



Illinois

2025-2026 Series
General Orders No. 7
January 2026

STATE HEADQUARTERS HOLIDAY SCHEDULE

State Headquarters will be closed on the following days: January 1st, New Year's Day and January 19th, Martin Luther King Jr. Day

PROGRAM DONATIONS

These donations are more than an All-State requirement; they are essential to supporting Veterans and their families. All these programs are funded entirely by donations from Posts and Districts, which are vital to our mission.

Below is a snapshot of donations received, expenditures, and program balances as of 12/12/2025.

Program	Donations	Expenditures	Balance
Service Officer Support	\$5,925	0	\$5,925
Homeless Veterans	\$6,360	\$3,325	\$3,035
National Home	\$6,036		\$6,036
MAP/Unmet needs	\$5,750	\$5,182	\$568
Commanders Special Project	\$7,040		\$7,040
Joint Project Natl Home Gator		\$14,635	-\$14,635
Total	\$31,111	\$23,142	\$7,969

There are 238 Posts and 17 Districts in Illinois. 142 of those Posts and 10 Districts have not made all their Donations to the 5 Programs. As a result Department is at a critical juncture; to The Post and Districts that have made donations, Thank you.

FEBRUARY COUNCIL OF ADMINISTRATION MEETING

The February Council of Administration Meeting and Voice of Democracy Banquet will be held February 6-8, 2026, at the Crowne Plaza, 3000 S. Dirksen Pkwy., Springfield, IL 62703. To reserve a reservation for February, you may call the hotel directly at (217) 529-7777, use option #1 and provide them group code: **Z0F** (Zero) or you may reserve a room online - go to our website www.vfwil.org, under News, go to the events page, Click on the link for VOD and February Council meeting room reservations. The room rate is \$112 a night plus tax.

FOUNDATION BOARD MEETING

There will be a Foundation Board meeting at 12:30 on Friday, February 6. The following members must be in attendance.

Todd Latham, President
Eugene Blackwell, Chairman
Rob Bailey, First Vice Chairman
Ryan Higginbotham, Second Vice Chairman
Scott Swinford, Treasurer
Crystal Grgec, Assistant Treasurer
Brett Nila, Vice President
Barb Wilson, Secretary
Fritz Mihelcic, Trustee
David Terrinoni, Trustee
Maurice Bridges, Trustee

COMMITTEE MEETINGS

Committee meetings will begin on Friday, February 6, 2026, at 1:00 pm at the Crowne Plaza in Springfield. All meetings will run consecutively, starting with the Veterans Service Committee, the Illinois VFW News, and the Budget & Finance Committee.

Members of the Veterans Service Committee are as follows:

Bobby Welch, Chairman
Brett Nila
Bobby Edwards
Maurice Bridges
Eugene Blackwell
Robert Bailey
Ryan Higginbotham
Scott Swinford

Illinois VFW News Committee:

Brett Nila, Chairman
Barbara Wilson, Editor
Robert Welch, State Historian
Eugene Blackwell
Scott Swinford
Maurice Bridges

Budget & Finance Committee:

Phil Maughan, Chairman
Scott Swinford, Assistant Chairman

COUNCIL OF ADMINISTRATION MEETING

The Council of Administration will meet at the Crowne Plaza on Friday, February 6, 2026, at 3:00 pm and Saturday, February 7, 2026, at 8:15 am.

All officers and directors are expected to attend all sessions of the Council of Administration. Past Department Commanders who receive Department-paid rooms are highly encouraged to attend all sessions.

All Program Directors **must** forward their written reports to State Headquarters by Monday, January 26, 2026. All Program Directors are expected to be present to highlight any changes or important information contained within their written report when

called upon. Please mail, fax (217-546-3415), or e-mail (Erin@vfwil.org) your reports to this office.

ASSIGNED TO THE COUNCIL OF ADMINISTRATION

In addition to the top three chairs and the seventeen District Commanders, the following State Officers and Program Chairmen are called to the Council of Administration Meeting...

State Chaplain	Poppy Chairman
Chief of Staff	POW/MIA
State Surgeon	Safety
State Inspector	Historian
State AQM	MOC Coordinator
State Judge Advocate	VOD
National Council Member	Youth Activities
Membership Chairman	Veterans Service Committee
Student Veterans Liaison	Illinois VFW News
Blood Donor	State Sergeant At Arms
Community Activities	Officer of the Day
All-State Chairman	Scouting
Homeless Veterans	Assistant QM
State Legislative	Assistant Youth Activities
National Home	VFW Riders
Public Relations	Veterans and Military Support
MAP Chairman	CTG Chairman

VOICE OF DEMOCRACY & PATRIOT'S PEN WINNERS' TRIP TO SPRINGFIELD

Each student will receive accommodations for two nights at the Crowne Plaza, 3300 S. Dirksen Parkway, Springfield, IL 62703. If the student would like to stay longer than two nights or book additional rooms, the District should assist with making these arrangements and help cover the costs. District Commanders or Chairmen may call State Headquarters to have these arrangements made.

Upon the students' arrival on Friday, February 6, 2026, State Headquarters will be hosting a pizza party! The following morning, the students will meet in the hotel lobby at 8:45 am for the Land of Lincoln Tour. The tour will make the following stops: Abraham Lincoln Presidential Museum, Stabb Funeral Home, Lincoln's Tomb, and the Illinois State Military Museum. Only Students and assigned personnel will be allowed on the bus. Following the 79th Annual State of Illinois Voice of Democracy Banquet, the students will be invited to enjoy an ice cream social.

LINCOLN PILGRIMAGE

The Lincoln Pilgrimage will take place at Lincoln's Tomb in Oak Ridge Cemetery at 3:00 pm on Saturday, February 7, 2025. Please be present at the tomb no later than 2:45 pm.

VOICE OF DEMOCRACY BANQUET

The Annual Voice of Democracy Banquet will be held on Saturday, February 7, 2026. Join us in celebrating our outstanding youth and the Voice of Democracy program at this year's annual banquet.

Tickets:

\$50.00 per person or \$500.00 per table of ten.

All tickets must be purchased by January 26, 2026

No tickets will be sold after this date, and no tickets will be available at the door.

District tables: District tables will once again be available and must be ordered and paid for by the District Commanders. These are available only in tables of ten.

Sponsorships are still available.

Book bags - \$300

Flowers - \$300

Bus-(last year's cost was \$1125.00), call headquarters to confirm the price for this year

Dinner tickets for the kids - \$1100.00

Military Museum - \$150

Please get in touch with State HQ if your District or Post wishes to sponsor any of these events.

2025-2026 TOWN HALL MEETINGS

State Commander Eugene Blackwell has one of the five Town Hall Meetings left this year. These meetings are designed to provide updates, share information, and offer direct feedback from our members. All Town Hall Meetings will begin promptly at 10:00 a.m. and will conclude no later than 2:00 p.m. Lunch arrangements will vary by host Post. Participation is a requirement for All-State eligibility. Each Post must ensure one member attends one Town Hall session.

April 11, 2026

John H Kraus Post 454
1006 E Lincoln St
Bloomington, IL 61701

POST MEMBERSHIP AWARD

- Post membership percentage must be at 99% by December 31st, 2025, will receive a special certificate from the State Commander \$100
- Post reaching 101% by February 28th, 2026, will receive a \$150 check for a post membership celebration meal recognizing the post efforts.
- Post achieving at least 101% membership by June 30, 2026 will receive a 100% Membership Pennant

MEMBER CONTACT INFORMATION

Members wishing to receive correspondence from the VFW at both the state and National level, please make sure your contact information is up to date. You can do so by logging in to www.vfw.org.

LOBBY DAY 2026

This year, the IL AMVETS is organizing and hosting the Illinois Veteran's Lobby Day in Springfield, IL on February 25, 2026. Again, we are inviting other IL veteran service organizations to join us as we lobby out state legislators on various veteran issues. Anyone that wishes to participate should plan on being in Springfield that day. The day will start at 8 am with a meeting of all the participants for coffee and donuts at VFW Post 755, 2211 Old Jacksonville Rd, Springfield, IL 62704. This will be an opportunity for everyone to discuss the planned visits for the day and the talking points that will be discussed with members of the IL General Assembly. A detailed schedule of the day and the scheduled visits will be handed out at the meeting. At 9:30, we will break up into teams and visit the offices of the State Representatives and the State Senators to talk about the veteran's issues in IL. The day will conclude at approximately 5 pm when we gather at Boone's Saloon, 301 W Edwards St, Springfield, IL (1 block from the State Capitol) for social hour and to discuss the day's results. All the talking points and bill info will be provided, so no lobby experience is necessary. This has been successfully done at the federal level to discuss veteran's issues and the state lobby day last year was instrumental in helping to get some bills signed into law. It is important that our State Legislators know what veteran's issues we think are important for IL and our members. Please plan to attend and make our IL Veteran's Lobby Day a success.

NEW CENTURY RAFFLE

The New Century Raffle has officially started and will run through June 30, 2026. The tickets are just \$10.00 each. Each ticket entitles you to participate in a weekly drawing of \$100 from July 1, 2025, to June 30, 2026. Drawings will be held every Friday. The winning ticket will be returned to the barrel for future drawings. This means each ticket has multiple chances to win. The seller of each ticket also has a chance to win \$10.00. If the seller prints their name on the ticket, they will receive \$10.00. If the seller does not sign the ticket, the \$10.00 will be automatically donated and split between the Department's Unmet Needs Program and Children's National Home. Winners will be announced each month in the General Orders and posted on the <http://vfwil.org> website

WEEKLY WINNER

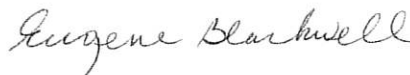
<u>Date of Drawing</u>	<u>Winner</u>	<u>Seller</u>
12/5/2025	Robert Sinnokrak	No Seller Listed
12/12/2025	Rick Furdek	No Seller Listed
12/19/2025	Michael Ciavattone	No Seller Listed
12/26/2025	Tony Gillette	No Seller Listed

By Order of:

Official



Joseph "Scott" Swinford
State Adjutant/Quartermaster



Eugene Blackwell
State Commander

February Council of Administration and 80th Annual Voice of Democracy Banquet

Tentative Agenda (May be subject to change.)

Crowne Plaza

3000 S. Dirksen Pkwy., Springfield, IL 62703

February 06-07, 2026

Friday, February 06, 2026

Dress Code for Friday's Council Meeting will be Coat & Tie.

10:30 AM	Foundation Meeting <i>Lincoln Boardroom</i>
12:00 PM	Various Committee Meetings <i>Plaza F</i>
2:00 PM	VFW Sales Open <i>West Plaza Lobby</i>
2:00 PM	Council of Administration Meeting <i>Plaza F</i>
4:00 PM	VFW Sales Close <i>West Plaza Lobby</i>

Saturday, February 07, 2026

Dress Code for Saturday's Council Meeting will be Coat & Tie.

7:00 AM	Church Service <i>Plaza C</i>
8:00 AM	VFW Sales Open <i>West Plaza Lobby</i>
8:00 AM	Council of Administration Meeting <i>Plaza F</i>
12:00 PM	VFW Sales Close <i>West Plaza Lobby</i>
12:30 PM – 2:00 PM	<i>Past District Commander's Luncheon, Cost: \$12</i> <i>Post 10302 2349 Stockyard Rd., Springfield, IL 62702</i>
3:00 PM	Lincoln's Pilgrimage <i>The Lincoln Tomb & War Memorials Site</i> <i>1500 Monument Avenue, Springfield, IL 62702</i>

Dress Code for Saturday's Banquet will be Formal.

5:30 PM	Doors Open for 80th Annual Voice of Democracy Banquet <i>The program will begin at 6:00 p.m.</i> <i>Emerald, Diamond, Sapphire Rooms</i>
---------	--

VFW Scout of the Year Scoring Tips

Ron Milton, Scouting Chair, usafret1@att.net

Introduction

Districts, when scoring your applicants, consider the following criteria.

1. Understand the Scoring Criteria

Before preparing your application, review the official VFW Scout of the Year guidelines. Typically, scoring is based on the following categories:

- Scouting achievements and leadership roles
- Community service and volunteerism
- Academic accomplishments
- Patriotism and citizenship activities
- Personal statement and recommendations

2. Highlight Leadership and Achievements

Emphasizes placed on leadership experiences within scouting—such as serving as a patrol leader, senior patrol leader, or other officer roles.

3. Document Community Service

A clear record of community service hours, describing the impact of your volunteer work. Focus on projects that demonstrate initiative, compassion, and sustained commitment to helping others. Include photos. Evidence of regular participation and leadership.

4. Academic Success

List academic achievements, including GPA, honors, advanced courses, Extra-curricular activities, Demonstrated leadership and Significance of participation.

5. Content of Letters of Recommendations

Evidence of exceptional character, leadership qualities, Willingness to accept responsibility, Evidence of self-confidence and serving others, Evidence of respect for authority, Evidence of patriotism and respect for this nation and its symbols.