



Illinois

2024-2025 Series
General Orders No. 7
January 2025

STATE HEADQUARTERS HOLIDAY SCHEDULE

The State Headquarters will be closed on the following days:

January 1st New Year's Day

January 20th Martin Luther King Jr. Day

CHANGE OF LOCATION, MEETING PLACE, DAY OR TIME

Section 205 of the National By-Laws governs the change of Meeting place and/or time for Posts. Posts must follow the outlined procedures if they want to change their meeting time, date or place.

Sec. 205 - Change of Location, Meeting Place, Day or Time.

A Post may, after at least thirty (30) days written notice to the Department Commander and members of the Post, change its chartered location upon a two-thirds (2/3) vote of the members present and voting at a regular or special meeting. Upon recommendation of the Department Commander, an amended Charter will be issued by the Commander-in-Chief. No change may be effected until an amended Charter is issued.

At such time as the Post changes its location from one community to another, any portion of the Post name that relates to the geographical area or community from which it has relocated shall be deleted from its name.

69

A Post may, after at least fourteen (14) days written notice to the Department Commander and members of the Post, change its meeting place, appointed day or time upon a majority vote of the members present and voting at a regular or special meeting.

SPAM EMAILS

If you receive an email from a Department Officer with a suspicious request, check the actual email address of the sender. Keep in mind that a Department Officer will not ask you send them money or gift cards. Scammers are very skilled at making an email appear that it came from someone else.

STATE CONVENTION

The State Convention will be held on June 5-8, 2025. The hotels for the State Convention are:

President Abe Lincoln Double Tree Hotel
701 E Adams
Springfield, IL 62701

Wyndham City Center
700 E Adams
Springfield, IL 62701

The VFW meetings will be held in the BOS Center at 1 Convention Center Plaza Springfield, IL 62701, which is located conveniently adjacent to both hotels. The VFW Auxiliary meetings will be held in the President Abe Lincoln Double Tree Hotel. Information on reserving your room for the President Abraham Lincoln Hotel or the Wyndham City Centre Hotel will be in upcoming General Orders and on the vfwil.org web page under "Events".

2025 CONVENTION RAFFLE AND PURPLE HEART TICKETS

Tickets for the 2025 Purple Heart and Convention raffle went out in the December issue of the Illinois VFW newspaper. Included were 2 sheets of 5 tickets (\$20 each) and two Purple Heart tickets (\$5 each). Winners will be randomly selected at our State Convention in June, for the following: \$10,000 grand prize, \$3,000 second prize, \$2,000 third prize, \$500 awarded to fourth through tenth place winners. Purple Heart Raffle: \$2,000 grand prize. If you have any questions or would like to request more tickets, please contact VFW Department Headquarters.

ALL-STATE POST AWARDS

The 2024-2025 Membership Program is designed to recognize exceptional leadership and teamwork, not only in Membership but in overall Post/District development and VFW Programs. If a Post qualifies to be "All State" all Post members will be recognized for this achievement because they are a team.

The 2024-2025 All-State Post Criteria is as follows:

- Membership greater than 101%
- Posts must hold 1 membership drives/events and submit report to Program Reporting Dashboard
- Posts must be 100% reported on the Department Programs Reporting Dashboard.
- Posts must have submitted all 4 quarterly Trustees Audits and audits were approved.
- Posts must be in compliance with all questions on the National and Department Inspection Sheets (for example: a post that is not incorporated shall not be eligible until proof is provided that they are in compliance)
- Posts must order at least 3 poppies per member with a minimum of 1,000 poppies.
- Posts must have one nomination for each of the programs of Patriot's Pen, Voice of Democracy submitted to District for judging or Donations to Voice of Democracy and Patriot's Pen will be accepted if a Post does not have a nomination. Teacher of the Year or Public safety, donations to these 2 programs do not receive credit towards All State Awards.
- Posts must have representation at all properly called District Conventions or meetings.
- Posts must have representation at a minimum of 1 Commanders Calls. (Roll Call will be taken)
- Posts must make a \$50 donation to the Service Office Support Program (SOS) this is separate from the Red, White, and Blue Program donations.
- New Posts need a minimum of 35 members to achieve-All State

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

There will be no limits on the number of Posts that can achieve All-State status.

All-State Post Commanders will receive an All-State Commander cap and distinguished service lapel pin. All-State Quartermasters may purchase an All-State Post Quartermaster cap and will receive a distinguished service lapel pin. All-State Post Members may purchase an All-State Post Member cap.

ALL-STATE DISTRICT CRITERIA

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

ALL AMERICAN POST CRITERIA

- Membership greater than 102%
- Post Election Report must be submitted to National
- Posts must meet all of the following Program Participation Criteria by January 31, 2025:
 - Voice of Democracy- minimum of one entry advanced to District judging.
(Overseas Posts can donate \$125 to National in lieu of entry).

- Patriots Pen- minimum of one entry advanced to District judging. (Overseas Posts can donate \$125 to National in lieu of entry).
- Donate to Veterans and Military Support Program Services. Minimum of \$125
- National Citizenship Education Teachers Award - one entry advanced to Department judging (Overseas Post can donate \$100 to National in Lieu of entry)
- A Post must submit a community service report quarterly to their department for submission to the All-American Dashboard. The quarters are July-September, October-December, January-March and April-June. One of these community service activities must be for the VFW Day of Service
- Buddy Poppy - minimum

POST MEMBERSHIP AWARD

- Post membership percentage must be at 98% by December 31st, 2024. The Post will receive a special engraved plaque
- Post reaching 100% by February 28th, 2025: The Posts will receive a \$150 Visa Gift Card for a post membership celebration meal recognizing the post efforts.
- Post achieving at least 100% membership by June 30, 2025 will receive a 100% Membership Pennant

AWARDS AND CITATIONS COMMITTEE

Please submit your recommendations for following to State Headquarters:

Nominations for Law Enforcement Officers, Firefighter, Paramedic, and Dispatcher of the Year must be submitted to State HQ by January 1, 2025

Nominations for Outstanding Legislator, Outstanding Patriotism, Government Service, Clergy, News Media, Employer, Citizen, JROTC Cadet of the Year and Life Saving Award must be submitted to State HQ by April 30, 2025

We do not have a form for nominations. Please send a resume and/or letter describing why this individual should be considered as well as how they are qualified for the award. Please include their contact information! Without your support of this program, it wouldn't be success!

FEBRUARY COUNCIL OF ADMINISTRATION MEETING

The February Council of Administration Meeting and 79th Annual Voice of Democracy Banquet will be held February 7-9, 2025 at the Crowne Plaza, 3000 S. Dirksen Pkwy., Springfield, Illinois 62703. To reserve a reservation for February, you may call the hotel directly at (217) 529-7777 and give them our group code: **V4W**, or you may reserve a room online - go to our website at 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 \$109 a night plus tax and the deadline to get a room is January 10, 2025.

COMMITTEE MEETINGS

Committee meetings will begin on Friday, February 7, 2025 at **1:00 pm** at the Crowne Plaza in Springfield. All meetings will run consecutively beginning with the Veterans Service Committee at **1:00 pm**. The *Illinois VFW News* Committee, Budget & Finance Committee, and The Foundation Committee will follow.

Members of the Veterans Service Committee are as follows:

Laurie Emmer, Past State Commander, Chairman
Brett Nila, Past State Commander
Bobby Edwards, Past State Commander
Bobby Welch, Past State Commander
Maurice Bridges, Commander
Eugene Blackwell, State Sr. Vice Commander
Robert Bailley, State Jr. Vice Commander
Scott Swinford, State Adjutant-Quartermaster

The Illinois VFW News Committee will meet following the Veterans Service Committee...

Laurie Emmer, Past State Commander - Chairman
Barbara Wilson, Illinois VFW News Editor
Robert Welch, State Historian
Maurice Bridges, State Commander

Scott Swinford, State Adjutant-Quartermaster
Brett Nila, Past State Commander

The Budget & Finance Committee will meet after the Illinois VFW News Committee... Phil Maughan, Past State Commander, Chairman
Scott Swinford, State Adjutant-Quartermaster, Assistant Chairman

The Foundation Committee will meet after the Budget and Finance Committee...

Todd Latham, President
Brett Nila, Vice President
Barbara Wilson, Secretary
Scott Swinford, Treasurer
Board of Directors
Maurice Bridges
Eugene Blackwell
Robe Bailey

Convention Committee

Rick Frank
William Regan
Russ Rieke
Duane Hisel
Jeff Britt
Chuck Ingle
Lowell Spieker

COUNCIL OF ADMINISTRATION MEETING

The Council of Administration will meet on Friday, February 7, 2025 and Saturday, February 8, 2025 at the Crowne Plaza Springfield. The meeting will begin Friday at 3:00 pm until approximately 5:00 pm. It will reconvene at 8:15 am on Saturday.

All officers and directors are expected to be in attendance for all sessions of the Council of Administration. Past Department Commanders who are receiving Department paid rooms are highly encouraged to attend all sessions of the Council of Administration

All Program Directors will forward their written reports to State Headquarters by Friday, January 24, 2025 so it can be added to the book of reports to be passed out at the meeting. All Program Directors are expected to be present to highlight

any changes or important information contained within your written report when called upon. Please mail, fax (217-546-3415) or e-mail (vfwil@vfwil.org) your reports to this office.

ASSIGNED TO THE COUNCIL OF ADMINISTRATION

In addition to the Top 3 Chairs and the 17 District Commanders, the following State Officers and Program Chairmen are called to be at Council of Administration Meeting...

Gary Holmes, State Chaplain

Nancy O'Connell, State Chief of Staff

Ryan Higginbotham, State Surgeon

Cathy Stubbs, State Inspector

Scott Swinford, State Adjutant-Quartermaster

Jay Hoffman, State Judge Advocate

Matthew Claussen, National Council Member

Eric Morales, State Membership Chairman

Georges Sanon, State Student Veterans Liaison

Rob Bland, State Blood Donor Chairman

Steve Eller, State Community Activities Chairman

Paul Bezazian, State Homeless Veterans Chairman

Larry Miller , State Legislative Chairman

Kyna Simpson, State National Home Chairman

Evamarie Duff, State All-State Chairman

Barbara Wilson, State Public Relations Chairman

Robert Welch, State Veterans and Military Support Programs Chairman

Stephanie Kirksey, State Poppy Chairman

Clarence Caraker, State POW/MIA Chairman

Glen Goodrich, State Safety Chairman

Robert Welch, State Historian

John Jakoby, State VFW/MOC Coordinator

Dave Darte, State Voice of Democracy Chairman
Kyna Simpson, Assistant Voice of Democracy Director
John Davin, State Youth Activities Chairman
PSC Laurie Emmer, Veterans Service Committee Chairman
PSC Laurie Emmer, Illinois VFW News Committee Chairman
Ray Bachawicz, State Sergeant-at-Arms
Jeff Britt, State Officer of the Day
Ron Milton, State Scouting Chairman
Josh Seed, State Assistant Quartermaster
Michelle Ramlow, State Assistant Youth Activities Chairman
Anthony Bellin, VFW Rider

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 would like to book additional rooms, the District should assist in 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 7, 2025, State Headquarters will be hosting a pizza party! The following morning, the students will meet in the lobby of the hotel 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 bar arranged by State Headquarters.

LINCOLN PILGRIMAGE

The Lincoln Pilgrimage will take place at Lincoln's Tomb in Oak Ridge Cemetery at 2:00 pm on Saturday February 10, 2024.

VOICE OF DEMOCRACY BANQUET

The State of Illinois VFW will be celebrating its 79th Annual Voice of Democracy/Patriot's Pen Banquet on Saturday, February 8, 2025 at the Crowne Plaza in Springfield, IL. Tickets are available for \$50 per person. Tickets may be ordered online by making a donation at <http://vfwil.org/> - and allocating the funds to the *Voice of Democracy Banquet*. You may also call State Headquarters (217) 529-6688. Deadline for tickets is February 2, 2025.

District Prime Tables will once again be available for \$500; they are to be ordered by and paid for by the District Commanders who will decide who will be seated at these tables.

Reminder - these are tables of ten.

Sponsorships are still available on a first come first serve basis

4th place PP- \$300 Sponsored by 15th District

14th Place - \$300 Sponsored by 15th District

15th Place - \$300 Sponsored by 10th District

16th Place - \$300 Sponsored In Memory of Sharon L. Edwards, donated by David J Edwards

17th Place - \$300 Sponsored by Post 11463

Ice Cream Social for kids - \$300 Sponsored by Post 8322 and Post 8821

Pizza Party for kids - \$300 In Memory of Sharon L. Edwards, donated by David J Edwards

Lunch for kids - \$300

Tours for kids - \$400

Book Bags for kids - \$400

Department is accepting donations for the student backpacks that will be given out. There are 21 backpacks. If your District would like to donate a snack (non-perishable) please get it to the Crowne Plaza by Thursday early afternoon. We are also accepting monetary donations for the backpacks in which Department will purchase items to put in the backpacks.

Please contact State HQ if your District or Post wishes to sponsor any of these events.

PUBLICATION CONTEST

Editors of Post and District publications are invited to send in a copy of 1 issue published during the 2024 year for the Illinois VFW Publications Contest. Please provide the contact information for the Editor, as well as how often the

newsletter is published. If you want to send a hard copy - mail to Barbara Wilson, Editor, 802 N. 3rd St., Riverton, Illinois 62561. You can also e-mail a copy to bwilson@vfwil.org. Deadline to submit nominations are February 28, 2025.

BUDDY POPPIES

All Posts are urged to promote the use and distribution of Buddy Poppies. All money collected from poppies is to be placed in the Post Relief Fund to aid and assist needy veterans. **ORDER YOUR POPPIES NOW FOR YOUR MEMORIAL DAY DISTRIBUTION!** Please order your poppies 8-10 weeks in advance of your sale to insure you receive them on time.

TRUSTEES REPORT OF AUDIT REQUIREMENT

Per Section 218 of the National Manual of Procedure - Officers and Chairmen, Duties and Obligations, the *Post Commander* must assure that the *Post Trustees* have examined the books and records of the Post and prepared the Post Trustees Quarterly Report of Audit no later than the end of the month following the last day of each quarterly period. **Failure on the part of the Commander to strictly enforce Section 218 of the National Manual of Procedure may release the Bonding Company of all liability in case of theft or misuse of funds and subject the Post to suspension.** The *duties* of the *Post Quartermaster* include providing the *Post Trustees* with all records, files and statements required or necessary for the preparation of the Post Trustees Quarterly Report of Audit.

INSPECTION

Attention is directed to the importance of CONSTANT INSPECTION!! District Commanders will exert every effort to have each Post in their District inspected at least once annually. Posts Commanders will insist on Quarterly audits of records and books by Post Trustees, subject to penalties outlined in Section 213 of the National By-Laws. Post Quartermasters are reminded that they are to be bonded in **AN AMOUNT AT LEAST EQUAL TO THEIR LIQUID ASSETS.** It is important that the District Inspector contact the Post well in advance of their official inspection advising the Quartermaster when

they will inspect the Post and what items they will need to conduct the Inspection. Each District will be compensated at the rate of \$10.00 per Post Inspection at the time the District becomes 100% inspected **and approved by the Department Inspector.**

POST INSURANCE-ADDITIONAL INSURED

According to VFW By-Laws, each Post is required to maintain adequate liability insurance and ***they also require National and Department be listed as "additional insureds" on the Post policy.*** Posts must have their Insurance Agent send a copy of the Insurance Certificate to both National and Department Headquarters. ***Posts that do not own property do not have to comply with this request.***

PROGRAM DONATIONS FOR DASHBOARD CREDIT

All Posts must donate a minimum of \$50.00 each to VFW State Headquarters for the Military Assistance Program (MAP), Homeless Veterans, Commander's Special Project, Service Office Support, and National Home to receive credit on the State "X" sheet. On-line donations are encouraged but ***don't forget to indicate your Post Number.***

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 2025

Lobby Day is planned for March 12, 2025. Please save the date. Details will be posted in upcoming General Orders as they become available.

Join 2024 VFW Day of Service.

The VFW’s third annual VFW Day of Service – a dedicated day of service led by VFW members throughout the country and the world – kicks off the first Saturday on May 3, 2024, and marks the start of veteran-led community service projects to take place throughout the month.

The VFW Day of Service is an outgrowth of the organization’s #StillServing campaign launched in 2020 to recognize the ongoing dedication of veterans and service members who continue to serve their communities. VFW Day of Service, led by veterans and in concert with other organizations and civic groups, is open for anyone to participate.

We’re urging all members and Posts to visit VFWDayofService.org to register their event on the interactive Day of Service map and receive a special participation decal, or find a local event to join and see what other veterans around the country are doing to make a difference.

2026 ILLINOIS VFW CALENDAR

The Council of Administration voted in August to allow the State Headquarters to proceed with a 2026 calendar raffle as part of the Marketing Program. Said raffle will begin on Jan. 1, 2026 and run daily through Dec. 31, 2026. The calendars will not be numbered to ensure the prizes are given away rather than determining if the “winning” calendar has been sold. Each calendar will cost \$20. Only 5,000 calendars will be sold.

State Headquarters has put together a prize structure and incentive package for Posts selling the calendars. Approximately \$21,500 in prizes will be awarded.

Below is the prize structure

Prize Structure

Prize Amount	# of Prizes	Total Prizes
a. 1000	7	\$7,000
b. \$500	7	\$3,500
c. \$250	2	\$500
d. 100	8	\$800
e. \$50	46	\$2,300
f. \$25	295	\$7,375
Total Prizes	365	\$21,475

Honoring Day

A. New Years Day, Memorial Day, Independence Day, Veterans Day, Thanksgiving Day,

Hannukah, Christmas

B. Army Bday, Navy Bday, Air Force Bday, USMC Bday, USCG Bday, USSF Bday, NG Bday

C. VFW Anniversary, VFW Auxiliary Anniversary

D. Loyalty Day, Halloween, St. Patricks Day, Mother's Day, Father's Day, Easter, Valentine Day, MLK Day

E. All other Sundays

F. All other days

Incentive Program: To help aid State Headquarters in selling the calendars, we have developed an incentive program whereas each Post selling the calendars would receive \$2 for each calendar they sell.

Sponsorship Programs available: We have a number of sponsorships available to Posts, Auxiliaries, and Members.

Sponsor a Day – We have two levels of “Sponsor a Day” sponsorships - For Posts with 100 or fewer members, a day could be sponsored for a donation of \$25. For Posts with 101 and more members, a day could be sponsored for \$50.

In consideration of the sponsorship, the sponsor would be allowed to submit a photo, or a tidbit of historical information, for that day, which would be included. The photo or information would not have to be about that day. Example: A Post could sponsor their anniversary day – and include either a photo of their post, the Post’s namesake, or information about their post namesake.

Sponsor a Week – For \$250, the entire week (Sunday-Saturday) could be sponsored. In consideration of the sponsorship, the sponsor could place three photos and four tidbits of historical information.

Sponsor a Month – For \$1,000, the entire month can be sponsored. In consideration of the sponsorship, the sponsor would be allowed to include a display photo (the main photo for that calendar month) as well as additional photos and informational tidbits throughout the month (to be placed on unsponsored days).

Calendars will be printed and available at the Illinois VFW State Convention in June.

If your post (or members) is interested in sponsoring a day, week, or month, please let State Headquarters know. We’ll work with the sponsors to ensure their photos and/or information is included on their sponsored area(s).

NEW CENTURY RAFFLE

The New Century Raffle has officially started and will run through June 30, 2025. The tickets are just \$10.00 each. Each ticket entitles you to participate in a weekly drawing of \$100 from July 1, 2024 to June 30, 2025. Drawings will be held each Friday beginning July 1, 2024, with each week's winning ticket being returned to the barrel for the 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 seller prints their name on ticket, they will receive \$10.00. If the seller does not sign the ticket, the \$10.00 will be automatically donated and split between Department's Unmet Needs Program and Children's National Home. Winners will be announced each month in the General Orders and posted on <http://vfwil.org> web site.

WEEKLY WINNER

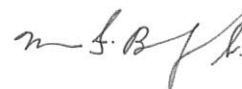
<u>Date of Drawing</u>	<u>Winner</u>	<u>Seller</u>
12/6/2024	Dennis Close	No Seller Listed
12/13/2024	James Kollins	James Kollins
12/20/2024	Doug Clinton	No Seller Listed
12/27/2024	Gerald Havens	Gerald Havens

By Order of:



Joseph "Scott" Swinford
State Adjutant/Quartermaster

Official:



Maurice Bridges
State Commander

PROGRAM SUMMARY

SCOUT OF THE YEAR

JANUARY 2025

IT'S A NEW YEAR AND **59 DAYS** UNTIL THE SCOUT OF THE YEAR APPLICATIONS ARE DUE TO YOUR POST.

CHECK WITH YOUR SCOUT UNITS AND CONTACT THE ELIGIBLE SCOUTS AND PROVIDE THEM WITH THE SCOUT OF THE YEAR APPLICATION.

LET'S HAVE A GREAT SCOUTING YEAR

RON MILTON

STATE SCOUTING CHAIR

USAFRET1@ATT.NET

National VFW Awards reminder

The Adjutant General Dan West has asked for your recommendations for these VFW awards if you believe you have a worthy candidate. Any member can nominate a candidate.

The deadline for submission is March 1, 2025.

The National Awards and Citations Committee will meet to discuss and choose award recipients for presentation at the National Convention in Columbus, Ohio 2025 upon approval from the National Council of Administration.

The nominations will only be accepted through the links provided below

Description of each award is on the form provided:

VFW Distinguished Fraternal Award

https://vfwprograms.formstack.com/forms/vfw_distinguished_fraternal_award

VFW Distinguished Patriotic Award

https://vfwprograms.formstack.com/forms/vfw_distinguished_patriotic_award

VFW Distinguished Historical Award

https://vfwprograms.formstack.com/forms/vfw_distinguished_historical_award

VFW Distinguished Citizenship Award

https://vfwprograms.formstack.com/forms/vfw_distinguished_citizenship_award

VFW Distinguished Educational Award

https://vfwprograms.formstack.com/forms/vfw_distinguished_educational_award

VFW Distinguished Service Award

https://vfwprograms.formstack.com/forms/vfw_distinguished_service_award



VFW and Columbia University Announce Military Transition Collaboration

The VFW and Columbia's Center for Veteran Transition and Integration team up to solve critical transition issues

WASHINGTON (Dec. 4, 2024) – The Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) is proud to announce its newest relationship with Columbia University's Center for Veteran Transition and Integration (CVTI) in a new initiative focused on improving transition outcomes for separating and retiring service members. The joint effort, which aims to better understand the complexities of service members' transitions into civilian life, seeks to inform policy discussions and affect meaningful change to available support programming.

Leveraging the direct contact VFW Pre-Discharge Claims representatives have with, on average, 14,000 transitioning service members annually, the VFW has begun collecting and submitting anonymized survey data to CVTI for analysis and reporting assistance. The collaborative research will seek to identify high points, trends and disparities among transitioning service members and recently separated and retired veterans who filed Benefits Delivery at Discharge (BDD) claims. These findings are intended to shape legislative, policy and program improvements to resources like the Department of Defense's Transition Assistance Program, as well as inform the creation of new and necessary support services.

“Transition is a pivotal time in every service member's military career bringing with it changes beyond what many have known since they volunteered to serve,” said VFW Washington Office Executive Director Ryan Gallucci. “Through the VFW's robust network of accredited Pre-Discharge Claims representatives and persistent advocacy on Capitol Hill, the VFW is heavily engaged in ensuring all transitioning service members have the benefits, support and tools they need to thrive as veterans. More than 10 years ago, the VFW started comprehensive client experience surveys for those we assist on military installations to better tailor our services and advocacy to their needs. This new relationship with CVTI is the next step in understanding how the transition experience has evolved over time so that we can provide real time, data-informed insight on the needs of today's transitioning force.”

Each year, roughly 200,000 service members exit the military and return to civilian life after highly variable lengths of service and experiences while serving. This variability necessitates a deliberate approach to how service members are supported before, during and after discharge or retirement as they re-enter their communities, seek higher education and join the workforce.

With complementary missions and areas of expertise, the VFW and CVTI are uniquely positioned to uncover the nuances of transition experiences and recommend viable solutions to real problems that veterans face, including heightened suicide risk in the months after discharge and the struggle of some veterans to reach their full potential in civilian workplaces.

“Effectively serving the veteran community requires moving beyond personal anecdotes or stereotypes and getting into the lived experiences of service members as they navigate the transition from military service to education and beyond,” said CVTI Executive Director Jason Dempsey. “Our collaboration presents an amazing opportunity to inform and refine the efforts of those seeking to assist veterans in this journey.”

Research will consider important data points including service member demographics, location in which they filed their BDD claim, service characteristics, timeliness and ability to engage transition resources, concerns about transition, higher education aspirations and preparedness, and much more.

-vfw-

About the VFW: The Veterans of Foreign Wars of the U.S. is the nation's largest and oldest major war veterans organization. Founded in 1899, the congressionally chartered VFW is comprised entirely of eligible veterans and military service members from the active, Guard and Reserve forces. With more than 1.4 million VFW and Auxiliary members located in nearly 6,000 Posts worldwide, the nonprofit veterans service organization is proud to proclaim “NO ONE DOES MORE FOR VETERANS” than the VFW, which is dedicated to veterans’ service, legislative advocacy, and military and community service programs. For more information or to join, visit our website at vfw.org.

About the Center for Veteran Transition and Integration: CVTI improves the lives of veterans, transitioning service members, and their families by collaborating with institutions, organizations, municipalities, and practitioners to build and integrate cultures of support in higher education and the workplace. Since its founding in 2017, CVTI has served over 200,000 veterans and transitioning service members in their post-military educational and vocational pursuits. For more information, visit veterans.columbia.edu.



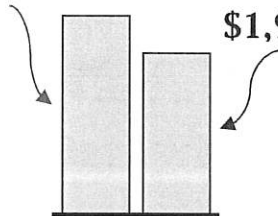
VA Disability Claims

What The Data Say

Like a lawyer being admitted to the bar, and not a law firm, individuals get VA-accredited, not businesses!

Represented Veterans
(Accredited representatives)

\$2,221



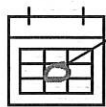
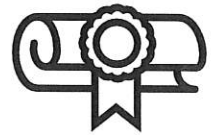
\$1,928

Unrepresented Veterans
(Includes Claim Sharks)

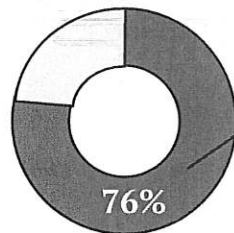
Average VA Award Per Month

Source: Internal Veterans Benefits Administration Data, Sept. 2024

What's the Deal with Accreditation?



9 - 12 MONTHS
Average time for VA to process an accreditation application



* Over last two years

% of all veteran beneficiaries* with accredited representative on file with VA
(Numbers consistent regardless of Claim Shark presence in states)

NO ONE (except VA) can make VA claims go faster!

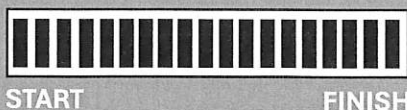
Initial VA Disability Claims

~ 128 DAYS

Increase VA Disability Claims*

~ 60 - 90 DAYS

* Most types of claims the Claim Sharks say they do

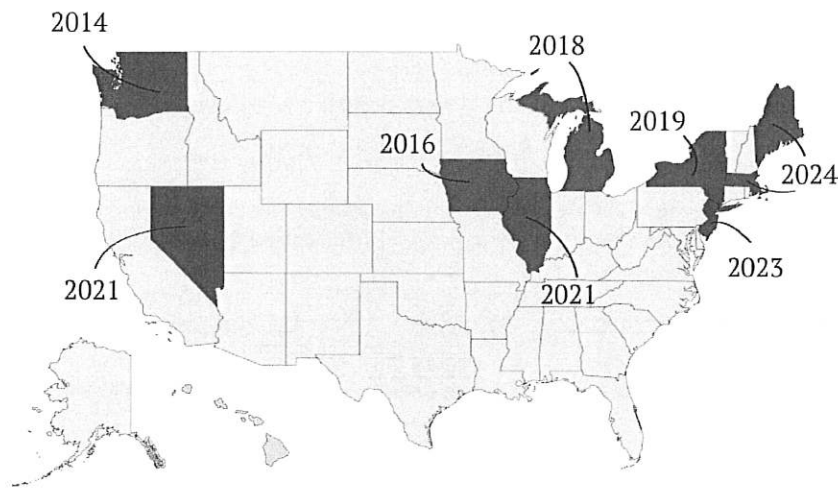


How Long Do VA Claims Take?

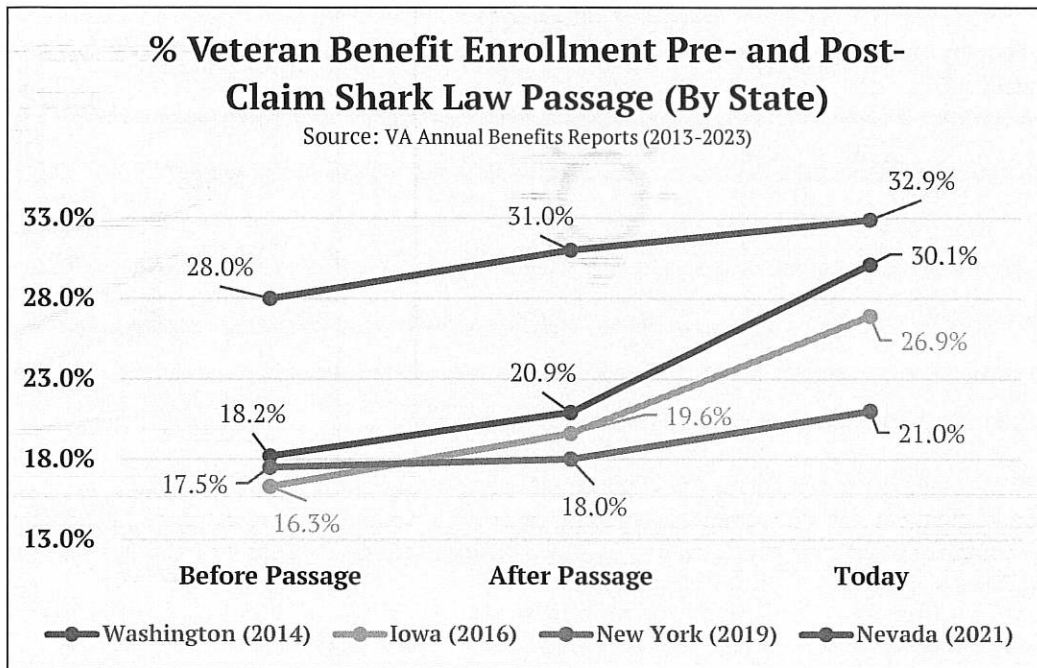


Percentages of veteran benefit enrollment have increased in states with Claim Shark laws, NOT decreased!

Since 2014,
9 States
Have Passed
Claim Shark
Laws



The Truth
About
Claim
Shark Laws



Contact the VFW National Legislative Service today

Pat Murray, Legislative Director (pmurray@vfw.org)

Kristina Keenan, Deputy Legislative Director (kkeen@vfw.org)

Nancy Springer, Associate Legislative Director (nspringer@vfw.org)

Questions?





The Department of Illinois
Veterans of Foreign Wars and Auxiliary



P R E S E N T T H E

2024-2025 DEPARTMENT JOINT PROJECT



BACKPACKS *for* HOMELESS VETERANS



TWO WAYS TO PARTICIPATE

ALL VFW Posts and Auxiliaries are encouraged to participate
in one of the following ways:

CREATE A BACKPACK

Some Suggested items:
Backpack, Personal care items,
Underwear, Socks, T-shirts,
Non-perishable food (w/ pull-tab lids)

**FULL BACKPACKS WILL BE
COLLECTED AT THE FEBRUARY
COUNCIL OF ADMINISTRATION
MEETING IN SPRINGFIELD**

MAKE A DONATION

Earmark donations:
“Backpacks for the Homeless”

AUXILIARY MEMBERS send to:
Department Treasurer
Linda Lorenz

VFW MEMBERS pay online at:
vfwil.org or send check to
Department Headquarters