

February 3, 2023

Greetings,

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

### **General Counsel**

- Submitted request to VA under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) for certain documents related to unaccredited companies representing claimants at VA. Response was received and is being reviewed.
- Filed an amicus curiae brief to the Seventh Circuit Court of Appeals in support of claimants seeking relief from 3M for defective ear protection.

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

### **Development**

This week's Development campaigns are listed below:

- Jan. 31 Appeal:
  - Partner in Patriotism year-end statements to member donors.
- Feb. 3 Appeal:
  - February acquisition kitchen bundle with check package.

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

### **Membership**

- It's a full-court press this month to upgrade your membership in the VFW! We are launching our Life member upgrade campaign to over 45,000 members and getting ready to deploy our Legacy Life upgrade campaign to just over 214,000 members! In addition, we have launched a new campaign focusing on those annual members who in January reached an age indicating a decrease in their Life membership fee.
- We are working this week to present another Membership Monday on Feb. 6.

The topic of our training is “Getting Back to Basics,” a general understanding of Memstats, myth-busting Membership anecdotes, and a discussion around the top calls our Member Service Center receives from our membership. Join us live at 10 a.m., 2 p.m., and 6 p.m. CST at <https://vfw.zoom.us/j/5745980143>. As always, the webinar will be recorded and archived for viewing at your convenience.

Contact: VFW Membership Director Rick Butler, [RButler@vfw.org](mailto:RButler@vfw.org).

### **Administrative Operations**

- There is currently one District under suspension and 38 Posts under suspension with seven Post suspensions lifted since last week. We are working to institute four new Posts and have instituted one new Post since last week; we have completed three and are working four Post consolidations; we are working two charter surrenders; we are working two charter revocations pursuant to Sections 201, 209, 210 and 212 of the National Bylaws. The organization has 5,758 chartered Posts.
- Administrative Operations is engaged in 18 Article IX Disciplinary Actions, 13 administrative actions and nine membership eligibility challenges.
- In an effort to reduce paper and expedite our process, Departments are encouraged to submit Post, District, and Department bylaws and Articles of Incorporation to Administrative Operations via email to our Post Records Coordinator April Ferreira ([AFerreira@vfw.org](mailto:AFerreira@vfw.org)). Additionally, submitted bylaws or articles in conflict with the National Bylaws will be returned to the unit (Departments will be cc'd) with a list of amendments and a digital copy of our template for resubmittal. For any questions regarding this change, please contact the Director below.

Contact: VFW Administrative Operations Director Johnathan Duncan, [JDuncan@vfw.org](mailto:JDuncan@vfw.org).

### **Meetings and Events**

- Preparing to send out housing assignment memos to VFW Department Adjutant/Quartermasters, copying Department Commanders and Senior Vice Commanders. Targeted date to send is Feb. 7, approximately one week prior to general housing opening Feb. 17.
- Provide to VFW Communications update information for convention webpage [www.vfw.org/Convention](http://www.vfw.org/Convention). This site provides links to general convention information, housing link and a tentative web agenda (updated as information changes).
- Preparing internal rooming list and meeting resume (specifications) for March 5-9, VFW Legislative Conference in D.C. Documents are due to hotel Feb. 7.
- Sending out exhibitor invites for Phoenix convention. Invites directed to all previous exhibitors (2022) and any new exhibitors who have requested to be included in the invites.

Contact: VFW Meetings and Events/Exhibits Director Vanessa Kane, CMP, CMM, [VKane@vfw.org](mailto:VKane@vfw.org).

## **VFW Foundation**

- VFW Foundation Assistant Director Ben Vargas, and VFW Foundation Board Chairman Mike DeRosa, recently attended the Great Western Franchise Association Mid-Winter Conference in Palm Springs, California, to solicit additional franchisees for the Burger King® VFW's Unmet Needs program.
- Oracle Cerner has agreed to sponsor the 2023 VFW National Convention and renew their \$50,000 philanthropic support to the VFW's Unmet Needs with an additional \$25,000 toward National Veterans Service support as needed.

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

## **National Legislative Service**

- VA will now allow certain survivors of LGBTQ+ veterans to apply for benefits, such as Survivors Pension or Dependency and Indemnity Compensation. Due to past bans on same-sex marriages and previous VA marriage requirements, many survivors of LGBTQ+ veterans were not eligible for benefits. Surviving spouses can now establish they had a "marriage-type" relationship by providing documents such as joint banking statements, joint purchase of a house, tax returns, insurance forms, lay statements, and more. These benefits are not retroactive, but those eligible who apply in the next year will receive benefits backdated to Oct. 11, 2022. Contact a [VFW Accredited Service Officer](#) for assistance filing for benefits. [Learn more](#).
- Scammers are taking advantage of new opportunities to commit fraud. There has been an increase in [VA education benefits fraud](#) by VA-approved schools that are billing veterans at a higher tuition rate than civilian students. Veterans and their family members need to be aware and should be cautious of anyone who advertises a lower tuition rate, offers exclusive benefits to civilian students, or bills 20 percent more than a non-VA approved school. To report suspected fraudulent activity, email [vaoighotline@va.gov](mailto:vaoighotline@va.gov) or call 800.488.8244. [Read more for tips to protect yourself against these new scams](#).

Contact: VFW National Legislative Service Director Patrick Murray, [PMurray@vfw.org](mailto:PMurray@vfw.org).

## **National Veterans Service**

- VFW's NVS Pre-Discharge representatives will conduct benefits and separation briefings this week on Fort Hood, Texas, Fort Bliss, Texas, Fort Myer, Virginia, Fort Drum, New York, and Fort Riley, Kansas.
- NVS Pre-Discharge leadership is providing a VA benefit briefing to the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff at Fort Myer, Virginia.
- NVS Quality Assistance/Training team will meet in final preparation for BASIC Training for newly VFW Accredited Service Officers to be held Feb. 13-17, virtually via ZOOM.

- NVS will hold a training planning meeting in advance of the annual Proficiency Training Conference (PTC) to be held in April in Annapolis, Maryland.
- NVS leadership attended the “Big 8” meeting with nominee for Undersecretary for Benefits (USB) Josh Jacobs, at VACO on Thursday, Feb. 2.

Contact: VFW National Veterans Service Director Ryan Gallucci, [RGallucci@vfw.org](mailto:RGallucci@vfw.org).

