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# **CONSTITUTION OF THE VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS OF THE UNITED STATES**

## **SECTION 230102 - PURPOSES**

**T**he purposes of the Veterans of Foreign Wars are fraternal, patriotic, historical, charitable and educational; and are to:

- Preserve and strengthen comradeship among its members;
- Assist worthy comrades;
- Perpetuate the memory and history of our dead, and to assist their surviving spouses and orphans;
- Maintain true allegiance to the government of the United States of America, and fidelity to its Constitution and laws;
- Foster true patriotism;
- Maintain and extend the institutions of American freedom; and
- Preserve and defend the United States from all enemies.

**V**eterans 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 the newly elected and appointed officers for 2022-2023 year. I begin with this famous quote: "Coming together is a beginning. Keeping together is progress. Working together is success." – Henry Ford, Industrialist. Your Commitment to Excellence and Willingness to Serve are a testimony to those who have come before you and will leave a legacy for those who will follow you.

As, we continue in keeping the momentum and progress that the Department has established during 2021-2022, we must continue working together for success. Parameters used during Post and District Inspections and reviews of Quarterly Audits identified areas of concerns for the Post, District, and Department's continuing success. Without You, the Department of Illinois will not function. Without You, Veterans' service will fail. Without You, VFW programs will falter... You, the local leaders of the VFW, are the backbone of the Department and of the organization. Your acceptance of the challenges so that you can feel the exhilaration of victory is why we will not fail, we will not falter. This I know to be true because I have faith in your ability and your compassion for our fellow Veterans. So, I say again, congratulations and welcome to the team.

Please keep this guide with you as you conduct the business of our order. The Commander's Leadership Manual is a resource for all the major programs we will be conducting this year. It will answer any of the questions you may encounter or direct you to someone who can. This manual is for all members, not just the leadership, so please share it. "The price of success is hard work, dedication to the job at hand, and the determination that whether we win or lose, we have applied the best of ourselves to the task at hand." – Vince Lombardi.

This year, there will be continuing changes to the way we have done things in the past; we are still coming out of the pandemic which kept us from conducting our normal business. We have become complacent in daily operations of Post and Districts. We will continue to bounce back; we will be better, and we will be stronger. To do this, we are going to increase the emphasis of involvement within our communities, participation in our core programs and mentorship within our organization. WE must let our communities know that were back and that we are coming back vigorously, our brothers and sisters in arms need to know that we are still here and that they can turn to us for support. This is the only way forward. "Success is how high you bounce when you hit bottom." – George S. Patton.

In closing I want to leave you with the Motto for this year: "Working Together, Supporting Veterans." We have a job to do, and we need to get it done, but let us not get so wrapped up in completing the mission that we overlook the Veteran with their hand outstretched asking for help. I look forward to working together with all of you to support the needs of our veterans.



**Bobby Edwards**  
*State Commander*

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Springfield, IL 62791-3206  
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Website: [www.vfwil.org](http://www.vfwil.org)

# STATE ADJUTANT



**Joe Bartley**  
*State Adjutant*

3300 Constitution Drive  
Springfield, IL 62791-3206  
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Website: [www.vwil.org](http://www.vwil.org)

Thank you to everyone that is out there serving veterans and doing the work to support veterans everyday. As we strive to get back to some sense of normalcy, let's continue the work of the VFW at the Post, District, and State level and make sure we are taking credit for all our efforts.

The posts and districts have worked hard and adapted their programs over the last 2 years and I encourage you to continue that hard work in the upcoming year. Thank you to all the officers that have served during the past 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 office is doing an outstanding job in supporting and assisting veterans.

I'm proud to share a leadership position with you this year. You have been chosen or elected by your peers to be a part of the leadership team for the State of Illinois. Whether you are serving at the post, district, or state level, you have accepted the responsibilities of those offices.

The State Headquarters is working to update the X-Sheet reporting to make it more user friendly, easy to use, and resemble the All American Dashboard. We have reorganized this year's Commander's Leadership Manual so that the programs are grouped in the same order as the X-Sheet. 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. According to the last census, there are approximately 84,000 veterans in Illinois who qualify for membership in the VFW, yet our membership is less than 42,000 members. 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. Our membership numbers have a direct correlation to our ability to help veterans and to influence legislation that is a benefit to all veterans.

We are all here for the same reason and must continue to work hard to meet the goals. We can do that by being team players, knowledgeable of our core values, and having a desire of "Working Together – Supporting Veterans". I look forward to working with you during the upcoming year to support our veterans. Thank you for being a part of the 2022-2023 Team!

# CHIEF OF STAFF

## Working Together-Supporting Veterans

Comrades, I want to start off by thanking Commander Edwards for appointing me as your Chief of Staff for the 2022/2023 year. Also, congratulations to all the newly elected officers at the Post and District level. I look forward to working with you.

To me, the Chief of Staff must have a little knowledge of everything we do. Whether that be membership, youth activities, the x-sheet, etc.

Let's talk a little about the x-sheet. It is in the process of a major overhaul that is long overdue. Hopefully, by now it is integrated to be more user-friendly and is somewhat mirrored from the National All-American Dashboard. So, what does that mean? You have no reason to leave anything blank. The x-sheet is a report card, so everyone knows you are doing the good work of the VFW.

Next, I want to talk about my two major goals this year. They are accountability throughout our Posts and Districts and spreading knowledge to our membership. As we continue to recover, I have noticed that we have become somewhat spiritless. We have used excuses to not exercise our obligations to our organization and that must stop now. We need to concentrate on rallying our troops. That means if you are a District Commander, you must rally your District Officers and your Post Commanders. If you are a Post Commander that means rallying your Post Membership. We have too many Posts that are in disarray in this Department, and it is inexcusable. So that is where knowledge and mentorship come into play. Don't ever be afraid to reach out and ask questions.

As we move forward this year, I am excited to see what everyone is capable of and what our Department Level Officers and Chairman have to offer. Remember we are all comrades, and we are here for the greater good of the Veterans of Foreign Wars.

As many of you know I always end my correspondence with "if you need any help don't hesitate to reach out to me". I take that to heart; I take pride in helping not just our veterans but our members as well.



**Ryan Higginbotham**  
*Chief of Staff*

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Olney, IL 62450

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Email:

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Post 4226-13

# STATE INSPECTOR



**Robert Bailey**  
*Inspector*

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Oswego, IL 60543

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rjbailey72@gmail.com

Post 7452-19

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 rate of \$10.00 per Post Inspection, at the time the District becomes 100 percent Inspected and approved by the Department Inspector.

## STATE SERVICE OFFICE



**Derek Giffin**  
*State Service Officer*

2122 West Taylor St.  
Room 105  
Chicago, IL 60612

Phone: 312-980-4284  
Fax: 312-980-4680  
E-mail: [derek.giffin@va.gov](mailto:derek.giffin@va.gov)

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, Derek Giffin, an Iraq 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. An ADSO from the Chicago office provides representative services to Hines VAMC every Thursday. Field service coverage is also provided at various locations as indicated in the schedule listed below. The Regional Office staff includes two Claims Consultants 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.

**Department Service Office Contact Information**

VFW Service Office  
2122 West Taylor St. Room 105  
Chicago, IL 60612  
Phone: 312-980-4284  
Fax: 312-980-4680  
  
Email: [derek.giffin@va.gov](mailto:derek.giffin@va.gov)  
Website link: [www.vfwserviceoffice.com](http://www.vfwserviceoffice.com)

Office Telephone Hours  
Monday thru Friday  
8:00 am to 3:30 pm

Office Walk-In Hours  
Monday through Thursday  
9:00 am to 11:30 am  
12:30 pm to 3:00 pm

**VFW Service Office Staff**

Derek Giffin, State Service Officer  
U.S. Army, Iraq [derek.giffin@va.gov](mailto:derek.giffin@va.gov)

Charles Johnson,  
Assistant Department Service Officer, Chicago  
U.S. Army, Iraq  
[charles.johnson5@va.gov](mailto:charles.johnson5@va.gov)

Russell Meredith,  
Assistant Department Service Officer, Chicago  
U.S. Navy, Iraq  
[russell.meredith@va.gov](mailto:russell.meredith@va.gov)

Gregory Strong,  
Assistant Department Service Officer,  
Marion VAMC  
U.S. Army, Iraq  
[gregory.strong3@va.gov](mailto:gregory.strong3@va.gov)

Sean Conner,  
Assistant Department Service Officer,  
Illiana Health Care System, Danville VAMC  
USMC, Iraq  
[sean.conner@va.gov](mailto:sean.conner@va.gov)

Grabiela Salgado,  
Claims Consultant, Chicago  
[grabiela.salgado@va.gov](mailto:grabiela.salgado@va.gov)

Edith Giles, Receptionist, Chicago  
U.S. Navy  
[edith.giles@va.gov](mailto:edith.giles@va.gov)

## Field Office/ Outreach Locations

Russell Meredith  
Hines VA Medical Center  
Bldg 1, Room D109  
Phone: 708-202-2562  
Each Thursday, 8:00 am to 3:30 pm  
(call the Chicago office to verify)

Derek Giffin  
Judd Kendall Post 3873  
every first Tuesday of the month  
(10:00 am to 2:00 pm)  
908 Jackson Ave.  
Naperville, IL 60540

Benjamin O. Davis Post 311  
every 2nd Wednesday of the month  
(9:00 am to 3:00 pm)  
22341 Governors Hwy.  
Richton Park, IL 60471

Chicago Heights Vet Center  
every 4th Wednesday of the month  
(9:00 am to 3:00 pm)  
1010 Dixie Hwy.  
Chicago Heights, IL 60411

Chicago Vet Center  
Every first Friday of the month (from  
09:00 am to 3:00pm)  
3348 W. 87th Street, Suite 2  
Chicago, IL 60652

Gregory Strong  
Marion VA Medical Center  
Room 103  
2401 W. Main St  
Marion, IL 62959  
Phone: 618-997-5311 ext. 58230  
FAX: 618-997-8219  
Monday, Wednesday to Friday, 8:00  
am - 3:00 pm

O'Fallon VFW Post 805  
223 West 1st St.  
O'Fallon, IL 62269  
618-624-6575  
1st Tuesday only  
8:00 am - 3:00 pm

Sean Conner  
Illiana Health Care System,  
Danville VAMC  
Bldg 98, Room 1012  
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 CBOC:  
First Tuesday of every month  
501 Lake Land Blvd., Mattoon IL from  
0800-1500

Bloomington VA CBOC:  
Second Tuesday of every month  
207 Hamilton Road, Bloomington IL  
from 0800-1500

Peoria VA CBOC:  
Third Tuesday of every month  
7717 N Orange Prairie Rd., Peoria IL  
from 0800-1500

Decatur VA CBOC:  
Third Wednesday of every month  
792 North Sunnyside Road,  
Decatur IL from 0800-1500

Springfield VA CBOC:  
Fourth Tuesday of every month  
5850 South 6th St., Springfield IL  
from 0800-1500

# MEMBERSHIP



**Matthew Willis**  
*Chairman*

202 W. Washington St.  
Athens, IL 62613

Phone: 217-741-7493  
Email sbama1@hotmail.com

Post 6871-10

I want to start by saying Thank You to State Commander Bobby Edwards for appointing me as your State Membership Director for 2022-2023 and I look forward to working with you as a part of your team.

COVID had a negative impact on the activities and membership of the IL VFW but now we need to get back to work and strive to reenergize our membership to build the IL VFW back to the Pre-COVID days, better and stronger.

We have a lot of potential for growth in Illinois. We have a lot of eligible veterans that have never been invited to join a VFW Post. We need to talk to people in the community and identify those veterans that qualify. We need to incorporate a membership drive or event into any other activity that we have throughout the year. If you're having a family picnic, use it as an opportunity to invite potential members and show them what the VFW is about. If your Post is striving for All-State or All-American, you need to show that you have conducted two membership drives or events and submit a report to the dashboard.

Our problem is not just the lack of getting new members, our problem is also about not retaining the members that we have. Our goal from the first day they join the VFW is to engage the new member in activities, mentor them on the importance of their membership, and encourage them to help others join our ranks.

Our membership year begins July 1 and we need to start work that day on contacting and renewing the membership of our annual members. National has recently started allowing members to renew for 1 or 2 years. Encourage the 2 year membership or renewal but again get them involved and keep them motivated to want to belong.

Are you using the VFW Mobile Recruiting App? I ask that you encourage your members to download the app and register with their mem-

bership number. Then, when they meet someone eligible for VFW membership, it is as easy as scanning the back of their drivers license and the app will populate a membership application.

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.

Instead of having 3 membership recruiters in North, Central, and South regions, 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 2022-2023 year. Commander Edwards reminds us we are all "Working Together – Supporting Veterans" Growing our membership and keeping the IL VFW strong is the best way to guarantee we can live up to that. Every Veteran Counts!!



## Illinois Membership Program

2022-2023

**Bobby Edwards**

State Commander

“Working Together Supporting Veterans”

### ILLINOIS MEMBERSHIP PROGRAM 2022-2023

**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.

#### 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: Every Veteran Counts!. It is our job to keep our VFW strong!

This membership year, you will see the addition of requirements for a membership drive/event. Membership materials, brochures, and posters can be ordered from the Membership Department using the Membership Order Form on [vfw.org](http://vfw.org). Resources for Post Development, Membership Campaigns, and Mentorship are available in the Training & Support Section of [vfw.org](http://vfw.org). Promotional tools such as radio spots, advertisement, public service announcement, and media kits are in the Media Room on [vfw.org](http://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. Membership Challenges will be issued in August, October, December, January, March, and May. The Membership Challenge will be sent out by email and included in the General Orders for the respective months.

## VETERAN OF THE MONTH

Posts are asked to nominate one of their members as Veteran of the Month. Look for those comrades from your post who stand apart from the rest by serving the community, Veterans and embodying the purposes of our congressional charter: to preserve and strengthen comradeship among its members; to assist worthy comrades; to perpetuate the memory and history of our dead; and to assist their widows and orphans; to maintain true allegiance to the Government of the United States of America, and fidelity to its Constitution and laws; to foster true patriotism; to maintain and extend the institutions of American freedom, and to preserve and defend the United States from all her enemies.

Nominations will be submitted by sending a letter to State Headquarters by the 25th of each month. The nomination letter will contain the veteran's name, Post Number, and a description of what the veteran has done over the last 30 days that makes them worthy of being the Veteran of the Month. Nomination should be sent by email to [vwil@vwil.org](mailto:vwil@vwil.org).

The Veteran that is selected each month will receive recognition from the State Commander and will become eligible for consideration as Veteran of the Quarter and each Veteran of the Quarter will be eligible for Veteran of the Year and recognition at State Convention.

## 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 distinctive State Commander's Knife Set
- 25 new or reinstated members will receive a State Commander's coin
- 50 new or reinstated members will receive a State Commander's shirt
- 75 new or reinstated members will receive a State Commander's Jacket
- 100 new or reinstated members by June 1, 2023 will be awarded \$500 to attend the 2023 National Convention. This award is non-transferable and will be presented to the winners at the National Convention.

## POST COMMANDER & QUARTERMASTER AWARD

Posts recruiting 5% of their prior membership (as reported on Memstats), with a minimum of six members, by January 15, 2023: The Post Commander and Quartermaster will receive a special embroidered State Commander's jacket. (Partial numbers will be rounded up to the next whole number). Jacket size forms will be sent to qualifying Post Commanders and Quartermasters. FORMS MUST BE RECEIVED AT STATE HEADQUARTERS NO LATER THAN FEBRUARY 15, 2023.

## POST AWARD

The Post having the largest increase in Legacy Life Membership, with a minimum of 5 new Legacy Life Memberships by April 30, 2023, will receive a \$100 gift certificate from the National VFW Store.

## DISTRICT AWARD

District Commanders who are 98% in membership by February 1, 2023, will receive a \$500 cash award. District Commanders who are 100% in membership by April 1, 2023, will receive an additional \$500 cash award.

(Up to \$1000 can be awarded to District Commanders!)

## CRAMER-SODEN AWARD

The All-State District Commander who has the highest numerical increase from their 2021-2022 year to their 2022-2023 year 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, 2023.

## ALL-STATE AWARD PROGRAM

The 2022-2023 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, 2023.
- To receive All-State awards at the State Convention, the deadline for completion of All-State criteria is April 30, 2023.

## ALL-STATE AWARD PROGRAM

- Membership greater than 102%
- Posts must hold 2 membership drives/events 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 5 poppies per member with a minimum of 1,000 poppies.
- Posts must have one nomination for each of the programs of Patriot's Pen, Voice of Democracy, and Teacher of the Year 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 representation at all properly called District Conventions or meetings.
- Posts must have representation at all of their respective Regional 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 50 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 100%
- Districts must have 100% of Posts inspected and the inspections must be cleared by the State Inspector by April 30, 2023
- Districts must hold a minimum of one School of Instruction and submit a report to State Headquarters.
- Districts must ensure at least 4 Posts hold a 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 Police Officer of the Year
  - o Firefighter of the Year
- Districts must forward a record of the Roll Call of Officers and Posts of each District meeting to State Headquarters

## ALL-STATE DISTRICT CRITERIA

- 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.



## **NATIONAL MEMBERSHIP PROGRAM 2022-2023**

### **Membership Mission**

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

### **Introduction**

Without question, our membership numbers have decreased every year except for two years in the last 30 years. Yes, we have been successful in recruiting new members. However, the effort across the organization needs to improve if we want our influence in Congress to be noticed.

Today, the Veterans of Foreign Wars is 123 years old. During those years, we have had WWI, WWII, Korean, Vietnam and other veterans joining en masse. Today, however, we have lost many of these honorable men and women. As history has proven, the Post-9/11 veterans will join our organization like others have when they are ready, however usually not until their kids grow or their retirements are in place.

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.

You might ask, how do we build our organization? It's simple, leadership by example. If you are a Commander of a Post, District, Department or the National Commander, then get out there and recruit members yourself and show your team that if you can do it, so can they. A good way to do this is to improve the way we communicate with our members at all levels of the organization. Posts, Districts, Departments and our National Officers need to use all methods available to convey information for news and training to our membership through newsletters, emails, social media, recruiting booths and outreach teams.

We need to know who our members are and how we can address their needs and concerns. It's time to step it up and recruit post-9/11 veterans. 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 that same scenario again next year and the year after, we could be easily back over 2,000,000 members strong. When you are out there recruiting, remember this one thing: Every Veteran Counts!

### **Membership Goals**

1. Build a strong organization through recruiting new members while retaining our current membership that creates a solid baseline for the future.
2. Work together to achieve the VFW's goals. The VFW National Headquarters staff is available to assist in coordinating programs, developing membership initiatives and building awareness among our membership and the entire veteran community.

### **Membership Objectives**

- 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
- Provide Membership Assistance, using teams from your conference to assist and mentor those who request assistance.

### **Membership Resources**

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

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

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

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

## **TRIPLE CROWN AWARD**

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

## **RECRUITING AWARDS**

- 1,5, 10, 15 Corresponding numbered member pin
- 25 CIC Belt Buckle or Jewelry Set & Citation
- 50 National Aide-De-Camp cap and Citation
- 75 Commemorative Medallion Set
- 100 Century cap or \$50 VFW Store credit & Citation
- 175 CIC Century Plus Jacket

## DEPARTMENT 100 PERCENT INCENTIVE

Any Department that attains 100% in membership by close of business on May 1st, 2023, will be entered into a random drawing. The commander plus guest and quartermaster plus guest that is selected will each receive:

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

## EARLY BIRD AWARD - VFW LEGISLATIVE CONFERENCE

The top three Post commanders and quartermasters in each division and the top two District Commanders and Quartermasters on Jan. 1, 2023, will receive:

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

## DEPARTMENT EARLY BIRD INCENTIVE

For every Department that achieves 92% in membership by Jan. 1, 2023; the Department commander and quartermaster will receive:

- A Henry .30-30 Caliber Rifle or a credit voucher of equal value for use with Veterans Travel Services (VTS) or the VFW Store.

## POST COMMANDER & QUARTERMASTER NEW AND REINSTATED MEMBER AWARD

The top 10 Post commanders and quartermasters in each division who report more than 50 new and/or reinstated members by Jan. 1, 2023, will each be awarded:

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

## KANSAS CITY SPREE

The top two Post commanders and the top two District commanders in each division who achieve 100% membership by April 1, 2023, along with their guest will each be awarded:

- Round-trip airfare to Kansas City, Mo. from the airport nearest the awardee's home.
- A fun-filled weekend (May 18-21, 2023) that may include but is not limited to touring, shopping and a complete tour of the VFW National Headquarters.

## 100% POST, DISTRICT AND DEPARTMENT

A distinctive streamer will be awarded to every Post, District and State/Department that achieves 100% or greater in membership before July 1, 2023.

## 100% COMMANDER DRAWING

Each Post and District commander that exceeds 100% in membership by June 1, 2023, 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 COMMANDER & QUARTERMASTER DIVISION CHALLENGE**

For every 10 new/reinstated members recruited between July 1, 2022, and April 1, 2023, Posts will earn one entry for both Post commander and quartermaster entered into a drawing. One Post per division will receive:

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

## **LEGACY LIFE MEMBERSHIP ACQUISITION**

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

- A Legacy Society Post Proclamation.

Each Post that achieves the distinctive benchmark of 100 Legacy Life members by July 1, 2023, commander or Post representative will receive:

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

## **TOP FIVE NATIONAL RECRUITERS**

The top five Recruiters plus a guest on February 1, 2023, will each receive:

- Transportation and Accommodations to attend the Commander-in-Chief's Seminar in May 2023.

(SEE IMPORTANT NOTES AT THE END)

## **TOP DEPARTMENT RECRUITERS**

The top Recruiter in every Department on July 1, 2023, will receive:

- A Henry .30-30 Caliber Rifle or a credit voucher of equal value for use with Veterans Travel Services (VTS).

Note: Minimum of 25 new/reinstated members required to win this award.

## **ELITE RECRUITER**

Any VFW member who signs up 250 or more new and/or reinstated members by July 1, 2023, will receive:

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

## **RECRUITER OF THE YEAR**

The VFW member who signs up the greatest number of new and/or reinstated members greater than 250 by July 1, 2023, will receive:

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

## NEW POST DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT AWARD

For each new Post chartered, and/or revitalized, the Department Quartermaster will receive:

- A \$250 credit from the VFW Store to be used towards necessary materials for the new Post.

## ALL-AMERICAN CRITERIA

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

## ALL-AMERICAN POST CRITERIA

- Membership greater than 100%
- Must conduct two Membership recruiting events, submit reports through All-American Dashboard.
- Post-Election Report must be submitted to National
- Meet all the following Program Participation Criteria:
  - o Voice of Democracy - minimum of one entry advanced to District judging (Overseas Post can donate \$75 to National in lieu of entry)
  - o Patriots Pen - minimum of one entry advanced to District judging (Overseas Post can donate \$75 to National in lieu of entry)
  - o Hold a fundraiser with the proceeds going to Veterans & Military Support Programs Services, minimum of \$100.
  - o National Citizenship Education Teachers Award – one entry advanced to next level of judging (Overseas Post donate \$75 to National in lieu of entry)
  - o A Post must submit a community service report to their department for submission to the All-American Dashboard NLT 30 June 2023
  - o Buddy Poppy- Purchase five per member in the Post

## ALL-AMERICAN POST AWARD

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

The Top 50 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 and Post members may purchase "Post Member" cap)
- All-American lapel pin (commander only, quartermaster may purchase pin)
- All-American Team Post Member lapel pin (25 pack)
- The top five commanders in each division will also receive:
  - A \$1,000 stipend to be used toward attending the VFW National Convention.
  - Reserved seating at the VFW National Convention joint opening session.

## ALL-AMERICAN DISTRICT CRITERIA

- Membership greater than 100%
- Conduct two Membership recruiting events, submit report through the dashboard.
- District-Election Report must be submitted to National
- Meet all the following Program Participation criteria:
  - o Voice of Democracy - minimum of one entry advanced to Department judging (Overseas District donate \$100 to National in lieu of entry)
  - o Patriots Pen - minimum of one entry advanced to Department judging (Overseas District donate \$100 to National in lieu of entry\*see last page)
  - o National Citizenship Education Teachers Award – one entry advanced to Department judging (Overseas District donate \$100 to National in lieu of entry)

## ALL-AMERICAN DISTRICT AWARD

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

The Top 25 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)
- The top two District commanders in each division will also receive:
  - A \$1,000 stipend to be used toward attending the VFW National Convention.
  - Reserved seating at the VFW National Convention joint opening session.

## ALL-AMERICAN DEPARTMENT CRITERIA

- Membership must be greater than 100%.
- Must conduct two Membership recruiting events, report of these events must be submitted through the All-American dashboard.
- Conduct a Department Commander's "Official Visit or Round Up" prior to Jan 1, 2023, with a report submitted through the All-American dashboard.

### National Legislative Service

- Monthly National Legislative Service committee member reports submitted to National Legislative Service in Washington, D.C.

### National Veterans Services

- Must have a State/Department service officer and submit his or her name and contact information to National Veterans Services in Washington, D.C. by July 31, 2022.
- Department Service Officer successfully completes NVS training requirements with a passing grade.
- Department Service Officer or appropriate designee reports hosting Post Service Officer training to NVS. Reports due by 30 June 2023.

### Programs

- Voice of Democracy - An entry advanced to National judging
- Patriot's Pen - An entry advanced to National judging
- Veterans & Military Support Programs – Must complete State/Department fundraiser and proceeds donated to Veterans & Military Support Programs, Kansas City, Mo. (\*see notes page)
- Must have at least one teacher submitted for the Teacher of the Year competition. (One entry from one of the three categories).

## ALL-AMERICAN DEPARTMENT AWARD

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

## CONFERENCE MEMBERSHIP AWARD

The State/Department leading each conference will be entrusted with the conference membership colors for the following year. The 2021-2022 Conference winners will return the colors to the membership booth at National Convention in Phoenix, AZ no later than COB on Monday after the Joint Opening Session. The 2022-2023 Conference winners will then pick up the colors from the Membership Director at National Convention in July 2023 in Phoenix, AZ any time after 0800 on Tuesday at the Membership booth.

The Conference with the highest membership percentage of the four Conferences will have their name and year engraved on a traveling trophy presented by the Commander-in-Chief to the Conference Chairman at the National Convention. The 2022-2023 Conference Chairman will return the trophy to the membership booth at National Convention in Phoenix, AZ no later than COB on Saturday to ensure placement of the new nameplate. This trophy will be presented to the 2022-2023 Conference Chairman on stage during the Joint Opening Session\*\*.

## POST MEMBERSHIP DIVISIONS & MINIMUM QUALIFYING PERCENTAGES

Division	Total Membership		Qualifying Percentage
1	951+		Over 100%
2	750	950	Over 100%
3	356	749	Over 100%
4	246	355	Over 100%
5	185	245	Over 100%
6	143	184	Over 100%
7	112	142	Over 100%
8	88	111	Over 100%
9	68	87	Over 100%
10	51	67	Over 100%
11	10	50	Over 100%

## DISTRICT MEMBERSHIP DIVISIONS & MINIMUM QUALIFYING PERCENTAGES

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

### Important Notes

- In order to receive stipends, awardees must attend designated events • Only one National paid stipend per event (National Convention, legislative Conference, etc.)
- All awards are non-transferable
- Post/District/Department: Membership must be greater than 100 percent, which means 100 percent plus one in overall membership.
- Early Bird Award – VFW Legislative Conference: Each winner if able must walk Capitol Hill with their Departments and attend the Voice of Democracy (VOD) parade of winners.
- Top Five Recruiter Award: Seminar is outside the continental United States and requires current passport to attend. Must be valid for 6 months after the trip dates.
- Post member cap, 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.
- The Department Commander’s “Official Visit or Round Up” is for Department commanders to visit Posts in their Department to get face-to-face time with their Post and District leadership and assist with membership and Programs.  
*For further information about the Commander’s “Official Visit or Round Up”, please contact the Membership Department by calling 1-888-JOIN-VFW or by email at membership@vfw.org*
- Donations made to replace a Voice of Democracy and Patriot’s Pen (By eligible overseas Post). Do not donate through your Department or by any other means. Use this link: <https://VFWPrograms.formstack.com/forms/vfwprogramsdonation>
- Veterans & Military Support Programs Services Donations for Post/District/Department as listed above will only be accepted only through the following link: <https://heroes.vfw.org/page/22950/donate/1>
- \*\*For the Conference Membership Award traveling trophy, the Conference Chairman will be responsible for the return of the trophy to the Membership Department booth at the National Convention each year

## **PUBLIC RELATIONS/ILLINOIS VFW NEWS**

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 news media outlets could set the stage for success in the years to come.

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

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

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

- Determine your audience. Who do you want to reach with your message? Different VFW activities appeal to different segments of the community.
- Define your message. Sticking to one message is essential. However, your message may be presented in several ways through various outlets. Determine the best way to present your message for the various outlets.
- Develop a strategy. How can you best accomplish your goals? Look at the dynamics of your community. Build a relationship with the media in your area. Keep an up-to-date list of contacts for each outlet. You may have better results if you have one person at each news media outlet as you go to contact. Become the best source of information in your community on patriotic and veterans' issues.
- Make your Post, District and Department visible and active on social media.

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

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



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**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).

### **2022-2023 State Publications Contest**

Editors of District and Post newsletters are invited to enter one issue of their publication in the 2022-2023 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, 2022 and December 31, 2022.

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 2023.

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, 2023**.

### **News Media Professional of the Year**

Posts and Districts are invited to nominate a News 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, 2023**. The News 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.