



VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS.

Department of South Carolina



210 Glassmaster Road, Lexington, SC 29072

Phone: 803-808-0317

10/16/2025

GENERAL ORDER: G26-005 – VFW “Associate” Memberships

The information below is from the VFW Quartermaster General and Director for Administrative Operations in response to reported Posts in South Carolina operating Canteens offering additional memberships to the public under various named membership types as follows:

Statement regarding VFW “Associate” Memberships:

Please be advised that the VFW National Bylaws and Manual of Procedure do not authorize or recognize any form of “associate membership.” Under the National Bylaws, there is only one class of membership, that of eligible veterans who meet the established criteria for service and who pay annual dues or purchase a Life Membership as outlined in Article I.

Posts, Districts, or Departments may not create or offer any additional categories of membership, such as associate, honorary, or social memberships, that imply or grant affiliation, rights, or privileges of VFW membership. Doing so is inconsistent with the VFW’s Congressional Charter and National Bylaws.

Furthermore, Posts must exercise caution under IRS regulations governing 501(c) veterans’ organizations and general nonprofit law. Charging or collecting a “membership fee” from individuals who are not eligible VFW members could:

- *Jeopardize the organization’s federal tax-exempt status by suggesting that the Post, District or Department operates for the benefit of nonmembers.*
- *Be construed as unrelated business income, subject to taxation; and*
- *Violate the VFW’s Congressional charter and tax-exempt purposes of serving eligible veterans, service members, and their families.*

Posts may, however, welcome community supporters or family members through properly authorized VFW Auxiliary membership or by hosting open community events, provided that such activities do not confer any form of membership or governance rights within the VFW itself.

If your Post wishes to recognize nonmembers who support VFW programs, you may do so informally—such as through certificates of appreciation, volunteer recognition, or participation in public events—without charging a fee or referring to them as “members.”

Please review Veterans' organizations: The Internal Revenue Code section 501(c) includes two subsections [501(c)(19) and 501(c)(23)] and adhere to federal law.

<https://www.irs.gov/charities-non-profits/other-non-profits/veterans-organizations>

If you place the post in a precarious position, you do so at your own risk. It could result in fines, suspension, or even revocation of your charter where Sec. 211 - Suspension and Revocation of Charter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Todd Haviland', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the left.

Todd Haviland
2025-2026 State Commander

Attested By:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Dennis Hamilton', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Dennis Hamilton
2025-2026 State Adjutant/Quartermaster