

VFW Massachusetts

October -November 2024

Issue 01



**COMMANDER &
PRESIDENTS'
MESSAGE**

**LEGISLATIVE
PRIORITIES**

**WHATS HAPPENING
AROUND THE STATE**

**RECRUITING &
MEMBERSHIP**

UPCOMING EVENTS



VFW
MASSACHUSETTS
NO ONE DOES MORE FOR VETERANS

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VFW NATIONAL CONVENTION

LETTER FROM OUR COMMANER

Now that the first quarter of the 24 24 year is over. Lets pause to see all that has been done. In July, members of the department and auxiliary visited Louisville Kentucky for the National Convention. Lots of VFW business was conducted including historical roll call vote on the floor over a proposal that would have profoundly impacted the VFW.

Next up, members of the VFW Riders from Massachusetts visited the National home for Riders Day. We hit some rain on the way home but the cause outweighed any moans and groans due to the weather.

In between the National Events, I have been Visiting Districts and Posts. I have discussed the importance of incorporations and by-laws and bonds and..... I also discussed the highlights of both the National and State Membership programs. Feedback from members has been excellent with some great questions coming from District 7 and District 9 so far.

We also held a Commanders BBQ and were given a small presentation by the Commander's Special Project. Please visit www.thetrp.org for further information on the project.

We also held our first OTI session at the Ludlow Veterans Center which was a great success. Over 20 showed up from Posts and Districts some as far away as District 6 (Bravo Zulu). Attending OTI puts them well on their way towards earning All-State and All-American Status.

Membership itself is off to a roaring start with the Department almost 5 percent ahead of where it was a year ago when the Life Member Payouts were made. Don't forget about the Life Member program as well. The Department has set aside limited funds to pay ½ of a life membership for any member. It can also be used to recruit new members as well. Make sure to let folks know about it when you are signing them up.

Lastly, we are asked to help our fellow comrades. Hurricane Helene had devastating effects in North Carolina, Florida, Tennessee, Georgia and South Carolina. National has mobilized their efforts. Please visit www.vfw.org/relief to see how you can help. As well the Department is already sending funds to those affected through the Massachusetts Foundation.

Lets keep the good work going and remember as always #NoVeteranLeftBehind



STATE COMMANDER



FROM THE AUXILIARY PRESIDENT



Greetings to the leaders and members of the Massachusetts VFW! Commander Freitas and I are working diligently – together and apart – to meet the high goals we have set for 2024-2025, and to meet the high standards set by Past State Commanders and Past Department Presidents. We are both around 83% in membership. This is October 1st!

Our membership chairs PSC Keith Jackson and Auxiliary Conductor Paul LaPorte excel in a vision of growth for now and the future that is motivating members on both sides to recruit members for both sides. That's exactly what we need to increase Auxiliary membership by 50% (Goal June 30 – 150%) and to increase VFW by 2% (Goal June 30 – 102%) I have been happy to join up with the VFW on various recruiting adventures and spend time with PSC Mike Raymond, State JVC Christine Tron, and District 12 Commander Stephenie Jones. It was really exciting to recruit an Auxiliary member with National President Brenda Bryant at the New England Pirate Museum. Always ask, and always carry an application!

I am very pleased to have spent time this quarter in Districts 5, 7, 8, 10, 12, 15, and 18 with VFW Commanders, District Presidents, Line Officers, and Membership. I enjoy discussing communication strategies, ideas for working together, and promoting the legacy of the VFW – now and in the future. What can we do together to be even better? No explanation is needed on how we work together on Auxiliary programs such as: Buddy Poppy/National Home, Hospital, Legislative, Membership, Mentoring, Scholarships, and Veteran and Family Support. (If you do have questions – reach out!) It is harder to envision how we can work together on Americanism (can we do a joint patriotic holiday event?), Auxiliary Outreach (it's what you call community service – what event can we support or hold together for our community, fire or police?), Historian/Media Relations (can you do a joint press release, jointly go on a radio or tv show to promote the VFW & Aux), and Youth Activities (do you host a Boy Scout or Girl Scout Troop, a NG Family Readiness Group, a young Marines detachment, or volunteer with youth? How can we help our youth within what we do at the VFW?) This is such a strong beginning! I can not wait to see all that 2024-2025 holds in store! Keep up the great work! (PS Pay your dues now! Please!)

Kelly Duggee-Egwin

DEPARTMENT PRESIDENT



**VFW AUXILIARY
MASSACHUSETTS**

THE STORY BEHIND THE STATE PRESIDENT SPECIAL PROJECT LOGO FOR 2024-2025

The color is a deep purple; the purple of the combat wounded veterans Military Order of the Purple Heart USA. The main body of the logo is a purple heart - that My grandfather PFC John T. Mulhane received when killed in action in Germany, March 1945, WW2; AND my youngest brother CPT Brian C Durkee unfortunately received on the ninth anniversary of September 11, 2010 during a rocket attack in Kandahar, Afghanistan. Embedded inside is the Gold Star of Grandfather John. Within that is the Blue Star of Active Duty Families due to the active-duty service of my Family, especially my Dad CPT William "Duke" Durkee, CPT William "Scot" Durkee. CPTS Brien C. Durkee, and WOC3 Chief Sean T. Durkee (who is still in the National Guard and occasionally still on active duty). And finally, in the center, is the white star reminding us that veterans are lost to military related suicide and PTSD on a daily basis. We must never forget any of them.



(Above) DMA AUX PRES KDE, DMA AUX CONDUCTOR Paul LaPorte, and DMA VFW JVC Christine Tron recruiting at Kelly's Special Project Military Friends Foundations MA Run for the Fallen.



KDE in the parade of department Presidents at the National Home during the annual Auxiliary CAFE event



KDE and Waltham State Representative Tom Stanley (D-9th Middlesex) honoring the fallen at the 23rd anniversary of 9/11 at the Waltham Emergency Services Complex.

From the Desk of the State Quartermaster



Comrades,

I hope you all had an enjoyable summer! Now that we're into October we should have our bonds submitted to the state (they were due August 31st) and our quarterly audits should be coming in soon, they're due on October 31st.

The Life Membership Program is alive and well, so continue sending those upgrade applications in and we'll process them. Remember though, don't wait until the day before you expire to submit it. Please get it in at least 45 days prior to expiring (or sooner) so that we have time to process it before the expiration date.

Quartermaster training is a part of each of the OTIs. Let me know if you have questions regarding what you learned at OTI and I'll be happy to talk with you. E-mail is the best way to reach me. Don't forget that your Annual Reports are due to the Secretary of State's office on November 1st.

We're continuing to push compliance with the IRS, so if your post has had its non-profit status revoked please reach out to me if I haven't already reached out to you. The revocation list is public record and I do search it from time to time and have reached out to post commanders and quartermasters in the past. But that also means potential donors can search it too and see that you're not in good standing with the IRS. That means they won't get a tax deduction for their donation and will probably stop them from donating to you. Depending on how long your non-profit status has been revoked will dictate how complicated the process to get reinstated is. I can't do this for you, there's just not enough time, but I can provide a couple of people for you to talk to and hire to do this for you.

A couple of other things to share we're finalizing the location for the Voice of Democracy and Patriot's Pen Banquet. We've signed on with the Sheraton in Springfield to host our State Convention in 2025, 2026, and 2027. We're excited about this location because it's close to many restaurants and activities. MGM Casino is right down the street and the Basketball Hall of Fame is nearby. Six Flags is also close, so we're hoping this will help draw more members and families to our convention.

Please let me know if there's anything I can do for you. I'm happy to jump on a call or a Zoom. Just email me to set up a time to talk.

Take care, Comrades!

A handwritten signature in dark green ink that reads "Ernest 'Scott' Carruthers, Jr." in a cursive script.

Ernest "Scott" Carruthers Jr.



Department Adjutant

From the Adjutant's Desk

Now that Fall is here, it's time to get your posts caught up on items due as we are coming into a very busy time for the VFW. Many posts are still missing items that were due in July and August. Please get with your post officers at your next meeting and ask them to get caught up. All Posts should have their Voice of Democracy and Patriot Pen entries turned into their Districts by October 31st. District Chairs need to work closely with our Department Chairs this year due to major changes on how things get reported. Stu Young is our Voice of Democracy Chair and Heath Joseph is our Patriot Pen chair. Make sure your post gets credit for participating.

In addition to the Officer Training already scheduled, I will be offering regular hour-long sessions on ZOOM to go over the OMS system and other areas that could assist posts further. District commanders will have the details when available and I will be posting them on social media. Please note, all items being turned into the Department, whether it is for the Commander, Line Officers, the Adjutant or the State Quartermaster must be sent to the Department Headquarters. There are no exceptions to this and include bonds, trustee quarterly reports, poppy orders, banquet registrations, and all donations. In this way, we can ensure your post gets proper credit and it helps to streamline services for you. Your cooperation is greatly appreciated. If you have officers who do not want to do this for whatever reason, please help us convince them to do this. For example, we still have posts that insist on sending the National Home donation directly to the home. That makes it hard for us to track your post donation and it does not guarantee the donation is going to the Massachusetts House. District meetings are vitally important to sharing much needed information with our members. If your post does not attend those meetings, your post membership missing out. Post Commanders are required to attend, or to designate someone to attend in their place, and then share the information at your post meetings. Too many posts across our department are not going to those meetings. You can help by asking your Commander at your next meeting or by volunteering to go in their place if they are unable to. So many changes have occurred over the past few years and many more to come, don't miss out. Don't forget about the ongoing Life Membership Incentive. Ask your officers about it. As always, we are here to assist. If we don't know the answer, we will find it or direct you to the right people.

Bill LeBeau
Department Adjutant

SENIOR VICE COMMANDER OFFICERS' BRIEF



This year is already off to an incredible start with our membership north of 80% and following another electrifying National Convention in Louisville, KY in July.

With the election of Al Lipphardt of Georgia as our Commander-in-Chief, we may see the end of a proud era with this fiery, energetic leader quite possibly being the last Vietnam Veteran to lead our organization nationally. Our Vietnam Vets still have much to offer but should feel pride in handing off the care of the VFW to the Veterans of the GWOT generation, as an organization that is still alive, relevant, and effective. They've done an incredible job and should have pride in the organization that they have left for those of us who are stepping up and coming up.

With this new generation also comes new requirements for reporting and compliance. By this I'm talking about electronic means. Every Commander, Quartermaster, and Adjutant must be able to utilize the computer and OMS in order to effectively to do their jobs now. There's no two ways around it any more. We here at State are always available to assist Posts in learning how to utilize the system and disseminate communications effectively with your members. However, everyone in leadership should know how to file their election report, type out their quarterlies, and file their bond online. As we kick off this very exciting year, I am proud of what we have been able to accomplish already, and Commander Freitas is just getting started! My chief obligation this year is to support him and assure his vision for the VFW is being carried out as to fulfill our mission and grow as an organization.

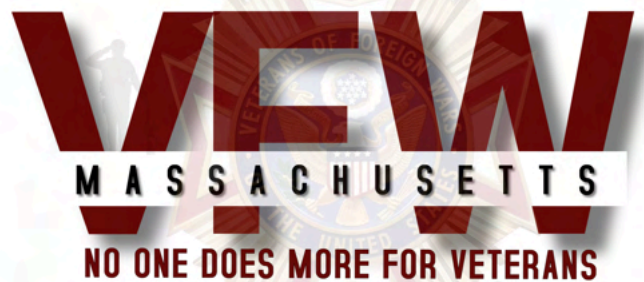
One of the terrific aspects of our mission is the identification and repatriation of MIA/KIA's. We have already seen two from WWII just this week being interred in North Adams and Agawam.

As always, I am excited about visiting you and your Districts this year during meetings as well as some of your events.

I'm just an email or a phone call away.

Troy Henke

Troy W. Henke
State Sr. Vice-Commander
VFW MA
2024-2025
#NoVeteranLeftBehind



STATE OFFICERS CORNER



Greetings, Comrades! The summer has been a flurry of events and activities in support of our veterans, families (to include Gold Star), and the community. By far, the highlight for me had been attending the milestone 125th VFW National Convention held in Louisville, KY July 27th – 31st.

As a bit of a bylaws and resolutions geek, many of my favorite sessions involved attending the discussions and subsequent voting on proposed amendments to these bylaws. Just some of the titles of these proposals that were approved are as follows:

401 Preserve the All-Volunteer Force, 402 Eliminate Sexual Assault and Harassment in the Military, 404 Keep Defense Budget Relevant, 406 Provide Full Concurrent Receipt of Military Retirement Pay and VA Disability Compensation, 411 Recognition for Afghan and Iraqi Combat Support Roles, 416 Deported Veterans, 419 Armed Forces Expeditionary Medal for Support of Ukraine; 601 Adequate Department of Veterans Affairs Budget, 602 VA Pharmaceutical Co-Payments, 604 Nursing Home Eligibility, 606 Mental Health Disorders, 607 VA Health Care for Women Veterans, 608 Expand VA Caregiver Benefits, 609 Sustainable Community Care Options, 613 Tinnitus and Hearing Loss Presumptive Compensable Service Connection, 614 VA Claims Workload, 615 Toxic Exposures, 616 Digital Claims Process, 619 Protecting VA Accreditation, 620 Appeals Modernization and Legacy Remands, 625 Veteran Housing and Food Insecurity Priorities, and 632 Expand Veteran Treatment Courts.

Again, these are most but not all the proposals that were approved during this 125th annual convention. A full listing of the Schedule of Resolutions and the results can be found as follows: www.vfw.org/MyVFW/125thNationalConventionBylaws.....ResolutionsResults.

Christine Iron

JR. VICE COMMANDER



GREETINGS, Comrades! It is with great honor that I am serving you, your Posts and Districts, and our Department as your State Judge Advocate. In this role, I am a resource to assist with bylaw, parliamentary, and rules & regulations issues. I will always do my nest to give the best advice based on our National Bylaws and Manual of Procedure, Department Bylaws, and Robert's Rules of Order (Newly Revised). And speaking about Bylaws... When was the last time that your Post's bylaws were updated? Now is a great time to get that done! Have you incorporated a "Zoom" option for your Post meetings? You can and should do it! This is a great opportunity to get more of your members involved with your Post meetings. If your Post plans on updating it's bylaws, please reach out for any assistance and advice you may need.

I know that the State Quartermaster touches on this, but ensure that all of your IRS and Massachusetts Department of State filings are up to date and accurate. Now is another good time to do this (before your Post is inspected!). With all of these administrative issues squared away, you can focus more on what we do that makes us a VFW Post, not just some group of veterans hanging out. So again, please do not hesitate to reach out of you have any questions on any topic, need advice, of just want to talk. I am here at your service!
Yours in Comradeship, Craig.

Craig DeOld

Craig DeOld
State Judge Advocate
VFW Boston Police Post 1018



STATE CHIEF OF STAFF

Comrades, this report encompasses numerous items of interest such as membership, recruiting, community service, national home pin sales, Canton Children's Christmas Party, Sponsor-A-Vet and more. Fiscal Year Quarter 1 for 2025 has officially come to a close!

Very proud to report that on the membership front our Department is already over 83.50% with over 12,170 members. We ended last year with 14,579 – so we are just over 2,400 away from hitting 100%, however our ultimate goal is at least 2,700 more members to achieve Nationals goal of 102%. We have already recruited 156 new annual members, 28 new life members, 955 members have renewed, 35 prior members have reinstated, and 129 annual members have already converted with the half-price life membership incentive! This half-price life membership upgrade is ongoing – please encourage annual members to take advantage of this great opportunity while funds last (the member or post QM MUST upgrade through the State QM Scott Carruthers for this half-price special).

Thank you and Congratulations to all of the Posts that have already reached 100% or greater. Posts 523, 662, 2498, 2902, 3007, 3104, 3236, 6539, 8164, 8507, and 10874. The Q1 lucky winners were: Large Post of 50+ members was Ludlow 3236 who won \$500 and Small Post of 49-members was West Roxbury 2902 who won \$250. The next opportunity for a chance at winning between \$250 - \$500 will be for any posts that reach at least 100% by December 31. Good Luck everyone!

Congratulations to our top five recruiters for the first quarter - PSC Raymond with 42, State JVC Christine Tron and Christopher Golden both with 14, State JA Craig Deold with 10 and D12 CDR Stephanie Jones with 8. EVERY MEMBER COUNTS!

Since it has been a great success ever since PSC/NCM Eric Segundo & PSC Jackson whom both earned All-American for our Department and has continued ever since, we are again continuing with the "Sponsor -A-Vet" program where individuals, posts, auxiliaries, districts can help sponsor the dues for a senior member age 75 who may be housebound, hospitalized or living on a fixed income so that they can continue to have access to both the state newspaper and national magazine (sponsorship donation is only \$25 – please see the "Sponsor-A-Vet" flier for more details). Thank you in advance for your support.

CONTINUE ON PAGE 11

STATE CHIEF OF STAFF

Sponsor a Vet!



The Department of Massachusetts is seeking sponsors to help our older members with their membership dues. Currently we have many members over the age of 75 in our "At-Large" Post. Many are now housebound, hospitalized, or on fixed incomes. They enjoy receiving the Department newspaper and VFW magazines.

Help us Honor those who have given so much

Any Post, Auxiliary, or person that would like to sponsor a Vet for \$25.00 will be entered into a \$200 cash drawing. For every sponsored veteran, you will receive one entry in the raffle. Posts and Auxiliaries can use their relief fund.

Contest Dates: September 15, 2024 - May 31, 2025 (Drawing at June 2025 State Convention)

Send Check to:

VFW Dept. of Massachusetts
State House, Suite 546-1
24 Beacon Street
Boston, MA 02133

In the Memo section please write "Sponsor-A-Vet"



Great to see many Posts reporting all of the great community service being performed in our communities including donations to many worthy causes. If your Post has not done so already, PLEASE be sure to have your Post QM or ADJ log into the VFW Online Membership System (OMS), Click on the "All-American" dashboard tab, then the "Entries" tab" and enter your event, information or donation amount. For Q1 we have had a total of 160 individual report entries: Total Donations - \$18,325; Volunteer Hours - 2,485; Total Volunteers - 670; Volunteer Miles - 8,136. Many posts have not reported anything to date ... and I know you all have been doing some great things in your communities, please report them so that everyone can see all the volunteering and donations your posts have given back to your communities. Keep up the amazing work in YOUR towns.

The VFW National Home pin sales to date have raised over \$3,500 combined from the sale of pins to individuals, posts, auxiliaries, districts, both state & national conventions, as well helping sponsor several Centennial

Bricks in honor of the National Home's 100th Anniversary and also traditional Tribute Bricks. The 77th Annual Canton Children's Christmas Party is scheduled for Monday, December 9 at 6pm. This has become a time honored tradition the VFW has done for very vulnerable children. If your post or district would like to make a donation to this wonderful cause (please see the flier for more info). Everyone is invited to attend this blessed event to see all the joy we bring to these wonderful children.

Keep up the great work and efforts TEAM Massachusetts!

If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact me at: mraymond@vfwma.org or (603) 608-6898.

Michael Raymond



Life Membership *Special!*



Convert your annual
membership to life today and
we will cover half (1/2) the cost

More Info: www.vfwma.org

Questions: Contact Membership Chairman
Keith Jackson kjackson@vfwma.org

Limited life conversion grant funds available, so act now!



VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS.

SCHOLARSHIP OPPORTUNITY

The VFW is dedicated to promoting patriotism and investing in our future generation. If you are a democracy-loving high school student interested in a \$35,000 college scholarship or a patriotic middle school student interested in winning \$5,000, these scholarships may be for you.



ABOUT THE SCHOLARSHIPS



VOICE OF DEMOCRACY 9TH-12TH GRADE

The 2024-25 theme is:
"Is America Today Our Forefathers' Vision?"

Established in 1947, our Voice of Democracy audio-essay program provides high school students with the unique opportunity to express themselves in regards to a democratic and patriotic-themed recorded essay. Each year, nearly 25,000 ninth through 12th grade students from across the country enter to win their share of more than \$1 million in educational scholarships and incentives awarded through the program.

The national first place winner receives a \$35,000 scholarship paid directly to the recipient's American university, college or vocational/technical school. A complete list of other national scholarships range from \$1,000-\$21,000, and the first place winner from each VFW Department (state) wins at least a scholarship of \$1,000. Before submitting your essay, download the 2024-2025 entry form and find your sponsoring local VFW Post as applications must be turned in by midnight, Oct. 31.

PATRIOT'S PEN 6TH-18TH GRADE

The 2024-25 theme is:
"My Voice in America's Democracy?"

Each year, nearly 68,800 students in sixth through eighth grades enter the VFW's Patriot's Pen youth essay contest for a chance to win their share of nearly \$1 million in state and national awards. Each first place state winner receives a minimum of \$500 at the national level, and the national first place winner wins \$5,000

The essay contest encourages young minds to examine America's history, along with their own experiences in modern American society, by drafting a 300- to 400-word essay, expressing their views based on a patriotic theme chosen by the VFW Commander-in-Chief.

To find out more on how to enter:



VFW Teacher Nomination Form

Please attach the required documentation.

Nominated Teacher

Name: _____
Address: _____
Email: _____
Phone: _____
Subject and grade taught: _____

Current School: _____
School Address: _____

School Phone: _____

Please sign below and submit this brochure with the recommended materials to your local VFW Post. Visit vfw.org/Find-a-Post for locations.

DO NOT SEND to the VFW National Headquarters.

Person Nominating Teacher

Name: _____
Address: _____

City, State, ZIP: _____

Phone: _____

Date Submitted: _____
Signature: _____

Deadline: Submit to local VFW Post by Oct. 31.

Identify and recognize America's best educators.



Wouldn't you like to see them get the honor they deserve?

Now you can!



For more information, contact your local VFW Post or its Auxiliary or visit our website at www.vfw.org.

Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States
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Revised 5/24

VFW
VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS.



**SMART/MAHER
VFW NATIONAL
CITIZENSHIP
EDUCATION
TEACHER
AWARD**
Grades K-12

America's History | Civic Responsibility | Flag Etiquette | Patriotism | Americanism | Traditions

VFW Cares About Education

Founded in 1899, the VFW highly supports the education of America's youth. VFW and its Auxiliary have developed a slate of programs dedicated to helping America's educators. VFW Citizenship Education programs stimulate interest in America's history, traditions, Americanism, civic responsibility, flag etiquette and patriotism.

VFW wants to identify and recognize America's best educators who instill a sense of national pride in students. It offers cash awards, commemorative plaques and all-expense-paid trips to the VFW National Convention for these worthy teachers. The trip provides an opportunity for winners to network with like-minded individuals.

Teachers care deeply about America and its children. They're concerned about the perpetuation of America's noblest traditions and highest ideals. Wouldn't you like to see them get the honor they deserve?

Now you can...

VFW annually recognizes the nation's top classroom kindergarten, elementary, junior high and high school teachers who teach citizenship education topics regularly and promote America's history and traditions effectively.

Teachers who promote civic responsibility, flag etiquette and patriotism are prime candidates for this award. For example, do you know a teacher who plans field trips to city hall or organizes community volunteer projects? Maybe you know an instructor who invites veterans into the classroom to discuss their military experiences. Perhaps you are familiar with a teacher who fosters the development of democratic values and beliefs through special projects. If you know of such a teacher, honor them today with the Smart/Maher VFW National Citizenship Education Teacher Award.

How Does the Contest Work?

Based on the nominees submitted, VFW chapters, called Posts, will recognize teachers in the following categories, K-5, 6-8 and 9-12. Posts then submit these winners' names and required documents to their District-level judging, who will forward their winners to the Department (or state) level. If your Department does not have a District judging, then submit to your Department Headquarters by Jan. 1. After judging, each Department then forwards their winners to VFW National Headquarters for consideration in the national awards contest.



Recognize teachers who care about America!

Who is Eligible?

All current certified/licensed teachers in grades K-12 are eligible. Previous national VFW winners are ineligible. Nominations can be submitted by themselves, fellow teachers, supervisors, family members or other interested individuals.

Nominate Someone Deserving

Have a teacher in mind? Complete the nomination form and see below for additional recommended documentation, then submit it to your local VFW Post. The investment that a teacher makes in today's youth will be the dividends we will all reap from future leaders.

How are Teachers Nominated?

Fill out the nomination form contained in this brochure, and provide 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 if available.

Please submit your completed nomination form signed, along with the required documentation to your local VFW Post. Visit vfw.org/FindaPost for Post locations or call VFW Programs Department at 816.756.3390 ext. 6287 to find the Post nearest you.

When is the Deadline?

Nominations must be submitted to your local Post by Oct. 31. Post judging occurs Nov. 1-15.

What are the National Awards?

Smart/Maher VFW National Citizenship Education Teacher Awards include the items below:

- A national \$1,000 Smart/Maher award for each of the top K-5, 6-8, and 9-12 teachers for professional development expenses.
- \$1,000 award for each winning teachers' school.
- Plaques for both the winning teacher and school.
- An all-expense-paid trip to attend the VFW National Convention.

NOTE: (The winner will receive a 1099-MISC as a result of their award and all-expense paid trip.)

VFW

Legislative Priorities

Exploring Alternative PTSD Treatments

Issue Contact: Meggan Coleman at
mcoleman@vfw.org

The VFW's Concern: According to the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), more than 40 percent of veterans in the VA system have a service-connected disability rating for mental health. The VFW acknowledges there is a growing need for alternative treatments for post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)/mental health conditions. Currently, veterans seeking mental health care are predominantly directed to two types of medications—selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRIs) and serotonin-norepinephrine reuptake inhibitors (SNRIs)—as well as various evidence-based therapies to reduce PTSD symptoms. While today's standard treatments may help some individuals, many veterans report having only temporary relief of symptoms, or experiencing negative side effects from medication.

PTSD is more prevalent among veterans than civilians. If not properly treated, the effects can be detrimental in many ways including risk of homelessness, substance abuse, relationship problems, financial instability, difficulties in transitioning back to civilian life, or suicide. Veterans have shown willingness to confront mental health challenges, but not all treatments work for all veterans, which is why the VFW is urging Congress and VA to research and provide alternative, outside-the-box solutions for certain veterans. Some such treatments that have shown potential include stellate ganglion block, hyperbaric oxygen therapy, ketamine infusion, MDMA-assisted therapy, medical cannabis, and other plant-based alternative therapies.



VA has nearly 2.5 million veterans utilizing mental health care. No other health care network in America has as large a population of patients as VA. It has the unique ability to lead from the front on mental health care and cutting-edge treatments given its resources and population size. Congress must push VA to research and study innovative mental health solutions to not only help veterans seeking mental health care, but to use this opportunity to push information to the private sector as well. The VFW believes if there are additional treatments that can effectively treat PTSD, then VA should receive funding to research and deliver those treatments. Historically, VA has been a leader with other innovative treatments such as telemedicine, cardiovascular care, and prosthetics, and now has the opportunity to do the same regarding treatment of PTSD and other mental health conditions. The VFW urges Congress to: Provide funding to the Department of Defense and VA for innovative PTSD treatments currently used in the private sector. Direct VA to perform studies on alternative PTSD and other mental health care treatments.

VFW

Legislative Priorities

Unaddressed Toxic Exposures

ISSUE CONTACT: NANCY SPRINGER AT NSPRINGER@VFW.ORG



The VFW's Concern: Congress must vigorously monitor Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) compliance with the Sergeant First Class Heath Robinson Honoring our Promise to Address Comprehensive Toxics (PACT) Act of 2022, commonly called the PACT Act, to ensure the continuous review of new presumptive conditions related to toxic exposures. The law directs VA to announce in the Federal Register, at least annually, its selections of military environmental exposures and adverse health outcomes for formal evaluation, informed by the established research working group. Subsequent public comments, input from Veterans Service Organizations, and information compiled by the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine should assist VA in its evaluation of new presumptive conditions for service connection.

The VFW urges Congress to: Require VA to publicly post announcements, updates, and current statuses of research pertaining to presumptive conditions from service-connected exposures. Conduct oversight hearings to ensure VA's compliance with the PACT Act for the ongoing evaluation of conditions associated with toxic exposures.

While the PACT Act included a list of conditions associated with exposure to particulate matter and herbicides, since the law's enactment veterans have informed the VFW they have other conditions related to toxic exposures during their time in service. These include but are not limited to uranium exposure at the Karshi-Khanabad (K2) Air Base in Uzbekistan; incidents of reproductive issues and other health conditions related to water contamination at Fort McClellan, Alabama; reports of higher rates of cancer among military pilots; and conditions associated with nuclear testing and waste cleanup. Veterans have reported exposure to firefighting foam and other materials exposing them to per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS). There has been concern about the impact of the water contamination from the Red Hill Bulk Fuel Storage Facility at Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam, Hawaii. The VFW has even had veterans report anomalous health incidents (Havana Syndrome), radiological exposures, and the use of burn pits in locations not currently covered by the PACT Act. These highlight the need for VA to comply with the law to ensure it has a functional and transparent presumptive process.

Whats Happening Around the State



(Left) VFW Post 2104 in conjunction with North Andover Cub Scout Pack 89 and Boy Scout Troop 87 conducted a Flag Retirement Ceremony at the Ridgewood Cemetery in North Andover on June 7th 2024. Post members provided guidance and assistance as the Boy Scouts gathered up flags, before saluting and handling the flags for destruction.



(Above) Joint VFW & American Legion Blood Drive in Hull, MA 28 Aug 2024, with Jim Flanagan (St Ann's Church), JVC Ken Walsh Hingham-Hull VFW Post 6053, and RAdm Mike Milner AmLegion Post 140, all working the Blood Drive and donating Blood also.



(Left) An Annual Stand Down hosted by the Veterans Outreach Center Cape & Islands was held on September 27th, 2024 in Hyannis. The VFW membership team that day that recruited several new potential members that day was led by District 12 Commander Stephanie Jones and assisted by Past District 12 Commander Joseph Feeley and State Junior State Commander Christine Tron.



(Above) Past District 12 Commander Joseph Feeley assists a prospective new member at the Annual Stand Down hosted by the Veterans Outreach Center Cape & Islands held on September 27th, 2024 in Hyannis.

Whats Happening Around the State



(Left) The Annual Massachusetts Run for the Fallen event was held on September 14th at Barnes Memorial Park in Dedham. Reading names that day was State Junior Vice Commander Christine Tron.

(Right) Reading names for the Annual Massachusetts Run for the Fallen on September 14th was State Auxiliary Conductor Paul Thomas LaPorte.



(Above) Preparing the medals for presentation to the runners and walkers as they cross the finish line at the Annual Massachusetts Run for the Fallen was PSC Michael Raymond.



(Above) Ready with medals to award to those runners and walkers finishing the Run for the Fallen are PSC Michael Raymond and State Auxiliary President Kelly Durkee Erwin.



(Above) Awarding a medal to her favorite runner in the Run for the Fallen was State Auxiliary President Kelly Erwin to Past Waltham VFW Post Commander Sean Durkee.

Whats Happening Around the State



(Left) On Sunday, September 29th, in honor of Gold Star Mother's Day, Fortunato Post #545 Commander Paul Lantz made a presentation to the mother of one of the namesakes of the post in ST. Mary's Cemetery in Beverly. Seen here, left-to-right, are Stephen Fortunato's mother Betty Crawford, his brother Anthony, and Post Commander Paul Lantz.



(Above) Photo of Halifax VFW member, 87 year old James Q Lyons and VFW National Aide-de-Camp Ken Walsh from Hingham Hull MA VFW Post 6053 throwing flowers into the Hull Bay in memory of those who gave all to our country at sea, and also to Honor the Gold Star Mothers, Wives, and Daughters present on Sunday, 29 September 2024 in Hull, MA.



(Above) VFW National-Aide-de-Camp Ken Walsh from the Hingham-Hull VFW Post 6053 with the Gold Star Mothers, Wives and Daughters enjoying a moment after the Wreath Laying Ceremony in honor of those who gave their lives for our country. In white is Jo Ann Maitland, Past National President Gold Star Mothers 2021-2022.



On May 4th on the VFW Day of Service, members of VFW Post 1105 joined with the Charles River Conservancy to clean up the Thomas J. Cannalonga Memorial Park in Watertown. Cannalonga Park holds special significance as it was named in honor of the first Italian-American from Watertown killed in action during World War II.

VFW NATIONAL CONVENTION

PHOTOS PROVIDED BY CHRISTINE TRON

(Right) Standing proud, representing the Department of Massachusetts as the VFW National Sergeant-at-Arms is Brian Willett, seen here as he introduces his team of Assistant Sergeants-at-Arms during the 125th VFW National Convention. Comrade Willette is a member of VFW Post #3104 South Hadley.



(Above) As a National Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms, also representing the Department of Massachusetts during the 125th VFW National Convention is Rene Fuertes, also a member of VFW Post #3104 South Hadley.

(Left) Addressing the delegates at the 125th VFW National Convention on July 30th was PSC Keith Jackson who is currently the President and Trustee #1 of the Veterans of Foreign Wars National Home Board of Trustees.



VFW NATIONAL CONVENTION

PHOTOS PROVIDED BY CHRISTINE TRON

(Below) The time-honored tradition of passing the hat to collect donations was done by State Junior Vice Commander Christine Tron among the delegation from the Department of Massachusetts on July 30th during the 125th VFW National Convention. The donations were then presented by State Commander Jody Freitas to National Home Buddy Poppy Child Layla. Pictured here donating is PSC and current National Council Member Eric Segundo.



(Above) State Commander Jody Freitas presented National Home Buddy Poppy Child Layla with the donations from the Department of Massachusetts delegates on July 30th during the 125th VFW National Convention in Louisville, KY.



VFW NATIONAL CONVENTION

PHOTOS PROVIDED BY CHRISTINE TRON



A highlight of the 125th National Convention is the parade that takes place on one of the evenings early in the week. Some from our department got in the spirit by wearing kilts. Pictured in the group photo are as follows, left-to-right: PSC Eric Segundo, District 6 Commander Andy Robinson, State JVC Christine Tron, PSC Michael Raymond, State Piper Ronald McNeil Jr., State Cdr Jody Freitas, Heath Joseph, State Senior Vice Commander Troy Henke, State Quartermaster Scott Carruthers, State Surgeon Patrick Logue, District 5 Commander Robert Santiago, Pat Johnson, State Adjutant Bill Lebeau, and Sterling Elmer.



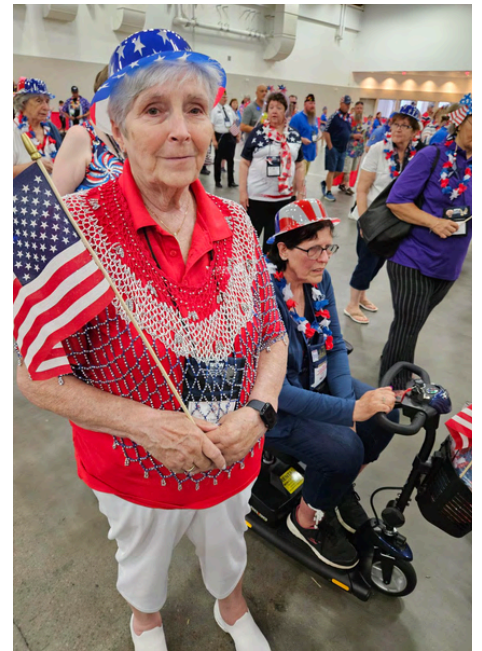
VFW NATIONAL CONVENTION

PHOTOS PROVIDED BY CHRISTINE TRON



The department banner was proudly carried by Bridgewater Post Commander John Sauvageau, State Auxiliary President Kelly Durkee Erwin, State Commander Jody Freitas, and District 11 Commander J.J. Barrett.

The official State Piper Ronald McNeil Jr. rocked the hall with his bagpipes during the parade.



VFW NATIONAL CONVENTION

PHOTOS PROVIDED BY CHRISTINE TRON



(Left) During the 125th VFW National Convention, a volunteer activity was held. Uniting to Combat Hunger saw members from the VFW and Auxiliary joining in to scoop seeds into packets. Seen here is State Auxiliary President Kelly Durkee Erwin.



(Middle) Another volunteer at the Uniting to Combat Hunger activity during the 125th VFW National Convention was State Junior Vice Commander Christine Tron, scooping seed into packets to be sent to impoverished areas of our country.



(Above) During the 125th VFW National Convention volunteering at the Uniting to Combat Hunger activity scooping seeds into packets was Townsend Post Commander Natalie Call.

CELEBRATING 125 YEARS

September 30, 2024: Veterans of Foreign Wars Day proclaimed in Boston by Mayor Michelle Wu. Members of Thomas Fitzgerald Post 561 and Boston Police Post 1018 were on hand as the VFW 125th Anniversary Flag was raised over Boston City Hall Plaza. Boston Commissioner of Veterans Services Robert Santiago (District 5 Commander and Boston Police Post Sr. Vice Commander) read the Mayor's proclamation and City Councilor Ed Flynn (Life Member Fitzgerald Post 561) read a Resolution from the City Council in celebration of 125 years of service of the VFW to the City of Boston. State Commander Jody Freitas, State Judge Advocate Craig DeOld, and State Chaplain Doug Wood, PSC, also gave remarks on the occasion.

The City of Boston



PROCLAMATION

Whereas, September 2024 the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) celebrates 125 years of service as one of the largest and most established organization of combat veterans in the United States; AND

Whereas, The VFW traces its roots back to the Spanish-American war when the battle wounded returned home to no health care, benefits and little support; AND

Whereas, in 1899, two groups, the American Veterans of Foreign Service and the National Society of the Army of the Philippines would soon merge to become the VFW; AND

Whereas, the VFW established its mission to foster camaraderie among veterans of overseas conflicts, to serve our veterans, the military and our communities and advocate on behalf of all veterans; AND

Whereas, the VFW would quickly grow in influence, expanding its advocacy efforts to educational benefits, disability pensions and hospital services. They would cultivate its local impact initiatives through community service, youth scholarships and programs, and civic engagement activities; AND

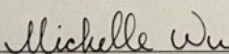
Whereas, throughout its storied history, the VFW has led the charge in making available positive, life changing support and resources to include the establishment of the Veterans Administration; AND

Whereas, Boston is proud to support Thomas J. Fitzgerald Post 561, Boston Police Post 1018, West Roxbury Post 2902, and Captain David L. Ramsay/Patrick E. Toy Post 8772 who provide services and assistance to veterans, families, and surviving family members who call Boston home; NOW

Therefore, I, Michelle Wu, do hereby proclaim September 30, 2024 to be

Veterans of Foreign Wars Day in the City of Boston

On this day I urge all my fellow Bostonians to join me in honoring and celebrating the services and sacrifices of our Veterans of Foreign Wars. I ordered the Property Management Department to raise the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) 125 Years of Service flag on the third flagpole on City Hall Plaza in place of the City of Boston Flag.



MICHELLE WU
MAYOR OF BOSTON
September 30, 2024





VFW Department of Massachusetts

77th ANNUAL CANTON CHILDREN'S CHRISTMAS PARTY

Monday, December 9th
(6pm – 7:30pm)

Pappas Rehab Hospital for Children: 3 Randolph Street, Canton, MA

We hope that many of you will support this very special event since it brings a great deal of joy and excitement to these children. Please help the Department celebrate this decades long tradition by supporting these wonderful children.

We are asking for donations to assist us in our efforts to ensure every child has a blessed Christmas ... Every dollar counts, no matter how great or how small.

Please make checks out to: VFW Department of MA

**Please write in the Memo section put:
'Canton Christmas Party Fund'**

Mail to: **VFW Dept. of MA**
 Attn: QM Scott Carruthers
 State House, Suite 546-1
 24 Beacon Street
 Boston, MA 02133



Thank you in advance for your kind donation and support!

**Warm Regards, PDC Matt Ching & PSC Michael Raymond,
Co-Chairs, Canton Children's Christmas Party**

Department Calendar 2024-2025

2024

Date	Time	Event	Location
October 12	9:00 AM	OTI Training	Needham Post 2498
October 19	9:00 AM	OTI Training	Leominster Post 1807
October 20	10:00AM	District 15 Meeting	Natick Post 1274
October 20	2:00PM	District 8 Meeting	Post 654 Host at 1385 Uxbridge
October 20	10:00AM	District 9 Meeting	Dalton Post 9566
October 26	9:30AM	Auxiliary COA	Billerica Post 8819
November 1-3		Eastern Conference	Burlington, Vermont
November 3	TBA	District 10 Meeting	Revere Post 4524
November 9	10:30AM	COA	North Andover Post
November 9	TBA	Veterans Day Parade (Boston Office of Veterans Services)	TBA
November 10	12:00PM	Veterans Day	Bourne, Massachusetts
November 11	6:30 PM	District 12 Meeting	Plymouth Post 1822
November 17	10:00AM	District 5 Meeting	Bellingham Post 7272
November 17	10:00AM	District 15 Meeting	Townsend Post 6538
November 17	10:00AM	District 18 Meeting	Watertown Post 1105
November 17	12:00PM	District 11 Meeting	Leominster Veteran Center
November 17	10:00AM	District 9 Meeting	Dalton Post 9566
November 17	1:00PM	District 6 Meeting	Taunton Post 611
November 17	2:00PM	District 8 Meeting	Oxford Post 5663
November 24	11:00AM	District 7 Meeting	Northfield Post 9874
December 7	12:00PM	Spaghetti Dinner/Holiday Auction	Dedham Post 2017
December 9	6:00 PM	Canton Christmas party	Arthur Pappas Center Canton

2025

Date	Time	Event	Location
January 5	10:00AM	District 5 Meeting	Dedham Post 2017
January 5	6:30PM	District 12 Meeting	Plymouth Post 1822
January 11	10:30AM	COA	Franklin Post 3402
January 12	10:00AM	District 15 Meeting	Bedford Post 1628
January 12	10:00AM	District 18 Meeting	Waltham Post 10334
January 13	6:30 PM	District 12 Meeting	Plymouth Post 1822
January 18	9:30AM	Auxiliary COA	Dilboy Post 529
January 19	12:00PM	District 11 Meeting	Leominster Veteran Center
January 19	1:00PM	District 6 Meeting	Westport Post 8502
February 9	10:00AM	District 15 Meeting	Pepperell Post 3291
February 1-6		National Mid-Winter Conference	Cancun, Mexico
February 15	9:00AM	Mid-Winter Conference	Winchendon, AL
February 16	10:00AM	District 9 Meeting	Dalton Post 9566
February 23	11:00AM	District 7 Meeting	AL Post 266 Granby MA
March 1-6		Washington Conference	Washington D.C.
March 2	TBA	District 10 Meeting	Ipswich Post 1093
March 9	10:00AM	District 15 Meeting	Littleton Post 6556
March 9	10:00AM	District 18 Meeting	Somerville Post 529
March 10	6:30PM	District 12 Meeting	Plymouth Post 1822
March 16	10:00AM	District 5 Meeting	Walpole Post 5188
March 16	12:00PM	District 11 Meeting	Leominster Post 1807
March 16	1:00PM	District 6 Meeting	Easton Post 2547
March 16	2:00PM	District 8 Meeting	Grafton Post 1497
March 16	10:00AM	District 9 Meeting	Dalton Post 9566
March 22	11:00AM	Pre-Convention Jamboree	Pepperell Post 3291
March 29	12:00PM	State President's Banquet	Newton, AL
April 6	10:00AM	District 15 Meeting	Westford Post 6539
April 13	10:00 AM	District 9 Meeting	Dalton Post 9566
April 20	2:00PM	District 8 Meeting	Millbury Post
April 26	9:30AM	Auxiliary COA	Brockton Post 1046
April 27	TBD	Loyalty Day State Ceremony	Hall of Flags (Ft Devens)
April 27	11:00AM	District 7 Meeting	Hamden Post 9397
April 27	12:00PM	District 11 Meeting	Leominster Veteran Center
May 4	10:00AM	District 5 Meeting	Norwood Post 2452
May 4	10:00AM	District 15 Meeting	N Billerica Post 8819
May 4	TBA	District 10 Meeting	Beachmont Post 6712
May 10	10:30AM	COA	Tuckers Restaurant, Southwick
May 12	6:30PM	District 12 Meeting	Plymouth Post 1822
May 18	10:00AM	District 18 Meeting	Belmont Post 1272
May 18	12:00PM	District 11 Meeting	Leominster Veteran Center
May 18	1:00PM	District 6 Meeting	Freetown Post 6643
May 18	2:00PM	District 8 Meeting	Uxbridge Post 1385
May 18	10:00AM	District 9 Meeting	Dalton Post 9566
May 25	12:00PM	Memorial Day	Bourne, Massachusetts
June 5-8		State Convention	TBD

Subscribe to VFW Massachusetts News

Never miss an issue!

NEXT DEADLINE December 15, 2024



December 14th, 2024



VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS.

UPCOMING TRAINING EVENTS

www.vfwma.org

**LUDLOW VFW
POST 3236**

487 HOLYOKE STREET
LUDLOW, MA 01056

**• SEPT •
28**

9AM-2PM

**• OCT •
19**

**LEOMINISTER
VFW POST 1807**
100 WEST STREET
LEOMINISTER, MA 01453

9AM-2PM

**NEEDHAM VFW
POST 2498**

20 JUNCTION STREET
NEEDHAM, MA 02492

**• OCT •
12**

9AM-2PM

The VFW MA is offering (3) VFW Training Seminars for any members wishing to learn the duties and responsibility.

School of instructions in:

- Adjutant
- Quartermasters
- VFW Programs
- Service Officers (update)
- Grant Programs
- OMS System
- Membership Programs
- and more

to register: visit www.VFWMA.ORG or email communications@vfwma.org
with location and number of members from your post attending

