



PUBLIC RELATIONS may be the most important task you and your Post will undertake. It occurs every minute of every day. It goes beyond preparing and distributing news releases. It is the underlying element that brings success or failure to your Post. All contact between your Post and the community has a public relations aspect. **Ensuring the community views your Post positively is paramount.**

In 1929, *VFW* magazine ran an article titled “Keeping Your Community Interested.” It stated: “Keeping your community interested is equivalent

to making it think in terms of the VFW. These thoughts must be of admiration, appreciation and gratitude ... not for services rendered during the months of conflict ... but for the constructive aid, which your organization is giving to your community years after the war.”

Today, that thinking is still on target. The community service your Post performs will enhance the Post’s reputation as a responsible, caring and energetic community service organization – one that leads by example.

Your PR Strategy

Define your objectives. What do you want to accomplish? This is the critical first step.

- **Determine your audience.** This includes members, potential members and non-members. Different Post activities appeal to different segments of the community.
- **Define your message.** Sticking to one message is essential. However, your message may be presented in several ways through various outlets. Determine the best outlet for the best results.
- **Develop a strategy.** How can you best accomplish your goals? Look at the dynamics of your community. Build a relationship with the media in your area. Keep an up-to-date list of contacts for each outlet. Become the best source of information in your community on patriotic and veterans' issues.

Make your Post visible and active on social media. Develop relationships with other local community service organizations.

When evaluating your strategy, you should listen carefully to the feedback from Post members and officers, members of the community and the media. Take this information and fine tune your strategy, if necessary. A good communicator talks and listens.

Suggestions from all sources should be considered. After all, those people see your messages from a different angle, and what might be very clear to you may not be to them. A new point of view may help get the word out more efficiently and effectively.

Development of good public relations takes time and commitment.

*Priority goals are listed each year on the VFW website at www.vfw.org/NLS.



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Building Media Contacts

As a Post officer, you will have to speak to the media and general public. Therefore, you need to be able to speak clearly and concisely on veterans' issues and VFW programs. Your ability to communicate in both the written and spoken word will benefit the Post and the community.

You should build a good working relationship with members of the media, as well as the leaders of the various VFW programs. The assistance of officers and members is invaluable when gathering information to present to the media. When your information is accurate and of interest to the community, the media will welcome your submissions.

Some basic equipment needed to accomplish this task are a computer, email address, letterhead and a style guide, such as the *Associated Press Stylebook*.

A camera or smart phone is a great tool when used properly. After all, "a picture is worth a thousand words," but only when that picture is of good quality and supports your newsworthy story. Avoid taking "grip-and-grin" photos. Additionally, always look for the action shots. Remember, get close, get faces and get a signed photo release.

Your goals are to develop a public relations strategy and make it work, establish media contacts and increase the community's awareness and respect for the VFW.



Building VFW Awareness by Rewarding Your Community

Know the VFW programs and how they serve the community. **Our programs are the heart of our organization, beginning with community service.** Tell the community about the Post service officer and the free assistance available to any veteran and his or her dependents to gain entitlements.

Our programs can reach people in the community who might not otherwise know veterans or the continuing service they offer to their communities. Through our youth and citizenship education programs we offer valuable and needed information to various groups in the community.

Establish an awards program that relates to VFW programs. Everyone loves praise. Recognition

focuses the community spotlight on the individual or group being acknowledged as well as on the VFW. Award your local police, firefighters and EMTs with a certificate of appreciation during a public ceremony. Coordinate this event with a community anniversary or a national observance.

Other organizations or groups that have assisted the VFW in a community service project deserve thanks as well. Host a special event to recognize individuals or groups who further the VFW's priorities and ideals. Include teachers, public officials, youths and members who have demonstrated support of the VFW's values.

Deal With Bad Publicity, Don't Avoid It

Unfavorable publicity needs to be handled promptly and with as accurate information as possible. Here are some tips for dealing with negative publicity:

- **Don't avoid the media.** Help them get all the facts so the story will be fair and balanced.
- **Do not provide conjecture or speak before you have all the facts.** Stating "We're aware of the situation, and are investigating," can help.

- **Do not place blame.**
- **Do not discuss fault or liability.**
- **Deal with the situation and move on.** Even a bad situation can have positive aspects.

Think of this as a welcome opportunity to present the VFW's programs and projects that help the community. If you have been helpful, the media contacts you make can prove valuable in the future.



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Targeting the Media with a Specific Message

Get to know the media in your area. This includes newspapers, both daily and weekly; radio, television and cable television stations; local or regional trade publications; and local and regional magazines.

Your contact list should include: name, title, address, affiliation, phone number, email address, social media handles and publication deadline dates.

Remember: your membership is diverse. Contacting various outlets ensures that your message reaches a

wide audience.

Not every message will need to be sent to every contact. A news release announcing teachers and students receiving awards from the VFW would be best sent to the local media outlets as well as the school and any professional publication for teachers. A blood drive held at the Post would have a different list of media contacts. Choose carefully. A constant barrage of unrelated news releases can numb the media to your message.

‘Thank Yous’ Reap Rewards

Nothing is more important than saying “thank you.” A well-written thank you note to a guest speaker is imperative.

Presentation of a certificate of appreciation to an individual or a group that has assisted with a program goes a long way toward building community relationships. A brief note of thanks to a member of the media for event coverage can help keep the lines of communication open. You also may want to consider writing congratulatory letters to individual Post members when they have accomplished something noteworthy outside of the organization.

Many members belong to various community service organizations. Sending congratulatory letters to elected leaders of other service organizations is a good way to establish a spirit of camaraderie between organizations. After all, we are all trying to better our communities through voluntary public service.

In addition, you can host an annual appreciation event for local law enforcement agencies, community-safety representatives, educators and youths who deserve recognition.



Make Your Community Proud of Your Post

Make your community proud it has a VFW Post. Be the focal point in your community for all patriotic programs. Whether it's parades, school programs or voter registration, make sure the VFW has a visible presence.

Keep the Post home in good shape. Make it attractive and welcoming. Let it be an example of an organization that is proud of its history and

working to make the community a better place in which to live. When the Post has a good image, it is easier to get the media involved and excited about VFW-sponsored events.

Finally, remember that you represent the VFW to every person you meet. The impression you make is one the public will associate with the VFW. Make sure it is a positive one.

Keep a Calendar

A calendar of upcoming VFW events can help simplify your job. On your calendar include important national events, anniversaries and observances. To commemorate these dates you may want to have a letter to the editor ready for possible publication.

Also you might consider hosting an event in observance of these special days. When planning an event it is important to consult with the local community calendar. Scheduling conflicts can be avoided with some simple checking.

Important Dates to Remember

3rd Monday in Jan. - Martin Luther King, Jr. Day

Jan. 27 - Signing of Vietnam Peace Accord (1973)

Jan. 31 - Panama Campaign Ended (1990)

3rd Monday of Feb. - Presidents' Day

March 31 - Somalia Campaign Ended (1995)

April 9 - National Former POW/MIA

Recognition Day

April 11 - Persian Gulf War Official Cease-Fire

May 1 - Loyalty Day

May 8 - WWII Ends in Europe (V-E Day) (1945)

May 15 - Peace Officers Memorial Day; Women's Army Corps Founded (1942)

3rd Saturday in May - Armed Forces Day

Last Monday of May - Memorial Day

June 14 - Flag Day; U.S. Army Founded (1775)

July 2 - U.S. Army Air Corps Established (1926)

July 4 - Independence Day

July 27 - Korean War Armistice Day

Aug. 4 - U.S. Coast Guard Established (1790)

Aug. 14 - Japan Surrendered, Ending WWII (1945); National Navajo Code Talkers Day

Sept. 2 - V-J Day: Japan Signed Formal Surrender (1945)

Sept. 4 - Labor Day

Sept. 11 - Patriots Day and National Day of Service and Remembrance

Sept. 14 - VFW Auxiliary Founded (1914)

Sept. 17 - Constitution and Citizenship Day

Sept. 18 - U.S. Air Force Established (1947)

3rd Friday in Sept. - POW/MIA Recognition Day

Sept. 29 - VFW Founded in 1899

Oct. 13 - U.S. Navy Established (1775)

1st Tuesday of Nov. - Election Day

Nov. 10 - U.S. Marine Corps Established (1775)

Nov. 11 - Veterans Day; Signing of WWI Armistice (1918)

Nov. 21 - Grenada Campaign Ended (1983)

Dec. 7 - National Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day

Dec. 13 - National Guard Established (1636) Dec. 15 - Iraq War Ended (2011)

Dec. 31 - Official End of WWII (1946); Kosovo Campaign Ended (2013)

A News Release Must be Newsworthy

The most fundamental way, although not the only way, to get your message out to the media is through a news release.

An effective news release relates information that is newsworthy. **It should be clear, concise, error-free and answer the "Five Ws" in the first paragraph: who, what, where, when and why.**

Try to keep the news release to one page, two at the most. If more information is needed to better explain your news release (fact sheets, biographies or program information), it can be attached. Be sure the contact person's name, phone number and the date of the release are clearly indicated.

Include quotes from the head of the organization, the Post commander or the officer responsible for the program. It is best to use quotes that sound natural and express an opinion or position.

Press releases can be written on events, programs, awards, election of VFW officers or national issues. Be sure to highlight the local aspect no matter what the subject. Localization makes for easier placement.

Avoid buzzwords and organizational acronyms. Assume that readers know nothing about the organization – chances are they don't.

As you are writing, think about simplicity. Be brief. Forget flowery adjectives – they will most likely be cut anyway. And don't be insulted if your release is changed or cut, as long as it gets the main points across. The editor's job is to do just that – edit.

Know the media deadlines. Allow enough time for editors to call with questions, but not too much time for the interest to lag.

Make the reporter's job easier by emailing the news release to them. Follow-up with a phone call.

When you have completed your news release, go back over it again. Check that you have answered the "Five Ws" in the first paragraph. Did you give the release a point of local interest? Are the sentences short and clear? Is the release written in a consistent manner? Is it typed and error-free? Nothing is more irritating to an editor than having to rewrite a release.

If a photo is included with the release, be sure to provide the names of everyone in the photo and a brief explanation of the event. Make sure the photo is of good quality and suitable for publication.

Control Interviews with Facts and Research

If reporters call, determine why they are calling and the subject to be discussed. Ask if the reporter is on deadline, and assure the reporter you will call back before the deadline. Remember, you have little control over the interview, but if the reporter asks an off-topic question, bring them back to the agreed topic. Here are tips designed to help as you prepare for the actual interview.

- Jot down likely questions and appropriate answers.
- Know what you want to communicate. Plan to make your points accordingly.
- Do your research. Provide background or expanded information.
- Never lie or mislead a reporter.
- Offer your conclusion first, briefly and directly. Back it with facts.
- Avoid organizational jargon and acronyms.
- Short answers are better than long. Use complete sentence.

- Don't accept a reporter's facts or figures as true; don't respond to a hypothetical situation; and do respond to negative-leading questions with positive statements.
- Keep cool. Don't allow yourself to be provoked.
- **Remember when talking to a reporter there is no such thing as "off the record."**
- If there are any skeletons in the closet, be prepared for them to come up in the interview.
- Be prepared to state all your positive points completely in response to the first questions asked.
- State clearly when you can release information and why.
- If you don't know the answers, say so, and offer to find out.

The interview will be brief. A reporter has only a few minutes to get your full story. Don't ask to approve the story before it is published or broadcast.



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Advertising

VFW National Headquarters has produced 30 and 60-second videos and radio spots.



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Be Creative with Publicity Options

We have talked about the printed word in the form of a news release and the possibilities available through radio and video, but there are other options to investigate as well.

- **Social media** offers a broad spectrum of free and paid services that are incredibly useful. Social media platforms allow you to connect with people anywhere in the world, almost instantly.
- **Outdoor advertising** ranges from bumper stickers to welcome signs as people drive through your community. Take every opportunity to keep the community aware of the VFW's presence. In this age of mobility it is important to remember that the population in your community can change daily.
- **Exhibits** in shopping areas, community social events and other public forums are excellent ways to bring the VFW story to the community. Information on VFW activities and programs can entice eligible veterans to join the organization and favorably influence others in the community.



The Age of Social Media

Simply put, social media allows people to create, share or exchange information, ideas, and pictures/videos in virtual communities and networks.

Establishing a social media presence allows your Post to engage a vast and diverse audience to include members, prospects, donors, potential donors, supporters, etc. while building the VFW's brand and credibility.

Social media is useful to share information about meetings and events, opportunities for support and to strengthen your Post's relationship with your

online community. It is a place to share success stories and to ask for support if needed.

There are numerous social media sites available for use. The key is finding the sites that are a good fit for your audience.

When looking into building a profile on a new social media site, be aware of the sites' strengths and weaknesses, the opportunities and the risks.

Using social media can have an extremely positive impact on your Post. Engaging with your audience by posting regularly and being responsive to questions and comments is the key to success!



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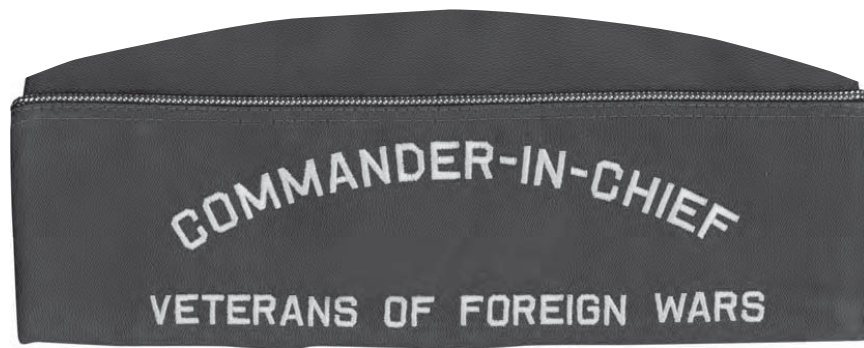
Dos and Don'ts of Social Media

DO:

- Post regularly.
- Use correct spelling, grammar and punctuation.
- Reply in a timely manner.
- Be customer-service oriented.
- Answer questions.
- Use pictures and videos for eye-catching content.

DON'T:

- Be argumentative when someone disagrees with the VFW's position.
- Post fake news. Only share articles from trusted news sources.
- Keep the password to yourself. Instead, make sure that more than one person has access to the Post's social media accounts.
- Post polarizing content. Instead, stay nonpartisan and in line with the VFW's stance.



Notifying the Media When the Chief Visits

The VFW National Commander's visit to your area is an important event for several reasons. First, they are the chief spokesman for our organization. They are widely traveled, aware of the concerns of veterans and their families across the nation and have the responsibility to meet with the President and key congressional members to express the interests and needs of the nation's veterans.

For these reasons, the local media will be interested in their views on veterans' issues, national security and foreign affairs. It benefits the VFW and veterans in general if the Chief's visit is well-covered by the media.

Ahead of the Chief's visit to your Post, VFW National Headquarters has supplied a media alert template, bio and suggested interview questions to the Department Commander and Adjutant. If the Department hasn't announced the visit, take the opportunity to publicize the event yourself. Your media plans for the Chief's visit should include:

- **Media Alert.** If your Department has already announced the Chief's visit, ask for a copy. Then, forward it to the news editors in your community. If the Department has not distributed a media alert, write one yourself.
- **Interviews.** Contact your local TV and radio stations in your community and ask if they would like to have the VFW's National Commander as a guest. Of course, be sure the Chief will be in your area long enough to take part in this type of interview. Most Post visits are scheduled for 30 minutes. Such an interview works best at the beginning of a visit or at the end. In any case, coordinate with your Department headquarters to determine what works best with the Chief's already-established schedule.

- **Interviewees.** The media is there to interview the Chief. Conduct the interview in such a manner so others cannot interrupt. You, the Chief, the Post/District commander and the Department commander are the only VFW members who should attend the interview. Post, District and Department commanders are there only to provide information on veterans' issues on a local or state level. Do not put the Chief into an interview by themselves where the media are going to concentrate on local veterans' issues. The Chief talks only on relevant national and international issues.
- **News Conference.** Since the amount of time a Chief can spend at a Post is limited, it is usually a good idea to invite the media for a specific time. Then, turn the Chief over to them for a news conference-type interview.
- **Place.** Where you conduct the interview is very important. **Do not conduct interviews in the Post canteen.** Use your meeting room or an area that is clean and quiet.
- **Time.** The best time to conduct an interview at the Post is as soon as the Chief arrives. Reporters have deadlines to meet, and they do not have time to stand around while the Chief visits with members. Get the interview started when they arrive. The Chief can visit with members later. The only exception to this rule is when the Chief will be at the Post for a luncheon or dinner. For these visits, ask the media if they would like to eat with members, listen to the Chief's remarks afterward, and then interview him/her. Quite often, the Chief's remarks to the group after the meal give the media ideas for questions.
- **Follow-up.** If there are questions that can't be answered during the interview, be sure to get the name and phone number of the reporter, and provide an answer as soon as possible.



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Good PR Helps Retain Members

Post officers have an additional responsibility to members of the VFW to ensure that Post activities are enjoyable, interesting and diverse. This promotes membership retention. Members who show pride in the organization and the community service they perform attract potential members.

Remind members to wear VFW apparel. Make sure new members feel welcome and offer them the opportunity to get involved in a VFW program or project that captures their interest. Getting a new member off to a good

start, or involving an existing member in a new program, is in everyone's best interest. A happy member is the best PR the VFW can have.

Supporting VFW activities through meaningful PR is the key to supporting members in their efforts to help the community. Members will recognize your contribution to the success of the VFW and its many projects and programs. There is no substitute for teamwork.

Using the Internet for Publicity and Outreach

The internet is a world of endless possibilities. It contains more information than most people will ever need. When researching for the most up-to-date information on a particular topic, it can't be beaten. **It provides you with the opportunity to communicate instantly with VFW members and others who visit your Post's website.**

Your Post's website is a window into the Post's character. A calendar of current activities, showing what, when, where and how to get involved, is an incredibly useful tool. A listing of diverse activities carried out by the Post allows numerous people to find the "perfect fit" for their interests and abilities.

Tell your Post's story.

- Is the VOD program in full swing? If so, what schools are participating? How many students are participating? What are the awards for the top students?
- Did you adopt a local military unit?
- Have you recently recognized local citizens for their efforts to better the community? Seize this opportunity to tell your story on your website.

The prompt placement of news releases on current actions of veterans' legislation, or breaking news on issues of interest to veterans on your Post's website is vital because members need to be aware of current events so they can contact their local, or national elected officials, and voice their opinions.

Numerous issues concerning veterans can be researched on the internet. Find out how your congressional representative or senator voted particular bill. Biographical and contact information on that individual is available in an instant. Use this tool to keep yourself and your members informed. The VFW provides a list of current, veteran-related bills before Congress and their current action at www.capwiz.com/vfw/issues/bills.

If your community has a website, ask if they will allow a link to the Post's site. This would be an excellent opportunity for non-members in the community to become further acquainted with the VFW and the many programs and projects it performs that benefit the community. Be sure to include information on how to join and a local contact at the Post.

If you keep your members informed they will feel connected to the organization and take pride in its accomplishments. Feeling proud and connected may encourage them to become more involved in Post activities. Increased involvement leads to more program participation. It is a win/win situation for the member, the Post and the community.

In addition, it's important for the Post website to continually be updated. A website that isn't being updated or maintained will deter visitors from your site. In this day of "instant access," people demand that information on websites be current. Otherwise you could lose credibility in your community.

The following pages comprise
the VFW Press Kit.

VFW at a Glance

The VFW is a nonprofit veterans service organization composed of eligible veterans and military service members from the active, Guard and Reserve forces. The VFW and its Auxiliaries are dedicated to veterans service, legislative advocacy, and military and community service programs.

Media Contacts:

Randi Law, VFW communications manager, 816-968-1104, rlaw@vfw.org

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Origins

In 1899, the American Veterans of Foreign Service (Columbus, Ohio) and the National Society of the Army of the Philippines (Denver, Colo.) were organized to secure rights and benefits for veterans of the Spanish-American War (1898) and the Philippines War (1899-1902). These two organizations merged in 1914, creating the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States. VFW was chartered by Congress in 1936.

Membership Eligibility

Those serving honorably in the U.S. Armed Forces in a foreign war or overseas operation recognized by a campaign medal, in Korea after June 30, 1949, and recipients of hostile-fire or imminent danger pay. Veterans of World War II, Korea, Vietnam, Lebanon, Grenada, Panama, Persian Gulf, Somalia, Kosovo, Afghanistan, Iraq and other smaller expeditionary campaigns, as well as occupation duty, qualify.

Partner Organization

A national volunteer service organization, the Auxiliary of the VFW was founded in 1914 and is the backbone of many local VFW volunteer efforts.

Membership Size

Nearly 1.7 million VFW and Auxiliary members in all 50 states, and many foreign countries.

Organizational Structure

Thousands convene each year at VFW's national convention to elect officers, adopt resolutions and discuss business affairs. Leading the organization are the elected commander-in-chief, senior vice commander-in-chief and junior vice commander-in-chief. The National Council of Administration serves as the VFW's board of directors. More than 6,500 Posts worldwide comprise 52 Departments in the 50 states, the Asia/Pacific Areas and Europe. Posts form the basic local chapter.

Priority Issues

- **VA Health Care:** Ensure veterans have timely access to high quality, comprehensive and veteran-centric health care, and secure sufficient funding for the VA Health Care System.
- **Women Veterans:** Expand women's health care services to all VA medical centers to ensure the growing number of women veterans have access to gender-specific services.
- **Suicide Prevention & Homelessness:** Ensure Congress funds support programs, including providing education and career training opportunities, substance abuse and mental health services and permanent housing solutions for all homeless veterans.
- **VA Benefits & Compensation:** Pass Appeals Modernization Act, and increase staff to ensure timely and accurate claims decisions.
- **Seamless Transition:** Demand the creation of one integrated medical and personnel record for every service member and continue to improve the quality and access to Transition Assistance Programs, both during and after service.
- **Military Quality of Life:** Oppose all proposals that will damage morale, call on Congress to improve the quality of life for all service members and support efforts to lower the Reserve Component retirement pay age to 55.
- **Education & Employment:** Fight to sustain G.I. Bill benefits and insist on strengthening USERRA. Continue to improve licensing and credentialing for military skills.
- **Defense & Homeland Security:** Fully support the troops and their mission in the war on terrorism, and to secure U.S. borders against all enemies, both foreign and domestic, who are intent on doing us harm.
- **POW/MIA:** Achieve the fullest possible accounting of America's 83,000 MIAs from World War II forward.



VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS

NO ONE DOES MORE FOR VETERANS.

www.vfw.org

VFW Community Achievements

The VFW takes great pride in its history of service to its communities both stateside and abroad. Annually, VFW and Auxiliary members donate nearly nine million hours to community service projects, relief efforts and local VA facilities each year.

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- 1915 Post 2100 helps sponsor a Boy Scout troop in Everett, Wash.
- 1916 First national VFW essay contest held.
- 1922 Buddy Poppy Program begins.
- 1923 VFW enters the war on drugs by printing a resolution calling for an international conference.
- 1927 VFW donates \$10,000 to Mississippi Valley flood victims.
- 1930 First VFW scholarship award (\$300) goes to a Boy Scout.
- 1936 Boy Scout-VFW plan of cooperation is signed.
- 1938 VFW supports the National Foundation for Infantile Paralysis.
- 1940 VFW Junior Rifle Clubs are formed with National Rifle Association.
- 1942 VFW Aviator Cadet Program begins.
- 1950 A cooperative disaster-relief plan is developed with the Red Cross.
- 1952 The Dunn family (Kansas flood victims) wins a \$75,000 farm in Washington courtesy of the VFW.
- 1953 VFW National Teen-er Baseball: First tournament is held in Hershey Park, Pa.
- 1956 150,000 kids take part in the national VFW marble competition.
- 1958 VFW becomes full partner with Voice of Democracy (VOD).
- 1959 Minnesota VFW/Ladies Auxiliary raise \$325,000 for dedication of the VFW Cancer Research Center at the Univ. of Minn. (Minneapolis).
- 1961 VFW assumes primary sponsorship of VOD—within four years 262,000 students participate.
- 1962 Lite-a-Bike program: a \$300,000 project with 3-M Co. of St. Paul, Minn., provides “Scotchlite” reflector tape—50,000 VFW members from 4,500 Posts participate.
- 1964 VFW/Ladies Auxiliary contribute nearly \$100,000 to earthquake victims in Anchorage, Alaska.
- 1970 Drive-to-Survive program begins.
- 1973 Drug Awareness program begins.
- 1978 Women admitted to VFW.
- 1979 VFW Political Action Committee forms.
- 1980 Minnesota VFW Posts sponsor the U.S. hockey team in the Winter Olympics.
- 1983 VFW agrees to permit the Red Cross to use VFW facilities as shelters and relief centers during national disasters and emergencies.
- 1986 VFW donates \$122,000 to the Statue of Liberty Restoration Fund.
- 1990 VFW contributes \$49,000 to California earthquake victims.
- 1992 VFW disburses \$197,000 to relieve victims of Hurricane Andrew and other disasters.
- 1993 Relief funds total \$500,000.
- 1995 Youth Essay Contest (7th-8th grades) begins.
- 1997 Buddy Poppy celebrates 75th anniversary.
- 1998 VFW Posts raise \$100,000 for the March of Dimes.
- 1999 VOD gives \$2.5 million in scholarship monies to high school students. VFW donates \$50,000 and 25,000 reprints of its war chronology to Vietnam Veterans Memorial’s *Young American Vietnam War Era Studies Project*.
- 2000 VFW distributes 60,000 audio books to armed forces worldwide through *Operation Yarnspinner*.
- 2002 VFW contributes \$110,000 to diabetes research. VFW equally distributes \$120,000 among families of active-duty personnel killed in the September 11, 2001, terrorist attack on the Pentagon.
- 2003 VFW partners with USA Freedom Corps homefront initiative.
- 2004 VFW establishes relationships with the National Council for Social Studies (NCCS) and National Association of Secondary School Principals (NAASP).
- 2005 VFW disburses \$560,000 to Gulf Coast veterans after Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. VFW distributes 5,000 copies of CD entitled, “*Vietnam: A Nation Remembers*.” VFW establishes VFW Military Scholarship program. VFW expands Patriot’s Pen Essay Competition.
- 2007 VFW Radiothon raises nearly \$100,000 for Unmet Needs.
- 2010 VFW donates over \$648,000 toward construction of the Vietnam Veterans Education Center. VFW increases Voice of Democracy National Scholarships to \$150,000. VFW raises over \$20,000 to assist service members with family in Haiti following the January earthquake.
- 2011 VFW pledges \$500,000 toward the construction of the Veterans Hall in the National Museum of the United States Army. VFW provides over \$145,000 in emergency financial relief to military families living in tornado-stricken areas.
- 2012 VFW provides over \$120,000 for Hurricane Sandy victims on the East Coast.
- 2013 VFW provides \$30,000 for the Moore, Okla. tornado victims and over \$30,000 for the flood victims in Colorado.
- 2015 VFW provides \$10,000 to the Pacific Areas for typhoon relief.
- 2016 VFW provides \$25,000 for flood relief in Louisiana.

VFW National Headquarters
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Website: www.vfw.org



VFW Diverse Endeavors

VFW honors veterans through memorial fundraising efforts, sponsorship of special events for disabled vets, and by recognizing volunteer service. Donations also help victims of natural disasters and less-fortunate children.

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Special Events

• **Honoring Disabled Vets**

VFW sponsors special trips for Purple Heart recipients. Past events include “Return to Vietnam” and other events.

• **“Run for the Wall”**

VFW support the annual “Run for the Wall,” a cross country motorcycle ride to the Vietnam Memorial in Washington D.C. The VFW sponsors refueling for all participating riders during a scheduled stop near the VFW National Headquarters.

• **Disabled Veterans Hunt**

VFW annually pays for an all-expense paid trip for disabled war veterans to go to South Dakota for a VFW Pheasant Hunt.

Memorials

In fulfilling its pledge to remember the nation’s war dead, VFW promotes national memorials for veterans of all wars. Additionally, thousands of memorials have been constructed across the nation through local VFW Posts.

• **National WWI Memorial**

VFW gave the memorial a \$350,000 grant to help expand the Liberty Memorial Museum, which houses the nation's most comprehensive collection of World War I historical materials.

• **National WWII Memorial**

VFW reached its five-year fundraising goal of \$6 million for the memorial’s construction in only two years. The donation ranks as the largest from any veterans group, and second overall.

• **Korean War Memorial**

Members donated \$600,000 toward the construction of the Korean War Memorial. The donation ranks among the highest.

• **Vietnam Veterans Memorial**

VFW contributed over \$300,000 toward building “The Wall”— all 58,000 Americans who died as a result of the Vietnam War are listed. VFW was the first major organization to contribute.

• **Women in Military Service to America Memorial**

VFW contributed \$70,000 toward construction costs.

• **Disabled Veterans for Life Memorial**

VFW contributed \$100,000 toward construction costs.

• **Vietnam Veterans Education Center**

VFW contributed over \$648,000 toward the construction of the Education Center.

• **National Museum of the United States Army**

VFW contributed \$500,000 toward the construction of the Veterans Hall in the museum.

• **National Desert Storm Memorial**

VFW donated \$100,000 toward its \$500,000 pledge for the construction of the National Desert Storm Memorial.

Awards

Outstanding police officers, firefighters, EMTs and other first responders are recognized annually by VFW for their work in the community.

National Home for Children

Children, youth and family of VFW and Auxiliary members who have nowhere to turn find a safe haven on this 629-acre VFW campus in Eaton Rapids, Mich. The privately funded facility is a living memorial to VFW and to all veterans.

Disaster Relief

Since 1964, VFW National Headquarters has donated over \$2.5 million in grants to state VFW relief efforts, including \$560,000 for Hurricanes Katrina and Rita and \$100,000 aid to the VFW Department of California following the 2007 California wildfires. VFW also raised over \$20,000 to assist service members with family in Haiti following the January 2010 earthquake, and in 2011 VFW provided over \$145,000 in aid to military families living in tornado-stricken areas. Since 2012, the VFW provided over \$120,000 in aid for Hurricane Sandy victims on the East Coast. In 2013, VFW provided \$30,000 for tornado-stricken victims in Moore, Okla., and \$30,000 for flood victims in Colorado. In 2015, VFW provided \$10,000 to the Pacific Areas for typhoon relief. In 2016, VFW provided \$25,000 to Louisiana for flood relief.



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VFW Legislative Victories

VFW played an instrumental role in virtually every significant piece of veterans' legislation passed in the 20th century, as well as bills enacted in the 21st century.

Note: In each case, this is the year an act was passed or an institution established.

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| 1917 | War Risk Insurance Act Amendments | 1982 | Veterans Employment and Training Service (VETS)
Vietnam Veterans Memorial dedicated |
| 1918 | Vocational Rehabilitation Act (P.L. 178) | 1983 | Emergency Veterans Job-Training Act |
| 1919 | Census Act Rider on Veterans Preference Discharge Allowance | 1984 | Montgomery GI Bill
Veterans Dioxin & Radiation Exposure Compensation Standards Act (P.L. 98-542): Agent Orange & Atomic Exposure |
| 1920 | Widows & Orphans Pension Act (Spanish-American War) | 1987 | New GI Bill Continuation Act |
| 1921 | Veterans Bureau Act | 1988 | Radiation-Exposed Veterans Compensation Act
Department of Veterans Affairs Act
Veterans Judicial Review Act |
| 1923 | Veterans Preference Point System | 1989 | VA becomes a Cabinet department
Court of Veterans Appeals |
| 1924 | House Veterans Affairs Committee
World War Adjusted Compensation Act | 1990 | Agent Orange service-connection |
| 1925 | Senate Subcommittee on Veterans Affairs | 1991 | Agent Orange Act (P.L. 102-4)
Persian Gulf War Veterans Assistance Act (P.L. 102-25) |
| 1926 | Spanish-American War benefits
New Johnson Act (WWI benefits) | 1992 | Veterans Health-Care Act |
| 1930 | Veterans Administration (VA)
World War Service Disability Pension Act (P.L. 522) | 1996 | Veterans Health-Care Eligibility Reform Act |
| 1931 | Bacharach Amendment (P.L. 743) allows borrowing on WWI bonus certificates | 1999 | Veterans Millennium Health-Care and Benefits Act |
| 1933 | Wagner-Peyser Act: Veterans Employment Service | 2003 | Concurrent receipt for military retirees rated 50% disabled or more (P.L. 108-136) |
| 1934 | Pension for widows of WWI vets | 2004 | Full concurrent receipt for military retirees rated 100% disabled (P.L. 108-375) |
| 1936 | Bonus bonds (\$2.4 billion) to WWI vets redeemable | 2005 | Traumatic Injury Insurance supplemental created |
| 1938 | Armistice Day (Nov. 11) legal holiday | 2006 | Protestors banned from military funerals
Stolen Valor Act signed into law |
| 1940 | National Service Life Insurance
Selective Service & Training Act | 2007 | VFW calls for VA/military healthcare system review after Walter Reed outpatient debacle |
| 1943 | Benefits to WWII veterans (P.L. 10)
Disabled Veterans Rehabilitation Act | 2008 | Record VA discretionary budget approved
GI Bill for the 21 st Century signed into law |
| 1944 | GI Bill of Rights (P.L. 346)
Veterans Preference Act | 2009 | Advanced Appropriations for VA becomes law |
| 1946 | Veteran Emergency Housing Act | 2010 | Family Caregiver Legislation signed into law
Ensured all VA and DOD health care programs met minimum health care coverage standards |
| 1947 | Bureau of Veterans Re-employment Rights (BVRR) | 2011 | VOW to Hire Heroes Act
VFW stopped TRICARE premiums from increasing annually |
| 1950 | Vocational Rehabilitation Act | 2012 | Honoring America's Veterans and Caring for Camp Lejeune Families Act
Extended USERRA protections to veterans working for TSA |
| 1951 | Servicemen's Indemnity & Insurance | 2013 | Reinstated military Tuition Assistance programs
New Stolen Valor Act signed into law
Stopped Creation of Distinguished Warfare Medal (Drone Medal) |
| 1952 | Veterans Readjustment Assistance Act (Korean War GI Bill) | 2014 | Veterans Access, Choice and Accountability Act of 2014
In-State Tuition for Post 9/11 GI Bill eligible veterans
Veterans Funding First Act: Advance appropriations for VA Benefits |
| 1954 | Veterans Compensation Act
Nov. 11 as Veterans Day (P.L. 380) | 2015 | Clay Hunt Suicide Prevention for American Veterans (SAV) Act
Eliminated 1% COLA reduction penalty on future military retirees
Created government match to military Thrift Savings Plan accounts |
| 1962 | Veterans Benefits Act (Cold War GI Bill) | 2016 | Toxic exposure research
In Vitro Fertilization treatments for wounded veterans
Discharge upgrade process for those discharged due to mental health conditions
Eighteen month extension for GI Bill benefits if a college loses their accreditation |
| 1966 | Veterans Readjustment Benefits Act (P.L. 89-358)
(Vietnam War GI Bill) | | |
| 1970 | Senate Veterans Affairs Committee | | |
| 1972 | Vietnam Era Veterans Readjustment Assistance Act | | |
| 1973 | Federal court agrees veterans preference applies to state jobs | | |
| 1974 | Vietnam Era Veterans Readjustment Assistance Act
(vocational rehabilitation) | | |
| 1976 | Veterans Education & Employment Assistance Act | | |
| 1977 | Post-Vietnam Era Veterans Educational Assistance Act | | |
| 1978 | Veterans preference preserved
Veterans & Survivors Pension Improvement Act
Veterans Day returned to Nov. 11 | | |
| 1979 | First joint meeting of House/Senate Veterans Affairs Committees
Vietnam Veterans Outreach Program (creates Vet Centers) | | |
| 1980 | VFW calls for Agent Orange study
Veterans Rehabilitation & Education Amendments | | |
| 1981 | Former POW Benefits Act
Veterans Health Care, Training & Small Business Loan Act | | |

VFW Programs & Projects

Since its founding, VFW has been a staple in the community. Troop support, youth activities, volunteering and scholarship programs are a few of the ways VFW shines in the many communities and cities where Posts are located.

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Youth Scholarship Programs

• *Voice of Democracy*

This audio-essay competition annually awards more than \$2 million in scholarships to students in grades 9-12. First-place winner receives a \$30,000 scholarship.

• *Patriot's Pen*

More than \$1.2 million is awarded annually to students in grades 6-8 in this essay contest. First-place winner receives \$5,000.

• *Scout of the Year*

Three scholarships are awarded annually to outstanding scouts. First place receives \$5,000, second place receives \$3,000 and third place receives \$1,000.

Educational Outreach

• *Echoes From the Wall*

VFW partnered with the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund to distribute a curriculum, Echoes From the Wall, to 25,000 public and private high schools and donated \$50,000 to the project.

• *Educational Brochures*

VFW produces and distributes a flag brochure and poster.

• *Veterans in the Classroom*

November is officially known as VFW Veterans in the Classroom Month. Members demonstrate flag etiquette and share their wartime experiences with America's youth.

Youth Activities

Locally, VFW Posts sponsor various youth sporting programs such as baseball and ice hockey. In addition many VFW Posts sponsor Boy and Girl Scout troops, Junior Olympics, bike safety, JROTC units, drill teams, color guards and a variety of other programs to build good citizenship and exemplary character in America's youth.

Community Volunteerism

Each year, VFW members volunteer nearly 9 million hours of service to various community endeavors.

• *Veterans Affairs Voluntary Service*

VFW was a charter member in 1946. VFW volunteers donate millions of hours of service annually at VA medical facilities.

Troop Support

• *Military Assistance Program (MAP)*

The link between the VFW and the military community has provided over 4,000 grants to VFW Departments and Posts for morale-boosting events since 2005, hosting more than 2 million military members and their families at these events.

• *Adopt-a-Unit*

More than 2,800 units and ships have been adopted through VFW Posts since 2007. VFW National Headquarters adopted the USS Cole in 2002.

• *Care Packages*

Posts across the country show their support of America's military by collecting and distributing much-needed personal items for troops.

• *VFW Unmet Needs*

This program administers emergency financial grants to military families to help cover basic expenses like mortgage payments, childcare, food and more. Since 2004, more than 4,100 grants have been issued totaling \$6.2 million.

• *VFW "Sport Clips Help A Hero Scholarship"*

Introduced in 2013, this program awards scholarships of up to \$5,000 to qualifying veterans and service members. The program has provided more than 715 scholarships totaling more than \$3 million.

• *1 Student Veteran*

Enacted in 2013, this program offers direct assistance to student veterans who have questions or are experiencing problems accessing their VA benefits.

• *VFW Operation Uplink™*

Introduced in 1996, this program connects active-duty personnel and hospitalized veterans with family members through free phone time and VFW "Free Call Days." Operation Uplink has provided over 7.6 million free connections through FCDs since 2006.



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VFW Service to Veterans

From lobbying Congress and monitoring the Department of Veterans Affairs to assisting veterans filing claims, VFW remains a dedicated advocate for America's veterans, service members and their families.

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National Veterans Service (NVS)

The NVS is responsible for accrediting and training VFW service officers. NVS provides annual training to VFW Service Officers. NVS staff represents veterans at the Board of Veterans Appeals in Washington, D.C. Each year NVS provides \$1.9 million to VFW Departments in support of their veteran service programs.

• **Department Service Officers (DSOs)**

A nationwide network of highly trained and accredited service officers helps veterans navigate the complicated VA claims process. Department of Veterans Affairs statistics show that for 2016, the VFW helped recoup \$7 billion in earned benefits. This amount includes \$1.2 billion in new claims, submitted on behalf of 116,791 veterans.

• **Tactical Assessment Center (TAC)**

VFW's TAC operates a 24-hour, toll-free hotline for veterans with questions or concerns about VA health care and benefits. The number is 1-800-VFW-1899.

• **Health Screenings**

VFW hosts a health fair at its national convention. Attendees can receive health screenings, eye exams, cholesterol checks, respiratory function testing, blood pressure screening and blood glucose testing. Many lives have been saved thanks to these free screenings.

• **Pre-Discharge Program**

Introduced in 2001, VFW's pre-discharge program (formerly known as Benefits Delivery at Discharge) provides claims assistance to separating military personnel on more than 20 military installations and military populated regions throughout the country. Education and relocation services are also available.

National Legislative Service

The NLS educates Congress and advocates for policies that improve the lives of veterans, active duty military and their families.

• **Action Corps**

This grassroots lobbying effort has 300,000 volunteer advocates who write, call and visit lawmakers to discuss issues related to veterans. Also, Action Corps members receive the VFW *Action Corps Weekly*, an e-newsletter relating to current legislation and events.

National Security and Foreign Affairs

The welfare of active-duty, Guard and Reserve personnel and their families is of a prime concern to VFW.

• **POW/MIA**

VFW national officers visit Asian and European countries to meet with host-country officials to stress the importance of conducting MIA investigation and recovery operations, as well as gaining access to documents and archival research facilities.

Employment Services

VFW is a strong supporter of veterans' preference in government positions. The Washington Office actively works to advance veteran-specific employment legislation.

• **VetJobs.com**

VFW is the major sponsor of this online service, which allows veterans and their spouses to post resumes and search available jobs.