

Jan. 26, 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

I asked our IT Director Sean Barnes to provide me with an explanation regarding the IT outages at the National HQ and D.C. Office that occurred on Monday and Tuesday. In short, we have some old equipment and a history of band aid fixes. Please know that as we upgrade our entire IT infrastructure it is very possible that we will have another outage at some point. Sean is in the process of reengineering what our needs are and what we need to correct them with.

Monday and Tuesday outages were caused by several factors.

- 1) Server equipment near end-of-life cycle.
- 2) Misconfigured equipment from four years ago, failover did not work.
- 3) Updates and patches failed on old equipment.

We have updated the primary networking equipment, but several servers are near end-of-life and a reengineering of the network failover is in process. IT is working to put in place some fixes to avoid these failures in the short-term, but we are working on true, long-term fixes to avoid these issues in the future.

The new networking gear has given us great insight as to the problem which would have taken a lot longer to fix without these upgrades.

We are upgrading all necessary network equipment to add redundant systems and better warnings to improve our reliability and uptime.

With upgrades needed, I am identifying additional training staff who will need to maintain all the latest networking equipment.

Dan West
Adjutant General

Legal Counsel

From time to time, Posts or Departments get sued and they call us asking what they need to do. Below are some general guidelines:

- Contact your insurance company. If you are insured for the cause of action, the insurance company will assign a defense attorney to you. Generally, the policy in place at the time of the incident leading to the lawsuit is the insurance carrier you need to contact. If you are not sure, send it to your carrier to determine. If you are covered, you may still be responsible for some of the expenses (depending on your insurance coverage), but you will need to use their assigned attorney and follow their guidance.
- Hire an attorney. If you do not have insurance for the cause of action, you may have to hire an attorney directly. Look on your state bar association's website (search <<State>> Bar Association) and find an attorney in your area that specializes in the type of law you are dealing with (ex. dramshop, employment, real estate).
- Make sure your lawyer responds in a timely fashion. **Do not ignore the lawsuit!** Doing so will only result in a default judgment against you.
- Preserve any evidence you may have. Do not delete or destroy any of it.

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

Development

January's anticipated revenue remains robust, with donations continuing to thrive and campaigns meeting projections. As of Monday, Jan. 22, 2024, we have achieved \$3.4M, showcasing strong receipt counts that position us well to attain our \$4.8M goal for the month. Kindly encourage your members to actively support the VFW's fundraising campaigns. Emphasize the significant impact their support has, enabling the VFW to persist in fulfilling its mission.

- Jan. 23 Appeal:
 - o Priority Goals email to all Friends of Freedom.
- Jan. 25 Appeal:
 - o Planned Giving eNews to all Friends of Freedom.
- Jan. 26 Appeals:
 - o January statement to member and nonmember donors.
 - o Partner in Patriotism quarterly statements to nonmember sustainers.
 - o Partner in Patriotism year-end statements to member sustainers.
- Jan. 27 Appeals:
 - o January lapsed reminder to nonmember donors.
 - o Nickel label with certificate to member donors.

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

Human Resources

- New Hire:
 - Tammie Flores is returning to the VFW as an Advisor in the Member Services Department in the Kansas City Office.
- Positions Actively Recruiting For:
 - Assistant Director, Operations & Administration – D.C. Office.
 - Associate Director, National Legislative Services – D.C. Office.
 - Assistant Director, Veterans Health Policy (NVS) – D.C. Office.
 - National Pre-Discharge Claims Representative – Hawaii.
 - Member Services Advisor, Member Services – K.C. Office

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

Programs

Team, final reminder for the VFW National Awards deadline is Feb. 2, 2024.

- The National Awards and Citations Committee will meet via Zoom on Feb. 23, 2024, to discuss and choose recipients for the awards at the 125th VFW National Convention in Louisville, Kentucky 2024, upon approval from the National Council of Administration.

I have updated each award to make things easier to submit only for the award you choose. Just click on each link below for a description and to fill out the nomination form.

Specifically, the awards to be reviewed by the committee will be:

- [VFW Distinguished Fraternal Award](#)
- [VFW Distinguished Patriotic Award](#)
- [VFW Distinguished Historical Award](#)
- [VFW Distinguished Citizenship Award](#)
- [VFW Distinguished Educational Award](#)
- [VFW Distinguished Service Award](#)

Adjutant General Dan West has asked for your recommendations for these awards if you believe you have a worthy candidate. **Deadline for submissions is Feb. 2, 2024.**

Questions can be submitted directly to Lynn Rolf at email below or by phone at 816.968.1116 (off.) or 913.290.1754 (cell).

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

Administrative Operations

- There are currently 41 Posts under suspension, one of which is new. There were no processed Post consolidations pursuant to Section 209 of the National Bylaws. The organization has 5,657 chartered Posts.
- Administrative Operations is engaged in 24 Article IX Disciplinary Actions, 13 Administrative Actions and 10 membership eligibility challenges.
- We have 50 Bylaws/Articles of Incorporation submissions in for review, 21 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:

As the Department Inspection initiative is well underway for the 2023-2024 term, we would like to share some of the common items that have been identified by the inspection team during their visits. We are halfway through the scheduled inspections for the year so the items below may change as we are able to gather more data. Please understand the list of items below is not all-encompassing but are the most commonly identified concerns the team encounters during the inspections. Some of these items are considered deficiencies pursuant to the National Bylaws but some are simply issues that can assist a Department in their daily operations, if implemented.

Most Commonly Identified Concerns:

- Failure to have proof of eligibility for all District Commanders, Senior Vice Commanders, and Junior Vice Commanders on file at the Department (Ref. Section 416).
- Departments are not properly bonded pursuant to Section 703 of the National Bylaws.
 - Failing to ensure **all** officers accountable for funds are bonded.

- o Departments not securing a bond that covers the required amount of all funds.
- o Departments do not have VFW National listed as additional insureds.
- Lack of or incomplete and outdated Standard Operating Procedures (HQ's staff, Service Officers, and HQ's operations).
- Lack of defined Adjutant/Quartermaster duties specific to the Department.
 - o Lack of Employee Handbook.
- To include policies approved by the Department Council of Administration and signed by all employees and Department officers.
 - o Conflict of Interest
 - o Sexual Harassment
 - o Travel Policy
 - o Vehicle Use Policy
 - o Use of Credit Cards
 - o Code of Ethics
 - o Information Technology/Security
- The Department Council of Administration should be approving budgets, SOPs, policies, Employee Handbooks, etc., but are failing to maintain proper records or meeting minutes showing approval of any and all items.

We look forward to another successful year of inspections and if you have any questions or concerns, please contact Quentin Carroll at QCarroll@vfw.org.

Contact: VFW Administrative Operations Associate Director Zach Schwenk, ZSchwenk@vfw.org.

Membership

- Congratulations to all the Early Bird Washington Conference Award winners. The award recognizes the top three Post Commanders and Quartermasters in each division as of Jan. 1, 2024. Awardees will receive a \$1,000 stipend to help with expenses toward attending the VFW Washington Conference in Washington, D.C. The stipend will be available for pickup after you arrive at the conference from a membership representative. For questions concerning the Early Bird award please contact Marvin Dotson, MDotson@vfw.org.
- Mid-Winter Conferences are happening around the country and the camaraderie is flowing! As the business of the VFW gets done, I am sure conversations eventually migrate to membership retention and growth. Keep these conversations alive when you travel back to

your districts. Know and understand where your national membership resources are and how to use them. Get the most updated membership recruiting materials now for your districts. To order New Member Applications and other membership materials, see the Membership Recruiting Brochures Order Form, under Membership Quick Links, on vfw.org.

- Now is the time to know how to find and understand your All-American Dashboard! If you have Post leaders struggling to understand Memstats, the All-American Dashboard, OMS reporting, etc., put them in touch with us to get those questions answered.
- If you have a topic for training in February, we would love to hear from you! Contact us by emailing Membership@vfw.org. Follow our [Facebook Page](#).

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

Meetings and Events

- Provided initial exhibitor floorplan (Louisville Convention) to e-Show for inclusion in e-Show program. e-Show will provide a more streamlined method for processing exhibitors applications/requests for 2024.
- Preparing to start tutorials/training on e-Show program for 2024.
- Finalized internal housing blocks for Louisville preparing to do convention housing assignments. Sent list to housing manager to protect, prior to housing opening. Target to complete housing assignments week of Jan. 29, 2024. Final assignments will be forwarded to Louisville housing manager.
- Reminder -- **convention housing opens March 18, 2024.**
- Preparing to work with Louisville housing manager for utilizing Meeting Max, housing reservation system.
- Preparing meeting resume (specifications) for upcoming Washington Conference (March). Due to the hotel Feb. 6, 2024.
- Preparing internal housing reservations list also due to the hotel Feb. 6, 2024.
- Ongoing, working with legal on upcoming meeting contracts and addendums.

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

VFW Foundation

- On Wednesday, Jan. 24, 2024, Sport Clips Haircuts presented a \$1.3 million check to the VFW Foundation in support of the VFW's "[Sport Clips Help A Hero Scholarship](#)" program. The celebration held at VFW Post 7397 in Lenexa, Kansas, was attended by VFW National Commander-in-Chief Duane Sarmiento along with Sport Clips Founder and VFW

Foundation board member Gordon Logan and Sport Clips CEO Edward Logan. Additionally, numerous local Kansas City area veterans received free haircuts.

Help A Hero has grown to be the largest scholarship program of its kind, offering service members and veterans support for education often needed in post-military careers. For the spring 2024 semester, 175 scholarships totaling nearly \$800,000 have been awarded!

If you have any questions on the above or need additional information, please contact Director of Corporate and Foundation Relations Brooke Brown, BBrown@vfw.org.

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

National Legislative Service

- VFW Attends SVA NatCon 2024: VFW members were recognized for their outstanding commitment to the student veteran community during Student Veterans of America's (SVA) 16th Annual National Conference (NatCon), held this year in Nashville, Tennessee. Denny Cosmo of Bristol Community College received the SVA Chapter Advisor of the Year Award. Eric D'Arce, of Suffolk County Community College, was named as a Student Veteran of the Year finalist. D'Arce also serves as VFW Post 2913's Jr. Vice Commander and District 11 Legislative Chairman. Additionally, VFW-SVA Legislative Fellow Jamie Springston was selected as a finalist for Student Veteran of the Year. During the conference, VFW-accredited service officers assisted hundreds of student veterans at a claims clinic on site. VFW Washington Office Executive Director Ryan Gallucci addressed the conference's general session stating, "Service organizations like SVA and VFW are vital to veterans to thrive through transition and beyond."

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

National Veterans Service

- VFW's NVS Pre-Discharge representatives briefed transitioning service members on VA benefits at Fort Bliss, Fort Campbell, Cherry Point, North Carolina, Navy Yard, Camp Pendelton, Fort Riley and Joint Base Myer Henderson Hall.
- NVS BDD leadership briefed Navy flag officers about VFW assistance for VA claims.
- NVS BDD leadership participated in the VBA VSO briefing on upcoming Stakeholder Enterprise changes.
- NVS health team participated in the MDMA therapy for PTSD virtual presentation.
- NVS director and deputy leadership attended the Under Sec VA for Health quarterly meeting.
- NVS health team participated in a VA homeless program update meeting.
- NVS health team participate in a Survivors Forum discussion.

Veterans of Foreign Wars
406 W. 34th Street
Kansas City, Missouri 64111
© 2024 All rights reserved. | ® ™ SM
Trademarks and service marks of VFW.

