

NATIONAL COUNCIL OF ADMINISTRATION
WEEKLY UPDATE



Sept. 15, 2023

Greetings,

We hope you enjoy this week's National Council Weekly Update on the pertinent happenings of your VFW departments.

From the Adjutant General

This last week VFW Commander-in-Chief Duane Sarmiento, Sr. Vice Al Lipphardt, Jr. Vice Carol Whitmore, Quartermaster General Marc Garduno, and myself along with each Department's Legislative Committee had a very successful time in Washington, D.C., meeting with elected representatives about several key priorities including active-duty Transition Assistance Programs, Claim Sharks, and Veteran Suicide. Many thanks to our Washington, D.C., Legislative Services staff led by Legislative Director Pat Murray for the many hours of advance work they did to make this event successful.

At the same time Department Service Officers met in Annapolis, Maryland, for a weeklong initial and advanced skill training that helps ensure VFW Accredited Service Officers have the best training in helping support veterans with their claims. I think we can all agree that our Service Officers help change lives for the better for the tens of thousands of veterans they assist with no cost to the veteran. Thanks goes out to our Veterans Service staff led by Director Mike Figlioli for the hours they spent making this event the success it was.

Today is POW/MIA Day and Section 223 of our Bylaws and Ritual calls on us to Commemorate this day each year. The National Headquarters will be conducting a ceremony to recognize and honor American service members held as prisoners of war and those who are still missing in action.

I would like to remind all Commands that the minimum membership goal this year is 102%. Your national membership department stands ready to assist you with any questions or resources you have or need. We already have several Posts that have reached this goal and congratulations to them for setting the example. The main reason people don't join is they have not been asked, the reason they may leave is that they are not asked to be involved.

As a reminder we will have several issues of the *VFW* magazine that will be Digital print only starting in 2024, unless you contact National and specifically request a printed copy of the digital issue.

Dan West
Adjutant General

Legal Counsel

- In February, the VFW filed an Amicus Curiae brief to the Seventh Circuit Court of Appeals in support of claimants seeking relief from 3M for defective ear protection. 3M had tried to shift the blame to its subsidiary Aearo Technologies, who it said was responsible for the defective earplugs and who had filed Chapter 11 bankruptcy, to avoid paying claimants. In August, 3M settled for \$6.01 billion, consisting of \$5 billion in cash and \$1 billion in 3M stock. Payments will be made between 2023 and 2029. The bankruptcy appeal is being held in abeyance pending finalization of the settlement. It is estimated that approximately 240,000 military service members or veterans will be eligible to receive part of the settlement.
- The Justice Department and the Department of the Navy have announced an “Elective Option” for those filing claims under the Camp Lejeune Justice Act (CLJA) of 2022. The Elective Option is a potential settlement process based on diagnosis, time spent exposed to Camp Lejeune contaminated water, and if the claim involved death. There are important limitations to be mindful of for anyone interested in pursuing the Elective Option, including the latency period and limits on compensation for more than one diagnosis. Additionally, the severity of any illness is not a factor in reaching a settlement under the Elective Option. Settlements range from \$100,000 to \$450,000, based on duration of exposure and type of illness. An additional amount of \$100,000 will be offered if the exposure resulted in death. There will not be an offset for VA disability benefits or VA medical care, but the offset may apply to other federal benefits. For more information, see <https://www.justice.gov/opa/pr/justice-department-and-department-navy-announce-voluntary-elective-option-more-efficient>.

While the Elective Option may provide immediate relief for some, those seeking relief under the CLJA should consider all their options before making a decision. Consult with competent legal counsel to determine what is the best course of action for you. If you are in need of counsel, the VFW has entrusted two law firms for CLJA claims: Bergmann and Moore, LLC, and Baird Mandalas Brockstedt & Frederico, LLC. <https://www.vfw.org/camplejeunehelp>.

Contact: VFW General Counsel John Muckelbauer, JMuckelbauer@vfw.org.

Development

This week’s Development Campaigns are listed below:

- Sept. 11 Appeal:
 - o September acquisition wallet tool with cards and check.
- Sept. 13 Appeals:
 - o September sustainer invite email #1 to all Friends of Freedom.
 - o September dormant reengagement email #1 to all Friends of Freedom.
- Sept. 16 Appeal:
 - o Partners in Patriotism sustainer invite #1 to all member and nonmember donors.

Contact: VFW Development Director Kelly Jones, KellyJones@vfw.org.

Human Resources

- Positions Actively Recruiting For:
 - o Director, Administrative Operations – K.C. Office.
 - o Member Services Advisor – K.C. Office

Contact: VFW Human Resources Director Sari Maple, SMaple@vfw.org.

Administrative Operations

- There are currently 48 Posts under suspension, one of which is new. We have processed one Post consolidation pursuant to Section 209 of the National Bylaws. The organization has 5,702 chartered Posts.
- Administrative Operations is engaged in 19 Article IX Disciplinary Actions, 13 Administrative Actions and 17 membership eligibility challenges.
- We have 18 Bylaws/Articles of Incorporation submissions in for review, eight of which are new; current turnaround time on Bylaws/Articles of Incorporation submissions is approximately 30 days.

Contact: VFW Administrative Operations Associate Director Zach Schwenk, ZSchwenk@vfw.org.

Membership

- The September Membership Monday covering the topic, “Recruiting Basics & Utilizing Post Reports,” is complete and is available at vfw.org on the Membership Recruiting and Retention page, where our other Membership Monday webinars can be found. Get an expert look and understanding of where to find basic member reports and learn how to use them. The next Membership Monday is scheduled for Oct. 9, 2023, at 2:00 p.m. CST. If you have a topic for training, we would love to hear from you! Contact us by emailing, Membership@vfw.org.
- Encourage your leaders to start planning now for those larger recruiting opportunities. We are here to help! Do you have hard chargers out developing new Posts? Call us at 888.564.6839 or email us at membership@vfw.org.
- The Membership team has regenerated our Facebook page (again!). Find and follow the Membership Facebook page at facebook.com/VFWMembership, where you’ll find a source for membership news, learning and sharing best practices.

Contact: VFW Membership Interim Director Corey Hunt, CoreyHunt@vfw.org.

Meetings and Events

- Working limited hours from home (9 a.m. to 3 p.m.) as released by doctor. During the week of Sept. 18, I will be in the office Monday, Wednesday, and Friday, as released by doctor (9 a.m. to 3 p.m.). Will review with the doctor at six-week appointment to determine when I can return to office full time.
- Taylor Engle handled details for the legislative committee meeting held in Washington, D.C., Sept. 11-15, 2023 – Rooming list, meeting resume. Worked with hotel to coordinate last minute details for meeting, e.g., room changes, cancellations, additions.
- Finalized review and coding of three major billings from the Phoenix convention – Hyatt Regency, VFW headquarters hotel, Sheraton Phoenix, and Hyatt Place (VFW staff hotel Taylor handled). Invoices were sent to accounting for payment.
- Review, coding and processing final billing for Crowne Plaza Hotel – Kansas City – Budget/Finance and Council of Administration meeting. Sent to accounting for payment on Sept. 12.
- Monday, Sept. 18 will be Taylor Engle's **first full day** in the K.C. office.
- Ongoing – working with legal on upcoming meeting contracts and addendums.

Contact: VFW Meetings and Events/Exhibits Director Vanessa Kane, CMP, CMM,
VKane@vfw.org.

VFW Foundation

- The 10th anniversary of the VFW's "Sport Clips Help A Hero Scholarship" campaign will run from Oct. 8 – Nov. 11, 2023, with over 1,800 franchised stores participating. Join the campaign and donate at www.vfw.org/2023HAH.

If you have any questions or need additional information, please contact Director of Corporate and Foundation Relations Brooke Brown, BBrown@vfw.org.

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

National Legislative Service

- VFW Remembers 9/11: This week marks the 22nd anniversary of the terrorist attacks that changed America forever. The memories of that day are still vivid and raw in our nation's heart, but the heroism that emerged from the rubble of the World Trade Center, the Pentagon, and in the air above a rural Pennsylvania field should inspire Americans for generations to come. As we remember 9/11 and the nearly 3,000 innocent lives lost that terrible day, the VFW hopes all Americans pause to reflect on those we lost and those who continue to sacrifice in the defense of freedom.

- VFW Salutes Medal of Honor Recipient: Army pilot Capt. Larry Taylor was awarded the Medal of Honor by President Joe Biden in recognition of his heroic actions to save his fellow brothers-in-arms during the Vietnam War. With little regard for his own safety, Taylor flew into enemy fire to rescue four reconnaissance team members from almost certain death. VFW Washington Office Executive Director Ryan Gallucci attended the White House ceremony to honor Taylor. [Read more.](#)
- Op-Ed Says Don't Ground Veteran Pilots: A Washington Post op-ed penned by VFW Washington Office Executive Director Ryan Gallucci explains that using VA benefits or seeking physical or mental health care should not be an automatic disqualifier for pilots. This is especially true considering the industry is woefully understaffed and looking to the veterans' community to help solve the problem. Gallucci wrote that the VFW "respects the difficult jobs our pilots do every single day and believes that the FAA has a duty to ensure the safety of millions of Americans who travel every year. If people are outright lying, they deserve scrutiny — but this is a bold accusation that does not align with how the VFW reads this [FAA] report." [Read more.](#)

Contact: VFW National Legislative Service Director Patrick Murray, PMurray@vfw.org.

National Veterans Service

- NVS Director Mike Figlioli attended the VBA Senior Leadership Symposium in Houston, Texas, to help VA chart the future state of benefits and entitlements and participated in a VSO panel.
- NVS conducted its fall Skill Level and Basic Training course in Annapolis, Maryland, for VFW accredited Service Officers. NVS also hosted nine VFW cross accredited county Service Officers as part of the Humana scholarship program in conjunction with their generous donation made at national convention.
- NVS health care staff participated in VA's Food Security Summit held in Washington, D.C., to assist veterans and their families.
- NVS staff attended the opening of the fall legislative conference to answer VA related questions and provide more detailed information for related talking points.

Contact: VFW National Veterans Service Director Michael Figlioli, MFiglioli@vfw.org.

