

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



BULLETIN

OCALA, FLORIDA

January 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 be continue issuing quarterly challenges to our Posts and rewarding those who lead their divisions in recruiting as well as Life Member upgrades. Every quarter (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.

Congratulations to those Posts who are leading the charge towards membership success!

MEMBERSHIP GOALS

As we go 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 Jan. 12, 2026, at 7:00 PM, CDT, Topic: **"IDENTIFYING RECRUITING OPPORTUNITIES."** 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:

Annual Payouts:

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

What will your Legacy be?

VFW Foundation

The VFW Foundation has received a prestigious \$3 million grant from Lilly Endowment Inc. to strengthen organizational capacity and better serve veterans, service members, and their families. Over the next three years, the grant will expand the Foundation's reach and visibility while supporting improvements in Personnel, Marketing & Public Relations, and Technology.

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

VFW National Convention

The 127th National Convention housing will open, **Tuesday, March 17, 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 25-29, 2026.

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 Kick Off – The NVS Annual Campaign is underway, and we urgently 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 returning from the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, in accessing the benefits they rightfully deserve.

Your donation ensures 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.

VFW members will receive the 2026 "Help Our Heroes" Member Survey to fill out and return. Your valuable input, gathered through this survey, will play a crucial role in shaping our ongoing efforts to support veterans' initiatives when delivering testimony to Congress. There are other special thank you gifts enclosed in the package as a thank you for your ongoing support of the VFW NVS program.

2026 Label and Certificate of Appreciation – In late January, we will be mailing your 2026 VFW Label and Certificate of Appreciation. Included with these tokens of gratitude is a special Memorial Day *American Hero* Card. We kindly ask that you sign and promptly return the card. Your participation has the power to bring comfort, encouragement and hope to fellow service members and hospitalized veterans. Our goal is to deliver *American Hero* Cards to as many veterans and service members as possible across this great nation by Memorial Day.

Receiving a simple “thank you” from a fellow veteran carries profound meaning. It serves as a reminder that they are remembered, valued, and supported by those who truly understand their service – offering a powerful connection during a time of difficulty or recovery.

In honor of your fellow veterans who are navigating the long road to recovery from battle-related injuries, we invite you to consider making a donation. Your generosity helps ensure the continued strength and availability of vital programs that provide critical support to veterans throughout your Department.

Your 2025 Year-End Tax Receipt Is On Its Way! – Late January we will be mailing the 2025 Year-End Tax Receipts to VFW members who have requested to receive one at the end of the year.

Keep? Shred? Share? What to do With Personal Papers – Chances are you use a lot less paper than before. Apps and paperless options have become normal. But when it comes to important documents, having hard or paper copies will always be the best choice. Read more about how you can keep those important documents organized here: <https://vfw.planmylegacy.org/keep-shred-share>.

Need more information on how to keep your documents organized and up to date, like your estate plans? Contact the Planned Giving Office at 816.968.1119 or by email 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 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

VFW Day of Service 2026 kicks off May 2 — are you ready to make a difference?

We're in our fifth year of VFW Day of Service events taking place across the nation and around the world showcasing veterans banding together to make a difference in their communities.

More than 300 events are already confirmed, so if you haven't confirmed your 2026 participation yet, what are you waiting for? [Signing up](#) is easy and we have plenty of [great ideas and free resources](#) to help your Post execute a successful community service event. Plus, hosting a Day of Service event is a requirement to become an All-American Post. There's no better time than right now to get the ball rolling and start planning your event.

Events are being hosted throughout the entire month of May, and we can't wait to see how your event comes together!

[Sign up for Day of Service 2026 today!](#)

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 2025-2026 program year. Funds have been depleted. If you have any questions, comments, or concerns, please contact us at M.A.P@vfw.org – 816.756.3390 ext. 6287.

VFW's "Sport Clips Help A Hero Scholarship"

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

All-American Eligibility

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

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

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

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

VMS Program Tools

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

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

VFW Programs

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

PROGRAMS DASHBOARD TOOL. (NOTE: Previously ALL-AMERICAN DASHBOARD) Please encourage Posts to read the 2025-26 Membership program. Military Appreciation Program grants have been launched to show Departments and Posts how much in grant assistance has been received from National HQs to supplement the Financial Assistance for Service Members financial grants & VFW Sport Clips Help a Hero scholarship statistics. The information charts reside in the KPI tools section.

FLY THE FLAG ON MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR.’S BIRTHDAY. The U.S. federal flag code has been amended by Congress and signed by the president to add Martin Luther King, Jr. Day to the list of days on which the flag should be displayed. His birthday is observed on the third Monday in January; therefore, the flag should be flown on that day. To purchase a U.S. flag from the VFW Store, go to <https://www.vfwstore.org/category/flags/usflags>.

Many communities are conducting community service projects that day. It is highly suggested that all members support this day of service.

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 and District level, if applicable, should be completed at this time and their winners submitted to their VFW Department Headquarters for their judging by Jan. 1.

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.

The corresponding deadlines for the next level of judging are as follows: Dec. 15, 2025, for completion of District judging, if applicable, and their winners forwarded to their Department Headquarters prior to Jan. 1, 2026; and Feb. 1, 2026, for completion of Department judging and their winners forwarded to National Headquarters. Each level may submit one candidate, in each grade category, on to the next level.

NOTE: The VFW National Programs Department requires the Department Headquarters to submit their winners via Formstack, using the link the Department Adjutants/Quartermasters recently received. For each Department winner, they will need to complete a “VFW Department Teacher Award Citation Request Form” located on Formstack, then download the winners’ entry documentation. Once they hit submit, it will arrive at National Headquarters. If you have questions regarding any of the above, please email mspencer@vfw.org or call 816.756.3390 and ask for extension 6287.

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.

VOICE OF DEMOCRACY AND PATRIOT'S PEN DEPARTMENT DEADLINE REMINDER. The deadline for submitting the Voice of Democracy and Patriot's Pen winner packets to National Headquarters is Jan. 15, 2026 (even if they have not been personally notified, they are the winner).

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 \$172,000, with the top three awards raised to \$35,000, \$21,000, and \$15,000. The Patriot's Pen National Awards total is \$55,000.

VFW NATIONAL PUBLIC SERVANT AWARDS. Judging at Post level should have been completed at this time or in the near future. VFW Post Safety Chairperson's may submit up to five winning nominees' documentation (one for each career area) to their Department Headquarters for judging no later than Jan. 1.

Once judging has been completed, Departments may submit their five winning nominees, if available, (one for each career area) to the VFW Programs office, by completing the “VFW Department Public Servant Award Request Form” through Formstack. VFW Programs staff has emailed the form link to Department Adjutants/Quartermasters prior to the deadline of Feb. 1.

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.

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.

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

How Pet insurance helps you save

Pet insurance helps ease the financial burden by covering both routine and unexpected medical needs for your pets.

Depending on your policy, coverage may include:

- Accidents and injuries, like poisons and sprains
- Serious and chronic illnesses, like cancer, diabetes, and allergies
- Prescription medicine
- Common illnesses, like vomiting and diarrhea
- Hereditary conditions, like hip dysplasia and blood disorders
- Testing and diagnostics, like ultrasounds and blood tests
- Procedures, like surgeries and chemotherapy
- Holistic and alternative methods, like acupuncture
- Wellness procedures, like vaccinations and spay/neuter

[Pet insurance makes it easier to care for your furry friends](#) without sacrificing financial stability. Whether your pet is young or aging, insurance helps ensure they get the care they need — and you get peace of mind.

For more information, contact the **VFW Member Benefits Department** at **833.VFW.VETS (833.839.8387)**, **option 2**.

“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 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

CHANGE OF DATES FOR NEWLY ACCREDITED REPRESENTATIVE VIRTUAL BASIC TRAINING

NVS Virtual Basic Accredited Representative Training which had been scheduled for Jan. 26-30, 2026, will now be held **Jan. 20-28, 2026**.

This training is for newly accredited representatives who have not yet received official Basic training from NVS. This conference will be a hybrid conference, with attendees receiving video training using the VFW Online Learning Portal as well as daily live instruction using Zoom teleconferencing software.

If you have questions regarding the NVS accredited representative training program, please contact Chris Macinkowicz, NVS Deputy Director at cmacinkowicz@vfw.org or Keith Garrison, NVS Assistant Director Training, at kgarrison@vfw.org.

National Legislative Service/Action Corps

VFW 2026 Priority Goals

The 119th Congress is now in its second session, and there is still much work to be done. The [VFW 2026 Priority Goals](#) include many issues concerning benefits and services for veterans, service members, and their families. The VFW will continue to advocate diligently to ensure members of Congress and the Departments of Veterans Affairs, Defense and Labor provide the resources and care our nation's veterans have earned and deserve.

VFW Store

Do you wear a kilt for ceremonial functions? VFW tartan patterned kilts are coming!

The VFW has teamed up with USA Kilts to provide kilts and accessories using the official VFW tartan registered with the National Records of Scotland.

The VFW Store will hold a limited-time pre-sale, now thru Feb. 15, for a variety of products for men and women using the VFW tartan.

We MUST meet a minimum of fabric usage during the pre-sale 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.