

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



BULLETIN

Ocala, Florida

December, 2019

“Together We Can

Our Commander-in-Chief is offering a new Life membership incentive program. All members who either join the VFW as a new Life member, reinstate as a Life member, or upgrade their existing annual membership to Life beginning Sept. 1, 2019, through June 30, 2020, will earn a \$50 store credit. This credit must be used prior to Aug. 31, 2020. Upgrade, pay off or reinstate your Life membership today oms.vfw.org/QuickRenew.aspx?srcid=275.

NEW MEMBERSHIP WEBINAR - TELEPHONE CAMPAIGNS

As we move through the membership year, we often get questions from Posts asking how they can better retain their annual members. We know from experience that the best method of retaining and mentoring our membership is through personal contact; and one of the best and most efficient ways to contact these members about their dues renewal is through a telephone campaign. The National Membership Department has put together a short training video explaining how to put one of these calling campaigns together so that your Post can remain on top of membership retention goals and keep these members from falling through the cracks.

You can find this new video on YouTube at youtu.be/rvOL9lmqNB0 - it's less than 12 minutes and provides a simple and concise lesson on putting a telephone calling campaign together. This video, along with other educational membership videos, can be found at vfw.org under the Training and Support section, which we encourage all of our Posts to visit and make use of.

As always, the VFW Membership Department is here to provide training and support, recruiting and retention materials, and assistance with all of your membership needs. If we can be of any help for your Department, District or Post, don't hesitate to contact us. Thank you all for all that you do for the VFW, and for showing that we DARE TO CARE about our fellow veterans.

DEPARTMENT "FIRST TO FINISH" INCENTIVE

For the Department that is first to attain 100% in membership, the Commander (plus guest) and the Quartermaster (plus guest) will each receive:

- **\$2,500 voucher through Veterans Travel Services (VTS) applied towards airfare, accommodations and transportation for a trip of their own choice.**

DEPARTMENT EARLY BIRD INCENTIVE

For every Department that achieves 92% in membership by Jan. 1, 2020, the Department Commander will receive:

- **A VFW Tribute Edition Henry Golden Boy .22 Caliber Rifle or a credit voucher of equal value for use with Veterans Travel Service (VTS).**

EARLY BIRD AWARD - VFW LEGISLATIVE CONFERENCE

The top three Post Commanders and Quartermasters and the top two District Commanders in each division on Jan. 1, 2020, will receive:

- **A \$1,000 stipend to be used toward attending the 2020 VFW Legislative Conference, Washington, D.C.**

POST DEVELOPMENT

As you are planning for the new year, make sure your Departments are in contact with the National Membership Department to identify an area in need of Post development or a revitalization effort. There are many resources available to you, all you need to do is call. We are looking to start a Post or revitalize an existing Post in every single Department. Let's not wait until the middle of the year to identify an area. Let the Membership Department know now what you're working on so we can start tracking that information and provide assistance as needed. For any questions or further information, you may contact Corey Hunt in the Membership Department [via email at coreyhunt@vfw.org](mailto:coreyhunt@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

SHOP AMAZON SMILE TO SUPPORT VFW PROGRAMS

This holiday season, VFW members and friends are encouraged to support VFW programs and services by shopping through AmazonSmile. For each qualifying purchase, Amazon will donate 0.5% of the product price to the VFW Foundation. Copy and share this link: [AmazonSmile](https://www.amazon.com/smile) and the VFW Foundation will benefit every time you shop on Amazon.com.

VFW FOUNDATION FUNDS WWI MEDAL RESEARCH

On Wednesday, Nov. 6, VFW National Commander William “Doc” Schmitz presented a \$70,000 donation from the VFW Foundation to Park University in support of the university’s research initiative into the awarding or denying of World War I military service medals based on racial bias. Schmitz also serves as chairman of the VFW Foundation Board of Directors.

More than 367,000 African Americans fought during World War I, yet during that time not one was awarded the Medal of Honor. Historians, scholars and researchers believe systematic racism may be to blame, thus prompting the Valor Medal Review project. The project is being conducted by Park University’s George S. Robb Centre for the Study of the Great War, the Valor Medals Review Task Force, and in conjunction with the Foundation for the Commemoration of the World Wars on behalf of the U.S. World War I Centennial Commission.

Thus far, researchers have identified 70 African Americans, 203 Jewish Americans, 18 Native Americans, three Alaskan Natives and three Hispanic Americans as recipients of the Distinguished Service Cross/Navy Cross or the Croix de Guerre with Palm, the second highest military decoration awarded for extraordinary heroism.

Development

MATCHING GIFT OFFER! – Late in November we mailed out a special notice regarding an incredible opportunity. Friends of the VFW have offered to triple your donation between now and Jan. 8, 2020! They have committed \$50,000 of their own money to kick off our 2020 Annual Challenge. They believe there are many others who understand that the cost of war extends well beyond the battlefield. They’re asking proud VFW members like you to support our newest veterans, especially those coming home disabled by war. Your gift to the VFW today will be matched and will triple your help to our veterans of all generations in receiving the life-changing services they need. To receive every dollar of the 2020 Annual Challenge, all gifts must be postmarked before Jan. 8, 2020. You still have time!

VFW Kicks Off the 2019 Year-End Campaign with the Friends of Freedom Online Community – Nov. 30 marks the beginning of the **VFW’s 2019 Year-End Campaign!** Donations raised toward the end of the year help meet a large portion of the program funding needs. With the demand for VFW programs rising rapidly, your response to this year’s 2019 Year-End Campaign is more important than ever. Watch for your email from the VFW and give as generously as you can, or visit vfw.org and click on the red “Donate” button to make your tax deductible year-end contribution. Please also spread the word about the campaign on your social media networks. You’ll be helping veterans of all generations receive much needed assistance from VFW Service Officers in applying for and getting their hard earned VA benefits; assisting military families in financial distress receive financial assistance for rent, utilities and other necessities; and ensuring all veterans are represented on Capitol Hill to ensure veterans’ rights and benefits are protected. Your generosity provides life-changing help when our nation’s heroes need it most.

Celebrate the Holiday Season by Helping Fellow Veterans – Your support of the VFW this holiday season – and throughout the year – is extremely important in helping the VFW’s efforts to serve and assist veterans of all generations who are sick, unemployed, homeless or suffering from combat wounds received long ago. We recently mailed a special 16-month edition of the 2020-2021 VFW “Fly the Flag” Calendar and the new 2019 VFW Christmas Cards. The 2020 VFW Veterans Service Annual Campaign will be mailed in late December. By supporting these programs, you help veterans and their families in need throughout the year in your Department and across the country. And please display the U.S. flag – especially on patriotic holidays, which are marked in your new VFW Calendar. You can visit heroes.vfw.org/flag and print a free flag poster to display.

Free Estate Planning Resources From the VFW – Did you know more than HALF of American adults do not have an estate plan or will in place? Most people know the importance of one, but the process often feels “too big” to start. So the VFW is providing a FREE Personal Estate Planning Kit, which you can download at vfw.org/plannedgiving. This kit will help you easily walk through the process of getting your plans ready. Once you have made sure your family and loved ones are taken care of, we invite you to consider a gift to the VFW in your will. It only takes a few words to offer continued support for our future generation of veterans.

Learn more by contacting the VFW Planned Giving Office at 816.968.1119 or email plannedgiving@vfw.org.

Have You Heard About the VFW’s Partners in Patriotism? – Would you like to support the VFW’s life-changing programs for veterans, service members and their families and reduce the amount of mail you receive? The VFW has an option that allows you to support VFW programs on a monthly, quarterly, or yearly basis, as well as reduce expenses and eliminate the fundraising mail. 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 the VFW’s 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 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 visit vfw.org/vfwatwork and click on “**Read VFW success stories**” to learn how the VFW is 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!

Department Resources – Many great resources are available for your Department to use in promoting fundraising programs. You need only go to heroes.vfw.org/vfwtools. The latest fundraising program information, ideas and promotional tools from the Development Department can be found here. Download ad slicks, ready-to-use articles and other items for your Department publications and/or website. Recent mailings and mailing schedules are also posted on a regular basis. Use the Department Resources tools to help strengthen your Department programs. Check it out today!

Veterans & Military Support Programs

Last year, through the Veterans & Military Support programs, the VFW provided support to nearly 400,000 service members, veterans and their families. We know your support at the local level goes far beyond what is reported. Help us let the general public know the impact the VFW has on military families and veterans by reporting your holiday events to your Veterans & Military Support Chairman. MAP grants have increased for the holiday season. Please complete the MAP after event requirements within the 14-day deadline. If you have any questions, please call the MAP office at 816.756.3390, ext. 6211.

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 and then Coast Guard. For military flags, go to vfwstore.org/products/GP238.

SMART/MAHER VFW NATIONAL CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION TEACHER AWARD. Nominations for this award and the judging at the Post level should be completed and District level should be close to completion. Districts are to send their winning recipient from each level to the Departments by Dec. 15. After Department judging, each Department forwards the names of its selections to VFW National Headquarters for consideration in the national award contest. Deadline is Jan. 15, 2020. Each Department's selections will receive a National Commendation citation.

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 school; and an all-expenses-paid trip to attend a VFW and Auxiliary national event. In addition, the top 10 national high school teachers will be invited to attend one of the available Summer Graduate seminars at the Freedoms Foundation in Valley Forge, PA.

Order the Citizenship Education Teacher Recognition Citation from the VFW Store, product #4320, vfwstore.org/products/23980. Present to all teachers nominated at all levels for the national award.

VFW NATIONAL PUBLIC SERVANT AWARDS. Departments are asked to submit three nominees (one for each career area) to the VFW Programs Office no later than Feb. 1, 2020. VFW Programs will create citations for the following awards in each Department:

- VFW National Law Enforcement Award
- VFW National Firefighter Award
- VFW National Emergency Medical Technician Award

Each Department will receive their three awards and 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 general public and especially other law enforcement personnel, firefighters and EMT's, 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: "NEW" VFW PUBLIC SERVANT AWARD CITATION POST ENTRY FORM. This form has been developed to assist VFW Post Safety Chairmen 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 forms along with the required documentation are to be returned to the local VFW Post for their judging. Once the winner in each category has been chosen, the Post will forward those 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**.

50TH ANNIVERSARY VIETNAM WAR COMMEMORATION PROGRAM. The Commemorative Partner Program is designed for federal, state and local communities, veterans' organizations and other non-governmental organizations to assist a grateful nation in thanking and honoring our Vietnam veterans and their families. As a Commemorative Partner, VFW Posts are encouraged to participate in the Commemoration of the Vietnam War by planning and conducting events and activities that will recognize the Vietnam veterans and their families' service, valor, and sacrifice.

Events and activities should be dignified, memorable occasions that show a sensitivity and appreciation for the solemnity of war and the losses suffered by many. Commemorative Partners should communicate how their events will achieve the congressionally-mandated objectives of the program. Events or activities should meet one or more of the following objectives.

1. To thank and honor veterans of the Vietnam War, including personnel who were held as prisoners of war or listed as missing in action, for their service and sacrifice on behalf of the United States and to thank and honor the families of these veterans.
2. To highlight the service of the Armed Forces during the Vietnam War and the contributions of Federal agencies and governmental and non-governmental organizations that served with, or in support of, the Armed Forces.
3. To pay tribute to the contributions made on the home front by the people of the United States during the Vietnam War.
4. To highlight the advances in technology, science, and medicine related to military research conducted during the Vietnam War.
5. To recognize the contributions and sacrifices made by the allies of the United States during the Vietnam War.

For the VFW Posts interested in becoming an official Commemorative Partner, they must submit an application and a signed Statement of Understanding.

Applications are available at VietnamWar50th.com on the Commemorative Partner Program. The approval process is usually less than 30 days. Partners will be kept informed through electronic notifications. Once approved as a Partner, the Commemoration will provide organizations with a starter kit of materials for developing and implementing their programs. If you have any questions regarding the Commemorative Partner Program application process, please direct them to: whs.vnwar50th_cpp@mail.mil. For Vietnam War commemorative items, shop the VFW Store at: vfwstore.org/searchresults?q=vietnam.

PROGRAMS DEPARTMENT DEADLINE REMINDER. The deadline for mailing the Voice of Democracy, Patriot's Pen and Teacher Award winner packets to National Headquarters is Jan. 15, 2020 (even if they have not been personally notified they are the winner).

The suggested deadline for Departments to have reviewed and approved their District and Post entries in the All-American Dashboard is Jan. 31. This will ensure we will have accurate reporting numbers across the organization and allot us the time to remedy errors. If you are unsure how to report your participation in the All-American Dashboard or if you are having login issues to the OMS system, contact Nick Lopez at nlopez@vfw.org or 816.968.1155.

VFW SPECIAL PROJECT PROGRAM. This program was put in place to recognize VFW units for creating and completing unique and extraordinary community service projects.

Record book entry nominations that are found to be complete and well-substantiated should be endorsed by the Department Adjutant or VFW Department Community Activities Chairman and forwarded to National Programs Department. Deadline for entries is April 30 of each year.

Every Post Special Project receiving the Award of Excellence in the May judging will be entered in the Fred C. Hall Memorial Outstanding Post Special Project Competition. Complete information can be found in the VFW Community Activities and Citizenship Education Chairman's Manual.

YOUTH HUNTING AND SHOOTING PROGRAMS. VFW has been involved with the National Rifle Association (NRA) since 1920. Through the NRA, hundreds of VFW Posts provide hunter safety courses and sponsor shooting competitions. Annually, VFW and NRA offer junior and adult small-bore rifle and air rifle individual and team matches conducted by mail called Postal Matches*.

NRA Postal Matches are designed for VFW rifle teams as a sport activity for youth and adults to build interest in rifle shooting and safety. A Postal Match is a match in which competitor's fire on their home ranges using targets which have been marked for identification. The team match is a series of four monthly matches for teams sponsored by VFW Posts held from December through March. The individual VFW match is fired in the fall with a December closing date. The scores are then mailed to the NRA for ranking of awards.

If your VFW Post does not already participate in the Youth/Adult Rifle Program and would like to take part in a program that has great appeal for youngsters as well as adults, please go to the NRA's Postal Match website nrahq.org/compete/dept-postal.asp.

Complete program information, rules, and entry form (in PDF format) are available: postalmatches.nra.org/documents/pdf/compete/Postals/VFW%20Postal.pdf.

If you have any questions, please contact the NRA directly at:

National Rifle Association
Competitive Shooting Division
11250 Waples Mill Rd.
Fairfax, VA 22030
email: postals@nrahq.org
phone: 703.267.1482

If you have any other questions, please feel free to contact the VFW Programs Office at 816.968.1155 or email nlopez@vfw.org.

*There are clubs and Posts, etc. that have local shooting programs all around the world. They teach gun safety and target shooting. Often, they wish to compete against other groups but cannot afford to travel to competitions. The NRA created "postal matches," where a team of shooters can have their own local competition using paper targets. These are NRA-sanctioned targets and must be signed by local officials verifying the manner in which the competition was conducted and the age of the participants. Those targets are then sent to the NRA Postal Match Program and, using the targets from the various groups, the NRA judges determine who wins, places, etc. and awards prizes. That way, the shooting match can involve shooters and clubs from almost anywhere without anyone having to travel. It's all done through the U.S. Postal System. Hence, the term, "Postal Match."

HALF-STAFF U.S. FLAG ON DEC. 7. Public Law 103-308, passed in 1994, designates Dec. 7 as “National Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day” and requests the flag of the United States to be flown at half-staff (sunrise to sunset) in honor of the individuals who lost their lives on that day. To order a flag, go to vfwstore.org/category/flags/usflags.

WORLD WAR I CENTENNIAL NEWS:

Is Your Post Named for a Veteran of the Great War (World War I)? If so, we want to hear from you! The U.S. World War I Centennial Commission is collecting information on VFW Posts named after WWI veterans. If your Post is honored by the memory of a local doughboy, marine, sailor, or nurse who served and sacrificed their lives, we want to know more. Please send your information and material on the history of your Post to: David Hamon, Veterans and Military Affairs Director, U.S. World War I Centennial Commission, at david.hamon@worldwar1centennial.org or you may call him at 540.379.8584. The Commission is collecting historical and archive information on the Great War to observe and commemorate those 4.7 million who served in that conflict. America never forgets its veterans. Help them build a national memorial in Washington, D.C. To learn more, go to: ww1cc.org/memorial.

Help Build America's World War I Memorial in Washington, D.C. The U.S. World War I Centennial Commission recently announced the creation of the AEF (Allied Expeditionary Forces) Memorial Corps. The program is a special designation for Posts, patriotic organizations, local chapters of civic organizations, among others, to be recognized as an official "AEF Memorial Corps Post" for making a donation to build the national WWI memorial in Washington, D.C. Your Post will be certified with a special Centennial Certificate commemorating your contribution in "going over the top" to get the memorial built. For more information, please write Mr. David Hamon: david.hamon@worldwar1centennial.org or call him at 540.379.8584. To view the progress of the memorial, go to: ww1cc.org/memorial. Your VFW Post will forever be enshrined in history as having pushed to get the memorial built. America never forgets her veterans!

POW/MIA FLAG -- OFFICIAL DISPLAY DAYS. Public Law 105-85 (Nov. 16, 1997) indicates the days that federal agencies, military installations and U.S. post offices are required to display the POW/MIA flag. The days are: Armed Forces Day, May 16, 2020 (third Saturday in May); Memorial Day, May 25, 2020 (last Monday in May); Flag Day, June 14; Independence Day, July 4; National POW/MIA Day, Sept. 18, 2020 (third Friday in Sept.); and Veterans Day, Nov. 11. 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

A cancer diagnosis is often a time of concern—concern for your health, life as you know it, your finances and your family. The VFW Cancer Care Insurance Plan, administered by AGIA, helps relieve the financial burden of cancer care, so you can focus on your health and recovery.

Cancer Care Insurance offers benefits to VFW members who have been diagnosed with cancer to help cover the high cost of treatment and recovery. These benefits include a lifetime maximum of \$300,000, and are yours to use as you see fit.

In fact, benefits from this plan can be used to pay for hospital bills, operations, mortgage, car payments and much more.

For additional information about the Cancer Care Insurance Plan, administered by AGIA, [click here](#) or call 1.877.850.0183.

"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 8 weeks in advance of your distribution date. Be sure to specify a date, by which the poppies are required, do not use "ASAP." Miscellaneous items (coin cans, buttons, posters, etc.) should be ordered directly from the VFW Store at vfwstore.org/category/programs/buddypoppy or the VFW Store/Emblem and Supply Catalog.

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 chairmen 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.

Contact information: BuddyPoppy@vfw.org or 816.756.3390, ext. 6722 for any questions or concerns.

VFW SILVER, GOLD AND DIAMOND ANNIVERSARY POPPIES. The silver, gold and diamond anniversary Buddy Poppies are only for Posts that are currently in their 25th, 50th or 75th anniversary years. The anniversary poppies are approximately three times as expensive for us to produce, but because of the small quantities we deal in, we don't pass those costs on to the Posts. Please limit your order of anniversary poppies to 1,000 to ensure stock does not run out. These are ordered through the Department and processed the same as the red poppies. Annotate on the order to National that it is for anniversary poppies and specify which one.

VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS JOINS "WORLD WAR I POPPY PROGRAM." The Veterans of Foreign Wars is joining the U.S. World War I Centennial Commission in announcing the WWI Poppy Program to raise awareness about World War I and generate funds for local VSO chapters all over the country.

The VFW is proud to share with you the WWI Poppy Program; an opportunity to generate resources for your Post while helping to honor the 4.7 million Americans who wore the uniform during WWI.

Poppies grew across the war-torn battlefields of Europe after World War I. From 2017 to 2019, the U.S. World War I Centennial Commission will tell the story of those American veterans, through events, exhibits, and memorial efforts, and the VFW is proud to be a partner in this important commemoration.

Click on the following link to learn about the WWI Poppy Program and how your purchase of a Poppy Kit helps build the new National World War I Memorial in Washington, D.C., while also helping to raise money for your Post.

Link: ww1cc.org/poppy

Here is a quick video that can help people understand why it is so important that we honor those who served during World War I: [youtube.com/watch?v=1_y4149mZso](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1_y4149mZso).

The red poppy is an internationally recognized symbol of veteran remembrance. Its use began in World War I and was captured in the war poem "In Flanders Fields," by Lt. Col. John McCrae.

National Veterans Service

Department Service Officer \$9 billion Challenge

Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) Service Officers recovered more than **\$9 billion** in benefits for veterans for the first time this past fiscal year, according to VA.

This year, as part of the VFW's Century of Service, VFW leaders issued a challenge to the Department Service Officers nationwide to assist as many veterans as possible who required help in filing benefits and compensation claims with the VA. VFW Service Officers met the challenge. The top 10 offices with the greatest percentage growth were:

- 1: Fort Harrison, Montana – 36.62%
- 2: Winston-Salem, North Carolina – 36.04%
- 3: Honolulu, Hawaii – 36.00%
- 4: Buffalo, New York – 35.93%
- 5: (tie): Denver, Colorado – 35.89%
- 5: (tie): Boise, Idaho – 35.89%
- 7: Reno, Nevada – 35.58%
- 8: Roanoke, Virginia – 35.49%
- 9: Anchorage, Alaska – 35.43%
- 10: Wichita, Kansas – 35.30%

All offices achieved at least 33 percent growth over the last quarter of fiscal year 2019, helping surpass the \$9 billion milestone.

VFW Service Officers are trained experts, helping veterans develop their case with ease by reviewing and applying current law, pertinent legislation, regulations, pension and death benefits, and employment and training programs. Service Officers are also prepared to present oral arguments on behalf of veterans when needed.

The VFW's global network of professional veterans' advocates should be incredibly proud to have reached this milestone in our 100th year of helping veterans. This demonstrates the hard work of our advocates who meet face-to-face with veterans every day. The founders of our humble benefits assistance program would be proud of the legacy that the VFW has built, proving that "No One Does More For Veterans."

If you know a veteran who seeks help in filing a claim, they can visit the VFW Website (vfw.org) and click on the Assistance tab to find their local service officer in the [VA Claims and Separation Benefits](#) section.

Accredited Representative of the Year Award

Official nomination criteria for the VW Accredited Representative of the Year Award will be sent out in early Jan. 2020. This award recognizes the contributions our professionally trained, accredited advocates make to the lives of veterans and their families every day. We encourage every Department to put forth a candidate. A nomination shows that Department leadership is aware of the significant contributions your program makes in your community every day.

Service Officers from Departments of New Hampshire, Rhode Island, New Mexico and Texas have earned this award since its inception four years ago. These Service Officers stood out from our nationwide cadre for not only meeting the challenge daily, but exceeding it through exemplary commitment, technical knowledge, and customer service.

National Legislative Service/Action Corps

TRICARE Open Season: TRICARE Open Season will run from Nov. 11 to Dec. 9, 2019. It is important to note that new retirees have only one year to enroll for TRICARE Prime. If they forget to enroll in TRICARE Prime, individuals are no longer going to be automatically enrolled into TRICARE Select and will have to wait for the next Open Season enrollment period. Individuals already enrolled can change their TRICARE coverage. [Learn more.](#)

Hackers Target Job-Hunting Service Members and Veterans: Service members and veterans seeking employment need to be aware of a scam circulating the web. The website, "Hire Military Heroes," prompts users to download an app that contains malicious malware that allows hackers to access a significant amount of personal information, according to cybersecurity researchers at Cisco Talos. The phony site shared a similar URL to the site "Hiring Our Heroes," an employment site the U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation launched. It is unknown at this time who may be the culprit behind the cyberattack. [Learn more.](#)