

# Mail Call

Department of Louisiana

February 2025 | Issue



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## UPCOMING EVENTS:

### State Commander’s Testimonial

March 22, 2025  
Post 9854

**\*\*More information to come!**

### VFW Day of Service May 3, 2025

### State Convention June 26-29, 2025

The Bentley Hotel Alexandria &  
Convention Center

### Council of Administration

August 22-24, 2025  
The Hotel Bentley  
Alexandria LA

*“Generations Continuing to Serve”*

# DISTRICT MEETINGS

## **DISTRICT 2 MEETINGS:**

**Feb 15, 2025**                      **Post 3750**  
 Registration                      9:00 am  
 Meeting                              10:00 am  
 Lunch (\$10)                      12:00noon  
**State Rep, QM Ray Bass**

**April 26, 2025**                      **Post 3267**  
 Registration                      9:00 am  
 Meeting                              10:00 am  
 Lunch (\$10)                      12:00noon  
**State Rep, JVC, Sharee Arends**

## **DISTRICT 3 MEETINGS:**

**April 26, 2025**                      **Post 4222**  
 Registration                      9:00 am  
 Joint Meeting                      10:00 am  
 Meeting                              10:30 am  
 Lunch(\$8)                        12:00noon  
**St. Rep, SVC. James Prestenback**

## **DISTRICT 4 MEETINGS:**

**Feb 15, 2025**                      **Post 1982**  
 Registration                      9:00 am  
 Meeting                              10:00 am  
 Lunch(\$8)                        12:00noon  
**State. Rep, PSC Fred Wesley**

**May 3, 2025**                      **Post 9822**  
 Registration                      9:00 am  
 Meeting                              10:00 am  
 Lunch(\$8)                        12:00noon  
**State Rep, QM, Elvin "Ray" Bass**

## **DISTRICT 5 MEETINGS:**

**April 26, 2025**                      **Post 3619**  
 Registration                      9:00 am  
 Meeting                              10:00 am  
 Lunch                                12:00noon  
**St. Rep, Cmd Debbie McElhannon**

## **DISTRICT 7 MEETINGS:**

**May 17, 2025**                      **Post 6720**  
 Registration                      9:00 am  
 Meeting                              10:00 am  
 Lunch(\$10)                      12:00noon  
**State Rep, QM, Elvin "Ray" Bass**

## **DISTRICT 8 MEETINGS:**

**April 26, 2025**                      **Post 3784**  
 Registration                      9:00 am  
 Meeting                              10:00 am  
 Lunch                                12:00noon  
**State Rep, QM Elvin "Ray" Bass**

## **DISTRICT 9 MEETINGS:**

**Feb 15, 2025**                      **Post 5735**  
 Registration                      9:00 am  
 Meeting                              10:00 am  
 Lunch                                11:00 am  
**St. Rep, SVC. James Prestenback**

**April 26, 2025**                      **Post 3652**  
 Registration                      9:00 am  
 Meeting                              10:00 am  
 Lunch                                11:00 am  
**State Rep, ADJ, Carl Karnish**

## **DISTRICT 10 MEETINGS:**

**Feb 15, 2025**                      **Post 3139**  
 Registration                      10:00 am  
 Meeting                              10:30 am  
 Lunch (\$10)                      12:00noon  
**State Rep, JVC, Sharee Arends**

**May 3, 2025**                      **Post 7643**  
 Registration                      10:00 am  
 Meeting                              10:30 am  
 Lunch (\$10)                      12:00noon  
**State. Rep, ADJ, Carl Karnish**

## **DISTRICT 11 MEETINGS:**

**May 10, 2025**                      **Post 1809**  
 Registration                      9:30 am  
 Meeting                              10:00 am  
 Lunch                                12:00noon  
**St. Rep, Cmd Debbie McElhannon**

## **DISTRICT 12 MEETINGS:**

**May 10, 2025**                      **Post 5951**  
 Registration                      9:00 am  
 Meeting                              10:00 am  
 Lunch (\$10)                      12:00noon  
**State Rep, JVC, Sharee Arends**

## District Meetings and Convention

### Article IV- Districts

#### Section 403 – Regular Meeting and Convention

*Regular meeting* – Unless otherwise provided for in Dept By Laws, Districts *shall hold* at least 6 three (3) regular meetings each year for the purposes as prescribed in Manual of Procedures.

*Convention* – Each District *shall hold* an annual District convention for the purpose of electing District officers and for the transaction of business; such Convention to be held not less than ten (10) days nor more than seventy-five (75) days prior to the convention of the Department Convention.

# 2025 LEGISLATIVE CONFERENCE

**March 2-6, 2025**

For nearly 75 years, the VFW's annual Washington Conference has provided an opportunity for VFW leaders from each state to personally lobby their respective lawmakers and watch as the VFW's current Commander-in-Chief testifies on Capitol Hill before the House and Senate Veterans' Affairs Committees on behalf of veterans.

Guest speakers are invited to address conference delegates, and since 1964, the VFW's Congressional Award has been presented annually to one sitting member of the House or Senate for their significant legislative contributions on behalf of those who have worn the uniform.

Also at the event, the national winners of the 2024-2025 Voice of Democracy and Patriot's Pen scholarship contests will be announced during the annual Parade of Winners ceremony, sponsored by Twisted X. During the ceremony both first place winners will read their winning essay before conference delegates after being presented with their winnings.

Visit the link below for the Schedule of Events and more information:

<https://www.vfw.org/media-and-events/2025-vfw-washington-conference>

## VFW NATIONAL CONVENTION HOUSING

126th National Convention housing will officially open soon. Housing reservation information will be located on the convention website accessed through the main VFW website at [www.vfw.org](http://www.vfw.org). The convention website will also have general convention information including the registration form and links to other convention related information for Columbus, OH—August 9-14, 2025 including a tentative agenda.

## VFW POST 7196 AND POST 3652 CONSOLIDATE – A STRONGER FUTURE FOR VETERANS

We are excited to announce that VFW Post 7196 has officially consolidated with VFW Post 3652. The consolidation of these two posts brings together the dedication and efforts of two strong communities, combining resources, leadership, and commitment to make an even greater impact in their communities!

## COMMUNITY SERVICE RECORD BOOK IS BACK AS AN ALL- STATE REQUIREMENT!

State Commander Debbie McElhannon has reintroduced the Community Service Record Book (or its electronic version) as a requirement for All-State eligibility this year. Here's one key reason why you should make it a priority: Your Record Book serves as critical documentation if your post is ever audited by the IRS. It clearly shows the community service activities your post has participated in, proving your eligibility for exempt tax status.

By keeping a detailed record of your community service, you'll avoid scrambling for information during an audit. All the details will be right at your fingertips in your Community Service Record Book. So, don't wait—start working on your record book today if you haven't already! Now is the time to get started!

## BUDDY POPPY

Now is the time to order your Buddy Poppies for Memorial Day!

[HTTPS://VFWDEPTLA.ORG/DI/VFW/V2/DEFAULT.ASP?PID=48307](https://vfwdeptla.org/di/vfw/v2/default.asp?pid=48307)

# 2025 Mid-Winter Conference Recap



## PATRIOT'S PEN

PLACE	STUDENT'S NAME	DIST	POST
1st	Caleb Barron	7	5153
2nd	Phoenix Lemoine	2	3267
3rd	Brenna Baye	9	3652

First Place Department Patriot's Pen recipient pictured with family as well as the District 7 Commander (Dennis Hart), State Commander (Debbie McElhannon), State President (Ella Wilson), Post 5153 Commander (Larry Thomas).

## VOICE OF DEMOCRACY

PLACE	STUDENT'S NAME	DIST	POST
1st	Ashlyn Rogers	2	3750
2nd	Lincoln B. Trumps	4	9822
3rd	Omar Benites	12	5951
4th	Ava Russell	8	3693
5th	Haven Wilhite	11	1809
6th	Anna Bourque	7	9903



## VFW NATIONAL REPRESENTATIVE

Adjutant General, Dan West, attended our Mid Winter Conference as the VFW National Representative. We would like to extend a heartfelt thank you to Dan for his presence and support at our recent Mid-Winter Conference. His attendance was a true honor, and we greatly appreciated the opportunity to hear directly from a leader who is so deeply committed to our veterans and their families.

# 2025 Mid-Winter Conference Recap

## TEACHER OF THE YEAR

### Elementary:

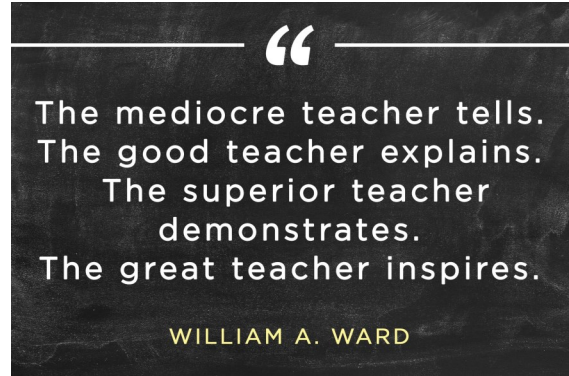
- 1st Place: Theresa Landry - VFW Post 3693 (Gonzales)
- 2nd Place: Lauren Dixon - VFW Post 3615 (Ruston)
- 3rd Place: Lisa Sedlitsky - VFW Post 12065 (New Iberia)

### Junior High:

- 1st Place: Adam Exnicios - VFW Post 3750 (Luling)
- 2nd Place: Gwen Johnson - VFW Post 5735 (Slidell)
- 3rd Place: Wendy Delgado - VFW Post 4752 (Houma)

### High School:

- 1st Place: Steven Griffith - VFW Post 4759 (Starks)
- 2nd Place: Lee Marsh - VFW Post 3139 (Marksville)
- 3rd Place: Jillian Rivers - VFW Post 5187 (Zwolle)



## AMERICANISM

### CAT I

- 1ST Place Samara Payyalla VFW Post 9822
- 2nd Place Aurora Castillo VFW Post 8720
- 3rd Place Katie Grey Talton VFW Post 1809

### Cat II

- 1st Place Addison Pasache VFW Post 3665
- 2nd Place Reed Parker VFW Post 3106
- 3rd Place Madeline Perrin VFW Post 8720

### Cat III

- 1st Place Ivy Duke VFW Post 1736
- 2nd Place Kalyel Monsibais VFW Post 3665
- 3rd Place Olivia Lemaire VFW Post 9822

### Cat IV

- 1st Place Kreid Johnson VFW Post 4224
- 2nd Place Grant Ochello VFW Post 5735
- 3rd Place Jillian Elizabeth Hebert VFW Post 1982

## Most Participating Students

District 5 VFW Post 3619  
2644 Students

## Most Participating Schools

District 5 VFW Post 1736  
10 Schools

District 11 VFW Post 1809  
10 Schools

District 10 VFW Post 1962  
10 Schools

District 5 VFW Post 2130  
10 Schools

**A Heartfelt Thank You to Program  
Chairpersons, Volunteers, and Mid-  
Winter Conference Attendees!**

## STATE COMMANDER'S MEMBERSHIP CHALLENGE WINNER FOR THE MONTH OF JANUARY

The top recruiter for the month of **JANUARY** is **PAUL STONE** from **Post 5951**, with 9 new members. Congratulations Paul!!

## COMMANDER IN CHIEF'S CHALLENGE

The monthly Commander's Challenge is rolling along as we see our Posts making great strides in recruiting and upgrading members to Life membership! To remind everyone, every month during the 2024-25 membership year, we will reward our Posts who lead their divisions in recruiting as well as Life Member upgrades.

Every month, we will award points to our Posts as follows:

- Recruit a new annual member into the Post: 1 point
- An annual or lapsed member converts to Life: 5 points
- Recruit a new Life member into the Post: 10 points

Every month a different award will be given out to the Posts that lead their divisions, and at the end of the year at our National Convention, each Post will be recognized for their achievement on a video display at the Membership booth.

**FEBRUARY'S winners will receive a 3' x 5' VFW outdoor flag to fly proudly at the Post, parades, and events.**

## 100 % POST

Congratulations to the Districts & Post that have reached 100% already this year!

## STATE COMMANDER'S MEMBERSHIP CHALLENGE/TOP RECRUITER AWARD FOR FEBRUARY!

**\*\*SEE THE NEXT PAGE FOR MORE DETAILS!**

## ATTENTION ALL POSTS: CHECK YOUR STATUS FOR THE ALL-STATE TEAM!

[https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1wDjAr-TdAoRiybKLGGrHa2oo\\_EpynZdH-XXOaiWlaviI/edit?usp=sharing](https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1wDjAr-TdAoRiybKLGGrHa2oo_EpynZdH-XXOaiWlaviI/edit?usp=sharing)

As we move into the final stretch of the year, it's important to ensure that your post is on track to earn the prestigious All-State recognition. The All-State Team is a reflection of the dedication and hard work put in by our posts to serve our veterans and community, and we want to make sure every post has the chance to meet the criteria.

To assist with this, we've made the All-State requirements easily accessible via a spreadsheet. The link to the spreadsheet has been provided below, and we highly encourage every post to review it and verify that they are meeting the necessary standards. This includes meeting membership goals, completing required activities, and more.

# FEBRUARY AWARD TOP RECRUITER



24x13  
Wood Flag



**3D carved wood  
by a Lafayette High School Student**

# CANIDATE FOR JR. VICE COMMANDER 2025-2026:

**Vote**

**James Bourque**

for

DEPT OF LOUISIANA  
JR VICE COMMANDER  
2025-2026

**VFW**  
VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS.

Gold Legacy Life Member

VFW 9822  
ALL-NEW 2025  
POST



## EVENT FLYERS:

Any District/Post that has upcoming events and would like to include a flyer in our monthly Mail Call, please send the information to [adj@vfwdeptla.org](mailto:adj@vfwdeptla.org)!

## Future National Convention Dates:

**August 9-14, 2025**

Columbus, OH

**July 31-Aug 4, 2027**

Milwaukee, WI

**Aug 15-20, 2026**

Salt Lake City, UT

**Aug 5-10, 2028**

San Antonio, TX

## COMMUNITY SERVICE REPORTING:

All reports should be submitted **MONTHLY** by logging onto the Department's Website - Members Only Section. It's very important that Community Service Activities are reported in the month that they take place!

## VFW Department of Louisiana Headquarters CONTACT INFORMATION:

Office- 225-928-5025 | [www.vfwdeptla.org](http://www.vfwdeptla.org)

\*Please note the Department NO longer has a Fax Number!

### State Quartermaster

Elvin R. Bass

Email: [lavfwqm@yahoo.com](mailto:lavfwqm@yahoo.com)

### State Adjutant

Carl Karnish

Email: [adj@vfwdeptla.org](mailto:adj@vfwdeptla.org)

### State Administrative Assistant:

Tori LeBlanc

Email: [lastatevfw@yahoo.com](mailto:lastatevfw@yahoo.com)

### State Commander:

Debbie McElhannon

Email: [debbiemc4vets@gmail.com](mailto:debbiemc4vets@gmail.com)

## Department Conference/ Convention Dates:

**2024-2025**

### State Convention

June 26-29, 2025

**2025-2026**

### CofA/Officer Training

August 22-24, 2025

### Mid Winter

January 22-25, 2026

### State Convention

June 18-21, 2026

### CoA/Officer Training

August 28-30, 2026

## State Commander's Special Project Brothers and Sisters in Arms

[Click here for more information, please visit https://www.brotherandsisterptsddogs.org](https://www.brotherandsisterptsddogs.org)



## CHALLENGE COIN

We invite all of our Post to join us in honoring our local law enforcement officers, EMTs, and firefighters by purchasing Challenge Coins to show our appreciation to them.

Cost \$10.00 each + shipping

All Posts should check with their District to see if they have placed an order to distribute to Post!

*Click the link below to order yours today!*

<https://form.jotform.com/242673672339162>



## From the desk of the State Commander...

We just finished up our Mid-Winter Conference (MWC) and so far, I am hearing great comments about the event. Thank you to everyone who made the MWC a success. We accomplished all business that we had at hand and had fun at the same time. Feel free to send me an email with suggestions for the next conference or comments about what you liked, or think can be done better.

By now, all inspections should be complete, and corrections being made. If your post inspection is not complete, the district and post are behind and need to schedule a date for the inspection now. All districts will receive a phone call from the department to set up a district inspection. Any questions call or email Phil Gallet or me.

Louisiana is now right at 93% membership. Thank you for everyone who has recruited members. I ask that each person recruit 1 member between now and April. We need to reach all eligible veterans and ask them to join. The more people we have active, the more that we can accomplish for veterans.

Legislative conference is coming up in March. If you did not give your name that you are attending, contact the Department so we can add you to the list. The Legislative conference is very important. This is our opportunity to talk to our representatives from Louisiana to discuss bills that we want passed for veterans. It takes many of us working to pass bills so that we ensure veterans get the assistance they need and deserve.

As a reminder the state President testimonial is 22 February, and the State Commander testimonial is 22 March. The Commander's testimonial will have a silent, bucket and live auction. What to wear to the commander's testimonial; wear your best spring outfit or business casual. If anyone would like a ticket to the upcoming Commander's Testimonial see the flyer below and give us a call. Come out to the big town of Vinton and enjoy some comradery, good food, door prizes, auction and music.

Remember to keep checking on your buddies and neighbors. Invite them to a fun event at your post, go out to lunch or have coffee and share stories. Comradery and helping veterans are our main purpose.

Thank you for you for what you do. I appreciate your hard work and dedication to serving and helping veterans. Hope to see you at my testimonial, 22 March.



**State Commander  
Debbie McElhannon**

# A message from our State Sr. Vice Commander....

Comrades,

Thanks to all those who attended the Mid-Winter Conference and those who worked behind the scenes to make it a great success! Congratulations to all our Americanism, Patriot's Pen, Voice of Democracy and Teacher winners! A big shout out to our Posts, Districts and State Chairman who promoted and judged all our programs! Thanks for hard work and dedication!

Now, let's finish this year strong Louisiana! Let's continue our recruiting efforts and help Louisiana reach or exceed 102%. Commanders, please review/monitor the National and State dashboards. We still have some Districts and Posts that are missing 1st, 2nd and/or 3rd quarter Trustee reports. If you need any assistance, please reach out to Department Headquarters or State Leadership.

I look forward to attending upcoming District and Post meetings!

Thanks for your commitment to the Veteran of Foreign Wars!



**Sr. Vice Commander  
James Prestenback**

# A message from our State Jr. Vice Commander....

Greetings Comrades,

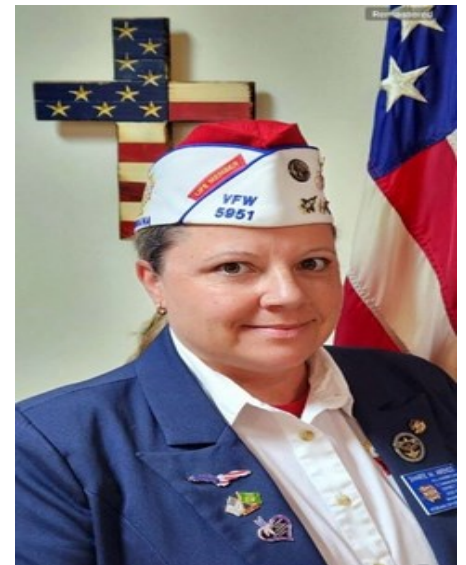
**It was a blessing to see everyone at a successful Mid-Winter!**

It is time to start planning now for your National Day of Service, May 3rd. The sooner you plan for this event, the greater it will be. Remember, it is a requirement by National. Make sure you register online and then do the follow-up once you have done your event.

Remember, just because we have completed our programs, and the awards have been presented, we are not done with sharing the information of those programs. Now is the time to start planning for next year. Get set up with the schools, fire departments, police departments and other veteran organizations. Get out there in the community and make sure the VFW is getting the visibility it needs and deserves!

Keep pushing on Membership and recruiting. The Washington (Legislative) Conference is a little over a month away. Let us make sure our strength is on display and the VFW is well represented.

I look forward to seeing each of you during my travels to the District meetings and at the Washington Conference!



**Jr. Vice Commander  
Sharee Arends**

# A message from our State Adjutant....

## Are You eligible to run AND hold a Post or District position?

**Article II Sec 215** – “All members shall be eligible to hold any office in the Post provided that proof of eligibility has been submitted and verified by the Post Commander and Adjutant prior to the installation....”

**Article II Section 216** - Elected and Appointed Officers; Chairmen and Committees.

- A. The Post shall elect the Commander, Senior Vice Commander, Junior Vice Commander, Quartermaster, and three Trustees.
- B. The Commander shall appoint an Adjutant, Chaplain, and may appoint a Service Officer.
- C. The Post may elect, or the Post Commander may appoint a Judge Advocate, Surgeon, Officer of the Day and/or Guard if required by Post Bylaws.
- D. The Post Commander may appoint such other chairmen and committees as deemed necessary to conduct the affairs of the Post or as may be required by Post Bylaws.



**State Adjutant  
Carl Karnish**

Are you eligible to run and hold a **District** position? **Article IV Sec. 415** – “Any member in a Post in the District shall be eligible to any office in the District....”

**Article IV Sec. 416** - Elected and Appointed Officers; Chairmen and Committees.

- A. The elected officers of each District shall consist of a Commander, Senior Vice Commander, Junior Vice Commander, Quartermaster, and three (3) Trustees.
- B. The Commander shall appoint an Adjutant, Chaplain, Service Officer and Inspector.
- C. The District may elect or the District Commander may appoint a Judge Advocate, Surgeon, Chief of Staff or Officer of the Day if required by the District Bylaws.
- D. The District Commander may appoint such other chairmen and committees as deemed necessary to conduct the affairs of the District or as may be required by District Bylaws.

**So you have decided yes I am eligible ... what's next? Look in March Mail Call!**

# A message from our State Quartermaster....

Comrades,

I want to extend my heartfelt gratitude to everyone who attended the VFW Department of Louisiana's Mid-Winter Conference. Your presence, participation, and dedication to our mission made this event a tremendous success.

A special thank you goes out to all the Post Quartermasters who attended the training and discussion sessions. Your commitment to learning, improving our processes, and ensuring the financial stability of your posts is vital to the strength of our organization.

Additionally, I want to acknowledge everyone who contributed to our various fundraising efforts during the conference. Thanks to your generosity and support, we raised:

- \$490.00 from the 50/50 fundraiser benefiting the Department's Ways & Means
- \$370.00 from the Poker Tournament benefiting the Veterans and Military Support Fund
- \$110.00 from the Karaoke Contest supporting the Commander's Special Project



**State Quartermaster  
Elvin Ray Bass**

Thank you again to all of our members for making the Mid-Winter Conference a success.

## A message from our State Surgeon....

Comrades, as we ended 2024 and moved into the New Year, I would like to thank everyone that has taken steps to maintain a healthy life. I would also like to thank everyone that participated in our Blood Drive during Mid-Winter Conference. Although, due to some communication mishaps, we didn't get the kind of results we would have liked, we were still able to collect enough to help save 24 Adults or 768 NICU babies. We will be conducting another drive during our State Convention in June, so please come and support this worthy cause.

Mid-Winter Conference went very well and we got the see many of our Brothers and Sisters we don't see regularly. Operation Daily Battle (ODB) held QPR training at mid-winter and we were able to train 9 folks. If you are interested in our class, we will be conducting them at state convention as well. Class size is limited to 35 members and we will have registration set up well in advance. This program is sponsored by the VFW Riders Group.

The Riders Group will also be host the 2nd Annual VFW Riders Rally in Bossier City, LA 2-4 May 2025. Flyer to follow.

If you do decide to reach out to me, both my phone number and email are below. However, if you call, please leave a message as I don't answer my phone during my work day...my Boss doesn't like that.



**State Surgeon  
Lawrence Koons**

## A message from our State Chaplain....

Its hard to believe that the first month of 2025 has passed as we turn our focus to February. While Valentines Day doesn't have as much veteran focus as say Memorial or Veterans Day, don't get your significant other as good gift and you will definitely hear about it until the next birthday, next year, anniversary, or Christmas. I joke about this, to some point but to be more serious keep our veterans in both hospitals or our states homes in your minds this month. They, like me when I for months was apart from my family, are confined to places that often times have no interest of being at. For me, towards the end of my months in both a comma and extended stay at hospitals literally felt like Bill Murray in the movie Groundhogs Day and swore I had already completed that day once or twice before. One of the eeriest things I suffered during my recovery, was waking up and not having the ability to execute tasks that I had done for years. I can only hope that the veterans that might also suffer from that will also use it to motivate others to accomplish bigger things. Always remember that I am always here for you if needed. Email, call, or text me and I will help you however I can .



**State Chaplain  
David Fields**

# Veterans of Foreign Wars Department of Louisiana Legislative Report

These are the key Topics from this month. Please read through these and let me know your thoughts on how we can continue to show Louisiana, that our Elected Officials are committed to our Veterans.

**January 6th:** No report, next one will be January 13th.

**January 13th:** VFW 2025 Priority Goals: The 119th Congress is now in session. Fortunately, the Senator Elizabeth Dole 21st Century Veterans Healthcare and Benefits Improvement Act was passed and signed into law in the final days of the previous Congress. This bipartisan, bicameral legislative package was a significant and long overdue victory for transitioning service members, veterans, caretakers, and survivors. However, there was much unfinished work on other important legislation. The VFW 2025 Priority Goals include many issues that still need to be addressed. We will continue to advocate diligently to ensure the newly seated Congress provides the resources and care our nation's veterans and their families have earned and deserve.

Accepting Nominations for VFW Volunteer Service Award: Nominations for VFW's Veterans Affairs Voluntary Service (VAVS) of the Year award are open until Jan. 27, 2025. Nominees must participate in VAVS assignments, serving as regularly scheduled volunteers. Contact your VFW National VAVS Representative at [vavs@vfw.org](mailto:vavs@vfw.org) for more information.

Veterans May Be Eligible for Additional Education Benefits: VA announced that it will begin authorizing additional education benefits resulting from the April 2024 *Rudisill v. McDonough* Supreme Court decision. The court ruled that veterans who served at least two periods of service -- one that qualified for the Montgomery GI Bill (MGIB) and another that qualified for the Post-9/11 GI Bill (PGIB) -- may be able to receive additional GI Bill benefits up to 48 months instead of the previous limit of 36 months. Prior to the Supreme Court's decision, though eligible for both benefits, beneficiaries using their PGIB benefits had to forfeit using any remaining MGIB benefits, even when eligibility was based on separate periods of service. Additionally, beneficiaries who previously used MGIB had their months of entitlement for PGIB limited to the number of remaining MGIB months of entitlement. Approximately 1,040,000 individuals with at least two periods of service may be impacted by these changes. Learn more.

VA Establishes Additional Presumptive Service Connections: As of Jan. 2, 2025, VA has established presumptive service connections from exposure to particulate matter 2.5 for urinary bladder, ureter, and related genitourinary cancers. Eligible veterans must have served on active military, naval, air, or space service in Somalia or the Southwest Asia theater of operations on or after Aug. 2, 1990; or in Afghanistan, Syria, Djibouti, Uzbekistan, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, or Yemen on or after Sept. 11, 2001. This interim final rule will ease the evidentiary burden for VA disability compensation claimants with these conditions. Read more or find an accredited representative for claims assistance.

Medal of Honor Presented to Army Soldiers: President Biden recognized seven Army soldiers from the Korean and Vietnam Wars, emphasizing their heroic actions that went above and beyond the call of duty. Five soldiers of the Korean War and one soldier from the Vietnam War were posthumously awarded the Medal of Honor for their valor. One Vietnam veteran was presented with the award in person. This recognition is part of an ongoing effort initiated in 2021 by Secretary of Defense Lloyd J. Austin to review military decorations awarded to minority veterans, aiming to ensure that their actions were properly acknowledged. Read more.

VFW Attends SVA NatCon 2025: VFW members were recognized for their outstanding commitment to the student veteran community during the Student Veterans of America (SVA) 17th Annual National Conference (NatCon), held this year in Colorado Springs, Colorado. VFW accredited service officers, led by VFW National Veterans Service Assistant Director of Field Operations Cindy Noel, assisted hundreds of student veterans at a claims clinic on site. VFW National Legislative Associate Director Joe Grassi participated in the event's Meet Your Veteran and Military Service Organizations panel discussion. VFW National Legislative Deputy Director Kristina Keenan addressed the conference's general session noting, "Even though I wear this hat and these ribbons, I constantly get asked if it was my father or husband who served." She concluded her remarks by saying, "For all you student veterans out there who no longer wear the uniform, for those who aren't always seen as "real" veterans, know that your voices need to be heard and your stories need to be told, even to Congress.

The VFW-SVA Legislative Fellows for the 2024-2025 class are:

Jose Ayon, Army veteran, University of Southern California

Jennifer Ross, Air Force veteran, Cornell University

Noah Sorseth, Army veteran, George Fox University

Casey Stege, Army veteran, Baylor University

Terry Traylor, Marine Corps veteran, North Dakota State University

Polina Washington, Army veteran, The University of Texas at Austin

**January 20<sup>th</sup>: Disaster Relief for Veterans:** The fires in California have caused catastrophic damage. Please consider giving an emergency gift today to the VFW's Disaster Relief Fund. Your support will provide direct assistance to veterans and military families who have been forced to flee their homes.

**VFW Podcast Provides Inside Scoop:** Join VFW Director of Public Affairs and Strategic Outreach Rob Couture as he hosts "Getting the Inside Scoop" on #StillServing: The VFW Podcast, along with other participants from our VFW Washington Office. This informative discussion covers the VFW's advocacy efforts, achievements, and legislative wins. The podcast also includes a lively review of VFW's participation in the Student Veterans of America 17th Annual National Conference, generally referred to as SVA NatCon. Watch the podcast on the VFW's YouTube channel or wherever you get your podcasts.

**VA Announces Further Presumptive Service Connections:** As of Jan. 10, 2025, VA has established presumptive service connections from exposure to particulate matter 2.5 for leukemias, multiple myelomas, myelodysplastic syndromes, and myelofibrosis. Eligible veterans must have served on active military, naval, air, or space service in Somalia or the Southwest Asia theater of operations on or after Aug. 2, 1990; or in Afghanistan, Syria, Djibouti, Uzbekistan, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, or Yemen on or after Sept. 11, 2001. This interim final rule will ease the evidentiary burden for VA disability compensation claimants with these conditions. The public may submit comments until March 11, 2025.

**January 27<sup>th</sup>: House Hearing on VA Community Care Access:** VFW Communications and Public Affairs Associate Director Brittany Dymond Murray testified before the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs regarding access shortfalls within the VA community care program. She illustrated her personal experience navigating the referral process as she sought inpatient mental health treatment for post-traumatic stress disorder. Following two denials for care because of arbitrary VA geographics rules, she was left with no choice but to attend a program that was not fully appropriate for her complex diagnosis. "Arbitrary location rules should never be the ONLY factor in determining which veterans have access to life-saving care," said Dymond Murray. Other witnesses on the panel discussed topics such as inconsistencies across VA facilities in implementing the *VA MISSION Act of 2018*, long delays in referral processing resulting in one veteran's worsened cancer diagnosis, and a veteran's suicide death that might have been avoided had he received more timely mental health care. [Read the testimony](#) or [watch the hearing](#), which begins at the 7:27 mark.

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**Senator Moran Outlines Priorities for VA Reform:** In his remarks during the first hearing of the Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs in the 119th Congress, Chairman Jerry Moran emphasized that his work is driven by feedback from veterans and is focused on improving VA. He highlighted the need for better access to health care and benefits. He also expressed his expectation that the next VA Secretary -- presumptive nominee former Georgia Rep. Doug Collins -- would share this focus and work to address the issues within VA, which plays a critical role in both supporting veterans and ensuring national security. [Read more.](#)

**Energy Jobs for Veterans:** The Troops to Energy Jobs program provides veterans with a roadmap for entry into highly skilled careers within the energy industry. These jobs are challenging, rewarding, and provide competitive compensation and professional growth opportunities. Its [website](#) is here to guide veterans, transitioning service members, National Guard and Reserve members, and military spouses on their paths to fulfilling careers. Learn more about the energy industry and the variety of energy careers, find energy jobs, and get advice and coaching from a veteran career coach.

Respectfully,

*Matthew J. West*

Matthew J. West

VFW, Department of Louisiana

National Legislative Committee Member 2020-2026

## COMMITTEEMAN'S CORNER

Welcome to 2025 and the halfway point of the 2024-2025 VFW Year. Our Department reached that all important 92% membership prior to 31 December 2024 which is a great achievement and helping build toward us reaching 102% as the CIC has set as a goal.

Soon we will be heading to Washington DC for the Washington Conference March 1-5, Legislative Chairman Matt West is working tirelessly to set up meetings with our Legislators so we can discuss Priority Goals and things that are effecting Louisiana veterans. The agenda has changed some as the CIC will be briefing the Joint Panel on Tuesday morning this year instead of Wednesday.

A big topic of discussion at the National Council Meeting on Sunday will be the continuation of the VOD Program as we operate now or do we adjust the program as what was outlined at the Mid Winter Conference, this has been discussed for the past year at the Council level and now action will be taken. I have had replies from our Past Department Commanders as well as the Council and we are in agreement that Option 3 would be best for the VFW and the students.

Option #1 – Do nothing and continue as we always have – cost \$192,000.00

Option #2 – Cancel the winner's trip and conduct a virtual Parade of Winners – cost \$50,000.00

Option #3 – Exchange the D.C. winners trip for the "Founding Forward trip, host the virtual Parade of Winners – cost \$107,000.00. Founding Forward would also assume all the risks associated with the students

As a reminder for the Post Trustees and their obligation to maintain the Quartermasters books: Sec. 213 - Arrearages, Deficiencies and Omissions. Any Post in arrears for any financial obligations to County Council (if applicable), District, Department and National for fees, dues, poppy money, supply money, failing to have the office of Quartermaster properly bonded in accordance with Section 703, failing to ensure that the Post is properly insured in accordance with Section 709, failing to submit properly completed quarterly Post Trustees Report of Audit, Post Election Report for the ensuing year, or other obligations, shall be deprived of all representation in County Council and District meetings; County Council, District, Department and National Conventions. Such representation shall be restored promptly upon proper adjustment of such deficiencies.

Trustees. Trustees shall not be eligible to serve as an elected officer, Adjutant or on a committee whose books, records and accounts are audited by the Trustees. Among the duties of Post Trustees, they shall:

- At least monthly, review the Monthly Report of Receipts and Expenditures of the Post Quartermaster.
- Within thirty (30) days from the end of each quarter, properly audit the books and records of the Post Quartermaster, Post Adjutant, and any activity, club room, holding company or unit sponsored, conducted or operated by, for or on behalf of the Post and submit a Post Trustee's Report of Audit to the Department Quartermaster for referral to the Department Inspector.
- The Report shall be in accordance with and upon such form as may be prescribed by the Adjutant General. The audit shall be signed by the Post Commander and Trustees, who shall, by their signatures, certify to the accuracy of the information contained therein.
- Perform such other duties as may be incident to the office or may from time to time be required by the laws and usages of the organization or lawful orders from proper authority

The monthly Council Updates are sent to all of the District Commanders for distribution to the Posts, if you are not receiving them please contact your District Commander or send me an email and I will send them to you.

Do not just wait until it is time to collect dues to contact your members, do it on a regular basis. Until next month, let's continue to renew, reinstate and recruit members into the Department of Louisiana VFW.



# Message from CIC Al Lipphardt

Comrades,

In the past two weeks we have been informed two VFW Departments have either officially or unofficially endorsed bills in their State Houses that would legalize and encourage Claim Sharks to profit off the backs of disabled veterans.

One Department testified at a State House hearing endorsing a bill that would charge veterans over ten thousand dollars to file claims while circumventing VA accreditation. The other Department told lawmakers they would support charging veterans' tens of thousands of dollars, as long as the Claim Sharks "promised to follow HIPAA". We have contacted Department leadership of both to remedy these situations because the state legislation was in clear violation of VFW National Resolution No. 619, approved by the delegates at the 125<sup>th</sup> VFW National Convention.

Please be reminded that VFW National Resolutions are binding in accordance with Sections 604 and 702 of the bylaws. While the national headquarters does not often weigh in on state level issues, it is incumbent upon state advocates to ensure that the measures your teams advance in your states comply with both the bylaws and resolutions approved by the National Convention.

If you have questions on state policies, please reach out to the VFW Washington Office staff for clarification. Over the last year, they have worked diligently with many states to either advance appropriate Claim Shark legislation or stall harmful legislation.

Attached to this email you will find the appropriate state level legislation that would meet the intent of Resolution 619. Please note that high-paid lobbyists from an organization calling itself the National Association for Veterans Rights (NAVR) is traveling from state to state, with claim sharks in tow, buying their influence to legalize predatory practices. In the unfortunate incident in one of the two Departments, they took the VFW's words and spun them in a [national press release](#) and a [social media posting](#) to imply the national organization's support. Be vigilant and ensure that if lobbyists tell you they are "trying to curb bad actors" or "protect choice" or "make the legislation better," ***THEY ARE LYING TO YOU!***

Please note that the VFW is very serious about this issue, and that if states actively endorse legislation that contradicts the will of the National Convention, I have the authority to take action as Commander-in-Chief by either pulling appointments to the Washington Conference, National Convention, disciplinary action, removal from office and withholding grant funding for Department-level programs. This is very serious.

Your positions have considerable responsibilities and when used inappropriately, they can damage the reputation and standing of our organization. When the VFW speaks at either our Nation's Capital or State Capitols, we need to have a unified voice and cannot allow any of our members to convey messages that run contrary to our Resolutions or Bylaws.

Be vigilant. If you have questions, ask.

Yours in Comradeship,  
Al Lipphardt

# SAVE THE DATE



## TESTIMONIAL

**STATE COMMANDER, DEBBIE MCELHANNON**

**March 22, 2025**

**Harrington LeBouef VFW Post 9854**

**2292 Highway 109 S**

**Vinton, LA 70668**

**Ticket Presale \$20.00**

**At the Door \$30.00**

**Doors Open at 4:00 P.M.**

**Auctions**



**Food**



**Music**



**Door Prizes and much more**

**Tickets may be purchased from District Commanders, at Mid-Winter Conference or by calling 337-324-0670 or 337-515-0811**

Hotel reservations can be made at Cobblestone Inn & Suites, by calling or 337-589-9420 or 337-313-5014 and using the code "testimonial", a block of rooms has been reserved for those coming in for the event. We were blessed to get a great deal at \$85.00 per night, which includes a hot breakfast. Limited number of rooms downstairs for those who may need, please call ASAP.



*Department President  
Ella Barks Wilson's Testimonial*

*Mardi Gras Ball*

*February 22, 2025*

*6-9pm*

*Tickets are \$20 or \$25 at the door*

*Starks UFW Post #4759  
4402 Highway 12  
Starks, Louisiana 70661*

*Cobblestone Inn & Suites  
2002 Corporate Drive  
Vinton, Louisiana 70668  
337-589-9420  
Code: UFW in February  
\$65/night*





**Don't Forget to register your Post for the Day of Service in May.**

**An All American Requirement**

**<https://todaysvfw.org/day-of-service>**



FROM EXECUTIVE PRODUCER  
GARY SINISE



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3 BROTHERS, 12 WAR FIGHTERS  
15 YEARS LATER

[www.brothersafterwar.com](http://www.brothersafterwar.com)

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TRIBUTE TO OUR  
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# Golf

VFW Post 4224 Tournament

2025 1st ANNUAL CHARITY

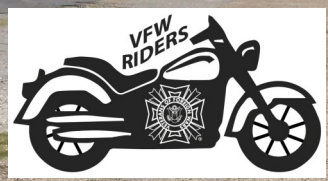
May 17, 2025 at 7:30am  
2100 Coppermill Blvd, Zachary LA

[www.vfwpost4224.org/golf@vfwpost4224.org](http://www.vfwpost4224.org/golf@vfwpost4224.org)



# LOUISIANA VFW RIDERS GROUP SECOND ANNUAL STATE RALLY 2-4 MAY 2025 BOSSIER CITY

## Registration Details to Come!!!



### Raffles and Silent Auction

### Vendors

Drinks and Comradery: At Post 5951 on the evening of 2 May  
Poker run, Music, and Lunch at 3 State Harley Davidson during the day on 3 May  
Dancing and fun at Post 4588 in the evening on 3 May  
Breakfast and send off at Post 4588 on 4 May



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