

April 19, 2024

Greetings,

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

General Counsel

In August, VFW filed an amicus brief in support of Army veteran James Rudisill, in his case against the Department of Veterans Affairs regarding the administration of Post-9/11 GI Bill and the Montgomery GI Bill. At issue was how the Department of Veterans Affairs calculated educational benefits for service members who earned benefits under two different versions of the GI Bill. The VA took the position, based on its interpretation of an isolated administrative provision of the Post-9/11 GI Bill, that veterans with separate and distinct periods of qualifying service, like Rudisill, had to exhaust or forfeit their remaining Montgomery benefits before obtaining the more generous Post-9/11 benefits.

This week, the Supreme Court ruled in favor of Rudisill, stating that “servicemembers who, through separate periods of service, accrue educational benefits under both the Montgomery and Post-9/11 GI Bills may use either one, in any order, up to §3695(a)'s 48-month aggregate-benefits cap.”

The case is Rudisill v. McDonough, 601 U.S. ____ (2024)
https://www.supremecourt.gov/opinions/23pdf/22-888_1b8e.pdf.

Development

As we reach the midpoint of April, our revenue stands at \$2.9M, nearing our \$3.5M projected goal. Notably, estate gifts contribute substantially, comprising half of this month's revenue goal. We began seeing the consistent results of the effectiveness of a steadfast Planned Giving cultivation strategy that was put into motion in the last four years.

This week's Development Campaigns are listed below:

- April 18 Appeal:
 - o Dormant reengagement email #3 to all Friends of Freedom.
- April 19 Appeals:
 - o Memorial Day package with nickels, coasters, and check to member and nonmember donors.
 - o April double sock with check package to lapsed nonmember donors.

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

Human Resources

- New Hire:
 - Daniel Fletcher is returning to the VFW as the Assistant Director of Compensation and Pension Policy in Veterans Service Programs in the D.C. office.
- Positions Actively Recruiting For:
 - National Pre-Discharge Claims Rep – Joint Base Lewis McChord, Washington.
 - National Pre-Discharge Rep – Joint Base Andrews, Maryland.

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

Administrative Operations:

- There are currently 48 Posts under suspension, three of which are new. The organization has 5,642 chartered Posts.
- Administrative Operations is engaged in 20 Article IX Disciplinary Actions, 12 Administrative Removals/Actions and 11 membership eligibility challenges.
- Currently Administrative Operations has 141 Bylaws/Articles of Incorporation submissions in for review, 22 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 this time all 10 Department inspections have been completed, which satisfies the Commander-in-Chief’s goal from the beginning of the year.

With the Department inspections being completed for the 2023-24 term, the team will be conducting an after-action review and compiling information from each of their inspections so we can put together a list of best practices and common issues to share with all Departments. This will

assist Departments in identifying shortcomings prior to their own inspections as well as provide resources of who they can reach out to assist in specific areas where they may need additional help.

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 have opened nominations for the upcoming year in March and close 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 is now available in OMS. 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

- As of April 18, we only have 53,995 members to go before we hit that 102% mark! We need to increase our membership by +740 members per day to reach that goal. Now is the time to look at recruiting events as well as helping Posts in your Department to contact expiring members and reaching out to lapsed members.
- We are working on updating many of Membership's brochures, posters, and other recruiting and training materials! Expect to see new versions of these useful items closer to convention.
- Pro tip of the Week – ENGAGEMENT! Encourage your Posts to reach out to all their members, not just leadership or those who attend meetings. With membership retention being so important, we need to make sure that no member gets left behind, and that everyone is involved! Phone calls, emails, and social media are effective ways to keep your membership aware and engaged.
- Do you understand MEMSTATS? Are you able to answer common questions to help Post leaders such as: "How do I check a Post's All-American Dashboard?" or "Do you know how to view and use your KPI Tools?" If these are questions you cannot answer, chances are good there are leaders in your Districts that cannot either. Please do NOT wait to ask questions! If you need help in this arena, call us! We will help you!
- 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.

Meetings and Events

- Ongoing, exhibitor requests processed into eShow for Louisville/2024. Currently at 69 booths representing revenue of \$88,492.25.
- Ongoing, working with Taylor on processes within department.
- Senior Vice Commander training – April 18-21, 2024.
- Scheduled the second and final local (National) convention (Louisville) committee meeting on Monday, April 29, 5 p.m. CDT via Zoom – saving money by doing Zoom.
- Researching location/rooms for 2025 Inauguration/Washington, D.C., per direction received from Officer Implementation meeting.
- Finalize hotel contracts for 2025 Columbus Convention.
- Finalize hotel contracts for 2025-26 Washington Conference.
- Finalize hotel contract for Adjutant/Quartermaster Training – K.C. – Sept. 12-15, 2024.

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

VFW Foundation

- Assistant Director Ben Vargas and Grants Manager Jason Couch have pursued other employment opportunities. Chris Johnson, formerly with VFW Programs, is our new Grants Manager.
- Director of Corporate & Foundation Relations Brooke Brown has been working diligently to finalize VFW National Convention sponsorships. Commitments are currently at \$462,500 with additional prospects in the pipeline.

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

National Legislative Service

- VFW Testifies Before House Subcommittee: VFW National Veterans Service Deputy Director Christopher Macinkowicz testified at a pending legislation hearing before the House Veterans' Affairs Subcommittee on Disability Assistance and Memorial Affairs. Macinkowicz commented on proposed legislation to improve the quality of veterans claims for VA benefits by providing training and oversight for those deciding VA claims. He noted, "While training and oversight is essential, without proper funding for these programs, the development and execution could be severely impacted, thus limiting the effectiveness of these programs." He also communicated the VFW's approval for legislation to assess VA notice letters sent to claimants by stating, "The VFW supports effective notification and believes that veterans should not be penalized for not understanding the complex laws of the

VA claims process.” [Read the testimony](#) or [watch the hearing](#), which begins at the 39:52 mark.

- VFW Testifies with Partner VSOs on VA Budget Request: The House Committee on Veterans’ Affairs held an oversight hearing on VA’s budget request for fiscal years 2025 and 2026. VFW National Legislative Service Director Patrick Murray offered testimony based on [The Independent Budget Recommendations for the Department of Veterans Affairs for Fiscal Years 2025 and 2026](#). This report serves as a comprehensive roadmap to ensure VA is fully funded and capable of carrying out its mission to serve veterans and their families, both now and in the future. [Watch the hearing](#), which begins at the 13:03 mark.

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

National Veterans Service

- The deadline for submitting nominations for the John A. Biedrzycki Accredited Service Representative of the Year Award for 2023-2024, is **April 30, 2024**. Each Department Commander may nominate one eligible individual for this award. The individual who is ultimately chosen as the recipient of the award will be furnished round-trip travel (for the winner and one guest) and two night’s hotel accommodations to attend the VFW National Convention where the award will be presented. In addition, the award recipient will receive \$599 in recognition of their accomplishments and to offset travel expenses. We encourage every Department to put forth a candidate. A nomination shows that Department leadership is aware of the significant contributions service representatives make in your community. Nominations can be submitted to NVS via email to TAldana@vfw.org no later than April 30.
- NVS BDD leaders met with Qualtrics for a survey sync meeting.
- NVS health leadership met with VA under secretary for health for the quarterly sync meeting.
- NVS BDD team participated in the Army General Officer TAP course.
- NVS health team participated in an advisory committee meeting for homeless veterans.

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

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