

Jan. 19, 2024

Greetings,

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

### **Legal Counsel**

As officers of the VFW, it's probable that you will at some point handle another person's personally identifiable information (PII). PII is information used alone or in combination that can identify a particular person, and includes names, addresses, phone numbers, birth dates, credit card information, social security numbers, driver's licenses, medical documents, etc.

In the VFW, PII may be found on membership applications, DD214s, grant applications, and documents used by service officers, just to name a few.

**It is critical that you protect other's PII.** Some ways to do that are:

- Don't leave paperwork out – lock it up.
- Don't leave your laptop in a repair shop – or anywhere that is not secured.
- Shred documents when you are done with them.
- Password protect your computer, laptop and phone.
- Use two-factor authentication if you can.
- Secure your flash drives, disks and external hard drives.
- Redact (black out) PII on documents before they are shared.
- Encrypt or password protect documents.
- Password protect or encrypt emails. Share the password verbally, through an encrypted email, or by another channel (fax, text, etc.) Do not send password in the same email.
- Use Sharefiles that encrypt documents.

When it comes to handling PII, an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.

Contact: VFW General Counsel John Muckelbauer, [JMuckelbauer@vfw.org](mailto:JMuckelbauer@vfw.org).

## **Development**

We were able to close out December receipts last week. We projected \$8.7 million and ended at \$10.1 million, a surplus of \$1.4 million above projections.

This week's Development Campaigns are listed below:

- Jan. 16 Appeal:
  - o Supporter survey email #2 to all Friends of Freedom.
- Jan. 19 Appeals:
  - o January acquisition currency package reminder.
  - o January campaign to nonmember donors.
- Jan. 20 Appeal:
  - o Veterans Service annual appeal reminder.

Contact: VFW Development Director Kelly Jones, [KellyJones@vfw.org](mailto: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](mailto: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.

## **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.
  - 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

- 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](mailto:QCarroll@vfw.org).

Contact: VFW Administrative Operations Associate Director Zach Schwenk, [ZSchwenk@vfw.org](mailto:ZSchwenk@vfw.org).

### **Membership**

- The days are already getting longer! That means recruitment opportunities are on the way! Get the most updated membership recruiting materials now. 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.
- Keep your membership roll going in January by 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. This type of engagement with your membership is key to retention!
- If you have a topic for training in February, we would love to hear from you! Contact us by emailing [Membership@vfw.org](mailto:Membership@vfw.org). Follow our [Facebook Page](#).

Contact: VFW Membership Interim Director Corey Hunt, [CoreyHunt@vfw.org](mailto:CoreyHunt@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.

- The VFW Foundation is actively pursuing sponsorships for the historic 125th VFW National Convention to be held July 27 – Aug 1, 2024, in Louisville, Kentucky, as we are reaching out to current and new prospective corporate partners.

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](mailto:BBrown@vfw.org).

Contact: VFW Foundation Director of Donor Relations Richard Freiburghouse, [RFreiburghouse@vfw.org](mailto: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](mailto:PMurray@vfw.org).

### **National Veterans Service**

- NVS leadership participated in a VSO listening session related to VA forms review and administrative improvements.
- NVS staff will attend the monthly VA Education Service update for changes to policy and programs.
- NVS leadership met with ETS sponsorship group discussing transitioning service members and VSO assistance.
- NVS leadership met with the VFW Foundation to discuss future state fundraising and sponsorship engagement opportunities.
- VFW's NVS Pre-Discharge representatives briefed transitioning service members on VA benefits at Fort Bliss, Fort Drum, Fort Campbell, NSA Annapolis, Camp Lejeune, and Fort Meade.
- NVS health team collaborated on improving the Health Watch webpage and improving the VFW VAVS manual.

Contact: VFW National Veterans Service Director Michael Figlioli, [MFiglioli@vfw.org](mailto:MFiglioli@vfw.org).

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