

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



BULLETIN

OCALA, FLORIDA

February 2026

“United We Stand for God, Family & Country”

Membership

BUILDING MEMBERSHIP WITH THE COMMANDER'S CHALLENGE!

As laid out in the 2025-26 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 (Jan. 1 – Mar. 31, 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.

EARLY BIRD AWARD

Congratulations to the following Posts who led their membership division as of Dec. 31, 2025. They will be awarded a \$1,000 gift certificate to the VFW Store.

<u>Division</u>	<u>Department</u>	<u>Post</u>	<u>Division</u>	<u>Department</u>	<u>Post</u>
1	Montana	1087	6	Massachusetts	2017
1	Maryland	2632	6	Kentucky	5480
2	Europe	9334	7	Pennsylvania	1620
2	West Virginia	6450	7	Arkansas	4683
3	Pennsylvania	5954	8	Kentucky	6182
3	Florida	4412	8	Tennessee	6908
4	Wisconsin	11038	9	New York	9215
4	Ohio	1662	9	Arizona	1704
5	Iowa	738	10	Pacific Areas	12231
5	Missouri	3176	10	Alabama	5184
			11	Illinois	3510

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.

UPCOMING TRAINING

Membership Monday training webinars will be on February 9, 2026, at 7:00 PM, CDT, Topic: **"Power of Life Membership"**. All VFW and Auxiliary members are welcome to attend and engage in the interactive training by following the link on our VFW Membership Facebook page, <https://facebook.com/VFWMembership>. This training will be recorded and made available through the *Training & Support* section of vfw.org following the presentation. We urge you to pass along this information to all who would be interested.

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:

Levels	
Gold-	\$1,200.00
Silver-	\$800.00
Bronze-	\$400.00

Annual Payouts:

	Posts	Departments	National
	\$18.00	\$18.00	\$18.00
	\$12.00	\$12.00	\$12.00
	\$6.00	\$6.00	\$6.00

What will your Legacy be?

VFW National Convention

The 127th National Convention housing will open, **Wednesday, March 18, 2026**. Housing reservation information will be located on the convention website accessed through the main VFW website at vfw.org/Convention. The convention website will also have general convention information including the registration form, tentative agenda, and links to other convention related information for Reno, Nevada – July 24-29, 2026.

CONVENTION REGISTRATION – Section 222 of the Manual of Procedure states each Post will pay, in advance, a National Convention registration fee of twenty-five dollars (\$25) which shall entitle the Post to a packet of convention information and materials, and one identified registered delegate for the VFW National Convention. Each additional delegate attending the National Convention will pay a ten-dollar (\$10) delegate fee provided the Post has paid the mandated \$25 advance registration fee. All advance registrations should be mailed to the VFW National Headquarters, 406 W. 34th Street, Kansas City, MO 64111. ATTN: Convention Registration. Quartermasters may also register delegates utilizing the online membership system (OMS).

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.*

2026 VFW National Veterans Service (NVS) Annual Campaign – The 2026 NVS Annual Campaign is well underway, and we still need your support to make a meaningful impact on the lives of America's veterans. This campaign is crucial for assisting veterans from all generations, particularly those now home from the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, in accessing the benefits they rightfully deserve. Your donations ensure the VFW's national force of highly trained and accredited service officers is at the ready to help America's veterans navigate the complicated VA system.

Early in January, VFW members received the 2026 “Help Our Heroes” Member Survey to fill out and return. Then, later in January, we followed up with a “Special Veterans Petition” urging you to sign the petitions to the President, Senate Majority Leader and Speaker of the House letting them know that VFW members oppose any legislative measures that would limit or cut the full VA benefits our veterans have rightfully earned, and calling on them to keep the promises made to veterans when they answered the call to serve. Your valuable input, gathered through this survey and your signatures on the petitions, will play a crucial role in shaping our ongoing efforts to support veterans’ initiatives when delivering testimony to Congress.

2026 Label and Certificate of Appreciation – If you haven’t already received it, anticipate the arrival of the 2026 Label and Certificate of Appreciation from the VFW. Alongside these tokens of gratitude, you will find a special Memorial Day “American Hero” Card.

We kindly request you sign and promptly return the card so we may deliver them to fellow service members and hospitalized veterans this Memorial Day. While Memorial Day is a day of remembrance for those lost in battle, we also want to ensure we can provide warmth and solace to our fellow service members and hospitalized veterans. The act of receiving a Thank You card from a fellow veteran resonates deeply with those who have served.

Your gesture demonstrates that they are remembered and cared for by their comrades, providing a meaningful connection during a time of reflection. In honor of your fellow veterans navigating the long road to recovery from battle injuries, we invite you to make a donation. Your generosity directly contributes to the strength and availability of programs that provide crucial support for veterans across *your Department*.

Your 2024 Year-End Tax Receipt Is On Its Way! – In late January, we mailed the 2025 Year-End Tax Receipts to VFW members who have requested to receive one at the end of the year.

Give Through Your IRA and Get Income for Life – Beyond providing income, your IRA can offer tax deductions on your contributions as well as tax-free account growth. The downside? You must pay taxes when you make a withdrawal. It stings more once you turn 73 and must start making the required minimum distributions. Even leaving the rest of your IRA to your loved ones won’t take the taxes away. But the VFW has good news for you. You can use your IRA to make an impact with the VFW without losing any of your money to taxes. To find out more about it, visit <https://vfw.planmylegacy.org/tax-free-power-of-ira>. To speak with a Planned Giving officer, call 816.968.1119 or send an email to 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 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!

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

The 2026 Washington Conference kicks off March 1, and if you’re joining us in our nation’s capitol, be on the lookout for the latest version of the VFW Events app in the [Apple App Store](#) or the [Google Play Store](#).

Not able to join us in D.C.? Watch the livestream of the Chief’s testimony on March 3 at vfw.org/VFWDC2026.

Stay up to date with all of the action throughout the conference by following #VFWDC2026 on [Facebook](#), [X](#) and [Instagram](#).

Veterans & Military Support Programs

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 2025-26 program year. Funds have been depleted. If you have any questions, comments, or concerns, please contact us at M.A.P@vfw.org or 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](https://www.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.

Nominations for this award and the judging at Post, District and Department level, if applicable, should be completed.

After Department judging, each Department could have selected one candidate from each category and submitted their winners to VFW National Headquarters by Feb. 1. The Department Teacher winners that are received at National Headquarters will be entered in the National judging and receive a VFW National citation for both the winning teacher and their school.

A completed nomination should consist of a completed official entry form with a one-page resume as a minimum or up to five-pages, including the resume, as a maximum of documentation of their teaching experience, (for example: resume, references, news articles, etc.) and a head-and-shoulder photo of themselves, if available at the time.

NOTE: The VFW National Programs Department requires the Department Headquarters to submit their winners via the Dashboard. If you have questions regarding any of the above, please email mspencer@vfw.org or call 816.756.3390 and ask for extension 6287.

VFW NATIONAL PUBLIC SERVANT AWARDS. Judging at all levels should have been completed at this time or the near future. Once completed, VFW Departments may submit their five winning nominees, if available, (one for each career area) to the VFW Programs office, by completing their submission via the Dashboard by the deadline of Feb. 1.

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: 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.

VOICE OF DEMOCRACY®AND PATRIOT'S PEN NATIONAL AWARDS. Every Voice of Democracy and Patriot's Pen first place Department winner will receive a National scholarship or award. The amount for the Voice of Democracy National Awards now totals \$174,500, with the top three awards raised to \$35,000, \$21,000 and \$15,000. The Patriot's Pen National Awards total is \$55,000.

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.

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

Every month brings expenses—mortgage or rent, utilities, car payments, groceries, loans, tuition, streaming services and more. It often feels like the bills never stop. But have you ever considered how your family would manage these costs if something happened to you?

Life insurance can help ease that worry. With plans designed to provide financial protection at every stage of life, you can take steps today to safeguard the people who matter most. Whether you're working or enjoying retirement, there are options available to fit your needs.

Protecting your loved ones starts with learning about your choices. Explore life insurance plans that can help cover essential expenses and give your family peace of mind.

For more information on life insurance plan options, [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 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 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.

National Veterans Service

ACCREDITED SERVICE OFFICER PROFICIENCY TRAINING, ANNAPOLIS, MD

National Veterans Service will conduct a hybrid training conference for VFW accredited representatives April 26-29, 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 to those who are unable to attend in person. Formal notification to students required to participate in these conferences will soon be sent out. Please address questions relating to accredited service officer training to Keith Garrison, Assistant Director, Training, NVS, at kgarrison@vfw.org.

VA EDUCATION SERVICE REQUIREMENT FOR MONTHLY VERIFICATION OF CHAPTER 35 ENROLLMENT

Starting at the end of January 2026, Chapter 35 beneficiaries are required to verify their enrollment each month to receive their benefit payments. A beneficiary must verify their enrollment for VA to begin processing the monthly benefit. Once verified, payment processing can take five to seven calendar days. This monthly enrollment verification requirement will be a major change for many Chapter 35 beneficiaries. Therefore, VA has implemented a comprehensive communication strategy to notify beneficiaries of this requirement and help prepare them for the new process. This includes targeted messaging asking beneficiaries to review and, if necessary, update their contact information (email, cell phone and mailing address) in their VA profile. Beneficiaries are also being provided with information about the enrollment verification process to help them understand the requirement and learn about the monthly enrollment verification options that will be available to them.

VA is also working with schools and training providers to provide them with timely updates about forthcoming enrollment verification requirements for Chapter 35 beneficiaries.

Enrollment verification is required by statute and requires a beneficiary to verify with VA their continued attendance each month in order to continue to receive benefit payments. A beneficiary can verify their enrollment through text, email, online, through the Ask VA system, or by calling the Education Call Center at 888.442.4551

National Legislative Service/Action Corps

VFW Launches New Targeted Action Alert

The VFW has launched a new action alert urging Congress to advance the Major Richard Star Act. This legislation that would correct a long-standing injustice affecting combat-disabled veterans whose earned retirement pay is currently offset by VA disability compensation. Unlike traditional alerts, this one uses a dynamic, targeted approach, delivering a tailored message to each member of Congress based on their role and position in the legislative process. This “living” alert will evolve as the bill moves forward, ensuring lawmakers continue to hear directly from those who are affected. Veterans and supporters are encouraged to [take action](#) and make their voices heard at this critical moment.

VFW-Supported Bill Signed into Law

H.R.983, Montgomery GI Bill Selected Reserves Tuition Fairness Act of 2025, is now [Public Law 119-55](#). Introduced by Rep. Van Orden (WI-3), this bill was approved by the House without objection and passed the Senate by unanimous consent. It requires VA to disapprove courses provided by educational institutions that charge higher than in-state tuition for individuals utilizing the Montgomery GI Bill-Selected Reserve benefits while living in the state where the education is located, regardless of the individual’s state of residence. The VFW applauds the passage of this legislation.

Feb. 15 is the deadline for kilt pre-orders!

The VFW has teamed up with USA Kilts to provide kilts and accessories (in men's and women's styles) using the official VFW tartan registered with the National Records of Scotland.

We MUST meet a minimum of fabric usage during the pre-sale ending Feb. 15 to move forward with all orders. If we meet the minimum, delivery is anticipated in June. To shop the selection, click <https://www.usakilts.com/vfw.html>.

July 4, 2026, marks the 250th anniversary of the United States. Celebrate with apparel and accessories from the VFW Store. Click <https://www.vfwstore.org/searchresults?q=250th> to shop.

