

Jan. 12, 2024

Greetings,

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

Legal Counsel

Posts, Districts and Departments often create their own newsletters, websites, and social media accounts. While we encourage that, here are some pitfalls they should be aware of:

- Don't copy and paste pictures, videos or music, even if you credit the work. You could end up receiving a letter demanding payment for copyright infringement. Instead, use your own pictures/videos/music (after obtaining any necessary releases) or obtain them online from a reputable source and comply with applicable licensing requirements (usually payment and crediting).
- Use your own words. Even though artificial intelligence like ChatGPT can write an article for you, there is no guarantee that it is accurate.
- Don't use other companies or organizations' trademarks without their permission.
- Even use of military service branches' seals and logos has restrictions. While Posts, Districts, and Departments may use Military Service marks in certain instances, it is advised that language be added to ensure there is no implied endorsement. DOD provides the following suggested disclaimer language:
 - o VFW Post [#] is not affiliated with the Department of Defense or any Military Service. The VFW is not an official component of the Department of Defense or any Military Service.
- Details about using Military Service marks can be found at:
<https://www.defense.gov/Resources/Branding-and-Trademarks/DOD-Trademark-Licensing-Guide/>.

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

Development

In the first four months of the fiscal year, our monthly revenue consistently exceeded projections, surpassing them by \$5.1 million. Particularly noteworthy is December where the initial gross

revenue projection was \$8.7 million, and our current standing is at \$9.9 million. It's important to note that we are still processing postmarked receipts for December. This encouraging trend serves as a positive indication that the economy is making a favorable shift and more importantly, shows the impact the health of the economy has on VFW's fundraising efforts.

This week's Development Campaigns are listed below:

- January 10 Appeal:
 - o Supporter survey to all Friends of Freedom.

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

Human Resources

- Positions Actively Recruiting For:
 - o National Pre-Discharge Claims Representative – Hawaii.
 - o Assistant Director, Veterans Health Policy – D.C. Office.
 - o Member Services Advisor – K.C. Office.

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

Administrative Operations

- There are currently 42 Posts under suspension, two of which are new. One Post consolidation has been processed pursuant to Section 209 of the National Bylaws. The organization has 5,660 chartered Posts.
- Administrative Operations is engaged in 26 Article IX Disciplinary Actions, 15 Administrative Actions and 11 membership eligibility challenges.
- We have 25 Bylaws/Articles of Incorporation submissions in for review, none of which are new; current turnaround time on Bylaws/Articles of Incorporation submissions is approximately 45-60 days.

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

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.
 - Departments not securing a bond that covers the required amount of all funds.
 - 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.
 - Lack of Employee Handbook.
- To include policies approved by the Department Council of Administration and signed by all employees and Department officers.
 - Conflict of Interest
 - Sexual Harassment
 - Travel Policy
 - Vehicle Use Policy
 - Use of Credit Cards
 - Code of Ethics
 - Information Technology/Security
- The Department Council of Administration should be approving budgets, SOP's, 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.

Politics:

VFW National Headquarters has recently received multiple inquiries pertaining to politics, and we would like to address them for clarification.

The VFW is prohibited by its Congressional Charter and National Bylaws to endorse any political candidate at any level of office. Individual members are free to back their candidates of choice (which includes wearing the VFW cap), and VFW Posts are permitted to allow candidates the use of their meeting halls in order to present their positions regarding veterans, service members and their families, as well as national defense and homeland security.

It is up to each individual Post to decide how their facility is used. We always recommend a Post open their facility to all candidates to avoid the image of favoring one side over another. Town hall meetings are a great way for veterans to understand and ask questions regarding issues pertaining to veterans.

We recommend your Post reviews Section 702 of the National Bylaws (Politics) to ensure compliance with the National Bylaws and Congressional Charter.

If further guidance is needed, please reach out to your Department Headquarters for direction to ensure no local or state statutes are violated.

The VFW is one of the most respected voices in Washington, D.C., and within local governments across America. We advocate for justice for our nation's veterans, service members and military families on an array of issues and continue to be the voice for veterans everywhere. We regularly testify before Congress, meet with elected officials, and rally our national network of VFW members and patriotic supporters to ensure our lawmakers put veterans first. When those who've served their country and those that support them stand together, we cannot be ignored.

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

Membership

- Growth patterns show that we are on track to surpass the 102% membership goal for this year. We expect a small dip in our day-to-day stats at the end of January as the holiday outages take full effect. I have heard from many membership chairs who are already planning their springtime recruiting events and membership drives. Planning early is key!
- Keep checking on those members you have not seen around for a while. Buddy Checks can be an important part of your membership strategy, and it lets those members know they have not been forgotten by the Post. To order door hangars and other membership materials, see the Membership Recruiting Brochures Order Form under Membership Quick Links, on vfw.org.
- If you have a topic for training, we would love to hear from you! Contact us by emailing Membership@vfw.org. Be sure to follow our [Facebook Page](#).

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

Meetings and Events

- Continuing preparations for utilizing e-Show program for processing exhibitor applications for Louisville Convention. Testing date and tutorial is Jan. 24, 2024. Going live Feb. 1, 2024. This new system will customize exhibitor's experience and eliminate the manual

process previously used to coordinate and process exhibits. **Note:** Sponsorship utilized program in 2023 for Phoenix.

- Identified internal housing blocks for Louisville prior to finalizing housing assignments. Reminder, housing opens March 18, 2024.
- First internal convention meeting scheduled for Jan. 18, 2024, to begin review of internal working agenda. Scheduled for monthly meetings going forward.
- I am out of the office Jan. 17-19, attending the annual ESPA (Event Service Professionals Association) industry meeting and board meeting. I sit on the board as ex-officio meeting planner board member. ESPA is a representative of service individuals we partner with, e.g., hotels, convention centers, housing providers, etc., for the success of our meetings.
- 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

- The VFW Foundation will take part in the [Help A Hero Scholarship Program Celebration](#) on Jan. 24, 2024, at VFW Post 7397, located at 9550 Pflumm Road, Lenexa, Kansas 66215. The event will highlight the generosity of Sport Clips, their franchisees, partners, and customers in their incredible effort to raise more than \$1.3 million through the most recent campaign which took place Oct. 8 – Nov. 11, 2023! VFW National Commander-in-Chief Duane Sarmiento will be in attendance along with Sport Clips Founder and VFW Foundation board member Gordon Logan and Sport Clips CEO Edward Logan. We encourage local veterans in the Kansas City area to attend and to receive a free haircut from 10 a.m. until 1:00 p.m.

If you have any questions 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 2024 Priority Goals: The 118th Congress is now in its second session, and there is still work to be done. The [VFW 2024 Priority Goals](#) include many issues concerning benefits and services for veterans, service members, and their families. The VFW will continue to advocate diligently to ensure members of Congress and the Departments of Veterans Affairs, Defense, and Labor provide the resources and care our nation's veterans have earned and deserve.
- FY 2024 NDAA Signed into Law: On Dec. 22, 2023, President Biden signed the *National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for Fiscal Year 2024* into law. This legislation focuses on DOD priorities and expenditures. It also authorizes appropriations but does not provide budget authority, which is provided by appropriations legislation. [Read more.](#)

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

National Veterans Service

- NVS health team attended the VHA Assessing Circumstances and Resources meeting.
- NVS health team participated in a VHA info briefing on Gulf War Studies and Beneficiary Travel.
- NVS leadership visited Fort Cavazos and Fort Bliss.
- VFW's NVS Pre-Discharge representatives briefed transitioning service members on VA benefits at Fort Campbell, Fort Bliss, and Fort Drum.

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

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