



Department of Oklahoma
Veterans of Foreign Wars



1103 N. Blackwelder Ave. OKC. OK 73106
405 525-2680/ www.vfwoklahoma.org

December 2020

2020-2021 Series

“Maybe Christmas”, the Grinch thought, “doesn’t come from a store.” “Maybe Christmas, ...perhaps...means a little bit more.”

Dr. Seuss

DEPARTMENT OF OKLAHOMA HEADQUARTERS
VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS OF THE UNITED STATES

General Orders No. 6

2020-2021 Series

1. Commanders on all levels are reminded that according to Section 105 of the National Bylaws, a member whose dues are unpaid after their anniversary date ceases to be a member in good standing and loses all rights of membership in the Veterans of Foreign Wars. They shall not attend meetings or conventions and shall not participate in Post, County Council, District, Department or National functions.
2. The attention of Department, District, County Council and Post Commanders is directed to Section 103 of the Manual of Procedure, which prescribes the manner in which applications for membership will be handled. Applications for membership of new, reinstated or transfer members must be voted on by the members present at a regular Post meeting.

/os/

MICHAEL L. MERIT
STATE COMMANDER

OFFICIAL:

/ os /

Curtis A. Watts
Adjutant



FROM THE COMMANDER



**Michael L. Merit
State Commander
Veterans of Foreign Wars
Department of Oklahoma**

Comrades,

December 1st 2020

First, I hope this finds all of you and your family healthy and well. If not, I pray for a speedy recovery. I would like to extend our heartfelt condolences to PSC Jay Bjorgo and his family. PDP Connie Bjorgo passed away November 29th, 2020. Please keep Jay and his family in your thoughts and prayers as they navigate this tough time.

Here we are beginning our sixth month of the year. I hope everyone that is able has continued their year in full swing. I know that the ongoing COVID pandemic is still limiting our ability to do our jobs 100%, so now is the time that we must throw the book out and think outside of the box. Speak with each other and share what works for you. During this time, we must help each other out to accomplish our mission. Remember, we are TEAM OKLAHOMA! Therefore, we must work together as one.

It is the holiday season! I hope everyone had a wonderful Thanksgiving. I will tell you, one of the things I was thankful this year was knowing each and every one of you are part of Team Oklahoma, continuing to strive for excellence in service to our military, veterans and their families. This is sadly also a time of uptick in veteran suicides. I encourage each and everyone of you to reach out to a veteran you have not hear from in a while and let them know you are thinking about them. Ask them if there is anything they need. Be that uplifting spirit they may need to get through the holidays. Remember, sometimes all it takes is one phone call or face to face meeting to save someone from despair. These are trying times for all of us, but we are here because we chose to serve those who need assistance and a voice. Love, compassion, and forgiveness for all are traits we should all adhere to during the holidays.

The Veterans Service Committee is still waiting on applications for an assistant service officer in Muskogee. State Service Officer PSC James Dockemeyer is working with the National Service Office to formulate a job description. Just as soon as that is complete, we will release it to everyone. As we continue to climb in the number of claims being submitted, we need assistant state service officers now, more than ever! So, if you or someone you know is interested in applying for the position, please contact the State headquarters.

Membership Update. November end numbers are as follows: Southern Conference, Oklahoma is #1. Nationally, Oklahoma is #13. We still have 1,318 to go to that magic 100% before the end of the year. That is approaching fast! Remember, keep working those At Large Lists and the Retention Lists you all have received. Our highest recruiter to date, State Surgeon Stacy Reddig has recruited 32 new members. NCM PSC Robbie Clark is at 27, 2 at 7, 1 at 5, 3 at 4, 7 at 3, 18 at 2 and 28 at 1. Our overall breakdown is 124 new members and 89 reinstates.

Quartermasters, please ensure you are entering a recruiter number when putting in new members, so the right person gets the credit for them. **Remember 92% by December 31st, 2020 and 110% by June 30th, 2021!** We also have my Commander's Challenge for the first half of this year. The first Post to 100% by December 31st, 2020 will receive \$100. Every Post after the first, but before the deadline, will receive \$50. Post 7740 will receive the \$100. So far 1048, 1193, 3689, 4465, 5914, 8676, and 9969 will receive \$50 each. Also, congratulations to Posts 3689, 7740, 8679 for surpassing 110%! So, get out there and bring these new members in. There is still plenty of time to win some money for your Post!

I have discussed with many of you a new partnership between the Military Order of the Purple Heart and this Department. As you may or may not know, during the last session of the State Legislature, Oklahoma was

designated as a Purple Heart state. We are now working with MOPH to designate each town that has a VFW Post as a Purple Heart City. It is quite a simple process with minimal time requirement. The information on how to complete the process will be attached to these General Orders. We already have several towns and cities working on this. I would love to see all 86 cities and towns in our state be designated by the end of this administrative year. Any questions, please do not hesitate to ask myself or Mitch Reed. His contact information is inside the packet.

Our Department Centennial is April 16th, 2021. Not many get to celebrate 100 years, so this is going to be an amazing experience for all of us. Speaking of mementos, our Centennial Coin design was released at the State Convention. The coins are in and a lot have already been distributed. All the State Officers and District Commanders have preorder forms. They are two inches wide and the price per coin is \$20. Each coin will be individually numbered, and the current set is 500 coins. We would love to have to order another 500! So, get in contact with one of the state officers to reserve yours today!



FROM THE STATE SENIOR VICE COMMANDER

State Senior Vice Commander
National and State Legislative Chair
Bylaws/Resolutions Chair

Jim Bassett

Oklahoma is 1st out of 14 Departments within the Southern Conference.
Oklahoma is 13th out of 52 Departments within the Veterans of Foreign Wars.

Happy Holidays! Merry Christmas and Happy New Years to all!!

This is a time of joy and happiness. It is a time that we start to think about home and family. It is also a time of helping others. Did you know that the American Red Cross, here in Oklahoma, has basically shut down due to the Covid-19 virus. Their Food Pantry and clothing centers continue to help those in need. There are many homeless veterans using these items. If you would like to donate to them or maybe sponsor a post drive to help, reach out to them and ask how you can help.



Please do not forget our military comrades in arms, Active, Guard, and Reserves. Many are still deployed and will not see their families until they return. Many of us have been in their place. Reach out to a unit to see what or who you can help. Host a Holiday Dinner for some of the families. Let them know that we care and that they are not forgotten.

A quick reminder. They VFW is still fighting to help veterans. One of these ways is talking to Congress and not letting them forget our veterans, or take away earned benefits. Please keep an eye on legislation that impacts your benefits. One way to do that is through knowledge and not hearsay or social media. Simply register to receive the Action Corps newsletter. This is a simple and easy way to stay informed. You can register at <https://votervoice.net/VFW/register>.

I'm sure that you have heard about Covid-19 virus. It is real and can be deadly. If you think about this, it is easy to stay healthy. The military taught us ways to stay clean during chemical warfare training. Use the training, stay healthy. Wear the mask and keep washing your hands. We have VFW members that have compromised systems that are susceptible to Covid-19 or

other illnesses. We have had members suffered or currently suffering from Covid. Remember, this will help you and also help those around you. Just so you know, our Department Headquarters has been disinfected recently. We have plans to continue disinfecting the facility. We have to keep the place clean for the veterans that visit us.

RETAIN, RETAIN, RETAIN!!! What are you doing to help retain post members?

Retain your members. Get to know them, encourage them to get involved. Ask them for ideas that they may want to manage or get involved with. Is there interest in education? Veteran's service? Helping other veterans? Community recognition? Aiding the community? Something special that they think the VFW should be doing? One never knows of what golden idea can come out of someone feels engaged.

Have you considered a blended meeting? Post members physically present and home bound members virtually present. Under current National policy, this is an option. In fact, members of the National Staff are interested in virtually attending Post, District, and Department level meetings. If you are interested in having one of them attend, let me know. Also, never forget that we have members who are in a home or hospital and this may be what cheers them up! Not everyone is staying home due to Covid.

We are working with organizations for next year. We have already committed to the Oklahoma State and Tulsa Fairs. We are waiting on the announcement of schedule dates for the OKC Dodgers and OKC Energy. If you have contact info for any organization that will put the VFW in front of the public, let me know and I can help. If you do hear of a major event, please let me know.



DONATE!! DONATE!! Our first blood drive will be February 13th at our Mid-Winter conference. If you have an event that would benefit from a Blood Drive, let me know.

This is another way that we can help our veterans, families, and communities. In the meantime, the American Red Cross and Oklahoma Blood Institute are running low. If you have recovered from Covid, your blood may actually help others. Donate some blood if able, help our community. The Supreme Military Order of the Cooties has set up an online report of blood donated. They will send you a certificate of recognition if you donate, please submit the information at <http://vampire.puptent1.org/>. The blood drives are being sponsored by the Military order of the Cooties Grand of Oklahoma.

Be Visible!

We need to increase our presence in our communities. The VFW and the Auxiliary used to be very active within their communities. What are you doing in your community? When you're

out volunteering for the VFW or Auxiliary, please wear something that identifies you as a VFW or Auxiliary member; it helps increase public awareness. Any time you help a veteran is also a good time to wear something that identifies you as a member of the VFW or Auxiliary. There are some exceptions if you are working with other entities, check with them to find out if you can wear VFW or Auxiliary items.

The Special Olympics schedule has been modified due to Covid, but they are always looking for volunteers. They are in need of coaches, assistants, chaperons, and cheering sections. When you're out volunteering for the VFW, please wear something that identifies you as a VFW or Auxiliary member; it helps increase public awareness. Sign up to help, better yet, have your post sign up to support or sponsor them. In August, I golfed with a Special Olympian as their partner during a qualifying round. I was fun and we both enjoyed ourselves. Apply at <https://www.sook.org/>.



Be Visible!

Jim Bassett

State Sr Vice Commander
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FROM THE STATE JUNIOR. VICE COMMANDER

Comrades, another month in the books. I enjoyed getting to visit with a lot of you over this month. By now, almost the whole state has been inspected and I believe we're all working hard to complete our missions. Please remember with the holidays we're celebrating to check on your comrades and make sure they're doing ok; it only takes a minute to do a buddy check. We're still making big strides in recruiting so let's keep that up. Make sure you're still doing your programs and moving forward through this pandemic. I've gotten to see first-hand some of you thinking outside the box and appreciate your dedication to this great organization. I hope to see many of you throughout this month and hope to find you in good spirits and great health.

Jeremy J. Owen
State JR Vice Commander
Department of Oklahoma

FROM THE STATE ADJUTANT/QUARTERMASTER

Fellow Oklahoma VFW Members,

I wanted to pass on the below information from David Prohaska, the National Director, Membership Services. I believe it is important for all to see that the Online Membership System (OMS) will be shutdown for a period of time at the end of the year and that National Headquarters will be shutdown from 24 Dec 20 to 3 Jan 21.

May each of you have a blessed Christmas and please remember during this time of year to slow down and take time to be grateful of all things good and to count your blessings.

Curt Watts

All Departments:

Please be advised that the Online Membership System (OMS) will be shutting down at 4:00 p.m. CST on Thursday, Dec. 31, 2020. Any transactions that are submitted through OMS on Dec. 31, up to the closing time, will be posted to Memstats and Post Query later that evening and available for viewing the morning of Jan. 4, 2021.

Mail received at the National Headquarters prior to Dec. 30, 2020, will be processed and counted in the December total. Mail received after that date, regardless of the postmark date, will not be counted in the December total. We suggest you have your Posts mail in their membership as early as possible or take advantage of the Online Membership System tools. Please note that email sent to the Member Service Center or its advisors are not guaranteed to be processed due to the closure of VFW National HQ beginning December 24, 2020.

The OMS system will be back online for the submittal of transactions by noon CST, Monday, Jan. 4, 2021; however, membership transactions that are processed will not be posted to Memstats until Jan. 8, 2021.

David E. Prohaska

Director, Member Services
VFW National Headquarters
406 W 34th St. Kansas City, Missouri 64111
P:816.968.1114 F:816.968.1115

FROM THE NATIONAL COUNCIL MEMBER

And the very latest is: **Programs National** Awards & Citations Committee Team VFW, please share this far and wide. Nominations are due by **Dec. 4, 2020**. The National Awards and Citations Committee will meet on Jan. 27, 2021, via a virtual meeting to discuss and choose the recipient for the VFW Congressional Award. In addition, the committee will be discussing the

awards to be given at the national convention in Baltimore. Adjutant General Kevin Jones has asked for your recommendations for these awards. If you believe you have a worthy candidate Contact: VFW Programs Director Lynn W. Rolf, III, LRolf@vfw.org. **Administrative Operations** There are currently 43 Posts under suspension, one of which is new. We have one pending Post consolidation pursuant to Section 209 of the National Bylaws. One Charter surrender was completed pursuant to Section 210 of the National Bylaws. The organization currently has 6,055 active chartered Posts. Administrative Operations is engaged in 20 Article IX Disciplinary Actions, 11 administrative actions and six pending membership eligibility challenges This past week we received 17 new Bylaws/Articles of Incorporation submissions in for review. We also reviewed and approved 10 total Bylaws/Articles of Incorporation submissions and currently have 21 submissions pending review and approval. Current turnaround time on Bylaws/Articles of Incorporation submissions is approximately 14 days.

Meetings and Events Ongoing participation in weekly educational online meetings/webinars/ZOOMs pertaining to meetings industry updates. Ongoing weekly ZOOM call with various meeting planners and supplier's discussions on state of the industry, ideas exchange and overall encouragement during this time. Ongoing - weekly ZOOM call with ALHI hotels and presentations of the current state of the meetings industry as provided by CEO/President Michael Dominguez. The presentation includes overall updates on COVID-19. Sources include Johns Hopkins and CDC. Ongoing conversations with Baltimore to stay up to date on the city status. Continuing to review responses for RFP (*Request for Proposal*) for 2025 & 2026 initial convention city bids. Targeting to do virtual presentations in December (virtually). Secured dates for February 2021 NCOA meeting in KC. Hotel due to have new Kansas City (COVID) guidelines on Jan. 16, which will help to determine the hotel's ability to hold meeting. Conducted a virtual (ZOOM) meeting with the 122nd national convention committee and committee chairmen to review their duties and responsibilities for the Baltimore convention. **National Legislative Service** Last week, the Senate passed VFW-supported [H.R. 8247](#), the *Veterans Comprehensive Prevention, Access to Care and Treatment (COMPACT) Act*, which passed the House in September and now heads to the president for signature. This legislation seeks to enhance a wide variety of services related to improving transition, suicide prevention, and care and services for women veterans. The VFW currently supports [160 pieces of legislation](#) pending before the 116th Congress. **Communications and Public Affairs** **Severall** tapings of The VFW Podcast occur this week. The VFW Foundation and I conducted an exploratory meeting with R&B musician and Navy veteran [B.Taylor](#) this week to discuss a potential working relationship that benefits the VFW and our veterans, service members, families and first responders. **Operations Met** with stakeholders in the student veteran advocacy arena to discuss ongoing efforts to improve education benefits for veterans and their families. **National Security & Foreign Affairs House** and Senate conferees are working on the FY 2021 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) hoping to finish their work well before the Dec. 11 budget deadline. NSFA will continue to monitor, specifically the 15 amendments dealing with military health care, and continuing reforms to military treatment facilities. NSFA participated in the Defense Health Agency VSO/MSO roundtable on Wednesday to continue pushing for changes to proposed military health care reforms,

specifically including status changes to targeted military health care facilities, and reduction of military health care personnel. **National Veterans Service National** Veterans Service concluded its Virtual Intermediate Skill Level Training conference for accredited service officers with fewer than five years of experience. More than 100 service officers participated in the training and will now use the NVS online learning platform to complete the end of course exam. Grades will be forthcoming to Department leaders in the coming weeks. NVS VFW's Pre-Discharge Claims Representatives continued to host a series of virtual benefits briefings for transitioning service members on military installations around the country. This week, NVS hosted briefings for Army general officers around the country, as well as service members at Joint Base Andrews, Washington Navy Yard, U.S. Naval Academy, and Camp LeJeune. The NVS health team participated in two VA advisory committee meetings this week focusing on rehabilitation and Gulf War illness. NVS also joined Cerner for a briefing on progress in electronic health record modernization between VA and DOD and a roundtable discussion with VA's customer experience office. Have a safe and enjoyable holiday New Year! Be safe out there!

Robbie Clark
National Council Member
Department of Oklahoma

From the Veteran & Military Support Committee Chair



Veterans and Military Services Committee Chair
Tony McGrew

Hi Comrades, Although Thanksgiving has come and gone, we can still be thankful for what is to come, a great year for the VFW in Oklahoma.



Unit program.

The VFW Military Assistance Program is designed to build a link between the VFW and the Military community as well as promote VFW member interaction with the local military community. This program has two unique services to help build the relationship between the Post and the local military community, the Military Assistance Program Grant process and the Adopt-A-

The Military Assistance Grant process is intended as financial assistance for Posts to sponsor events for active duty military units, National Guard, and Reserves. These events are most successful when local Posts interact directly with the military unit and involve the Veterans Service Officers. The grants are intended for food or food type items, plates, cups and so on. The amount provided to the post is dependent on the number of military members and their families in attendance. A Military Assistance Grant application must be submitted to VFW National Headquarters a minimum of two weeks prior to the event. A post event report needs to be submitted by the post sponsoring the event.

The application must be filled out completely, including a breakdown of the event budget and the VFW involvement with the event.

The other opportunity for Posts to interact with their local military community is the Adopt-A-Unit program. The program is a means for the post to pledge support to the service members

The only way they will know these services are available to them is, if we tell them. I encourage you to be always on the lookout for a Veteran or Service Member and just take a couple of minutes to let them know we are here and how we may help them. Not only will they appreciate it but, you will feel better knowing you helped someone.

Upcoming Volunteer Opportunities and Events:

Yellow Ribbons: We have 1 upcoming Yellow Ribbon. *I will have more info on these as they draw closer.*

Location: Oklahoma City, OK

Venue: TBD

Event date: 12-13 December 2020 (2 day event)

Event Time: 0800-1630 (setup is from 0700 to 0800)

Type of event: 1st & 2nd Post-deployment

Unit: 834th Aviation Regiment

of Attendees: 200 adults (120 Service Members, 60 adult guests and up to 20 kids)

All are welcome to attend these events, just let me know which ones you would like to attend so I can schedule you in.

Dress Code: Please wear business casual clothing, no t-shirts, shorts, or baseball caps. Do wear your VFW Cap. We want to project a professional and competent image.

We are participated with the Oklahoma ARNG on their Trunk or Treat Program to hand out candy to children of the ARNG Members at their facility on N. Kelly Ave.

Post 8706 received a donation from a Family Trust this month. The donation was an electric wheel chair, 2 standard wheel chairs, a portable potty, stool and walking cane. The electric

Stay Healthy with free Sanitizer!!!

In this time of Covid-19, we are all at risk. You never know who has been infected at any time. I voted this year, and the odds are high that at least one person there was infected by the virus. The worst part is they may not have even known it. Because most of our members are in the high-risk category, we must protect ourselves and others. Wear a mask to protect yourself. Stay the approved social distance of 6 feet. Try to go to businesses that clean properly and allow the social distancing.



One of the tools to fight this virus is disinfectant. I want to extend a congratulations to the Claremore Post, J. R. Hooper Memorial Post 2976. They are receiving 55 gallon barrels of disinfectant from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). This post is willing to share a 55 gallon drum at the cost of time and money to go get it.

They want us to distribute the sanitizer to local schools or nursing homes. If you are interested in helping to distribute the sanitizer, please contact the post.

I failed to find out who the contact is for this program but if you call William Richey, 918.829.9610, he can put you in touch with their individual.

Yellow Ribbon



834th Aviation Regiment

December 12th & 13th

8:00 am till 4:30 pm

Sheraton Midwest City Hotel at the Reed

5750 Will Rogers Road

Midwest City, OK 73110

If you would like to attend and participate in this event, please contact Tony McGrew, Department VMS Chairman

Tony.vfw8706@gmail.com

405-820-6467