

**VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS
OF THE UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF FLORIDA
HEADQUARTERS**



BULLETIN

Ocala, Florida

April 2026

“United We Stand for God, Family & Country”

CONTINUING TO BUILD MEMBERSHIP WITH THE COMMANDER'S CHALLENGE!

As laid out in the 2025-26 Membership Program, we will be continue issuing quarterly challenges to our Posts and rewarding those who lead their divisions in recruiting as well as Life Member upgrades. Every quarter (Apr. 1 – June 30), we will award points to the Posts as follows:

- Recruit a new annual Member into the Post: 1 point
- An annual or lapsed member converts to life: 5 points
- Recruit a new Life Member into the Post: 10 points

At the end of the quarter, the Post that leads their membership division in points will receive a special award designated by the Commander-in-Chief. All Posts who meet these quarterly challenges will also be featured on a video display at the National Convention to recognize their achievements.

MEMBERSHIP GOALS

As we continue to go through the membership year, we want everyone to remember the goals that the Commander-in-Chief has set out in her 2025-26 Membership Program:

- Achieve 101% in Membership
- For everyone to recruit at least one new member and then mentor that member
- Increase membership drives and/or events
- Develop new Posts and/or revitalize existing Posts
- Increase Life Membership and Legacy Life Membership

MEMBERSHIP RESOURCES:

Do you want to help your Post meet your membership goals? Log into vfw.org and go to <https://vfw.org/my-vfw/vfw-training-and-support/membership-recruiting-and-retention> where you can view training videos, download recruiting materials and posters, and gain access to all the tools you need in order to help recruit, retain, and mentor your members!

The 2025-26 Membership Program is available online at vfw.org, under MY VFW, scroll down to Membership Quick Links, click on Membership Recruiting and Retention. You will see the 2025-26 VFW National Membership Program in blue letters.

NATIONAL MEMBERSHIP MATERIAL ORDER FORM

We have made it easier for you to get all the recruiting brochures you will need to make this membership year successful! It's as easy as one two three!

1. Go to vfw.org and click the login link in the upper right corner. Sign in when prompted.
2. Under "Membership Quick Links," select Membership Online Order Form.
3. Use the dropdown list to indicate items you need. The form will automatically calculate the cost of items and shipping. When finished, click SUBMIT and it will take you to a billing page if there are any charges.

Follow these simple steps and if you have any questions, you may contact the Membership department at 1.888.564.6839 or email us at membership@vfw.org.

NEW POST DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT GRANT

For each new Post chartered the Department Quartermaster will receive a \$250 credit from the VFW Store to be used towards necessary materials for the new Post. Department Commanders and Quartermasters may apply for this grant directly through the National Membership Department.

For details on this and all other All-American membership incentives view the Commander-in-Chief's National Membership Program at vfw.org under *Membership Recruiting & Retention*.

For any questions or further information, please contact the Membership Department via email at membership@vfw.org or call us at 1.888.564.6839.

LEGACY LIFE MEMBERSHIP

CHECK OUT OUR LEGACY LIFE VIDEO! Go to vfw.org, click on JOIN, and scroll down to Legacy Life Membership and then click on the video on the right. This prestigious program is available to all Life Members and is now available in memoriam for past Life Members. There are three levels of membership; each offer their own package of exclusive member benefits. Financial contributions to the Legacy Life member program are tax deductible to the maximum extent allowed by law.

Enrollment Cost:

Annual Payouts:

<u>Levels</u>	<u>Posts</u>	<u>Departments</u>	<u>National</u>
Gold- \$1,200.00	\$18.00	\$18.00	\$18.00
Silver- \$800.00	\$12.00	\$12.00	\$12.00
Bronze- \$400.00	\$6.00	\$6.00	\$6.00

What will your Legacy be?

VFW Foundation

The VFW Foundation is pleased to announce the addition of two outstanding professionals to our team.

Rafaela Schwan joins the VFW Foundation as our new **Corporate Relations Manager**. Rafaela brings more than 20 years of leadership experience spanning nonprofit development, corporate partnerships and national program operations. In addition to her extensive professional background, Rafaela is also a proud U.S. Air Force veteran. Her experience and dedication to service will play a vital role in strengthening and expanding the Foundation's corporate partnerships.

Tiffany Ward has been selected as our new **Corporate Accounts Manager**. Tiffany has more than 10 years of experience in relationship-centered account and program management. She has a proven track record in partnership stewardship, stakeholder engagement and program execution. Tiffany's expertise will help enhance collaboration with our corporate partners and support the continued growth of the Foundation's mission.

Please join us in welcoming Rafaela and Tiffany to the VFW Foundation staff.

Contact: VFW Foundation Director of Donor Relations, Richard Freiburghouse, RFreiburghouse@vfw.org

Development

Here is some helpful information about why the support of every VFW member is vitally important. VFW's life-changing programs are not possible through membership dues alone. In fact, membership dues alone cover just 16% of the cost of programs. As a nonprofit organization, the VFW relies heavily on the generosity of its members and patriotic supporters. When members donate, 100% of their net donation goes directly back to support their Department. *Please spread the word and give as generously as you are able.*

May is National Military Appreciation Month – May will be here before we know it and it is time to start thinking of ways you can support fellow veterans and service members. There are many ways to show your support. Later this month you may receive a piece of mail asking for you to show your support by joining other veterans and military families in displaying the United States flag on all patriotic holidays, particularly on Memorial Day. If you don't have a flag, you can visit heroes.vfw.org/Flag and print a free flag poster to display. You can also check with your Post to see if they are planning to commemorate a special event for Military Spouses Day on May 8, Peace Officers Memorial Day on May 15, Armed Forces Day on May 16, National Maritime Day on May 22, or Memorial Day on May 25. These are all great ways to get involved. In that mailer, you will also see that we have included a set of patriotic coasters as a gift for your past support of the VFW programs. Your continued support of the VFW helps us to provide life-changing assistance to all veterans, service members and their families when they need it most.

Would You Like More Income in Retirement? – Support our nation's heroes and yourself through a charitable gift annuity with the VFW. Donate using cash, appreciated securities or other assets, and you will receive reliable income for your lifetime (and/or the lifetime of a loved one if you choose).

And, after your lifetime, the amount remaining goes to the VFW to provide support for America's heroes. Check out the VFW's helpful form to see what your personal payouts might be at <https://vfw.planmylegacy.org/cga>. Contact the VFW Planned Giving Office at 816.968.1119 or plannedgiving@vfw.org with questions.

Have You Heard About the VFW's Partners in Patriotism? – Adjutant General Dan West would like you to join him in supporting the VFW's life-changing programs for veterans, service members and their families. The VFW has an option that allows you to support VFW programs on a monthly, quarterly or yearly basis, which helps reduce expenses and eliminates the amount of fundraising mail you receive. It is called Partners in Patriotism. As a member of Partners in Patriotism, you choose a set dollar amount for your donation (minimum amount of \$10) that is either charged to your credit card or set up as an Electronic Funds Transfer (EFT) from your bank account. Once you join Partners in Patriotism, you will only receive the Quarterly Supporter newsletters to keep you informed of the many efforts your monthly gifts are making possible and a Year-End Tax Receipt mailed by the end of January. If you are interested in joining Partners in Patriotism, you may contact Donor Services in the VFW Development Department toll-free at 1.833.VFW.GIVE (1.833.839.4483) or email us at partners@vfw.org with "Partners in Patriotism Application" in the subject line.

VFW Friends of Freedom – If you are not already a member of the VFW's online community, please visit vfw.org and look for the gold banner that says "Find Out What's Happening" to sign up. As a member of the VFW's Friends of Freedom, you will receive special emails with breaking VFW news, legislative alerts and unique opportunities to help the VFW in assisting our nation's veterans, service members and

You may also read [VFW Success Stories](#) to learn how the VFW is at work fighting for veterans' rights, assisting veterans in need, educating our youth and aiding military families across the nation. Check back often to see newly posted stories!

VFW Department Resource Page – We encourage all VFW Departments to actively support the VFW Department Fundraising Programs. The success of these initiatives relies on the participation and backing of your department's members. Promotional materials can be accessed by visiting heroes.vfw.org/VFWTools.

Marketing Communications

This week, the VFW announced it is making it easier than ever for veterans to access the benefits they've earned. At claims.vfw.org, the new online tool will connect service members within 180 of separation, veterans and survivors with a VFW Accredited Service Officer in just a few clicks, streamlining the process and reducing delays.

This tool is designed to reduce paperwork, eliminate confusion and improve communication between veterans and their service officer.

With just a few simple questions, veterans can get their claims process started while ensuring their information is securely transmitted and immediately available to the representative assigned to their case.

If you're looking to file a VA claim, or know a veteran who is, direct them claims.vfw.org to get started today!

Veterans & Military Support Programs

2026 VFW Day of Service

Make your state stand out! We're kicking off **2026 VFW Day of Service**, a nationwide community service effort, and we are counting on you to help make this year bigger and better. Please visit <https://todaysvfw.org/vfw-day-of-service/> to learn more, check out helpful tools and resources — and most importantly — sign up!

Day of Service events should be scheduled during the month of May 2026 and Dashboard credit for “Day of Service Participation” will not be applied until after May 2026. If you have any questions, comments, or concerns, please contact Mark Herron at mherron@vfw.org.

127th National Convention – Reno, Nevada

As we plan for the **2026 National Convention**, there is a new **VMS Keychain** for the **2026-27 Program year**! ADJs/QMs will be able to pre-order their keychains and will be able to pick them up at the convention again this year. Notification and order forms will be emailed later this month. If your Department has an outstanding balance from last year, you will need to remedy that before you can pre-order for this year.

VFW Financial Assistance for Service Members

If you have any questions, comments or concerns, please contact us at mherron@vfw.org or 816.968.1102.

Military Appreciation Program (MAP) Grant Funds

Be advised that the VFW MAP Grant is now closed for the remainder of the 2025-2026 program year. Funds have been depleted. If you have any questions, comments, or concerns, please contact us at M.A.P@vfw.org 816.756.3390 ext. 6287.

VFW's "Sport Clips Help A Hero Scholarship"

The **2026 Fall Semester** opened Jan. 1, 2026, and runs through Apr. 30, 2026. The application is only available online at vfw.org/Scholarship.

All American Eligibility

To qualify for **All-American**, a **minimum donation of \$125** must be donated to **VMS** by **June 30, 2026**. VMS donations will only be handled through the Dashboard. All Posts must click on the "**VMS Donation**" tab on the **Dashboard** to donate. The link will point them to OMS. Please do not send checks to the National Headquarters. If a Post does not use a credit card, the Post will send their donation to their Department HQs, and the Department HQs will submit the donation for their Post. Credit will automatically update on the Dashboard daily. Overseas Departments will donate to the other programs through the link also in lieu of participation. This will automatically update daily.

When you make your **\$125.00** or more donation, all that needs to be entered into the box is **125** or more. The **\$** and **.00** are **not required** in the donation amount box.

Do not use the red donate link in the upper right-hand corner of this webpage. This is for general donation purposes only.

2025-26 VMS Lapel Pin payments should be paid through the Dashboard. Please use the **VMS Donation** link on the Dashboard to pay for your order. Please do this as soon as possible.

VMS Program Tools

The Veterans & Military Support (VMS) Program Tools webpage is updated every month. Link to the webpage is <https://www.vfw.org/VMSPTools>

Continue to do what you are doing and thank you for your support!

VFW Programs

DISPLAYING MILITARY SERVICE SYMBOLS. Military service flags, insignias, etc. should be displayed in the following order (left to right as you face the flags): Army, Marine Corps, Navy, Air Force, Space Force and then Coast Guard. For military flags, go to vfwstore.org/searchresults?q=MilitaryFlag.

PROGRAMS DASHBOARD TOOL. (NOTE: Previously ALL-AMERICAN DASHBOARD) Please encourage Posts to read the 2025-26 Membership program. Military Appreciation Program grants have been launched to show Departments and Posts how much in grant assistance has been received from National HQs to

supplement the Financial Assistance for Service Members financial grants & VFW Sport Clips Help a Hero scholarship statistics. The information charts reside in the KPI tools section.

2025-26 SMART/MAHER VFW NATIONAL CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION TEACHER AWARD PROGRAM. SMART/MAHER VFW NATIONAL CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION TEACHER AWARD PROGRAM DEADLINE REMINDER.

National awards will be presented in July to each teacher during the VFW National Convention in Reno, Nevada. Each of the winners will receive an all-expense-paid trip to the National Convention and a \$1,000 cash award for professional development expenses (winners will receive a 1099-MISC); \$1,000 award to each winning teacher's school; plaques for both the winning teacher and his or her school. Each Department's recipients and their schools will receive a National Commendation citation, which will be sent to the Department Headquarters prior to the National Convention for presentation.

VFW NATIONAL PUBLIC SERVANT AWARDS. Department Headquarters are in the process of receiving their requested awards, according to their presentation dates listed on Formstack. They should be contacting their recipients to arrange a presentation. Department Commanders may present the awards at their Department Convention, but are encouraged to also present the award in front of the recipient's peers at a professional association event, city council meeting, etc. The purpose of the second venue is to expose these VFW awards to the public and especially other law enforcement personnel, firefighters, EMTs, dispatchers and EODTs personnel, many of whom are veterans eligible for VFW membership. Order plaques and citations for public servants from the VFW Store vfwstore.org/searchresults?q=public%20servant.

NOTE: Remember, the First Responder Medal is available through the VFW Store. To review this item, please click on the following link: vfwstore.org/products/32134.

OUTSTANDING NATIONAL COMMUNITY SERVICE AWARD. Each year on July 1, the National Programs office will determine the top community service Posts in each conference, based off their community service reporting and total impact, from July 1 to June 30 the previous year. Your community service total impact is figured by the money spent to host and organize the community service event, plus total hours all volunteers participated, plus the mileage for all volunteers (Dollars Donated + Hours + Mileage = Total Impact).

These four Posts will be awarded the Award for Community Service and will be invited to attend the VFW National Convention. The Post Commander (or designated representative) and a guest will receive round-trip airfare, hotel accommodations for five nights, and a \$599 stipend to receive the award at the VFW National Convention.

NATIONAL COMMUNITY SERVICE POST OF THE YEAR. Each Department will have an NCSP winner based on total impact also. National will select based on end of year reports on July 1. Winners will also be published in the Convention program booklet and receive a street sign identifying this national award for the Post to put up in their community.

HALF-STAFF U.S. FLAG. The U.S. Flag should be at half-staff on Memorial Day, the last Monday in May (federal holiday - half-staff until noon). Flags available at VFW Store vfwstore.org/category/flags/usflags.

FLAG DAY, JUNE 14. All VFW units are reminded to properly display the U.S. Flag on Flag Day, Saturday, June 14 and to conduct a ceremony or program as feasible. You may contact the VFW Communications

Department for a Flag Day speech. It is also suggested Posts should award the VFW Patriotic Citizen Award (Product No. 4385) for those who have displayed our national flag daily.

POW/MIA FLAG -- OFFICIAL DISPLAY DAYS. Under previous Public Law 105-85 (Nov. 16, 1997), it indicated there were only six days that federal agencies, military installations and U.S. post offices were required to display the POW/MIA flag. Now under new law, Public Law 116-67 (Feb. 21, 2020), it is required that the POW/MIA flag be flown on all days on which the flag of the United States is displayed. To purchase a POW/MIA flag, go to vfwstore.org/products/GP237.

IRS AND VFW AWARD MONIES. The Internal Revenue Service (IRS) requires that any recipient that receives more than a \$599 award should receive a Form 1099 identifying the proceeds as taxable. This will include the VFW programs Patriot's Pen and Smart/Maher VFW National Citizenship Education Teacher Award.

VFW Member Benefits

Don't Let a Hospital Stay Drain Your Wallet

No matter what insurance you have — including Medicare — your share of a hospital bill can quickly add up to hundreds or even thousands of dollars. Even a brief stay can bring unwanted financial stress to an already difficult situation.

That's where the Hospital HELP Plan for VFW members, administered by AGIA, comes in. It pays cash benefits that grow the longer your covered hospital stays, putting money back in your pocket when you need it most.

What Makes it Different:

- Cash paid directly to you — spend it however you choose, no questions asked
- Pays regardless of any other health plan or insurance you carry
- No medical exam required — VFW members are guaranteed coverage
- Monthly rates start as low as \$7.92 for members under 50
- 30-day free look — cancel anytime for a full refund

[Get coverage today.](#)

"Buddy"® Poppy

NATIONAL "BUDDY"® POPPY DISPLAY CONTEST. The time frame for registering and setting up the Department winning Buddy Poppy displays for the national judging at convention will be the same as usual. Department winning entries will be accepted for registration and may be set up beginning at 8:00 a.m., Saturday, July 25th, until noon, Monday, July 27, 2026. Winning displays will be identified with the appropriate ribbons on Tuesday morning, and announced later, on the convention floor. Displays must be removed prior to 11:30 a.m. on Tuesday. Any displays left after this time will be removed for disposal by convention center personnel during the disassembly of the exhibit hall.

“BUDDY”® POPPY CAMPAIGN. Although we emphasize Buddy Poppies on Veterans Day and Memorial Day, it is important to realize that the distribution of Buddy Poppies should be a year-round exercise. Each time a Post participates in an activity where the public will be present, Buddy Poppies should be present as a fundraising tool and simply to recognize our fallen comrades. Where the VFW appears, Buddy Poppies should be a constant reminder that we will never forget those who have perished in the name of liberty. Just as “They Gave, Will You?” is a year-round thing, so should the distribution of VFW Buddy Poppies.

Remember that your poppies should be ordered a minimum of three (3) weeks in advance of your distribution date.

BUDDY POPPY POLICY AND PROCEDURES:

- 1) Departments must order poppies through OMS.
- 2) All claims of non-receipt of a Buddy Poppy order must be made within 60 days of the date of the order or will NOT be replaced free of charge.
- 3) All orders for the traditional Buddy Poppy, Anniversary Poppies or tin tab poppies must be placed through your Department Headquarters. Auxiliaries must go through their Post to order all poppies.
- 4) The tin tabs do count towards the Buddy Poppy requirement for the All-American program.
- 5) If you do not receive your order within four weeks of placing it with your department, please contact your Department Headquarters to report you have not received your order.
- 6) All poppies are shipped within 10 days of ordering except orders placed in June and July, due to preparation for National Convention, please allow an additional five business days.

Miscellaneous items (coin cans, buttons, posters, etc.) should be ordered directly from the VFW Store at vfwstore.org/category/programs/buddypoppy or by calling Member Service Center at 1.833.839.8387.

The Manual of Procedure provides that Post relief funds may be used for programs such as Voice of Democracy, Patriot’s Pen, Citizenship Education, and Community Service as long as suggestions in the chairperson’s guidebooks are used as an example of promoting these programs.

Posts are further reminded that Section 711 of the Manual of Procedure provides that non-profit organizations, exempt from taxes under Section 501(a) of the Internal Revenue Code, may assist with the distribution of Buddy Poppies, provided there shall be no division of proceeds. A donation to these groups may be made from the Post general fund.

VFW ANNIVERSARY POPPIES. The silver, gold and diamond anniversary Buddy Poppies are for Posts that are currently in their 25th, 50th or 75th anniversary years. For Posts currently in their 100th year anniversary, they can order any color and as many as they need.

Please limit your order of anniversary poppies to 1,000 to ensure stock does not run out unless you are currently in your 100th year. These are ordered through the Department in OMS and processed the same as the traditional & tin tab poppies. Currently we have no plans to replenish inventory of Anniversary poppies due to increased cost and the small quantities we sell of Anniversary Poppies.

The Life Membership Board of Trustees, with the concurrence of the National Council of Administration, pursuant to Section 111 of the VFW Bylaws, has determined that for the 2026-27 membership year, the Life Membership Fund will pay out as follows:

- Plans A, B, C - A total payout of \$10.50 for each life member (\$3.50 to each Post, Department and National)
- Plan D - A total payout of \$12.54 for each life member (\$4.18 to each Post, Department and National)
- Plan E - A total payout of \$24.30 for each life member (\$8.10 to each Post, Department and National)
- Note: At-Large Members are corresponding Plan pay out amount divided by two. For example, Plan ABC At-Large Payout is \$5.25.

Payment will be made in September 2026 for all Life Members recorded as of Aug 31, 2026. In addition, a payment will be made in January 2027 for all Life Members processed during the period Sept. 1 through Dec. 31, 2026.

If you have any questions, please contact Marc Garduno, Quartermaster General, MGarduno@vfw.org.

National Veterans Service

LAST CALL FOR VFW SERVICE OFFICER OF THE YEAR 2025-2026 NOMINATIONS

The deadline for submitting nominations for the John A. Biedrzycki Accredited Service Representative of the Year Award for 2025-2026 is **April 30, 2026**.

Each Department Commander may nominate one eligible individual for this award. The individual who is ultimately chosen as the recipient of the award will be furnished round-trip travel (for the winner and one guest) and two nights' hotel accommodations to attend the VFW National Convention where the award will be presented. In addition, the award recipient will receive a stipend to offset travel expenses.

We encourage every Department to put forth a candidate. A nomination shows that Department leadership is aware of the significant contributions service representatives make in your community.

Nominations can be submitted to NVS via email to taldana@vfw.org by no later than April 30.

ACCREDITED SERVICE OFFICER TRAINING, ANNAPOLIS, MD, APRIL 26-29, 2026

The upcoming VFW National Veterans Service Proficiency Training Conference (PTC) for accredited representatives is being held April 26-29, 2026, at the Doubletree Annapolis, Maryland, with a virtual workgroup option for those who cannot attend in person.

While registration has already ended, this is a reminder that your Department Service Office may be closed while your accredited representatives attend this training which is essential to maintaining expert knowledge of the veterans' benefits system.

Questions regarding this or any VFW National Veterans Service sponsored training, should be addressed to Mike Figlioli, Director, VFW National Veterans Service, at mfiglioli@vfw.org.

National Legislative Service/Action Corps

House Committee Pending Legislation Hearing

VFW National Legislative Service Acting Director Nancy Springer submitted a statement for the record for a House Committee on Veterans' Affairs hearing on pending legislation. The VFW stated support for proposals to reauthorize and strengthen key VA programs; to improve benefits related to toxic exposure, health care, and housing; and to enhance workforce recruiting and retention within the appellate system. This legislation reflects long-standing VFW priorities, including stronger safeguards against unaccredited claims representatives and the creation of a fourth VA administration. [Read the testimony](#) or [watch the hearing](#), which begins at the 7:11 mark.

Senate Committee Advances Veterans Legislation

The Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs held a markup business meeting on pending legislation and has advanced 24 bills for consideration, many of which the VFW has supported in testimony.

These proposals span a wide range of issues, including establishing parity in education benefits for National Guard and Reserve service members, improving VA's disability compensation claims and appeals processes, and studying the generational impacts of toxic exposures. If enacted, these bills would strengthen benefits and services for veterans, caregivers and survivors while advancing key VFW legislative priorities. [View the meeting](#), which begins at the 23:19 mark.

Administrative Operations

Post Election Reports must be submitted no later than June 1 to the National Headquarters.

Installing officers are directed to see to it that the Post Election Reports have been completed and submitted to National Headquarters. If a Post Election Report has not been forwarded to National Headquarters at the time of installation, the installing officer shall complete and forward such report at the time of the installation of Post Officers no later than June 1. **We encourage all Post Quartermasters to use the online Election Report process featured in the Online Membership System (OMS)**, which is located behind the member's "LOGIN" at vfw.org. Post Election Reports received electronically will be forwarded to the Department Headquarters.

VFW Store

BE PART OF THE 5TH ANNUAL VFW DAY OF SERVICE, starting Saturday, May 2, and continuing all month. Get coordinating shirts for your team's service project at the VFW Store. To order today go to vfwstore.org/category/vfw/stillserving or call 833.839.8387.