

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



BULLETIN

Ocala, Florida

March 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.

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 March 2, 2026, at 7:00 PM, CDT, Topic: "The Membership Toolbox." 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?

The VFW Foundation is pleased to announce that Jason Couch has joined our team as the new Grants Manager. Jason returns to the VFW Foundation after a nearly two-year absence, bringing with him a wealth of experience and a deep understanding of our mission. Many of you have already met Jason through his numerous grant workshops at VFW events and the VFW National Convention. Welcome back, Jason!

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.*

Soon to Arrive – Spring Edition All-Occasion Cards – This spring, the VFW is mailing the 2026 Special Edition All-Occasion Card Collection and other gifts in recognition of your commitment to the VFW and our nation's struggling veterans of all generations. More importantly, there is a special Independence Day card included in the package. Please sign and return it right away so that we can deliver your message of gratitude to one of America's service members or hospitalized veterans in time for Independence Day. It means so much to them to know their fellow veterans remember and care.

Right now, thousands of veterans are living with the physical and mental trauma of war. The physical wounds can be seen, but what about those veterans who suffer in silence? There are thousands of veterans who carry the invisible wounds of war, such as Traumatic Brain Injury and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder.

The VFW wants to be sure when veterans from all wars and conflicts turn to us for assistance, we have the programs available for them. When you send back the signed card, please send a donation in honor of your fellow veterans who now face a long road to recovery from injuries sustained in battle. Your gift will mean that these programs stay available and strong for all veterans, right in *your* Department.

2026 Voice of Democracy® Winners – It’s almost time to announce the 2026 Voice of Democracy National Winner. We hope you will take the opportunity to [listen to the essay](#) given by your state winner as well as the winners from other states. The grand prize winner will be announced in April during the winner’s trip to the Founding Forward Spirit of America. If you are not currently a member of the VFW Friends of Freedom, you can sign up to receive these important alerts at vfw.org.

Tax Law Changes for 2026: What They Mean for Your Giving – New tax rules have been implemented this year that may determine how you choose to give to the VFW and other organizations you support. Here is what you need to know: <https://vfw.planmylegacy.org/2026-tax-law-changes>.

Contact the VFW Planned Giving Office at 816.968.1119 or by email at plannedgiving@vfw.org to help make the most of your giving.

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 and VFW Auxiliary members are on Capitol Hill this week for the 2026 VFW Legislative Conference. If you’re joining us on The Hill be prepared by downloading the updated VFW Events app today in the [Apple App Store](#) or the [Google Play Store](#).

Not able to join us in D.C.? Watch the livestream Tuesday, March 3 at 10:00 a.m. EST for VFW National Commander Carol Whitmore’s testimony before a joint session of the House and Senate Veterans’ Affairs committees at vfw.org/VFWDC2026.

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

VFW Financial Assistance for Service Members

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

Military Appreciation Program (MAP) Grant Funds

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

VFW’s “Sport Clips Help A Hero Scholarship”

The 2026 Fall Semester opened Jan. 1, 2026, and runs through 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!

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 the Post, District and Department level (if applicable) are completed. The Department Teacher winners that are received at National Headquarters will receive a VFW National citation for both the winning teacher and their school in each grade category. The National Teacher Award winners will be announced soon.

Order the Citizenship Education Teacher Recognition Citation from VFW Store, product #4320, <https://www.vfwstore.org/searchresults?q=4320>. Present to all teachers nominated at all levels for the national award.

VFW NATIONAL PUBLIC SERVANT AWARDS. Judging at all levels should have been completed at this time. VFW Departments should have already submitted their nominees 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 <https://www.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: <https://www.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. 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

Protect Your Identity: Essential Steps from ID Resolve

Identity theft experts recommend 24/7 vigilance through comprehensive monitoring and proactive measures:

Monitor Actively:

- Use ongoing credit monitoring that sends instant alerts when suspicious activity occurs
- Check if your email appeared in data breaches and get specific remediation recommendations

Strengthen Your Defenses:

- Use credit freeze assistance to prevent new accounts being opened in your name
- Enable biometric multifactor authentication and install digital security software

Protect Your Privacy:

- Use opt-out services to stop pre-approved credit mailings and marketing calls that thieves exploit
- Research suspicious offers through scam assessment services before responding

With identity theft striking every two seconds, these proactive steps are essential safeguards. ID Resolve can help protect your money, time, and financial reputation by springing into action at the first sign of identity theft.

To learn more, [click here](#) or call 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 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

NOMINATIONS ARE NOW BEING ACCEPTED FOR THE JOHN A. BIEDRZYCKI ACCREDITED SERVICE REPRESENTATIVE OF THE YEAR AWARD 2025-2026

The importance of the work done by VFW accredited service representatives cannot be overstated as they are essential to the continued well-being of our nation's veterans and their families. Our accredited representatives counsel veterans, complete paperwork, and submit VA claims for earned entitlements and benefits.

Every Department should strive to put forth a candidate for the **2025-26 John A. Biedrzycki Accredited Service Representative of the Year Award**. A nomination shows that Department leaders are aware of the significant contributions your staff and your program make in your community every day.

ELIGIBILITY:

Eligible nominees include:

- Department Service Officers
- Assistant Department Service Officers
- Claims Consultants/Representative/Analysts/Reviewers
- Veterans Service Officers/Representatives

Individuals NOT eligible for this award are:

- VFW National Staff
- VFW Contractors
- VFW accredited representatives whose primary employer is other than the VFW or a State veterans' agency
- Previous recipients of the Accredited Service Representative of the Year Award
- Individuals who do not have VFW accreditation

SELECTION CRITERIA:

Nominees for the annual award must have demonstrated exceptional efforts in assisting veterans and their families during the 12 months preceding the April 30, deadline.

A brief summary of no more than two pages is to be submitted which explains the who, what, when, where, why, and how the nominee's efforts are considered exemplary.

Suggested items for consideration (but not limited to)

- Number of individuals with VFW POAs assisted.
- Community outreach conducted.
- Examples of excellent customer service provided.

- Meticulous use of Tyler Veterans Benefits (TVB) or another electronic claims processing system (specify system).
- Submission of TIMELY monthly reports (if located in a VA regional office).
- Number of VFW members recruited.

AWARDS:

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

Past winners of this award have come from the Departments of New Hampshire, Rhode Island, New Mexico, Texas, Utah, Washington, Minnesota, Idaho, Kentucky, and Georgia. These service officers stood out from our worldwide cadre for not only meeting the challenge daily, but exceeding it through exemplary commitment, technical knowledge, and customer service.

Nominations should be sent to the Director, VFW National Veterans Service, by email to taldana@vfw.org or by fax at 202.547.3196.

Nominations must be received not later than April 30, 2026.

National Legislative Service/Action Corps

The VFW on Capitol Hill

Hundreds of VFW members will be in Washington, D.C., March 1-5, for the 2026 VFW Washington Conference. Members from each Department will visit their congressional offices to present the VFW's [2026 Priority Goals and talking points](#). VFW National Commander Carol Whitmore will testify on behalf of our organization before a joint session of the Senate and House Committees on Veterans' Affairs on Tuesday, March 3. We will continue to forge ahead with our advocacy efforts in the 119th Congress to ensure our nation's veterans, service members, and their families receive the benefits and services they have earned and deserve.

VFW Store

Gear that moves with the mission!

Engineered for warriors who move with purpose, the new tactical woobie hoodies from the VFW Store deliver warmth, mobility, and a bold tactical edge.

Inspired by the iconic poncho liner and built for real-world performance, this hoodie keeps you agile and mission-ready — whether you're on duty, in the field, or locking in for the day's grind. Gear up. Lock in. Own every mission.

Features include:

- * Large tactical pockets on both sleeves offer plenty of room for customization mix and match your favorite patches
- * Shell: 100% polyester woven for durability and structure
- * Lining: 100% polyester for lightweight warmth
- * Rib neck patch for easy on/off when wearing a woven shell
- * Sleeve patch pockets for small essentials
- * Rib cuffs and bottom band for a secure, comfortable fit
- * Lined hood with drawcord for adjustable coverage
- * Kangaroo pocket for warmth and utility

Order yours today! Available in green and camo, sizes small through 3XL. Click [vfwstore.org/category/apparel/tactical](https://www.vfwstore.org/category/apparel/tactical).

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.