entitles another entry. The number of schools participating does not affect the number of entries allowed)

Key Information for Districts

District Chairpersons are urged to aggressively promote the Voice of Democracy Program. After coordination with your Auxiliary counterpart, please reach out to every Post and Auxiliary in your District. Establish a quick, easy and effective line of communication between you and the Post Voice of Democracy Chairman/Commander. Consider using e-mail or social media for this purpose. As the District meeting is to be a School of Instruction, it would not be at all out of line for the Voice of Democracy Chairman to ask for time to train Post Voice of Democracy Chairmen and Commanders on the program requirements.

Districts may advance one winner to the State Competition. Be sure to forward your District Winner's entry material to the State VOD Director, with cc to State Headquarters to arrive no later than December 22, 2024. The winner's package must include the following:

1. Recorded Speech (on Flash Drive or Emailed)
2. Typed copy of the speech
3. Entry form with all necessary signatures
4. Two glossy head and shoulder color photographs of your winner are acceptable but a good quality digital photo is much preferred. Photos taken by a smart phone are acceptable and can be easily emailed.
5. Introductory questionnaire

(Comrades, email is the preferred method of submitting entries. A flash drive with all information is also perfectly acceptable. If that is foreign to you, please recruit someone to help you. Please know that I will take them the old fashion way if absolutely necessary.

The following link will allow you to access the documents required for submission of your entry or entries. The documents are fillable for your ease and for legibility concerns. Those documents that require signatures are capable of your electronic signature for your convenience. All documents can be downloaded and emailed including your student's audio script, typewritten essay, and digital photo which can also be emailed. Email entries are fast, eliminates expensive postage and the risk of lost mail. Documents can also be copied as needed. Documents can be found on the state website at www.vfwil.org (click on resources and scroll down to Voice of Democracy) Depending on your email provider, the file with all information may be too large to send in one email. If that is the case, I suggest that you send the audio essay and written essay in one and the rest of the information in a second consecutive email.

Please understand that all that information is critical both to comply with National requirements and to allow the printing of the program book distributed at the State Awards Banquet. If critical information is not received timely, I may need to contact your student directly even if you have not yet announced your district winner. Please send in a complete entry - including quality photographs - so this action is not required. The District Report Form and District Participation report form are due December 29 and are included in the link above.

Key Dates (Please Note New Deadlines)

- October 31 - Student entries to post
- November 15 - Post judging complete Check on your District's due date
- December 15 - District judging complete
- December 22 - District winners due to the State Headquarters
- December 29 - District Participation Report due to the State Headquarters
- January 10 - State Judging will be completed
- January 15 - Department winners due to National
- January 31 - Department reports due to National
- February 8, 2025 State Voice of Democracy Awards Banquet, Springfield

Prize Structure at the National and State Level

The winner from each state competition earns a trip to Washington DC and competes for national awards which range from a minimum \$1,000 up to \$35,000 for first place.

The State Awards are:

1st Place - John H. Emery Youth, Pageantry and Patriotism Fund First Place Award in Memory of George G. Gorin, Jr	\$2,500 Cash
2nd Place – George Cramer/Ray Soden Scholarship Award	\$1,500 Cash
3rd Place – Terry L. McKinney Memorial Award	\$1,250 Cash
4th Place – Dale & Catherine Clifton Award	\$1,000 Cash
5th Place – Johnson Phelps Post 5220 Auxiliary.....	\$750 Cash
6th Place – Jarnell/Ross Award.....	\$600 Cash
7th Place – William Glenn Britt Memorial Award.....	\$550 Cash
8th Place - Dick Cosner Memorial Award.....	\$500 Cash
9th Place – Vern & Lorraine Umphery, Post 6863 & L.A. Award.....	\$450 Cash
10th Place – Robert C. Holysz Post 2200 Award.....	\$400 Cash
11th Place – Grant-Parkholme Post 9115 Award.....	\$375 Cash
12th Place – West End VFW Post 2004 Memorial Award.....	\$350 Cash
13th Place - Chester Spears Memorial Award.....	\$325 Cash
All other District Winners will receive an award of	\$300 Cash

Districts and Posts wishing to become an Award sponsor should forward their donation of \$300 to Department Headquarters by December 1, 2024 earmarked V.O.D. Award Sponsorship. Thank you for this valuable support of the state program. Sponsorships will be awarded in the order received. Districts wishing to sponsor the Annual VOD Pizza Party or the Annual VOD Ice Cream Social for 2024-2025 Champions can donate \$300 but their donation needs to be earmarked "VOD Pizza party Sponsor" or VOD Ice Cream Social Sponsor" and the first District to respond will receive the sponsorship. Districts wanting to sponsor other Voice of Democracy weekend events, such as the Student luncheon during Saturday's Springfield tour or the tour of The Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum, should forward a donation of \$300 to Department Headquarters. The Donation should be earmarked Springfield Tour.

Each of the District Champions will be provided two nights free lodging in Springfield and one ticket to the Voice of Democracy Awards Banquet.

The Post sponsoring the State winner will receive a beautifully engraved plaque at the State Convention.

The school where the State winner attends will receive a \$500 award. In the event the student is home-schooled, the Department of Illinois VFW will donate \$500 to the charity of the parents' choosing.

Additional Resources

All the information that is needed to conduct the PP/VOD programs is online at www.vfw.org After you log in, (or create an account and log in), click on My VFW and then on the VFW Training and Support heading. There you will find a wealth of information about VFW programs! Scroll down and click on Community Service & Youth Activities for more information specific to Voice of Democracy.

You can download and print the student entry forms for Voice of Democracy at the National website also by visiting the below links and clicking on:

Voice of Democracy: <https://bit.ly/30UN71g>

National's supply catalog has printed entry forms, posters and a wide variety of awards and gifts designed for use in the Voice of Democracy program. (800) 821-2606 or www.vfwstore.org.

The State Voice of Democracy Director and Assistant Directors are anxious to help your Post and District have its most successful Voice of Democracy program yet. If you have any questions about the Voice of Democracy, let us know. Our contact information is at the front of this section.

Programs Reporting

The Dashboard will be marked green for the Voice of Democracy no later than February based upon the report submitted by each District Voice of Democracy Chairman to the State Director. Department Commander Bridges and I encourage all Posts to actively participate in the Voice of Democracy Program. However, recognizing that some posts are just not able to generate a student entry, the Post can get credit on the dashboard for Voice of Democracy by making a donation (\$200 for Posts with 100 members or more or \$100 for Posts with fewer than 100 members). Send your check to the State Headquarters office by April 30, 2025 with a notation that it is for the Voice of Democracy program.

District Award

The district sponsoring the largest number of students participating in the VOD contest will receive \$100. Because the district is comprised of varying numbers of posts, the award will be calculated by the total number of students participating divided by the total number of posts in the district (regardless of if those post participate or not). This is intended to level the playing field among larger and smaller districts. The award will be known as the "Voice of Democracy Participation Quotient".

Promote patriotism in our youth through the Voice of Democracy program as we remind our "Veterans and Their Families - We Got You"

VOICE OF DEMOCRACY



2024-2025 Theme

“Is America Today Our Forefathers’ Vision?”

Student Entry Deadline: October 31, 2024

Patriotic Audio Essay Competition Grand Prize: \$35,000 Award

What is the Voice of Democracy Program?

Since 1947, the Voice of Democracy has been the Veterans of Foreign Wars’ (VFW’s) premier scholarship program. Each year, nearly 27,000 high school students compete for more than \$2 million in scholarships and incentives. Students compete by writing and recording an audio essay on an annual patriotic theme. This year’s theme is, “Is America Today Our Forefathers’ Vision?”

Why Should I Enter?

Prizes and scholarships can be awarded at the Post, District, state and national level. Department (State) winners receive an all-expense-paid trip to Washington DC, to tour the city, be honored by the VFW and its Auxiliary and receive their portion of \$171,000 in national awards, the top scholarship being \$35,000.

The Rules

Who can enter?

The Voice of Democracy is open to students in grades 9-12 by the Oct. 31 deadline who are enrolled in a public, private or parochial high school or home study program in the United States, its territories and possessions; or dependents of U.S. military or civilian personnel in overseas schools. Although U.S. citizenship is not required, students must be lawful U.S. permanent residents or have applied for permanent residence (the application for which has not been denied) and intends to become a U.S. citizen at the earliest opportunity allowed by law. Foreign exchange students, students age 20 or over, GED or Adult Education Students are ineligible.

What do I need to enter?

Record your original 3-5 minute (+ or – 5 second max.) audio essay on a flash drive, or other electronic device. You will submit the recording, typed essay and this completed entry form. Provide these items to your school/group competition or VFW Post for judging. In addition you can submit your emailed entry form, essay, and audio file to the VFW Post upon approval. You must be the sole author of your essay. Inappropriate use of ChatGPT or other AI tools is not allowed. The recording must be in your own voice and in English. Hearing/speech impaired students should email the Voice of Democracy National Office at youthscholarships@vfw.org for special instructions. No music, singing, poetry or sound effects are allowed. The body of the essay must not identify you in any way, (including, but not limited to your name, school, city, state, race, or national origin) although the recording & typed essay should be labeled with your name, to show ownership.

Where Do I Submit My Entry?

All entries begin at the VFW Post level. The only exception is where schools/classes/youth groups have large numbers of students and wish to conduct their own competition, submitting one winner for each 15 students to the VFW Post. Individual students may submit their entry directly to the Post. Entries sent to VFW National will be returned. One winner for every 15 entries from each Post advances to District and one District winner advances to the state (Department) competition. If you need help finding a participating VFW Post, follow these instructions: First, visit this website vfw.org/FindaPost to “Find A VFW Post.” If you do not have success in finding a Post, or if you have trouble getting in touch with them, you can contact your VFW Department (state) office to see if they can offer any information or assistance. You can visit this link <https://www.vfw.org/ContactUs/> and look for “Find a State Contact” to get your VFW state office’s phone number and email. If you still need assistance, please email us at VFW National Headquarters at youthscholarships@vfw.org

What Is the Deadline for My Entry?

All entries competing at the Post level must be in the hands of that VFW Post by midnight, **Oct. 31, 2024**. It is the responsibility of the student to meet this deadline by submitting their entry to the proper location by ensuring it is a participating Post.

What Are the Judging Criteria?

Originality is worth 30 points:

Treatment of the theme should show imagination and human interest.

Content is worth 35 points:

Clearly express your ideas in an organized manner. Fully develop your theme and use transitions to move smoothly from one idea to another.

Delivery is worth 35 points:

Speak in a clear and credible manner.

2024-2025 Official Entry Form
Voice of Democracy Competition
Must Be Completed by All Contestants

Name: First, M.I., Last

Address

City, State, Zip
() _____

Phone Email

Date of Birth (mm/dd/yy) Grade in School Age Jacket Size

School Name, City, State

Teacher's name and Email (if applicable)

To Be Completed by Student's Parent/Guardian
(Required even if student is 18 or over)

Parent/Guardian Name (Printed)

Parent/Guardian Signature Date
() _____

Parent/Guardian Daytime Phone

Parent/Guardian Email

Participant Agreement for Students
Advancing to National Level

If selected as a first-place state winner, I have the consent of my parent/guardian and school to attend the Voice of Democracy National Finals in Washington, D.C. as a guest of the VFW National Organization. In consideration for permission to participate in the National Voice of Democracy Competition ("Competition") I do hereby, for myself, for my heirs, executors, administrators and assignees, waive, release and discharge all rights and claims which I have or which may hereafter accrue against the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States (VFW) and/or the Departments (state organizations) of the Veterans of Foreign Wars and their respective officers, agents, successors and assigns from any damages which may be sustained by me in connection with my participation in or association with the Competition and/or arising out of any travel related to the Competition. In the event of sickness, accident or injury in connection with the Competition, I consent to and accept the services of a duly licensed medical, surgical or dental specialist selected on my behalf and for such treatments, as they may deem necessary. I understand that VFW will not be liable for such treatment. I further understand that the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States retains non-exclusive rights to use my audio file, essay, name and likeness in the promotion and execution of the organization's programs and activities.

I Have Read and Understand the Rules and Participant Agreement

I certify that I am the sole author of the enclosed audio/essay entry and that I have not inappropriately used any AI tools or Chat GPT. I have only entered the competition once yearly if otherwise eligible. I understand that if it is found that I have entered any other Post's competition or used this essay for another VFW competition, I face elimination from the competition and will return any and all prizes or incentives awarded.

Signature of Student Participant Date

To Be Completed by the VFW Post

I certify that this student has an authorized entry in our VFW Post Level Voice of Democracy Competition.

Post Commander/Chairperson Signature Post #

VFW Auxiliary President/Chairperson Signature (if applicable)

Post Address

City, State, Zip

VFW Post Email

No. of students participating

No. of winners advanced to District

Amt. of Post/Aux. scholarship awards \$

Amt. of Post/Aux. additional expenses (banquet, pins, etc.) \$

To Be Completed by the VFW District

I certify that the student named in the previous section is the duly selected winner of the Voice of Democracy Contest District Competition and is our sole entry into the Departments.

District Chairperson Signature Dist. #

Address

City, State, Zip
() _____

Phone Email

To Be Completed by the VFW Department Chairperson

I certify that the student named in the previous section is the duly selected first-place winner of the Voice of Democracy Department Competition and is our sole entry into the National Judging.

Department Chairperson Signature
() _____

Daytime Phone Email

The winner has been will be (check one) notified that they are the first-place Department winner on _____.

For assistance contact:
816.968.1155
Email: youthscholarships@vfw.org

Local VFW Post Information:

Contact: _____

Phone: _____ Best Time To Call: _____

Alternate Contact: _____

Phone: _____ Best Time To Call: _____





Voice of Democracy Introduction Questionnaire

Representing VFW Post _____ and its Auxiliary,

a _____ at _____
GRADE (FRESHMAN, SOPHOMORE, JUNIOR, SENIOR) SCHOOL NAME

in _____
CITY

STUDENT'S NAME

PRONUNCIATION OF STUDENT'S NAME

The student is the Son/Daughter of

Mother: _____

and

Father: _____

SUMMARY

**DISTRICT VOICE OF DEMOCRACY
PARTICIPATION REPORT**

DISTRICT NO. _____

DEPARTMENT OF _____, VFW

The VFW Posts and Auxiliaries identified in this report in this District participated in the VFW annual Voice of Democracy Program.

GRAND TOTALS FOR POST COMPETITION: list totals taken from District report form(s)

Posts	Auxs	Students	Post Winners Advanced
\$ _____		\$ _____	
Scholarships & Awards		Addl. Money Expended	

MONETARY VALUE OF DISTRICT COMPETITION (add County Councils if applicable):

District Scholarships & Awards \$ _____

District Additional Expenses \$ _____

Signed by: _____ Date _____
District Chairman

***PLEASE ATTACH COMPLETED REPORT FORM(S) AND GIVE
THIS COMPLETED SUMMARY TO YOUR DEPARTMENT
VOICE OF DEMOCRACY CHAIRMAN***

YOUTH ACTIVITIES PROGRAM

Youth Activities programs can be a big asset for your post and district when they are promoted in your communities. Issue press releases and introduce these programs in the community. People like to hear of organizations doing things for veterans as well as local youth.

All the information that is needed to conduct the Youth Activities Program is online at <https://vfw.org>. After you log in (or create an account and login), click on My VFW and then on the VFW Training and Support heading. There you will find a wealth of information about VFW programs! Scroll down and click on Community Service & Youth Activities for more information specific information, including the Youth Activities Manual.

When approaching the various types of youth activities, develop a plan of implementation. Allow plenty of time for press releases and advertising as well as contact with community leaders. Local papers like to hear of different youth programs, so, it is usually easy to get coverage. Our youth is our future and can strengthen the posts within their communities. We are promoting good citizenship and showing young people the joys of service.

Informed post, district and auxiliary chairpersons are vital within our organizations. They provide a vital link between the community and today's youth. Contact your local schools and scouting organizations, as well as the many church groups of your areas. Check out the various kind of activities which they already have and try to build on them. Be excited about our programs. Be creative and work in new programs with local teachers and scout leaders. Be sure to honor these young people with certificates, trophies, plaques, and cash awards to help keep them excited and motivated.

Encourage your posts and districts to report their programs on the Department Dashboard. Reporting on a monthly basis makes it easier and more accurate.

Post Awards

There will be a \$50.00 cash award and certificate for first place presented to the Posts who have the most hours, dollars, and member participation reported in the following membership categories:

- Membership Category 1 - Up to 150 Members
- Membership Category 2 - 151-300 Members
- Membership Category 3 - 300 Members and up

District Awards

There will be one district plaque award presented to the district who has the most hours, dollars, and member participation reported.



John Davin
Chairman

516 Lee Lane
Bolingbrook, IL 60440
Phone: 630-632-9878

Email:
bigjohndavin@hotmail.com

Post 5917-18

PATRIOT'S PEN
2024-2025 Theme: "My Voice in America's Democracy"

Program overview

The Patriot's Pen Program is a 300-400- word essay contest sponsored by the VFW and Auxiliary nationwide for students in grades 6 through 8, including those home-schooled. The VFW appreciates the difficult task that teachers and administrators have to develop curriculum to prepare students for their future. We realize that it is particularly challenging because of the myriad of career choices that lie ahead for students. Regardless of the path they choose, however, one thing that students have in common is that they will, hopefully, all become active U.S. citizens and the next generation of decision-makers and leaders of our great country. For that reason, the VFW believes that students are never too young to ponder the rich heritage of freedoms that they are inheriting from those patriots who have gone before and to begin to formulate their role in preserving and advancing those freedoms. The Patriot's Pen Contest incorporates both academic and good citizenship instruction. In addition, we believe that most would agree that learning to effectively organize and communicate their beliefs and ideas is a skill that will serve students well in all walks of life.

Key information for Posts

Get started in your schools as soon as possible. Be sure to have all the information (entry forms, theme, rules, eligibility requirements, post award information as well as district and state information) when you approach your teachers to help you - maybe even a copy of last year's winning essay. The VFW Store has many supplies to aid you, including posters that can be displayed in libraries and on community bulletin boards. Posts and auxiliaries are encouraged to work together in promoting and conducting the program.

Rules:

The contest is open to all 6th, 7th, and 8th grade students enrolled in a public, private, or parochial school as well as a home-schooled study program within the United States, its' territories and possessions; or enrolled in an overseas school as a dependent of the US Military or US Civilian personnel. (Foreign exchange students are excluded.)

The essay must be the contestant's original work; and the participants cannot refer to their race, disabilities, national origin, or identify themselves, their school, city or state, in any way within the essay. All essays must be typewritten and have to be no less than 300 words or more than 400 words. A one letter word such as (a), will be counted as one word. Essays either under or above requirements will be disqualified. Complete rules and judging criteria are available at <https://vfw.org>

After post judging is complete, the Post Chairman may advance their "winner(s)" based on the following schedule:

- 1-15 essays - One (1) entry to District
- 16-30 essays - Two (2) entries to District
- 31-45 essays - Three (3) entries to District

(NOTE: Each additional 15 essays entitles one additional entry. The number of schools participating does not affect the number of entries allowed.)

Once the post judging is completed, Chairpersons and Commanders should ensure that the winner's materials are properly submitted to the District Patriot's Pen Chairperson. Please follow the District Chairperson's instructions regarding where, when, and how entries are to be submitted. Unless otherwise directed, you will need to submit items 1-4, that are listed below under Key information for Districts. Note that there is a link provided there to access those documents. Do not forget to heap loads of recognition and praise on your post winner(s). Completing a press release for the local paper with a picture, as well as some prize for the winner(s), would be most appropriate.

Deadlines:

- October 31, 2024 – Student entries essays must be in the hands of the Post Chairman
- November 15, 2024 – Post judging completed
- November 22, 2024 – Post winning entries to District Chairman
- December 15, 2024 – District judging completed
- December 22, 2024 – District winning entry to Department PP Chairman
- January 1, 2025 – Department judging completed
- Feb 8, 2025 – State Patriot's Pen Awards Banquet, Springfield

Key Information for Districts

District Chairpersons are urged to aggressively promote the Patriot's Pen Program. After coordination with your auxiliary counterpart, please reach out to every post and auxiliary in your district. Establish a quick, easy, and effective line of communication between you and the Post Patriot's Pen Chairman/Commander. Consider using email or social media for this purpose. As the District meeting is to be a School of Instruction, it would not be at all out of line for the Patriot's Pen Chairman to ask for time to train Post Patriot's Pen Chairmen and Commanders on the program requirements.

Districts may advance one winner to the State Competition. Be sure to forward your District Winner's entry material to the State Youth Activities Chainnan with a copy to Department Headquarters to arrive no later than December 22, 2024. The winner's package must include the following:

- Typed copy of the speech
- Entry form with all necessary signatures
- A glossy 3x5 head-and-shoulder, color photograph of your winner is acceptable but a digital photo is much preferred. Photos taken by a smart phone are acceptable and can easily be emailed.
- Patriot's Pen Introductory questionnaire

(Email is the preferred method of submitting entries! A flash drive with all the information is also perfectly acceptable. If that is foreign to you, please recruit someone to help you - entries submitted the old fashioned way will be accepted as well)

Please understand that all this information is critical both to comply with National requirements and to allow the printing of the program book distributed at the State Awards Banquet. If critical information is not received timely, I may need to contact your student directly even if you have not yet announced your district winner. Please send in a complete entry - including quality photographs - so this action is not required.

The District Report Form and District Participation report form are due by December 30. Those documents are available on following pages.

The following link will allow you to access the documents required for submission of your entry. Email entries are fast and eliminate expensive postage and the risk of lost mail. Documents can also be copied as needed. Documents are available on the slate website at <http://www.vfw11.org> and are located under Programs. Click on Patriot's Pan.

Top 4 entries will receive two nights lodging at the Department of Illinois Voice of Democracy and Patriot's Pen Awards Banquet and meeting weekend in Springfield. Students will also tour Springfield sites.

The State Awards are:

- 1st Place - John H. Emery Youth, Pageantry and Patriotism Fund First Place Award in memory of Ronald Hubert \$1,000 Cash
- 2nd Place - Gaye Hines Memorial Second Place Award.....\$500 Cash
- 3rd Place Award - William Glenn Britt Memorial Third Place Award.....\$400 Cash
- 4th Place Award - Raymond L. Moreland Memorial Fourth Place Award.....\$300 Cash

2024-2025 Illinois VFW Commander's Leadership Manual

****The winner will be announced at the Voice of Democracy and Patriot's Pen Awards Banquet and the winner will read his or her winning essay****

District Award

The district sponsoring the largest number of students participating in the PP contest will receive \$100. Because the district is comprised of varying numbers of posts, the award will be calculated by the total number of students participating divided by the total number of posts in the district (regardless of if those post participate or not). This is intended to level the playing field among larger and smaller districts. The award will be known as the "Patriot's Pen Participation Quotient".

State Dashboard Reporting

The Participation entry for the Patriot's Pen Contest will be posted in February based upon the report submitted by each District Youth Activities Chairman to the State Director.

NOTE: Posts can receive credit for Patriots Pen participation by making a cash donation to the Department of Illinois, VFW earmarked 'Patriots Pen' by April 30, 2025. Posts with 100 members or more must donate \$100.00 Posts with less than 100 members must donate \$50.00

The Post sponsoring the State Winner will receive a beautifully engraved plaque at the State Convention.

Smart/Maher VFW National Citizenship Education Teacher Award

(Please note Deadlines)

This Program recognizes teachers who care about America. VFW annually recognizes the Nation's top classroom Elementary, Junior High (Middle Schools) and High School teachers who teach Citizenship Education topics regularly and who promote American History, traditions and institutions. Nominations are submitted by fellow teachers, supervisors, and other interested individuals (not relatives). Self-nominees are not eligible.

National Headquarters mails the brochures out directly to Schools...but posts still need to contact the schools regarding this program.

Posts will need to follow up, and the deadlines are as follows:

- Teacher Nominations to Post October 31, 2024
- Completion of Post Judging November 15, 2024
- Completion of District Judging December 15, 2024
- Completion of Department Judging January 10, 2025
- Department winners to National January 15, 2025
- District participation reports due to Department Chairman - January 1, 2025
- Department Reports to National January 31, 2025

District Chairmen must send the following to Department Headquarters for Judging:

- ▶ Winner's original entry form and essay of 350 words or less
- ▶ Winner's official Post Teacher Entry form with signatures at Post & District Level.
- ▶ One page resume (no more than two sides)
- ▶ Up to 5 (five) pages (both sides) of additional documentation (i.e. news articles, supervisor's recommendations.)
- ▶ Good quality head and shoulders photograph (Digital photos are preferred! Color copies or low-grade computer printouts will not be accepted.)

(Note: No entries will be considered for department Judging if all of the above criteria is not Included with the nomination.)

State Awards

The first-place winner in each of the three categories will receive \$100.00 Cash and a special engraved plaque.

A special engraved plaque will also be presented to the winning Teacher's School.

The Categories are:

- Kindergarten through 5th Grade
- 6th through 8th Grade
- 9th through 12th Grade

National Awards: (as shown on our National Headquarters web page, <https://vfw.org>)

Included in this Program is the end-of-the-year Post Report Form that the District Chairman is required to fill out and submit to the State Youth Activities Program Director by no later than January 1, 2025.

PATRIOT'S PEN



2024-2025 Theme

“My Voice in America’s Democracy?”

Student Entry Deadline: October 31, 2024

Patriotic Written Essay Competition Grand Prize: \$5,000 Award

What is the Patriot's Pen Program?

Conducted nationwide, this VFW-sponsored youth essay competition gives students an opportunity to write essays expressing their views on an annual patriotic theme. We invite you to join the more than 73,000 students who participated last year in this contest.

Why Should I Enter?

Prizes and scholarships can be awarded at the Post, District, State and national level. Department (State) winners receive a portion of \$55,000 in national awards. National Winners will receive at least \$500. **The first-place national award is currently \$5,000.**

The Internal Revenue Service requires a recipient awarded more than \$599 be given Form 1099 identifying the proceeds as taxable income. This may require the winner to provide their social security number.

How Does the Contest Work?

All entries begin at the VFW Post level. The only exception is where schools/classes/youth groups have large numbers of students and wish to conduct their own competition, submitting one winner for each 15 students to the VFW Post. Individual students may submit their entry directly to the Post.

The contest consists of four levels. The first level (entry) is sponsored by VFW Posts. Post winners advance, one for every 15 entries, to the VFW District (regional) level where the one first-place winner is advanced to the VFW Department (state) level. The first-place winner at the Department level is then advanced into the VFW national competition.

Who Can Enter?

Patriot's Pen is open to 6th, 7th and 8th-grade students enrolled by the Oct. 31 deadline in public, private or parochial schools in the U.S., its territories or its possessions; or dependents of U.S. military or civilian personnel in overseas schools. Home-schooled students also are eligible. Although U.S. citizenship is not required, students must be lawful U.S. permanent residents or have applied for permanent residence (the application which has not been denied) and intends to become a U.S. citizen at the earliest opportunity allowed by law. (Foreign exchange students are ineligible.)

How Do I Get Started?

- Ask a teacher or youth group/club adult leader to supervise the Patriot's Pen writing contest.
- Contact a participating VFW Post and indicate your interest in participating.

- Establish a contact person who is a member of that VFW Post or its VFW Auxiliary.
- Make sure that your essay is submitted to the VFW Post before the contest deadline of October 31, 2024. You can submit your essay and entry form by email upon the Post's approval. Entries sent to the VFW National Headquarters directly will be returned.

How Am I Judged?

Knowledge of the theme is worth 30 points:

You must show a thorough knowledge of the theme in your work. Demonstrate you have researched the issue extensively.

Theme development is worth 35 points:

Answer all relevant facts about the theme such as the who, what, where, when and why. Relate the theme to your own experiences.

Clarity of ideas is worth 35 points:

Write your essay in an easy-to-understand format. Leave your reader with a clear understanding of your explanation of the theme.

What Is the Theme?

VFW's Commander-in-Chief annually chooses the year's theme. The 2024-2025 theme is:

“My Voice in America’s Democracy?”

Deadline Information.

To qualify, all entries must be submitted to a sponsoring VFW Post by midnight October 31, 2024.

Note:

If you need help finding a participating VFW Post, follow these instructions:

First, visit vfw.org/FindaPost to “Find a VFW Post.”

If you don't have success in finding a Post, or if you have trouble contacting them, you can contact your VFW Department (state) headquarters office to see if they can offer any information or assistance. You can visit vfw.org/contactus to look for “Find a State Contact” to get your VFW state office's phone number and email.

For assistance contact
 the VFW National Headquarters
 at 816.968.1155
 Email: youthscholarships@vfw.org

2024-2025 Official Entry Form Patriot's Pen Competition

Must Be Completed by All Contestants

Name: First, M.I., Last _____

Address _____

City, State, Zip _____

(____) _____
Phone Email

Date of Birth (mm/dd/yy) _____ Grade in School _____ Essay Word Count _____

School Name, City, State _____

Teacher's name and Email (if applicable) _____

To Be Completed by Student's Parent/Guardian (Required even if student is 18 or over)

Parent/Guardian Name (Printed) _____

Parent/Guardian Signature _____ Date _____

(____) _____
Parent/Guardian's Daytime Phone

Parent/Guardian's Email _____

What Are the Rules?

- You must write your own essay.
- All essays should be typed in English with no color or graphics. 300 - 400 words in length (+ or - 5 word max). Every word is counted regardless of length. The essay title (theme) or added footnotes do not contribute to the word count.
- In no way may contestants identify themselves within their essay (including, but not limited to, your name, school, city, state, race or national origin.) Do not put your name on the essay. The entry form is your essays cover sheet. Secure the Official Student Entry Form with a staple or other fastener on top of your essay. Contestants are allowed to enter only once each year if otherwise eligible (one Post competition).
- The essay must be contestant's original work and a product of the contestant's own thinking. Inappropriate use of ChatGPT or other AI tools is not allowed. The approach to the Patriot's Pen theme should be positive and clearly focused. Poetry is not acceptable. Quotations may be used sparingly if plainly identified wherever used. A contestant's teacher, counselor or parent may check the essay for punctuation, grammar and/or spelling, but the content must remain the contestant's. Contestants will be judged on the basis of their essay alone and are not required to present the essay orally. All essays become the property of the Veteran's of Foreign Wars. The VFW retains non-exclusive rights to the use of your essay and likeness in the promotion and execution of the organization's programs and activities.
- At any time during the contest additional participant personal information (i.e. SSN, photo, etc.) could be requested by the VFW.

I Have Read and Understand the Contest Rules

Signature of Student Participant _____ Date _____

To Be Completed by the VFW Post

I certify that this student has an authorized entry in our VFW Post level Patriot's Pen Competition.

Post Commander/Chairperson Signature _____ Post# _____

VFW Auxiliary President/Chairperson Signature (If applicable) _____

Post Address _____

City, State, Zip _____

VFW Post Email _____

No. of participants _____ No. of winners _____

Amt. of Post/Aux. scholarships awards \$ _____

Amt. of Post/Aux. additional expenses (Banquet, Pins, etc.) \$ _____

To Be Completed by the VFW District

I certify that the student named in the previous section is the duly selected winner of the Patriot's Pen Contest District Competition and is our sole entry into the Department.

District Chairperson Signature _____ Dist. # _____

Address _____

City, State, Zip _____

(____) _____
Phone Email

To Be Completed by the VFW Department Chairperson

I certify that the student named in the previous section is the duly selected first-place winner of the Patriot's Pen Department Competition and is our sole entry into the National Judging.

Department Chairperson Signature _____

(____) _____
Daytime Phone Email

The winner has been will be (check one) notified that they are the first-place Department winner on _____.

Local VFW Post Information:

Contact: _____

Phone: _____ Best Time To Call: _____

Alternate Contact: _____

Phone: _____ Best Time To Call: _____





Patriot's Pen Introduction Questionnaire

Representing VFW Post _____ and its Auxiliary,

a _____ at _____
GRADE (6th, 7th or 8th) SCHOOL NAME

in _____
CITY

STUDENT'S NAME

PRONUNCIATION OF STUDEN'TS NAME

The student is the Son/Daughter of

Mother: _____

and

Father: _____

SUMMARY

DISTRICT PATRIOT'S PEN PARTICIPATION REPORT

DISTRICT NO. _____

DEPARTMENT OF _____, VFW

The VFW Posts and Auxiliaries identified in this report in this District participated in the VFW annual Patriot's Pen Program.

GRAND TOTALS FOR POST COMPETITION: list totals taken from District report form(s)

_____	_____	_____	_____
Posts	Auxs	Students	Post Winners Advanced
\$ _____			
Monetary Awards	\$ _____		
	Addl. Money Expended		

MONETARY VALUE OF DISTRICT COMPETITION (add County Councils if applicable):

District Monetary Awards	\$ _____
District Additional Expenses	\$ _____

Signed by: _____ Date _____
District Chairman

*PLEASE ATTACH COMPLETED REPORT FORM(S) AND GIVE
THIS COMPLETED SUMMARY TO YOUR DEPARTMENT
Patriot's Pen Chairman*

Smart/Maher VFW National Citizenship Education Teacher Award
(Please note Deadlines)

This Program recognizes teachers who care about America. VFW annually recognizes the Nation's top classroom Elementary, Junior High (Middle Schools) and High School teachers who teach Citizenship Education topics regularly and who promote American History, traditions and institutions. Nominations are submitted by fellow teachers, supervisors and other interested individuals (not relatives). Self-nominees are not eligible.

National Headquarters mails these brochures out directly to the Schools but....Posts still need to contact the schools regarding this Program.

Posts will need to follow up as deadlines are as follows:

- Teacher Nominations to Post - October 31, 2024
- Completion of Post Judging - November 15, 2024
- Completion of District Judging - December 15, 2024
- District winners due to State HQ – December 22, 2024
- District Participation Report due to State HQ – December 29, 2024
- Completion of Department Judging - January 10, 2025
- Department winners to National - January 15, 2025
- Department Reports to National - January 31, 2025

District Chairmen must send the following to Department Headquarters for Judging:

- Winner's original entry form and essay of 350 words or less
- Winner's official Post Teacher Entry form with signatures at Post & District Level.
- One page resume (no more than two sides)
- Up to 5 (five) pages (both sides) of additional documentation (i.e. news articles, supervisor's recommendations.)
- Good quality head and shoulders photograph (color copies or low grade computer printouts will not be accepted)

(Note: No entries will be considered for Department Judging if all of the above criteria is not included with the nomination)

State Awards

The first place winner in each of the three categories will receive \$100.00 Cash and a special engraved plaque. A special engraved plaque will also be presented to the winning Teacher's School.

The Categories are:

- Kindergarten through 5th Grade,
- 6th through 8th Grade, and
- 9th through 12th Grade.

National Awards

(as shown on our National Headquarters web page, www.vfw.org.)

Included in this Program is the end of the year Post Report Form that the District Chairman is to fill out and submit to the State Youth Activities Program Director no later than December 29, 2024.

With your help and dedication, we can continue to show our "Veterans and Families - We Got You"

2024-2025 Smart/Maher VFW National Citizenship Education Teacher Award



Entry Deadline: October 31, 2024

What is the Teacher Award Program?

Founded in 1899, the VFW highly supports the education of America's youth. VFW and its Auxiliary have developed a slate of programs dedicated to helping America's educators. VFW Citizenship Education programs stimulate interest in America's history, traditions, Americanism, civic responsibility, flag etiquette and patriotism.

Teachers care deeply about America and its children. They're concerned about the perpetuation of America's noblest traditions and highest ideals. Wouldn't you like to see them get the honor they deserve? Now you can.

Why Should I Enter?

VFW wants to identify and recognize America's best educators who instill a sense of national pride in students. The national awards include \$1,000 Smart/Maher award for each of the top K-5, 6-8, and 9-12 teachers for professional development expenses, \$1,000 award for each winning teacher's school, commemorative plaques and all-expense-paid trip to the VFW National Convention.

Who is Eligible?

All current certified/licensed teachers in grades K-12 are eligible. Previous national VFW winners are ineligible. Nominations can be submitted by themselves, fellow teachers, supervisors, family members or other interested individuals.

How are teachers nominated?

Fill out the official entry form contained on the next page, and provide a one-page resume as a minimum or up to five pages, including the resume, as a maximum of documentation of their teaching experience (for example: resume, references, news articles, etc.) and a head-and-shoulder photo if available.

Please submit your completed entry form signed, along with the required documentation to your local VFW Post. Visit vfw.org/FindaPost for Post locations or call VFW Programs Department at 816.756.3390 ext. 6287 to find the Post nearest you.

What Is the Deadline for My Entry?

All entries competing at the Post level must be in the hands of that VFW Post by midnight, Oct. 31, 2024. It is the responsibility of the nominator to meet this deadline by submitting their entry to the proper location by ensuring it is a participating Post.

What Are the Judging Criteria?

Citizenship (1-25 points): On a scale of 1-25, to what extent does the teacher encourage and/or model good citizenship and community involvement?

Innovation (1-25 points): On a scale of 1-25, how much innovation (new ideas, new tools, new resources, and new approaches) does this teacher utilize in the classroom? Does this teacher's effort reflect an ongoing desire to stimulate the students with new things?

Resources (1-25 points): On a scale of 1-25, to what degree has this teacher demonstrated an ability to identify and utilize new and exceptional resources to fund, facilitate and provide materials for his or her classroom? Does this teacher tap into outside agencies, organizations and individuals to acquire materials and expertise in the classroom? As an example – bringing speakers, finding in-kind and monetary donations, or utilizing local opportunities like museums, field trips and local events.

Passion (1-25 points): On a scale of 1-25, to what degree does this teacher appear to be passionate about the profession of teaching? Are they regularly seeking to upgrade their skills? Do they try and find ways to encourage their students? Do they take a personal interest in their student's individual success?

*If you have any questions, please call
Tammy Beauchamp, 816.756.3390, ext 6287
or tbeauchamp@vfw.org.*

Local VFW Post Information:

Contact: Name, Title

Phone Best time to call

Alternative Contact: Name, Title

Phone Best time to call

2024-2025 Smart/Maher VFW National Citizenship Education Teacher Award



Entry Deadline: October 31, 2024

2024-2025 Official Entry Form Teacher Award Competition

Please tell us who you are nominating—below in box.

Name: First, M.I., Last	
Address	
City, State, Zip	
()	_____
Phone	Email
Grade Level (K-5, 6-8, or 9-12)	
School Name	
School Address	
()	_____
School Phone	School Email

Person Nominating Teacher

Name: _____
 Address: _____
 City, State, Zip: _____
 Phone: _____
 Email: _____

To Be Completed by the VFW Post

I certify that this teacher has an authorized entry in our VFW Post level Teacher Award Competition.

 Post Commander's/Chairperson's Signature Post #

 VFW Auxiliary President's/Chairperson's Signature
 (If Applicable)

 Post Address

 City, State, Zip

 VFW Post Email

 No. of teachers participating

 No. of winners advanced to District

 Amt. of Post /Aux. scholarship awards \$

 Amt. of Post /Aux. additional expenses \$
 (banquet, pins, etc.)

To Be Completed by the VFW District (If Applicable)

I certify that the teacher named in the previous section is the duly selected winner of the Teacher Award District Competition and is our entry into the Department judging.

 District Chairperson's Signature Dist #

 Address

 City, State, Zip

() _____
 Phone Email

To Be Completed by the VFW Department Chairperson

I certify that the teacher named in the previous section is the duly selected first-place winner of the Teacher Award Department Competition, is our entry into the National Judging.

 Department Chairperson's Signature
 () _____
 Daytime Phone Email

The winner has been will be (check one) notified that they are the first-place Department winner on _____.

Where Do I Submit My Entry?

All entries will begin at the local VFW Post level. Individual nominees may submit their entry directly to the Post. This VFW Post should be within your local area and within your U.S. state of residence. Entries sent to VFW National will be returned. One Post winner can be submitted for each level, and to District by Nov. 15. If your Department does not have a District judging, then submit to your Department Headquarters by Jan. 1. Otherwise, one District winner, at each level, may advance to the state (Department) competition. If you need help finding a participating VFW Post in your area, follow these instructions: First, visit vfw.org/FindaPost to find your local VFW Post. Be sure this Post is within the state you reside in. If you do not have success in finding a Post, or if you have trouble getting in touch with them, you can contact your VFW Department (state) office to see if they can offer any information or assistance. You can visit vfw.org/ContactUs and look for "Find a State Contact" to get your VFW state office's phone number and email. If you still need assistance, please email us at VFW National Headquarters at tbeauchamp@vfw.org.



**SMART/MAHER VFW NATIONAL CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION
TEACHER AWARD CITATIONS FOR ELEMENTARY, MIDDLE
AND HIGH SCHOOL TEACHERS AND THEIR SCHOOLS**

Each year, the Veterans of Foreign Wars selects elementary, middle and high school teachers to participate in the Smart/Maher VFW National Citizenship Education Teacher program. Effective this year, VFW Post Teacher Award Chairman may submit one candidate to their **Department Headquarters by January 1, unless your state does district judging.** The Department will select a single candidate and submit them to **VFW National Headquarters by February 1 for national judging.** VFW's Department Teacher winners that are received at National Headquarters will receive a VFW National citation for both the winning teacher and their school.

NOTE: The only item the National VFW Programs Department requires is the completed "VFW Department Teacher Award Citation Request Form" which is now available on the VFW website. Simply visit vfw.org/#login, log in to My VFW, then look under Member Resources, click on VFW Training & Support, then click on Community Service & Youth Programs, then look under Additional Resources. The Teacher Entry form, Instruction sheet, Citation request form and Chairman's Manual will be up on the VFW website in the near future.

Who Is Eligible?

1. Teachers who promote civic responsibility, flag etiquette and patriotism are prime candidates for this award. For example, do you know a teacher who plans field trips to city hall or organizes community volunteer projects? Maybe you know an instructor who invites veterans into the classroom to discuss their military experiences. Perhaps you are familiar with a teacher who fosters the development of democratic values and beliefs through special projects. If you know of such a teacher, honor him or her today.
2. All current certified/licensed teachers in grades K-12 are eligible. Previous national winners are ineligible. Nominations can be submitted by themselves, fellow teachers, supervisors, family members or other interested individuals.

Documentation Required for all Candidates:

1. All Post-level nominees should provide a one-page resume as a minimum or up to five pages as a maximum of documentation of their teaching experience (for example: references, news articles, etc.) and a head-and-shoulder photo of themselves, if available. These items will be forwarded on to the Department with the winning teacher entry form.

NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS

406 W. 34th Street Office 816.756.3390
Kansas City, MO 64111 Fax 816.968.1157

WASHINGTON OFFICE

200 Maryland Ave., N.E. Office 202.543.2239
Washington, D.C. 20002 Fax 202.543.6719

info@vfw.org
www.vfw.org

MATERIAL FOR THE DISTRICT CONTEST

VFW DISTRICT CHAIRMEN ONLY
DISTRICT REPORTING GUIDELINES FOR THE
SMART/MAHER VFW NATIONAL CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION TEACHER AWARD

USE THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION TO COMPLETE THE ATTACHED:

The guidelines listed below are intended to help clarify the Smart/Maher VFW National Citizenship Education Teacher Award reporting process and to ensure that all participation and expenses incurred by Posts/Auxiliaries are completely and accurately reported for proper credit:

TOTAL POST PARTICIPATION

List Posts in your District that had a declared winner. Please list the participating Posts in numerical order on the report form.

TOTAL AUXILIARY PARTICIPATION

If Post has an Auxiliary, credit their participation by indicating **YES** or **NO**.

TOTAL NUMBER OF PARTICIPATING SCHOOLS

Number of schools that had teachers nominated.

TOTAL NUMBER OF PARTICIPATING TEACHERS

Number of teachers that actually were nominated.

AWARDS AND MONEY EXPENDED

Total dollar values of awards presented to teacher participants at Post & District level. All additional moneys allocated and expended in conducting their program. (Banquet, gifts, medals, citations, etc.)

**Forwarding Smart/Maher VFW Natl Citizenship Education
Teacher Award District Winners to Department**

District Chairman: The District winner's materials that should be forwarded to the Department Chairman (immediately after the District judging is completed) are:

1. District winner's original nomination form and essay of 350 words or less signed by person nominating the teacher.
2. District winner's official Post Teacher Entry form w/signatures at Post & District level.
3. One page resume (**no more than two sides**).
4. Up to 5 pages (both sides) of additional documentation (i.e. news articles, supervisor's recommendations.)
5. Good quality head and shoulders photograph (**low grade computer printouts will not be accepted.**)

If you have any questions, please contact VFW Programs (816) 756-3390 x 287
tbeauchamp@vfw.org

VFW DISTRICT CHAIRMEN ONLY

**DISTRICT REPORTING GUIDELINES FOR THE
SMART/MAHER VFW NATIONAL CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION TEACHER AWARD**

USE THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION TO COMPLETE THE ATTACHED:

The guidelines listed below are intended to help clarify the Smart/Maher VFW National Citizenship Education Teacher Award reporting process and to ensure that all participation and expenses incurred by Posts/Auxiliaries are completely and accurately reported for proper credit:

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List Posts in your District that had a declared winner. Please list the participating Posts in numerical order on the report form.

TOTAL AUXILIARY PARTICIPATION

If Post has an Auxiliary, credit their participation by indicating *YES* or *NO*.

TOTAL NUMBER OF PARTICIPATING SCHOOLS

Number of schools that had teachers nominated.

TOTAL NUMBER OF PARTICIPATING TEACHERS

Number of teachers that actually were nominated.

AWARDS AND MONEY EXPENDED

Total dollar values of awards presented to teacher participants at Post & District level. All additional moneys allocated and expended in conducting their program. (Banquet, gifts, medals, citations, etc.)

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1. District winner's original nomination form and essay of 350 words or less signed by person nominating the teacher.
2. District winner's official Post Teacher Entry form w/signatures at Post & District level.
3. One page resume (**no more than two sides**).
4. Up to 5 pages (both sides) of additional documentation (i.e. news articles, supervisor's

MATERIAL FOR THE DISTRICT CONTEST

VFW DISTRICT CHAIRMEN ONLY

**DISTRICT REPORTING GUIDELINES FOR THE
SMART/MAHER VFW NATIONAL CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION TEACHER AWARD**

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List Posts in your District that had a declared winner. Please list the participating Posts in numerical order on the report form.

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If Post has an Auxiliary, credit their participation by indicating *YES* or *NO*.

TOTAL NUMBER OF PARTICIPATING SCHOOLS

Number of schools that had teachers nominated.

TOTAL NUMBER OF PARTICIPATING TEACHERS

Number of teachers that actually were nominated.

AWARDS AND MONEY EXPENDED

Total dollar values of awards presented to teacher participants at Post & District level. All additional moneys allocated and expended in conducting their program. (Banquet, gifts, medals, citations, etc.)

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2. District winner's official Post Teacher Entry form w/signatures at Post & District level.
3. One page resume (**no more than two sides**).
4. Up to 5 pages (both sides) of additional documentation (i.e. news articles, supervisor's recommendations.)
5. Good quality head and shoulders photograph (**low grade computer printouts will not be accepted.**)

If you have any questions, please contact VFW Programs (816) 756-3390 x 287 tbeauchamp@vfw.org

YOUTH CADETS AWARDS

VFW awards for special recognition of outstanding achievement and exceptional leadership are available for Junior and Senior ROTC programs, Naval Sea Cadets and Civil Air Patrol Cadets. If any of these programs exist in your community, these awards provide your Post an outstanding opportunity to honor these patriotic young people.

JROTC

(Junior Reserve Officer Training Course)

Why should a Post become involved?

Few youth programs provide a greater benefit to a Post than involvement with a Scouting or JROTC unit. Both programs annually produce individuals with an appreciation for patriotism, civic responsibility, and the likelihood of future military service. As Boy and Girl Scouts, Sea Scouts, Venture Scouts and JROTC cadets, these individuals are often a tremendous asset to a Post by helping with Post projects such as placing flags on graves on Veterans Day and Memorial Day, helping with Post maintenance and fix-up efforts, helping distribute "Buddy"® Poppies, providing color guards and assisting with VFW public events.

As young adults, participants in these programs are much more likely than others of their age group to enter the military and, ultimately, become eligible for membership in the Veterans of Foreign Wars.

Awards Administration

Cadet awards may be initiated by the local VFW Post or directly by the cadet's unit. In either case, documentation should come from the unit as follows:

- Naval Sea Cadets: from the unit commanding officer in a letter with copy to NSCCHQ.
- Civil Air Patrol Cadets: from the candidate's squadron by submitting a CAPF-120.
- JROTC/SROTC Cadets: from the unit by submitting a letter documenting the criteria.

Criteria for Civil Air Patrol and Naval Sea Cadets

- Good academic standing
- Satisfactory progress in the cadet program
- Outstanding achievement in community service and/or the cadet program
- Outstanding leadership in the cadet program
- High moral character
- Exceptional professionalism in appearance and actions (Officer Award)
- Outstanding military bearing and conduct in and out of uniform (NCO Award)
- Involvement in patriotic programs, drill team, color guard, etc.
- Demonstrated potential and willingness to assume higher levels of responsibility

Additional criteria for JROTC & SROTC awards:

- Positive attitude toward the ROTC program
- For JROTC, must be enrolled as a 10th - 12th grade JROTC student
- For SROTC, must be an undergraduate student enrolled in Military Science I through IV
- Must maintain a "B" average in ROTC curriculum and a "C" average in all remaining subjects with no failing grades in the previous semester
- Active in at least one other student extracurricular activity (music, athletics, government, etc.)

Upon receipt of the letter and documentation, VFW Programs Department personnel will review the submitted materials, approve and contact the VFW Department. The Department or Post may then purchase the award(s) through the VFW Store for presentation.

The VFW has many other opportunities that you can be involved with Youth Activities in your community. Remember, this is a win-win situation for the Post. The Post can support youth in the community.

Here are some other examples of how you can support Youth Activities. This list is not all inclusive. Talk to your community leaders, youth leaders, churches, and other community groups on how you Post or District can become involved and support the Youth of America

Support of Community Youth Activities

- o Coach or sponsor a Youth Team (baseball, soccer, football, basketball, soccer, etc)
- o Host a youth activity or event at your post
- o Work with a youth group on community event (food or clothing collection)
- o Meet with Key Club or National Honor Society at HS on community project
- o Sponsor a pizza party or ice cream for youth group

Youth Recognition Programs

- o Recognize an outstanding young person in your community
- o The VFW Store has numerous certificates that you can purchase to recognize youth
- o Leaders of Youth Program
- o Individual Patriotic Services
- o Individual Appreciation for Community Service
- o Honor Certificates for Youth

Post Scholarships

- o If your Post is one of the lucky Posts that have sufficient funding, you may consider awarding a scholarship to a local High School Student
- o Talk to Key Club or National Honor Society and see if they have any students needing financial assistance to attend leadership conference

VFW in the Classroom

Every day, we strive to thank America's educators by providing them with helpful resources and encouraging our members to visit local classrooms. Let us help you educate America's future leaders and bring history to life!

Veterans play an important role in educating our nation's youth about the founding principles upon which America was founded. As combat veterans, VFW members can provide students with a unique perspective about the sacrifices America's service members make to maintain freedom for all of us.

When visiting a classroom, a VFW member will prepare a brief introduction, a main presentation and a Q&A session. Depending on the topic, a member may bring appropriate memorabilia, uniforms, photographs and other relevant material.

American history is something we all share, and there's no one better to help tell that story than someone who's had a great part in shaping it.

If you are a VFW member or Post interested in becoming active with your local schools, see the tips and suggestions on the following pages.

VETERANS – IN THE – CLASSROOM



Get your Post involved in your local schools.

Get together with members of your Post to brainstorm ways to participate.

Remember, November is VFW's "Veterans in the Classroom" month. Promoting citizenship education in schools is an important goal for VFW, and there are many programs you can plan and present in schools.

UNWAVERING SUPPORT



FOR UNCOMMON HEROES*

Here are some suggested school activities to help you get started.

- **Grades K-2:** Young American Award (Supply item #04389). Teach the students the Pledge of Allegiance and present them an "I Learned the Pledge of Allegiance" certificate.
- **Grades 3-5:** Reading of Ten Short Flag Stories and Flag Education Program. The "Fun Flag Facts" can be copied and distributed to students.
- **Grades 6 and higher:** Living History Presentation. A presentation about your military service and your experiences in war. Also consider flag education programs for these age groups. Remember, the week of Veterans Day is "National Veterans Awareness" week in the schools.

In everything you do, work closely with your Auxiliary counterpart. The most successful Posts are always the ones that work hand-in-hand with their Auxiliary. Remember, your presenters are representing the VFW. They should be prompt, courteous, polite and knowledgeable.



SPEAKER'S GUIDELINE

Arrangement

The initial contact you make with your local school(s) is very important. Explain that you are interested in assisting the teacher by providing a “living history” presentation about your military service during World War II, Korea, Vietnam, Persian Gulf, Somalia, Afghanistan, Iraq or any other campaign period. Select a date and time for your presentation. The teacher may wish to audiotape or videotape your presentation. Decide on which format makes you feel most comfortable.

Preparation

Prepare a short biography of yourself and your military service (send a copy to the teacher at least two weeks prior to your presentation.) By beginning your presentation with biographical information, you introduce yourself to the students and provide them with information which might inspire further questions.

Include in your biographical introduction:

- Date and place of birth
- Occupation before joining the military
- Reasons for joining (did you enlist or get drafted?)
- Site and length of basic training
- Geographical location of where you served overseas
- Length of service
- Occupation after leaving the service

Check to see what materials you have from your military service that you could use in your presentation, such as military uniforms, equipment or photographs. Food and clothing hold a special fascination for audiences of all ages. Descriptions of C and K rations, what you missed most from home or the importance of certain clothing items are a few examples of what you could address.

For example, an army helmet and liner are two separate items. You may want to ask the class why a helmet needs a liner (a demonstration wearing a helmet without the liner would immediately demonstrate why a liner was required.) Then, you might describe the different ways you used a helmet: carrying water, cooking and washing. As you prepare, allow time for questions and answers either during or at the end of your presentation.

Here is a suggested breakdown of the class time:

Introduction: 5-10 minutes

Main Presentation: 10-15 minutes

Questions and Answers: 5-10 minutes

Wrap Up: 2-5 minutes

Presentation

Contact the teacher two or three days prior to the presentation to confirm the date and time of your presentation and where you should meet the teacher when you arrive at the school. Prior to your presentation, display your personal items. With the teacher's understanding, try to create an informal atmosphere by having the students sit close to you. After your presentation, ask the teacher for some feedback on how you did.

SCOUTING PROGRAM

Scout of the Year Program

Annually, the VFW honors Scouts who have been the recipient of one of the following awards: Eagle Scout Award, Girl Scout Gold Award, Venture Summit Silver Award, or Sea Scout Quartermasters Award. Also, in order to be eligible for the honor, the Scout must be a Registered, active member of a Scout BSA Troop, Girl Scout Troop, Venturing Crew, or Sea Scout Ship who has risen above their peers in exemplifying the exceptional qualities of their rank. The National Scholarship award are as follows:

\$5000.00 1st Place Scholarship
\$3000.00 2nd Place Scholarship
\$1000.00 3rd Place Scholarship

The Department of Illinois will be making an Award to the First Place nominee from the Boy Scouts of America programs and the First Place Girl Scout of America nominee in the following amount however, only one Scout will be advanced to the National Competition:

\$300.00 Cash Award -Boy Scouts of America Scout of the Year
\$300.00 Cash Award -Girl Scouts of America Scout of the Year

This is a natural fit for the VFW, and will afford your Posts and Districts an opportunity to create activities that promote good Citizenship and Americanism. Each Post and District is urged to assign a liaison person to work closely with scout groups in your area.

On the Post level you can establish a Post Award of maybe a plaque or cash. Then advance your Scout of the Year entry or entries to your District or directly to the Department if no District program is offered. Districts are encouraged to honor entrants as well, but are not required.

Deadline dates for the Scout of the Year Award:

Student Entry to Post – March 1, 2025
Post Entry to State Headquarters – April 1, 2025
State Winner to National – May 1, 2025

The necessary forms can be found on the state website at www.vfwil.org. Click on resources tab and scroll down to Scout of the Year. Make an extra effort to involve scouts in your Post and District programs and activities. The rewards are great for you as well as the Scouts. By working with your local scouting groups, you may also be able to assist and promote the scouts to work toward achieving all of their scouting goals, not just those that qualify them to enter the Scout or The Year contest.



Ron Milton
Chairman

209 Taurus Dr
Shiloh, IL 62269
Phone: 618-604-0423
Email: usafret1@att.net

Post 4183-14

Let's plan to make Youth Activities a priority in our Posts and Districts. These programs will give your post more visibility in your community, will allow you more opportunity for new member recruitment, as well as encouraging current members to get involved because they have children and grandchildren. Remember too, the Patriot's Pen and Scouting programs can be a precursor for the Voice of Democracy Contest.

I sincerely hope that your involvement with youth activities this year will be a pleasant and rewarding experience for all involved. Always remember that you are invited to call if you have any questions or need any help.

Other Scout Programs

If your Post doesn't have anyone in your area that qualifies for Scout of the Year, there are still plenty of ways you can still meet the requirements to get the green on the dashboard. Here are some examples. The list is not all inclusive but is an example of how other Posts are supporting the Scouting Program. Contact Scout packs or troops in your area and see how you can help.

- Allow a boy scout or girl scout troop to use your facility for meetings
- Volunteer to be a scout leader
- Work with a local scout on their Eagle Scout or Gold Award project
- Teach a class or help the scouts to receive a merit badge
- Work with the scouts on a flag retirement ceremony
- Work with the scouts on a food drive or clothing drive

Don't think that you can't get credit on your dashboard just because you don't have an Eagle Scout in your area. There are lots of ways to be involved with scouting. Remember, you have to fill out the Program Reporting Form and tell what you did to support scouting. I recommend you submit a report after each activity just so you don't forget about it.

SCOUT OF THE YEAR Program



WHAT IS THE SCOUT OF THE YEAR PROGRAM?

Annually, the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States recognizes individuals who are: Eagle Scouts, Girl Scout Gold Award recipients, Venture Summit Award recipients and/or Sea Scout Quartermasters who have risen above their peers in exemplifying the qualities of that rank.

AM I ELIGIBLE?

To be eligible for the award, the candidate must:

- Be the recipient of the Eagle Scout Award, Girl Scout Gold Award, Venture Summit Award or Sea Scout Quartermaster Award.
- Be a registered, active member of a Boy or Girl Scout Troop, Venturing Crew or Sea Scout Ship at the time the above reward was received.
- Have demonstrated exemplary citizenship in school, Scouting and community.

Prior National Scout of the Year winners are ineligible. There is no minimum age requirement for applicants as long as all other eligibility criteria has been met. The maximum age requirement for applicants is 18 years old. If an applicant reaches their 18th birthday during the nomination year, they remain eligible as long as they are still in high school at the time of the submission deadline. A Scout may enter through only one VFW Post. A local Post can be identified by zip code at vfw.org/FindaPost.

WHAT ARE THE DEADLINES?

- Deadline for entry to VFW Post is **March 1**.
- One candidate with full entry criteria must be submitted by a VFW Post to the next level of judging by **April 1**. The VFW Department Scouting chairman can provide this information.
- The Department winner must be selected and submitted by their Department Scouting chairman to the VFW National Headquarters by **May 1**.

Questions should be directed to during normal business hours Monday through Friday or emailed to scouting@vfw.org.

Official Entry Form

SCOUT OF THE YEAR Program

MUST BE COMPLETED BY EACH CONTESTANT
and submitted directly to a VFW post in your community.

Name: First, M.I., Last

Address

City, State, Zip

()

Home Phone

Email

Date of Birth (dd/mm/yyyy)

Scout Troop Number

SCOUT/VENTURE CERTIFICATION

I hereby certify that the foregoing information is accurate and if I am the winner, I will make myself available to receive the award at a presentation ceremony as designated by the Veterans of Foreign Wars.

Scout/Venture Signature

Date (mm/dd/yyyy)

UNIT LEADER'S CERTIFICATION

I hereby certify that the above-named Scout/Venture is an active member of our unit or was when the award was received and the information supplied by the candidate is accurate to the best of my knowledge.

Unit Leader's Signature

Date (mm/dd/yyyy)

PARENT'S CONSENT

I hereby certify that all information on this application is correct. I willingly submit this name for consideration as the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States' Scout of the Year. If this individual is selected as the winner, I will ensure that he/she is allowed to attend a presentation ceremony as designed by the Veterans of Foreign Wars.

Father, Mother or Guardian Signature

Date (mm/dd/yyyy)



VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS.

SCOUT OF THE YEAR Program

VFW DEPARTMENT SCOUTING CHAIRMAN

PHONE: _____

SPONSORING VFW POST

POST NUMBER: _____

ADDRESS: _____

POST COMMANDER'S SIGNATURE: _____

DISTRICT CERTIFICATION
IF APPLICABLE, CHECK WITH THE VFW DEPARTMENT SCOUTING CHAIRMAN

DISTRICT #: _____

DISTRICT CDR.: _____

DEPARTMENT CERTIFICATION
MUST BE COMPLETED BY DEPARTMENT VFW SCOUTING CHAIRMAN OR DEPT. COMMANDER

DEPARTMENT: _____

SUBMITTED BY: _____

SIGNATURE: _____

WHAT DOCUMENTATION IS REQUIRED?

The following documentation should be submitted:

- **Photograph of the Scout** — must be attached to this form. The Scout must appear in correct, complete uniform for their current rank. Recommended size 3" x 5".
- **School Participation Record** — a single page, one-sided resume of the candidate's school activities indicating academic achievements, offices held, honors received and significant participation in other activities.
- **Scouting Record** — maximum of three pages, one side only, listing of all Scouting participation beginning with Cub Scouts or Brownies - years of participation, unit numbers and sponsors. Also include when Eagle, Gold, Summit or Quartermaster Award was received and Palms. Identify leadership positions held at all levels, participation in Scouting activities (jamborees, Order of the Arrow conferences, etc.) and the candidate's Eagle Scout, Girl Scout Gold Award, Venture Summit or Sea Scout Quartermaster Project.
- **Community Service Record** — a single page, one-sided resume listing participation in community and religious service organizations (excluding Scouting and school), noting leadership positions held and any recognition received.
- **Letters of Recommendation** — Submit three letters, no more than two pages in length from:
 - A scout leader.
 - A community member.
 - A teacher/faculty member (if homeschooled, a parent letter is allowed).
 - In addition, you may include one or two additional letters, no more than two pages in length from local community members who have special knowledge of the candidate's abilities/accomplishments.
- **Completed Entry Form** – submitted to a local VFW Post. Local Posts can be identified by zip code at vfw.org/FindaPost.

WHO MAKES UP THE VFW SCOUTING TEAM?

The backbone of Scouting in the VFW is the VFW Scouting Team. These VFW members are deeply involved in Scouting, most with decades of experience.

Appointed by their Department Commander, they are responsible for promoting scouting in their state. They are available to encourage Posts to sponsor units, support units and individual Scout projects. They should be the Department's "expert" on all phases of scouting. Many Departments have multiple members of the VFW Scouting Team, but every Department should have at least one individual to promote the values of scouting to youth and to the VFW itself. For more information on the VFW Scouting Team call email scouting@vfw.org





LEGISLATIVE ADVOCACY

LEGISLATIVE ADVOCACY

National

- **National Action Alerts**
- **Meeting with National Representative**
- **Attend VFW Legislative Conference**

State

- **State Action Alerts**
- **File witness slips on bills**
- **Meeting with State Representative**

Local

- **Meeting with local elected officials**
- **Participating in County Veterans Assistance Commission**

LEGISLATIVE ADVOCACY PROGRAM

The VFW with our coalition partners were very successful in the first session of the 103rd Illinois General assembly. This year, our grassroots lobbying efforts in Illinois has produced some key pieces of legislation.

Working with State Senator Porfirio and State Representative Kifowit, the VFW led the charge is supporting SB3479, which is Illinois version of the "Claim Shark Bill" This bill has passed both houses in the Illinois General Assembly and is awaiting the Governor's signature. This bill will protect our veterans from the unscrupulous law firms and organizations that are charging excess fees for filing initial VA disability claims.

Much of our grassroots efforts are focused on witness slips throughout the legislative process. When we send out a call for action on state legislation, we ask that you take 2 minutes to complete a witness slip. You don't have to be a VFW member to complete a witness slip. Get your family and friends to also submit witness slips on key veteran bills. The number of witness slips help to solidify our position for or against a bill.

The committee will constantly update the District legislative chair on events in Springfield and Washington. What we need from the district is that they communicate with the post on these issues and conduct training sessions to ensure that each post knows how to submit a witness slip in support of our legislative agenda. we also request that the post commanders introduce themselves to their state senator and state representative. You are the subject matter expert to assist them in veterans Legislation.

This year, we hosted the "Veterans Lobby Day" in Springfield. About 50 veterans from multiple veteran organizations went to the State Capitol and met with the Senators and Representatives to discuss veteran issues and request their support on key veteran legislation. We plan to host "Veterans Lobby Day" again in this upcoming year and have it scheduled for March 12, 2025. Mark your calendar now and plan to join us.

ACTION CORPS

The VFW Action Corps is our national grassroots advocacy network comprised of more than 300,000 VFW members and patriotic supporters of veterans. This group stays up-to-date on the issues facing our veterans, our military and their families, standing ready to email, write, call and visit our nation's lawmakers to make their voices heard. The VFW Action Corps is free and open to all patriotic Americans who care about the military and veterans' communities.

Join the VFW Action Corps today and add your voice to the thousands of veterans' advocates making a difference every day, and if you're already a member of the VFW Action Corps, encourage your friends and neighbors to join the effort!

Participants receive:

- The VFW Action Corps Weekly, an easy-to-read electronic newsletter that highlights the VFW's advocacy efforts on Capitol Hill.
- Immediate access to a nationwide database of contact information for all elected officials, a congressional directory.
- Regular VFW "Action Alerts" on how to get involved when our nation's veterans, service members and their families need their voices heard on Capitol Hill.

The VFW Action Corps is what gives the VFW its strength in advocating for our nation's heroes. Working hand-in-hand with the VFW's National Legislative Service -- whose office is in eye-shot of the Capitol dome in Washington -- members of the VFW Action Corps are armed with all of the tools and information they need to help the VFW in its mission to support our nation's veterans.

VFW
VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS.

2022 PRIORITY GOALS


Support Today's Veterans and Military

Please contact or visit your congressional representatives and stress that these are the issues we will be fighting for in the 117th Congress. These priority goals reflect the resolutions passed and supported by the men and women of the VFW and its Auxiliary. To find your congressional representatives, visit www.vfw.org/ActionCorps.

Play a Role in the Process

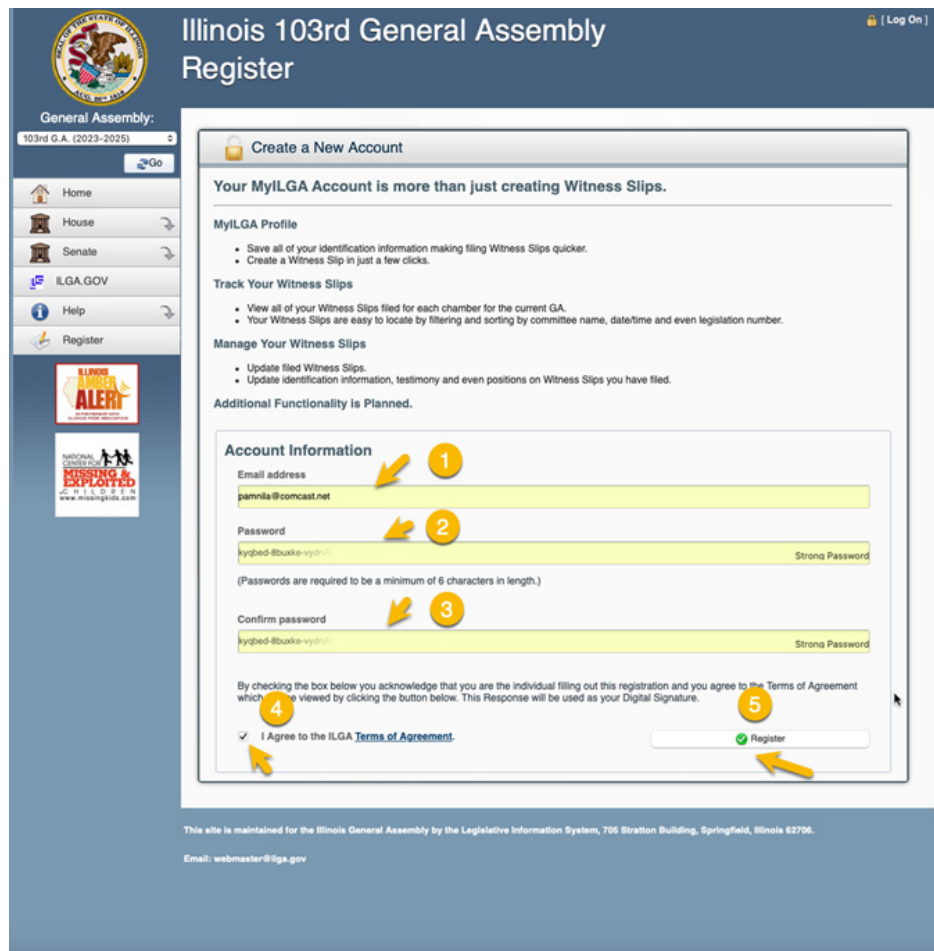
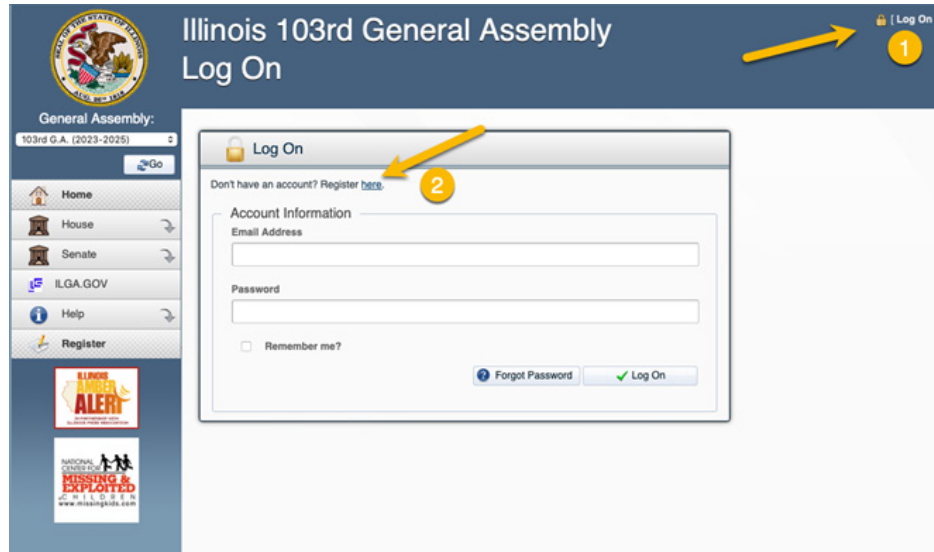
Be engaged and help us ensure that these priority goals are enacted. Sign up today for the VFW Action Corps Weekly and VFW Action Alerts:

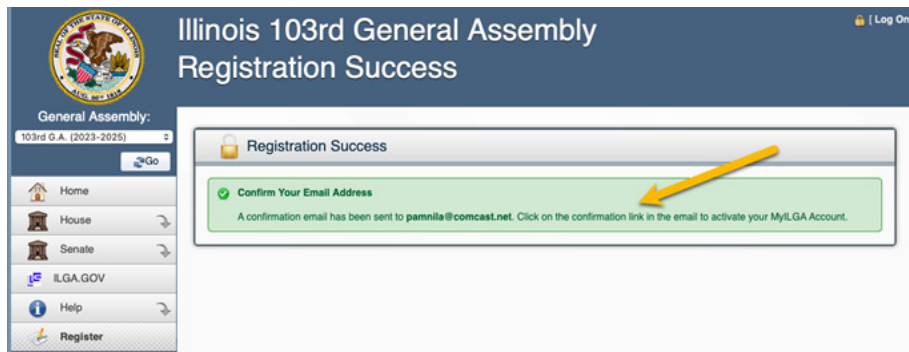
- Visit vfw.org/JoinActionCorps
- Text "VFW" to 50457
- Scan the QR Code



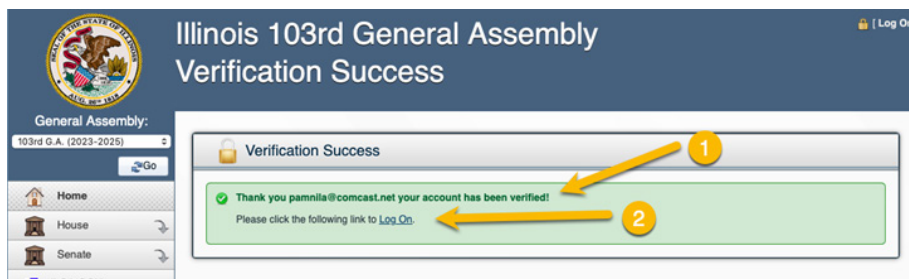
NO ONE DOES MORE FOR VETERANS.

If you wish to support our legislative efforts on an ongoing basis, you may wish to create an account on my.ilga.gov. Once you create an account, Witness Slips may be completed much more quickly.





Once you click on the link in the email your account will be activated, and you will receive a notice that your account has been verified and you will be asked to LogOn.



Once you've completed your profile, you will need to locate the bills that you wish to complete Witness Slips for. The simplest way to do this is to use the link provided by the VFW Illinois Action Corps. Using this link will take you to the bills that the VFW is asking you to support.

DEPARTMENT of ILLINOIS

HOME ABOUT PROGRAMS RESOURCES NEWS CONTACT LOGIN

Illinois Actions Corps
The place to come to help Veterans through Legislation
Your Immediate Action needed We Support **5** different Bills

Click Here For Witness Slip

Items Posted To Hearing

ID	Bill Number	Author	Committee	Status
1012	SB0001	Sen. Dan Claitor	SENATE VETERANS AFFAIRS	Pending
1013	SB0002	Sen. Dan Claitor	SENATE VETERANS AFFAIRS	Pending
1014	SB0003	Sen. Dan Claitor	SENATE VETERANS AFFAIRS	Pending
1015	SB0004	Sen. Dan Claitor	SENATE VETERANS AFFAIRS	Pending
1016	SB0005	Sen. Dan Claitor	SENATE VETERANS AFFAIRS	Pending

The Department of Illinois VFW would like all Illinois supporters of Veterans to complete Witness slips before Thursday 27 April for 5 items. A witness slip takes 30 seconds to complete and lets Illinois state Senators and Representatives know what we support and what we oppose. Links to all bills downward here The 5 items are:

If you do not have access to the website or an email that directs you to the bills, the following will help you find any bills that are pending with the Senate Veterans Affairs Committee.

Illinois 103rd General Assembly
Scheduled Senate Committee Hearings

Welcome pamnila@comcast.net! [Log Off]

General Assembly: 103rd G.A. (2023-2025)

Scheduled Senate Committee Hearings

Date / Time	Committee
4/25/2023 - 1:30 PM	Public Health Capitol - 400 - Springfield, IL
4/25/2023 - 1:30 PM	Education * Changed * Capitol - 212 - Springfield, IL
4/25/2023 - 1:30 PM	Judiciary Capitol - 409 - Springfield, IL
4/25/2023 - 4:00 PM	Transportation Capitol - 212 - Springfield, IL
4/25/2023 - 4:00 PM	Health and Human Services * Changed * Capitol - 400 - Springfield, IL
4/25/2023 - 5:30 PM	Higher Education Capitol - 212 - Springfield, IL
4/25/2023 - 5:30 PM	Insurance Capitol - 400 - Springfield, IL
4/25/2023 - 5:30 PM	Financial Institutions Capitol - 409 - Springfield, IL
4/26/2023 - 8:30 AM	Appropriations- Education * Changed * Capitol - 409 - Springfield, IL
4/26/2023 - 8:30 AM	Appropriations Capitol - 212 - Springfield, IL
4/26/2023 - 11:00 AM	Behavioral and Mental Health Capitol - 400 - Springfield, IL
4/26/2023 - 11:00 AM	Labor Capitol - 212 - Springfield, IL
4/26/2023 - 1:30 PM	State Government * Changed * Capitol - 409 - Springfield, IL
4/26/2023 - 1:30 PM	Executive * Changed * Capitol - 212 - Springfield, IL
4/26/2023 - 1:30 PM	Licensed Activities * Changed * Capitol - 400 - Springfield, IL
4/26/2023 - 3:00 PM	Senate Special Committee on Criminal Law and Public Safety Capitol - 409 - Springfield, IL
4/26/2023 - 4:00 PM	Revenue Capitol - 400 - Springfield, IL
4/26/2023 - 4:00 PM	Local Government Capitol - 409 - Springfield, IL
4/26/2023 - 5:30 PM	Appropriations- Public Safety and Infrastructure Capitol - 212 - Springfield, IL
4/26/2023 - 5:30 PM	Transportation Capitol - 212 - Springfield, IL
4/26/2023 - 5:30 PM	Appropriations - Health and Human Services * Changed * Capitol - 400 - Springfield, IL
4/27/2023 - 8:30 AM	Agriculture Capitol - 212 - Springfield, IL
4/27/2023 - 9:00 AM	Veterans Affairs Capitol - 400 - Springfield, IL
4/27/2023 - 9:30 AM	Environment and Conservation Capitol - 400 - Springfield, IL
4/27/2023 - 9:30 AM	Energy and Public Utilities Capitol - 212 - Springfield, IL
4/27/2023 - 9:30 AM	Human Rights Capitol - 409 - Springfield, IL
4/27/2023 - 10:00 AM	Early Childhood Education Capitol - 114 - Springfield, IL

The fifth step will take you to the lists of bills that require your attention. From this page, you can view create a new Witness Slip or view who has already completed a Witness Slip. Click on the Create Witness Slip Icon.

Illinois 103rd General Assembly
Senate Hearing Details

Welcome pamnilla@comcast.net! [Log Off]

General Assembly:
103rd G.A. (2023-2025)

Electronic witness slips can be submitted up to the end of the day of the committee's scheduled date.

Senate Veterans Affairs Hearing Details

Scheduled Date : 4/27/2023 - 9:00 AM
Location : 400 - Capitol - - Springfield, IL
Posting Date : 4/20/2023 - 3:10 PM

Items Posted To Hearing

Bill #	Sponsor Name	ABR - Short Description	Witness Slips
SR66	Tom Bennett	ATOMIC VETERANS DAY	
HB925	Mike Porfiro	MILITARY SERVICE-TECH	
HB2500	Meg Loughran Cappel	ANIMAL ADOPTION-FEE WAIVER	
HB2856	Suzy Glowiak Hilton	VITAL RECORDS-VETERAN DEATH	
HB3295	Julie A. Morrison	DFPR-MILITARY FEE WAIVER	

Displaying Items 1 - 5 of 5

If you have registered on the my.ilga.gov website, Section I, Identification will be completed for you. Complete the remaining steps per the diagram below.

RECORD OF COMMITTEE WITNESS - ILLINOIS HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

HB 5184 Bill #

BILL OR RESOLUTION NUMBER

Veterans' Affairs Committee Committee

Wednesday, April 6, 2022 11:00 AM **Date time of hearing**

Other (Subject Matter): Unavailable

I. IDENTIFICATION

All fields are required unless noted as optional.

Name: **Your Name**

Address: **Your Address**

City: **Your Town** State: IL Zip: **Your Zip Code**

Firm/Business Or Agency: **Organization & TOWN Example "VFW Mount Prospect" if N/A Self**

Title: **Miss Mr Ms Mrs**

Email: **Your Email**
(A confirmation email will be sent if email address is provided.)

Phone: **### - ### - ####**

Fax (Optional):

1 →

II. REPRESENTATION

This section is to be filled if the witness is appearing on behalf of a group, organization or other entity.

Persons, groups firms represented in this appearance:
SELF this is preferred unless you represent the department or above

2 →

III. POSITION

Select your position(s) on the legislative items.

Description: SCA 1 **Click** Proponent Opponent No Position On Merits

Proponent unless we ask you to Oppose a bill

3 →

IV. TESTIMONY

Select the testimony types that you will supply for the hearing. (Check all that apply)

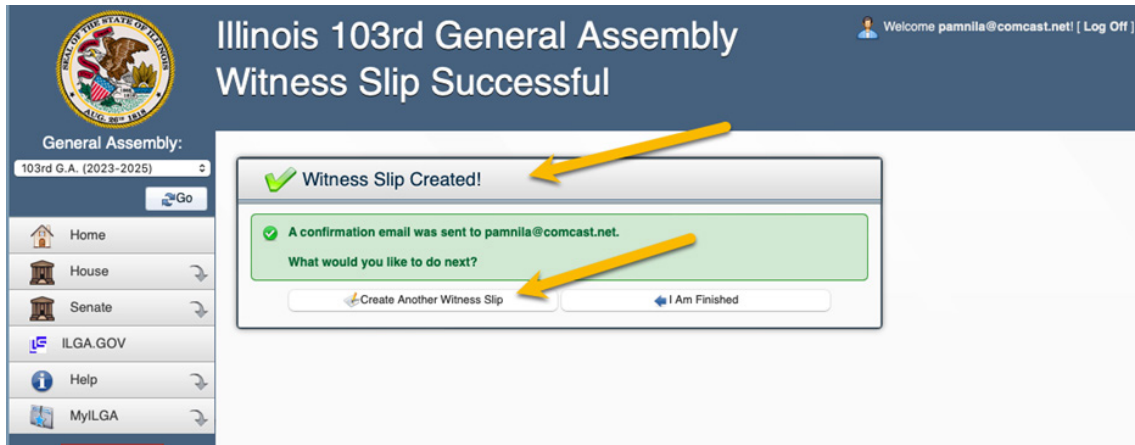
Oral Written Statement Filed **Click** Record Of Appearance Only

Please Agree to the Terms Of Agreement I Agree to the ILGA Terms of Agreement. **Click**

4 →

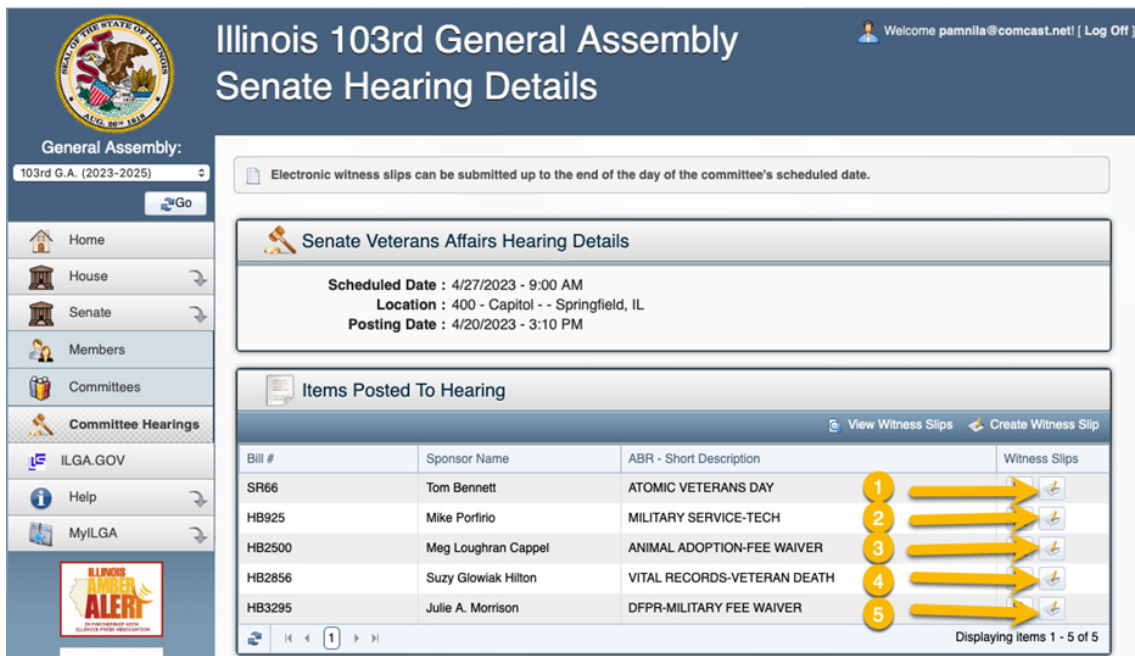
5 → **Click** **Create(Slip)**

You will then receive a notice that you will be sent an email confirmation the a Witness Slip was created. And you will be asked if you would like to Create another Winess Slip or select that I am Finished. Selecting Create Another Witness Slip will return you to the list of bills where you would like to creat Witness Slips.



The website does not remove the bill that you have already created a Witness Slip for. If you select View Witness Slips, you will find that your Witness Slip is on the last page. Although you may filter Witness Slip the default filing is my date and time created.

Continue with the process above until you have completed Witness Slips for all of the bills. If you have registered on the site, each bill should only take a minute or so to complete





ILLINOIS SPECIFIC PROGRAMS

ILLINOIS SPECIFIC PROGRAMS

Poppy Program

- *Poppy Order Form*
- *Poppy Display Entry Form*
- *Poppy Display Rules*

Blood Donor Program

Program Donations

- *Homeless Veterans*
- *National Home*
- *Military Assistance Program (MAP) Unmet Needs*
- *Service Office Support*
- *Commander's Special Project*

POPPY PROGRAM

Please read the program carefully. The Buddy Poppy Program and Buddy Poppy Display Contest are separated into sub-categories. Please contact me with any questions you may have.

A SYNOPSIS OF BUDDY POPPY

The Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States was the first veteran organization to promote a nationally organized campaign for the annual distribution of Poppies assembled by disabled and needy veterans. The Poppy movement was inspired by the poem, "In Flanders Fields" written by Colonel John McCrae of the Canadian forces before the United States entered World War I. The VFW conducted a Poppy campaign prior to Memorial Day 1922, using only Poppies that were made in France.

It was during the 1923 campaign that the VFW evolved the idea which resulted in the VFW Buddy Poppy fashioned by disabled and needy veterans who were paid for their work as a practical means of providing assistance for these comrades. Immediately thereafter the VFW Buddy Poppy Factory was established in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, where all VFW Buddy Poppies for the 1924 campaign were assembled by disabled veterans.

In February 1924, the VFW registered the name "Buddy Poppy" with the United States Patent Office, and a certificate was issued on May 20, 1924, granting the VFW all trademark rights in the name of "Buddy" under the classification of artificial flowers. The VFW has made that trademark a guarantee that all Poppies bearing that name and the VFW label are genuine products of the work of disabled and needy veterans. No other organization, firm or individual can make legal use of the name "Buddy Poppy". It has been noted that all Presidents since Warren G. Harding (1921-1923) have conveyed to the nation at large, endorsement and recognition of the VFW effort.

Today, VFW Buddy Poppies are no longer assembled by disabled, needy and aging veterans. The demand was greater than what could be assembled by disabled veterans. The majority of proceeds derived from each campaign conducted by VFW Posts and their Auxiliaries are retained locally to provide for veteran services and welfare. Buddy Poppy proceeds represent no profit to any VFW unit. All money contributed by the public for Buddy Poppies is used in the cause of veterans welfare, or for the well being of their needy dependents and the orphans of veterans.



Stephanie Kirksey
Chairman

7 Carol Dr.
Waterloo, IL 62298
Phone: (618) 973-0153

Email:
kirksey714@gmail.com

Post 6504-14

BUDDY POPPY PROGRAM

When VFW Posts acquire Poppies, they distribute these Poppies to the public for donations and those funds support the Relief Fund in the local VFW Posts. Recognition and Appreciation is noted for their displaying of the flower. All money received is used in the Post's Relief Work. All Posts should acquire extra Poppies that will not be distributed to the public so they can participate in our annual Buddy Poppy Display Contest.

The following rules apply toward our annual Buddy Poppy Distribution/eligibility for Contest:

- **When ordering** Buddy Poppies from the VFW State Headquarters, you have the option to pay when ordering or after your set date of distribution plus your Post will receive credit on the Programs Dashboard at the time the order is placed.
- **Be Advised** our Buddy Poppy Distribution Year runs from July 1, 2024 to June 30, 2025 and is based on the number of Poppies purchased by the Post and/or Auxiliary with its purchases through the Post from the VFW State Quartermaster and covers any and all donations and other uses of the Buddy Poppy such as displays, floats, etc. by the Post and/or Auxiliary.
- **Remember** that when ordering your Poppies, our 2024-2025 Membership Program will require that Posts order a minimum of 3 poppies per member with a minimum order of 1,000 poppies to be considered for All-State. Also, Posts should order extra Buddy Poppies if needed for their Poppy Display requirements. It is also important to put your Poppy Sale Date on your Order Form to make sure you receive your Poppies when they are needed.
- **Be sure** to check your order upon delivery for a shortage in Poppies/multiple damaged Poppies because adjustments will be made only within 30 days of delivery.

- **Plaque Awards** will be presented to the Post and/or Auxiliary showing the greatest numerical increase in Poppy purchases. Cut-off for determining winners will be April 30, 2025. A beautifully inscribed plaque will be presented to one Post in each Membership Category listed below. (Must have purchased poppies during the previous year to qualify for this award). In the event of a tie, the winner will be selected by the Director.

Membership Category 1 - Up to 150 Members
Membership Category 2 - 151 to 300 Members
Membership Category 3 - 301 Members and Up

- A **Special Award** will be presented during State Convention to any Post who orders a total of 25,000 poppies or more during this Fiscal Year.
- **Special Citations** will be presented to individuals recommended by Post or Auxiliary Poppy Chairman recognizing those individuals for their outstanding services to promote the Buddy Poppy Program. Individuals can include local bankers who may voluntarily set up a display in his/her bank a week or so prior to Buddy Poppy Day, urging the community's participation; another could be a theatre manager; an editor, a printer or sign maker; or anyone who promotes the program where it is not already advertised. Citation distribution to those concerned will be conducted by the Post Commander or the Post Poppy Chairman.
- **All New Post(s)** starting during the 2024-2025 Fiscal year will receive 500 free Poppies to begin their program.
- **ANNIVERSARY POPPIES** - Posts celebrating milestone anniversaries can order special poppies. Ordering requirements are the same - place your order through State Headquarters. Remember to allow 8-12 weeks for delivery.

Note: Should there be any need for clarification, contact the State Poppy Director.

ORGANIZING A POPPY DISTRIBUTION DAY

A successful V.F.W. or Auxiliary Poppy Chairman must be a special person. He or She must be a combination executive salesman, public relations expert, accountant and advertising specialist. They must be ever ready to cooperate with and assist their partner and counterpart in the Auxiliary (or Post) and have the leadership ability to make others want to work with them. They must be ENTHUSIASTIC, AND ANXIOUS TO WORK and have a thorough knowledge of the Program. To assist you in promoting your upcoming distribution, we offer these tips... Perhaps you are using them already, perhaps you use others more adaptable to your circumstances. In any case, follow these few guidelines in preparation:

A. **FIND POSSIBLE LOCATIONS:** for distribution and lock in your dates. If need be, contact the Bureau of permits at City Hall or the County Clerks Office. Insurance is also required for distribution in the streets at intersections.

B. **GET VOLUNTEER COMRADES** from your membership.

C. **START A SIGN IN SHEET** at your Post for comrades to be posted at specific locations so they know you know and that you will be looking for their presence at the time they specify.

1. **Obtain your workers.** If possible, invite the Boy Scouts or Girl Scouts to help assist in your distribution of Poppies. Just remember that a VFW member must be at the same location with the scout(s).
2. **Make sure** you have only one (1) or two (2) at a location distributing poppies.
3. **Allow** two (2) to four (4) hour shifts for distributors before relief. Relief is necessary because we are not getting any younger. You may even want to have a chair at each location for a rest period.
4. **Instruct your workers.** They must know why they are distributing Poppies, what they are expected to do and how to approach the public without scaring them off or getting their dandruff up for an argument.

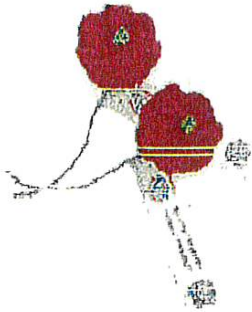
PROMOTE THE EVENT

Advise the public of your upcoming Poppy Day(s) through various sources. Example:

1. VFW Newsletters
2. Flyers
3. Newspapers
4. Radio & TV Announcements
5. Social Media
6. And of course... "Word of Mouth"

If you can think of any other way to attract attention of the public... do it!!

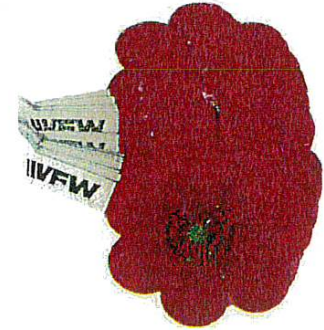
REMEMBER...When ordering Buddy Poppies, please allow twelve (12) weeks for delivery. If the State Headquarters has Poppies on hand, they will ship them to you immediately if needed right away. All Poppy accessories such as Poppy Cans, Easel Boards, Poppy Seller Caps, I.D. Cards, etc. are to be ordered directly from our National Emblem & Supply Catalog. Keep in mind that poppies can be paid for with a credit card by clicking on "Donations" on our Department Website and identifying your payment as Poppy Order.



Traditional Poppy

POPPY ORDER FORM

HEADQUARTERS
DEPARTMENT OF ILLINOIS
VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS OF THE U.S.
3300 CONSTITUTION DRIVE, SPRINGFIELD, IL 62711
FAX: 217-546-3415



Metal Poppy

ORDER DATE _____ DATE OF POPPY SALE _____

(Do not leave blank)

POST/AUX NAME _____ NUMBER _____ DISTRICT _____

PLEASE PLACE OUR ORDER FOR THE FOLLOWING:

_____ TRADITIONAL BUDDY POPPIES (\$280.00 PER THOUSAND)\$ _____

_____ METAL BUDDY POPPIES (\$140.00 PER THOUSAND).....\$ _____
(ORDER IN INCREMENTS OF 500 ONLY)

(POPPY CANS, POSTERS, ETC. CAN BE ORDERED DIRECTLY FROM THE VFW STORE AT NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS)

SHIP THE ABOVE TO: _____

(Name - PLEASE PRINT OR TYPE)

(Title)

(Poppies can only be ordered using a person's name, not the name of the Post or Office)

ADDRESS (UPS Address - **Please no P.O. Box No.**) (City) (Zip Code)

AMOUNT OF ORDER.....\$ _____

SHIPPING AND HANDLING.....\$ _____

AMOUNT INCLUDED WITH ORDER\$ _____

BALANCE DUE.....\$ _____

For Department use only:

Date Received	Date Recorded on X Sheet	Date Ordered	Date Shipped or Picked Up	Date Invoiced	Date Paid

PLEASE ALLOW 8 WEEKS WHEN ORDERING YOUR POPPIES!! YOUR POPPY ORDER WILL BE PROCESSED BY STATE HEADQUARTERS THROUGH THE PROGRAMS DEPARTMENT AT NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS. ONLY RUSH ORDERS WILL BE SHIPPED FROM STATE HEADQUARTERS IF AVAILABLE.

YOU MAY ALSO ORDER ONLINE AT www.vfwil.org

POPPY DISPLAY CONTEST GENERAL RULES

1. The rules governing the poppy displays for the 2024-2025 year will be in accordance with the national poppy display contest. All entrants will comply with these rules. Your entry will be judged by them. All Districts are requested to follow these rules as closely as possible when holding your display judging.

RULES

CATEGORY 1 - Public promotion of poppy sales: (Window, booth, parade, or poster displays, sales promotion, etc.)

A. Displays must be designed for public exposure and must bear a message urging the buying and wearing of the VFW Buddy Poppy.

B. At least one (1) of the poppies used in the display must be in their original form and color, with labels attached.

CATEGORY 2 - Memorial or inspirational displays: (wreaths, memorial tablets or plaques, patriotic or devotional themes.)

A. Displays must be designed to honor the dead, to inspire devotion to God and country, or to dramatize the activities supported by the Buddy Poppy Program.

B. At least one (1) of the poppies used in the display must be in their original form and color, with labels attached.

CATEGORY 3 - Artistic or decorative use of poppies: (Post home displays, table centerpieces, corsages, pictures, plaques, models, scenes, hats, novelty pieces, etc.)

A. Display not meeting the qualifications for categories 1 or 2 shall automatically be entered in Category 3.

B. Complete freedom shall be permitted in the use of poppies, poppy parts or poppy labels, and in the use of dyes or paints in achieving the desired artistic effect.

C. At least one (1) of the poppies used in the display must be in their original form and color, with labels attached.

2. The scoring of the displays will be in accordance with the national rules. Originality - 25 points; Composition - 25 points; Neatness - 25 points; Poppy Story - 25 points; for a total of 100 points maximum. The Originality, Composition, and Neatness are self-explanatory, with the Poppy Story as outlined in the Buddy Poppy Story.

3. Awards - There will be a First and Second Place Plaque awarded in each Division. Category One (1) must have been on display at least three days.

4. A report of District judging must be sent to the Department Buddy Poppy Display Director prior to the Department Convention. Any display not accepted at District level, or not entered in District judging, will be ineligible for State judging.

5. All Displays entered and accepted at District level will be accepted for Department judging during the Department Convention.

6. Forms for judging and reporting results will be passed out to the District Commanders at the February Council of Administration Meeting, to be forwarded to each District Chairman.

7. Poppies to be used in display contests are to be ordered from VFW Department Headquarters, 3300 Constitution Dr., Springfield, Illinois 62711.

ALL DISTRICT CONTESTS SHOULD BE COMPLETED BY MEMORIAL DAY!!

The Districts will award prizes to their winners at their discretion. Each District entry will be allowed to enter in the Department Contest, in each of the three categories. However, they must remain in the category and division as entered in the District judging.

Who may enter the contest? Any person or group of persons (except professional display builders.) The display must be entered by Post or Auxiliary.

All previous District or Department entries are ineligible for this contest.

Categories 1-2-3

A. Originality - Your own thoughts, ideas, notion, lighting, or sound in setting up a display.

Categories 1-2-3

B. Neatness - Self-Explanatory

Categories 1-2-3

C. Composition - The manner in which display is composed, and use of Buddy Poppies for effect.

Categories 1-2

D. Poppy Story - Ability to display to sell and induce the public to buy and wear poppy; tells the story of the Buddy Poppy, its use of Poppy funds, by use of words, pictures or use of toys.

NOTE- No Poppy story included in category 3.

Judging-Point System - Categories 1 and 2 can earn up to 25 points in each of the above for a top score of 100 points. Category 3, which isn't judged with a poppy story can earn up to 25 points in the other categories for a top score of 75 points.

All ties will be broken by largest Buddy Poppy count.

POPPY DISPLAY CONTEST - STATE CONVENTION

All entries in the National Display Contest must be approved and sponsored by the Department Headquarters. No other entries will be accepted by officials of the National Contest. The number of entries allocated to Illinois by National Headquarters may be flexible, and in accordance with National's rules. Department display contest winners will be notified by Department Headquarters soon after the Department Convention. Special forms will be sent to those eligible for entry in national competition. Do Not, Do Not.... take any entry to National without the proper forms as it will not be accepted.

JUDGING:

There will be four (4) judges, one of whom must be a member of the V.F.W. The other three (3) judges should not be affiliated with the organization in any manner. Each judge will be assigned a specific area to judge. It is suggested the V.F.W. Judge be assigned to the Poppy Story. All judges should be residents of the convention city.

The decision of the judges and that of the Buddy Poppy Director, and her assistants, will be final. During the judging the entire area will be closed to all except the judges so as to insure impartial judging.

Let's show that No One Does More for Veterans, and have another great year in the Buddy Poppy Display Contest. Displays will be accepted at the Department Convention from noon to 4 p.m. Thursday and Friday of Convention Week. No entries accepted after 4 p.m. Friday. Awards to be presented during the Saturday business session.

VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS OF THE UNITED STATES
PROGRAMS DEPARTMENT
“BUDDY”[®] POPPY PROGRAM

NATIONAL CONVENTION BUDDY POPPY DISPLAY CONTEST

These guidelines have been designed to place emphasis on the purpose and effectiveness of the displays. It is suggested and recommended that Department (State) contests rule be established in a like form.

RULES

- (1) Displays will be presented and judged in three categories:

CATEGORY 1. Public Promotion of Poppy Campaign (Window, booth, parade, poster displays, campaign promotions, etc.)

- (a) Displays must be designed for public exposure and must bear a message soliciting a donation for and wearing of the VFW “Buddy”[®] Poppy.
- (b) At least one (1) of the poppies used in the display must be in its original form and color, with label attached.

CATEGORY 2. Memorial or Inspirational Displays (Wreaths, memorial tablets or plaques, patriotic or devotional themes)

- (a) Displays must be designed to honor the dead, to inspire devotion to God and Country, or to dramatize the activities supported by the Buddy Poppy.
- (b) At least one (1) of the poppies used in the display must be in its original form and color, with label attached.

CATEGORY 3. Artistic or Decorative Use of Poppies (Post Home displays, table center-pieces, corsages, pictures, plaques, models, scenes, hats, novelty pieces, etc.)

- (a) Any display not meeting the qualifications for Categories 1 or 2 shall automatically be entered in Category 3.
- (b) At least one (1) of the poppies used in the display must be in its original form and color, with label attached.

- (2) Departments purchasing over 250,000 poppies will be allowed two (2) displays in **each** of the three (3) categories for the National Display Contest all others will be allowed one (1) display in each of the three (3) categories, no deviations.

- (3) The National Programs Committee shall have no responsibility in setting up, taking down or returning displays.

- (4) Displays shall be set up in space provided in the convention facility. Prior to setting up the display, the responsible person must register with the Buddy Poppy desk and complete an entry form (unless one was forwarded earlier, approved by Department) which will show the category of competition, the number of poppies used, the purpose of the display, the Post and/or Auxiliary number and location, and the name of the person who will dismantle and remove the display at the close of the convention. **(Please be advised, all displays must be removed by 4:00 p.m. on Tuesday or it will be disposed of by convention center personnel.)**
- (5) Displays may or may not be accompanied by a white card, not to exceed 4 inches by 6 inches in size, on which is lettered in black ink an explanation of the theme for the display or other information of interest to the viewers or the judges.
- (6) Post name, number, city or state (including the shape of your state) may **not** be visible on the displays. Failure to comply will result in disqualification.
- (7) (NEW) Any use of non VFW trademarks or copyrighted material on your display must have prior approval from the trademark or copyright holder. These include but are not limited to names, logos, audio/visual graphics, images and/or props. The VFW and Buddy Poppy logo and name is authorized but use of any outside organization trademark or copyrighted material and/or logos must have prior approval through their respective organization.

JUDGING

Judging of displays will be on the basis of effectiveness, purpose, clarity of theme, suitability, originality, beauty and number of poppies used. Where a sample of a large number of identical items (such as corsages or wreaths) is entered, full credit shall be given for the total number of poppies used. Judging will be completed by Monday evening and the winning displays will have the appropriate ribbons placed on the display on Tuesday morning.

PRIZES

Plaques will be awarded to the first, second, and third place winners in each of the three categories, and will be mailed to the winning Department's adjutant after convention.

NOTE

The Department adjutant will have to notify the Programs Director, in writing, by **June 30** of the Posts that will represent the Department in each category. This will allow us the time necessary to ensure each entry has sufficient space to set up at the National Convention.

Please be advised, the Programs Committee cannot guarantee against theft of personal items placed on the displays. The exhibit hall is secured at night and monitored by security guards; however, they monitor a large area and are not assigned to one specific area. We strongly discourage using items of sentimental value, items of value or items considered to be irreplaceable on the Buddy Poppy displays.

Thank you and good luck!

(Revised 1/8/2019)

OFFICIAL ENTRY BLANK FOR DISTRICT AND STATE DISPLAY CONTESTS
TO BE FILLED OUT BY ENTRANT:

POST #	AUXILIARY #
NAME OF BUILDER OR BUILDERS	
HOME ADDRESS	
NUMBER OF POPPIES USED IN DISPLAY	

THIS DISPLAY IS ENTERED IN THE FOLLOWING CATEGORY:

Circle Category and Division:

STORE OR WINDOW DISPLAY

Category #1	Division A	Division B	Division C	Store or
Poppies used in Display	100 to 750	751 to 1500	1501 and up	Window

MEMORIAL or INSPIRATIONAL DISPLAY

Category #2	Division A	Division B	Division C	Memorial or
Poppies used in Display	100 to 750	751 to 1500	1501 and up	Inspirational

ARTISTIC OR DECORATIVE DISPLAY

Category #3	Division A	Division B	Artistic or
Poppies used in Display	10 to 1000	1001 and up	Decorative

CATEGORY #1, Please have this certification form completed before entering contest

I certify that this Poppy Display was on exhibit in my place of business for a period of not less than three (3) days.

Name of Store or Business: _____

City: _____

(To be filled in by Poppy Display Chairman:)

District# _____ Display # _____

Location of Display Contest: _____

Your Display was graded	<u>ORIGINALITY</u>	<u>POINTS</u>
	<u>NEATNESS</u>	<u>POINTS</u>
	<u>COMPOSITION</u>	<u>POINTS</u>
	<u>POPPY STORY</u>	<u>POINTS</u>
	<u>TOTAL SCORE</u>	_____

Your Display Finished
_____ **Place**

Attest: Buddy Poppy Display Chairman _____

DISTRICT BUDDY POPPY CHAIRMAN: You must submit one copy of this ENTRY BLANK for each display entered in your District to the State Poppy Display director by June 1

Send to: Stephanie Kirksey, 7 Carol Dr., Waterloo, IL 62298 • If you need more copies, please photocopy

BLOOD DONOR PROGRAM



Robert Bland
Chairman

2512 W Farmington Ct
Belvidere, IL 61008
Phone: 815-685-1611

Email: robert.b.bland@outlook.com
Post 1461-6

During 2023-2024, the Department of Illinois saved up to 5,616 lives!

2023-2024 year reporting by the numbers:
2,546 hours donated
3,439.72 miles driven
3,304 members participated
\$20,190.50 dollars spent or in-kind donations
138 blood drives hosted or supported
1,872 pints donated

Let's see how many lives we can save in 2024-2025!

Reporting Requirements:

The Blood Donor Program has two parts: Blood Donations and Blood Drive. Posts and Districts must report both in the Dashboard Report.

Dashboard Report Requirements:

Post Blood Donation. To receive credit on the Dashboard Report the Post must report blood donations. Each blood donation from a Post member, Auxiliary member, or someone donating on the Post's behalf at a blood drive hosted by the Post will count as one unit for the report. Posts will also receive credit for donations if a Post member donates with another organization, for example a Post member donates at a drive with the VA the Post will receive credit for the donation.

Posts will receive one donation for a whole blood donation, one donation for a platelet donation and receive two donations for a double red donation. Only donations count for credit.

Being paid for plasma at a plasma center is not a donation and does not count for blood donation. Receiving a small in-kind gift is acceptable, such as a T-shirt or gift card. Posts may report number of hours

for donations by individual and other incidentals such as mileage to get to the donation site.

Post Blood Drive: To receive credit a Post must host a blood drive. There are many ways that you can achieve this. A Post can have a Blood Center come out to the Post and hold a drive at the Post. A Post can work with another organization and have a blood drive at the other organization's location. A Post may also work with a Blood Center and adopt the site for a day and get Post and Auxiliary members to go there and donate. When reporting add the number of hours volunteers assisted and any in-kind donation, such as using your building.

District Blood Donation: A District will receive credit on the Dashboard Report for blood donation if a member of the District Leadership reports one donation, that donation will not be counted under the Post Donations, no double counting of donations.

District Blood Drive: A District will receive credit on the Dashboard Report for Blood Drive by coordinating more than one Post in the District to have a blood drive within the same month. For example, for Veterans Day coordinate for two or more of your Posts will hold a blood drive that week or month.

Program reporting begins July 1, 2024 and will end June 30, 2025.

At the District level, a Cash Award of \$50.00 will be presented if 100 percent of the Posts have reported blood donations and blood drives by January 15, 2025.

At the Post level, a \$50 Cash award will be awarded to the Posts who donates the most pints of blood in one of the following membership categories:

- Category 1: Up to 150 Members
- Category 2: 151 to 300 Members
- Category 3: 301 Members and up

As your Blood Donor Chair, I would like to thank all of those you have donated and held blood drives in the past and for your future support. In December, 2022, my Mother had a hole in her aorta, she needed 30 blood products to save her life and allow her to have another Christmas with family. When you donate you are not just saving that person's life, you are impacting the entire family, co-workers and maybe a fellow Veteran. I am passionate about helping Veterans and getting blood, please reach out to me if you have any questions. I also used to work for the Rock River Valley Blood Center and can talk to other Blood Centers to assist in setting up blood drives.

Blood is a product that cannot be manufactured, the only source is blood donations. We as Veterans that have stepped up to put our lives on the line have another opportunity to step up and save our fellow citizens. Blood products are needed every day, from helping a newborn child fight for life, to helping accident victims, to help cancer patients fight another day. We have fought before, so now we will help others fight.

Illinois Blood Centers

Please work with your local blood centers and see if they have any programs that can assist us with community support. For example, many of the blood centers have a scholarship program for high school students. High school students run the blood drive and have a chance to earn money. This is an easy way for us to provide a place for the drive and the students run the blood drive.

The Blood Centers are listed below:

Versiti Blood Centers of Illinois

Versiti (formerly Heartland Blood Center) provide blood products to all three of our Chicagoland VA Hospitals: Jesse Brown VA Medical Center, Edward Hines Jr. VA Hospital, and Captain James A Lovell Federal Health Care Center. Across Chicagoland we serve over 80 hospitals and work with partners to collect 600 units of blood daily for local patients in need.

Point of Contact is:

Emily Alanis

Regional Manager, Donor Recruitment

Email: eanis@versiti.org

Vitalent

For information and to apply to host a blood drive go to their website at <https://vitalant.org>.

Rock River Valley Blood Center (RRVBC)

RRVBC provides blood products to 13 local hospitals in the Rockford Area.

Point of Contact is:

Elizabeth Costa (Post 1461 Auxiliary Member)

Donor Recruiter

Email: ecosta@rrvbc.com

American Red Cross

Point of Contact is:

Anna Feltham

Account Manager II

American Red Cross Blood Services

Anna.feltham2@redcross.org

Impact Life

For information and to apply to host a blood drive go to their website at <https://www.bloodcenter.org>. POC is Rob Bland at robert.b.bland@outlook.com or (815) 685-1611

PROGRAM DONATIONS

We ask every Post to support 5 programs that have been selected by the IL Veterans of Foreign Wars as vital programs that provide assistance to veterans, families, and communities. Below are the 5 programs that you are being asked to support and what your donations support.

The Program Year for these donations is July 1, 2024 to June 30, 2025. Donations MUST be received during the dates of the Program Year to get credit on the dashboard. Donations are posted to the dashboard as the donations are received and processed by State HQ.

HOMELESS VETERANS

Minimum Donation \$50

This donation must be sent to State HQ and marked as Homeless Veterans to get credit on dashboard.

This money supports Homeless Veterans Programs throughout the State of Illinois. Types of programs supported include:

- o Homeless Veterans standdowns
- o Purchase equipment or supplies for Homeless Veterans shelters
- o Support building projects that benefit Homeless Veterans
- o Support programs that assist veterans transitioning from Homeless to Housing

NATIONAL HOME

Minimum Donation \$50

This donation can be sent to State Headquarters and marked as National Home to get credit on dashboard. If you send a donation direct to the National Home that is \$50 or greater, send proof of the donation to State Headquarters and you will get credit on dashboard.

This money supports the VFW National Home in Eaton Rapids, MI. The IL VFW has 2 homes that we sponsor at the National Home (Illinois 1 and 2). We have also worked with the National Home to sponsor or support fundraising to fund a specific item or special need. All donations will be forwarded to the National Home to provide funds according to the following priorities.

1st – Fund the operations, maintenance and upkeep of Illinois Home 1 and Illinois Home 2

If the reserves required for Illinois 1 and 2 are sufficient, then money will go to:

2nd – Fund any special item or need that the IL VFW has agreed to sponsor or support at the National Home. For example, during this last year, we agreed to support raising money for a new playground and golf carts.

Final priority at National Home

3rd – General Operating Fund

Military Assistance Program (MAP)/Unmet Needs

Minimum Donation \$50

This donation must be sent to State Headquarters and marked as Military Assistance Program (MAP)/Unmet Needs to get credit on dashboard.

This money supports veterans that needs financial assistance to meet their essential needs throughout the State of Illinois. Request for assistance can be emailed to vfwil@vfwil.org and must include a specific request outlining what type of assistance is needed, the circumstances that caused the need, and total amount requested. If the veteran is not a VFW member, they must provide proof of veteran status. They must also submit copies of invoices or bills that need paid. Assistance will be paid directly to the vendor and not to the veteran. All request are approved on a case by case basis following the same guidelines as National VFW Unmet Needs programs. Types of programs supported include:

- o Assist with rent or house payment
- o Assist with utilities (electric, gas, water, sewer, phone)
- o Assist with funeral expenses for a veteran
- o Provide gas for vehicle or food for veteran

Service Office Support (SOS)

Minimum Donation \$50

This donation must be sent to State Headquarters and marked as Service Office Support (SOS) to get credit on dashboard.

This money supports the Illinois VFW Veterans Service Offices. The Illinois VFW has 3 VSOs and 2 clerical personnel in Chicago, 1 VSO in Danville, 1 VSO in Marion, and 1 part time VSO in O'Fallon. The VSO supports veterans with VA claims, VA healthcare, funeral benefits, education benefits, employment counseling, military records and other federal and state veterans benefit programs. The VSO are a resource that Posts and Districts can use to support their activities and provide those VSO services on an outreach basis. These funds support the specialty requirements of the office and supports the outreach and marketing so that the VSOs can expand their reach and assist more veterans. The SOS donations and the Red, White, and Blue Program supports all of our VSO throughout Illinois.

Minimum donation for dashboard credit is \$50

SOS Support is \$50 to \$249

Blue Level Support \$250 to \$499

White Level Support \$500 to \$999

Red Level Support \$1,000 or more

Supporters at the Red, White, or Blue Level will receive a beautiful plaque denoting their level of support, and special recognition at State Convention. Supporters donating to all three levels will receive a special plaque noting their support at all levels.

2024-2025 Commander's Special Project

Minimum Donation \$50

This donation must be sent to State HQ and marked as Commander's Special Project (CSP) to get credit on dashboard.

The Commanders Special Project this year involves Homeless Veterans Shelters in Illinois. Commander Bridges has selected 4 different Homeless Veteran Shelters that will each receive a portion of the monies donated to the Commanders Special Project Fund



Eagles Nest of St. Clair County at The Joseph Center

Eagles Nest of St Clair County is a twenty-six (26) bed transitional housing center that affords practical services for homeless male veterans striving for self-sufficiency.

They provide trauma informed care, housing, intensive case management, clothing, meals, hygiene products, substance use group, transportation assistance, career exploration options and various life skills services.



Spring Street Veterans Renaissance

Spring Street Veterans Renaissance is a transitional housing program for veterans who are homeless and/or disabled. SSVR is a 15-bed congregate facility which provides shelter and supportive services for up to 24 months and addresses all barriers to independent living. It is located in Springfield.

They operate a Veterans Pantry that provides free resources to any veteran in need. They can assist with food, clothing, household items, dishes, cookware, furniture, cleaning supplies, and personal hygiene items.



Featherfist

More than 50% of those they serve are homeless veterans. Whatever they need—housing, mental health and substance abuse treatment, educational training, vocational placement—they provide directly or through our collaborations. Featherfist is located in Chicago.

They are aware some homeless veterans live with PTSD (Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder) and/or physical disabilities. Featherfist employs case managers who are former service members themselves to better understand the challenges faced and services required to successfully re-enter mainstream society.

Networking with Chicago's VA Medical Center has helped them successfully house and maintain veteran households who otherwise might have been overlooked. Featherfist is proud to have been awarded the only TIP (Transition In Place) Veteran Housing Program in Illinois in 2012, which is still funded and operational today.



Veterans Path to Hope

New Horizons is a transitional living program for up to 20 homeless veterans. It was formerly a hotel, and there are 14 efficiency apartments and 3 shared rooms. There are two tracks for participation in the program: 1) the Bridge program for residents who need short-term assistance while waiting for identified housing to become available and 2) the Service program for veterans who need three months or longer to obtain employment, save money for housing, address recovery and/or legal concerns, and complete other goals as needed. They are located in Hebron, Illinois.

The intent of this Commander's Special Project is to draw attention to the Homeless Veteran population in Illinois. These homeless veterans shelters are just 4 of the many homeless veteran shelters and programs that are located throughout Illinois. I encourage posts to work with and support homeless veterans programs in their community throughout the year. The donations and the manner in which each facility benefited will be recognized at our 2025 State Convention.

To obtain credit for donating to the Commander's Special Project, a Post or District must send a \$50 donation to Department HQ; once received and processed the staff will change the dashboard from red to green.

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IMPORTANT DATES & DEADLINES

Calendar of Events

2024

July 4, 2024	Independence Day.
July 27-Aug. 1, 2024	National Convention, Louisville, KY
August 16-18, 2024	Council of Administration Meeting, Fairview Heights, IL
August 17, 2024	State Commander's Homecoming Banquet, Fairview Heights, IL
September 11, 2024	Patriot Day
September 20, 2024	Prisoner of War/Missing In Action Recognition Day
September 14, 2024	Commander's Call - Centralia, IL
September 15, 2024	Commander's Call - Caseyville, IL
September 21, 2024	Illinois Day at the National Home (Eaton Rapids, Michigan)
September 28, 2024	Commander's Call – East Peoria, IL
September 29, 2024	Commander's Call – Brookfield, IL
October 18-20, 2024	Big 10 Conference Indianapolis, IN
November 11, 2024	Veterans Day
December 7, 2024	Pearl Harbor Day

2025

February 7-9, 2025	Council of Administration meeting in Springfield, Illinois
February 8, 2025	State Voice of Democracy & Patriot's Pen Banquet in Springfield, IL
February 28-March 4, 2025	Voice of Democracy, Washington DC
March 1-5, 2025	National Legislative Conference, Washington DC
April 12, 2025	Commander's Call – Springfield/Decatur, IL
May 1, 2025	Loyalty Day
May 3, 2025	VFW Day of Service
May 26, 2025	Memorial Day
June 5, 2025	District Commander-Elect Training, Springfield, IL
June 5-8, 2025	State Convention, Springfield, IL
June 14, 2025	Flag Day
June 28, 2025	VFW National Home 100th Anniversary Celebration, Eaton Rapids, MI
August 9-14, 2025	National Convention, Columbus, OH

2026

Feb 6-8, 2026	State VOD Banquet and Council of Administration Springfield, IL
June 11-14, 2026	State Convention, Springfield, IL
August 15-20, 2026	National Convention, Salt Lake City, UT

2027

Feb 5-7, 2027	State VOD Banquet and Council of Administration Springfield, IL
June 10-13, 2027	State Convention, TBD
July 31-August 5, 2027	National Convention, Milwaukee, WI

Deadline Dates to Remember for 2024-2025

July 31, 2024	Audits for quarter ending June 30 due to State HQ
August 1, 2024	Deadline to submit articles for Illinois VFW News
August 1, 2024	Deadline to make Hotel Reservations for Council of Administration and Commander's Homecoming
August 9, 2024	Deadline to order Commander's Homecoming dinner tickets
August 31, 2024	Quartermaster bonds issued through State HQ expire
August 31, 2024	Fall Program book ads due to State HQ
October 15, 2024	Deadline to submit articles for Illinois VFW News*
October 31, 2024	Audits for quarter ending September 30 due to State HQ
January 10, 2025	Deadline to make Hotel Reservations for Council of Administration and Voice of Democracy and Patriot's Pen
January 31, 2025	Audits for quarter ending December 31, 2024 due to State HQ
January 31, 2025	Deadline to order VOD/PP Banquet dinner tickets
February 1, 2025	Deadline to submit articles for Illinois VFW News
April 1, 2025	Deadline to submit articles for Illinois VFW News*
April 15, 2025	Ads for Convention Book due to State HQ
April 30, 2025	Post Election Reports due.
April 30, 2025	Audits for the quarter ending March 31, 2025 due to State HQ
April 30, 2025	Any proposed By Law Changes for IL VFW By Laws due to State Adjutant
May 17, 2025	Deadline to make Hotel Reservations for State Convention
May 31, 2025	Any proposed Resolutions for consideration at State Convention due to State Adjutant
June 1, 2025	District election reports due to State HQ

VFW PROGRAMS DEADLINE DATES

NOTE: Updated for the 2024-2025 VFW Program Year

Membership

December 31, 2024	Post membership at 98% to receive plaque
February 1, 2025	District Membership at 98% to receive \$500 cash award
February 28, 2025	Post membership at 100% to receive gift card for member meal
April 1, 2025	District Commanders with 100% in membership receive \$500 cash award
April 30, 2025	Deadline to determine winner of Cramer-Soden Award
April 30, 2025	Deadline to complete All-State Post Criteria to receive award at State Convention
April 30, 2025	Post with largest increase of Legacy Life Memberships (minimum 4) receives \$100 gift certificate to VFW Store
April 30, 2025	Deadline for Districts to have completed all Post Inspections and Inspections approved by State Inspector
June 1, 2025	100 new or reinstated members to receive \$500 to attend 2025 National Convention
June 15, 2025	Deadline to qualify for All State Post/District
June 30, 2025	Deadline to qualify for All American Post/District

Public Relations/Marketing

February 28, 2025	Deadline to submit nominations for State Publication Contest to State HQ
April 30, 2025	Deadline to submit nomination for New Media Professional of the Year to State HQ

Community Service

March 15, 2025	Deadline to submit Community Activities Report to State HQ in order to qualify for National Certificate of Recognition
April 1, 2025	Deadline to submit nomination of Volunteer of the Year to State HQ
April 30, 2025	Department Community Service Report (Department to National)
May 2, 2025	Deadline for Post to submit Community Activities Recordbook to State HQ for judging

Americanism Program

April 30, 2025	Deadline to submit reports for Americanism Program to State HQ
April 30, 2025	Deadline to submit reports for POW-MIA Program to State HQ

Safety Program

April 30, 2025	Deadline to submit reports for Safety Program to State HQ
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Public Servant Recognition

January 1, 2025	Deadline to submit nominations for Law Enforcement Officer, Firefighter, Paramedic, Dispatcher of the Year to State HQ
February 1, 2025	Deadline for State to submit Law Enforcement Officer, Firefighter, Paramedic, Dispatcher of the Year to National
April 30, 2025	Deadline to submit nominations for Outstanding Legislator, Outstanding Patriotism, Government Service, Clergy, Citizen, News Media, Employer, JROTC Cadet of the Year and Life Saving Award to State HQ

Veteran's Assistance

April 30, 2025	Deadline to submit donation (\$50 min.) for MAP Program to State HQ
April 30, 2025	Deadline to submit donation (\$50 min.) for Homeless Veteran donation to State HQ
April 30, 2025	Deadline to submit donation (\$50 min.) for National Home to State HQ
April 30, 2025	Deadline to qualify for National Home Awards
April 30, 2025	Deadline to submit reports for Hospital/VAVS Program to State HQ
April 30, 2025	Deadline to order Buddy Poppies
June 30, 2025	Deadline to submit donation (\$100 min.) for VMS Program to National HQ

Voice of Democracy and Patriot's Pen

October 31	Student entries to the Post
November 15	Completion of Post judging
December 1	Sponsorship money due at State HQ for Posts or Districts wishing to sponsor VOD/PP Scholarships, Pizza Party, or Ice Cream Social
December 15	Completion of District judging December 22 District winners entry due to State HQ
December 29	District participation reports due to Department Chairmen
January 10	Completion of Department judging
January 15	Department winners due to National
January 31	Department reports due to National
April 30	Deadline to submit donation for VOD/PP to State HQ for Posts that had no nomination for VOD/PP

Smart/Maher Citizenship Education Teacher Award

October 31	Entries to the Post
November 15	Completion of Post judging
December 15	Completion of District judging
December 22	District Winners due to State HQ
December 29	District participation reports due to State HQ
January 10	Completion of Department judging
January 15	Department winners to National
January 31	Department participation reports due to National

Scout of the Year

March 1	Scout entries to the Post
April 1	Post entries to Department Scouting Chairman or Department HQs
May 1	Department entry to National from Department Scouting Chairman or State HQs

Legislative Advocacy

May 31	Resolutions to be considered at State Convention due to State HQ
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Poppy Display Contest

April 30	Deadline for Convention Awards for Poppies
May 29	District judging of Poppy displays completed
June 8	District winners' Poppy Displays delivered to State Convention
June 30	Department sends State winners list to National HQ

Illinois Specific Programs

- April 30, 2025 Deadline to submit reports for Blood Donor Program to State HQ
- April 30, 2025 Deadline to submit donation (\$50 minimum) for Commander's Special Project to State HQ
- April 30, 2025 Deadline to submit donation (\$50 minimum) for Service Office Support to State HQ

"Required deadline (by VFW National Headquarters.) All other deadlines are suggested, and can be internally set at the discretion of the VFW Department leadership. Post Chairperson, be sure to communicate with your District Chairperson to find out their official deadlines, and District Chairperson need to communicate with their Department Chairperson to find out their deadlines.

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OUR VFW STATE HEADQUARTERS



Our State Headquarters is located at 3300 Constitution Drive in Springfield. If you are ever in the area, please stop by to say hello.

Our dedicated staff is there daily to help make your year easier and to answer questions that might arise throughout your term of office. Our State Adjutant, Joe Bartley is always available via e-mail or telephone and makes serving veterans his top priority.

All communications to State Commander Maurice Bridges shall be mailed to our State Headquarters, 3300 Constitution Drive, Springfield, IL 62711.

Correspondence dealing with VFW procedures shall be directed to the State Adjutant at State Headquarters.

All money due to State shall be made payable to the State of Illinois, Veterans of Foreign Wars, and shall be transmitted to the State Quartermaster.

Poppies: All correspondence having to do with Poppies should be directed to the State Quartermaster.

STATE HEADQUARTERS

3300 Constitution Drive

Springfield, Illinois 62711

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

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