



The Sentinel

Official Publication of the VFW Department of South Carolina and its Auxiliary

UNWAVERING SUPPORT



FOR UNCOMMON HEROES®



VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS.

South Carolina



**It's not the price you pay to become a member,
It's the price you paid to become eligible.**

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October 2026

10 OCTOBER, 10 AM - C. OF A. @HQ

22 - 24 OCTOBER - SOUTHERN CONFERENCE

22 - 24 JANUARY - MIDWINTER CONFERENCE

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Comrade Blankin, ca. 1970





Comrades and Auxiliary Members,

Thank you for placing your trust in me and allowing me to service as your State Commander. I truly believe that 2026-2027 will be great, and I look forward to seeing all the different posts recognized for their hard work and dedication to the veterans living here in the great state of South Carolina. My priority this year is simple, or the three foundational pillars are

1. **Membership:** Nothing happens in the VFW without its members, so bringing in new members will help preserve what we have already started. I know that South Carolina is a great state to be a member of, but we need everyone to know it. The greater our numbers are the more our voices will be heard on capitol hill.
2. **Legislative:** Comrade Scott Craig and Shannon Gaskin do a stupendous job for the department when it comes to fighting for veterans, rights, and benefits. We as an organization need to lean forward and help these gentlemen out. I was always told that there are strengths in numbers. So, let's help make legislative reporting a part of our daily routine.
3. **VSO:** The VFW has its very own VSO office, comrades we pay for personnel to work in that office, but we also understand when life happens it's just that. The VSO are looking for a few good men and women volunteers.

Goals for 2026-2027 Year:

I genuinely believe that a team is built through relationships and one common goal. When leaders and subordinates work together, the impossible becomes possible. Everyone must know their role and be the best at it. The Department of South Carolina is good, but it's time that we show the entire VFW our greatness. We have flirted with coming in 2nd, 3rd, and in some cases 4th place nationally, which is good. We want to be first, and I would like to focus on these goals.

1. **All Districts** (All-State and All-American), there is nothing better than entire team success. We will focus on being 90% complete with all tasks by 31 Dec and 100% by 1 Feb. minus a few reports.
2. **Training:** Ensure this happens at every level and that training is available through multiple streams, so that we are totally transparent with membership to the lowest level. When you know better, you do better.
3. **Resources:** Outfit the department with all the resources needed to ensure that each committee can do its job without constraints.

4. **Communication:** We will work hard at breaking the code of the lack of information, getting down to all the comrades. This is vital to our success.

No Excuses: Excuses are tools of the incompetent that build bridges to nowhere and monuments of nothing.

Tony Brown, SC State Commander



Department President Barbara's Special Project:

Fisher House provides a free, temporary "home away from home"; lodging for families and caregivers of veterans or service members receiving care at major military and VA medical centers. These homes, often located steps away from medical facilities, allow families to stay together and support their loved ones without financial burden.

South Carolina has two houses. One is in Charleston near the Ralph H. Johnson VA Medical Center, the 2nd one at "William Jennings Bryan Dorn". Each has 16 guest rooms, a fully equipped community kitchen, a dining room with seating for 22, living & family rooms with TV and toys for children as well as an outdoor patio. Each facility has modern laundry, Wi-Fi, and is wheelchair accessible.

All donation received will be divided between the houses in Charleston & Columbia.

Please support her special project as it stays in SC and we never know if we'll ever need to stay at a Fisher House.

Note to Auxiliaries: this is a requirement for the Auxiliary of Excellence Program.



From Our Community Service Chairman

This newsletter is a great opportunity to introduce myself and the Department's Community Service Program. I was appointed Chairman back in 2017 by State Commander Sullivan after I met with him and proposed a Google form that would collect reports from every Post in SC and file them into one spreadsheet. I've served every Department Commander since then as we've moved from those Google forms to today's online reports found on our vfwsc.org website. It's now easy for Posts to report their activities, have them approved, and see the results on our Department report card. Meanwhile, our state's achievements and accomplishments are "scraped" from our database every night by VFW National Headquarters.

And why is that important? Because the Veterans of Foreign Wars can demonstrate to Congress and to the Veterans Administration with real live data. Numbers of hours of service to our communities, to our fellow veterans, dollars that we donate, causes that we support, miles that we drive to help others. This data is important! And that's why Community Service reporting is important! And easy!

How easy is it? Go to our website at www.vfwsc.org. Download the Community Service Form for Individual Comrades, fill it out and get it to your Post's designated person who gets on the computer to send in all your Post's reports electronically. Your Post Commander should have designated that person (usually the Quartermaster or Adjutant).

Here we are, a few months into the new year with our new Department Commander, Tony Brown. I have served as Community Service Chairman for our eight previous commanders, and Tony has asked me to continue in the role until I finally get it right! (LOL) He has outlined clear standards for earning All-State recognition for Community Service in his Commander's Book, page 22. I am repeating those requirements here for everyone's reference:

Community Service reports must be submitted by April 30, 2027.

1. Community Service: 5 reports per quarter
2. Americanism: 4 reports
3. Youth Activities: 4 reports
4. Safety: 12 reports

For Safety reports, each post must submit one report every month. That means a brief safety presentation should be included at each meeting, and the report should be submitted as soon as possible afterward.

Comrades who complete Safety reports on behalf of their posts must pay close attention to detail when submitting reports online.

Let's be realistic: a safety briefing usually covers topics such as heat injuries, changing smoke alarm batteries, or recognizing the signs of a heart attack or stroke. These briefings take no more than five minutes and usually only about three. **The challenge is that our report format requires time to be entered in hours, so we must convert minutes to decimals.** For example, a three-minute briefing is 3 divided by 60, or .05 hours, and a five-minute briefing is 5 divided by 60, or .08 hours.

Please pay close attention to detail when submitting your Safety reports. The guidance is posted clearly on our website: go to vfwsc.org, log in, move to **Programs**, and select **Community Service** from the drop-down menu.

There you will find what you need to know about Community Service reporting. Every post should also download the Report Form for individual Comrades: Community Service Report Form 2026–2027.

Print copies and pass them out at your meetings. When a comrade helps another veteran or performs community service, he or she can complete the form and submit it to the Commander so the activity can be reported by the post.



Nick Camera

South Carolina VFW State Community Service Chairman



MEET THE NEW CHAPLAIN

Charles (Chuck) Blankin is a Gaffney, South Carolina native.

After school he was commissioned in the Navy. He served in the 1099th Boat Company in Vietnam 1970 to 1971. As a River Rat he received a Bronze Star for his meritorious actions. He also received the Vietnam Service Ribbon and the Navy Expeditionary Medal. He left the Navy as a Lieutenant Junior Grade (LTJG) (O-2).



Charles continued to serve his country when he came home. He served with the Greenville County Sheriff's Department for 24 years. While he was serving with the Sheriff's Department he met and married his wife, Brenda.

He is a Lay Eucharistic Minister in the Anglican Church. Charles states that he "knows the power of God's Grace and Mercy".

He is currently a member of J.J. Raby VFW Post 445 on James Island. He has served as an All-American and All-State Post Commander from 2022 to 2025, and Post Chaplain for 3 years. He received the J. Francis Carlisle Award for Outstanding Post Chaplain for 2018-2019 year and 2019-2020 year.

He is a Silver Legacy Life Member and served as a National Ade-de-Camp 2020 to 2021. He was the District 1 Chaplain for 4 years.

Charles hopes to continue the example that Chaplain Wilton Fowler set as a standard. He states that he wants "to be there for the Post and District Chaplains and for every Comrade in the Department".

His advice to the incoming chaplains at the Post and District levels is "Be a steady source of help and support for all in the good and bad times."



Hurricane Helene Relief
Sr. Vice Haviland, Mrs. Blankin, Charles

Editor's Note:

Chaplain Fowler asked not to be featured in the newsletter.

We would like to extend our most sincere gratitude for his many years serving the VFW.



VFW Day of Service Sets New Record with Nearly 2,700 Events

The worldwide effort mobilized VFW and VFW Auxiliary members, veterans, military families and community supporters to address local needs and demonstrate the continued impact of veterans beyond their military service.

Projects ranged from construction, landscaping and road cleanups to veteran gravesites and memorial preservation, food and hygiene kit drives, veteran resource fairs, blood drives, habitat restoration and more.

San Antonio VFW Post 1533 partnered with Scouting America Troop 307 to support a local crisis center. Together, volunteers sorted 550 pounds of donated clothing, prepared 763 sandwiches, and assembled 600 snack bags for individuals and families in need. VFW Day of Service Committee Chair Suzzie Thomas said volunteers contributed more than 100 hours of service and found the experience deeply rewarding.

“Supporting organizations that provide food, clothing and other essential services is one of the most meaningful ways we can strengthen our community,” Thomas said. “Veterans understand the importance of answering the call to serve. By working alongside our community partners, we can help ensure that individuals and families facing difficult times receive the care, dignity and support they deserve.

VFW Day of Service began in 2022 as an outgrowth of the organization’s Still Serving campaign that highlights the ongoing dedication of veterans and service members who continue to uplift and improve their communities after their military service has ended. This year’s VFW Day of Service was sponsored by Humana, USAA, Center Well and Loan Depot.

“For the fifth year in a row, our members and veterans around the world showed up for their neighbors, strengthened their communities and continued the legacy of service that defines who we are,” said VFW National Commander Carol Whitmore. “VFW Day of Service is a powerful reminder that for our members, service does not end when the uniform comes off. The

record participation in 2026 reflects not only the momentum of this initiative, but the enduring commitment of veterans to lead by example.”

The VFW is inviting all veterans across America and around the world to join in the 2027 VFW Day of Service to show that veterans never stop serving.

To register for a 2027 event, get resources, find an event to join or see how other veterans around the country are making a difference, visit VFWDayofService.org.



Steak and Shake Partnership with Department of Veterans Affairs

The Department of Veterans Affairs and Steak 'n Shake today announced an agreement to promote VA benefits and services and make it easier for Veterans to become owner-operators of Steak 'n Shake franchises. As part of the public-private partnership, VA and Steak 'n Shake have signed a memorandum of understanding under which:

- Steak 'n Shake will waive its \$10,000 fee under its Franchise Partner Program for Veterans seeking to run their own Steak 'n Shake franchise.
- Steak 'n Shake restaurants across the nation will promote awareness of VA healthcare and benefits through in-restaurant signage and on its website.
- Steak 'n Shake will prioritize the hiring of Veterans and VA beneficiaries, including family members, caregivers and survivors, for leadership positions across the company.

As part of the initiative, Steak 'n Shake will prioritize qualified Veterans in its franchise pipeline and waive franchise fees for Veterans participating in the Franchise Partner Program, creating a direct pathway to restaurant ownership.

If Veterans have any questions about the news release, you can direct them to the Steak 'n Shake website for more franchising information.

Please contact CMA Marlon Hinds (Marlon.Hinds@va.gov) if you have any questions.



Meet your new Editor Team:

David & Beate Lies are Life members of Post 12102 in Walterboro; Quartermaster / Adjutant and President, respectively.

David served in the Navy's Submarine Force for 13.5 years. They met during his time aboard USS Sea Devil (SSN-664), during a port of call in Kiel, Germany. Beate joined the Auxiliary in 2014; David joined the Post 2 years later.

David earned his first eligibility in 1988 when his boat may or may not have been operating possibly or possibly not in or near the territorial waters of a hostile nation, where he may or may not have been in close proximity of hostile forces. He earned the Navy Expeditionary Medal for this patrol. He then served during Desert Storm where he earned the Southwest Service Medal.

STILL SERVING DOGS

HOW ARE YOU STILL SERVING WITH YOUR DOG?

Across the country and around the world, America's veterans continue to serve — often with the support of a canine companion. VFW wants to hear these stories of service and how your dog helps you show up for your **Still Serving** commitment.

Share your experience with ...



Service Dogs



Working and Therapy Dogs



Emotional Support Dogs



A Beloved Family Pet

<https://todaysvfw.org/stillserving-dogs/>



Source: <https://todaysvfw.org/>

OUR STILL SERVING STORIES



Bill LaMotte

Little River Post 10804

Where did you serve and what did you do?

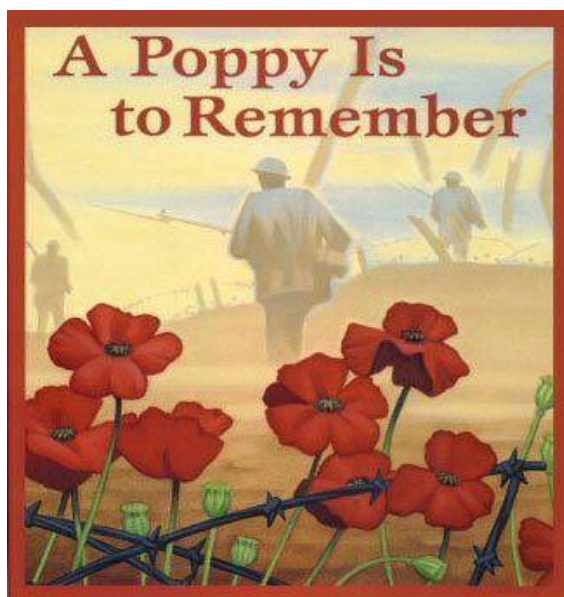
US Air Force 1966 to 1987, Air Traffic Controller

How are you Still Serving?

"Each year on the 4th of July I put together a team of four community veterans who participate in the city of North Myrtle Beach SC, "Salute to America". We carry flags on the North Myrtle Beach beaches. 80 volunteers, in teams of four, carry the American, South Carolina, POW-MIA and Purple Heart flags the entire 8 miles of North Myrtle Beach beaches. Each team carries for a 6 to 8 block segment. This event is organized by members of American Legion Post 186 in Little River, SC. This year my team laid claim to the "oldest team" on the beach with a combined age of 309 years. Me leading the way at 80, then 77, 76, 76."

Why do you do it?

"I have done this for 12 years and it is how I have planned my 4th of July for all those years. It is an amazing event to see and even more amazing to be a part of. The cheers of support from the thousands of beachgoers is a sight that has to be experienced."



Since 1922, the **Buddy Poppy** has been an integral part of the VFW community. As VFW's official memorial flower, the Poppy represents the blood shed by American service members. It reiterates that the VFW will not forget their sacrifices.

The Poppy movement was inspired by Canadian Army Col. John McCrae's famous poem, "In Flanders Fields." Poppies were originally distributed by the Franco-American Children's League to benefit children in the devastated areas of France and Belgium following WWI.

And so, it was known for veterans in VA hospitals and domiciles and in state veterans' homes, every day would be VFW Buddy Poppy Day. These men and women assemble the Poppies, tie them in bunches of ten and pack them in boxes of 500, 1,000 or 2,000 for shipment to the Posts and Auxiliaries. Poppy assembly was often used as a therapy program to provide exercise for fingers and hands crippled by wounds, disease, and effects of old age. Another reason Poppies are so important is because all proceeds from the distribution are used for veteran's welfare or for the well-being of their needy dependents and the orphans of veterans. More than 2,300 children of Veterans have been or are being cared for in the VFW National Home in Eaton Rapids, Michigan, thanks to a portion of Poppy funds.

The way forward, with the closing of VA domiciles due to COVID we had no way to assemble Poppies, the New Buddy Poppy Tin Tab was introduced to continue the mission of supporting veterans and their families. We still had millions of Poppies that needed to be assembled, and we looked for a way that would benefit the community. A partnership with Cottonwood Industries began, an adult disabilities center in Lawrence, Kansas that provides work for adults with multiple challenges who would not otherwise have an opportunity for paid work. This is how we continue to provide the traditional Buddy Poppy for distribution to our Posts.

In Flanders Fields

By John McCrae

In Flanders fields the poppies blow

Between the crosses, row on row,

That mark our place; and in the sky

The larks, still bravely singing, fly

Scarce heard amid the guns below.

We are the Dead. Short days ago

We lived, felt dawn, saw sunset glow,

Loved and were loved, and now we lie,

In Flanders fields.

Take up our quarrel with the foe:

To you from failing hands we throw

The torch; be yours to hold it high.

If ye break faith with us who die

We shall not sleep, though poppies grow

In Flanders fields.

2026-2027 JOINT SPECIAL PROJECT

**OPERATION
BRING THEM HOME****RETURNING ALL OF OUR HEROES TO
THEIR FAMILIES AND BRINGING
THEM HOME WITH HONOR**

VFW AUXILIARY NATIONAL PRESIDENT
DONNA K. MILLS
& VFW NATIONAL COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF
CORY L. GEISLER



The DPAA (Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency) is a Department of Defense agency that works to account for and repatriate U.S. service members who are or were Prisoners of War (POW) or Missing in Action (MIA) from past conflicts. Its mission is to provide families and the nation with the most complete record of these missing personnel. The DPAA uses a combination of historical research, recovery operations and forensic science including analyzing DNA to identify remains and **bring them home**.

To support this project, select the **"Make a Gift"** tab and then **"National President's 2026-2027 Special Project"** in MALTA. Or mail a check to National Headquarters earmarked "National President's/Commander-in-Chief's 2026-2027 Special Project." Members may also mail gifts earmarked for the special project to the VFW Foundation.

Members can report this under the **Veterans & Family Support Program**. Also reportable under Veterans & Family Support and integral to DPAA's efforts is what is called a Family Resource Sample (FRS). DNA from surviving family members is key to identifying missing loved ones. It is technology that did not exist when these troops were lost.

Helping this organization means helping families find peace. Your contributions will help fund the DPAA's efforts. To learn more about DPAA, visit www.dpaa.mil.



WHAT'S IN A NAME?

Post 445, Dist. 1 (James Island)

Rear Admiral J. J. Raby Post

Rear Admiral James Joseph Raby (US Navy)

(September 17, 1874, Bay City, MI – January 15, 1934, Midway, GA).

Raby was appointed a midshipman on September 9, 1891. Commissioned as an ensign on July 1, 1895, he advanced rapidly in rank, becoming commander on July 1, 1914, captain on November 23, 1919, and rear admiral on November 1, 1927.

In 1912, he commanded the battleship *Oregon* (BB-3) with additional duty as Commander of the port of Apra, Guam. During World War I, took out the first merchant convoy under American escort during the war. He received the Navy Cross for convoy escort duty while commanding *Albany* (CL-23) and later *Missouri* (BB-11). He held a commission as an Air Pilot and often flew his own plane.

After various assignments in Washington, D.C., in 1922 Raby became Commandant of the Naval Air Station Pensacola, Florida, until 1926, and later of the 8th Naval District. In 1931, he became Commandant of the 6th Naval District with additional duty as Commandant of the Charleston Navy Yard, Charleston, South Carolina. In January 1934, he was transferred from command of the Sixth Naval District to San Francisco, where he was scheduled to assume command of the Twelfth Naval District on 1 February.

He died near Midway, Georgia, approximately 30 miles south Savannah, in a traffic accident on January 15, 1934, when the car in which he was riding turned over in attempting to pass another. He was 59 years old. He is buried at Arlington National Cemetery, Section 6, Site 9629. His wife, Jane Callaghan Raby, sustained major injuries but survived, and died in 1957. She is buried in the same plot as Admiral Raby.

It amuses me to think that your group
spends so much time
looking for new members
when I was there all the time
Do you remember me?
I'm the person you asked to join.
I paid my dues and was asked to be a
loyal and faithful member.
I'm the person who came to every meeting,
but nobody paid attention to me.
I tried to be friendly, but everyone seemed to have
their own friends to talk and sit with.
I sat with different people several times, but they
did not pay much attention to me.
I hoped somebody would ask me to join one
of the committees or do something
but no one did.
Finally, because of illness I missed a meeting.
When I came again no one asked me
where I had been.
I guess it didn't matter much whether I came or not.
Next time I decided to stay home and
watch a good TV show.
When I came back again no one asked
where I was the month before.
You might say I'm a good person,
fun loving and religious.

You know what else I am?

I'm the member who never came back.



Don't forget to make your voice heard!

2026-2027 VFW-SVA Legislative Fellowship Applications Now Open

Program allows student veteran VFW members to engage members of Congress

WASHINGTON (Aug. 17, 2026)

The Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) and Student Veterans of America (SVA) are now accepting applications from student veterans interested in participating in the upcoming 2026-2027 VFW-SVA Legislative Fellowship program. Since 2014, the fellowship has brought select student veterans, who must be VFW members or membership eligible, to Washington, D.C., to meet face to face with their senators, representatives and staff members.

Student veterans interested in applying must complete an application package that includes a 3–5 page essay and a 30–60 second video outlining program interest. Applicants must also submit a resume, proof of current enrollment at an accredited college or university and proof of military service. Candidates will participate in a virtual or phone interview with the selection committee.

“When I say, ‘One team, one mission, veterans first,’ this is what I’m talking about,” said VFW National Commander Cory Geisler. “The VFW-SVA Legislative Fellowship program is a prime example of VFW members stepping forward to rally around a common goal and lead not only on Capitol Hill but also on their campuses and in their communities as they seek to improve the lives of current and future student veterans.”

Past fellows have earned academic credit for their experience, found internships, accepted additional academic opportunities and landed full-time employment because of their fellowship experience. Several fellows have even had their research incorporated into laws, which has a lasting impact on veterans, service members and their families.

VFW-SVA Legislative Fellowship opportunities are open to all enrolled student veterans who are VFW members or eligible for membership. VFW eligibility criteria can be [found here](#). The program is open to all majors, and some students may be eligible for college credit.

“The VFW-SVA Legislative Fellowship gives student veterans the opportunity to turn their lived experiences into meaningful action,” said SVA President and Chief Executive Officer Cory Boatwright. “Through mentorship, advocacy training, community engagement, and direct interaction with policymakers, fellows learn how to transform the challenges

facing their communities into meaningful, bipartisan policy solutions. Together with the VFW, we’re developing the next generation of student veteran advocates, strengthening the voice of the veteran community, and ensuring those who have served have a seat at the table where decisions about their futures are made.”

The 2026-2027 VFW-SVA Legislative Fellowship program is scheduled from October 2026 to May 2027. Chosen fellows will work with VFW and SVA staff on a shared policy priority and participate in the 19th Annual SVA National Conference in Grapevine, Texas, Jan. 4 – 6, 2027. Fellows will also travel to Washington, D.C., for the VFW Washington Conference, Feb. 27 – March 4, 2027, where they will join more than 500 VFW advocates to bring veterans’ priorities directly to Capitol Hill.

Travel expenses will be covered for both trips including airfare, hotel accommodation, on-site transportation to/from meetings and a per diem allowance.

All applications must be submitted by 11:59 p.m. EDT on Sept. 15, 2026. For full details about the VFW-SVA fellowship and to apply, visit VFW.org/StudentFellowship or contact Gabby Kubinyi, VFW, at gkubinyi@vfw.org or Faisal Sulman, SVA, at faisal.sulman@studentveterans.org.

The VFW-SVA Legislative Fellowship is another example of the strong collaboration between the VFW and SVA that resulted from a memorandum of understanding signed by the two organizations at the SVA National Conference in January 2013.



A good Chaplain is one who doesn't wait to be asked for help, but seeks out those who may need help but are too proud to ask for it.

A great Chaplain is one who never judges a person's motives but prays for their need and for their motives to be God inspired.

P/S Chaplain Wilton Fowler

LIFE MEMBERSHIP FEES



ONE TIME
PAYMENT.
LIFELONG
COMMITMENT.



LIFE MEMBERSHIP
FEES ARE
NOT REFUNDABLE.



A LIFE MEMBERSHIP
IS A LASTING WAY TO SHOW
YOUR SUPPORT AND STAY
CONNECTED TO OUR
MISSION AND VALUES.



WHY GO LIFE?

- ★ ONE-TIME PAYMENT
- ★ NEVER PAY DUES AGAIN
- ★ STRENGTHENS OUR ORGANIZATION
- ★ SUPPORTS VETERANS AND THEIR FAMILIES
- ★ LEAVES A LASTING LEGACY

**INVEST IN TODAY.
IMPACT FOREVER.**

THANK YOU

FOR BEING A VITAL PART OF THE
VFW AUXILIARY FAMILY!

ATTAINED AGE AT 12/31
OF YEAR APPLYING FOR
LIFE MEMBERSHIP.

THROUGH
20

THROUGH 20

\$253

21-25

\$242

26-30

\$230

31-35

\$219

36-40

\$213

41-45

\$201

46-50

\$196

51-55

\$184

56-60

\$173

61-65

\$161

66-70

\$150

71-75

\$132

76-80

\$109

81-85

\$86

86-90

\$69

91 AND OVER

\$58

STRONGER TOGETHER. ★ SERVING VETERANS. ★ HONORING SACRIFICE.

Veterans push for Gulf War Illness designation as a VA disability

Some veterans groups are urging the Department of Veterans Affairs to formally add Gulf War Illness to its disability rating schedule for determining compensation and medical coverage for sick and injured veterans. The inclusion would, for the first time, enable veterans to qualify for disability benefits specifically for a diagnosis of Gulf War Illness connected to their active duty in the Persian Gulf, said Ronald Brown, an Army veteran who served with the 82nd Airborne Division and is leading the effort. The VA uses its disability rating schedule to calculate monthly tax-free disability payments and determine eligibility for health care and other benefits for veterans with service-connected diseases and injuries. Because Gulf War Illness is a multi-symptom condition with no known single cause, the VA historically managed it as an “undiagnosed illness” or “medically unexplained chronic multi-symptom illness,” rather than an explicit disease, said Brown, who works as a toxic wound consultant with Vietnam Veterans of America. The VVA has a stated mission to assist and represent veterans from all conflicts. After the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recognized Gulf War Illness with a medical diagnostic code in October 2025, many Gulf War veterans and their advocates said they expected the disease would be added to the VA’s Schedule for Rating Disabilities. But veterans and their advocates say that has not occurred. The VA said in a statement that it now adds the CDC’s new code into a veteran’s medical record upon request. “But this is not a necessary step to receive comprehensive medical care at VA for Gulf War Illness,” the VA said. “VA has decades of experience diagnosing, treating and researching Gulf War Illness, and will continue this work on behalf of the thousands of veterans who have been diagnosed with it.” People with Gulf War Illness — which has no known cure — may experience chronic problems with fatigue, wheezing and shortness of breath, skin rashes, inflammation, memory loss and other cognitive disorders, according to the National Institutes of Health. “We went over healthy and came back sick. That has not changed in 34 years,” said Jeffrey Ford, who curates an online support group for veterans with Gulf War Illness. “What has changed is that there are now people, some with good intentions and some with institutional interests, making decisions about how our illnesses get categorized.” The VA has estimated that Gulf War Illness affects more than a third of the roughly 700,000 service members deployed to the Persian Gulf in 1990 and 1991. “The first time I got sick was within 15 minutes of the demolition of an Iraqi chemical weapons depot in Khamisiyah in March 1991,” said Brown, whose unit secured the compound prior to its destruction. “I stayed sick, came home sick and left the military sick,” said Brown, who was honorably discharged in February 1997 after eight years of service. Anthony Hardie, an Army veteran and the national chair and director of Veterans for Common Sense,

said that Gulf War Illness claims often are designated as “undiagnosed illnesses” — a category with a high denial rate. Hardie and other veterans are advocating for the VA not only to include Gulf War Illness as a presumptive condition for benefits but also to create a new rating schedule for the disease itself. “A disability rating schedule for Gulf War Illness is long overdue. Now that the CDC has finally recognized GWI with a diagnostic code, VA should follow suit and finally make a rating schedule,” said Hardie, a former staff sergeant who now lives in Florida. “Many of us veterans developed symptoms while in theater that never went away. My symptoms have worsened over the years, and my medical issues have compounded.” The veterans also acknowledged that they do not have an estimate of how much it would cost to compensate former service members with a designated Gulf War Illness rating. “The ‘undiagnosed illness’ determination has absolutely failed the veterans it was intended to help,” Brown said. “Adding Gulf War Illness to 38 CFR 3.317 would likely provide broader and more meaningful benefits to Gulf War veterans than the current ‘undiagnosed illness’ framework has been able to provide.” Section 3.317 refers to federal rules guiding VA compensation for disability due to undiagnosed illnesses and medically unexplained chronic multi-symptom illnesses in veterans. The VA website describes Gulf War Illness as a cluster of “medically unexplained chronic symptoms.” Veterans have qualified for disability compensation based on their symptoms, in lieu of a Gulf War Illness rating, Brown said. “VA presumes certain chronic, unexplained symptoms existing for six months or more are related to Gulf War service without regard to cause. These ‘presumptive’ illnesses must have begun or were exacerbated after active duty in the Southwest Asia theater of military operations,” according to the website. The VA website lists qualifying illnesses for compensation as fibromyalgia, chronic fatigue syndrome, gastrointestinal disorders and “undiagnosed illnesses.” But the website does not list Gulf War Illness as an eligible presumptive condition. Paul Sullivan, a Gulf War Army veteran and former project manager at the VA, said that the agency needs to issue regulations stating that veterans with a Gulf War diagnosis can be compensated for their illness and provided with free health care. “For decades, countless Desert Shield and Desert Storm veterans suffering from Gulf War Illness have had their claims with VA denied,” said Sullivan, a former cavalry scout in the 1st Armored Division during Operation Desert Storm in Iraq and Kuwait in 1991. “Once those regulations are in place, veterans can talk to their providers about placing Gulf War Illness as a diagnosis in their records.”

Source - Stars and Stripes, <https://www.stripes.com/veterans/>



COMBAT TESTED GAMING

By the **VFW**
VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS.

Building Community, Purpose, and Camaraderie for Veterans and Families

OUR MISSION

The Veterans of Foreign Wars established Combat Tested Gaming (CTG) to build unbreakable community among veterans through the shared language of online and in-person gaming.

We fight isolation with headsets and hearts. We turn strangers into battle buddies. Through high-stakes tournaments, live streams on Twitch and YouTube, veteran-led podcasts, and real-world LAN events at VFW Posts nationwide, CTG delivers purpose, competition, and camaraderie — all in one server.

**NO ONE FIGHTS ALONE.
NOT ON THE BATTLEFIELD.
NOT IN THE LOBBY.**

CONNECT WITH CTG

COMMUNITY

Meet veterans who understand the value of teamwork and shared experience.

LIVE iRACING

Watch live-broadcast iRacing every Sunday at 8:00 PM ET.

CREATOR STREAMS

CTG creators stream all kinds of content, from Arma to World of Warcraft.

MEMBER SERVERS

Members can play together on dedicated CTG servers for most games.

RESOURCES

Our Discord is filled with resources for veterans and families.

JOIN THE CTG DISCORD

CONNECT WITH US: discord.gg/combattestedgaming

Follow us: twitch.tv/combattestedgaming • youtube.com/@CTG-Racing



PTSD Service Dog

Looking for his Veteran

The current owners of “Buddy” would like to donate this little guy to another Veteran who also suffers from PTSD.

He is trained to provide pressure against you when needed and to also walk next to a scooter. He was recently trained by *Activate Canine* in Summerville. Alicia, who is the owner of *Activate Canine*, is the daughter of a Veteran who's also a member of VFW Post 12102. She is assisting in this transfer and has offered to provide training with the new Veteran. She will also provide lifetime training to both the Veteran and this service dog at no cost.

Buddy has recently completed basic obedience and service dog training by *Activate Canine*. He's roughly one year old.

Also, before placement into a new home, the new owner must consent to a home inspection per the current owners' instructions. This will be done by *Activate Canine*.

For more information email
activatecaninesc@gmail.com.

DISTRICT 1

DISTRICT 1!

★ WE ARE PROUD OF YOU! ★

*Congratulations to our District 1 members
who now hold Department positions!*

★ PATRICE LAMB	DEPARTMENT SR. VICE
★ SHAREN PETERSON	DEPARTMENT TREASURER
★ ANGELA GASKINS	DEPARTMENT GUARD
★ JANE FOX	DEPARTMENT ASSISTANT TREASURER
★ CURTIS PETERSON	JR. VICE COMMANDER
★ CHARLES BLANKIN	CHAPLAIN
★ BETTY HILLIARD	JUDGE ADVOCATE
★ REX BROWN	INSPECTOR



DISTRICT 5

Aux. 2889

- Working with Rolling Thunder on 9/11 to display flags over the Interstate 77 bridge
- Hosting a Veterans Day Luncheon on November 11
- Held a food drive for the Veterans Hospital Food Pantry in Columbia, SC

Aux. 3746

- Hosting "A Jazz Night to Remember" on September 18, from 7:00 PM to 12:00 AM
- Held a back-to-school drive with Clinton College for detergent and toiletries
- Planning an upcoming yard sale

Aux. 9138

- Serving breakfast every third Saturday of the month
- Offering Sunday meal specials
- Hosting a Red Cross Blood Drive in November

Aux. 12136

- Hosted School Flag Education on August 20
- Hosting a Car Show on October 10
- Hosting a Pig Pickin' in October
- Sponsoring the Traveling Vietnam Wall
- Hosting monthly 50/50 Dinners



Recently, while on vacation in Michigan, my wife and I had the opportunity to visit the VFW National Home in Eaton Rapids, Michigan. We stopped at the Administrative Building which houses offices and the apparel store. One of the staff offered us a golf cart tour of the 8-acre home site, which we gladly accepted. Riding through the neighborhood we passed many of the 95 children, along with their families, who live in one of the 44 homes that make up this small rural outpost which is surrounded by fields of corn and beans. Other facilities included the large gym, maintenance buildings, a 22-unit guest house to be used by overnight guests, a ball diamond and soccer fields and even a fire dept with a very old but well-maintained fire engine. The 44 homes, with 2 more under construction, that house the families are all well maintained brick structures with basements and either 3 or 4 bedrooms. The homes are usually sponsored by state departments, South Carolina sponsors a home. All the families can stay at the National Home as long as it takes to complete their program. Four years is not unusual for a length of stay. Families come from throughout the country to stay at the National Home. We all can be very proud of our VFW and what it has done for families who need a helping hand.

Ken Obriot

Commander District 5

CALLING ALL DISTRICT COMMANDERS & PRESIDENTS

Here's a column just for you to brag about what your Posts and Auxiliaries have done over the past 3 months.

Please send emails with photos and short write-ups to

scvfwnews@gmail.com

**The deadline for the
January 2027 issue is 12/15.**



Veterans Experience **Action Center**

Over the weekend of 10 - 12 September our SC VSO team, Nicole & JJ, assisted some 20 Veterans in working on their VA claims.

Thank you to the Comrades that went out to the Ladson Fairgrounds to help set up and assist the team during the three-day claims-clinic.



DISTRICT 6



Veterans gathered at Taki's Diner in Darlington on Wednesday, June 24, 2026, during a meeting to establish a new Veterans of Foreign Wars post.

They are currently waiting to receive their Charter with a membership strength of 34 Veterans, 25 male Veterans and 9 Female Veterans for the new **LTC Charity E. Adams VFW Post.**

"If the new Post hadn't opened, our District could've very well been dissolved." We hope that District 6's story will encourage and inspire other posts, districts and veterans of working together as a team and working together can accomplish great things, because "TEAMWORK Makes The Dream Work"

- Laurie Strange, District 6 Commander

UPDATE: South Carolina's newest Post received their charter. They are Post 12252. Read more about it in the January 2017 newsletter.



DISTRICT 7

Post 6091 Honors Purple Heart Recipients in Community Ceremony

The Festival Marketplace in Dillon, South Carolina, transformed into a space of reflection, gratitude, and community pride as VFW Post 6091 organized a Purple Heart Recognition Ceremony on August 7, 2026. This event honored the brave service members who were wounded or have made the ultimate sacrifice in the line of duty. Six Purple Heart recipients were in attendance, each with their own story of sacrifice and courage.

The guest speaker at the ceremony was Enrique Murillo, a former Special Forces member and Purple Heart recipient. His personal insights resonated with the audience. He shared his military experiences, the challenges he faced during and after his service, and the resilience it took to overcome them. His words served as a profound reminder that the Purple Heart represents more than just a medal; it symbolizes extraordinary bravery and the lasting costs of combat.

The event garnered significant support from the community, including Representative Hayes, Mayor McColl, local civic leaders, VA Healthcare representatives, fellow Veterans, citizens, and families. Their collective presence highlighted the strong bond between Dillon's Veterans and the community they continue to inspire.

By hosting this important event, VFW Post 6091 ensured that the Purple Heart recipients' valor is not only commemorated but also honored in a public forum.

This ceremony stood as a tribute to those who served and sacrificed, reinforcing the shared responsibility of our community to recognize and celebrate the men and women who have given so much for our Nation's freedoms.



WHY WERE AMERICAN SOLDIERS IN WWI CALLED DOUGHBOYS?

It's unknown exactly how U.S. service members in World War I (1914-18) came to be dubbed doughboys—the term most typically was used to refer to troops deployed to Europe as part of the American Expeditionary Forces—but there are a variety of theories about the origins of the nickname.

According to one explanation, the term dates to the Mexican War of 1846-48, when American infantrymen made long treks over dusty terrain, giving them the appearance of being covered in flour, or dough. As a variation of this account goes, the men were coated in the dust of adobe soil and as a result were called “adobes,” which morphed into “dobies” and, eventually, “doughboys.”

Among other theories, according to “War Slang” by Paul Dickson the American journalist and lexicographer H.L. Mencken claimed the nickname could be traced to Continental Army soldiers who kept the piping on their uniforms white through the application of clay. When the troops got rained on the clay on their uniforms turned into “doughy blobs,” supposedly leading to the doughboy moniker.

However doughboy came into being, it was just one of the nicknames given to those who fought in the Great War. For example, “poilu” (“hairy one”) was a term for a French soldier, as a number of them had beards or mustaches, while a popular slang term for a British soldier was “Tommy,” an abbreviation of Tommy Atkins, a generic name (along the lines of John Doe) used on government forms.

Source: [history.com](https://www.history.com)



EXCITING NEWS FOR BLIND VETERANS ACROSS SOUTH CAROLINA!

We now have three locations scheduled to distribute Ray-Ban Meta smart glasses at no cost to eligible blind veterans!

The Palmetto Council of the Blind, an affiliate of the American Council of the Blind, is partnering with Meta through this national initiative.

A special thank-you to the South Carolina Commission for the Blind, the South Carolina Vocational Rehabilitation Department, and the South Carolina Chapter of Foundation Fighting Blindness for providing distribution locations.

We also thank the National Federation of the Blind of South Carolina, VFW posts, American Legion posts, and Lions Clubs for sharing this opportunity and helping us reach blinded veterans in their communities.

MYRTLE BEACH

Tuesday, October 13, 2026

1:00–4:00 p.m.

Tidal Creek Brewhouse

3421 Knoles Street

Myrtle Beach, SC 29577

COLUMBIA

Friday, October 16, 2026

9:00 a.m.–1:00 p.m.

South Carolina Commission for the Blind

1430 Confederate Avenue

Columbia, SC 29201

NORTH CHARLESTON

Thursday, October 22, 2026

10:00 a.m.–1:00 p.m.

South Carolina Vocational Rehabilitation
Department

4360 Dorchester Road

North Charleston, SC 29405

WHO QUALIFIES?

Recipients must:

- Be a U.S. military veteran
- Provide proof of military service or veteran status
- Acknowledge that they are legally blind
- Have a compatible smartphone capable of running the Meta AI app
- Attend one of the distribution events in person

WHAT SHOULD VETERANS BRING?

- A DD214, VA ID, military ID, or other official proof of military service
- The compatible smartphone they plan to use with the glasses
- A fully charged phone
- Their Apple Account or Google Account login information

Veterans are encouraged to download the Meta AI app before attending.

Proof of military service will be viewed only to confirm eligibility. It will not be copied or retained.

Advance registration is strongly encouraged. Registered veterans will receive priority during the first hour of each event. Eligible walk-ins may be served afterward while supplies remain.

Register and find additional information at:

<https://www.acb.org/glasses-blinded-veterans>

Only one pair may be provided to each eligible veteran. Glasses must be received in person and cannot be shipped.

Please share this information with veterans, families, veterans' organizations, blindness organizations, and community partners throughout South Carolina. Reach out to us if you have questions about any of these events.

Palmetto Council of the Blind
<https://scblind.org>
info@scblind.org

The graphic features a background of an American flag on the left and a South Carolina state flag on the right, set against a sunset sky. In the bottom left corner, silhouettes of soldiers are visible. The VFW logo is prominently displayed in the top left, and the South Carolina state flag is in the top right. The central text is arranged in a hierarchy of banners and boxes, celebrating current achievements and setting future goals.

VFW
DEPARTMENT OF
SOUTH CAROLINA

NO ONE DOES MORE FOR VETERANS®

MISSION: 100% MEMBERSHIP
DEPARTMENT IS CURRENTLY AT **86.11%**
#1 IN THE SOUTHERN CONFERENCE

SERVICE
SERVICE
HONOR
COMMITMENT
COMMUNITY

★ EVERY POST • EVERY MEMBER • ONE TEAM ★

CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR 100% POSTS!

★	★	★
VFW POST 3412 LAKE CITY, SC 102.77%	VFW POST 6738 EUTAWVILLE, SC 100%	VFW POST 10601 AIKEN, SC 100%

Congratulations to these outstanding Posts for achieving and exceeding the Department's 100% Membership Goal!
Your hard work, dedication, recruiting, and commitment to our veterans continue to strengthen the VFW Department of South Carolina.

WHO WILL BE NEXT?

RECRUIT ★ RETAIN ★ RENEW
ONE TEAM ★ ONE MISSION ★ 100%

★ **LET'S MAKE SOUTH CAROLINA 100%! ★**

DEPARTMENT GOAL: 90% NLT DECEMBER 2026
DEPARTMENT GOAL: 100% NLT 28 FEBRUARY 2027

VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS
SERVICE ★ ALWAYS ★ FOREVER

*South Carolina
Veterans Stronger Together*

ROBERT'S RULES OF ORDER

★ CLUB CHEAT SHEET ★

★ BASIC FLOW ★

- 1 Call to Order
- 2 Motion
- 3 Second
- 4 Debate
- 5 Vote
- 6 Result Announced



★ HOW TO SPEAK ★

- ★ Address the chair first
- ★ One speaker at a time
- ★ Stay on the motion
- ★ Keep comments respectful

★ COMMON MOTIONS

-  **Main Motion** — *brings business before the group*
-  **Amend** — *changes the motion*
-  **Table** — *sets the matter aside temporarily*
-  **Previous Question** — *ends debate and forces a vote*
-  **Reconsider** — *reopens a decision*
-  **Adjourn** — *ends the meeting*

★ KEY RULES ★

- ★ A motion usually needs a second
- ★ The chair remains neutral
- ★ Majority vote usually decides
- ★ 2/3 vote is often needed to limit debate or close nominations
- ★ Point of Order — used when rules are broken
- ★ Quorum — minimum members needed to conduct business

★ QUICK TIPS ★

- ★ No side conversations
- ★ Debate ideas, not people
- ★ Follow the agenda
- ★ Respect the chair
- ★ Keep order, then move business



★ RUN THE MEETING. KEEP THE ORDER. HANDLE BUSINESS. ★