

## VFW Day

### (Greetings)

**In 1899 the American Veterans of Foreign Service and the National Society of the Army of the Philippines joined in the common cause of serving the needs of America's veterans and their families. At the time of their founding, there was no veterans administration, no one to ensure our troops were taken care of when their service was over. Men returning from battle were given a paltry fifteen dollars discharge pay and a simple goodbye salute. Adjusting to life and finding necessary medical care after the war sat on their shoulders alone. Those who had fought during the Spanish-American War and returned home were ignored and forgotten.**

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**Together, those two organizations finally provided a voice for America's veterans, and in 1913 that voice gained strength and influence when they came together to form one organization.**

**The following year on August 1, 1914, ... and by happenchance, on the day World War One began ... a new name for this combined veterans' advocacy organization – The Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States – was officially adopted.**

**Even though the organization was in its infancy, the VFW immediately got to work affecting important change for the troops who served in World War One. Early in that war, the VFW gained congressional passage of legislation providing war risk insurance for disabled veterans and for**

**the widows and children of men killed in combat. Shortly thereafter, another law called for by the VFW passed — one that provided training for disabled veterans.**

**The post-World War One years were trying times for many veterans. They came home to an economy where prices were climbing, production was declining, and jobs were scarce.**

**The VFW addressed the needs of these veterans when it called upon the federal government to provide bonuses to them and assistance to those who wanted to buy homes or farms. It has even been said that the basis of all future veterans' legislation was laid in the resolutions drawn up at the VFW's first post-war convention.**

**The battle for the World War One bonus kicked off in May of 1919 and was fought in the streets of America and in the halls of Congress. And at times that battle went beyond words and demonstrations – it went to violence, bloodshed and death. It took the VFW nearly 20 years, but we didn't rest until veterans were finally able to celebrate the long sought victory of the bonus battle.**

**The VFW quickly rose to become the voice of America's veterans, a voice raised in protest over neglect and indifference, and in support of care and concern. Not only did the VFW rally the veterans of America, it spoke to the conscience of America by reminding them that there is a high cost to freedom.**

**Although it's been more than 120 years since our beginning, many of the programs established during those years of strife and turmoil remain to this day: The VFW's National Veterans Service, National Legislative Service, our "Buddy" Poppy program, and the VFW National Home.**

**In 1929, the VFW stood strong with 77,000 members. By 1931 that figure had risen to 138,620. It was that same year when the VFW won a three-year campaign to have the Star-Spangled Banner adopted as our national anthem.**

**The VFW received its congressional charter in May of 1936, which allowed us to make presentations to Congress, and to represent veterans before other governmental agencies.**

**Although December 7, 1941, caught us by surprise, the VFW acted quickly. While the U.S. jumped into a war that raged around the world, here at home the VFW submitted a 10-point veterans program. It asked for educational aid, VA hospital care, continuation of military pay for six months after discharge, a cost of living adjustment for compensation, veterans preference in federal employment, extra compensation for veterans disabled overseas, veterans preference in public employment, expansion of the VA, expansion of the VA employment service, and VA jurisdiction over all veterans matters.**

**One of the items we fought hardest for was the G.I. Bill, the legislation which allowed millions of veterans to attend college free of charge, and go on to fulfill productive lives.**

**In 1945 we may have won the world war, but because of the VFW's unyielding effort, World War Two veterans received a better benefits program than any previous generation of veteran ever had before.**

**As soon as the fighting broke out in Korea, the VFW again went to the steps of Congress to ask that the benefits won for World War Two veterans be extended to Korean War vets. We were determined to ensure their care before Congress forgot about them. We won that battle. And years later, we unsparingly gave funds needed to build a memorial in honor of those who served and to those who died in Korea.**

**America's involvement in Vietnam bred controversy and bitterness, but the VFW recognized the value and**

**sacrifice of those who were called upon to fight that unpopular war and vigorously advocated on their behalf.**

**The biggest battle was for recognition and compensation for Agent Orange related illness and post-traumatic stress disorder ... two landmark victories that would prove to be beneficial for every generation of veteran to come after.**

**We fought for proper care and attention for those who served in Operations Desert Storm and Desert Shield. Despite winning a decisive victory, no one could explain the illnesses many of our Gulf War veterans suffered from. The VFW demanded answers and the government responded by taking action.**



**And just this August, we were standing proud next to the president as the SFC Heath Robinson Honoring Our Promise to Address Comprehensive Toxics Act of 2022 was signed into law. The comprehensive bill expands health care for generations of veterans who up until recently had the arduous task of proving their conditions or illness as a result of service-connected exposure to toxic substances or environments, such as the burn pits many post-9/11 veterans were exposed to during deployments to Iraq and Afghanistan. The bill enacts VA provisions for 23 presumptive conditions for rare respiratory diseases and cancers, and creates a framework for the establishment of future presumptions of service connection related to toxic exposure.**

**Today, as in previous decades, you will find the VFW adamant and just as persistent while engaging Congress whenever veterans' benefits are threatened. And we remain steadfast in doing all that we can to improve the quality of life for today's service members, veterans and their families.**

**While the VFW's legislative influence is vast and well known, the effect the VFW has had on the lives of America's heroes, and their families extends far beyond its advocacy efforts. Its programs and services continue to provide America's heroes and their families with the vital support they need.**

**From providing more than \$12.1 million to more than 10,800 veteran and military families to aid with basic life needs in times of crisis and more than \$9.2 million in college**

**scholarships for student veterans, to its members  
volunteering 10.3 million hours of time annually to their  
local communities, the VFW and its Auxiliary continue to  
act as pillars of support in communities across America and  
abroad.**

**Through the years the VFW has made a huge difference  
in the lives of so many, and on September 29 ... 123 years  
after its foundation ... the VFW remains a dedicated and  
staunch advocate for America's veterans, service members  
and their families ... still operating with the same mission it  
was founded upon — existing to care for those who selflessly  
fought and sacrificed to protect the American way of life.**

**-VFW-**