

Feb. 13, 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 continued to play a leading role in protecting veterans from predatory claims practices (Claim Sharks) and promoting access to free, accredited assistance.

- In California, we closely monitored and analyzed the passage of S.B. 694, which restricts unaccredited claims companies from charging veterans for benefits assistance. In connection with this effort, the California Attorney General’s public communications and press materials closely reflected long-standing VFW messaging and terminology regarding “Claim Sharks” and the importance of accredited, no-cost representation, underscoring the organization’s influence on the national policy conversation in this area. VFW leadership and staff also evaluated the practical and legal implications of the law to ensure it strengthens consumer protections without creating unintended barriers for veterans.
- We tracked and supported enforcement efforts by the Texas Attorney General against VA Claims Insider, which resulted in a judgment of approximately \$6.8 million for deceptive and unlawful practices targeting veterans seeking disability benefits. This action validates years of advocacy by the VFW and reinforces our position that aggressive enforcement is essential to deterring exploitation in the VA claims marketplace.
- The VFW expanded its public education and outreach efforts through the release of a new [Claim Sharks awareness video](#), featuring a character named Kip Sharkington. The video builds on the organization’s long-standing campaign to warn veterans about predatory companies and to encourage the use of trained, VFW Accredited Service Officers. This initiative strengthens the VFW’s advocacy message, reinforces public awareness of available free services and supports our broader mission to ensure veterans receive accurate, ethical and no-cost assistance in accessing their earned benefits.
- Finally, we saw a significant win on the state legislation front. States are increasingly enacting Claim Shark laws to regulate who may assist veterans with VA benefits claims and how those services may be compensated. While sometimes well-intentioned, we have said all along that these laws raise serious constitutional concerns when they intrude into a field Congress has long governed through a comprehensive federal framework. A recent federal court decision agreed and highlights the key legal issue — the Supremacy Clause (federal preemption) defense, which bars states from imposing conflicting regulations in areas dominated by federal law. In *Military-Veterans Advocacy, Inc. v. Landry*, the court struck down Louisiana’s Claim Sharks (PLUS Act) statute after finding it interfered with Congress’ carefully balanced system for accredited representation and compensation, undermining veterans’ access to qualified advocates. **This is one of the most important defenses against similar legislation nationwide, with direct implications for veterans’ access to competent representation and the preservation of a uniform national benefits system.**

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

Development

Since the last update, we have fully closed out December, finishing at \$12.1 million, the highest revenue-producing month in our history. Given the strength of December, I anticipated some pullback in January, and we did come in \$416,000 short. However, on a total revenue basis we remain on track overall. Weather may have been a contributing factor toward the end of the month, and some month-to-month variability is expected. Overall performance remains solid, and our full-year outlook is unchanged. While this does reduce our cushion slightly, it is not a cause for concern currently. My team and I continue to closely monitor performance daily.

At the end of December, we entered into a contract with Wealth Engine, a firm that applies machine learning to billions of data points to deliver detailed insights into an individual's propensity, capacity and intent to engage. This tool will allow our Major Gifts officer to tailor proposals more effectively based on donor capacity, removing much of the guesswork around ask amounts. It will also support our Planned Giving officers by enabling more informed and meaningful conversations with prospects based on their philanthropic preferences.

We are also working with Giving Docs, which partners with nonprofits to provide free estate planning tools to their supporters. We recently emailed donors with access to this resource, and to date, 137 individuals have completed their wills at no cost. Of those, seven individuals have included the VFW in their estate plans, 66 requested that their information remain anonymous, and the balance have not yet fully completed their estate plans. Unlike our previous provider, this platform offers more detailed insight into donor engagement, specifically whether a will has been completed, whether the VFW has been included and how a gift may be structured. It also provides us the ability to nudge an individual along if they have not fully completed their will. This service is provided free of charge, and if you have not already done so, I encourage you to take advantage of the following link to create your estate plans vfw.planmylegacy.org.giving-docs.

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:	<input type="text" value="National Awards"/>
Award Type:	<input type="text" value="Charitable Award"/>
Department:	<input type="text" value="Kansas"/>
District:	<input type="text" value="1"/>
Post:	<input type="text" value="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

- New Hires:
 - Von Blackett is a new National Pre-Discharge Claims Representative in National Veterans Service and will be located at JB Andrews.
 - Hope Williams is a new Member Services Advisor in Membership and Member Services in the KC Office.
 - Julia Pope is a new National Pre-Discharge Claims Representative in National Veterans Service and will be located at Joint Base Myer and Anacostia-Bolling.
- Current Vacant Positions in Recruiting Process:
 - Corporate Accounts Manager, Foundation – KC Office

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

Membership and Member Services

- If you're not talking about it, it's not important; Recruit, Retain, Recover!
- Membership Outreach Event Grants are evaluated on both the process and impact of planned outreach efforts. Successful applicants have demonstrated the ability to submit a clear recruiting plan and a focus on developing new recruiters. Grants are still available to help finish the 2025-26 membership year strong.

- Posts, Districts or Departments in need of membership brochures, applications or supplies to fulfill their recruiting and retention goals can place orders online. 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 Jan. 5, 2026:

- There are currently 32 Posts under Department Suspension

State	Post	Charter city	Suspension expiration date
California	8900	Fresno	4.9.2026
Colorado	4281	Holly	2.8.2026
Colorado	6461	Fountain	4.15.2026
Colorado	8449	Bennett	2.8.2026
Georgia	3563	Lyons	4.29.2026
Georgia	4828	Royston	4.16.2026
Illinois	2606	Grayville	4.28.2026
Illinois	8324	Granville	4.28.2026
Maryland	10078	Baltimore	2.22.2026
Maryland	10159	Salisbury	3.1.2026
Massachusetts	1788	Rockland	3.19.2026
Massachusetts	5489	Mashpee	3.22.2026
Massachusetts	6536	South Boston	Ongoing litigation
Michigan	Dist. 13		4.12.2026
Mississippi	4488	Grenada	3.15.2026
Missouri	8101	Buckner	3.12.2026
New Mexico	7688	Questa	2.16.2026
North Carolina	3006	Salisbury	3.18.2026
Ohio	451	Lorain	2.24.2026
Ohio	1042	Elmwood Place	4.9.2026
Ohio	2850	Cleveland	3.15.2026
Ohio	7490	Louisville	2.12.2026
Oklahoma	5307	Salina	1.11.2026
Pennsylvania	6675	Pittsburgh	2.5.2026
Rhode Island	2812	Thornton	2.27.2026
Texas	8315	Schertz	2.20.2026
Texas	8627	Richardson	Pending request for revocation of charter
Texas	9179	Stamford	4.22.2026
Vermont	9653	Morrisville	3.8.2026
Washington	2826	Vashon	4.15.2026
Washington	3057	Westport	Pending CIC decision
West Virginia	4595	Marlinton	2.21.26

- There is one Post under Commander-in-Chief suspension due to not submitting a 2025-2026 election report:

State	Post No.	Charter city	Suspension Expiration date
Pennsylvania	245	Sellersville	1.16.26 - pending outcome of possible trial

- There are three Posts Consolidations:

State	Post No.	Consolidated w/Post No.	Date Approved
Delaware	2863	3420	1.21.2026
Maine	1761	4633	1.27.2026
Massachusetts	2596	9397	1.23.2026

- There are five defunct Posts:

State	Post No.	Termination Date
Kentucky	5480	1.13.2026
North Carolina	10940	1.15.2026
North Dakota	1874	1.12.2026
Oklahoma	9265	1.12.2026
Virginia	2296	1.12.2026

- Administrative Operations is engaged in 11 Article IX Disciplinary Actions:
 - o Arizona:
Post 285 (District Quartermaster & Post Commander) – disciplinary action
 - o California:
Post 6476 (Life member) – 30 days to appeal hearing panel’s imposed penalty
 - o Hawaii:
Post 3830 (Past Dept. Commander) – disciplinary hearing
 - o Indiana:
Post 717 (Life member) – disciplinary hearing
 - 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) – waiting on the DA-7 from Dept.
 - o Pennsylvania:
Post 6493 (Life member) – awaiting CIC’s decision
Post 7842 (Life member) – disciplinary hearing
 - o Wisconsin:
Dept. of Wisconsin MAL (Life member) – summary disposition

- There are 14 Administrative Removals/Actions:

- o Alabama:

District Commander – awaiting possible appeal

- o Florida:
Post 6180 Quartermaster - awaiting possible appeal
Post 6287 Commander – awaiting possible appeal
 - o Georgia:
Post 8480 Commander – Dept. rebuttal
 - o Missouri:
Post 1000 Commander – awaiting possible appeal
 - o New York:
Post 8728 Commander – pending
 - o Oklahoma:
Post 9265 Commander – submitted appeal
 - o South Dakota:
Past Dept. Commander – awaiting CIC’s decision
 - o Texas:
Post 1475 Commander – awaiting possible appeal
Post 3992 Commander – CIC denied appeal – 30 days to appeal to COA
Post 8397 Commander – awaiting possible appeal
 - o Virginia:
Post 637 Commander – awaiting possible appeal
Post 1115 Junior Vice Commander – awaiting possible appeal
 - o Washington:
Post 3057 Quartermaster – CIC denied appeal – 30 days to appeal to COA
- There are no Pending 518s:
 - There are 23 Membership Eligibility Challenges:

Member Name	Post No.	Dept	Due Date
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 Quioco, 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
Nichole Wyland	3057	WA	3.7.2026
Marty Lawrence	3057	WA	3.7.2026
Richard Lamm	3057	WA	3.7.2026
Thomas Lawton	5821	PA	3.14.2026
George Hosselkus	1084	KY	3.22.2026
Lee Raymond	7865	ME	3.28.2026
Brian Wedemeyer	7061	AZ	3.29.2026

- There have also been three Voluntary Resignations, four Voluntary Surrenders, three Terminations and one Reinstatement.
- Administrative Operations has 72 Bylaws and Articles of Incorporation submissions for review. Since Jan. 5, 2026, 101 Bylaws/Articles of Incorporations have been received, 128 have been approved and distributed and 17 have been returned for corrections and resubmission through proper channels.
- There have been nine total Charters produced:
 - o Three Post Consolidation Charters
 - o One Post Replacement Charter
 - o Four Post Name Change Charters
 - o One New Post Charter

Dept	Post/District No.	Unit Designation	Document Type
AR	10442	Post	Name Change Charter
WI	7629	Post	Name Change Charter
AZ	1433	Post	Replacement Charter
IL	1376	Post	Consolidation Charter
OK	4465	Post	Name Change Charter
TN	12244	Post	New Charter
DE	3420/2863	Post	Consolidation Charter
VA	4469	Post	Name Change Charter
ME	4633/1761	Post	Consolidation Charter

- **Department Inspections:** The following 10 Departments have been identified and scheduled for Inspections:
 - o California – Inspection completed
 - o Florida – Inspection completed
 - o Kansas – Inspection completed
 - o Pennsylvania – Inspection completed
 - o Tennessee – Inspection completed
 - o Texas – Feb. 9-11, 2026
 - o New Jersey – Feb. 18-20, 2026
 - o Minnesota – March 11-13, 2026
 - o Connecticut – April 6-8, 2026
 - o Montana – April 22-24, 2026

If you have any questions or concerns about the above information or requirements:

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

National Legislative Service

- **Defense Authorization Improves Transition Data Sharing:** The National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2026 that is now Public Law 119-60 includes a VFW-supported provision to improve information sharing between the Department of Defense and state veteran agencies for separating and retiring service members. Section 573, championed by Sen. Angus King, I-Maine, updates existing law to make the transfer of contact information an *opt-out* process, ensuring veterans are automatically connected to state veteran agencies unless they choose otherwise. The shared information may be used only to connect veterans with benefits or services and strengthens privacy and cybersecurity safeguards. This change supports a smoother transition to civilian life and access to earned benefits.
- **VFW Washington Conference:** The VFW conference in Washington, D.C., will take place March 1-5. Hundreds of attendees will make sure veterans' voices are heard on Capitol Hill. Our National Legislative Committee members will lead their delegations, some including the 2025-2026 VFW-SVA Fellows, in meetings with their members of Congress and staffers. VFW National Commander Carol Whitmore will testify before a joint hearing of the Senate and House Committees on Veterans' Affairs on Tuesday, March 3, at 10:00 a.m. EST, to present our 2026 legislative priorities.

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

National Veterans Service

This past month NVS has stayed focused on the work that matters most, helping veterans and their families navigate the VA system and get the benefits they've earned. January was busy and filled with day-to-day wins, steady progress and behind-the-scenes efforts that don't always make headlines but make a real difference. Below is a look at what NVS accomplished over the past month.

- NVS Director met with the Acting Undersecretary of Benefits, Margarita Devlin to hear updates on VBA operations and programs.
- NVS Director participated in an HVAC Roundtable discussion on veteran fraud.
- NVS Director conducted site visits at Camp Pendleton, Joint Base Lewis McChord and Naval Base San Diego.
- BDD reps conducted briefings and claims support with active-duty service members around the world.
- BDD leadership briefed at Army, Navy and Air Force General Officer TAP courses.
- BDD reps conducted individual counseling session for general officers attending TAP.
- BDD reps briefed United States Coast Guard transition courses.
- BDD leadership briefed FDA commissioned officers about VA benefits.

- Health team participated in the ATLAS VSO meeting.
- Health team participated in The Military Coalition health care collaboration.
- Health team leadership participated in the Carelinx discussion for VA home care.
- NVS training team attended the Texas mid-winter conference to provide claims assistance and training on how to help veterans in the local community.
- NVS hosted the annual Accredited Representative Virtual Basic Training Conference with more than 25 new representatives attending.
- NVS QA team visited the Department of New Mexico Service Office to conduct a routine site visit.

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

