



Department of Oklahoma  
Veterans of Foreign Wars



P.O Box 1126 OKC. OK 73101-1126

405 850-0815/ [www.vfwoklahoma.org](http://www.vfwoklahoma.org)

March 2022

2021-2022 Series

*“By March, the worst of the winter would be over. The snow would thaw, the rivers begin to run and the world would wake into itself again.”*

*Neil Gaiman*

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

General Orders No. 09

2021-2022 Series

1. Attention is directed to Section 217 of the **National Bylaws, Nomination, Election, Installation and Term of Office.** *Post officers shall be nominated, elected and installed as prescribed in Section 217 of the Manual of Procedure.*

**Manual of Procedure,** Section 217, Nomination, Election, Installation and Term of Office:

**Nomination:** *Nominations of Post Officers shall open in March and remain open until the Post is ready to vote, provided, however that when a poll system is used, as hereinafter described, nominations must be closed at the meeting prior to the election to allow the Adjutant to prepare a printed ballot.*

**Election:** *Post Officers shall be elected in April. Balloting for Post officers may be conducted by open vote or written secret ballot (handwritten or printed) at a regular Post meeting, or, if required by Post Bylaws or authorized by Post vote prior to the opening of nominations, by a poll system. Absentee ballots and proxy votes are prohibited.*

2. Attention is directed to: **National By-Laws, Sec 222, Delegates, District Convention & Meetings, Department and National Conventions:** provides that (a) delegate strength shall be one for every thirty members or fraction thereof in good standing. (b) Delegates elected under this section shall not be considered instructed and may exercise full authority in the duty to be performed. (c) Each Post will pay, in accordance with its Department ByLaws, a delegate registration fee for each and every delegate to which the Post shall be entitled. (d) Each Post will pay, in advance, a National Convention registration fee of twenty-five dollars (\$25) which shall entitle the Post to a packet of convention information and materials and one identified register delegate for the National Convention

Pursuant to MOP, Sec 222, Delegates and alternates for the District Convention and Meetings, Department and National Conventions shall be elected a regular meeting in April. Delegate strength will be based on members in good standing as of March 31<sup>st</sup>. Delegate and alternates of each Post shall serve as delegates throughout the year provided, they remain members in good standing in the respective Post within the District.

**3. Proof of Eligibility Requirements for Officers:** All Posts, Districts and Departments should be reminded of the provisions of Sections 216, 416, and 516 of the Manual of Procedure that officers, elected and appointed, shall not be installed or assume the duties of their office until proof of eligibility has been submitted to the respective Adjutant and properly reviewed.

**4.** 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.

/os/

JAMES BASSETT  
STATE COMMANDER

OFFICIAL:

/ os /

Curtis A. Watts  
Adjutant

# *Commander Jim Bassett*

Oklahoma is 10<sup>th</sup> out of 14 Departments within the Southern Conference.  
Oklahoma is 44<sup>th</sup> out of 52 Departments within the Veterans of Foreign Wars.  
*As of 14 February 2022*

The Mid Winter Conference is behind us. We had two days of training on various topics. We also held an open Town Hall with our National Representatives that was very informative. Our representative, John Muckelbauer, said that it was unique and he enjoyed it. I want to thank all of you for making this event a great success.

During the Commander's training we talked about National's New and Reinstated Membership Grant initiative for VFW Posts. Now is the time to start calling your annual or overdue members and get them reinstated. Start calling the members at large and get them into the posts. It is extra money to help the posts. Recruiting versus retention. If we retain our members, then we have cut the numbers needed to recruit. Let's make it easy on ourselves. What are you doing to keep your members?

I want to thank those that helped my class of commanders with the perpetual Voice of Democracy scholarship. Through your donations we will be offering a \$2,000 scholarship. The more money donated to the scholarship, the more can be awarded to the recipient. To donate to this worthy cause, you can send the money to our department to be collected as a total donation from the department or you can send your donation to:

Class 122 VOD Scholarship  
James Lierz  
VFW National Headquarters  
406 W. 34<sup>th</sup> Street  
Kansas City, MO 64111  
816.756.3390

The donation window will permanently close June 30<sup>th</sup>, 2022.

Some may have noticed that I do not talk about investigations or discipline. I was taught in the military that you praise in public and criticize in private. Nobody gains by spreading rumors, gossip, half-truths, or lies about someone or a post. Please remember, we meet to ***“transact business of mutual benefit. Do not let petty jealousies or trivial personalities influence our deliberations. Let us uphold always the***

*obligations of **unselfish comradeship** and loyalty to our organization and to the government of the United States of America.”*

Mandates are being lifted and it is beginning to look like normalization of a post Covid world. I think that the virus will always be with us like many other variants of the flu. With that in mind, I would like everyone to take the precautions that they feel are necessary to stay healthy. Be it wearing a mask, social distancing, taking the vaccine, or staying home. Do whatever **you** feel is best for your health and your family. Please keep an eye out on friends and family, don't be afraid to check with people. Buddy Checks. Stay healthy, stay on top of deadlines, but mostly, remember to have fun. We have many wonderful opportunities out there; we just need to capitalize on them.

## WW II Recognition!

World War II veterans are considered “the greatest generation”. Many events and “items” have been scheduled or held to commemorate and honor them. In Oklahoma we worked with VFW National and Dream Flights to provide them with a free flight in a 1947 Boeing Steerman airplane. Let us go over our membership rosters and find our WW II veterans. Maybe we can hold an event and recognize them. Thank them for all they did for us.

## **How is your Post?**

How to Destroy a Post in 22 easy steps

*Many posts have issues. Some are easy to fix, while others may take time. A post is a living organization, it needs its members to stay viable and healthy. It needs members to hold office, manage programs, seek new members, and keep the ones that have joined. It needs members to become involved. A post is so much more than an organization. It is a refuge, a haven, a place where a combat vet can meet and talk to others with the same experience. This is expressively why it is important to have post-military outlets life like the VFW.*

It is important to have a place where you feel comfortable sharing your feeling and can allow for healing. *Your post* can provide that type of sanctuary; however, to do so, your post must provide an open and welcoming atmosphere. Here are 22 ways to destroy your post.

1. Don't ever attend the Post meetings.
2. If you do come, don't get there on time and don't pay attention.
3. Don't support the work being done by the officers and other members.
4. Don't accept an office and don't congratulate others on their good work.
5. Don't attend committee meetings if you get appointed to a work group.
6. Don't give your opinions on matters, then disagree with everything after the meeting.
7. Don't join in when others roll up their sleeves to hold events and membership outreach.
8. Don't pay your dues early so your comrades have to chase you down.
9. Don't bother about getting new members. Let the Commander or Adjutant do it.
10. Don't take corrective actions when your home association tries to run the Post.
11. Don't remind others that only regular VFW members can serve on the association's board.
12. Don't give anything back to the Post while enjoying membership benefits.
13. Don't cooperate with other members and officers but expect them to cooperate with you.
14. Don't pitch in when volunteers are needed; just blame the officers for failed programs.

15. Don't reach out to invite younger members to join your Post.
16. Don't call or visit members who have not renewed their dues.
17. Don't welcome new members and don't invite them into your family of veterans.
18. Don't make changes to your post that will make your facilities and events family friendly.
19. Don't ask new and younger members to take on a leadership role in you Post.
20. Don't support the efforts of the leadership appointed to lead the Post.
21. Don't point out mistakes but never offer a solution that will benefit the Post.
22. Don't ever point the finger at yourself.

One issue that we must confront in our organization is to accept that a barrier that blocks our progress to attract and retain new members can be directed to prior behaviors, attitudes, and actions that contaminate our Post and relationships within the organization.

*Another issue is not looking towards the future. Statements like "We have always done it that way" or not wanting to change creates stagnation. Complaining that a veteran from today has not paid their dues also does nothing but create resentment. It chases younger members into other organizations.*

So how do we fix it? Let's allow time for creative dialogue amongst the membership both seasoned and new, inviting others to ask questions and share emotions, experiences, and insights will lead to success. Running a Post takes involvement from all members and working together will add to Post unity.

#### Heading In the Right Direction

##### *Staying Informed and communicate:*

It's important to understand that your individual efforts as members of the Veterans of Foreign Wars are generally driven by a need to make a difference. You have likely chosen to volunteer your services based upon your desire to help those who cannot help themselves. In our organization, we have a saying "Still Serving", and it is absolutely true; however, your ability to fulfill that statement is based upon the knowledge of information shared amongst the membership.

It is important to be provided with most current and updated information regarding the organization as having those tools will help you support the overall goal of the Veterans of Foreign Wars and most importantly how to make a difference in our community. The best way to getting to that information is to attend Post meetings. In post meetings the Commander will share communications given to him from District, Department and National which will govern the organizations future.

As the largest and oldest war veterans service organization, we have a long history of supporting service members, veterans, and their families. We must get and stay organized to achieve the success we need to complete tasks and stay on top of things to be done, such as, attending local events, townhalls, etc. in order to truly make a difference within our communities.

We can also help veterans in our community by:

1. *Welcoming our younger veterans, they have answered the call, same as us.*
2. Volunteering at a shelter.
3. Being a mentor or legal aid.
4. Organizing a Stand Down program.
5. Developing a veteran burial program in your area.
6. Helping Veterans get to and from medical appointments.

7. Providing a stand in lifeline for Vets whose families live far away.
8. Help with Veteran Outreach Programs that assist Homeless Veterans and those with PTSD.
9. Recruiting and retaining Women Veterans and giving insight to their views of the VFW.
10. *Being active in your post, think outside the box of ways to help veterans, families, and communities.*

Remember, of all these things we can do to help others, we need to apply them to ourselves in order to be our own savior. Trust in your brotherhood and don't be afraid to ask for help. Moving forward is not possible without you and communication cannot, nor should it ever be a one-way street.

By Bob Houchins and Reggie Russell, VFW California  
Italicized added by Oklahoma

*Jim Bassett*

State Commander  
Department of Oklahoma  
Veterans of Foreign Wars  
P. O. Box 1126  
Oklahoma City Oklahoma 73101  
405.664.3929  
[Bassettj15@yahoo.com](mailto:Bassettj15@yahoo.com)  
<https://vfwoklahoma.org/>



Oklahoma

*If not you, then who?*

*If not now, then when?*

*Hillel the Elder*

## *Senior Vice Commander Jeremy Owen*

Comrades, it was fantastic seeing so many of you at our Mid-Winter Conference. I hope we made it home safely and healthy! I trust that many of us attended some of the great training and classes that were offered. Going into March, I'm going to reiterate, we need to continue pushing our retention and membership programs. Let's make sure to be using the dashboard so your post gets the credit it deserves for what you do for this great organization! I am still looking to fill appointments for next year. That being said, if you feel you would be a great fit for any committees or chairs for committees, please don't hesitate to contact me. Please make sure to continue your buddy checks! We are all seeing what's happening in the world and these events could trigger some issues in several of our brothers and sisters; let's be there for them. Let's keep moving forward as TEAM OKLAHOMA!

Have you thought about supporting our very own Oklahoma VFW Foundation? There are several ways to do it: Amazon smile is a great way. Just go to <https://smile.amazon.com> once there then find Oklahoma Veterans of Foreign Wars Foundation. Post donations & personal donations are another great way to support our Foundation. Donations are tax deductible. Donating to the Oklahoma VFW Foundation is a way of donating back to Posts within our department and our programs. Donors may also designate where they want their donation dollars to go toward, for instance, Veterans Services, Honor Guards, etc. Donations can be sent to Oklahoma VFW Foundation, [P.O. Box 1126, Oklahoma City, OK](mailto:Post@okvfwfoundation.org) or by visiting the Foundation website at <https://okvfwfoundation.org> and the selecting the donate button.

Jeremy Owen  
State Senior Vice Commander  
Department of Oklahoma



# *Junior Vice Commander*

*Erica Traxler*

*Student Veterans of America Liaison  
Citizenship Education Chair*

Comrades,

I hope this month's general orders finds you well. As we finish up the third quarter of district meetings. I hope your nominations are going well and that you are choosing your leaders wisely. As I said last month: good luck, choose wisely, be open to change, be transparent, and be ready to work. I know the person you elect as your district and post commanders will represent you well as well as represent Oklahoma. If you are looking to take on more responsibility look to your post and district positions, look to the chair positions at the state level, and reach out to people to inform them that you are interested. If you have not yet held a position start with something small at your post or shadow a person to learn what the responsibilities are. I am still looking to fill chair positions at the state level for my command year.

Mid-Winter was a success. It was great seeing all of you in person and having great conversations. I look forward to the state convention where I will get to see you again. I will be attending district meetings throughout the remainder of the VFW year. If you need me to speak on something, please let me know and I would be happy to support. Please get registered for the state convention as soon as possible as well as the national convention. It is always great when we have a large number of people representing our state.

Social media is still important and will continue to be so for the indefinite future. It is a powerful tool that can assist in the successes of every event we host in Oklahoma. Comrade Kinsler has been reaching out to people to get the necessary information so he can share it across the platforms that we use. He gets as much information out as he can, so if you have an event reach out to him so he can share it, but also post it on your social media pages.

Recruit! Recruit! Recruit! It is important for us to recruit and retain members so we can address congress and have our needs addressed and supported by members of congress. We have earned this opportunity, but we must maintain the members to be able to continue this opportunity.

I am fundraising for my State Commander year. I have to be able to purchase things like shirts for the CofA members, coins, gifts for each state commander, my National Commander gift, and anything else that comes up. The first raffle I am doing is a ¼ beef with a deep freezer. Tickets are \$10 for one or \$25 for three. You can purchase at any time. The drawing will be on

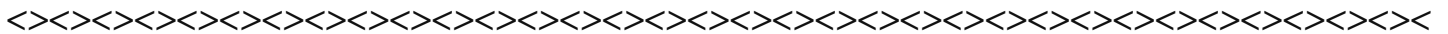


Saturday at the state convention. If you live in Oklahoma, I will deliver the beef to you. I appreciate the support from every person so that I can continue these traditions.

Thank you again for allowing me to serve you as the Oklahoma Junior Vice Commander. This is truly an honor. As you know I am running for state Senior Vice Commander and would appreciate your vote. Please call, text, or email if you need anything.

**Erica Traxler**

Junior Vice Commander, VFW Oklahoma  
Student Veterans of America Liaison  
Citizenship Education Chair  
989-239-5999  
[ericatraxlervfw@gmail.com](mailto:ericatraxlervfw@gmail.com)



*State Adjutant/Quartermaster*

*Curt Watts*

*Department Parliamentarian (RP)*

**COMMANDERS & ADJUTANTS:** Pursuant to **MOP, Sec 222**, Delegates and alternates for the District Convention and Meetings, Department and National Conventions shall be elected a regular meeting in April. Delegate strength will be based on members in good standing as of March 31<sup>st</sup>. Comrades, on 31 March 22 or NLT 1 April 22, I will go into OMS and obtain the members in good standing for each Post within our department. Shortly after, I will be publishing a delegate strength roster showing the number of delegates for each post. This will be your delegate strength for conventions.

**Assistant Department Adjutant/Quartermaster:** Comrades, I hope each of you at our Mid-Winter Conference was able to reach out to Comrade Andrea Melcher from Glenpool Post 9126 who is serving as our Assistant Adjutant/Quartermaster for the remainder of the 2021-2022 year. As of this writing, Sr. Vice Commander Jeremy Owen is planning on appointing Andrea as State Adjutant for next year during our VFW 2022-2023 year allowing me to step down from some of the Department duties. Andrea is currently serving as Glenpool Post 9126 Adjutant/Quartermaster. Andrea's email is [atherrien83@gmail.com](mailto:atherrien83@gmail.com) Please don't hesitate to contact her.

***National Council Member***  
***Curt Watts***

Comrades, I trust and hope that each of you who attended our Oklahoma VFW/VFWA Mid-Winter Conference had a great time. I want to personally thank each of you who attended for spending your personal time with fellow members of our great organization. Without a doubt, we are stronger as individuals and as an organization when we spend time in comradeship and speak out for our VFW, learn more about our organization, and conduct the business of our organization. As many of you witnessed, we had a great representation of our Voice of Democracy, Patriot Pen, and Teacher of the Year recipients. However, let us not forget our Public Servant Award recipients as well. We had a great showing of Law Enforcement Officers, Fire Fighters, and Emergency Medical Technician recipients attend our joint session on Saturday morning as well. A special thanks should go out to each of you at Post, District and Department levels, both on the VFW and the Auxiliary side for once again making these programs successful in the Department of Oklahoma. And of course, let us all thank the committee chairpersons and committee members at all levels who selflessly put forward the efforts to make these programs happen.

As I have stated before and continue to state, that as your National Council Member, it is my goal and desire to always represent you, speak out for you, and do what we believe is best for the VFW Department of Oklahoma within our National organization. I want to thank each of you who let me know your thoughts.

As many of you know, one of the hottest topics at the National level is the retirement of Quartermaster General Debra Anderson.

**Election of a Quartermaster General:**

I have previously sent out an email showing Debra's announcement of her retirement as Quartermaster General effective March 2<sup>nd</sup> at close of business. Therefore, pursuant to National Bylaws & MOP Sec. 620, the National Council of Administration will be elect a Quartermaster General to fill the vacancy until our next National Convention. I asked you the membership of our department how you wanted me to cast my vote, and from the two candidates, Past Commander-in-Chief Hal Roesch and Assistant Quartermaster General Marc Garduno, the majority of you have chosen Marc Garduno. Therefore, I will cast my vote for Marc Garduno.

**National Legislative Conference:** Unfortunately, again this year, due to COVID restrictions, the National Legislative Conference and the Voice of Democracy Parade of Winners will be in virtual settings. This is unfortunate for us, because it is important for our Senators and Representatives on Capital Hill to see us and hear from us face to face!

The Commander-in-Chief's Testimony will be held virtually from the Hyatt Regency on Wednesday, 2<sup>nd</sup> March at 1400hrs eastern time in which I will be in attendance. I have not yet seen on our National Website if anyone can join in virtually. However, it might be posted soon. On Monday there will be a Life Member Committee Meeting and Tuesday the Budget & Finance Committee meeting. While not a member of either of these committees, I plan on attending.

### **Voice Of Democracy Parade of Winners:**

The VFW will be hosting its second annual virtual Voice of Democracy Parade of Winners live on April 7 at 7 p.m. CDT, live on Facebook.

Join us as VFW and VFW Auxiliary state and national leadership, a representative from program sponsor [Twisted X](#), and this year's 52 Voice of Democracy Department (state) winners come together from all over the world as we crown the 2022 national Voice of Democracy first place winner.

Be sure to [visit the VFW Facebook page, select the Virtual Parade of Winner event, tap "interested," then "going" to ensure you stay up-to-date and receive all event notifications and reminders.](#)

Furthermore, it is great for our department Voice of Democracy to go to Washington D.C. and see for themselves where our Nation conducts its business as a republic. As of today, I am being told that even the Commander-in-Chief's Testimony before Congress has a pretty good chance of being conducted via tele-conference versus in person.

### **National Legislative Service:**

- VA has proposed changes to its Schedule for Rating Disabilities for auditory, respiratory, and mental health conditions. These changes would incorporate modern medical data and terminology, allowing veterans to receive disability ratings based on the most current information. Ratings of veterans who currently receive VA disability compensation will not be impacted as a result of these changes. The VFW will carefully review the proposed changes and will submit a public comment to the Federal Register. [Read more.](#)
- The VFW, alongside fellow veteran advocates, met with Department of Education Secretary Dr. Miguel Cardona to discuss education issues facing veterans, service members, and their families. The VFW expressed the need for transparent and accessible data about institutions to facilitate informed decision making. Secretary Cardona relayed his department's dedication to improving higher education accessibility and affordability, as well as improving collaboration with DOD and VA.

- The VFW currently [supports 147 bills; and opposes one bill](#) pending before the 117th Congress.

Contact: VFW National Legislative Service Director Patrick Murray, [PMurray@vfw.org](mailto:PMurray@vfw.org). or our own National Legislative Committee Member Mike Merit at

#### National Veterans Service

- NVS VFW's Pre-Discharge Claims Representatives hosted a series of benefit briefings for separating service members around the country this week to include U.S. Naval Academy and Joint Base Andrews.
- NVS participated in a bimonthly Wounded Warrior Project meeting, discussing the ongoing grant support that the VFW receives to operate our VFW Pre-Discharge program on military installations around the country. NVS anticipates that the grant will continue in 2022-2023.
- NVS participated in a discussion with VA to promote the fielding of their new mobile application for mental health called Getting Ready in Transition (GRIT). The app will connect the veteran with a support team of their choosing and also provides exercise and insights for better mental health. NVS is working with VA to ensure that resources like the VFW's global network of service officers are properly integrated into the app.
- The NVS health care team participated in a discussion on the Comprehensive Program for Caregiver Assistance with Veterans Health Administration.

Contact: VFW National Veterans Service Director Ryan Gallucci, [RGallucci@vfw.org](mailto:RGallucci@vfw.org).

Comrades, feel free to contact me at my email address or my cell number below if desired. I am always willing to listen to your comments and/or share information from the National side.

Respectfully,

Curt Watts

National Council of Administration 2021-22

Oklahoma

[vfwokncm@outlook.com](mailto:vfwokncm@outlook.com)

405.590.8577

**Oklahoma VFW Foundation**  
**John H. Fischer Secretary/Treasurer**

Comrades,

If you attended the Mid-Winter Council of Administration meeting, you are aware that the Oklahoma VFW Foundation made a \$5,000 donation to the Dept. of Oklahoma VFW for their service officer program. These are actually funds that were donated to the OK VFW Foundation from the Vietnam Veterans Association Chapter 216 (Tulsa) last year and were earmarked specifically for the VFW Service Officer program. The Foundation worked closely with Dept. Quartermaster Watts on the timing of making this donation from the Foundation to the VFW to ensure that this donation did not jeopardize any other grants the VFW receives for their Service Officer work.

We have received many questions about funding Honor Guards and the Foundation board met during Mid-Winter and we will be establishing grants very soon. Honor Guards can apply for small grants on a service-by-service basis. After an Honor Guard performs a service for one of our departed comrades, they can fill out a very simple application which will be on the Foundation's website ([www.okvfwfoundation.org](http://www.okvfwfoundation.org)) on or before March 1<sup>st</sup>. Grants will start out relatively small, only \$25 per service, because the Foundation currently only has \$900 in its Honor Guard fund and we want to make sure we can fund as many Honor Guards as possible. Watch for Foundation fundraisers for the Honor Guard program. As our available funds increase, our Board will be able to reevaluate the amount of these grants.

As always, the Foundation is here to assist VFW Posts and Auxiliaries if they find grants or have corporations who want to donate to them but are only able to donate to a 501(c)(3). In the last few months, with the assistance of Comrade Gary Miles, the Foundation was able to do a \$5,000 pass through donation to help fund the Ponca City Veterans Parade and did another pass-through donation of over \$7,000 from a private individual to fund a new flag pole for a community center in Kay County.

Thank you all for your patience and support.

John H. Fischer,  
Secretary/Treasurer  
Co-Founder of the  
Oklahoma VFW Foundation



***National Legislative Committee Member***  
***Mike Merit***

Comrades,

First of all, I hope all is well with you and you are staying warm in this cold weather. We had a decent turnout at the Mid-Winter legislative training and briefing. We were cramped on time, but I hope those in attendance received some good information. Of the seven members of our Congressional delegation, we had a video from Congressman Hern, and staff from Congressman Lucas' and Bice's offices. Not the showing we were hoping for, but it is a busy time in Congress right now.

Beginning on the 28<sup>th</sup> of February and running through the 2<sup>nd</sup> of March will be the National Legislative Conference. We will again be conducting the conference virtually. Currently, we plan to meet with Senator Inhofe, Congressman Lucas, Congressman Hern and Congresswoman Bice. We received a video from Congressman Cole because he is wrapped up on the Appropriations Committee and will not be able to attend. We still have not heard from Sen. Lankford or Congressman Mullin. If there is anything military or veteran related that you would like to communicate to those we are meeting with, please do not hesitate to pass it on to myself. We will get it to them when we meet with them.

If you have not heard by now, our biggest ally in the Senate when it comes to our military, veterans and their families, Senator James Mountain Inhofe, is announcing his retirement at the end of this current congress in January of 2023. Because of the ways the Oklahoma election laws are structured, there will be a special election to fill the seat during the normal November elections this year.

There is currently an Action Alert out that I strongly urge everyone to participate in. Here is the information on it:

**Vote YES on Honoring Our PACT Act**

**Background**

The *Honoring our PACT Act* is a comprehensive solution to provide access to VA health care and benefits to toxic-exposed veterans. This historic legislation would help millions of veterans by establishing a permanent presumptive framework to address any toxic exposure, foreign or domestic, past, present, and future. It would provide VA health care access for all veterans exposed to hazards, create a concession of exposure for airborne toxins, and establish a list of presumptive conditions associated with burn pits and other exposures. This legislation would help Post-9/11 veterans, K2 veterans, Atomic veterans, and Vietnam veterans, including those who served in Thailand, Cambodia, and Laos. We urge the House to pass the *Honoring our PACT Act* as soon as it is brought to the floor.

**Take Action**

Contact your representative and tell them to vote **YES** as soon as the *Honoring our PACT Act* is brought to the House floor. Toxic-exposed veterans cannot afford to wait any longer for health care and benefits. We must act now!

[Click here to act now!](#)

I am again attaching the department legislative tracker that came out last month. The plan is to send it out each month so you can review how our delegation stands and to learn more about the bills the VFW supports.

Thanks for all you continue to do and stay safe out there!

V/R,

Michael L. Merit

National Legislative Committee

Member

[Senate Committee Advances Bill for Post-9/11 Toxic-Exposed Vets](#): The Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs unanimously passed the Health Care for Burn Pit Veterans Act, introduced by Chairman Jon Tester (D-Mont.) and Ranking Member Jerry Moran (R-Kan.). The VFW-supported legislation would extend VA health care eligibility for combat veterans from five to ten years after separation from the military. The bill would require VA to screen veterans regarding their exposures during service, furnish training for VA health care providers and disability claims processors, and provide additional reporting and tracking of veteran health conditions due to toxic exposures. "This legislation is a step in the right direction to take care of this group of veterans and we look forward to additional expansions of health care and benefits to cover all toxic exposed veterans," said VFW National Legislative Director Pat Murray. [Read Here.](#)

[House Holds Hearing on Securing High-Demand Jobs for Veterans](#): The House Veterans' Affairs Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity held a hearing focused on the impact of new VA education and training programs such as [Veteran Employment Through Technology Education Courses](#) (VET TEC) and [Veteran Rapid Retraining Assistance Program](#) (VRRAP) in securing veteran employment. Since its launch in 2019, VET TEC has placed over 1,700 graduates in new employment, earning an average salary of \$60,000. It is currently a five-year pilot program, and the VFW continues to advocate for funding to support its success. Watch the hearing.

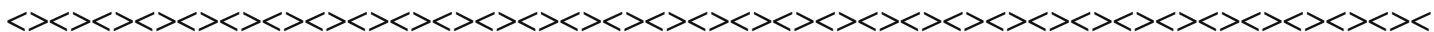
[Independent Budget Released](#): Leading veterans service organizations (VSOs) - Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW), DAV (Disabled American Veterans), and the Paralyzed Veterans of America (PVA)—have released [The Independent Budget \(IB\) Recommendations for the Department of Veterans Affairs \(VA\) for FY 2023 and FY 2024](#). This report serves as a roadmap to ensure VA is fully funded and capable of carrying out its mission to serve veterans and their families, both now and in the future. "For over 30 years, the IBVSOs have coauthored the IB, offering substantive solutions and policy recommendations to ensure the timely delivery of specialized health care, as well as appropriate earned benefits for the men and women who served," said Bob Wallace, executive director of VFW Washington Office.

“While this year’s report is now complete, it is now imperative Congress and VA work together, along with veterans service organizations and other veterans’ stakeholders to put veterans’ interests on the top of their list.”

**House Holds Hearing on Survivor Benefits and Services:** The House Veterans’ Affairs Subcommittee on Disability Assistance and Memorial Affairs held an oversight hearing on the effectiveness of VA services for dependents and survivors. VFW National Legislative Associate Director Kristina Keenan submitted a statement for the record explaining how VA needs to improve outreach to military and veteran families and better explain the benefits available to survivors. “Preplanning is key. Veterans and their families need to receive clear and continuous communications informing them of future benefits and the documentation needed to ensure that survivors are supported in the event of the veteran’s passing,” stated Keenan. She stressed that surviving family members are often unaware that the benefits they may be entitled to receive are significantly less than what veterans receive in disability compensation, resulting in unanticipated financial hardship. [Read the statement](#) or [watch the hearing](#).

**VA Proposes Disability Rating Changes:** VA has proposed changes to its Schedule for Rating Disabilities for auditory, respiratory, and mental health conditions. These changes would incorporate modern medical data and terminology, allowing veterans to receive disability ratings based on the most current information. Ratings of veterans who currently receive VA disability compensation will not be impacted as a result of these changes. The VFW will carefully review the proposed changes and will submit a public comment to the Federal Register. [Read More](#).

**Please see the attached “VFW Supported Bills-Oklahoma Cosigners-Support Spreadsheet.**



***VFW-OK Southern Conference 23 Committee Chairman  
Mike Merit***

Greetings From the Southern Conference 2023 Committee!

If you have not heard, the VFW Department of Oklahoma and the Auxiliary will be hosting the VFW Southern Conference Meeting at River Spirit Casino in Tulsa November 1<sup>st</sup>-4<sup>th</sup>, 2023. On December 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2021 State Commander Bassett established the Southern Conference 2023 Planning Committee consisting of Committee Chair Michael Merit, Vice Chair Darryl Mabry with Dannie Bates, Dan Fuller, Gary Miles, Elizabeth Carter and Curt



Watts as members. Department Auxiliary President Polly McCord named to the Auxiliary side Chair Laquetta McCartor with Joyce Caldwell, Bonnie Wheeler, Deborah Minor-Gonzales and Monica Hogue as members. This will be the core team that will be working on the planning and execution of the conference. However, it cannot be done by just this small group. It will require so many more on the committee and a vast number of volunteers to make this the best conference seen in many years and to really showcase our Department and the Oklahoma Standard.

There are a few initial areas we would like to discuss with you. The first area we would like to address is volunteerism. We have so far established several subcommittees that will take care of most of the points of concern. Currently they are Administration, Sponsorships, Vendors, Activities/Excursions, Entertainment, VFW/Auxiliary Meeting Coordination, Transportation, Space Management, and Volunteer Coordination. We will need many, many individuals to help with each of those subcommittees. Please, pass the word on to members of your Posts and Auxiliaries to see if anyone would be interested in volunteering their time. All help will be greatly appreciated.

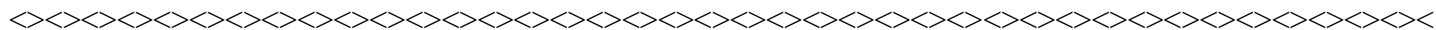
Secondly, to function requires money and donations. At the 2022 Mid-Winter Conference, the committee adopted a Sponsorship/Donor/Vendor Letter and Application that was approved by the Department Council of Administration. There are several levels from VIP sponsorships down to a simple donation. Because of our Oklahoma VFW Foundation, we do have the capability for anyone to utilize it for a 501(c)(3) donation to help our cause. While we will have members of this committee actively seeking out individuals, it will take each one of you as well to help us achieve our goals. We have enclosed with the comments the said approved letter and application for you to print off to seek out those who can help us. From Posts and Auxiliaries to small businesses, non-profits and even corporations, all can be a part of this great event. Please help us get the word out there.

Third, each attendee usually receives a gift bag at registration. Our wonderful Auxiliary is taking on this mission whole-heartedly. However, we would like to help them out. We would like to ask for you to look for knickknack donations that showcases Oklahoma and the Made in Oklahoma concept. We want to show off Oklahoma to the rest of the Conference. Please keep in mind that the attendee numbers can vary between 400 to 800. The most recent attendance at the last conference was near 650 attendees. So, any help would greatly be appreciated.

We still have many milestones to set and accomplish to pull this off. Most importantly, none of it can be done without yours and others help. We will try to keep you updated monthly concerning how the committee and the conference is coming along. November 2023 is not as far away as you may think. It will be on top of us before we know it and we must stay ahead of it. To put it simply, we need your help. Please help up get the word out to everyone you

possibly can for maximum participation. We thank you in advance for all your help and look forward to working with all of you. Take care and stay safe out there! Let the good times roll!

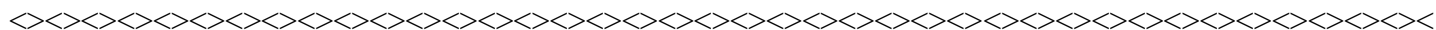
V/R,  
Michael L. Merit  
Southern Conference 2023  
Planning Committee Chair



*Voice of Democracy, Patriot Pen & Teacher of the Year Chairman  
Mike Devenitch*

**VFW YOUTH SCHOLARSHIPS:** Please showcase your post, district and state winners with pictures, social media posts and newspaper articles. Let your teachers, students and supporters know you will be back next year. Due to the pandemic, the VFW will host a virtually Voice of Democracy and Patriot's Pen Scholarship awards show and the Parade of Winners. The event will be live streamed sometime in early April. As soon as information is released, I will pass along. After this event, we expect the 2022-2023: Voice of Democracy (VOD and the Patriot's Pen (PP) youth essay topics to be released. See <https://www.vfw.org/community/youth-and-education/youth-scholarships> for more info.

VOD/PP/ToY CONTACT: Michael H. Devenitch, (405) 819-9914. 4224 Manhattan Dr. Moore, OK, 73160 [sentrymike@yahoo.com](mailto:sentrymike@yahoo.com)



*Veterans and Military Services Committee Chair  
Tony McGrew*

Hello Comrades,  
VMS Programs are an integral part of the VFW's never-ending obligation to assist members of the active-duty military, National Guard and reserves, as well as their families. VMS is broken down into 3 distinct stand-alone programs.

- Unmet Needs
- Military Assistance Program (MAP)
- VFW "Sport Clips Help a Hero Scholarship" program



- \* Unmet Needs provides financial assistance to service members, veterans, and their families experiencing a financial hardship directly related to their military service.
- \* Assistance, not a hand out.
- \* The financial assistance is in the form of a one-time grant in an amount up to \$2,500. All grants are paid directly to the “creditor” companies (such as the electric company, mortgage company, landlord, etc.) and not to the individual.
- \* Funds can be used for rent, car repairs, medical expenses, infant-care items and many other necessities.
- \* Each case is reviewed individually and acceptance determined by a committee.
- \* Applied for on line at: <https://www.vfw.org/assistance/financial-grants>

### **VMS Fund Raisers:**

The raffle for the K-Bar Knives, Bottles of Specialty Whiskey. 30 mm Bottle Popper and small knife raised \$570. Thanks to all who participated.

### **Adopt a Unit**

Did you know a Post can adopt a Military Unit and provide support for Family Days, Yellow Ribbons, Deployments, Holiday Events, Meeting and Support Seminars, Direct Assistance and more.

This is an excellent way to locate and enlist new members into your Post. If you need more information on Adopting a Unit, please, get in touch with me.

### **Upcoming Volunteer Opportunities and Events:**

#### **Oklahoma Army National Guard Crossroads Events**

Location: 3535 NE Military Circle, OKC 73111

Dates:

26-Mar, 9-Apr, 21-May, 4-Jun, 16-Jul, 6-Aug, and 17-Sep

Times: 0800 Until

\*\* Crossroads Events are sponsored by the OKANG and provides information to troops on transitioning to civilian life and their VA Benefits. They are planning on more events in March, April, May, June, July, August and September.

All for One; One for All

Tony McGrew

State VMS Chair

District 10 Commander

Department of Oklahoma



# 2022 Women Veterans Symposium

## Purpose After Service

**March 5th, 2022**

**9 am to 1 pm Via Zoom**

Register at [veteran.okstate.edu](http://veteran.okstate.edu)



**Keynote Speaker:**  
*Kim Howerton*  
LtCol Ret.  
OK Air Guard  
US Air Force Reserve



**Connect:**  
*Patricia Mathes-Kerr*  
US Army



**Community:**  
*Tracy Lewis*  
Author  
US Air Force



**Commitment:**  
*Tracy Morrill*  
US Air Force



**VA Volunteer Activities:**  
*Rochell Alexander*  
US Army



OFFICE OF  
**STUDENT VETERAN SUCCESS**  
University College



**OKLAHOMA**  
DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS



THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA  
VIETNAM WAR  
COMMEMORATION

*honoring Service Valor Sacrifice*



**Kiowa-Comanche-Apache Indian Veterans Organization would like to invite all to Honor Our Vietnam War Veterans, to include the Surviving Spouses.**



DATE: 29th of March-National Vietnam Veterans Day

Time: 13:30hrs

Place: At the new Lawton Farmers Market-77 SW 4th ST. Lawton OK. 73501

POC- Kristopher Killsfirst (580) 699-0896 or email [kk114a@yahoo.com](mailto:kk114a@yahoo.com)

Every Vietnam Warrior will be recognized and Surviving Spouse will receive honors on behalf of the Organization

Guest Speakers, Veterans Offices, Fellowship and more

Family and Friends Invited to help honor Our Vietnam Veterans





## A message from the Special Olympics Oklahoma

Hello Volunteers!

First off, you are SO missed! Here at Special Olympics Oklahoma we are searching for ways to stay connected and active during these times and want you to know we have not forgotten about you!

I actually need some volunteers for a few upcoming events & then I want to share an at-home volunteer opportunity that you can be a part of.

For the last few months an at-home opportunity has been available and has been very successful for reaching our athletes in an encouraging way! This opportunity is called **Volunteer From Home** and allows you to make homemade posters, letters, videos, and photos encouraging our athletes across Oklahoma. More information regarding this event is available through the link here to sign-up:

<https://www.signupgenius.com/go/8050E4EA4AC2BA6F58-volunteer>

If you have any questions regarding any of the above opportunities or have suggestions as well, please reply to this email and I will do my best in communicating back with you as soon as possible. Thank you again for all that you have done and will continue to do for Special Olympics Oklahoma and our incredible 12,100 athletes!

**Josie Stephens**

*Volunteer Manager*

.....

**Special Olympics Oklahoma**

Tel +1 918-481-1234

Facebook [Special Olympics Oklahoma](#)

Volunteer Facebook [Special Olympics Oklahoma Volunteers](#)

Instagram [@SOOKlahoma](#)

Twitter [@SOOKlahoma](#)



# American Red Cross

We are with you, wherever you are, 24  
hours a day, everyday.  
1-877-272-7337 or [redcross.org/military](http://redcross.org/military)

## **American Red Cross Needs YOU!**

Please join us as a Red Cross Volunteer Mental Health Facilitator!

**We are looking for volunteers interested in facilitating virtual, interactive, engaging, psychoeducational, small-group workshops for military service members, Veterans, their family-member's and caregivers.**

### **Our Goals:**

Provide a safe educational space for participants to discuss challenges and concerns and learn the tools to build upon their natural resilience.

### **Ready To Join The Team? Need more information?**

Please contact Samantha Hand at [Samantha.hand@redcross.org](mailto:Samantha.hand@redcross.org) or call 405-245-6467.

### **What is needed?**

- Master's level or higher mental health professional with independent, clinical, and unencumbered license.
- Interest in facilitating 2 or more workshops:

### **What is required?**

- Facilitate a minimum of two times a year
- Able to facilitate virtually and/or in person
- Actively participate in short virtual training course
- Provide copy of current license with visible expiration date

### **Red Cross provides:**

- All training and materials
- CEs for completion of facilitator training
- Tech hosts for virtual and in person workshops

### **Current workshops**

- Creating Calm
- Stress Solutions Reconnections--Adult / Child Family Laugh and Learn
- Calm and Connected Virtual Chat for teens Mind/Body workshops



## *Volunteer Opportunities with Service to the Armed Forces*

- Virtual Briefing Facilitators
- Virtual Workshop Tech Hosts
- Casework
- Youth Action Campaign (Ages 13-24)
- MTF Pharmacy Teams
- Remote Office Support
- Pharmacy
- Dental/Medical Assisting
- Sewing Auxiliary

We are with you, wherever you are, 24 hours a day, every day. 1-877-272-7337 or [redcross.org/military](http://redcross.org/military)

## *Virtual Resiliency Workshops*

- Live, interactive, virtual workshops.
- Active Duty, Reserves, National Guard, Veterans, Family Members, Family Readiness, Ombudsmen, Key Spouses, and Caregivers of Military/Veterans.
- Topics Include
  - Stress Solutions
  - Effective Communication
  - Reconnection Workshops
- Ready to schedule a workshop for your command, group, or family?

Contact us by phone or email to set up your workshop today!  
katrina.velarde@redcross.org 785-477-1751  
samantha.hand@redcross.org 405-245-6467

## *Hero Care APP*

Easy to use free smart phone application.

**The fastest way to  
send an emergency  
message  
Text  
'GETHEROCARE  
' to 90999.**

**Contact Information:**

If you would like more information on the American Red Cross, it's programs, or volunteering or helping, please contact Samantha Hand at [Samantha.hand@redcross.org](mailto:Samantha.hand@redcross.org) or call 405-245-6467 or

Rebecca McGary, [rebecca.mcgary@redcross.org](mailto:rebecca.mcgary@redcross.org) or call 405-228-9547, VFW Post 8706.

