

Jan. 9, 2026

Greetings,

We hope you enjoy this issue of the National Council Monthly Update summarizing the pertinent operations at VFW National Headquarters over the last month.

General Counsel

The VFW has been invited to participate in a confidential mediation with Trajector Medical LLC on Feb. 5, 2026. Although the VFW is not a party to the underlying lawsuit (*Warriors and Family Assistance Center v. Trajector*, North Dakota, Florida), Trajector has requested our presence in the mediation in an effort to resolve concerns we have raised — and potentially prevent the VFW from filing a separate legal action.

Trajector is not accredited by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, yet charges veterans significant fees for services directly related to VA disability claims — activities that appear to violate federal statutes and regulations governing who may lawfully assist with such claims. This model not only risks exploiting veterans through improper fees but also creates confusion about legitimate representation options and contributes to improper or unsupported claim filings. We call such companies “Claim Sharks.”

It has been our long-held view that the practices of Trajector (and similar companies) violate federal law and VA regulations, specifically:

- 38 U.S.C. § 5901 and § 5904, which prohibit unaccredited individuals or entities from assisting with VA claims in exchange for payment;
- 38 C.F.R. § 14.636, which strictly limits when and how fees may be charged in the claims process—even for accredited representatives.

This mediation is being conducted under Rule 408, which means that all settlement discussions are confidential and cannot be used in court to prove liability. The VFW’s participation does not waive any of our legal rights, and we remain fully prepared to pursue regulatory or legal action if necessary.

We will use the mediation to seek meaningful reforms that protect veterans, including cessation of unauthorized services, contract and marketing changes, and appropriate relief for affected veterans. We will update the Council following the mediation.

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

Development

The Development team entered December focused on achieving \$9.2 million. While the month has not yet been officially closed as we continue processing December postmarked mail to ensure donors receive accurate year-end tax receipts, preliminary results are exceptionally strong.

To date, we have recorded nearly 80,000 more responses than last December and total revenue of \$11.1 million, exceeding our monthly goal by \$1.9 million so far. This total includes revenue from VFW’s annual

Year-End Campaign, an online initiative that launched in late November and concluded on Dec. 31. This year's campaign outperformed last year's results by \$114,000, closing at \$1.3 million in total revenue.

These results would not have been possible without the extraordinary collaboration and commitment of Marketing Communications, Innovairre, Merrigan & Company, Further and PRS. All teams contributed countless hours, with PRS working through the holidays to ensure more than 400,000 direct mail responses were processed and deposited efficiently. *Teamwork* truly feels like an understatement.

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

VFW Programs

The National Awards and Citations Committee will convene via Zoom on March 27, 2026, to discuss and select recipients for the VFW National Awards, which will be presented at the 2026 VFW National Convention in Reno, Nevada, pending approval from the National Council of Administration. Your thoughtful recommendations play a vital role in recognizing and honoring outstanding service within our organization.

Adjutant General Dan West has asked for your valued input to ensure we recognize those who have made significant contributions. Your recommendations help us honor exceptional individuals and strengthen the spirit of our organization. If you have participated in the nomination process previously, thank you for your dedication and continued support.

The following awards are open for nominations:

- **VFW Distinguished Fraternal Award**

To recognize VFW members or citizens who have furthered the aims or ideas of VFW camaraderie. Nominations must show how the nominee displayed efforts to preserve and strengthen a spirit of good friendship and loyalty among VFW members, assisted surviving spouse orphans of deceased members, or assisted vulnerable and at-risk comrades above and beyond what others would or have done.

- **VFW Distinguished Patriotic Award**

To recognize VFW members or citizens in recognition of their local or national patriotic activities. Nominations must show how the nominee displayed efforts that fostered true patriotism by showing and demonstrating a feeling of passion, devotion, and loyalty to America and extended the institutions, traditions, customs, and establishments of American Freedom above and beyond what others would normally do.

- **VFW Distinguished Historical Award**

To recognize VFW members or citizens for contributions to a better understanding of our American way of life, history, and institutions. Nominations must show how the nominee displayed efforts that perpetuated the memory and history of our dead and/or displayed the importance of American history and why that history is important in our institutions above and beyond what others would do.

- **VFW Distinguished Charitable Award**

To recognize VFW members or citizens for service rendered through outstanding charitable endeavors to the country or local efforts. Nominations must show how the nominee displayed a high level of benevolent actions and philanthropic allegiance supporting veterans, civil, political and social

rights that exemplifies the duties and privileges of being an American citizen above and beyond what others would do.

- **VFW Distinguished Educational Award**

To recognize VFW members or citizens for outstanding contribution to the education of the intrinsic values of American freedom and citizenship. Nominations must show how the nominee exemplified through formal, informal or non-formal educational work that teaches the best attributes of patriotism and intrinsic values of knowledge through everyday life above and beyond what others would do.

If you know of a deserving candidate, please submit your nomination by March 6, 2026, via the Programs Dashboard tool. I do understand that not every NCOA member or Department leader has the entry tab on the dashboard. If you do not, please work with your Department HQs, District officers and/or Post officers to submit your nomination.

Below is a screenshot of the Entry Tab to select National Awards. (Do not allow the use of the pre-populated information and type each piece in the blocks).

Create Entry

Entry Type:	National Awards
Award Type:	Charitable Award
Department:	Kansas
District:	1
Post:	56

Should you have any questions, please feel free to contact me directly at the email address below or by phone.

Thank you for your commitment and for helping us celebrate excellence in service.

Contact: VFW Programs Director Lynn W. Rolf, III, LRolf@vfw.org.

Human Resources

- Promotions/Transfers:
 - o Chris Cormier was promoted to Engraver, Supply and Logistics, in the KC Office.
- Current Vacant Positions in Recruiting Process:
 - o Shipping and Receiving Clerk – KC Office
 - o Member Services Advisor – KC Office
 - o Corporate Accounts Manager, Foundation – KC Office

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

Membership and Member Services

- Our membership growth is on track to meet the Commander-in-Chief's 101% goal, thanks to exceptional work from our Posts in recruiting and retention.
- Our next Membership Monday online training seminar will be on Jan. 12, at 7:30 p.m. CST. This will be an interactive training video using Microsoft Teams. Any VFW or Auxiliary member is welcome to join in to learn and ask questions. The topic will be "IDENTIFYING RECRUITING OPPORTUNITIES," and all are welcome to attend by clicking [here](#).
- Representatives of the VFW Membership Department are out at the Student Veterans of America convention in Colorado this week, representing the organization, recruiting new members and increasing our reach in the community. If your Department is looking to take part in state-level events and would like support or possible reimbursement of costs using the new Membership Outreach Event Grant, have your Department Quartermaster contact the Membership Department at 888.564.6839 or email us at Membership@vfw.org.
- If your Posts, Districts or Departments need membership brochures, applications or supplies to fulfill their recruiting and retention goals, they can be ordered online through our website. Simply log into vfw.org, click on the "Membership Recruiting Brochures Order Form" link and place an order.

Contact: VFW Membership and Member Services Director David Prohaska, DProhaska@vfw.org.

Administrative Operations

Administrative Operations Updates and Actions Since Dec. 5, 2025:

- There are currently 30 Posts under Department Suspension

State	Post	Charter city	Suspension expiration date
California	8900	Fresno	1.9.2026
Colorado	1247	Grand Junction	3.11.2026
Colorado	4281	Holly	2.8.2026
Colorado	8449	Bennett	2.8.2026
Georgia	4828	Royston	1.16.2026
Maryland	10078	Baltimore	10.8.2025 Pending Department decision
Maryland	10159	Salisbury	3.1.2026
Massachusetts	1788	Rockland	3.19.2026
Massachusetts	5489	Mashpee	3.22.2026
Massachusetts	6536	South Boston	Ongoing litigation
Mississippi	4488	Grenada	3.15.2026
New Mexico	7688	Questa	2.16.2026
North Carolina	3006	Salisbury	3.18.2026
Ohio	451	Lorain	2.24.2026
Ohio	1042	Elmwood Place	1.9.2026
Ohio	2850	Cleveland	3.15.2026
Ohio	7490	Louisville	2.12.2026
Oklahoma	5307	Salina	1.11.2026

Oklahoma	9265	Oklahoma City	1.1.2026
Oklahoma	11201	Chickasha	1.9.2026
Pennsylvania	6675	Pittsburgh	2.5.2026
Rhode Island	2812	Thornton	2.27.2026
Texas	8315	Schertz	2.20.2026
Texas	8627	Richardson	3.26.2026
Texas	9179	Stamford	1.22.2026
Vermont	9653	Morrisville	3.8.2026
Virginia	2296	Tasley	2.20.2026
Washington	91	Tacoma	4.5.2026
Washington	3057	Westport	Revocation of Charter Hearing on 1.21.26
West Virginia	4595	Marlinton	2.21.2026

- There were three Post Consolidations:

State	Post No.	Consolidated w/Post No.	Date Approved
Michigan	2777	4087	12.18.2025
West Virginia	7780	2102	12.10.2025
Wisconsin	7501	11038	12.16.2025

- There were two Defunct Posts:

State	Post No.	Termination Date
Florida	10174	12.22.2025
Pennsylvania	5937	12.11.2025

- There was one New Post:

State	City	Date Instituted	Post No.
New Jersey	Knowlton	1.3.2026	12246

- Administrative Operations is engaged in 10 Article IX Disciplinary Actions:
 - o Arizona:
Post 285 (District Quartermaster & Post Commander) – disciplinary action
 - o California:
Post 6476 (Life member) – disciplinary hearing
 - o Georgia:
Post 4346 (Life member) – 30 days to appeal hearing panel’s-imposed penalty
 - o New York:
Post 8728 (Life member) – disciplinary hearing
 - o Oklahoma:
Post 9265 (Post Quartermaster) – awaiting CIC’s decision
 - o Oregon:

Post 4015 (Past Dept. Adjutant/Quartermaster) – disciplinary action

- o Pennsylvania:
Post 6493 (Life member) – 30 days to appeal hearing panel’s-imposed penalty
Post 7842 (Life member) – disciplinary action
- o Wisconsin:
Dept. of Wisconsin MAL (Life member) – summary disposition
Post 10407 (Life member) – disciplinary action

- There were 11 Administrative Removals/Actions:

- o Alabama:
District Commander – awaiting possible appeal
- o Florida:
Post 8203 Commander – awaiting possible appeal
Post 9272 Commander – awaiting possible appeal
Post 9832 Commander – awaiting possible appeal
- o Georgia:
Post 8480 Commander – submitted appeal
- o New York:
Post 8728 Commander – pending
- o Oklahoma:
Post 9265 Commander – submitted appeal
- o South Carolina:
Post 10420 Commander – awaiting possible appeal
- o South Dakota:
Past Dept. Commander – awaiting CIC’s decision
- o Texas:
Post 3992 Commander – awaiting CIC’s decision
- o Washington:
Post 3057 Quartermaster – Department rebuttal

- There are two Pending 518’s:

- o Oregon:
Post No. 661 – Oct. 17, 2025
- o California:
Department – Due Jan. 3, 2026

- There were nineteen Membership Eligibility Challenges:

Member Name	Post No.	Dept	Due Date
Brian Wedemeyer	7061	AZ	3.29.2026
Michael Leopold	7576	OH	1.13.2026

Carol Drum	4709	TX	1.24.2026
Richard Eccleston	3439	MA	2.5.2026
Mearl Adams	3439	MA	2.5.2026
Donald Thomas	5480	KY	3.6.2026
Andres Alvarez	5480	KY	3.6.2026
Itzomora Miller	5480	KY	3.6.2026
Jarrold Robertson	5478	KY	3.6.2026
Lester Fries	3057	WA	3.6.2026
Randy Ullom	3057	WA	3.6.2026
Jon Markstrom	3057	WA	3.6.2026
Kenneth Niemela	3057	WA	3.6.2026
Jesus Quiocho, Jr.	3057	WA	3.6.2026
James Stieg	3057	WA	3.6.2026
Frank Copeland	3057	WA	3.6.2026
Glen A. Peifer	3057	WA	3.6.2026
Peter Owen	3057	WA	3.6.2026
Frank Sokolowski	1170	KY	3.6.2026

- There have also been one Voluntary Resignation and three Terminations.
- Administrative Operations has 124 Bylaws and Articles of Incorporation submissions for review. Since Dec. 5, 2025, 81 Bylaws.Articles of Incorporations have been received, 83 have been approved and distributed, and four have been returned for corrections and resubmission through proper channels.
- There have been eight total Charters produced:
 - o Four Post Consolidation Charters
 - o Two Post Replacement Charters
 - o One Post Location Change Charter
 - o One District Replacement Charter

Dept	Post/District No.	Unit Designation	Document Type
MO	6	District	Replacement
MI	4087	Post	Consolidation Charter
WV	2102	Post	Consolidation Charter
UT	12061	Post	Replacement Charter
TX	12209	Post	Location Change Charter
MO	6514/5178	Post	Consolidation Charter
EU	8862/12159	Post	Consolidation Charter
NJ	1352	Post	Replacement Charter

- **Department Inspections:** The following 10 Departments have been identified and scheduled for Inspections:
 - o California – Inspection completed
 - o Connecticut – April 6-8, 2026
 - o Florida – Inspection completed
 - o Kansas – Inspection completed
 - o Minnesota – March 11-13, 2026

- o Montana – April 22-24, 2026
- o New Jersey – Jan. 26-28, 2026
- o Pennsylvania – Inspection completed
- o Tennessee – Jan. 7-9, 2026
- o Texas – Feb. 9-11, 2026

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

VFW Foundation

- The VFW Foundation has received a prestigious \$3 million grant from Lilly Endowment Inc. to strengthen organizational capacity and better serve veterans, service members and their families. Over the next three years, the grant will expand the Foundation's reach and visibility while supporting improvements in personnel, marketing & public relations, and technology.

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

National Legislative Service

- **New VFW Story Collecting Initiative:** The VFW has launched VFW Voices of Service – Stories in Action, a new national initiative to collect veteran and family experiences that inform and strengthen our legislative advocacy. We will be gathering stories on a wide range of issues, including VA health care access; toxic exposures; concurrent receipt and the *Major Richard Star Act*; VA benefits and disability claims; education, employment and transition; mental health and suicide prevention; food insecurity; caregiver and survivor benefits and other challenges facing the veteran and military community. Submissions will help us to identify patterns, gaps, and real-world impacts that shape legislative priorities, congressional engagement, testimony, education and grassroots advocacy throughout the year. Every experience adds to the overall picture. [Share your story](#) and help turn your personal experience into advocacy action.

Contact: VFW National Legislative Service Acting Director Nancy Springer, NSpringer@vfw.org.

National Veterans Service

- NVS leadership met with BetterUp mental health to discuss how they may assist veterans.
- NVS pre-discharge representatives briefed transitioning service members on VA benefits at military installations across the country.
- NVS BDD team participated in two General Officer TAP courses and provided individual feedback sessions.
- NVS/BDD leadership met with the VAOIG to discuss VA TAP, strengths and areas for improvement.
- NVS/BDD leadership met with senior general officer, briefing how a VFW Service Officer can assist with claims.
- NVS health team participated in The Military Coalition health collaboration.
- NVS health team met with VA ATLAS for quarterly briefing.

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

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