

# ILLINOIS

## COMMANDER'S LEADERSHIP MANUAL



### ALL IN, ALL THE TIME

ROBERT BAILEY, STATE COMMANDER, 2026-2027

NATIONAL COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF 2026-2027

CORY GEISLER

“ONE TEAM, ONE MISSION, VETERANS FIRST”



# 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 Robert Bailey.

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 2026-2027 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 *All In, All The Time* 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](mailto:vfwil@vfwil.org) • State Website: <http://www.vfwil.org>

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>Section</b>	<b>Page</b>
You Are The Leader.....	Inside Front Cover
Table of Contents.....	Page 3
VFW Mission and Vision.....	Page 4
VFW Core Values.....	Page 5
Constitution of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States.....	Page 6
State Commander.....	Page 7
Adjutant.....	Page 8
Chief of Staff.....	Page 9
State Inspector.....	Page 10
State Service Office.....	Pages 11-17
Membership Program.....	Pages 18-32
Public Relations & Illinois VFW News.....	Pages 33-34
<b>The Five Pillars of VFW Service</b>	
<b>Community Service</b>	
Community Activities.....	Pages 39-41
Americanism.....	Pages 42-43
POW-MIA Program.....	Pages 44-45
Safety Program.....	Page 46
Public Service Recognition.....	Pages 47-50
<b>Veteran's Assistance</b>	
Military Assistance Program (MAP)/Unmet Needs.....	Pages 53-54
Homeless Veterans.....	Page 55
National Home for Children.....	Pages 56-57
Student Veteran Liaison.....	Page 58
Claims and Benefits.....	Page 59
VFW Mental Wellness.....	Pages 60-61
Hospital/VAVS Program.....	Pages 62-63
Buddy Poppy Drive.....	Pages 64-65
Women Veterans.....	Page 66
Veteran Suicide Awareness Program.....	Pages 140-141
<b>Youth Programs</b>	
Voice of Democracy.....	Pages 69-78
Youth Activities.....	Pages 79-95
Youth Cadet Program.....	Pages 96-97
Scouting Program.....	Pages 98-104
<b>Legislative Advocacy</b>	
Legislation Advocacy.....	Page 107
Action Corps.....	Pages 108-114
<b>Illinois Specific Programs</b>	
Buddy Poppy Program.....	Pages 117-125
Blood Donor program.....	Pages 126-127
Program Donations.....	Pages 128-130
<b>Important Dates &amp; Deadlines</b>	
Calendar of Events.....	Page 132
Deadline Dates to Remember.....	Page 133
VFW Program Deadline Dates (by program).....	Pages 134-136
VFW Program Deadline Dates (by month).....	Pages 137-139
State Headquarters.....	Back Cover

# **THE VFW MISSION**

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

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

# **THE VFW VISION**

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

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

## **THE VFW CORE VALUES**

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

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

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

**The VFW Purpose**

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

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

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

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

# STATE COMMANDER

Comrades and Leaders of the Department of Illinois,

Welcome to the 2026–2027 administrative year. As we stand on the threshold of a new chapter for the Department of Illinois Veterans of Foreign Wars, I am profoundly honored to serve alongside you. The manual you hold in your hands is more than a collection of rules, dates, and administrative guidelines—it is your roadmap to operational excellence, structural health, and impactful service.

Our mission this year is driven by a singular, unyielding focus: **“All In, All the Time.”** Leadership in the VFW is not a title; it is a continuous commitment to the veterans who rely on us, the communities that look to us for strength, and the legacy we are charged to protect. Being “All In” means looking at our Posts, Districts, and Department programs with a sharp eye for accountability, transparency, and growth.

To achieve this, our focus this year rests on three critical pillars:

- **Strict Operational Compliance:** True leadership begins with organizational integrity. We must ensure absolute adherence to the National Bylaws, the Manual of Procedure, and our statutory responsibilities. From timely Election Reports to sound financial reporting, our compliance is the bedrock that allows our advocacy to stand strong.
- **Decisive and Transparent Communication:** A leadership team is only as strong as its connection to the field. We are implementing structured internal communication protocols to ensure every leader is informed, aligned, and equipped to execute operational orders.
- **Aggressive Membership Recruitment and Engagement:** Growth is the lifeblood of our organization. We must be relentless in our recruitment and retention efforts, ensuring every eligible veteran knows they have a home, a purpose, and a voice in the Department of Illinois.

This manual provides the essential tools, program criteria, and award structures—from our youth scholarship deadlines to our community outreach initiatives—designed to help your Post and District thrive. Use it daily. Treat it as the foundational text for your leadership team.

The challenges ahead of us require steady hands and dedicated hearts. I challenge each of you to push past the status quo, demand excellence of yourselves and your officers, and approach every day of this ensuing year with an “All In, All the Time” mindset.

Thank you for your leadership, your dedication, and your unwavering service to our fellow veterans. Let’s get to work.



**Robert Bailey**  
*State Commander*

3300 Constitution Drive  
Springfield, IL 62791-3206

Business: (217) 529-6688  
Fax: (217) 546-3415

E-mail: [rbaileyvfwil@gmail.com](mailto:rbaileyvfwil@gmail.com)  
Website: [www.vfwil.org](http://www.vfwil.org)

## STATE ADJUTANT



**Scott Swinford**  
*State Adjutant*

3300 Constitution Drive  
Springfield, IL 62791-3206  
Business: (217) 529-6688  
Fax: (217) 546-3415  
E-mail: [vwil@vwil.org](mailto:vwil@vwil.org)  
Website: [www.vwil.org](http://www.vwil.org)

Thank You to Commander Bailey for the appointment as Adjutant. Congratulations to all the incoming District and Post Officers. I look forward to working with you all to make the Department of Illinois the very best we can be. Additionally, a big Thank you to all the outgoing officers for the foundation they have laid for their successors to achieve new goals.

We have made great strides the past year, both in audits and helping struggling Posts get back on their feet. Unfortunately, some of you still struggle with audits and we have lost a few more Posts. If you are struggling, please contact us, the earlier we get help to you the greater the odds of a positive outcome.

Our mission is to support and assist Posts and Districts in overcoming the challenges posed by the strict requirements set in the By-Laws and to work our Programs. The Headquarters' staff is committed to aiding Posts and Districts by being "All in, All the time". There continues to be challenges within our Department and the staff and I stand ready to assist you. I implore you to reach out to us if you have any questions or if you are considering making changes at the Post level, such as changes to meeting time/date/location, sale or purchase of property, updating By-Laws etc.

We are also making changes at State Headquarters to improve our communication with Posts and Districts. We need your help there! Please make sure that election reports contain accurate emails for all officers. Also please, if you are not currently receiving newsletters please contact Heather at [admin@vwil.org](mailto:admin@vwil.org), this is the best way for us to keep Posts and members "in the loop". We will be sending out information on who to contact for what after the National Convention.

We are very excited about the State website update project. More to come on that as well.

We are continuing to make changes, we hope for the good, to the State Convention. The hope is that we are making for a more beneficial event for Posts and members by providing the education tools needed to execute our Programs and requirements and recognize their achievements and excellence. Any recommendations for changes or additions are encouraged and welcome. It is, after all, your convention.

Our Programs are designed to make our organization what it is. We serve our communities and fellow veterans, support our youth, support legislation that supports and benefits veterans and recognize outstanding achievements in these areas. The instructions for Dashboard reporting have changed significantly, please read them. They are available on the State website.

We can't forget about membership; members accomplish our mission! Our goals for this year are bit different from recent years but are attainable. We lost over 1,300 members last year to the unavoidable. We owe it to those members who served our Posts to continue their mission, to do that we must replenish our ranks. Without members we don't exist! Membership numbers have a direct bearing to our ability to help veterans and to influence legislation that is a benefit to all veterans. It directly affects the amount of money that each Post and State Headquarters receives in per capita membership payments.

I look forward to working with each and every one of you to further our goal of "All In, All the Time"

## CHIEF OF STAFF

First and foremost, I want to extend my sincere gratitude to Commander Bailey for the honor of serving as your Chief of Staff for the 2026-2027 term. I also want to offer my warmest congratulations to all the newly elected and appointed officers at the Department, District, and Post levels. I am incredibly eager to collaborate with each of you as we build the future of our Department.

I believe an effective Chief of Staff brings deep experience and knowledge to the table, but more importantly, brings a willingness to continuously learn. None of us have all the answers, and having a growth mindset means never being afraid to say, "I don't know—but I will find out." I view my role as a dynamic asset for every Post and District in Illinois.

To truly maximize our impact, we must operate as a unified front. When we put aside trivial differences and personal politics, we unlock our true potential. We must work together seamlessly to be **All In All The Time**.

*"Knowledge is power. Information is liberating. Education is the premise of progress in every society, in every family." – Kofi Annan*

To keep the VFW thriving, we have a responsibility to actively mentor, counsel, and develop our peers for future leadership roles. Every member should have a strong grasp of both our veteran support programs and our operational logistics.

To proactively support this goal, we are launching targeted training breakout sessions this year for various elected and appointed positions. Additionally, we will host four regional Commanders Calls throughout the State.

I highly encourage **all** members to attend as many of these sessions as possible. This training is designed to sharpen our collective understanding of:

- VFW program guidelines and critical deadlines
- Navigating and utilizing the digital dashboard
- Accessing vital resources and identifying key points of contact

The VFW evolves every single year, and we have a collective obligation to evolve with it. Through continuous training and proactive mentorship, we will hold each other to a higher standard of accountability. The outdated mindsets of "I didn't know" or "That's how we've always done it" will no longer serve us.

Relying solely on how things were done in the past leaves our Posts vulnerable. When a Post struggles to pass an inspection, it is often due to overlooked details. A fundamental rule of thumb for this year is to **assume that everything matters**.

Inspections are not a tool for punishment; they are a health check for our success. We will prioritize completing inspections early in the year so we can immediately identify and correct deficiencies. Waiting until the final hour only hurts our comrades. For a Post to make a difference, it must first be healthy and stable.

Let's stop resisting the work that needs to be done. Instead, let's transform our Department into a massive, collaborative think tank, ensuring we remain the powerhouse Veteran Service Organization we have always been.

Lean on your comrades, your appointed officers, and your elected leaders. We all share the same goal: we want the absolute best for the VFW, and we want Illinois to lead the nation. As your Chief of Staff, my door is always open, and I am ready to support you in any way necessary.

I am incredibly excited to see what we will achieve together this year, and I look forward to the camaraderie and fun we will have while being **All In All The Time!**



**David Long**  
Chief of Staff

706 Sunset Dr.  
Mahomet, IL 61853

Phone: (217) 769-9810

E-mail:  
sgtlongdis7@gmail.com

Post 454-7

# STATE INSPECTOR



**Cathy Stubbs**  
*Inspector*

420 Stone River Rd  
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 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 five VA Accredited Assistant Department Service Officers. You can find two working in Chicago, one stationed at the Marion VAMC, one stationed at the Danville VAMC, and 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 Chicago VA Regional Office staff includes an Accredited Claims Consultant, who serves as our Regional Office Manager.

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 Benefits Advisors 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**  
*Director of Veterans Service*

2122 West Taylor St.  
Room 105  
Chicago, IL 60612

Phone: 872-212-4502  
E-mail: [sean.conner@va.gov](mailto:sean.conner@va.gov)

**Department Service Office Contact Information**

VFW Service Office, Located in the Chicago VA Regional Office  
2122 West Taylor St., Chicago, IL 60612  
Room 105  
Phone: 312-980-4284  
Fax: 312-980-4680  
Email: [vso@vfwil.org](mailto:vso@vfwil.org)  
Website link: [www.vfwilserviceoffice.com](http://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  
Department Service Officer  
Chicago VA Regional Office  
[sean.conner@va.gov](mailto:sean.conner@va.gov)

Tyler Lybarger  
Air Force, Iraq/Afghanistan  
Assistant Department Service Officer  
Marion VA Medical Center  
[tyler.lybarger@va.gov](mailto:tyler.lybarger@va.gov)

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

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

Dick Taylor  
Navy, Iraq  
Assistant Department Service Officer  
Danville VA Medical Center  
[richard.taylor16@va.gov](mailto:richard.taylor16@va.gov)

Craig Koch  
Marine Corps, Desert Storm  
Assistant Department Service Officer  
[craig.koch@va.gov](mailto:craig.koch@va.gov)

Grabiela Salgado  
Claims Consultant/Office Manager  
Chicago Regional Office  
[grabiela.salgado@va.gov](mailto:grabiela.salgado@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  
Every Friday  
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.  
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  
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.



NO ONE DOES MORE FOR VETERANS.

The Department of Illinois VFW Veteran Service Office will be doing outreach at the following locations;

- **Benjamin O. Davis Post 311, VFW** EVERY MONDAY & TUESDAY and FIRST & SECOND WEDNESDAY 9am-4pm
    - 22341 Governors Hwy, Richton Park, IL
- (except 1<sup>st</sup> Monday & Tuesday)**
- **Hines VA** EVERY THURSDAY & THIRD FRIDAY 9am-3pm
    - 5000 5<sup>th</sup> Ave, Bldg 1, Rm 109 Hines, IL
  - **Frisbie Senior Center** THE FIRST MONDAY 9am-2pm
    - 52 E Northwest Hwy, Des Plaines, IL
  - **Judd Kendall Post 3873, VFW** THE FIRST TUESDAY 10am-2pm
    - 908 W. Jackson Ave, Naperville, IL
  - **Chicago Vet Center** THE FIRST FRIDAY 9am-3pm
    - 8658 S Sacramento Ave, Chicago, IL
  - **Aurora Vet Center** THE SECOND & FOURTH FRIDAY 9am-2pm
    - 750 Shoreline Dr #150, Aurora, IL

During these outreach days we can provide;

- assistance in filing for disability compensation
- pension and death benefits assistance
- information on rehabilitation and education programs
- links to employment and training programs
- requests for hearings before the VA and the Board of Veterans Appeals to present oral arguments
- information on other benefits for eligible Veterans provided by local and state agencies

\*Unless otherwise noted

\*Closed all federal holidays

For further information or questions, please contact us at; VSO@VFWIL.ORG

Offices located at;

VA Regional Office, 2122 W. Taylor St., Rm 105, Chicago, IL 60612 ·Phone: (312)980-4284

Danville VAMC, 1900 E. Main St., Danville, IL 61832 ·Phone: (217)554-4502

Marion VAMC, 2401 W. Main St., Marion, IL 62959 ·Phone: (618)997-5311

Version 3.1.2024



The Department of Illinois VFW Veteran Service Office will be doing outreach at the following locations;

- **Mattoon VA Clinic** EVERY FRIDAY
  - 501 Lake Land Blvd., Mattoon IL from 0900-1400
- **Dow Stepp Memorial Post 5975, VFW** the FIRST THURSDAY of every month
  - 112 North 5<sup>th</sup> St., Marshall IL from 0900-1400
- **Crawford County Post 4549, VFW** the SECOND TUESDAY of every month
  - 712 E. Main St., Robinson, IL from 0900-1400
- **Decatur VA CBOC** the SECOND THURSDAY of every month
  - 792 North Sunnyside Rd., Decatur IL from 0900-1400
- **Busey-Fletcher-Stillwell Post 630, VFW** the THIRD THURSDAY of every month
  - 1303 E. Main St., Urbana, IL from 0900-1400
- **Bloomington VA Clinic** the FOURTH TUESDAY of every month
  - 207 Hamilton Rd., Bloomington IL from 0900-1400
- **Springfield VA Clinic** the FOURTH THURSDAY of every month
  - 5850 South 6<sup>th</sup> St., Springfield IL from 0900-1400

During these outreach days we can provide;

- assistance in filing for disability compensation
- pension and death benefits assistance
- information on rehabilitation and education programs
- links to employment and training programs
- requests for hearings before the VA and the Board of Veterans Appeals to present oral arguments
- information on other benefits for eligible Veterans provided by local and state agencies

\*Unless otherwise noted

\*Closed all federal holidays

For further information or questions, please contact us at [VSO@VFWIL.ORG](mailto:VSO@VFWIL.ORG)

Offices located at;

VA Regional Office, 2122 W. Taylor St., Rm 105, Chicago, IL 60612 ·Phone: (312)980-4284

Danville VAMC, 1900 E. Main St., Danville, IL 61832 ·Phone: (217)554-4502

Marion VAMC, 2401 W. Main St., Marion, IL 62959 ·Phone: (618)997-5311

Version 10.17.2025



The Department of Illinois VFW Veterans Service Office will be doing outreach at the following locations;

- **Sgt. Charles A. Fricke Post 805, VFW** EVERY TUESDAY from 11a-7p
  - 223 W. 1<sup>st</sup> Street, O'Fallon, IL
  
- **Metro East Vet Center** EVERY WEDNESDAY from 8a - 4p
  - 228 West Point Drive, Swansea, IL

During these outreach days we can provide;

- assistance in filing for disability compensation
- pension and death benefits assistance
- information on rehabilitation and education programs
- links to employment and training programs
- requests for hearings before the VA and the Board of Veterans Appeals to present oral arguments
- information on other benefits for eligible Veterans provided by local and state agencies

\*Unless otherwise noted

\*Closed all federal holidays

For further information or questions, please contact us at [VSO@VFWIL.ORG](mailto:VSO@VFWIL.ORG)

Offices located at;

VA Regional Office, 2122 W. Taylor St., Rm 105, Chicago, IL 60612 ·Phone: (312)980-4284

Danville VAMC, 1900 E. Main St., Danville, IL 61832 ·Phone: (217)554-4502

Marion VAMC, 2401 W. Main St., Marion, IL 62959 ·Phone: (618)997-5311

Version 3.14.2024



The Department of Illinois VFW Veterans Service Office will be doing outreach at the following locations;

- **Veterans Services Center, Southern Illinois University – Carbondale**
  - **SECOND TUESDAY** and **FOURTH WEDNESDAY** from 9a - 2p
    - Woody Hall 381, MC 4727, 900 S. Normal Ave., Carbondale, IL
  
- **Jefferson County Courthouse – Mt. Vernon**
  - **SECOND FRIDAY** and **FOURTH FRIDAY** from 9a - 2p
    - County Board Office, 100 S. 10<sup>th</sup> St., Mt. Vernon, IL

During these outreach days we can provide;

- assistance in filing for disability compensation
  
- pension and death benefits assistance
  
- information on rehabilitation and education programs
  
- links to employment and training programs
  
- requests for hearings before the VA and the Board of Veterans Appeals to present oral arguments
  
- information on other benefits for eligible Veterans provided by local and state agencies

\*Unless otherwise noted

\*Closed all federal holidays

For further information or questions, please contact us at [VSO@VFWIL.ORG](mailto:VSO@VFWIL.ORG)

Offices located at;

VA Regional Office, 2122 W. Taylor St., Rm 105, Chicago, IL 60612 ·Phone: (312)980-4284

Danville VAMC, 1900 E. Main St., Danville, IL 61832 ·Phone: (217)554-4502

Marion VAMC, 2401 W. Main St., Marion, IL 62959 ·Phone: (618)997-5311

Version 3.14.2024

# MEMBERSHIP



**Alonzo "Skip" Skipper**  
*Chairman*

1400 Waverly Dr  
Collinsville, IL 62234

Phone: (618) 910-7936  
Email: joetaraskipper@yahoo.com

Post 5691-12

things happening across the Department.

The Department calendar will also reflect Department Membership events and recruitment activities throughout the year.

## Membership Drives & Community Outreach

Department membership drives will continue throughout the year. Depending on the location, we will coordinate with the host District and local Posts for support and participation.

Successful membership events require teamwork. Districts 10 and 15 have consistently demonstrated what strong local support looks like during State Fair events, and we appreciate that continued involvement.

Department drives may include participation from:

- Department VFW Membership
- Department Auxiliary Membership
- Department Veterans Service Officers (VSO)

First, I would like to thank Department Commander, Robert Bailey, for the opportunity to serve as the 2026–2027 Department Membership Chairman.

I appreciate the trust placed in me and look forward to working alongside our Posts, Districts, Auxiliary members, and Department team this year under his theme:

**"All In, All the Time."**

Here is a quick snapshot of where we stand as a Department:

2016 — 53,900 Members

2025 — 34,150 Members

That is a 37% decline in membership over the last decade.

Two issues stand out immediately:

### ***Retention and age.***

If we want to strengthen the future of the VFW in Illinois, we must focus on keeping the members we already have while continuing to recruit the next generation of eligible veterans and family members.

What should you expect from the Department Membership Team this year?

- Consistency.
- Communication.
- Accountability.
- District, Post, and Auxiliary engagement
- Communication & Transparency

To minimize communication breakdowns, Posts will be copied on membership-related communication whenever possible. We will continue utilizing the Illinois VFW Membership Facebook page to highlight membership successes, recruitment efforts, and positive

Our VSOs are an incredible resource. The VFW fact sheet shows over \$16 billion recovered in benefits and compensation for veterans and their families. If schedules permit, I strongly encourage Posts and Districts to request VSO participation at local membership events whenever possible.

### **Department Membership Focus Areas**

This year, Department Membership will focus on three major goals:

1. 80% Post Retention. Retention matters. We cannot continue replacing members at the rate we are losing them.
2. 100% Plus One. Every Post should strive to reach 100% and recruit at least one additional member beyond goal.
3. Buddy Checks. This is the most important initiative this year.

Every Post is asked to complete buddy checks on all members in good standing. This is not simply about membership numbers — it is about making sure our veterans are okay, staying connected, and knowing someone still cares enough to call.

Once completed, the Post Commander or District Commander should report completion to me for credit.

Any District achieving 100% completion of buddy checks will be recognized at the Department Convention.

#### **District Visits & Support:**

Department Membership, alongside our Auxiliary Membership team, plans to visit every District meeting at least once during the fiscal year.

We are here to help. You can reach me by calling, texting, or emailing.

If your Post needs assistance with membership drives, retention ideas, outreach, or recruiting support, reach out.

#### **Additional Membership Initiatives**

Additional programs planned for this year include:

- Sponsor-a-Veteran Program rollout
- Membership recognition and incentive programs
- Bragging Rights Trophy awarded to the top-performing District during Council of Administration meetings

Please remember:

All-State and All-American programs have separate criteria and requirements. I strongly encourage all Posts and Districts to review those requirements carefully throughout the year.

Finally, accountability goes both ways.

I expect Posts and Districts to work hard this year, but I also expect you to hold me accountable for this program and the commitments being made.

We all have a role in rebuilding and strengthening the Department of Illinois.

**All In, All the Time.**

#VFW #VFWIL #VFWILMEMBERSHIP26-27 #STILLSERVING #ALLINALLTHETIME



## Illinois Membership Program

2026-2027

**Robert Bailey**

State Commander

*"All In All the Time"*

### ILLINOIS MEMBERSHIP PROGRAM 2026-2027

**VFW MEMBERSHIP MISSION:** Our mission is to sustain and strengthen our organization for current and future Veterans well into the next century. To achieve this, Posts, Districts, and State leadership must collaborate effectively to retain existing members, recruit new ones, and reinstate those whose memberships have lapsed. District and State leaders should spearhead a well-coordinated membership campaign that complements other vital VFW programs.

State Headquarters stands ready to provide the technical, logistical, and financial support necessary for successful retention and recruitment efforts. Additionally, our National organization offers valuable incentives to help us meet these objectives. It is our collective responsibility to leverage these resources and execute a robust Membership Program to ensure lasting success.

**VFW MEMBERSHIP VISION:** Our Membership Program starts with the foundation of last year's accomplishments. From this strong starting point, we aim to grow—if not in numbers, then in unity and purpose. Together, we must welcome Veterans and their families from all backgrounds and conflicts, creating a community that celebrates the diverse experiences and perspectives they bring. There is no room for bias or barriers here; if someone qualifies, let us embrace them as part of our family.

True and lasting success lies in our ability to retain members, reconnect with those we've lost, and continually bring new Veterans into our fold. The potential is immense, with Veterans of all ages still eligible to join. Yet our focus must remain clear: Post-9/11 Veterans are the key to our future, and we must ensure they see a home within our ranks. Let us also shine a spotlight on our female Veterans, whose contributions are essential as they represent the fastest-growing membership group.

By working together, we can build a thriving, inviting organization that not only honors our past but also secures a bright future for generations to come.

**OUR GOAL THIS YEAR IS 100% plus One**

Our membership numbers speak volumes when we advocate for Veterans' rights at the National or State level. Strong membership sends a powerful message: the VFW is a thriving, influential organization committed to making a difference. Each of us holds the key to that strength. By recruiting just one new member, we can see remarkable growth. Imagine the impact—if every member brings in one recruit, we will see significant progress within a single year. Repeating this effort year after year could lead us to surpass 50,000 members once again. Success starts at the Post level. Every one of us is a recruiter for our post and the organization. Tell other Veterans who are qualified to join the Veterans of Foreign Wars about us. Invite community members to our posts or events to increase awareness of what we do in the community. Share information about our scholarship programs. Share what the Auxiliary is doing. Conduct Buddy Poppy and recruiting events in the community.

## MEMBERSHIP CHALLENGES

Throughout the membership year, exciting Membership Challenges will be announced and shared, complete with incentives to recognize and reward Posts or Members who rise to the occasion. These challenges will be communicated via email and featured in the General Orders for the corresponding months.

## RECRUITING AWARDS

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

- 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, 2027, will be awarded \$500 to attend the 2027 National Convention. This award is non-transferable and will be presented to the winners at the National Convention.

## MEMBERSHIP AWARDS

- Posts achieving at least 75% retention of their annual members by December 31, 2026, will receive a certificate and \$100
- Posts achieving 100% plus one-member by Feb. 28, 2027, will receive a certificate and \$150
- Posts achieving at least 100% membership by June 30, 2027, will receive 100% Membership Pennant
  - Should a post reach both goals by December 31, 2026, they will receive the higher dollar amount.

**Membership Trophy** – At each Council of Administration meeting, a traveling trophy will be awarded to the district with the highest membership percentage. It will be determined by the percentages on the morning of the Saturday meeting. The district with the highest membership percentage for the VFW year will keep the trophy until the next council meeting.

The Post with the highest membership percentage on 6/30/2027 will receive a Top Post 2026-2027 plaque for the post to commemorate the accomplishment.

## POST AWARD

The Post having the largest increase in Legacy Life Membership, with a minimum of five (5) new Legacy Life Memberships by April 30, 2027, will receive a \$100 gift certificate from the National VFW Store.

## DISTRICT AWARD

Districts who reach 75% in membership by February 1, 2027, will receive a \$200 cash award.

## CRAMER-SODEN AWARD

The All-State District Commander who has the highest numerical increase from 2025-2026 to their 2026-2027 year and whose 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.

## ALL-STATE AWARD PROGRAM

The 2026-2027 All-State Program is designed to recognize exceptional leadership and teamwork. Not only in Membership but in overall Post and 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 30, 2027.
- To receive All-State awards at the State Convention, the deadline for completion of All-State criteria is April 30, 2027.

## ALL-STATE AWARD PROGRAM CRITERIA

To receive All State, a post must complete all the following tasks:

- Membership equal to or greater than 100% plus one member.
- Must retain 80% of the post annual membership from the previous year.
- Host one membership recruiting event and submit a report to the Program Reporting Dashboard.
- Be 100% reported on the Department Programs Reporting Dashboard.
  - Must host a fundraiser or partner with a nonprofit organization whose mission is to raise awareness for Veteran Suicide. Funds raised must go to that organization.
  - All four quarterly Trustee Audits must have been submitted and approved.
  - Must make all required \$50 donations except Service Officer Support is \$75.
  - Must have fully completed National and Department inspection forms, submitted and approved by the State Inspector.
  - Must purchase at least five (5) Buddy Poppies per member, with a minimum of 500.
  - Have representation at all properly called District meetings and Conventions.
  - Have representation at a minimum of one Commander's Town Hall meeting.
- Have an essay nomination for both Patriots' Pen and Voice of Democracy submitted to their respective District for judging. Donations in lieu of a submission will **NOT** be accepted.
- Must submit at minimum one nomination for one of the following programs: Teacher of the Year, Public Servant or Life Saving Award. Donations in lieu of a submission will **NOT** be accepted.
- 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

To receive All State, a district must complete all the following tasks:

- Membership equal to or greater than 100% plus one member.
- Must retain 80% of the districts' annual membership from the previous year.
- Be 100% reported on the Department Programs Reporting Dashboard.
- All four Trustee Quarterly Audits must have been submitted and approved.
- Must have 100% of posts inspected, approved by the State Inspector, and on file with HQ.
- Must submit a roll call showing attendance for Officers and Posts for each District meeting.
- Must have a minimum of 80% of Posts in the District attend a Commander's Town Hall.
- Host or participate in two membership recruiting events and submit a report to the Program Reporting Dashboard.
- Districts must host at least one School of Instruction and submit a report to State Headquarters.
- Districts must submit a nomination to the Department for each of the following programs:
  - o Patriot's Pen
  - o Voice of Democracy
  - o Teacher of the Year
  - o Public Servant

## ALL-STATE DISTRICT AWARD

- There will be no limit 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.
- The District Commander, with the highest membership percentage increase, will receive an All-State Team Captain Cap. The deadline for this award is April 30, 2027.



**Cory Geisler**

Commander-in-Chief 2026-2027

## **NATIONAL MEMBERSHIP PROGRAM 2026-2027**

### Commander's Introduction

Cory Geisler was elected Commander-in-Chief of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the U.S. on July 29th, 2026, at the 127th VFW National Convention in Reno, NV. Cory served in the U.S. Army from 2005 to 2012, earning his VFW eligibility by serving in Korea and Iraq.

He joined the VFW in 2008 as a member at large and then transferred to VFW Post #721 in Waukesha WI, where he maintains his Gold Legacy Life membership.

Cory has served at various levels in the post to include his election to Post Commander in 2012. Cory has served as the Post Commander for 12 of his 18 years and is a two-time All-State Post Commander and was an All-American Post Commander in 2019. At the district level Cory was the head of various committees and was the Chief of Staff for 3 different district commanders. Cory was elected the District 2 Commander for 2017 – 2019. During the 2018 – 2019 year District 2 was recognized as an All-State and All-American district. At the department level, Cory was the Department Safety Chairman for 5 years and the Youth Activities Chairman for 3 years. Cory was elected the Department of Wisconsin State Commander for the 2021 – 2022 year.

In 2023 he was elected to the National Council of Administration and in 2025 he was elected as the Senior Vice-Commander in Chief.

## **MEMBERSHIP MISSION**

To strengthen the VFW by driving membership growth through comprehensive support for recruiting, retention, recruiter development, ensuring consistent dues processing, and member fulfillment. To empower our Post and Department leaders through specialized training programs that prioritize membership sustainability. To provide necessary insight and guide informed decision-making through data-driven reporting and analysis. To deliver exceptional customer support to our comrades and prospective members, fostering a culture of service and camaraderie that sustains the VFW legacy for future generations.

## 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

All Posts who have met the following criteria as of June 30th, 2027 will be named as All-American Posts:

- Must meet the Divisional Membership Quota as shown on the table at the end of this section
- At least 80% retention of prior year Annual members. Definition of retention can be found on page 12.
- Must have a Post election report submitted and be in good standing.
- Must meet the following Program Participation Criteria by January 31, 2027:
  - o Voice of Democracy – minimum of one entry advanced to District judging (Overseas Posts may donate \$125 to National in lieu of entry)
  - o Patriot's Pen – minimum of one entry advanced to District judging (Overseas Posts may donate \$125 to National in lieu of entry)
  - o National Citizenship Education Teachers Award –Post must advance a teacher to District; if no District judging applies then advance to Department for judging (Overseas Post donate \$100 to National in lieu of entry)
  - o Entries must be submitted via the Programs Dashboard by January 31, 2027 in order to be recognized.
- National Veterans Service Programs – must donate \$125 via the Programs Dashboard NVS Donation link. Donations will be designated to support the VFW National Veteran Service operations.
- Must make a restricted donation, minimum of \$75, to National in support of DPAA (Defense Personnel POW/MIA Accounting Agency). Donations must be processed through the Programs Dashboard.
- Must meet the following Community Service Requirements:
  - o Participation in the VFW Day of Service event held during the month of May. This event may be counted for a Post's quarterly community service activity.
  - o 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. Please see page 12 for further details.
  - o A Post must show an increase in total Community Service of at least 5% from the previous year.
- Must purchase at least 5 Buddy Poppies per member, with a minimum of 500.
- Must have been chartered for at least a full calendar year as of July 1st, 2026. Posts that were chartered between July 1st, 2025 and June 30th, 2026 will not be eligible for All-American awards, but may be recognized under the New Post Growth Grant.

## ALL-AMERICAN POST AWARD

All Posts that meet the listed criteria will receive: An All-American Post Streamer, a Post Home Citation, and will be recognized in the VFW Magazine.

In addition, the top 20 Posts in each membership division will receive:

- All-American Post Commander's Citation
- All-American Post Commander's Cap
- All-American Post Commander's Badge
- All-American Post Commander's lapel pin

These awards for the top 20 Posts will be presented on stage at the 128th National Convention. All All-American Post Awards will be distributed at the 128th National Convention. Department Quartermasters will be directed to collect and distribute awards for All-American Posts not in attendance.

The Top five Post Commanders in each division will receive a \$1,000 award to recognize their leadership. Commanders must attend the 128th National Convention in order to receive this award.

Division	Minimum Membership	Maximum Membership	Membership Quota
1	501	---	103%
2	351	500	104%
3	246	350	105%
4	190	245	106%
5	150	189	107%
6	125	149	108%
7	105	124	109%
8	90	104	110%
9	70	89	111%
10	50	69	112%
11	10	49	113%

## ALL-AMERICAN DISTRICT CRITERIA

All Districts that have met the following criteria as of June 30th, 2027 will be named as All-American Districts:

- Must exceed prior year's membership, based on June 30th, 2026 totals. (100%+1)
- Must finish in the top 20 Districts in their division, based on membership percentage as of June 30th, 2027.
- Must make a restricted donation, minimum of \$100, to National in support of DPAA (Defense Personnel POW/MIA Accounting Agency). **Donations must be processed through the Programs Dashboard.**
- Must have a District election report submitted and be in good standing.
- Must meet the following Program Participation Criteria by January 31, 2027:
  - o Voice of Democracy – minimum of one entry advanced to Department judging (Overseas Districts may donate \$125 to National in lieu of entry)
  - o Patriot's Pen – minimum of one entry advanced to Department judging (Overseas Districts may donate \$125 to National in lieu of entry)
  - o National Citizenship Education Teachers Award – one entry advanced to Department judging (Overseas District donate \$100 to National in lieu of entry)
  - o Entries **must be submitted via the Programs Dashboard by January 31, 2027 in order to be recognized.**

## ALL-AMERICAN DISTRICT AWARD

All Districts that meet the listed criteria will receive an All-American District Streamer, an All-American District Commander's Citation, and recognition in the VFW Magazine.

In addition, the top 10 Districts in each membership division will receive:

- All-American District Commander's Cap
- All-American District Commander's Badge
- All-American District Commander's lapel pin

These awards for the top 10 District Commanders will be presented on stage at the 128th National Convention. All All-American District Awards will be distributed at the 128th National Convention. Department Quartermasters will be directed to collect and distribute awards for All-American Districts not in attendance.

The top two District Commanders in each division will receive a \$1,000 award to recognize their leadership. Commanders must attend the 128th National Convention in order to receive this award.

## ALL-AMERICAN DEPARTMENT CRITERIA

All Departments that have met the following criteria as of June 30th, 2027 will be named as All-American Departments:

- Must exceed prior year's membership, based on June 30th, 2026 totals. (100%+1)
- Department must submit Department legislative chairman reports monthly through the Program dashboard tool.
- Must make a restricted donation, minimum of \$200, to National in support of DPAA (Defense Personnel POW/MIA Accounting Agency). **Donations must be processed through the Programs Dashboard.**
- Must meet the following Program Participation Criteria by January 31, 2027:
  - Voice of Democracy – an entry advanced to National judging
  - Patriot's Pen – an entry advanced to National judging
  - Teacher of the Year – an entry advanced to National judging
  - Entries **must be submitted via the Programs Dashboard by January 31, 2027 in order to be recognized.**
- National Veterans Service fundraiser – must complete State/Department fundraiser with proceeds donated to the National Veterans Service fund via the Programs Dashboard.

## ALL-AMERICAN DEPARTMENT AWARD

All Departments that meet the listed criteria will receive the following:

- All-American Department streamer
- All-American Department Commander's Citation
- All-American Department Commander's Cap
- All-American Department Commander's Badge
- All-American Department Commander's lapel pin
- \$1,000 award to recognize leadership

These awards will be presented on stage at the 128th National Convention.

## TRIPLE CROWN

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 the 128th National Convention with a special Triple Crown pin.

For Departments without Districts, any individual who achieves All-American Commander status twice as a Post Commander and once as Department Commander, or once as a Post Commander and twice as Department Commander will receive this honor as well.

## INDIVIDUAL RECRUITING AWARDS

- 5/10/15 members recruited: corresponding recruiter pin
- 25 members recruited: Commander-in-Chief's Coin
- 50 members recruited: 40oz Insulated Tumbler w/CIC Logo
- 75 members recruited: Commander-in-Chief's Medallion Set
- 100 members recruited: Century Cap and Citation. Recruiters may opt to receive a \$50 credit to the VFW Store in lieu of a Century Cap.

Individual Recruiting Awards will be sent out regularly during the membership year to the Post, to be given out at a Post meeting to recognize those members who have helped achieve the membership mission.

## EARLY BIRD AWARD

The top two Posts in each division as of January 1, 2027 will receive reimbursement of up to \$1,000 for a representative of the Post to attend the 2027 VFW Washington Conference.

## 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. Proclamations will be sent out to the Post along with recruiting awards throughout the year.

For each Post that achieves the distinctive benchmark of 100, 250, or 500 Legacy Life members by June 30th, 2027, their commander or Post representative will be reimbursed up to \$1,000 for travel / lodging for the National Convention, reserved seating at the 128th VFW National Convention joint opening session and a Legacy Society Post Proclamation presented at the National Convention.

## 100+% MEMBERSHIP STREAMER

All Posts, Districts, and Departments that exceed their prior year membership total on or before June 30th, 2027 will receive a distinctive streamer.

## NEW POST GROWTH GRANT

Any Post chartered in the previous membership year (between July 1, 2025 and June 30th, 2026) that exceeds their prior year membership total (100%+1) and has over 50 members as of June 30th, 2027 will receive a grant of up to \$50 per new member (up to \$1,000) between July 1st, 2026 and June 30th, 2027.

## RECRUITING & RETENTION CHALLENGE

The top two Posts in each membership division based on new and reinstated members as well as retention according to the table below will receive a \$1,000 membership grant deposited into the Post's account.

Division	Size	New Member Quota	Retention Percentage
1	501+	At least 125 new/reinstated members	103%
2	351-500	At least 100 new/reinstated members	104%
3	246-350	At least 75 new/reinstated members	105%
4	190-245	At least 60 new/reinstated members	106%
5	150-189	At least 50 new/reinstated members	107%
6	125-149	At least 40 new/reinstated members	108%
7	105-124	At least 30 new/reinstated members	109%
8	90-104	At least 20 new/reinstated members	110%
9	70-89	At least 15 new/reinstated members	111%
10	50-69	At least 12 new/reinstated members	112%
11	10-49	At least 10 new/reinstated members	113%

## **DEPARTMENT ABOVE & BEYOND AWARD**

Any Department that exceeds their prior year membership total and has at least 75% of the Posts in the Department also exceed their prior year membership total will receive a membership grant as follows:

Small Departments (10,000 and below): \$2,500

Medium Departments (10,001-20,000): \$5,000

Large Departments (20,000 and up): \$7,500

## **ELITE RECRUITER**

Any VFW member who signs up 250 or more new and/or reinstated members as of June 30th, 2027 will receive a \$1,000 award for their achievement, as well as a distinctive cap, citation, and name badge. Awards will be presented at the 128th National Convention.

## **ELITE RECRUITER**

The VFW member who signs up the greatest number of new and/or reinstated members greater than 250 as of June 30th, 2027 will receive a \$1,000 award for their achievement as well as a distinctive cap, citation, and name badge and the Recruiter Of The Year trophy. Awards will be presented at the 128th National Convention.

## **LIFE MEMBER RECRUITER AWARD**

Any VFW member who recruits at least 50 new and/or reinstated Life members by June 30th, 2027 or before will receive a special citation from the Commander-in-Chief and a CIC logo travel bag.

## **NEW POSTS STARTUP GRANT**

New Posts chartered between July 1st, 2026 and June 30th, 2027 will receive a \$250 credit from the VFW Store to be used towards necessary materials for the new Post. This credit will come in the form of a gift certificate sent out to the Post once a charter has been issued. The Commanders of all Posts chartered during the membership year will also receive an invitation to the 128th VFW National Convention.

## **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 quarter (July-September, October-December, January-March, April-June), 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 quarter, 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 challenges will be recognized at the 128th National Convention for their achievements.

## 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 quarter (July-September, October-December, January-March, April-June), 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 quarter, 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 challenges will be recognized at the 128th National Convention for their achievements.

<b>Post Division Breakdown</b>		
<b>Division</b>	<b>Minimum Membership</b>	<b>Maximum Membership</b>
1	501	---
2	351	500
3	246	350
4	190	245
5	150	189
6	125	149
7	105	124
8	90	104
9	70	89
10	50	69
11	10	49

<b>District Division Breakdown</b>		
<b>Division</b>	<b>Minimum Membership</b>	<b>Maximum Membership</b>
1	2400	---
2	1680	2399
3	1290	1679
4	880	1289
5	600	879
6	10	599

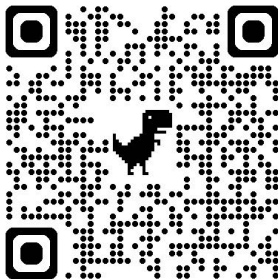
**MEMBERSHIP NOTES AND RESOURCES:**

- Awards given to a Post may be transferred to any member of that Post.
- Must participate in the VFW Day of Service event held during the month of May and registered at [todaysvfw.org/day-of-service/](https://todaysvfw.org/day-of-service/) no later than May 15th. Participation may count as community service for All-American quarterly requirements. The event must meet certain criteria aimed at making a meaningful difference in the community. The criteria and more information can be found here: <https://todaysvfw.org/vfw-day-of-service-faq/>
- Community Service quarterly reports must be submitted via the All-American Dashboard or via the state's Community Service Reporting Portal and must be approved by the Department Adjutant/Quartermaster. Reports must detail individual events, roll-up or summary reports will not be accepted. Posts must be able to provide verifiable documentation of their community service activities. Reports must meet the IRS 990 standards for organizations operating under 501©(19) status.
- **RETENTION DEFINITION: (Prior Year Annual Members In Good Standing – Expired Members) / (Prior Year Annual Members In Good Standing)**
- Posts, Districts, and Departments must show growth in membership to qualify for any award. This does not apply to the Early Bird Award.
- Awards, stipends, and reimbursements 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 \$2000.00 or more. 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 or awards in this program unless otherwise authorized by the Adjutant General and/or Quartermaster General.

**All-American Notes**

- Any member of a Post that is named as an All-American Post may purchase a All-American Post Member cap from the VFW Store after the 128th National Convention. Post, District, and Department Quartermasters and Adjutants may purchase an All-American Post Member cap bearing their title. Quartermasters may also purchase an All-American Quartermaster pin from the VFW Store.
- Donations made to replace Program Participation by eligible overseas Posts, Districts, or Departments as well as fundraising donations must be made through the Programs Dashboard, not through any other means.

For information on how to use the Programs Dashboard, scan the QR code below:



# PUBLIC RELATIONS/ILLINOIS VFW NEWS



## **Barbara Wilson**

*Chairman,  
Public Relations*

*Editor,  
Illinois VFW News*

802 N. 3rd St  
Riverton, IL 62561  
Cell: 618-559-3331

E-mail:  
barb.wilson2@outlook.com

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** is the official publication of the Illinois Veterans of Foreign Wars. It is published digitally in a magazine-format six times per year - July, September, November, January, March, and May.

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 10th of the Month preceding publication, but is subject to change.

### **2026-2027 State Publications Contest**

Editors of District and Post newsletters are invited to enter one issue of their publication in the 2026-2027 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, 2026 and December 31, 2026.

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 2027.

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, mailing address, email address, and telephone number
- 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, 2027**.

### **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. There are three categories - print, radio, and television. You may also include newspaper clippings and/or weblinks with your nomination. The deadline for nominations is **April 30, 2027**. The Media Professional of the Year will be recognized at the Illinois State Convention in June. All nominations should be mailed to State Headquarters.

**VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS**

# **5 PILLARS VFW SERVICE**



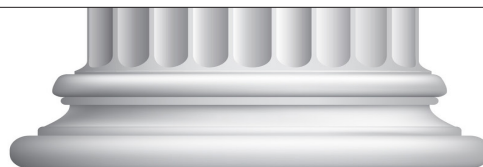
**COMMUNITY SERVICE**

**VETERANS ASSISTANCE**

**YOUTH PROGRAMS**

**LEGISLATIVE ADVOCACY**

**ILLINOIS SPECIFIC**



**DEPARTMENT OF ILLINOIS VFW**

- THIS PAGE LEFT INTENTIONALLY BLANK -



# 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, 2026 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 we are **Serving Our Community With Resilience**. 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 web-site at [www.vfwil.org](http://www.vfwil.org).



**Steve Eller**  
*Chairman*

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

Email:  
[spe9296@yahoo.com.au](mailto: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 2026-2027, 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, 2026.**

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

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

By reporting your out of pocket expenses, volunteers and hours for each project, we can be  
***"All In, All The Time"***

**Deadline Dates**

National VFW Post Special Project Program Deadline is April 30, 2027

“VFW Member Community Service Volunteer of the Year” Award Deadline must be in Department Headquarters by April 1, 2027

**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.

- 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, 2026 through June 30, 2027.

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 2026 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 2026 Department Convention.

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

### Loyalty Day

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:

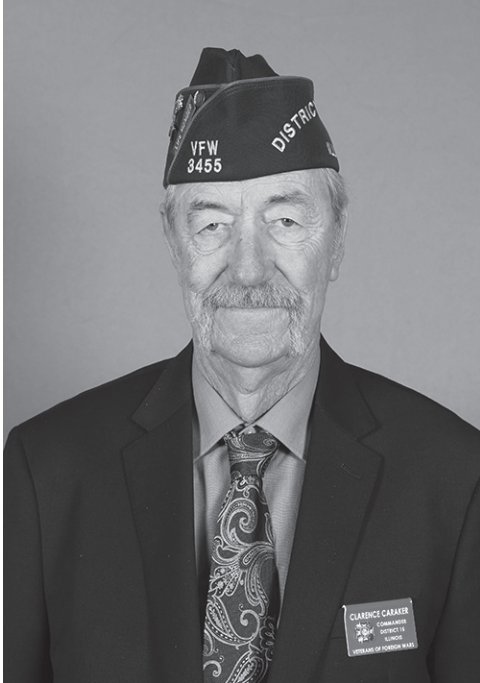
- 1) Hold parades
- 2) Conduct Flag ceremonies
- 3) Sponsor public meetings
- 4) Conduct school programs
- 5) and other American activities

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



**Clarence Caraker**  
*Chairman*

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

Email:  
cecaraker@gmail.com

Post 3455-15

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 !!!!

### 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)

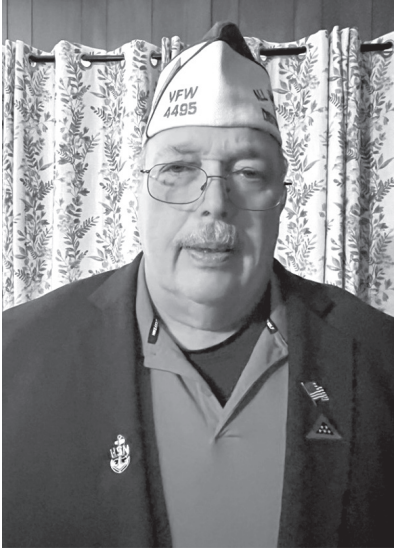
### AWARD

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 are  
"All In, All The Time"

# SAFETY PROGRAM



**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

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 VFW.

## 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](http://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](http://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](mailto: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](mailto: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](mailto:tbeauchamp@vfw.org) or Lynn Rolf at [lrolf@vfw.org](mailto: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.



## **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](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.



**Adam Abdul**  
*Chairman*

655 Burroughs Ave.  
Collinsville, IL 62234  
**Phone: (708) 705-6090**

E-mail:  
adamabdul@sbcglobal.net

Post 5691-12

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](mailto:HelpAHero@vfw.org) with questions. Applications are available only at [www.vfw.org/Scholarship](http://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](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](http://www.vfwil.org).

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:

***All In, All The Time***



**Paul Bezazian**  
*Chairman*

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

E-mail:  
[pbezazian@sbcglobal.net](mailto: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

wherever needed in the United States. The help line also serves as the first step to living on the National Home campus.

**Funding:** The VFW National Home receives no government funding. The Home is funded solely through donations. Our VFW Department of Illinois sponsors 2 homes - Illinois #1 and Illinois #2.

**Governance:** 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 19, 2026

**The 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.

**The Mission:** The VFW National Home is committed to supporting military and veteran families with children. They provide a foundational environment of services and resources, enabling families to achieve personal and family goals and move forward in a positive, safe, and healthy way. For families touched by the stresses of deployment and war, it can be difficult to provide a safe and loving home. The National Home offers struggling servicemembers and veterans families a place to heal and grow and a chance to work on moving forward.

**Families in Residence:** The families living at our National Home learn how to rebuild their lives. They receive case management services, on site licensed child care, life skills training and other services designed to help them succeed outside of the military.

**Spacious Facilities:** The VFW National Home located in Eaton Rapids, Michigan has 42 single family homes on 629 acres. There are also playgrounds, a community center, a licensed daycare facility, recreational areas, a guest lodge, chapel and an administrative building.

**Dedicated 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 Line is staffed Monday-Friday 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. by caring professionals who provide information and connections for services

### **Program Credit**

#### **\*\*\*Requirements for Program Credit\*\*\***

A \$50.00 minimum donation is required to receive credit for participating in the National Home Program. Posts must report donations on the Dashboard to receive credit. Monetary donations may be earmarked for a specific purpose or to the National Home's General Fund. VFW Posts and/or Auxiliary may purchase tribute bricks or individuals may purchase life memberships, or give through a will/trust, appreciated stock or an IRA. Write Post numbers on all checks and submit a program report to receive credit.

Please note, it is strongly recommended that donations be sent through Illinois VFW Headquarters to receive credit on the Dashboard. When sending donations \$50 or greater directly to the National Home, send proof of donation to Illinois Dept HQ to receive credit on the 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, 2027.

### **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@vfwnationalhome.org](mailto:info@vfwnationalhome.org)

<https://vfwnationalhome.org/>

We help military and veteran families succeed.

**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](http://www.veteranscrisisline.net)

Give an Hour providers [www.giveanhour.org](http://www.giveanhour.org)  
Click on "Search for a Provider"

Substance Abuse & Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) [www.samhsa.gov](http://www.samhsa.gov)  
1.800.622.HELP (4357)

Patients Like Me online network [www.patientslikeme.com](http://www.patientslikeme.com)

VA Health Care 1.877.222.VETS (8387)  
[www.va.gov/health](http://www.va.gov/health)

PTSD Coach Online Apps [www.ptsd.va.gov/PTSD/apps/ptsd-coachonline](http://www.ptsd.va.gov/PTSD/apps/ptsd-coachonline)

Defense Centers of Excellence for Psychological Health & Traumatic Brain Injury [www.dcoe.mil](http://www.dcoe.mil)

VA Vet Center Program [www.vetcenter.va.gov/](http://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 Eugene Blackwell's theme "*Serving Our Community With Resilience*" 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 Headquarters at 217-529-6688 or email [vfwil@vfwil.org](mailto:vfwil@vfwil.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, 2026 and continues through June 30, 2027. 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, 2027.

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, 2026 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<br/>1900 E Main St.<br/>Danville, IL 61832<br/>Phone: (217) 554-3000</p> <p>3. Marion VA Medical Center<br/>2401 W. Main St.<br/>Marion, IL 62959<br/>Phone: (618) 993-5311<br/>Fax: (618) 993-4155</p> <p>5. Jesse Brown VA Medical Center<br/>820 S. Damen Ave.<br/>Chicago, IL 60612<br/>Phone: (312) 569-8387, Ext. 56109</p> | <p>2. Hines VA. Medical Center<br/>5000 S. 5th Ave.<br/>Hines, IL 60141<br/>Phone: (708) 202-8387<br/>Fax: (708) 202-2246</p> <p>4. Capt. James A. Lovell Federal<br/>Health Care Center<br/>3001 Green Bay Road<br/>North Chicago, IL 60064<br/>Phone: (847) 688-1900</p> <p>6. St. Louis VA Medical Center<br/>#1 Jefferson Barracks Drive<br/>St. Louis, MO 63125<br/>Phone: (314) 652-4100</p> |
|---|--|

### VETERANS HOMES

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



**Jennipher Glenn**  
*Chairperson*

Contact information is  
private by request

Post 2024-3

Dear Comrades,

It is both an honor and a privilege to serve as your VFW, Department of Illinois, Women Veterans Chairperson for the 2026-27 year. I am not here to rebuild what was already beautifully created, but to honor it, strengthen it, and proudly carry it forward.

As we move ahead, we will continue to strengthen the VFW's mission while intentionally expanding membership, programs, and resources, ensuring we serve women veterans and underrepresented communities with dignity, purpose, and lasting impact. We will not fall short in genuinely showing up as an inclusive and welcoming organization for every member, especially women veterans. As we uphold the values of unselfish comradeship, respect, and loyalty to the Veterans of Foreign Wars, we will continue to proudly honor all who have suffered the ultimate sacrifice, those who gave everything.

My sisters in arms, I ask each of you to stand with me in collaboration. Your knowledge, your voice, and your contributions are invaluable to this order. This committee cannot succeed without you!

To my brothers in arms and our VFW Auxiliary family, this is a joint mission. It will take all of us. We need all hands on deck, because strengthening our women veteran communities is not a solo effort; it is a shared responsibility.

I welcome your guidance, partnership, and ideas.

In alignment with our VFW Department of Illinois State Commander, Rob Bailey, we remain "All In, All the Time," because that's how we accomplish the mission!

Leading with love, integrity, transparency, and authenticity.

Your Sister in Arms,  
Jennipher V. Glenn



## **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 2026-2027 Theme is:  
"What a Veteran Taught Me About America"

## Program Overview

The Voice of Democracy Scholarship competition is especially designed for high school students grades 9 through 12 including home-schooled students. It is a valuable, educational experience for students and a wonderful opportunity for positive publicity for students, teachers, and schools, as well as 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 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

NOTE: Posts can no longer receive credit for Voice of Democracy participation by making a cash donation to the Department of Illinois. Posts must advance at least one student entry to District judging.

You may make this a joint effort with your Post Auxiliary. Prior planning ensures high-level performance. As most know by now, the National VFW Organization has contracted with a company named Scholars App, which has digitized the Student Application process and has modernized the reporting of the Patriot's Pen and Voice of Democracy programs. Illinois VFW is in the process of transitioning to the new platform. Posts may utilize much of the conventional methods of conducting the contests this year but will be required to implement some portions of the new method.

Video Training modules will be available to assist post and district volunteers to adapt to the new system over time. Videos and a list of VFW Scholars App Coordinators are available at the department website, [vfwil.org](http://vfwil.org), under "Resources/Scholars App". Currently the post commander/chairperson can easily download, copy, and disseminate flyers created by Scholars App to promote the contests. They can be published in local newspapers or displayed in any public places that will allow. The posters contain a QR Code and link that allows students to use their computers to enter the contests directly through Scholars App, which in turn deliver those entries complete with application, essay and MP3 audio/essay directly to your post in Scholars App. The flyers allow students access to the contests even if schools don't offer them. Remember there are many home-schooled students that can be reached through your local R.O.E (Regional Office of Education) or in some areas D.O.E. (District Office of Education). They will have a list of all home-schooled students who register with the R.O.E. or D.O.E. Home schooled students are not required to register but most do to insure accreditation. They are generally grateful for the opportunity to advertise student scholarship information, and home-schooled students and their parents are often grateful as well. Posts can also use the conventional methods used in past years of providing Voice of Democracy materials to local school boards, principals,



**David Darte**  
*Chairman*

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

Post 3912-12

teachers or other contacts within the school or schools in your community. Let's make the effort to reach as many students as possible this year. You may offer your Scholars App flyers to teachers as a possible way to conduct the contest, but don't wear out you welcome by pushing them to adopt that method. There will be a video and Teacher Resource available to advise the post and teachers about remedies to some problems that occurred with schools during the last cycle.

It will be the Post Commander/ VOD Chairperson's responsibility to submit their name and email address to the District VOD Commander/Chairperson. In turn, the District Chairperson will use the Post Chairperson's name and email address to create an account in the Scholars App Suborganization List. Scholars App will then email the Post Chairperson with an invitation to login to their account. This year all post chairmen must login if the post is going to conduct the VOD contest even if you plan to use the conventional method for conducting most of the contest. Once logged in the post chair will have access to the entire post level Scholars App platform. The login process is simple and self-explanatory but new video training will be available at the department website and will be emailed to you in a timely fashion.

Other new, short and easy-to-follow video training modules will be available to instruct each individual action that is required, if one is to participate extensively in the Scholars App platform, as well as the conventional paper methods, to avoid problems that have caused confusion in the past. For those who have promoted and conducted the youth essay contests in the past but are tech-reluctant, keep up the enthusiasm and experience in conducting the contests. Recruit someone with the necessary computer skills and who is able to donate the minimal time necessary. And if you choose to be patient and learn the necessary skills, you will be glad you did. There will be a list of Scholars App Coordinator contacts to assist you also at [vfwil.org](http://vfwil.org), "Resources/Scholars App".

### Judging Post Entries

As soon as possible, after the Oct. 31st deadline for student entries, assign your judges through Scholars App or by conventional methods. A video training module will be available to demonstrate judging methods. Note: The judging criteria supplied by national is not comprehensive. The Judges Guideline that is used at the department II level gives judges more quantifiable guidelines and is available at [vfwil.org](http://vfwil.org), under "Programs/VOD". Department recommends you send the Judges Guideline to your post judges in addition to what Scholars App provides.

The deadline for Post judging is Nov. 15, 2026, unless otherwise specified by your District VOD Chairperson. Once the post judging is completed, posts 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 another entry. The number of schools participating does not affect the number of entries allowed

Once you have identified your post winner(s), you can advance (promote) them directly to your District Chairperson directly through Scholars App, if the student entries came through the Scholars App platform. This year, if post winner(s) were submitted to your post as paper applications, essays, and MP3 audio/essays, the post will need to manually upload the application, essay, and MP3 audio/essay for each post winner to Scholars App and then promote them directly to your district chair. Posts are asked to submit a good quality, color "head and shoulders" photo of your Post Winner(s). Digital photos are preferred and cell phone pictures are acceptable.

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 and or a Social Media post. Also, some type of prize for the winner(s), would be most appropriate.

### 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. It will be the District VOD Chairperson's responsibility to submit their name and email address, if different from last cycle, to the Department VOD Chairperson asap. The Department chairperson will then create and account for the District Chairperson in the Scholars App Suborganization list. Scholars App will send an email inviting the District Chairman to login to their account. Once logged in, it will be the District VOD Chairperson's responsibility to enroll all post VOD chairpersons from their district into the Scholars App Suborganization List if different from last cycle, as soon as possible. In the event a chairperson is not submitted from a post by July 15th, the District VOD Chairperson shall enroll the Post Commander as Post Chairperson. This will ensure that all posts have been given the opportunity to participate in the VOD contest. These are very simple tasks. Video training will be available with login assistance and adding or removing Post Chairpersons to Scholars App. District chairpersons shall create and maintain an email list of all Post Chairpersons in their district asap to facilitate efficient communication between post, district and department chairpersons. As the district meeting is to be a School of Instruction, it would be advantageous for the District Voice of Democracy Chairperson to ask for time to present training materials to post Voice of Democracy chairmen and commanders on the program requirements.

Posts have been advised to have their post judging completed by November 15, 2026, please advise posts in your district of your deadline to receive post entries via Scholars App This will allow adequate time to assign judges, complete district judging and advance the District Winner to Department in Scholars app by December 15, 2026.

Headshots of students can be uploaded to Scholars App but is not a required field. If the headshot (photo) is not uploaded to Scholars App, a good quality, color "head and shoulders" photo of your district winner (digital photos are preferred and cell phone pictures are acceptable) must be submitted to Department Headquarters to arrive no later than December 15, 2026. This will allow time for the printing of the program books that are distributed at the State Awards Banquet.

### Key Dates (Please Note New Deadlines)

- October 31, 2026- Student entries to post
- November 15, 2026 - Post judging complete unless otherwise specified your District
- December 10, 2026 - District judging complete
- December 15, 2026 - District winners due to the State Headquarters
- January 1, 2027- District Participation Reports due to State Headquarters
- January 10, 2027- State Judging will be completed
- January 15, 2027 - Department winners due to National
- January 31, 2027 - Department reports due to National
- February 6, 2027- 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 Valley Forge Pennsylvania 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 - Commander-in-Chief Fritz Mihelcic award .....	\$4,000 Cash
2nd Place - John H. Emery Youth, Pageantry and Patriotism Fund First Place Award in Memory of George G. Gorin, Jr .....	\$2,500 Cash
3rd Place – George Cramer/Ray Soden Scholarship Award .....	\$1,500 Cash
4th Place – Terry L. McKinney Memorial Award .....	\$1,250 Cash
5th Place – Dale & Catherine Clifton Award .....	\$1,000 Cash
6th Place – Johnson Phelps Post 5220 Auxiliary.....	\$750 Cash
7th Place – Jarnell/Ross Award.....	\$600 Cash
8th Place – William Glenn Britt Memorial Award.....	\$550 Cash
9th Place - Dick Cosner Memorial Award.....	\$500 Cash
10th Place – Vern & Lorraine Umphery, Post 6863 & L.A. Award.....	\$450 Cash
11th Place – Robert C. Holysz Post 2200 Award.....	\$400 Cash
12th Place – Grant-Parkholme Post 9115 Award.....	\$375 Cash
13th Place – West End VFW Post 2004 Memorial Award.....	\$350 Cash
14th 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, 2026; it should be earmarked “VOD 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 PP/VOD Pizza Party or the Annual PP/VOD Ice Cream Social for 2026-2027 can donate \$300, but their donation must be earmarked “PP/VOD Pizza Party Sponsor” or “PP/VOD Ice Cream Social Sponsor.” The first district to respond will receive the sponsorship. Districts wanting to sponsor other Voice of Democracy weekend events, such as Saturday’s student luncheon, the 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. Gifts can also be given to cover the cost of the flowers for the students to wear at the Awards Banquet, room expenses, and the backpacks that are given to all district winners. Donations for the backpacks could be cash to purchase the backpacks and or snacks that we include in each backpack.

Each District Winner and family will be provided two nights free lodging in Springfield and one ticket to the PP/Voice of Democracy Awards Banquet. District is expected to pay for the tickets for family members accompanying their district winner.

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

The school that 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.

The district sponsoring the largest number of students participating in the VOD contest will receive \$100. Because districts are comprised of varying numbers of posts, the award will be calculated by dividing the total number of students participating by the total number of posts in the district (regardless if those posts 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.

### Additional Resources

All the information needed to conduct the PP/VOD programs is online at <https://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 following link: <https://www.vfw.org/community/youth-and-education/youth-scholarships> or at the Department website: 2025-2026 Voice of Democracy - VFW Dept of Illinois

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. Telephone: (800) 821-2606 or <https://www.vfwstore.org/>

### State Dashboard Reporting

The participation entry for the Voice of Democracy Contest will be posted to the dashboard in February based upon the report submitted by each District Voice of Democracy Chairperson to the State Chairperson.

NOTE: Posts can no longer receive credit for Voice of Democracy participation by making a cash donation to the Department of Illinois. Posts must advance at least one student entry to District Judging.

Promote patriotism in our youth through the Voice of Democracy program as we embrace the motto of 2026-2027 IL VFW State Commander Robert Bailey "All In, All the Time"



## 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: \_\_\_\_\_

# VOICE OF DEMOCRACY



## 2026-2027 Theme "What a Veteran Taught Me About America"

**Student Entry Deadline: Oct. 31, 2026**  
**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 26,000 high school students compete for more than \$2 million in scholarships and incentives. Prizes and scholarships can be awarded at the Post, District, state and national level. National winners will be notified of their scholarship & placement. Students compete by writing and recording an audio essay on an annual patriotic theme. This year's theme is, **"What a Veteran Taught Me About America"**

### The Rules

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 intend 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.

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](mailto:youthscholarships@vfw.org) for special instructions. No music, singing, poetry or sound effects are allowed. To ensure fairness and impartiality in judging, essays **must be anonymous. Please do not include your name, address, school name, or any other personal identifiers in the body of your essay.** Additionally, avoid references to your race, sex, religion, national origin, or other specific personal characteristics that could reveal your identity. General references to nationality or patriotic identity (such as being an American or referencing American values) are permitted if they are relevant to the essay theme. However, personal identifiers tied to your individual background or experience should be avoided.

You may enter only one competition at one Post (if otherwise eligible) per year. At any time during the contest, additional participant personal information could be requested by the VFW, including but not limited to a photograph, SSN, or biographical information.

### Advancement

Decisions of Judges at all levels are final. One winner for every 15 entries from each Post advances to District and one District winner advances to the state (Department) competition. Contact the post where you entered at to check on your advancement

### 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, 2026. It is the responsibility of the student to meet this deadline by submitting their entry to the proper location - ensuring it is a participating Post.

### How do I enter?

Record your original 3-5 minute (+ or - 5 second max.) audio in MP3 format (no videos) on a flash drive, or other electronic device. You will submit the recording, a typed essay and this completed entry form. Provide these items to your school/group competition or VFW Post for judging.

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 a Post. Your local post will give instructions on how to turn in your entry to them. Audio may be submitted physically on a Flash Drive, emailed to the Post (with permission) or submitted through our online platform using Scholars App. **To submit through Scholars App you must first receive a QR code or link from your local post.** Entries sent to VFW National Headquarters directly will not be considered.

If you need help finding a participating VFW Post, follow these instructions: Visit this website [vfw.org/FindaPost](http://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](mailto:youthscholarships@vfw.org).

### What Are the Judging Criteria?

#### Originality is worth 35 points:

Treatment of the theme should show imagination and human interest.

#### Delivery is worth 35 points:

Speak in a clear and credible manner.

#### Content is worth 30 points:

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

**2026-2027 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 Founding Forward Spirit of America Leadership trip to Valley Forge, Pennsylvania 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:**  
**816.968.2787**  
**Email: youthsponsorships@vfw.org**

**Local VFW Post Information:**

Contact: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Best Time To Call: \_\_\_\_\_

Alternate Contact: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Best Time To Call: \_\_\_\_\_



## 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



**Robert Bland**  
*Chairman*

2337 Westfield Lane  
Belvidere, IL 61008  
Phone: (815) 685-1611

Email:  
robert.b.bland@outlook.com

Post 1461-6

The purpose of the Youth Activities program, as outlined in our Congressional Charter, is to “foster true patriotism.” and “to maintain and extend the institutions of American Freedom”.

Youth Activities is divided into several categories.

- Youth Programs
- Youth Scholarships
- Youth Cadet Awards
- VFW in the Classroom
- ROTC and JROTC Awards Program

Youth Programs are anything you do with the youth in your local community. It can be as simple as holding an Easter Egg hunt to a separate Post scholarship program. When looking for an event to hold ask yourselves two questions; does this answer a need in the community and does this support the mission of the VFW.

In order to get credit on the Dashboard for Youth Activities, first you must report your activities!

Why is it important to report what your Post does? Your Youth Activities gets rolled up with the rest in the Department and is used to in the Department Fact Sheet to show the impact that we have in the community. The information is also used at National to highlight the great work we are doing when the VFW is on Capital Hill advocating for veterans.

When reporting ensure that you are reporting hours, dollars and members participating. The three Posts, in their membership categories, that have the most will receive a \$50.00 award and certificate presented at the State Convention.

- The membership categories are:
- Membership Category 1: Up to 150 members
  - Membership Category 2: 151 to 300 members
  - Membership Category 3: 301 members and up

The District that has the most reported hours, dollars and member participation will receive a plaque.

Other Youth Activities information can be found at: <https://vfw.org/community/youth-and-education>

When conducting your Youth Activities, remember to work with your Auxiliary. The Auxiliary Youth Program consists of:

**PATRIOTISM THROUGH LITERACY:** Promote and support reading among young people.

Here are a few ideas you can use to engage with your community:

- Build a Lending Library/Free Little Library. A quick google search will bring up all kinds of ideas, building plans, YouTube instructional videos, etc. Try to choose a location that is easily accessible to kids, and make sure you have permission from the property owner before you proceed. (They may even want to help you with the project- BONUS!) Then, stock it with some patriotic or historic figures fiction or nonfiction books, and be sure to include a variety of reading levels. If you need book ideas, you can find a list of suggestions here: <https://vfwauxiliary.org/what-we-do/youth-activities/> and scroll down to the link about ¾ way down the page. Make sure to share your project on social media and use the hashtag #auxlendinglibrary to get the word out!
- Volunteer to host a story time. This can be hosted at your local library, an afterschool program, or even at your post. If at the library or your post, you'll want to make sure that the parents stay present with their child. Talk to your local library, YMCA, park district, or daycare facilities for volunteer opportunities. They will usually even help you promote the event to their regular patrons.
- Host a read-a-thon or contest with prizes. Offer to donate several copies of a patriotic themed book and ask students to write an essay or even draw a picture about the story. Or work with one of the above groups to provide prizes for a student read-a-thon. Make sure you know the parameters and your budget for prizes up front to avoid uncomfortable surprises.
- Run a Young Writer's Workshop or bring in a local author. Do you have a historical fiction or creative non-fiction author in your community that could help you? A great way to find local authors is by checking with your small local (non-chain) bookstore owners.

ILLUSTRATING AMERICA: This contest is to introduce, encourage and recognize young artists as they express patriotism through art.

- Contest is open to any student in grades K-8 who is enrolled in public, private, parochial, or home school in the United States, it's territories and possessions, or dependents of US Military or civilian personnel in overseas schools. Please see the entry form for specific rules regarding eligibility and contest rules.
- You can download the entry form and rules at <https://vfwauxiliary.org/what-we-do/youth-activities/> and click on the image of the form. It will download a pdf form to your computer that you can attach to emails or print.
- Submit contest information to your local schools, post it at the library, and even to Scout groups and other youth organizations. Send it early so they have time to plan it as part of their activities before the deadlines.
- KNOW THE DEADLINES! How disappointed a student would be to spend time on a creation only to find out they were misinformed (or uninformed) about the project deadlines? NOTE: THESE DEADLINES HAVE CHANGED FROM RECENT YEARS.

**DEADLINE TO ENTER:**

Local Auxiliary  
District (optional)

**AUX WINNERS TO DEPARTMENT**

Mail entries to:

Illustrating Art Contest  
Beth Costa-Bland  
2337 Westfield Ln  
Belvidere, IL 61008

**DEPT WINNERS TO NATIONAL**

**DATE:**

December 15, 2026  
January (check w/Dist Program Chair)  
January 15, 2027

January 31, 2027

### RECOGNIZE PATRIOTISM BY YOUNG PEOPLE AND YOUTH GROUPS

We all know that one of the best ways to encourage good actions is through positive reinforcement!

- Make earning one of your certificates or recognitions a goal in your community by yelling LOUD and PROUD when you give them out.
- Post pictures (only with parent's permission) of kids with their certificates or RAP cards and tag parents on social media.
- Certificates, Patriotic Youth Award citations, and Random Acts of Patriotism (RAP) cards can all be found on Malta>Member Resources>Youth Activities on the left side of the page. Scroll down to the bottom of the page.
- Make sure that youth organization groups know about the opportunity to be recognized for the "Youth Group Supporting Our Veterans" Citation by posting about it on social media or leaving a flyer at their headquarters office to go out in a newsletter sent to all local group leaders. Make a big deal about it when you present the citation and watch how quickly you will get more requests!

### SPONSOR A YOUTH GROUP &/OR INVITE THEM TO YOUR ACTIVITIES

There are so many youth groups and activities looking for sponsorships to support their programs. Community youth sports programs, scout programs, 4-H, FFA, Boys & Girls Clubs, Nat'l Honors Society... even local summer camp programs through your park district.

- Don't just send a check, be a part of it if possible! Did you sponsor a Little League team? Go to a game or two, wearing a team tshirt if you can get one! Visit the daycamp or offer to run a craft one afternoon. Let the kids know where you're from and why you are there.
- Many youth programs are looking for community service opportunities! Invite them to help out at one of your events. Maybe they can bus tables at a monthly breakfast or dinner. Grounds pick-up and flags put out for Memorial Day or Veteran's Day.
- Invite them to walk in a parade or visit veterans at a local home or hospital with you (bring their parents too.)

If you do not have an Auxiliary, see if another Auxiliary in the area would like to help or the Auxiliary District. Remember when working with your Auxiliary, we are in this together. The Auxiliary is just one of the many organizations in the community that work with youth. For example, Rotary International has a literacy program, reach out to them and see the impact that we can have together.

**Patriot's Pen**

**2026-2027 Theme: "What A Veteran Taught Me About America"**

Patriot's Pen overview along with the rules of the contest are outlined on the Patriot's Pen Entry Form found at: <https://vfw-org-hqagarhxahbybyd9.z01.azurefd.net/-/media/VFWSite/Files/Community/Youth-and-Education/Patriots-Pen-Entry-Form-Fillable.pdf?la=en&v=1&d=20260410T233718Z> or at the end of this section.

Each Post is allowed to forward 1 entry to District for every 15 they receive, for example:

- 1-15 essays – 1 entry to District
- 16-30 essays- 2 entries to District
- 31-45 essays – 3 entire to District
- 46-60 essays- 4 entire to District
- And so on.

**Timeline:**

- October 31 2026 – completed student entries due to the VFW Post
- November 22, 2026 – winning entries due to District
- December 15, 2026 – winning entries due to Department by Scholars App
- December 30, 2026 – District Report Form and Participation Form due to State HQ
- January 1, 2027 – Department judging completed
- February 5-7, 2027 - State Patriot's Pen Award Banquet, Springfield
- February – State updates the Dashboard for the Posts and the Districts that submitted winners for Patriot's Pen

**Completed packet consists of:**

- Entry form with all necessary signatures – Scholars App
- Legible copy of speech – Scholars App
- Digital Photo, head and shoulder in color - Scholars App
- Patriot's Pen entry form – email

Judging Post entries is outlined in the Voice of Democracy guidance.

## 2026-2027 Illinois VFW Commander's Leadership Manual

### State Awards:

Top 4 entries will receive 2 nights of lodging at the Department of Illinois Voice of Democracy and Patriot's Pen Award Banquet. Students will tour sights in Springfield and network with other patriotic students in Illinois.

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

NOTE: Posts can no longer receive credit for Patriot's Pen participation by making a cash donation to the Department of Illinois. Posts must advance at least one student entry to District judging.

The VFW National Website has material to help with your program. After you log in to the National site go to my VFW. Under training and Support, click onto the Community Service, Scholarships & Awards tab. Under the Patriot's Pen Youth Essay Contest you will see:

### ➤ Patriot's Pen Youth Essay Contest

- [Patriot's Pen Entry Form](#) - Discover this year's theme, rules and entry form
- [Patriot's Pen Brochure](#) - Help spread the word about our Patriot's Pen competition
- [National Award List](#) - View a complete listing of national awards available
- [Patriot's Pen Judging Guidelines](#) - Understand how to score annual entries
- [Score Sheet](#) - The official Patriot's Pen judges' score sheet
- [Post, District and Department Reports](#) - The official VFW reporting and summary on the Programs Dashboard Tool
- [Department Patriot's Pen Report Instructions](#) - Everything you need to know on forwarding your Patriot's Pen winner to national
- [VOD and Patriot's Pen Scholarship Donor Criteria](#) - If you're interested in sponsoring a scholarship, here's what you need to know
- [Competition Announcement Press Release](#) - Fill in the blanks and send to your local media
- [Patriot's Pen Winner Press Release](#) - Fill in the blanks and promote your local winner
- [Public Service Announcement Script](#) - Ask local TV and radio stations to promote the program

Here are a couple of example press releases:

#### VFW Kicks-Off Annual Essay Competition

<city>, <state abbreviation>. (<month> <day>, <year>) – Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) Post <Post name/number> Commander <full name> is proud to announce the kick-off of the VFW's annual Patriot's Pen youth essay competition. Middle school students in grades 6-8 in this area have the opportunity to compete and win their share of nearly \$1 million in local, state and national level awards.

The VFW enacted the Patriot's Pen competition in 1995 to encourage young minds to examine America's history, along with their own experiences in modern American society by composing a 300- to 400-word patriotic-themed essay. The theme for the <20XX-XX> competition is "<insert theme>."

Students begin by competing at the local Post level. Post winners advance to District competition with District winners advancing to the state competition. State first place winners compete for their share of thousands of dollars in awards, and the national first place winner is awarded the top prize of \$5,000.

Each year, more than 60,600 students participate in the competition worldwide. Deadline for student entries is Oct. 31, and interested students and teachers should contact their local VFW Post <Post number> by phone at XXX.XXX.XXXX or email the Post at <Post contact email address> for more information.

For more details on the program or to download this year's entry form, visit [vfw.org/PatriotsPen](http://vfw.org/PatriotsPen).

-vfw-

NOTE: Although this press release was designed as a sample Department winner announcement, it can also be used to announce your Post/District winner (with slight text modifications.)

#### VFW Announces Post Patriot's Pen Essay Contest Winner

City, State abbreviation. (Month day, 20XX) – The VFW Post Number is pleased to announce that winner's full name, a 6th/a 7th/an 8th/ grade student from City, State, has been named the Post's first place winner of the VFW's 20XX-XX Patriot's Pen youth essay contest. Winner's first name, who was sponsored by VFW Post name/number and its Auxiliary in Post's city, state, wrote their winning essay based on this year's theme, "Insert theme."

The VFW enacted the Patriot's Pen youth essay competition in 1995 as a way to encourage young minds to examine America's history, along with their own experiences in modern American society while improving their writing skills.

The contest is a worldwide competition that gives students in grades 6, 7 and 8 the opportunity to write a 300- to 400-word theme-based essay expressing their views on democracy while competing for nearly \$1 million in awards and prizes at the local, state and national levels.

Over number of students students in the local community participated in the competition this year. As one of XX finalists worldwide, winner's first name will compete at the national level for individual awards ranging from \$500 to the top first place prize of \$5,000.

-vfw-

# PATRIOT'S PEN



## 2026-2027 Theme

### "What A Veteran Taught Me About America"

**Student Entry Deadline: October 31, 2026**

**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 60,000 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 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. Decisions of Judges at all levels are final. Contact the post where you entered to check on your advancement. Decisions of Judges at all levels are final. Contact the post where you entered to check on your advancement.

### 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 intend 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 Oct. 31.

- Your local Post will give instructions on how to turn in your entry to them. It may be delivered in person, emailed to the Post (with permission) or submitted through our online platform using Scholars App. **To submit through Scholars App you must first receive a QR code or link from your local post.**

Entries sent to VFW National Headquarters directly will not be considered.

### 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 2026-2027 theme is:

## "What A Veteran Taught Me About America"

### Deadline Information.

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

### Note:

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

First, visit [vfw.org/FindaPost](http://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](http://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 816.968.2787  
Email: [youthscholarships@vfw.org](mailto:youthscholarships@vfw.org)**

## 2026-2027 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.
- To ensure fairness and impartiality in judging, essays must be anonymous. Please do not include your name, address, school name, or any other personal identifiers in the body of your essay. Additionally, avoid references to your race, sex, religion, national origin, or other specific personal characteristics that could reveal your identity. General references to nationality or patriotic identity (such as being an American or referencing American values) are permitted if they are relevant to the essay theme. However, personal identifiers tied to your individual background or experience should be avoided.
- 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:

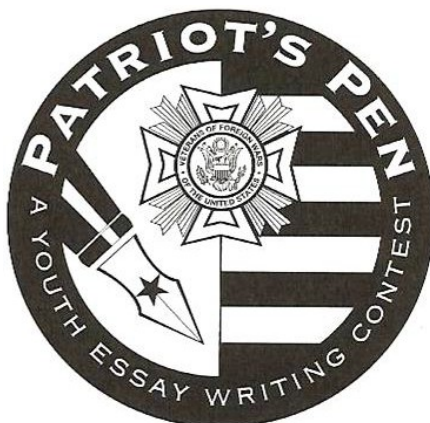
Contact: \_\_\_\_\_

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 (6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup> or 8<sup>th</sup>) 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**

The Teacher Award program is a way to recognize the teachers in your community.

There are three categories for the award:

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

To be eligible for the award, the teacher must be a currently certified/licensed teacher in grades K-12. Previous national winners are ineligible.

Nominations can be submitted by themselves, fellow teachers, supervisors, family members or other interested individuals.

The nomination packet consists of:

- Official Entry form complete with signature through the District Chairperson
- Resume, minimum 1 page, up to 5 pages, including resume, as a maximum of documentation of their teaching experience.
- Head-and-shoulder photo, if available

Deadlines:

- October 31 - Nomination to Post
- November 15- Post Awardees to District
- January 1 – District Awardees to Department
- January 1 – District participation report to Department
- January 15- Department Awardees to National

Resources can be found by logging in to the National site go to my VFW. Under training and Support, click onto the Community Service, Scholarships & Awards tab. Under the Smart/Maher VFW National Citizenship Education Teacher Award you will see:

#### **➤ Smart/Maher VFW National Citizenship Education Teacher Award**

- [Teacher Award Rules and Eligibility](#) - Everything you need to know about the Smart/Maher VFW National Citizenship Education Teacher Award
- [Teacher Award Entry Form](#) - Ensure your Post is using the most up-to-date form
- [Teacher Award Brochure](#) - Help spread the word about the award to your local community
- [Teacher Award Scoring Sheet](#) - The official Teacher of the Year award judges' score sheet
- [Contest Announcement Press Release](#) - Fill in the blanks and send to your local media
- [Teacher Award Winner Press Release](#) - Fill in the blanks and promote your local winner

### **VFW in the Classroom**

Veterans are an important part of the fabric of our community. We can bring unique stories to the lessons that are taught in school. Working with educators, we can provide firsthand knowledge of events that are being taught.

When preparing to visit a classroom, ensure that you coordinate with the teacher on what is expected of you, what they are hoping to get out of your visit to the classroom and the time that you have available.

In you preparing allow time for an introduction, your presentation and for questions and answers. Your presentation will have to change depending on the age of the students. Bring appropriate memorabilia to show the students.

Some possible presentations are:

- Displaying the flag
- Folding the flag
- U.S. Flag History
- History of the U.S. Military
- History of your Branch of Service

Avoid discussions on:

- Politics
- Religion

### **ROTC and JROTC Awards Program**

The ROTC Awards Program offers Posts an opportunity to reach out to future service members. Some of those who choose military service careers will become eligible for VFW membership. This program gives many cadets their first look at what the VFW has to offer.

ROTC Awards are available for both Junior (JROTC) at high school level and Senior (ROTC) at college level. While the VFW outlines eligibility criteria, the selection of the recipient is up to the school. If the school conducts an awards ceremony, it is recommended that a VFW representative be on hand to make the presentation. Awards (medal, ribbon and certificate) can be purchased through the VFW store.

In addition to the National Program, the Department of Illinois also recognizes a JROTC Cadet of the Year at the annual State Convention. A form for submitting candidates is available on the Department website. Submissions to headquarters are due by April 30.

Resources supporting the ROTC Awards Program can be found on the Department of Illinois home page under Programs / ROTC:

- 1) a form by which schools can request awards, providing Posts with the information they need to place the order
- 2) a list of ROTC and JROTC Programs in Illinois (but always contact the school to verify the Program is still active)
- 3) A form by which Posts may submit candidates for JROTC Cadet of the Year
- 4) The ROTC tri-fold pamphlet which can be given to schools with full information on the awards that Post may obtain for them.

Other organizations like the Military Order of Foreign Wars (MOFW) and the Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR) also have ROTC and JROTC awards programs. Working with other organizations can enhance our impact.



**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. VFW Post Teacher Award Chairpersons may submit one candidate in each grade level to their District by Nov. 15. If your Department does not have a District judging, then submit to your **Department Headquarters and/or Department Chairperson by Jan.1**. The Department may select a single candidate in each grade level and submit them to **VFW National Headquarters, on the Dashboard by Feb.1, for National judging**. Department Teacher winners that are received at National Headquarters By Feb.1 will receive a VFW National citation for both the winning teacher and their school.

Simply visit [vfw.org/#login](http://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, and Chairperson's Guide are up on the VFW website.

**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 them 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, 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 of themselves, if available. These items will be forwarded on to the District, if applicable, and/or the Department with the winning teacher entry form.

**NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS**

406 W. 34th Street  
Kansas City, MO 64111

Office 816.756.3390  
Fax 816.968.1157

**WASHINGTON OFFICE**

200 Maryland Ave., N.E.  
Washington, D.C. 20002

Office 202.543.2239  
Fax 202.543.6719

[info@vfw.org](mailto:info@vfw.org)  
[www.vfw.org](http://www.vfw.org)

## 2026-2027 Smart/Maher VFW National Citizenship Education Teacher Award



**Entry Deadline: October 31, 2026**

### 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](http://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, 2025. 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 Mary Spencer, 816.756.3390, ext 6287 or [mspencer@vfw.org](mailto:mspencer@vfw.org).*

### Local VFW Post Information:

Contact: Name, Title

Phone Best time to call

Alternative Contact: Name, Title

Phone Best time to call

## 2026-2027 Smart/Maher VFW National Citizenship Education Teacher Award



**Entry Deadline: October 31, 2026**

### 2026-2027 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](http://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](http://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 [mspencer@vfw.org](mailto:mspencer@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:

#### 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

# 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.

# SCOUTING PROGRAM

## Scout of the Year Program



**Ron Milton**  
*Chairman*

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

Post 1739-14

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 Department of Illinois will be making an Award to the First Place nominee from the Scouting 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 - Scouting 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, 2027  
Post Entry to State Headquarters – April 1, 2027  
State Winner to National – May 1, 2027

The necessary forms can be found on the state website at [www.vfwil.org](http://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 of the Year contest.

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.

# VFW SCOUT OF THE YEAR

## Judges Score Sheet

DEPARTMENT/STATE \_\_\_\_\_ DATE OF JUDGING \_\_\_\_\_

JUDGE'S NAME & SIGNATURE \_\_\_\_\_

**Instructions to Judges:** Read and review all letters and data submitted by each applicant with the criteria listed below in mind. Use the input data to develop an overall presentation of the scout's personality that is consistent through all the data and letters submitted and grade each scout in each character areas. Grade each candidate using the following scoring system:

**EXCEPTIONAL = 6-10 pts. AVERAGE = 4-5pts. LOW = 1-3 pts.**  
**Ten (10) points are the maximum for each of the sub-elements.**

**SECTION A: HIGH SCHOOL PARTICIPATION**

- \_\_\_\_\_ Academic achievement
- \_\_\_\_\_ Extra-curricular activities
- \_\_\_\_\_ Demonstrated leadership
- \_\_\_\_\_ Significance of participation
- \_\_\_\_\_ **Sub-Total (40 pts. Max.)**

**SECTION C: COMMUNITY SERVICE RECORD**

- \_\_\_\_\_ Evidence of regular participation
- \_\_\_\_\_ Impact on the community
- \_\_\_\_\_ Demonstrated leadership
- \_\_\_\_\_ Demonstrated achievement (awards, etc.)
- \_\_\_\_\_ **Sub-Total (40 pts. Max.)**

**SECTION B: SCOUTING RECORD**

- \_\_\_\_\_ Timeliness of achieving rank
- \_\_\_\_\_ Demonstrated leadership
- \_\_\_\_\_ Participation in events
- \_\_\_\_\_ Quality of Eagle, Gold, Summit, or Quartermaster Project
- \_\_\_\_\_ Demonstrated adherence to Scout Code
- \_\_\_\_\_ Exemplary moral/spiritual character
- \_\_\_\_\_ **Sub-Total (60 pts. Max.)**

**SECTION D: CONTENT OF THE LETTERS OF RECOMMENDATION**

- \_\_\_\_\_ Evidence of exceptional character
- \_\_\_\_\_ Evidence of leadership qualities
- \_\_\_\_\_ Willingness to accept responsibility
- \_\_\_\_\_ Evidence of self-confidence
- \_\_\_\_\_ Evidence of serving others
- \_\_\_\_\_ Evidence of respect for authority
- \_\_\_\_\_ Evidence of patriotism and respect for this nation and its symbols.
- \_\_\_\_\_ **Sub-Total (70 pts. Max.)**

\_\_\_\_\_ **TOTAL SCORE (210 PTS. Max.)**

**JUDGES HAVE THE OPTION OF INTERVIEWING TOP FINALISTS  
 PRIOR TO FINAL SELECTION.**

# 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](http://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 816.756.3390, ext. 6787 during normal business hours Monday through Friday or emailed to [scouting@vfw.org](mailto: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 designated by the Veterans of Foreign Wars.

Father, Mother or Guardian Signature

Date (mm/dd/yyyy)



# 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](http://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 816.756.3390, ext 6787, or email [scouting@vfw.org](mailto:scouting@vfw.org)



## *Scouting Tracking Form*

The attached scouting tracking form will assist posts and districts in tracking scouting activities and entries into the State dashboard.

Record your scouting contacts as they happen and while they are fresh on your mind. Some of your contacts can also be used for community service and Americanism.

Your contacts will also help in promoting the Scout of the Year Program. If you have any questions or assistance, please contact me at [usafret1@att.net](mailto:usafret1@att.net).

Ron Milton  
State Scouting Chair.



# Veterans of Foreign Wars State of Illinois

## Scouting Activity Report Form

Due Quarterly: July 31, October 31, January 31, April 30

Post #	Post Name	Dist.	Quarter Ending		
<b>Scouting America Programs</b>		Members	Hrs	Money	Milage
<b>List only things that you do in support of Scouting America</b>					
<b>Girl Scout Programs</b>		Members	Hrs	Money	Milage
<b>List only things that you do in support of Girl Scout, USA</b>					
<b>Donations to Scouting Programs</b>		Members		Money	
<b>List only donations made by your VFW or Auxiliary Unit members</b>					
Scouting America					
Girl Scouts					
<b>USE OF BUILDING</b>		Members		Money	
<b>Total Members this Report</b>				<b>Total Monies Donated</b>	
<b>Total Hours this Report</b>				<b>Total Miles</b>	
VFW State Headquarters 217-529-6688					
3300 Constitution Drive					
Springfield IL 62711					

Also report VFW Scout Activity on your Community Service Report



**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. 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 law-makers 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](http://www.vfw.org/ActionCorps).

### Play a Role in the Process

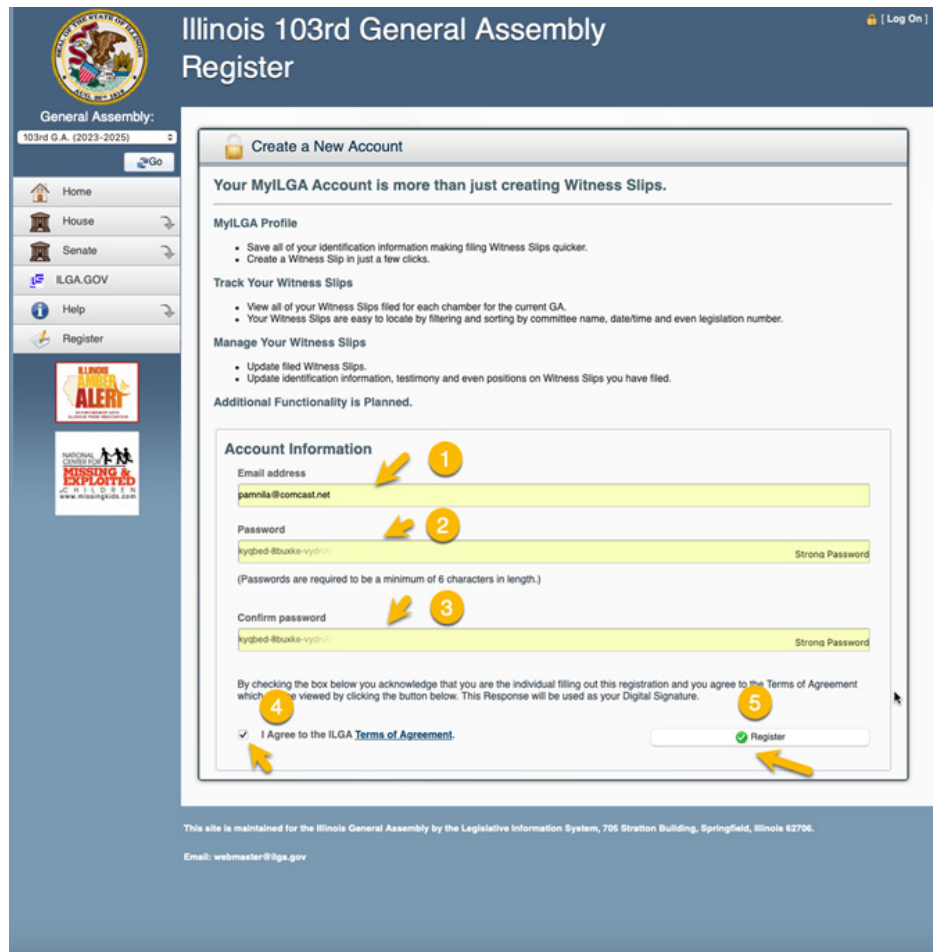
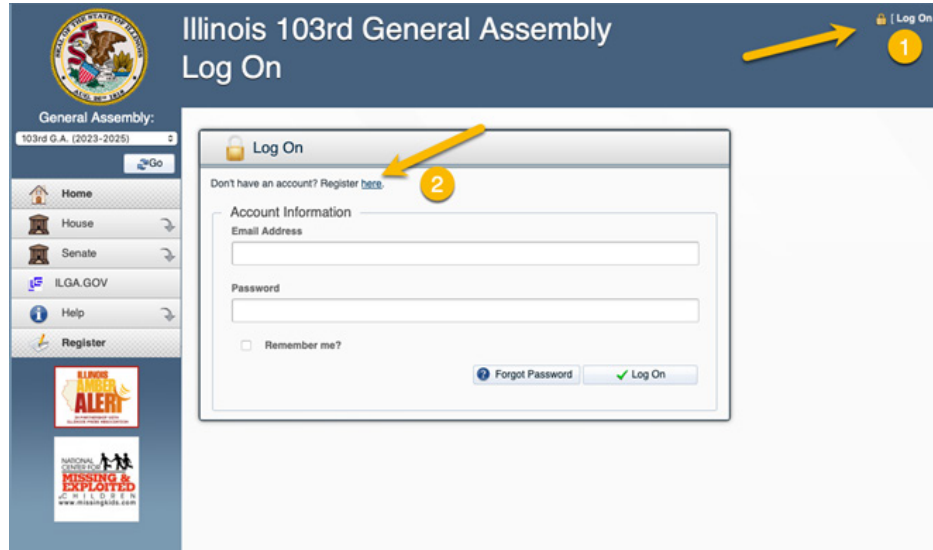
Be engaged and help us ensure that these priority goals are enacted. Sign up today for the VFW Action Corps Weekly and VFW Action Alerts:

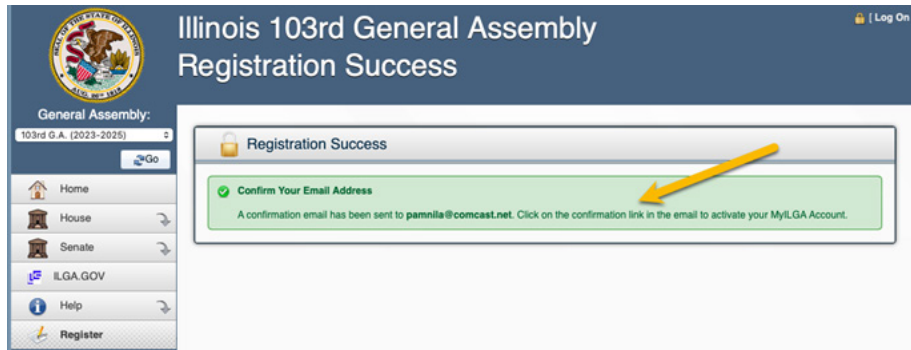
- Visit [vfw.org/JoinActionCorps](http://vfw.org/JoinActionCorps)
- Text "VFW" to 50457
- Scan the QR Code



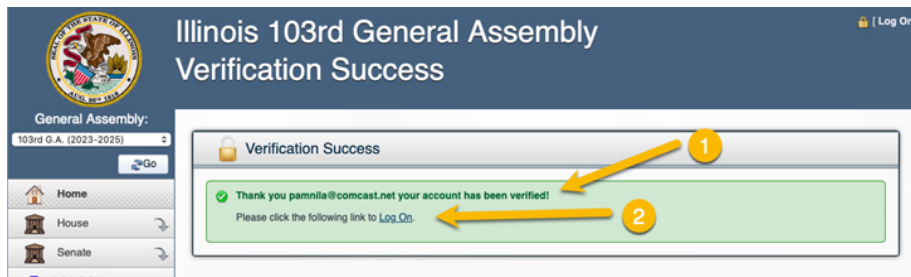
**NO ONE DOES MORE FOR VETERANS.**

If you wish to support our legislative efforts on an ongoing basis, you may wish to create an account on my.il-ga.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.

# 2026-2027 Illinois VFW Commander's Leadership Manual

**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**

Bills Picked To Hearing

The Department of Illinois VFW would like all Illinois supporters of Veterans to complete Witness slips before Thursday 27 April for 5 bills. 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 downcard 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)

Home  
House  
Senate  
Members  
Committees  
Committee Hearings  
ILGA.GOV  
Help  
MyILGA

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 pamnita@comcast.net | [Log Off]

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

Home  
House  
Senate  
ILGA.GOV  
Help  
MyILGA

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	[Witness Slips Icon]
HB925	Mike Portorio	MILITARY SERVICE-TECH	[Witness Slips Icon]
HB2500	Meg Loughran Cappel	ANIMAL ADOPTION-FEE WAIVER	[Witness Slips Icon]
HB2856	Suzy Glowiak Hilton	VITAL RECORDS-VETERAN DEATH	[Witness Slips Icon]
HB3295	Julie A. Morrison	DFPR-MILITARY FEE WAIVER	[Witness Slips Icon]

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 #**      Veterans' Affairs Committee Committee  
 BILL OR RESOLUTION NUMBER      **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**

**III. POSITION**

Select your position(s) on the legislative items.

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

**2**

**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

**4**

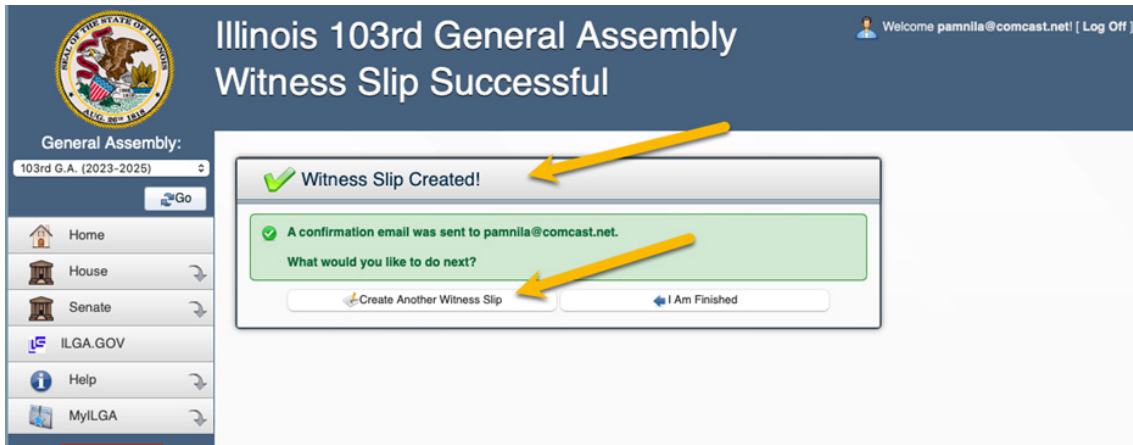
**5**

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

protected by reCAPTCHA      Privacy - Terms

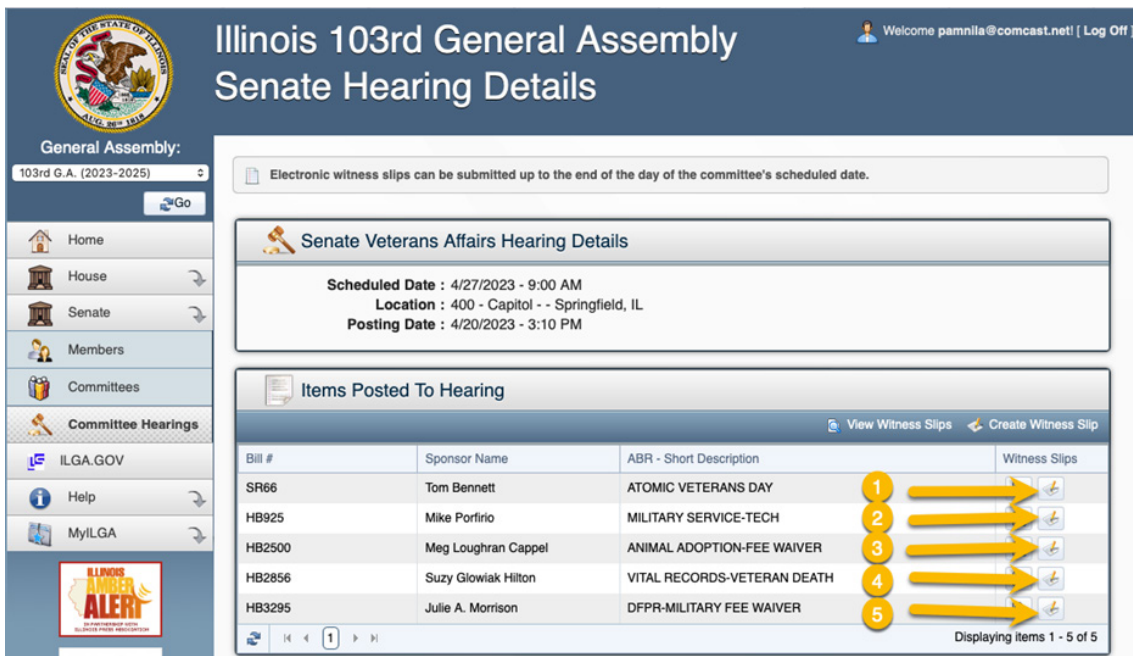
**Click**      **Click**      **Create(Slip)**

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, 2026 to June 30, 2027 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 2026-2027 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.
- **Checks** 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, 2026. A Check 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 2026-2027 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.



## VFW Department of Illinois Poppy Sales Order

Veterans of Foreign Wars Department  
of Illinois Headquarters  
3300 Constitution Drive  
Springfield, IL 62711

**Email Form**

<b>Date:</b>	<b>District:</b>	<b>Post/Aux Name &amp; Number:</b>
--------------	------------------	------------------------------------

**Traditional Buddy Poppy: \$140 for 500 or \$280 for 1,000**  
**Tin Tab Buddy Poppy: \$70 for 500 or \$140 for 1,000**  
**Poppies can only be ordered in increments of 500**

<b>Name to be shipped to:</b>	
<b>Address to be shipped to:</b>	
<b>City/State/Zip to be shipped to:</b>	
<b>Phone number:</b>	
<b>Type of Buddy Poppy:</b>	Traditional
<b>Quantity:</b>	500
<b>Cost:</b>	
<b>Shipping:</b> 500-\$15.95, 1000-\$29.95, 1500-\$34.95, 2000-\$39.95, 2500 plus-\$69.95	\$15.95
<b>Total Balance Due:</b>	\$ 15.95

**Payment Options:**

1. Make checks out to the Department of Illinois VFW and mail them to State HQ at the address above.
2. Go to [www.vfwil.org](http://www.vfwil.org) to pay online by using the "Donate Now" button. You must allocate the funds to your "Post # Poppy Order"

**NOTE:** \_\_\_\_\_

**For Department use only**

<b>Date recorded on dashboard</b>	<b>Date shipped or picked up</b>	<b>Date invoiced</b>	<b>Date paid</b>

**Please allow 8 weeks when ordering your poppies.** Your order will be shipped by State Headquarters; however, we may have to order the poppies from National

### **POPPY DISPLAY CONTEST GENERAL RULES**

1. The rules governing the poppy displays for the 2026-2027 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 - First place Poppy Displays will be awarded a \$100 gift certificate to the VFW Store. Second place Poppy Displays will be awarded a \$75 gift certificate to the VFW Store. 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”<sup>®</sup> 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”<sup>®</sup> 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

You will notice a major change to the Blood Donor Program. There is not a separate Blood Donor chairman this year. This year, the Blood Donor Program is under the duties of the State Surgeon. State Commander Rob Bailey's theme "*All In, All The Time*" should remind each of us to take a good hard look at the Veterans of Foreign Wars Blood Donor Program.

## **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 has have a blood drive at the other organizations 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 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 with in 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 begins on May 1, 2026 and will end on April 30, 2027.

This year, there is no credit on the dashboard for just donating blood. The only credit available will be for Posts and/or Districts hosting a Blood Drive.

Thank you to all who have donated and held blood drives in the past and for your future support.

Blood is a product that cannot be manufactured, the only source if 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 new born 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: ealanis@versiti.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

#### **Vitalent**

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

#### **Impact Life**

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

POC is State Surgeon

# PROGRAM DONATIONS

## Vital Core Programs & Donation Guidelines

**Program Year:** July 1, 2026 – June 30, 2027

To successfully support the veterans, families, and communities across Illinois, every Post is strongly encouraged to contribute to the following vital programs.

### Important Deadlines & Tracking

- **Deadline:** All donations **MUST** be received by State Headquarters no later than June 30, 2027.
- **Dashboard Credit:** Contributions are processed and posted to the online dashboard dynamically as they are received by State HQ.

#### 1. Homeless Veterans

- **Minimum Donation:** \$50
- **Routing Note:** Must be sent directly to State HQ and clearly marked “**Homeless Veterans**” to receive dashboard credit.

This fund directly supports critical initiatives and resources for unhoused or transitioning veterans throughout the State of Illinois, including:

- Funding and hosting Homeless Veterans Stand Downs.
- Purchasing essential equipment and operational supplies for local homeless shelters.
- Supporting specialized community projects that directly benefit unhoused veterans.
- Funding programs that assist veterans successfully transitioning from homelessness into permanent housing.

#### 2. VFW National Home

- **Minimum Donation:** \$50
- **Routing Note:** Can be sent to State HQ marked “**National Home**”. Alternatively, if paid directly to the National Home, you must send proof of payment to State HQ to receive dashboard credit.

These donations support the VFW National Home in Eaton Rapids, MI, with a focus on the two dedicated homes sponsored by our Department (Illinois 1 and Illinois 2). Funds are distributed dynamically according to the following strategic priorities:

- **1st Priority:** Operations, maintenance, and facility upkeep of Illinois Home 1 and Illinois Home 2.
- **2nd Priority:** Special campaigns or specific project needs agreed upon by the Department of Illinois (e.g., funding new playgrounds or campus golf carts).
- **3rd Priority:** General Operating Fund of the VFW National Home (utilized once Illinois 1 & 2 reserve thresholds are fully satisfied).

#### 3. Military Assistance Program (MAP) & Unmet Needs

- **Minimum Donation:** \$50
- **Routing Note:** Must be sent to State HQ and clearly marked “**MAP/Unmet Needs**” to receive dashboard credit.

This fund provides emergency financial relief to veterans facing severe financial hardships across Illinois. All requests are evaluated case-by-case following National VFW Unmet Needs criteria.

**Veteran Assistance Application Process**

- **How to Apply:** Submit a detailed, specific request outlining the financial hardship and circumstances via email to [vfwil@vfwil.org](mailto:vfwil@vfwil.org).
- **Required Documentation:** \*Copies of the specific invoices or utility bills requiring payment.
  - Explicit proof of veteran status (if the applicant is not a current VFW member).
- **Disbursement Policy:** To ensure strict financial accountability, approved funds are paid directly to the vendor/creditor, never directly to the veteran.

**Types of Relief Supported**

- Housing security assistance (rent, mortgage, or lease payments).
- Essential utilities (electric, gas, water, sewer, and primary telephone services).
- Emergency food assistance or vehicle fuel.
- Dignified funeral and burial expenses for indigent veterans.

**4. Service Office Support**

Donations to this program directly support the Illinois VFW Veterans Service Offices, which assist veterans with VA claims, healthcare, funeral and education benefits, employment counseling, and military records. The funds are utilized for specialty office requirements, outreach, and marketing to expand their reach. The Department currently maintains:

- **Chicago:** 2 Veterans Service Officers (VSOs) and 1 Claims Consultant
- **Danville:** 1 VSO
- **Marion:** 1 VSO
- **O'Fallon:** 1 part-time VSO

**Dashboard Credit Requirements**

- **Minimum Donation:** \$75 is required to receive credit on the Department dashboard.
- **Routing:** The donation must be sent directly to State Headquarters and explicitly marked as **Service Office Support (SOS)**.

**Recognition & Support Levels: Red, White and Blue Program**

Contributions are categorized into four distinct tiers of support:

Support Level	Donation Range	Recognition and Awards
<b>SOS Support</b>	\$50 to \$249	Standard Dashboard Credit (if \$75 or above)
<b>Blue Level Support</b>	\$250 to \$499	Distinctive plaque and special recognition at the State Convention
<b>White Level Support</b>	\$500 to \$999	Distinctive plaque and special recognition at the State Convention
<b>Red Level Support</b>	\$1,000 or more	Distinctive plaque and special recognition at the State Convention

## **2026-2027 Commander's Special Project**

Financially supporting VFW State Service Officers (VSO) is one of the most critical investments a Department can make. While National VFW provides a framework, the operational strength of a Service Office relies on department-level funding. Here is why strong financial backing from the State VFW is essential to the organization's mission, growth, and reputation:

### **1. Direct Impact on Veteran Benefits and VA Claims**

State Service Officers are the frontline advocates for veterans navigating the complex Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) system.

- **Maximizing Back Pay and Monthly Compensation:** VSOs help veterans secure life-changing disability compensation, pensions, and healthcare enrollment. Every dollar invested in a VSO directly translates into millions of dollars brought into the state's local economy and veteran households.
- **Keeping Services Free:** Financial support from the Department ensures that veterans and their families never have to pay for professional representation, protecting them from predatory unaccredited claim companies ("claim sharks").

### **2. Safeguarding the VFW's Primary Charter Mission**

The foundational purpose of the Veterans of Foreign Wars is to assist comrades and protect veterans' welfare.

- **Fulfilling the VFW Congressional Charter:** The core identity of the VFW relies on service work. If a Department underfunds its service office, it risks diminishing its reputation as a premier veteran service organization.
- **Maintaining Accreditation Excellence:** High-quality training, up-to-date legal resources, and secure technology infrastructure are required to maintain strict VA accreditation standards.

### **3. Driving Membership and Post Growth**

A robust, successful Service Office is the best recruitment and retention tool a Department possesses.

- **The Best Marketing Tool:** When a VSO wins a complex claim for a veteran, that veteran becomes a lifelong ambassador for the VFW. Many of the most dedicated, active members joined the organization simply because a Service Officer changed their life.
- **Community Relevance:** A Department known for having an elite, highly effective service office naturally attracts community respect, corporate sponsorships, and positive media coverage, which directly strengthens local Posts.

**The Bottom Line:** Funding State Service Officers is not an operational expense; it is the core mission. When a State VFW prioritizes its Service Office financially, it secures the well-being of its veterans, solidifies its organizational legacy, and drives the growth necessary to sustain the department for future generations.



**IMPORTANT DATES & DEADLINES**

## Calendar of Events

### 2026

July 4, 2026: Independence Day.

July 25-29, 2026: National Convention, Reno, NV

August 7-9, 2026: Council of Administration Meeting, Joliet, IL

August 8, 2026: State Commander and Auxiliary Presidents' Homecoming Banquet, Joliet, IL

September 11, 2026: Patriot Day

September 18, 2026: Prisoner of War/Missing In Action Recognition Day

September 19, 2026: Illinois Day at the National Home (Eaton Rapids, Michigan)

October 15-18, 2026: Big 10 Conference, Kalamazoo, MI

November 11, 2026: Veterans Day

December 7, 2026: Pearl Harbor Day

### 2027

February 5-7, 2027: State VOD Banquet and Council of Administration, Springfield, IL

February 6, 2027: State Voice of Democracy & Patriot's Pen Banquet, Springfield, IL

February 28-March 4, 2027: National Legislative Conference, Washington DC

May 1, 2027: Loyalty Day

May 31, 2027: Memorial Day

June 10, 2027: District Commander-Elect Training, Springfield, IL

June 10-13, 2027: State Convention, Springfield, IL

June 14, 2027: Flag Day

July 31-August 5, 2027: National Convention, Milwaukee, WI

### 2028

June 8-11, 2028: State Convention, Springfield

August 5-10, 2028: National Convention, San Antonio, TX

## **Deadline Dates to Remember for 2026-2027**

June 25, 2026: Deadline to submit articles for Illinois VFW News (July issue)

July 1, 2026: Fall Program book ads due to State HQ

July 31, 2026: Audit for quarter ending June 30 due to State HQ

August 15, 2026: Deadline to submit articles for Illinois VFW News (Sept. issue)

August 31, 2026: Quartermaster bonds issued through State HQ expiration

October 15, 2026: Deadline to submit articles for Illinois VFW News (Nov. issue)

October 31, 2026: Audit for quarter ending September 30 due to State HQ

December 15, 2026: Deadline to submit articles for Illinois VFW News (Jan. issue)

January 31, 2027: Audit for quarter ending December 31, 2026, due to State HQ

February 15, 2027: Deadline to submit articles for Illinois VFW News (March issue)

April 15, 2027: Deadline to submit articles for Illinois VFW News (May issue)

April 15, 2027: Ads for Convention Book due to State HQ

April 30, 2027: Post Election Reports due

April 30, 2027: Audit for the quarter ending March 31, 2027, due to State HQ

May 15, 2027: Any proposed IL VFW bylaw amendments or proposed resolutions for State Convention due to State HQ

June 1, 2027: District election reports due to State HQ

## **VFW PROGRAMS DEADLINE DATES**

(by program)

NOTE: Updated for the 2026-2027 VFW Program Year

### **Membership**

December 31, 2026: Post achieving 75% retention of their annual members will receive a certificate and \$100

February 1, 2027: Districts who reach 75% in membership will receive \$200

February 28, 2027: Post membership of 100% plus one-member will receive a certificate and \$150

April 30, 2027: Deadline to determine winner of Cramer-Soden Award

April 30, 2027: Deadline to complete All-State Post Criteria to receive award at State Convention

April 30, 2027: Post with the largest increase of Legacy Life Memberships (minimum 5) receives a \$100 gift certificate to VFW National Store

April 30, 2027: Deadline for Districts to receive \$10 per post for 100% approved post inspections.

June 1, 2027: 100 new or reinstated members to receive \$500 to attend 2027 National Convention

June 30, 2027: Posts membership at 100% will receive a 100% Membership Pennant

June 30, 2027: Deadline to qualify for All State Post/District

June 30, 2027: Deadline to qualify for All American Post/District

### **Public Relations/Marketing**

February 28, 2027: Deadline to submit nominations for State Publication Contest to State HQ

April 30, 2027: Deadline to submit nomination for News Media Professional of the Year to State HQ

### **Community Service**

March 15, 2027: Deadline to submit Community Activities Report to State HQ to qualify for National Certificate of Recognition

April 1, 2027: Deadline to submit nomination of Volunteer of the Year to State HQ

June 30, 2027: Community Service Reports deadline (National Dashboard)

July 1, 2027: National Community Service Posts of the Year (NCSP). The National Programs

office will determine the top National Community Service Post of the year. Each

Conference will have a ONCSP Winner based on total impact from July 1 to June 30 of the previous year

### **Americanism Program**

April 30, 2027: Deadline to submit reports for Americanism Program to State HQ for awards at State Convention

April 30, 2027: Deadline to submit reports for POW-MIA Program to State HQ for awards at State Convention

**Safety Program**

April 30, 2027: Deadline to submit reports for Safety Program to State HQ for awards at State Convention

**Public Servant Recognition**

January 1, 2027: Deadline to submit nominations for Law Enforcement Officer, Firefighter, Paramedic, Dispatcher of the Year to State HQ

February 1, 2027: Deadline for State to submit Law Enforcement Officer, Firefighter, Paramedic, Dispatcher of the Year to National

April 30, 2027: 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, 2027: Deadline to qualify for National Home Awards

April 30, 2027: Deadline to submit reports for Hospital/VAVS Program to State HQ

June 30, 2027: Deadline to submit donation (\$125 min.) for National Veterans Service via the Programs Dashboard NVS Donation link

**Voice of Democracy and Patriot's Pen**

October 31, 2026: Student entries to the Post

November 15, 2026: Completion of Post judging

December 1, 2026: Sponsorship money due at State HQ for Posts or Districts wishing to sponsor VOD/PP Scholarships, Pizza Party, or Ice Cream Social

December 15, 2026: District winners due to the State Headquarters

January 10, 2027: State Judging will be completed

January 10, 2027: District Participation Report due to State Headquarters

January 15, 2027: Department winners due to National

January 31, 2027: Department reports due to National

**Smart/Maher Citizenship Education Teacher Award**

October 31, 2026: Entries to the Post

November 15, 2026: Completion of Post judging

December 15, 2026: District Winners due to State HQ

December 29, 2026: District participation reports due to State HQ

January 10, 2027: Completion of Department judging

February 1, 2027: Department winners and reports due to National (to guarantee receipt for Department Convention presentation)

**Scout of the Year**

March 1, 2027: Scout entries to the Post

April 1, 2027: Post entries to Department Scouting Chairman or Department HQs

May 1, 2027: Department entry to National

**Legislative Advocacy**

May 15, 2027: Resolutions to be considered at State Convention due to State HQ

**Poppy Display Contest**

April 30, 2027: Deadline for Convention Awards for Poppies

May 29, 2027: District judging of Poppy displays completed

June 10, 2027: District winners' Poppy Displays delivered to State Convention

June 30, 2027: State winners list due to National

**Illinois Specific Programs**

June 30, 2027: Deadline to submit donation (\$50 minimum) for Commander's Special Project to State HQ

June 30, 2027: Deadline to submit donation (\$75 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.

## VFW PROGRAMS DEADLINE DATES

(by months)

### June 2026

June 25, 2026: Deadline to submit articles for Illinois VFW News (July issue)

### July 2026

July 25-29, 2026: National Convention, Reno, NV

July 31, 2026: Audits for quarter ending June 30th due to State HQ

### August 2026

Aug. 7-9, 2026: Council of Administration Meeting, Joliet, IL

Aug. 8, 2026: State Commander and Auxiliary President's Homecoming, Joliet, IL

Aug. 15, 2026: Deadline to submit articles for Illinois VFW News (Sept. issue)

Aug. 31, 2026: Quartermaster bonds issued through State HQ expiration

Aug. 31, 2026: Fall Program book ads due to State HQ

### September 2026

Sept. 18, 2026: Prisoner of War/Missing In Action Recognition Day

Sept. 19, 2026: Illinois Day at the National Home (Eaton Rapids, Michigan)

### October 2026

Oct. 15, 2026: Deadline to submit articles for Illinois VFW News (Nov. issue)

Oct. 15-18, 2026: Big 10 Conference, Kalamazoo, MI.

Oct. 31, 2026: Audit for quarter ending September 30th due to State HQ

Oct. 31, 2026: VOD/PP entries to the Post

Oct. 31, 2026: Teacher of the Year entries to the Post

### November 2026

Nov. 15, 2025: VOD/PP post-judging completed

Nov. 15, 2025: Teacher of the Year post judging completed

### December 2026

Dec. 1, 2026: Sponsorship money due for Posts or Districts wishing to sponsor VOD/PP Scholarships, Pizza Party, or Ice Cream Social

Dec. 15, 2026: Deadline to submit articles for Illinois VFW News (Jan. 2027 issue)

Dec. 15, 2026: District VOD/PP winners due to State HQ

Dec. 15, 2026: District Teacher of the Year due to State HQ

Dec. 29, 2026: District Participation reports due to State HQ

Dec. 31, 2026: Post achieving at least 75% retention of their annual membership will receive a certificate and \$100

### January 2027

Jan. 1, 2027: Nominations for Law Enforcement Officer, Firefighter, Paramedic, and Dispatcher of the Year due to Department HQ

Jan. 10, 2027: Smart Maher Teacher of the Year judging completed

Jan. 10, 2027: VOD/PP State judging completed

Jan. 10, 2027: VOD/PP District Participation Report due to State HQ

Jan. 15, 2027: Department VOD/PP winners due to National

Jan. 31, 2027: Department VOD/PP reports due to National

Jan. 31, 2027: Audit for quarter ending December 31, 2026, due to State HQ

**February 2027**

- Feb. 1, 2027: District Membership at 75% to receive \$200
- Feb. 1, 2027: Department Smart/Maher winners and reports due to National
- Feb. 1, 2027: Deadline for State to submit Law Enforcement Officer, Firefighter, Paramedic, Dispatcher of the Year to National
- Feb. 15, 2027: Deadline to submit articles for Illinois VFW News (March issue)
- Feb. 5-7, 2027: State VOD Banquet and Council of Administration, Springfield, IL
- Feb. 6, 2027: State Voice of Democracy & Patriot's Pen Banquet, Springfield, IL
- Feb. 28, 2027: Post achieving 100% plus one-member will receive a certificate and \$150
- Feb. 28, 2027: Deadline to submit nominations for State Publication Contest to State HQ
- Feb. 28-March 4, 2027: National Legislative Conference, Washington DC

**March 2027**

- March 1, 2027: Scout entries to the Post
- March 15, 2027: Deadline to submit Community Activities Report to State HQ to qualify for National Certificate of Recognition.

**April 2027**

- April 1, 2027: Deadline to submit nomination of Volunteer of the Year to State HQ
- April 1, 2027: Post entries to Department Scouting Chairman or Department HQs
- April 15, 2027: Deadline to submit articles for Illinois VFW News (May issue)
- April 15, 2027: Ads for Convention Book due to State HQ
- April 30, 2027: Post Election Reports due.
- April 30, 2027: Audit for quarter ending March 31, 2027, due to State HQ
- April 30, 2027: Deadline to determine winner of Cramer-Soden Award
- April 30, 2027: Post with largest Legacy Life Memberships (minimum 5) receives \$100 gift certificate to VFW Store
- April 30, 2027: Deadline for Districts to receive \$10 per post for 100% approved post inspections.
- April 30, 2027: Deadline to submit nomination for News Media Professional of the Year to State HQ
- April 30, 2027: 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
- April 30, 2027: Deadline to qualify for National Home Awards
- April 30, 2027: Deadline for Convention Awards for Poppies
- \*\*\*April 30, 2027: Deadline to complete All-State Post Criteria to receive award at State Convention.
- \*\*\*April 30, 2027: Deadline to submit all dashboard reports in order to receive awards at State Convention

**May 2027**

- May 1, 2027: Department entry to National from Scouting Chairman or State HQs
- May 15, 2027: Any proposed Illinois bylaw changes or resolutions for State Convention due to State HQ
- May 29, 2027: District judging of Poppy displays completed

**June 2027**

- June 1, 2027: District election reports due to State HQ
- June 1, 2027: 100 new or reinstated members to receive \$500 to attend 2027 National Convention
- June 10, 2027: District winners' Poppy Displays delivered to State Convention
- June 10, 2027: District Commander Elect Training, Springfield, IL
- June 10-13, 2027: State Convention, Springfield, IL
- June 15, 2027: Deadline to submit articles for Illinois VFW News (July issue)
- June 30, 2027: Deadline to qualify for All State Post/District
- June 30, 2027: Deadline to qualify for All American Post/District
- June 30, 2027: Community Service Reports deadline (National Dashboard)
- June 30, 2027: Deadline to submit donation (\$125 min.) for National Veterans Service via the Programs Dashboard NVS Donation link
- June 30, 2027: Department sends State Poppy winners list to National HQ
- June 30, 2027: Posts achieving 100% membership will receive a membership pennant
- June 30, 2027: Deadline to submit donation (\$50 min.) for National Home to State HQ
- June 30, 2027: Deadline to submit donation (\$50 minimum) for Commander's Special Project to State HQ
- June 30, 2027: Deadline to submit donation (\$75 minimum) for Service Office Support to State HQ
- June 30, 2027: Deadline to submit donation (\$50 min.) for MAP Program to State HQ
- June 30, 2027: Deadline to submit donation (\$50 min.) for Homeless Veteran donation to State HQ

**July 2027**

- July 1, 2027: National Community Service Posts of the Year (NCSP). The National Programs office will determine the top National Community Service Post of the year. Each Conference will have a ONCSP Winner based on total impact from July 1 to June 30 of the previous year
- July 31-August 5, 2027: National Convention, Milwaukee, WI

**2028**

- June 8-11, 2028: State Convention, Springfield, IL
- August 5-10, 2028: National Convention, San Antonio, TX

# VETERANS SUICIDE AWARENESS PROGRAM



**Mathius Carter**  
*Chairman*

1113 Sagebrush Trl.  
Cary, IL 60013  
Phone: (847) 404-2668

Email:  
mathius.carter@yahoo.com

Post 12014-5

## MISSION

The Department of Illinois Veterans Suicide Prevention Program exists to reduce stigma, increase awareness, strengthen community connections, and ensure veterans and their families know that help is available.

As Veterans of Foreign Wars members, we have a responsibility to look after one another. Suicide prevention is not solely the responsibility of mental health professionals. It begins with a conversation, a phone call, a check-in, or simply letting another veteran know they are not alone.

This program is designed to encourage meaningful engagement, community partnerships, education, and direct support of organizations working every day to prevent veteran suicide and improve mental wellness.

## PROGRAM OBJECTIVES

- Increase awareness of veteran suicide and mental health challenges.
- Promote open and honest conversations regarding mental wellness.
- Reduce stigma surrounding mental health treatment and support.
- Strengthen partnerships with organizations dedicated to veteran suicide prevention.
- Encourage veteran-to-veteran connectedness and peer support.
- Provide opportunities for Posts to engage their communities in meaningful ways.
- Support organizations providing life-saving services to veterans and their families.

## WHY THIS PROGRAM MATTERS

Many veterans were taught to carry burdens silently. We were taught to push through adversity, handle problems on our own, and avoid discussing personal struggles.

While resilience is one of our greatest strengths, silence can become one of our greatest obstacles.

The reality is that many veterans struggle with depression, anxiety, PTSD, relationship challenges, financial stress, substance use, and feelings of isolation. These challenges do not discriminate based on rank, branch, combat service, or age.

By talking openly about mental health, we help break the stigma that prevents veterans from seeking support. Every conversation creates an opportunity to save a life.

As leaders within our communities, VFW members have the unique ability to create environments where veterans feel comfortable asking for help without fear of judgment.

## PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS

Each Post is encouraged to participate in suicide prevention activities throughout the program year.

Examples include:

- Hosting awareness events.
- Conducting Buddy Check outreach.
- Organizing educational presentations.
- Inviting mental health professionals or veteran service providers to speak.
- Participating in community walks or awareness campaigns.
- Supporting veteran wellness initiatives.
- Promoting available resources through social media and local outreach.

### ALL-STATE REQUIREMENT

To qualify for All-State consideration under the Veterans Suicide Prevention Program, a Post must complete the following:

- Partner with an approved suicide prevention or veteran mental health organization designated by the Department Chairman.
- Work directly with the designated point of contact provided by the Department.
- Host, co-host, sponsor, or actively participate in a suicide prevention awareness event, fundraiser, educational event, wellness event, or community outreach activity.
- Submit documentation of participation, including photographs, event descriptions, and impact summaries.

### IMPORTANT:

Simply sending a monetary donation does NOT satisfy the All-State requirement.

The purpose of this program is engagement, education, and relationship building.

Posts must actively participate in an event or initiative that raises awareness, supports veterans, and strengthens community connections.

### APPROVED PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS

Examples include, but are not limited to:

- Veterans Path to Hope – SSG Fox Suicide Prevention Program
- Road Home Program at Rush University Medical Center
- Other organizations approved by the Department Chairman that demonstrate a direct commitment to veteran suicide prevention, mental wellness, crisis intervention, peer support, or veteran behavioral health services.

### PARTNERSHIP EXPECTATIONS

Participating Posts should:

- Meet with the designated organization representative.
- Learn about available services and resources.
- Share information with Post members and community veterans.
- Support awareness efforts.
- Create opportunities for veterans to access assistance.
- Build sustainable local relationships that continue beyond a single event.

### REPORTING

Reports should include:

- Name of partner organization.
- Date and location of event.
- Number of participants.
- Description of activity.
- Amount raised, if applicable.
- Impact on veterans and community.
- Photographs and supporting documentation.

### CHAIRMAN'S CHALLENGE

Every Post is challenged to have at least one conversation this year that could save a life.

- Talk to the veteran who has stopped attending meetings.
- Call the member who never answers.
- Check on the veteran who always says they are fine.
- Reach out to the family member who may be struggling.

Suicide prevention does not always begin with a crisis. Often, it begins with connection.

Together, we can build a culture where asking for help is viewed as strength, where mental wellness is openly discussed, and where no veteran feels forgotten.

**No One Fights Alone. No Veteran Left Behind. All In, All the Time.**

## 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, Scott Swinford is always available via e-mail or telephone and makes serving veterans his top priority.

All communications to State Commander Robert Bailey 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: [vfwil@vfwil.org](mailto:vfwil@vfwil.org) • State Website: <http://www.vfwil.org>