

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



BULLETIN

Ocala, Florida

August, 2026

“Continue the Mission”

STARTING THE YEAR STRONG WITH THE COMMANDER'S CHALLENGE!

As laid out in the 2026-27 Membership Program, we will continue issuing quarterly challenges to our Posts and rewarding those who lead their divisions in recruiting as well as Life Member upgrades. Every quarter (July 1-September 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 is set out in the 2026-27 National Membership Program, we are aiming for membership growth as well as a minimum of 80% retention of our Annual members. Focusing our efforts on growth through recruiting and stability via retention will be essential in our efforts to increase our membership strength. The 2026-27 National Membership Program can be downloaded through the Training & Support page on vfw.org.

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 to help recruit, retain, and mentor your members!

The 2026-27 VFW National 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 2026-27 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 Quartermaster will receive a \$250 credit from the VFW Store to be used towards necessary materials for the new Post.

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

VFW Foundation Chairman Sean Kingsbury competed in The Tactical Games Regional at the Big Springs Shooting Complex in Searsboro, Iowa, on Saturday, July 11. Former Commander-in-Chief Carol Whitmore, VFW Foundation Executive Director Hal Roesch, Grants Manager Jason Couch and VFW Department of Iowa Leadership were on hand to cheer Kingsbury on as he competed in eight elite-division fitness and shooting events. Kingsbury's performance showcased the strength, skill and competitive spirit of the VFW.

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.*

VFW 2027 Special Edition Calendar – The exclusive 2027 VFW Fly the Flag and Songbird Calendars were mailed during the first week of July, and we hope you have received them and are enjoying them. Throughout the year, you'll find reminders of days to proudly display the United States flag, along with important historical dates honoring the sacrifices and service of America's veterans. If you do not have a flag to display, simply visit heroes.vfw.org/Flag to print a free flag poster for your home or office.

You'll also find helpful information about VFW programs and services available to veterans, service members, and their families, as well as VFW membership eligibility information in the back of the calendars. We hope these resources prove both meaningful and useful throughout the year.

If you haven't already responded, please send the most generous gift you can. Your support of the 2027 VFW Calendar program helps provide assistance to veterans and their families throughout the year in *your Department*. Every gift helps ensure that those who have served our nation can turn to the VFW when they need us most.

Matching Gift Opportunity to Support the VFW's Programs Has Been Extended – Last month, the VFW was presented with an incredible opportunity by a generous friend and supporter of the VFW to triple your donation if you responded within 30 days of receiving that offer. Our friends have extended their generosity for another 30 days! When you receive this offer in the mail, please consider responding with whatever gift you can to ensure that we meet the matching offer of \$50,000 and help even more veterans.

Many veterans and returning service members are turning to the VFW for assistance with filing claims for the VA benefits they earned through their military service, including compensation for service-connected injuries and illnesses, separation-related benefits, and other vital programs. They also rely on the VFW for educational support through scholarships and grants—and so much more. Thanks to dedicated members like you, we have been able to provide the life-changing assistance our veterans need. Your generosity also helps the VFW fight—and win—vital legislative battles on Capitol Hill. The VFW is on the front line in the fight for education, jobs, health care and an overall better quality of life FOR VETERANS! This is a great opportunity to help support veterans of every generation, *right in your Department*.

Create Your Will for Free - There's no better time to take control of your legacy than during National Make-a-Will Month in August. If you are ready to create your first will or update an existing one, visit <https://vfw.planmylegacy.org/giving-docs>. AT NO COST TO YOU! For more information, contact the VFW Planned Giving Office at 816.968.1119 or at plannedgiving@vfw.org.

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 their families. 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

In case you missed any of the happenings from the 127th VFW National Convention as it came to a close July 29, we have you covered. Now available on demand, watch National Commander Cory Geisler’s installation as VFW National Commander, or catch up on anything you might have missed at vfw.org/Convention.

Veterans & Military Support Programs

All-American Eligibility

Updates to VMS regarding the 2026-27 Program Year were discussed at the 127th VFW National Convention Programs Town Hall Meeting that was conducted on Sunday July 26, 2026.

Donating to NVS (no longer referred to as VMS) and DPAA (new for 2026-27) can only be done via the **Dashboard** by going to the link “**NVS Donation**” at the upper right-hand corner of the screen. For the **2026-27 Program Year**, your **\$125** or more donation to NVS **meets the eligibility criteria for All-American** in this category. Your **\$75** donation or more to DPAA **meets the eligibility criteria for All-American** in this category. **Donations must be received by June 30, 2027, to make All-American.**

When you make your donation for either category, all that needs to be entered into the box is 125 for NVS or 75 for DPAA. No \$ and no .00 are required in the donation amount box.

PLEASE DO NOT USE ANY OF THE RED/WHITE DONATE LINKS IN THE UPPER RIGHTHAND CORNER OF ANY WEBPAGE. THIS LINK GOES TO THE GENERAL DONATION PAGE AND WILL NOT BE CREDITED AS AN NVS/DPAA DONATION.

Military Appreciation Program (MAP) Grant Funds

Be advised that the VFW MAP Grant is now closed for the remainder of the 2025-26 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 Financial Assistance for Service Members

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

VFW's "Sport Clips Help A Hero Scholarship"

The **Spring 2027 Semester** application opens Aug. 1 through Nov. 15, 2026. The application is only available online at vfw.org/Scholarship.

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 2026-27 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.

2026-27 SMART/MAHER VFW NATIONAL CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION TEACHER AWARD PROGRAM. The Veterans of Foreign Wars wants to recognize the nation's top elementary, junior high and high school teachers (teaching at least half of the school day in a classroom environment) who teach citizenship education topics regularly and promote America's history, traditions, and institutions effectively through this program.

Now is the time to begin locating exceptional teachers for your Post to nominate for the next competition. 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.

All Post-level nominees should provide a one-page resume as a minimum or up to five pages, including the resume, as a maximum documentation of their teaching experience (for example: resume, references, news articles, etc.) and a head-and-shoulder photo of themselves, if available.

VFW Post Teacher Award chairpersons may submit one candidate, in each grade level (K-5, 6-8, 9-12), to their District by Nov. 15. If a Department does not have a District judging, then the Post entries would be submitted to the Department Headquarters and/or Department Chairperson by Jan. 1. The Department may select a single candidate, at each grade level, and submit them to VFW National Headquarters through the Dashboard by Feb. 1 for National judging. To submit their winners, the "VFW Department Teacher Award Citation Request Form" should be completed, and the winning entry documentation uploaded.

VFW's Department Citizenship Education Teacher award includes a citation for both the winning teacher and their school.

VFW's National Citizenship Education Teacher awards include: three National \$1,000 awards for the top K-5, 6-8, and 9-12 teachers for professional development expenses; \$1,000 award to each winning teacher's school; plaques for both the winning teacher and their school; and an all-expense-paid trip to attend a VFW National Convention.

Please verify that all websites, publications, announcements, etc. have the correct teacher award entry deadlines and rules for the 2026-27 program year. The teacher entry form, information page, and Chairpersons Guide are available on the VFW website.

Simply visit vfw.org, 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**. Here you will find all program manuals and on the same page are all other program materials.

PATRIOT DAY, SEPT. 11. Per Presidential Proclamation, Sept. 11, is designated as "Patriot Day." The President requests the flag of the United States to be flown at half-staff (sunrise to sunset) and a moment of silence observed in honor of the individuals who lost their lives on that day due to terrorist attacks on the United States. For flags and other patriotic items, click here vfwstore.org/category/patriotic/miscpatriotic.

NATIONAL POW/MIA RECOGNITION DAY, SEPTEMBER 18. Posts should conduct an appropriate ceremony. Information on conducting a ceremony can be found in the current VFW Manual of Procedure. For POW/MIA merchandise, click vfwstore.org/category/memorial/pow-mia.

IT'S SCHOLARSHIP TIME! It is the perfect time to contact schools, youth groups, parent organizations and others with information about Voice of Democracy® and Patriot's Pen. Schools are making curriculum decisions now and parents are thinking about scholarships. Please remember that Voice of Democracy and Patriot's Pen are VFW programs supported by the VFW Auxiliary. It is inappropriate for a VFW Auxiliary to conduct separate judging at any level. If you have questions regarding any of the above, please email Jlinstra@vfw.org or call 816.968.1155.

NEW VOICE OF DEMOCRACY AND PATRIOT'S PEN THEMES. The 2026-27 themes were chosen by Commander-in-Chief Cory Geisler. The Voice of Democracy theme will be **"What a Veteran has taught me about America"** and the Patriot's Pen theme will also be **"What a Veteran has taught me about America."**

NEW VOICE OF DEMOCRACY AND PATRIOT'S PEN ENTRY FORMS. The new 2026-27 Voice of Democracy and Patriot's Pen entry forms are now available on the VFW website. For Voice of Democracy and Patriot's Pen brochures, posters, awards and more, visit the VFW Store: vfwstore.org/category/programs/voiceofdemocracy for Voice of Democracy and vfwstore.org/category/programs/patriotspen for Patriot's Pen.

NOTE: Voice of Democracy and Patriots Pen posters are available!

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 total impact of community service 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.

VFW NATIONAL PUBLIC SERVANT AWARDS. Departments may submit up to five nominees (one for each career area) to the VFW Programs office no later than Feb. 1, 2027. All Department Public Servant Citations must be requested through the “VFW Department Public Servant Award Request Form” through the Dashboard. VFW Programs will create citations for the following awards in each Department:

- VFW National Law Enforcement Award
- VFW Firefighter Award
- VFW National Emergency Medical Technician Award
- VFW National 911 Dispatcher Award
- VFW National Explosive Ordnance Disposal Technician (E.O.D.T.) Award

Each Department will receive their requested awards and should contact 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: VFW PUBLIC SERVANT AWARD CITATION POST ENTRY FORM. This form was developed to assist VFW Post Safety Chairpersons with an entry form to hand out to the local Fire Department, Police Department, etc. to assist interested individuals in nominating one of their own. The entry form along with the required documentation are to be returned to the local VFW Post for their judging, by Oct. 31. Once a winner in each category has been chosen, the Post will forward the winning entries on to the next level of judging.

Simply visit vfw.org, 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 **Public Servant Program**.

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.

VETERANS IN THE CLASSROOM MONTH IN NOVEMBER. VFW and VFW Auxiliary members are encouraged to volunteer in their schools to talk about their military and home front experiences to students. Invite your local military recruiter to join you to talk about military service today. Additional information can be found in the VFW Community Activities and Citizenship Education Chairperson’s Guide.

Simply visit vfw.org, 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**. Here you will find all program manuals, and on the same page are all other program materials.

Participate in this activity during the week of Veterans Day, which is part of “National Veterans Awareness week,” as designated by Congress. Find Pledge of Allegiance pencils and coloring books, plus other citizenship education tools at the VFW Store vfwstore.org/category/programs/citizeneducation.

NATIONAL COMMUNITY SERVICE VOLUNTEER RECOGNITION PROGRAM. This program is designed to provide recognition and awards to VFW members who volunteer their time to outside organizations. Recognition is in the form of certificates and/or lapel pins which are given to volunteers who have completed the number of hours prescribed for those awards. For more information, see the VFW Community Activities and Citizenship Education Chairperson’s Guide or contact Mary at 816.968.1187 in the VFW Programs department for a nomination form.

“UPDATED” 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

Dental issues can arise unexpectedly and be quite costly. For instance, the average price for a dental crown is \$1,515. With Dental Insurance, you can lower your out-of-pocket expenses and keep your smile healthy through preventive care.

Dental Insurance provides coverage for dental costs that might not be included in your medical plan. It covers routine cleanings and exams and reduces expenses for X-rays, fillings, and more.

Dental Insurance not only assists with paying for dental care but also helps in preventing issues. When preventive care is covered, you're more likely to attend cleanings and checkups, which can help you avoid problems before they become too expensive or complicated.

For more details about Dental Insurance, click [here](#).

“Buddy”® Poppy

“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 SILVER, GOLD AND DIAMOND 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 red 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. Based on the past four years' sales, we have sufficient inventory for the next 2 years of Gold, 3 years of Diamond and 50 years of Silver.

Adjutant General

General Counsel/Legal

VFW's Most Recent Successes in Advocating for Veterans Through the Court System

- **Federal Court Issues Major Victory in Fight Against Claim Sharks**

The U.S. District Court for the Middle District of North Carolina recently issued a major victory for veterans in *Ford v. Veterans Guardian VA Claim Consulting, LLC*. The court ruled that Veterans Guardian acted as an unaccredited VA claims agent by preparing and presenting VA disability claims for compensation without the accreditation required under federal law. Importantly, this was a merits ruling, not a procedural decision.

This means the court established as a matter of law that Veterans Guardian violated federal law by acting as an unaccredited agent while charging veterans for claims assistance. The court has not yet ruled on the remaining state-law claims or the remedies that may be available to class members. Those issues will be addressed in a later order.

This decision reinforces important protections for veterans and highlights the value of seeking help from VA accredited representatives and veterans service organizations that provide free claims assistance. [Read the opinion.](#)

- **US Court of Appeals for the Federal Circuit Held That the VA Must Provide Notice of Claim Denial**

In 2024, VFW filed an amicus brief in *Hamill v. McDonough*. In the case, the VA implicitly denied Mr. Hamill's character of discharge request when it denied a claim for disability benefits. He filed a petition with the Veterans Court for a writ of mandamus to compel the VA to adjudicate his character of discharge claim. The Veterans Court dismissed the case as moot.

Hamill then appealed to the US Court of Appeals for the Federal Circuit and VFW filed an amicus brief on his behalf, arguing that veterans have the right to notice and due process under the Veterans Appeals Improvement and Modernization Act of 2017 (AMA).

In a February 2026 ruling, the US Court of Appeals for the Federal Circuit agreed with our position and vacated and remanded the case, holding that the VA must provide veterans clear and explicit denial in accordance with the AMA. This decision enforces Congress's intent that veterans be provided appropriate notice and due process on their claims.

- **SCOTUS Rules in Favor of Service Members, Keeping Contractors Accountable**

In a decision issued April 22, 2026, the U.S. Supreme Court vacated a lower-court ruling that had broadly shielded contractors from liability under the doctrine of "battlefield preemption." The ruling allows U.S. Army Spc. Winston Hencely's case to proceed, marking a significant victory for service members harmed by contractor negligence.

Hencely v. Fluor Corp. stems from a 2016 attack at Bagram Airfield, where Hencely was severely injured while confronting a suicide bomber employed by contractor Fluor. Hencely's actions likely prevented greater loss of life, but he suffered permanent disabilities, including a traumatic brain injury.

After lower courts dismissed his lawsuit, VFW filed [amicus briefs](#) at both the certiorari and merits stages, arguing that overly broad application of battlefield preemption denied service members meaningful legal recourse.

The court's opinion, delivered by Justice Clarence Thomas, aligns closely with the VFW's arguments, rejecting blanket immunity for contractors and clarifying that federal law does not preempt state-law claims absent a clear conflict with federal interests. The decision narrows the scope of contractor immunity and reinforces the principle that negligence, especially in controlled environments, must be subject to legal scrutiny.

The VFW emphasized that this outcome preserves accountability and strengthens protections for those who serve. We will continue to monitor the case as it proceeds and stands ready to support efforts that uphold the rights and protections of America's service members.

National Veterans Service

JOHN A. BIEDRZYCKI ACCREDITED SERVICE REPRESENTATIVE OF THE YEAR AWARD WINNER FOR 2025-2026

During our recently concluded 127th National Convention held in Reno, Nevada, VFW National Veterans Service was pleased to recognize Colin Anderson, VFW Department of New York, as the recipient of the John A. Biedrzycki Accredited Service Representative of the Year Award Winner for 2025-26. It was an honor to recognize him before the membership of our great organization.

ACCREDITED SERVICE OFFICER SKILL LEVEL TRAINING, ANNAPOLIS, MD

National Veterans Service (NVS) will conduct a hybrid training conference for VFW accredited representatives, Oct. 4-8, 2026, at the DoubleTree Annapolis Hotel in Annapolis, MD. This hybrid course will include in-person instruction that will be live-streamed simultaneously via electronic media.

In addition to Skill Level Training, NVS will hold concurrent Basic Training for newly accredited representatives, Oct. 4-9, 2026, at the DoubleTree Annapolis. There is no virtual option for Basic Training; it is being offered on an in-person basis only.

Formal notification to students required to participate in these conferences has been sent out.

Please address questions relating to accredited service officer training to Keith Garrison, Assistant Director, Training, NVS, at kgarrison@vfw.org.

National Legislative Service/Action Corps

August Recess – Your Congressional Members at Home

Congress is in recess for the month of August, which means your congressional members will be back in their home states. This is a good opportunity for VFW members to contact and visit their district/state offices, or participate in town hall meetings and focus attention on the VFW's [legislative priorities](#). Familiarize yourself with the VFW's stance on protecting veterans' disability compensation; concurrent receipt and retirement compensation; transition assistance; suicide prevention; community care reform; and education and employment. Make sure your senators and representatives know what they need to do to meet the needs of our service members, veterans, and their families. Help us hold Congress accountable to the VFW's legislative priorities.

VFW Store

Tartan

There's still time to get a kilt in the VFW tartan. USA Kilts offers several styles for men and women, plus additional apparel. Click <https://www.usakilts.com/vfw.html>



Personalize it

Create your own look with personalized apparel from the VFW Store.

Select a shirt and choose your embroidery options.

- For men's apparel click <https://www.vfwstore.org/category/apparel/personalizedmensapparel?page=1&size=50>
- For women's apparel click <https://www.vfwstore.org/category/apparel/personalizedladiesapparel?page=1&size=50>
- For personalized caps, click <https://www.vfwstore.org/category/apparel/personalizedhats>