

March 15, 2024

Greetings,

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

From the Adjutant General

Over the last several days many Departments have received an email with a Cease-and-Desist letter from DLA Piper, a law firm representing Veterans Benefit Guide.

You may respond to the email with "This is to acknowledge receipt of your correspondence. I understand a detailed response from VFW National will be provided."

I would ask that you forward any letter or email that you receive to John Muckelbauer at JMuckelbauer@vfw.org.

Any questions please let me know.

Dan West
Adjutant General

Development

February concluded on a positive note, exceeding our monthly projection of \$3.1M by \$2M. As we transition into March, we're seeing the momentum from the previous month continue and are hopeful the projection of \$3.8M will be easily attainable.

This week's Development Campaigns are listed below:

- March 13 Appeal:
 - March engagement/petition email #1 to all Friends of Freedom.
- March 14 Appeal:
 - March spring birthday card package email reminder to nonmember direct mail package recipients.

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

Human Resources

- New Hires:
 - o Katherine Cassell has returned to the VFW and is the new Assistant Director, Veterans Health Policy in National Veterans Service in the D.C. Office.
 - o Clifton Gathers is a new Maintenance Technician in VFW Properties in the D.C. Office.
- Promotion:
 - o Keith Garrison has been promoted to Assistant Director, Training and Quality Assurance in National Veterans Service in the D.C. Office.
- Positions Actively Recruiting For:
 - o National Pre-Discharge Claims Rep – Norfolk, Virginia.
 - o National Pre-Discharge Claims Rep – Hawaii.
 - o National Pre-Discharge Rep – Joint Base Andrews, Maryland.
 - o Member Services Advisor – K.C.

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

Administrative Operations

- There are currently 53 Posts under suspension, three of which are new, three lifted suspensions, and one new and pending charter surrender. There is one processed Post consolidation pursuant to Section 209 of the National Bylaws, and one new Post charter application approved. The organization has 5,652 chartered Posts.
- Administrative Operations is engaged in 18 Article IX Disciplinary Actions, 15 Administrative Removals/Actions and 14 membership eligibility challenges.
- Currently Administrative Operations has 90 Bylaws/Articles of Incorporation submissions in for review, 32 of which are new; current turnaround time on Bylaws/Articles of Incorporation submissions is approximately 45-60 days.

Disciplinary Action Guide:

There have been recent updates to the Disciplinary Action Guide that outlines the process to successfully complete a disciplinary action. We have included information to the guide that encompasses sentencing guidelines which is located as an appendix at the end of the guide and outlines sentencing/penalty considerations, clarifications, and examples.

The guide is available on the Document Repository in the “Guide to Disciplinary Action” folder or on the VFW website behind the login under My VFW/Bylaws: Training, Forms & Templates/ Training/Training Guides & Standard Operating Procedures.

Department Inspections:

At the beginning of the 2023-2024 term, we planned for a total of 10 Department inspections. At this time a total of seven Department inspections have been completed with three scheduled and pending. All inspections will be completed by the end of April, at which time we will compile an updated list of common issues and best practices.

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact Quentin Carroll at QCarroll@vfw.org.

Election Reports:

2024-2025 Election reports have been mailed out. Per the Bylaws and Manual of Procedures, Posts should be opening nominations for the upcoming year in March and closing the nominations and electing the Post officers in April. To access the election report online; sign in to VFW.org and proceed to My VFW. Select Online Membership System (OMS), then press the drop-down menu on the left side of the screen for Election Report and select Post Election Report Filing.

The 2024-25 Election Report will be available in OMS on April 1, 2024. Please ensure when you file your Election Report for the new term that you have selected 2024-25 from the drop-down option as OMS will typically default to the current term.

NOTE: The National Bylaws and Manual of Procedure require a properly completed Election Report for the ensuing year to be submitted to Department and National Headquarters by June 1, 2024.

Contact: VFW Administrative Operations Director Quentin Carroll, QCarroll@vfw.org.

Membership

- Congratulations to the 34 Early Bird winners for this year! The Early Bird award is given to the top three Post Commanders and Quartermasters in each Division on January 1, 2024. Thank you for your continued hard work in growing and maintaining strong membership in your Posts.
- Ensure your Posts are submitting new members correctly. To ensure Posts are credited for new members, ensure Post Quartermasters are submitting new member applications correctly and promptly. This means submitting applications through OMS.
- Now is the time to plan your Post Open House, membership drive(s), and Buddy Poppy campaigns. Plan and communicate with your teams early to mitigate challenges before they arise. If you need help in this arena, call us! We will help you!
- Yes, it is true. National Membership has training resources for you. Whether it is recruiting training, or a video on how to properly complete a new member application, we have training resources for you! Check them out on vfw.org>**Membership Recruiting and Retention**.
- Need recruiting training/resources?! If you have a topic for training, we would love to hear from you! Contact us by emailing, Membership@vfw.org. Follow our Facebook Page, <https://www.facebook.com/VFWmembership>.

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

VFW Foundation

- The VFW Foundation corporate relations team secured \$32,500 in corporate sponsorships for the Washington Conference. This included gifts from T-Mobile, Oracle Health, Booz Allen Hamilton and Health Psychology Associates.
- Twisted X returned as this year's premier Voice of Democracy sponsor at \$130,000. CEO Prasad Reddy was unable to attend but sent a heartfelt video congratulating the winners and thanking the VFW and VFW Auxiliary members.
- The VFW Foundation was awarded a \$75,000 grant from Oracle Giving in support of the VFW's NVS activities.

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

National Legislative Service

- VFW National Commander Testifies Before Congress: VFW National Commander Duane Sarmiento testified before a joint hearing of the Senate and House Committees on Veterans' Affairs. The VFW delivered its top legislative priorities of cracking down on predatory claims companies, improving VA benefits data sharing for suicide prevention, including accredited claims representatives in transition assistance programs, and removing offsets from concurrent receipt policies. Sarmiento stated the VFW strongly supports the *GUARD VA Benefits Act* to reinstate penalties for charging veterans unauthorized fees for submitting VA claims, and explained that Claim Sharks are spending millions of dollars to lobby against this bill, which is stalling a federal fix. "It's distasteful that these Claim Sharks take money from veterans. But it's disgusting that they take money from survivors," Sarmiento said. [Read the testimony](#) or [watch the hearing](#), which begins at the 7:39 mark.
- Major Richard Star Act Press Conference: VFW Department of Montana Adjutant/Quartermaster Tim Peters spoke at a press conference on H.R. 1282/S. 344, *Major Richard Star Act*, alongside Sen. Jon Tester (D-MT); Rep. Gus Bilirakis (FL-12); Sen. Mike Crapo (R-ID); Tonya Star, the widow of Major Richard Star; and other veteran advocates. "Our veterans cannot afford to continue losing their full earned military retirement pay because Congress insists on saving money at their expense," said Peters. "It is time to stop talking about this bill and get it done!" With consistent and overwhelming bipartisan and bicameral support, this legislation would permit combat injured and medically retired veterans with less than 20 years of service to receive their full earned retirement pay and disability compensation without reduction. The press conference was heavily attended by VFW members from across the nation, as it coincided with the annual VFW Washington Conference.
- Representative Levin Receives VFW Congressional Award: The VFW presented its 2024 Congressional Award to Rep. Mike Levin (CA-49) for his outstanding service and years of unwavering support of veterans, service members, their families and survivors. "I am honored to present this award to such a staunch advocate for our military and veteran

communities,” said VFW National Commander Duane Sarmiento. “Representative Levin exemplifies the values of service and advocacy that we at the VFW strive to live every day. His propensity for and track record of working across the aisle to deliver results is remarkable.” Levin is a staunch proponent of the *GUARD VA Benefits Act* that would protect veterans by eliminating predatory claims practices, and is one of the VFW’s top legislative priorities.

- VFW Department of New Jersey Accepts Award: The VFW presented its 2023-2024 National Legislative Service Award to VFW Department of New Jersey. The criteria for the award includes quality reporting of legislative activity, advocacy actions taken, and resulting accomplishments. The Department was instrumental in the passage of a state law that makes it a violation of the *Consumer Fraud Act* for individuals to receive unlawful compensation for advising or assisting with veterans’ benefits. This legislation safeguards veterans from fraud and Claim Sharks. VFW National Commander Duane Sarmiento presented the award to National Legislative Committee members Bill Thomson and Luddie Austin who accepted the award on behalf of the Department of New Jersey.
- Vet the Vote: March 11-15 is National Civic Learning Week. Participate in this non-partisan event by registering to vote or checking your voter registration status. The program also provides volunteer opportunities for veterans and military families to support their local communities by becoming poll workers in time for election day. [Learn more.](#)

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

National Veterans Service

- NVS leadership participated in the VA VBA VSO update to discuss the current state of the VA and upcoming changes to regulations.
- NVS leadership met with Humana regarding future strategies and how we can continue to move forward with our partnership.
- VFW’s NVS Pre-Discharge representatives briefed transitioning service members on VA benefits at Forts Campbell, Liberty, Cavasos, Drum, Myer, and Meade.
- NVS BDD conducted a VA benefits briefing for the CG, U.S. Army Europe and Africa.
- NVS health team collaborated with the VHA Innovation team at an in-person meeting.
- NVS health team attended the biweekly ATLAS meeting.
- NVS health team participated in the Maryland Department of Virginia Women’s Health briefing.
- NVS health team participated in the VA expanded health care listening session.
- NVS health team attended the VA MST messaging meeting.

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

Veterans of Foreign Wars
406 W. 34th Street
Kansas City, Missouri 64111
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