

# NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS BULLETIN



KANSAS CITY, MISSOURI

VOLUME 49, NO. 6

JAN. 2025

## Membership

Happy new year, VFW! As we continue growth, Commander-in-Chief Al Lipphardt has instituted a monthly Commander's Challenge. As a reminder, every month we will award points to our Posts as follows:

- Recruit a New Annual Member into the Post: 1 point
- An Annual or Lapsed Member converts to Life: 5 points
- Recruit a New Life Member into the Post: 10 points

For the month of January 2025, the Post that leads each division will receive an 8' VFW table drape customized for the Post to be used for meetings, recruiting events, and other functions. In addition, at the end of the year every Post who has led their division in the monthly challenges will be featured on a video display at the National Convention to recognize their achievements.

Keep it up and we will show everyone how **NO ONE DOES MORE FOR VETERANS!**

This contest will run from Jan. 1, 2025, through Jan. 31, 2025. Applications and payments processed online before close of business will be credited that day, payments and applications made through the mail will be processed when received. Questions about this or other membership programs can be sent to [membership@vfw.org](mailto:membership@vfw.org).

### MEMBERSHIP RESOURCES:

Do you want to help your Post meet your membership goals? Log into [vfw.org](http://vfw.org) and go to <https://www.vfw.org/my-vfw/vfw-training-and-support/membership-recruiting-and-retention> where you can view training videos, download recruiting materials and posters, and gain access to all the tools you need in order to help recruit, retain, and mentor your members!

### MEMBERSHIP REQUIREMENTS

As the membership year has begun, keep in mind the membership requirements set out by the Commander-in-Chief:

- Achieve 102% in Membership
- For everyone to recruit at least one new member and then mentor that member.
- Increase membership drives and/or events.
- Develop new Posts and/or revitalize existing Posts.
- Increase Life Membership and Legacy Life Membership.

## NATIONAL MEMBERSHIP MATERIAL ORDER FORM

As you are starting the new membership year, we have made it easier for you to get all the recruiting brochures you will need to make this membership year successful! It's as easy as one two three!

1. Go to [vfw.org](http://vfw.org) and click the login link in the upper right corner. Sign in when prompted.
2. Under "Membership Quick Links," select Membership Online Order Form.
3. Use the dropdown list to indicate items you need. The form will automatically calculate the cost of items and shipping. When finished, click SUBMIT and it will take you to a billing page if there are any charges.

Follow these simple steps and if you have any questions, you may contact the Membership department at 1.888.564.6839 or email us at [membership@vfw.org](mailto:membership@vfw.org).

## UPCOMING TRAINING

Our next Membership Monday training webinar will be on Jan. 13, at 2:00 PM, CDT, Topic: "**Bringing Members Back – Focus on Retention**". We will cover how to contact your members when their dues are coming up for renewal, best practices for recovering lapsed members, and the importance of converting them to Life Membership. Follow us on Facebook at <http://www.facebook.com/VFWMembership> to learn how to attend this online training.

## LEGACY LIFE MEMBERSHIP

CHECK OUT OUR LEGACY LIFE VIDEO! Go to [vfw.org](http://vfw.org), click on JOIN, and scroll down to Legacy Life Membership and then click on the video on the right. This prestigious program is available to all Life Members and is now available in memoriam for past Life Members. There are three levels of membership; each offer their own package of exclusive member benefits. Financial contributions to the Legacy Life member program are tax deductible to the maximum extent allowed by law.

### Enrollment Cost:

### Annual Payouts:

<u>Levels</u>	<u>Posts</u>	<u>Departments</u>	<u>National</u>
Gold- \$1,200.00	\$18.00	\$18.00	\$18.00
Silver- \$800.00	\$12.00	\$12.00	\$12.00
Bronze- \$400.00	\$6.00	\$6.00	\$6.00

*What will your Legacy be?*

## CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR TOP RECRUITERS!

### Top Three Recruiters

Timothy M. Borland – 443  
VFW Post 9972, Dept of AZ

Ed Stefanak, Jr. – 230  
VFW Post 9539, Dept of SC

Steven L. Woodward – 165  
VFW Post 2224, Dept of WA

These comrades are leading the charge for membership growth – will you take up the challenge and see your name on this list?

## VFW National Convention

### VFW NATIONAL CONVENTION HOUSING

The 126th National Convention housing will open, **Monday, March 17, 2025**. Housing reservation information will be located on the convention website accessed through the main VFW website at [vfw.org/convention](http://vfw.org/convention). The convention website will also have general convention information including the registration form, tentative agenda, and links to other convention related information for Columbus, Ohio - Aug. 9-13, 2025.

## Development

As we near the season of giving, here is some helpful information about why the support of every VFW member is vitally important. VFW's life-changing programs are not possible through membership dues alone. In fact, **membership dues alone cover just 18% of the cost of programs**. As a nonprofit organization, the VFW relies heavily on the generosity of its members and patriotic supporters. When members donate, 100% of their net donation goes directly back to support their Department. *Please spread the word and give as generously as you are able.*

**2025 VFW National Veterans Service (NVS) Annual Campaign Kick Off** – is underway, and we urgently need your support to make a meaningful impact on the lives of America's veterans. This campaign is crucial for assisting veterans from all generations, particularly those returning from the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, in accessing the benefits they rightfully deserve. Your donation ensures the VFW's national force of highly trained and accredited service officers is at the ready to help America's veterans navigate the complicated VA system.

As a token of our appreciation, enclosed in this package, you will find the 2025 Petition to Congress and an "American Hero" Memorial Day Ribbon Card. We urge you to add your signature to the petition and card before returning them to us. The collected petitions will be delivered to Congress, sending a powerful message that any proposed cuts to veterans' benefits are unacceptable to those who have proudly worn the uniform. The signed cards will be distributed to hospitalized veterans and service members, bringing them a heartfelt reminder in time for Memorial Day. Some members will receive the 2025 "Help Our Heroes" Member Survey to fill out and return. Your valuable input, gathered through this survey, will play a crucial role in shaping our ongoing efforts to support veterans.

**2025 Label and Certificate of Appreciation** – This January, anticipate the arrival of the 2025 Label and Certificate of Appreciation from the VFW. Alongside these tokens of gratitude, you will find a special Memorial Day "American Hero" Ribbon Card. We kindly request you to sign and promptly return the card, as your participation holds the power to bring warmth and solace to our fellow service members and hospitalized veterans this Memorial Day. The act of receiving a Thank You card from a fellow veteran resonates deeply with those who have served.

Your gesture demonstrates that they are remembered and cared for by their comrades, providing a meaningful connection during a time of reflection. In honor of your fellow veterans navigating the long road to recovery from battle injuries, we invite you to make a donation. Your generosity directly contributes to the strength and availability of programs that provide crucial support for veterans across your Department.

**Your 2024 Year-End Tax Receipt Is On Its Way!** – Late January we will be mailing the 2024 Year-End Tax Receipts to VFW members who have requested to receive one at the end of the year.

**How to Keep Control of Your Estate** – Planning for the future means taking action now. Once you've created a will that aligns with your values, there are two important steps to take. First, update your will on a regular basis so that any life changes and current wishes are reflected. Next, share your estate plan with your loved ones, including charitable giving to organizations like the VFW. Learn more about why these steps matter: <https://vfw.planmylegacy.org/keep-control-of-your-estate>. The VFW Planned Giving Office is here to help you at 816.968.1119 or [plannedgiving@vfw.org](mailto:plannedgiving@vfw.org).

**Have You Heard About the VFW's Partners in Patriotism?** – Adjutant General Dan West would like you to join him in supporting the VFW's life-changing programs for veterans, service members and their families. The VFW has an option that allows you to support VFW programs on a monthly, quarterly or yearly basis, which helps reduce expenses and eliminates the amount of fundraising mail you receive. It is called Partners in Patriotism. As a member of Partners in Patriotism, you choose a set dollar amount for your donation (minimum amount of \$10) that is either charged to your credit card or set up as an Electronic Funds Transfer (EFT) from your bank account. Once you join Partners in Patriotism, you will only receive the Quarterly Supporter newsletters to keep you informed of the many efforts your monthly gifts are making possible and a Year-End Tax Receipt mailed by the end of January. If you are interested in joining Partners in Patriotism, you may contact Donor Services in the VFW Development Department toll-free at 1.833.VFW.GIVE (1.833.839.4483) or email us at [partners@vfw.org](mailto:partners@vfw.org) with "Partners in Patriotism Application" in the subject line.

**VFW Friends of Freedom** – If you are not already a member of the VFW's online community, please visit [vfw.org](http://vfw.org) and look for the gold banner that says "**Find Out What's Happening**" to sign up. As a member of the VFW's Friends of Freedom, you will receive special emails with breaking VFW news, legislative alerts and unique opportunities to help the VFW in assisting our nation's veterans, service members and their families. You may also visit [vfw.org/VFWatWork](http://vfw.org/VFWatWork) and click on "**Read VFW success stories**" to learn how the VFW is fighting for veterans' rights, assisting veterans in need, educating our youth and aiding military families across the nation. Check back often to see newly posted stories!

**Department Resources** – We encourage all VFW Departments to actively support the VFW Department Fundraising Programs. The success of these initiatives rely on the participation and backing of your department's members. Promotional materials can be accessed by visiting [heroes.vfw.org/VFWTools](http://heroes.vfw.org/VFWTools).

## Marketing Communications

### Join VFW Day of Service 2025

The fourth annual VFW Day of Service – a dedicated day of service led by VFW members throughout the country and around the world – kicks off on May 3, 2025, and marks the start of veteran-led community service projects to take place throughout the month.

VFW Day of Service is an outgrowth of the organization's #StillServing campaign, launched in 2020 to recognize the ongoing dedication of veterans and service members who continue to serve their communities. VFW Day of Service, led by veterans and in concert with fellow veteran-serving organizations and civic groups, is open for anyone to participate.

## Veterans & Military Support Programs

### 2025 VFW Day of Service

Make your state stand out! We're kicking off 2025 VFW Day of Service, a nationwide community service effort, and we are counting on you to help make this year bigger and better. Please visit <https://todaysvfw.org/vfw-day-of-service/> to learn more, check out helpful tools and resources—and most importantly — sign up!

Day of Service events should be scheduled during the month of May 2025 and Dashboard credit for “Day of Service Participation” will not be applied until after May 2025. If you have any questions, comments, or concerns, please contact Mark Herron at [mherron@vfw.org](mailto:mherron@vfw.org).

### Military Assistance Program (MAP) Grant Funds

Be advised that the VFW MAP Grant is now closed for the 2024-25 program year. The 2024-25 MAP Grant funds have been depleted. Any events held after the closure of the MAP grant will not be reimbursed with the 2025-26 funds.

### All American Eligibility

To qualify for **All-American**, a **minimum donation of \$125** must be donated to **VMS** by **June 30, 2025**. VMS donations will only be handled through the Dashboard. All Posts must click on the “**VMS Donation**” tab on the **Dashboard** to donate. The link will point them to OMS. Please do not send checks to the National Headquarters. If a Post does not use a credit card, the Post will send their donation to their Department HQs and the Department HQs will submit the donation for their Post. Credit will automatically update on the Dashboard daily. Overseas Departments will donate to the other programs through the link also in lieu of participation. This will automatically update daily.

When you make your **\$125.00** or more donation, all that needs to be entered into the box is 125 or more. The **\$** and **.00** are **not required** in the donation amount box.

**Do not use the red donate link** in the upper right-hand corner of this webpage. This is for general donation purposes only.

### VMS Lapel Pin Payment

If your VFW Department headquarters ordered and received the 2024-25 VMS Lapel Pins, please pay for them as soon as possible. You may utilize the “**VMS Donation**” link on the upper right-hand corner of the **Dashboard**.

## VMS Program Tools

The Veterans & Military Support (VMS) Program Tools webpage is updated every month. Link to the webpage is <https://www.vfw.org/VMSPTools>

## VFW's "Sport Clips Help A Hero Scholarship"

The **2025 Fall Semester** opened Jan. 01, 2025, and will close Apr. 30, 2025. The application will be available online only at [vfw.org/Scholarship](http://vfw.org/Scholarship).

**Continue to do what you are doing and thank you for your support!**

# VFW Programs

**DISPLAYING MILITARY SERVICE SYMBOLS.** Military service flags, insignias, etc. should be displayed in the following order (left to right as you face the flags): Army, Marine Corps, Navy, Air Force, Space Force and then Coast Guard. For military flags, go to [vfwstore.org/searchresults?q=MilitaryFlag](http://vfwstore.org/searchresults?q=MilitaryFlag).

**VFW 125TH ANNIVERSARY COMMEMORATIVE POST PROGRAM SIGN UP.** We encourage as many of our VFW posts to get signed up to become a 125th Anniversary community service Post. To date, we have 89. Please help us spread the word. Our birthday was a couple of days ago, but our celebration will last the rest of the year and conclude at the National Convention in Columbus.

The VFW National Commander invites all VFW Posts to be the catalyst to get their communities involved in commemorating the contributions of all veterans and their family members to our country during the VFW 125th Anniversary year. In addition, it is hoped you will encourage your community to study the history of this era to help ensure a safer and better tomorrow.

Have our posts click this link <https://vfw125.org/get-involved/> and click on the **red** Accept Invitation icon for further information.

**PROGRAMS DASHBOARD TOOL. (NOTE: Previously ALL-AMERICAN DASHBOARD)** Please encourage Posts to read the 2024-25 Membership program. Military Assistance Program grants have been launched to show Departments and Posts how much in grant assistance has been received from National HQs to supplement the Unmet Needs financial grants & VFW Sport Clips Help a Hero Scholarship statistics. The information charts reside in the KPI tools section.

**FLY THE FLAG ON MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR.'S BIRTHDAY.** The U.S. federal flag code has been amended by Congress and signed by the president to add Martin Luther King, Jr. Day to the list of days on which the flag should be displayed. His birthday is observed on the third Monday in January; therefore, the flag should be flown on that day. To purchase a U.S. flag from the VFW Store, go to [vfwstore.org/category/flags/usflags](http://vfwstore.org/category/flags/usflags).

Many communities are conducting community service projects that day. It is highly suggested that all members support this day of service.

**SMART/MAHER VFW NATIONAL CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION TEACHER AWARD PROGRAM DEADLINE REMINDER.** Nominations for this award and the judging at Post and District level, if applicable, should be completed at this time and their winners submitted to their VFW Department Headquarters for their judging by Jan. 1.

A completed nomination should consist of a completed official entry form with a one-page resume as a minimum or up to five-pages, including the resume, as a maximum of documentation of their teaching experience, (for example: resume, references, news articles, etc.) and a head-and-shoulder photo of themselves, if available at the time.

The corresponding deadlines for the next level of judging are as follows: Dec. 15, 2024, for completion of District judging, if applicable, and their winners forwarded to their Department Headquarters prior to Jan. 1, 2025; and Feb. 1, 2025, for completion of Department judging and their winners forwarded to National Headquarter. Each level may submit one candidate, in each grade category, on to the next level.

NOTE: The VFW National Programs Department requires the Department Headquarters to submit their winners via Formstack, using the link the Department Adjutants/Quartermasters recently received. For each Department winner, they will need to complete a “VFW Department Teacher Award Citation Request Form” located on Formstack, then download the winners’ entry documentation. Once they hit submit, it will arrive at National Headquarters. If you have questions regarding any of the above, please email [tbeauchamp@vfw.org](mailto:tbeauchamp@vfw.org) or call 816.756.3390 and ask for extension 6287.

**VOICE OF DEMOCRACY AND PATRIOT’S PEN DEPARTMENT DEADLINE REMINDER.** The deadline for submitting the Voice of Democracy and Patriot’s Pen winner packets to National Headquarters is Jan. 15, 2025 (even if they have not been personally notified, they are the winner).

The suggested deadline for Departments to have reviewed and approved their District and Post entries in the All-American Dashboard is Jan. 31. This will ensure we have accurate reporting numbers across the organization and allot us the time to remedy errors. If you are unsure how to report your participation in the All-American Dashboard or if you are having login issues to the OMS system, contact John Linstra at [jlinstra@vfw.org](mailto:jlinstra@vfw.org) or 816.968.2787.

**VOICE OF DEMOCRACY AND PATRIOT’S PEN NATIONAL AWARDS.** Every Voice of Democracy and Patriot’s Pen first place Department winner will receive a National scholarship or award. The amount for the Voice of Democracy National Awards now totals \$172,000, with the top three awards raised to \$35,000, \$21,000 and \$15,000. The Patriot’s Pen National Awards total is \$55,000.

**VFW NATIONAL PUBLIC SERVANT AWARDS.** Judging at Post level should have been completed at this time or the near future. VFW Post Safety Chairperson’s may submit up to five winning nominees’ documentation (one for each career area) to their Department Headquarters for judging no later than Jan. 1.

Once judging has been completed, Departments may submit their five winning nominees, if available, (one for each career area) to the VFW Programs office, by completing the “VFW Department Public Servant Award Request Form” through Formstack. VFW Programs staff has emailed the form link to Department Adjutants/Quartermasters prior to the deadline of Feb. 1.

VFW Programs will create citations for the following awards in each Department:

- VFW National Law Enforcement Award
- VFW National Firefighter Award
- VFW National Emergency Medical Technician Award
- VFW National 911 Dispatcher Award
- VFW National Explosive Ordnance Disposal Technician (E.O.D.T.) Award

Each Department will receive their requested awards and should contact their recipients to arrange a presentation. Department Commanders may present the awards at their Department Convention, but are encouraged to also present the award in front of the recipient's peers at a professional association event, city council meeting, etc. The purpose of the second venue is to expose these VFW awards to the public and especially other law enforcement personnel, firefighters, EMTs, dispatchers and EODTs personnel, many of whom are veterans eligible for VFW membership. Order plaques and citations for public servants from the VFW Store [vfwstore.org/searchresults?q=public%20servant](http://vfwstore.org/searchresults?q=public%20servant).

Simply visit [vfw.org](http://vfw.org), log in to My VFW, then look under Member Resources, click on **VFW Training & Support**, then click on **Community Service & Youth Programs**, then look under **Public Servant Program**.

NOTE: Remember, the First Responder Medal is available through the VFW Store. To review this item, please click on the following link: [vfwstore.org/products/32134](http://vfwstore.org/products/32134).

**PLEASE REVIEW UPDATE ON O.C.S.P. PROGRAM.** VFW National Programs has updated Outstanding Community Service Post award programs starting this program year. Please share this with your Community Service Chairpersons.

**OUTSTANDING NATIONAL COMMUNITY SERVICE AWARD.** Each year on July 1, the national Programs office will determine the top community service Posts in each conference, based off their community service reporting and total impact, from July 1 to June 30 the previous year. Your community service total impact is figured by the money spent to host and organize the community service event, plus total hours all volunteers participated, plus the mileage for all volunteers (Dollars Donated + Hours + Mileage = Total Impact).

These four Posts will be awarded the Award for Community Service and will be invited to attend the VFW National Convention. The Post Commander (or designated representative) and a guest will receive round-trip airfare, hotel accommodations for five nights, and a \$599 stipend to receive the award at the VFW National Convention.

**NATIONAL COMMUNITY SERVICE POST OF THE YEAR.** Each Department will have an NCSP winner based on total impact also. National will select based on end of year reports on July 1. Winners will also be published in the Convention program booklet and receive a street sign identifying this national award for the Post to put up in their community.

**“UPDATED” POW/MIA FLAG -- OFFICIAL DISPLAY DAYS.** Under previous Public Law 105-85 (Nov. 16, 1997), it indicated there were only six days that federal agencies, military installations and U.S. post offices were required to display the POW/MIA flag. Now under new law, Public Law 116-67 (Nov. 7, 2019), it is required that the POW/MIA flag, on certain federal properties, be flown on all days on which the flag of the United States is displayed. To purchase a POW/MIA flag, go to [vfwstore.org/products/GP237](http://vfwstore.org/products/GP237).



**IRS AND VFW AWARD MONIES.** The Internal Revenue Service (IRS) requires that any recipient that receives more than a \$599 award should receive a Form 1099 identifying the proceeds as taxable. This will include the VFW programs Patriot's Pen and Smart/Maher VFW National Citizenship Education Teacher Award.

## VFW Member Benefits

### A Simple Way to Care for Your Pets and Your Finances

Whether you have a new puppy with kennel cough or a senior cat with kidney disease, it's hard to anticipate accidents and illnesses that might occur in the span of your pets' lives. Pet insurance makes it easier to prepare your finances and care for your pets, whatever issues arise.

Pet insurance often includes coverage for:

- Accidents and injuries, like poisons and sprains
- Serious and chronic illnesses, like cancer, diabetes and allergies
- Prescription medicine
- Common illnesses, like vomiting and diarrhea
- Hereditary conditions, like hip dysplasia and blood disorders
- Testing and diagnostics, like ultrasounds and blood tests
- Procedures, like surgeries and chemotherapy
- Holistic and alternative methods, like acupuncture
- Wellness procedures, like vaccinations and spay/neuter

For additional information about Pet Insurance, call Nationwide at 877.738.7874 or [click here](#).

## "Buddy"<sup>®</sup> Poppy

**"BUDDY"<sup>®</sup> POPPY CAMPAIGN.** Although we emphasize Buddy Poppies on Veterans Day and Memorial Day, it is important to realize that the distribution of Buddy Poppies should be a year-round exercise. Each time a Post participates in an activity where the public will be present, Buddy Poppies should be present as a fundraising tool and simply to recognize our fallen comrades. Where the VFW appears, Buddy Poppies should be a constant reminder that we will never forget those who have perished in the name of liberty. Just as "They Gave, Will You?" is a year-round thing, so should the distribution of VFW Buddy Poppies.

Remember that your poppies should be ordered a minimum of three (3) weeks in advance of your distribution date.

### BUDDY POPPY POLICY AND PROCEDURES:

- 1) Departments must order poppies through OMS.
- 2) All claims of non-receipt of a Buddy Poppy order must be made within 60 days of the date of the order or will NOT be replaced free of charge.
- 3) All orders for the traditional Buddy Poppy, Anniversary Poppies or tin tab poppies must be placed through your Department Headquarters. Auxiliaries must go through their Post to order all poppies.
- 4) The tin tabs do count towards the Buddy Poppy requirement for the All-American program.

- 5) If you do not receive your order within four weeks of placing it with your department, please contact your Department Headquarters to report you have not received your order.
- 6) All poppies are shipped within 10 days of ordering except orders placed in June and July, due to preparation for National Convention, please allow an additional five business days.

Miscellaneous items (coin cans, buttons, posters, etc.) should be ordered directly from the VFW Store at [vfwstore.org/category/programs/buddypoppy](http://vfwstore.org/category/programs/buddypoppy) or by calling Member Service Center at 1.833.839.8387.

The Manual of Procedure provides that Post relief funds may be used for programs such as Voice of Democracy, Patriot's Pen, Citizenship Education, and Community Service as long as suggestions in the chairperson's guidebooks are used as an example of promoting these programs.

Posts are further reminded that Section 711 of the Manual of Procedure provides that non-profit organizations, exempt from taxes under Section 501(a) of the Internal Revenue Code, may assist with the distribution of Buddy Poppies, provided there shall be no division of proceeds. A donation to these groups may be made from the Post general fund.

**VFW ANNIVERSARY BUDDY POPPIES.** Special poppies are available to Posts celebrating their 25th, 50th, 75th and 100th anniversaries. The poppies are the same design as traditional poppies but come in silver for the 25th anniversary Post, gold for the 50th anniversary Post and diamond (iridescent white) for the 75th anniversary Post. Posts currently in their 100th anniversary year can order any color and as many as they need. If not in your 100th anniversary year, please limit your order of anniversary poppies to 1,000 to ensure stock does not run out. These are ordered through the Department in OMS and processed the same as red poppies and should be distributed and used in displays just like the red poppies. Currently we have no plans to replenish inventory of Anniversary poppies due to increased cost and the small quantities we sell of Anniversary Poppies. Based on the past four years' sales, we have sufficient inventory for the next 2 years of the Gold, 3 years of Diamond and 50 years of the Silver.

## National Veterans Service

### **New Accredited Representative Virtual Basic Training**

NVS is excited to announce that Virtual Basic Accredited Representative Training will be available Feb. 3-7, 2025, for newly accredited representatives who have not yet participated in an NVS training conference. This conference will be a hybrid conference, with attendees receiving video training using the VFW Online Learning Portal as well as daily live instruction using Zoom teleconferencing software. Formal notification to students who are required to participate in this conference will be sent in the coming weeks, along with instructions on how to register and access the course.

## National Legislative Service/Action Corps

### **VFW Hosts Veterans Justice Commission**

The VFW Washington, D.C., office hosted the Veterans Justice Commission to discuss the work it does to examine the extent and nature of veteran involvement in the criminal justice system, and to develop recommendations for evidence-based policy changes that can enhance safety, health, and judicial fairness.

VFW National Legislative Director Pat Murray moderated a panel presentation with former Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel and Commission Director Jim Seward during which they presented both state and federal policy proposals.

### **VFW Speaks at Women Veteran Caucus Event on Transition**

VFW National Legislative Deputy Director Kristina Keenan spoke at the final event of the Servicewomen and Women Veterans Caucus of the 118th Congress, led by Reps. Chrissy Houlahan, Jen Kiggans, Derrick Van Orden, and Brad Wenstrup, all of whom are veterans. The discussion centered around the unique challenges that women face when transitioning out of the military such as service-connected injuries that affect fertility, mental health effects of military sexual trauma, and barriers to accessing benefits due to childcare constraints. Keenan explained that it is critical that all transitioning service members have access to a service officer to file their pre-discharge VA disability claims. "We know that veterans are vulnerable to suicide during the first year after separation from the military. We also know that veterans who use their VA benefits and health care have a lower risk of suicide. Eliminating the gap between service and access to VA is incredibly important and our service officers can facilitate that transition."

## VFW Store

### **VFW STORE:**

All Ryan Roulette Racing gear is on sale now! Order yours while supplies last. Click [vfwstore.org/category/more/specials/racing](https://vfwstore.org/category/more/specials/racing)

Also check out the selection of 125<sup>th</sup> Anniversary items available. [vfwstore.org/category/more/specials/125thanniversary](https://vfwstore.org/category/more/specials/125thanniversary)



## Roll Call of Departed Comrades

WILLIAMS, LARRY, C., Commander, Department of Arizona, 2021-2022, and a Gold Legacy Life Member of Sgt. J. D. Wadkins Jr. Post No. 3713, Coolidge, Arizona, October 30, 2024.

THOMAS, RAYMOND K. "RAY", National Council of Administration member 2011-2013, National Inspector 2014-2015 Commander, Department of Arizona, 2006-2007, Department Adjutant 2005-2017, and a Gold Legacy Life Member of John M Jackson Post No. 3632, Tempe, Arizona, December 12, 2024.

MCMINDES, ALBERT J. "JACK", Department Adjutant 1979-1980, 1981-2002, 2010-2012, Department Quartermaster, 2008-2012, and a Bronze Legacy Life Member of Kenneth J Booth Post No. 1103, Tonopah, Nevada, December 20, 2024.