

VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS OF THE UNITED STATES AUXILIARY DISTRICT 8



To: District 8 Line Officers, VFW Auxiliary Presidents, Program Chairmen, District 8 Past Department Presidents
From: Lisa Raplee, PDP, and District 8 President
Date: November 25, 2025
Subject: February / March District 8 Newsletter

District President's Message.....

I would like to thank you all for all your hard work so far this year. As you are all aware, the year is starting to wind down and soon it will be time for year-end reports and elections. If your auxiliary is missing any program reports, I will be contacting each president to go over programs and to check and see if you need any assistance with completing them. I know that they can be time-consuming, but they are necessary to maintain our tax-exempt status.

At your April meeting you will be electing your officers for the upcoming year. If anything has changed since your official visit, and you need assistance, please contact me as soon as possible. I will follow the proper steps to get your auxiliary help. Make sure you notify all members by sending a letter when your elections are scheduled so all members are aware.

The tickets for the President's Special Project 50/50 Raffle are coming in good; however if your auxiliary has not sent the ticket stubs and money to me, please do as soon as possible. The drawing will be held at our March District meeting.

Our next meeting will take place on March 29, 2026, at VFW Post 6433, Waterloo, NY. Department President Justine Robles will be making her Official Visit to the District at this meeting. Please make sure your Auxiliary sends at least one representative to this meeting. We will have a luncheon at Noon in honor of the Dept. President; the audit will take place at 1:00 PM and the business meeting will begin at 2:00 PM. The lunch will consist of Ziti with Meatballs, Tossed Salad, Roll and Cake for dessert. If you would like to donate, the money collected will go to the Presidents Special Project.

If you have any questions, please contact me at 607-368-1435, email lisavfwaux2425@outlook.com. I look forward to seeing you all on March 29th in Waterloo.

Spring District Meeting and Official Visit by Dept. President - The District 8 Spring meeting is scheduled for **Sunday, March 29, 2026 at Waterloo Memorial Post 6433, 29 West Elisha Street, Waterloo**. Luncheon at 12 Noon; Audit will be held at 1 PM; and the business meeting will begin at **2:00 PM**.

A reminder from the Department:

1. **4th Quarter Audit** – The October, November, December Quarterly Audit is due to the Department Treasurer by February 28, 2026 or sooner. Audits may be sent through the USPS mail, scanned via email or faxed to the Dept. Treasurer. Please do not **TEXT** the Audit.
2. VFW Aux. National President, Lois Callahan, Official Visit to NY – Scheduled for March 8 – 10, 2026 in New York City. Upon receipt of details, information will be emailed to the Auxiliaries.
3. Spring Conference – Scheduled for March 27 and 28th at the Radisson Hotel, Corning, NY. Hotel Reservations deadline is **February 24th**. Items requested to bring by Program are:
 - a. Buddy Poppy/VFW National Home
 1. A \$10.00 National Brand Gift Card to be raffled to support the VFW National Home
 2. Participate in the Dog Parade - \$5.00 entrance fee
 3. Buddy Poppy Display (Memorial/Inspirational Display, Public Promotion Display, Artistic/Decorative Display)
 - b. President's Special Project – “Triumph over Trauma” monetary donations will be accepted – cash or check! Check payable to VFW Aux., Dept of NY earmark *Presidents Special Project - Headstrong*.
 - c. Ways and Means – \$10.00 Lottery Scratch Off tickets

District Programs

Veterans and Family Support – Chairman Phyllis Walker would like to extend her appreciation for the overwhelming amount of blankets and hats (adult and children) to benefit the Rochester Veterans Outreach Center. The Rochester VOC was truly grateful for all the donations.

The 2025-2026 New Points of Focus by National Ambassador are as follows:

- VFW based Veterans Assistance Programs
- Veterans Mental Health Issues
- Veteran and Veteran Spouses employment
- VFW's Financial Assistance Program for Service Members to help active duty service members including Guard/Reserve members and their families who have run into unexpected financial difficulties because of deployment or other military-related activity or injury.

Veterans Crisis Line serves veterans, families and friends and is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year. Call 988 and press 1.



- **March Spring Meeting Request** - Chairman Phyllis is requesting the following personal care items which will benefit the Rochester Veterans Outreach Center for their homeless program. Thank you for your support.
 - Requested Items: Men's & Women's Deodorant, Shampoo, Conditioner, Bar Soap, Toothpaste, Razors, and Shaving Cream



Americanism - Chairman Ardell Garland reminds everyone to fly your flag on the following patriotic holiday:

1. February 17, 2026 – Presidents' Days

Just a quick reminder, if you have not sent in your “**Honor Flight**” thank you request, the deadline is **March 1, 2026** and the cost per card is \$5.00. Please return your “Honor Flight” completed request and Auxiliary check made payable to VFW Aux., Dept. of NY to the Department Chairman, Ashleigh Horsky. (Form attached to newsletter)



Buddy Poppy/VFW National Home – Chairman Flora Becker reminds everyone to continue to distribute your Buddy Poppies to benefit your Relief Fund. Remember the Dog Parade scheduled for the Dept. Spring Conference with proceeds going towards the generators at the VFW National Home. Attached is the flier regarding the Dog Parade from the Spring Conference Package.

With Valentine's Day and St. Patrick's Day not too far off, please send a card to the VFW National Home to the families. They would appreciate your thoughtfulness.

Cancer Program – Chairman Sara Raplee extends her appreciation for the \$25.00 donation to purchase “cancer themed” items for the District basket for the Spring Conference.

“In Memory of” and “In Honor of” paper ribbons are available for a donation of \$5.00 each. The ribbons are designed to honor loved ones, celebrate remarkable achievements, and support those affected by cancer.

- Personalization: Each ribbon can be personalized with a name and/or a heartfelt message, allowing you to honor those who have battled cancer or celebrate survivors.
- These ribbons will be prominently displayed throughout the 2026 Dept Convention for all to see, creating a powerful visual tribute.
- The form is a fillable form on the Dept. Website to complete. Checks must be made payable to VFW Aux., Dept. of NY. Completed form and check to be sent to the Dept Cancer Fund Chairman, Amber Sullivan or can be brought to the Spring Conference. (Form attached to the newsletter)

Hospital Program - Hospital Chairman, Helen Weeks appreciated all the Wal-Mart Gift Cards and the men’s winter gloves that were brought to the December District meeting benefiting the veterans at Canandaigua VA.

- **Salute to Veteran Patients Week** will be observed from February 9th to February 15th. Valentine, Thank you for your Service, or Thinking of You cards would be most appreciated by the veterans. Cards can be sent to Canandaigua VA, Attn: Regina Deck, CDCE, 400 Fort Hill Ave., Canandaigua NY 14424. (See attached flier from Canandaigua VA regarding National Salute to Veteran Patient Week.)



- **March Spring Meeting Request** – Hospital Chairman Helen is requesting the following Pantry Items for Canandaigua VA.

- Canned Chicken and Canned Tuna Fish
- Soup, Rice, Pasta and Pasta Sauce
- Canned Pasta Meals, Rice-A-Roni Meals
- Peanut Butter, Oatmeal and Cereal
- Canned Fruit, Canned Vegetables
- Reusable Shopping Bags

SCAN TO VIEW VFW SUPPORTED BILLS
INTRODUCED IN THE 119TH CONGRESS



Legislation – Department Chairman, Tina Roberts is requesting all members to please remember to check the Department Auxiliary and District 8 Facebook pages. There has been a lot of Legislative information posted on them. Please share this information with your Auxiliary members. Also we have 3 Call to Action Bills which need our support. We all need to take action on these Alerts. When you take action, send a report to Tina Roberts, Legislative Chairman.

1. HR4837 - *Written Informed Consent Act* which would require clear, written information before the VA prescribes certain psychiatric medications.
2. HR 2623 - *Innovative Therapies Centers of Excellence Act of 2025* which would create five VA centers to expand access to cutting-edge PTSD treatments.
3. H.R.1965 - *Veteran Education Assistance Adjustment Act* would adjust the book stipend to \$1,400 and tie future increases to inflation, ensuring this vital benefit keeps pace with the real cost of education.

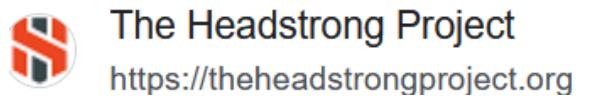
HOT OFF THE PRESS: VFW Voice of Service-Stories in Action is now live which will get Veterans stories to Congress. Stories are what makes the lawmakers listen. The Veteran and or family member may submit their stories to <https://forms.gle/3K4toepnSPDFLpvU6>. Flyers with the QR codes with more information are posted on the Department Auxiliary Facebook page. When sharing the Facebook flyers, please remember to add #VFWstoriesInAction and #TellYourStory.

In addition, the VFW 2026 Priorities Goals are available to be downloaded, printed, and disbursed at all events. (See attached 2026 Priority Goals Brochure) I encourage you to share this information with your Auxiliary members.

Membership Program – Chairman Cindy Campbell shares the following message. Membership is getting harder all the time. We have lost a great number of members this year to death in our auxiliary. I'm sure some of the other auxiliaries have too. Ask your Post Quartermaster for a mailing list of their members and send a letter telling them who can join under their membership. If you go to Malta you can print off the membership circle that shows who is eligible. Send those members who have not paid dues yet a reminder. They are no longer a member in good standing, but will not completely lose it until the end of our fiscal year (June 30, 2026). They have a chance to keep their continuous membership.

Congratulations to Auxiliary 4658, Francis Hibbard for winning the \$50 drawing for 100% in Membership prior to November 30th.

Mentoring – Chain of Command – In the January National VFW Auxiliary Magazine there was an article on “Chain of Command”. The article explains what the chain of command is and how it works. The article provides a flow chart as well to describe the process. Attached is a copy of the article for your review and to share with your members.



President's Special Project – Chairman Lisa Raplee reminds auxiliaries the proceeds from the 50/50 raffle will benefit the Department President and Commander's Special Projects: Headstrong, 2 NY National Home Cottages, and Homeless Veterans. All monies (checks payable to District 8 VFW Auxiliary) and ticket stubs need to be returned to Lisa ASAP. Drawing will be held at the March Spring District Meeting.

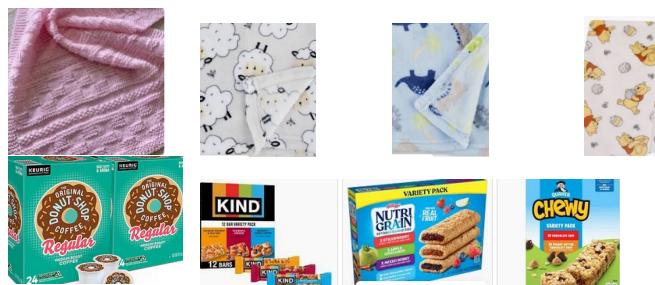
Scholarship Program – Chairman Beverly Gister announces that the winners of the District 8 Judging of the Voice of Democracy and Patriot's Pen Awards are:

- Voice of Democracy First Place – Sara Ziukin – Post 412
- Patriot's Pen First Place – Jackson Jennings – Post 6200

The Continuing Education application deadline date is February 15th to National Headquarters. Beverly encouraging Auxiliaries to contact your local school regarding the *YOUNG AMERICAN CREATIVE PATRIOTIC ART CONTEST AND 3-DIMENTIONAL CREATIVE PATRIOTIC ART CONTEST* which have deadlines of March 31, 2026. Contest applications can be found on MALTA under the Scholarship Program.



Ways and Means – Chairman Marita Fredette is asking each Auxiliary to bring an **Easter/Spring themed basket** as part of the Ways and Means Raffle to the March District meeting.



Youth Activities – Chairman Brittany Tierson appreciates the toys and books donated for Toys for Tots at the December District meeting. Reminder the Illustrating America Art Contest submissions

are due to Auxiliaries by March 31, 2026. Auxiliary first place winners are to be submitted to the Dept. Youth Activities Chairman by April 15th.

- **March Spring Meeting Request** – The Youth Activities Chairman is requesting colorful baby blankets and healthy snacks for the Neo-Natal Unit at Strong Memorial Hospital. Thank you for your generosity.

Thank you for your support to our veterans, their families, and your community. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact me at 607-368-1435 or email at lisavfw2425@outlook.com. I encourage you to share the District 8 Newsletter with your auxiliary members.

Loyally,

Lisa Raplee

Lisa Raplee, PDP, District 8 President

Auxiliary Events Happening in District 8

Auxiliary 2883 – Arcadia Memorial

Location: 225 East Union Street, Newark

- Saturday, April 25th – 4 PM - Family Feud Night – Teams of 4 – Public Welcome – Team Entry Fee - TBD

Auxiliary 4658 – Francis Hibbard Post

Location: 344 Dorsey Road, Greece

- Friday, February 6th – Happy Hour – Band: Stone Age Romeos, 4 PM – 7PM
- Friday – March 6th – Happy Hour– Band: Jenna and Journeymen, 4 PM – 7 PM
- Friday - March 27th - American Legion Annual Ham Raffle – 6 PM. Raffle tickets from American Legion members or at the Post Bar. \$5 a ticket.
- Friday - April 3rd - Fish Fry 4PM to 6 PM. Sponsored by the Sons of the American Legion. Tickets on sale at the Post. This is also Happy Hour from 5 PM – 8 PM - Music by Harris & Grillo
- Saturday – April 4th – Easter Egg Hunt and Breakfast
- Sunday, April 26th – American Legion Chicken BBQ – pre-purchase ticket at Post before event. Begins at 4 PM until sold out.

Auxiliary 6200 – Arthur G. Depew Memorial

Location: 7068 State Route 96, Ovid

- “Depew Chow Hall” – Open Monday – Friday – 7 AM – 2 PM
Breakfast Served from – 7 AM until 10:30 AM * Lunch Served from – 10:30 AM – 2 PM

Auxiliary 6433 – Waterloo Memorial

Location: 29 West Elisha Street, Waterloo.

- Friday, February 6th – Fish Fry – 5 PM – 7 PM
- Friday, February 13th – Fish Fry – 5 PM – 7 PM
- Friday, February 20th – Fish Fry – 5 PM – 7 PM
- Friday, February 27th – Fish Fry – 5 PM – 7 PM
- Friday, March 6th – Fish Fry – 5 PM – 7 PM
- Friday, March 13th – Fish Fry – 5 PM – 7 PM
- Friday, March 20th – Fish Fry – 5 PM – 7 PM
- Friday, March 27th – Fish Fry – 5 PM – 7 PM
- 40” TV Raffle and Scratch Off Basket Tickets – Tickets are 1 for \$1.00, 3 for \$2.00 or 10 for \$5.00
- Post is Open Friday through Sunday 3 PM to 5 PM.

Auxiliary 8649 – Goodrich-Smith Post

Location: 125 Seneca St Ext., Dundee

- Friday, February 6th - Fish Fry – 4 PM – 8 PM (eat in or take out service available)
Serving fried or broiled Haddock or breaded Shrimp dinners – Cost \$15.00
- Friday –March 6th - Fish Fry – 4 PM – 8 PM (eat in or take out service available)
- Cash Bash - \$20.00 a Ticket / only 250 Tickets sold – For tickets contact Tina Roberts or Lisa Raplee
- Post Hunters Banquet Tickets Available - \$20.00 donation. Scheduled for May 16, 2026: Ticket includes 20 changes to win a prize, meal and drinks. For more information, please contact Tina Roberts, Aux. President.

Auxiliary 8726 – James R. Moore Memorial Post

Location: 7811 Rt. 21, Naples

- Friday February 6th –\$15 at the door – Menu: Fried Haddock, Salt Potato’s or Fries, Cole Slaw or Mac salad, Roll, Dessert with Live music.
- Friday, March 6th - –\$15 at the door – Menu: Fried Haddock, Salt Potato’s or Fries, Cole Slaw or Mac salad, Roll, Dessert
- Friday, April 10th - –\$15 at the door – Menu: Fried Haddock, Salt Potato’s or Fries, Cole Slaw or Mac salad, Roll, Dessert
- Saturday, March 14th - Music Fest to benefit Honor Flight of Rochester. More details and flier to follow. \$20 at the door and proceeds from raffle prizes to all go to Honor Flight.



Thank you for your service and sacrifice cards.

Donation is \$5.00 per card.

Cards will be distributed during the March Veterans' Mail Call.

Make checks payable to: **Dept of NY VFW Auxiliary** ~ earmarked “**Honor Flight**.”
Check must be received by: **March 1st 2026**

Mail check and this form to:

Mail check and this form to:

Ashleigh Horsky, Americanism Chairwoman – 585 Park Avenue, Apt 3C Brooklyn, NY 11206

Honor flight name: _____

Auxiliary: _____ District: _____

Phone #: _____ email: _____

Amount of Cards: _____ Check #: _____

Brief message:

Honor Flight Locations:

Albany _____

Big Apple/JFK _____

Buffalo Niagara _____

Hudson Valley

Leatherstocking

Long Island

North Country

Rochester

Syracuse

Twin Tigers

Spring Conference 2026 Puppy Parade



Pre-Registration Form



Please **Circle** Your Chosen Categories from the List Below

*Enter **AS MANY DOGS** in **AS MANY CATEGORIES** As You Would Like*

Most Patriotic

Most Unique

Biggest

Smallest

Softest

Dog Owner Name: _____

of Dogs: _____ # of Categories @ \$5/each: _____

TOTAL: \$ _____ Check # _____

*A Check or Money Order is Preferred, Made out to “**Dept. of NY VFW Auxiliary**” MEMO LINE – **Special Project NY Houses***

Please Mail This Form with Payment to:

“**Honor**” Combs

98 Beech Court

Elizabethtown, KY 42701



DEADLINE FOR PRE-REGISTRATION IS MARCH 1, 2026

DEPARTMENT OF NEW YORK VFW AUXILIARY

IN MEMORY OF AND IN HONOR OF RIBBONS



The Dept of NY VFW Auxiliary is proud to launch a new campaign to support the Cancer Grant Donation Fund.

We are proud to offer "In Memory of" and "In Honor of" paper ribbons, designed to honor loved ones, celebrate remarkable achievements, and support those affected by cancer.

How It Works:

- **Donation:** Ribbons can be obtained with a \$5 donation that will contribute to our cause, including support for cancer research and patient assistance.
- **Personalization:** Each ribbon can be personalized with a name and/or a heartfelt message, allowing you to honor those who have battled cancer or celebrate survivors.
- **Display:** These ribbons will be prominently displayed throughout the 2026 Dept Convention for all to see, creating a powerful visual tribute.

Why Participate?

- **Celebrate Lives:** Take a moment to remember those who have made a significant impact on your life, especially those affected by cancer.
- **Support a Cause:** Your donation directly supports the Cancer Donation Fund and furthers our mission, including vital funds for members fighting cancer.
- **Community Connection:** Join a community of individuals honoring their loved ones together and stand in solidarity with those facing cancer.

How to Donate:

1. Select your preferred ribbon color (Pink, Blue, Orange, Red, Yellow, Teal, Purple).
2. Personalize your message as you wish. (Please remember space is limited – each ribbon measures 4x8 inches).
3. Make your \$5 donation (Checks must be written to "VFW Aux Dept of New York").
4. Mail your completed form and check to Amber Sullivan.

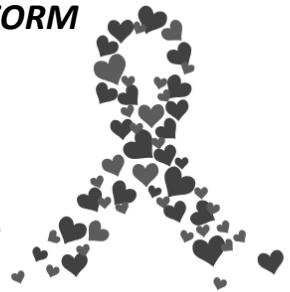
Display Details:

- Ribbons will be showcased at the June 2026 Convention for attendees to reflect on and honor those impacted by cancer.
- We encourage you to take photos and share the story behind your ribbon and share to social media using the #StayTrueToTheFight

Your participation not only honors cherished individuals but also supports a meaningful cause in the fight against cancer. Thank you for your generous support!

DEPARTMENT OF NEW YORK VFW AUXILIARY
IN MEMORY OF AND IN HONOR OF RIBBONS DONATION FORM

Donation: \$5.00



Name: _____

Phone # or Email: _____

Name/Message on the Ribbon:

Please print clearly and remember space is limited

**ALWAYS STAY
TRUE TO OUR
RED WHITE & BLUE**

AWARENESS IS THE
FIRST STEP

Please circle your preferred ribbon color:

Pink

Blue

Orange

Red

Yellow

Teal

Purple

Surprise Me

Payment Information:

Make checks payable to: "VFW Auxiliary Dept. of New York."
Return this form and send your donation to:

Amber Sullivan
Cancer Fund Donation Chairman
2 Donna Lane
Binghamton, NY 13903



OR

Drop off at the Cancer Donation Fund Table at Fall or Spring Conferences
*I will also have blank forms available

Questions, please contact Amber

Call/Text: (718) 715-8784 or Email: amberaux7276@use.startmail.com

ALL RIBBONS WILL BE DISPLAYED DURING THE 2026 CONVENTION

"Alone we can do so little; together we can do so much" ~ Helen Keller

"Always Stay True to Your Red, White and Blue"

"From Sea to Shining Sea Honoring Veterans Who Keep Us Free"

VA Volunteers, Employees & Community Partners Are Invited to Participate in VA's National Salute to Veteran Patients Week 2026!

Join us in handing out Valentines and celebrating our Veteran Residents at one of the below scheduled events!

Bath VA Valentine Distribution Party

Thursday, February 12th – Meet in Building #78, 1st Floor Community Living Center (CLC) Activity Room @1:00pm

Canandaigua VA Valentine Distribution

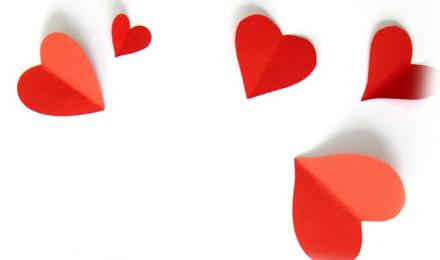
Friday, February 13th – Either enter the Canandaigua Outpatient Clinic, meet in CDCE Office (Room 1E001) by 12:30-12:45pm OR Park in Lot #7, across from Pharmacy, and walk in ground level doors to Building #7 where staff will greet you at 1pm by the elevators. Events will take place on CLCs' 7A & 7B.

***For the safety of all, we kindly ask that you do not attend if you are experiencing any symptoms of illness.*

Please contact your local CDCE Office with questions.

607-664-4423 (Bath) / 585-393-7757 (Canandaigua)

Todd.Drake2@va.gov / Chad.Christensen@va.gov



Support Today's Veterans and Military

Please contact or visit your congressional representatives and stress that these are the issues we will be fighting for in the 119th Congress. These priority goals reflect the resolutions passed and supported by the men and women of the VFW and its auxiliary. To find your congressional representatives, visit vfw.org/ActionCorps.

Play a Role in the Process

Engage and help us ensure that these priority goals are enacted. Sign up today for the VFW weekly e-newsletter and VFW Action Alerts:

- Visit vfw.org/JoinActionCorps
- Text "VFW" to 50457*
- Scan QR code below

*Messaging and data rates may apply. Message frequency varies.
Reply HELP and STOP to unsubscribe.



JOIN NOW

NO ONE DOES MORE
FOR VETERANS.®

*Delivering the promise to our
veterans, service members and
their families.*



VFW National Headquarters

406 W. 34th Street
Kansas City, MO 64111
816.756.3390

VFW Washington Office

200 Maryland Ave., N.E.
Washington, D.C. 20002
202.543.2239

V F W . O R G



2026
**PRIORITY
GOALS**

Budget

To fully fund relevant programs for veterans, service members and their families, Congress must:

- Hold leaders accountable to “Honor the Contract” and uphold their end of the military service contract by opposing any effort to cut or reduce veteran benefits.
- Ensure sufficient, timely appropriations and proper budget oversight for VA.
- Authorize VA to receive reimbursements from TRICARE and Medicare.
- Never reduce one veteran’s benefits to pay for another.
- Modernize and reform VA and DOD programs that do not meet the needs of service members, veterans and families.

Disability Assistance and Memorial Affairs

To ensure veterans and their survivors have timely access to earned benefits, Congress and VA must:

- Implement the VFW’s recommendations to improve the VA disability claims process, specifically appeals, digital claims, DBQs and disability examinations.
- Crack down on unaccredited claims consultants known as Claim Sharks.
- Study all toxic and environmental exposures, and implement programs to ensure health care and benefits are provided to all exposed service members and veterans.
- Increase Dependency and Indemnity Compensation, burial allowances and other benefits for survivors.
- Improve the accuracy of disability compensation claims related to military sexual trauma.

Education, Employment and Transition Assistance

To ensure veterans succeed after leaving military service, Congress, VA, DOD and DOL must:

- Improve education benefits through modernized student housing and supply allowances, child care stipends, parity for National Guard and Reserve members and elimination of delimiting dates.
- Improve the delivery of the Veteran Readiness and Employment program to include administrative support for counselors and standardized training.
- Ensure parity of VA and DOD education programs with other federal programs.
- Expand small business, hiring preference, tax incentives and entrepreneurship resources for veterans and military spouses.
- Increase funding for HUD-VASH vouchers, grant and per diem payments and pilot programs to combat veteran homelessness.
- Conduct oversight of VA’s Transition Assistance Program to ensure compliance with the law, and require the inclusion of accredited claims representatives.
- Protect the VA Home Loan Guaranty program and expand it to the reserve components.
- Eliminate red tape preventing effective use of education and employment benefits.

National Security, Foreign Affairs and POW/MIA

To fully support the all-volunteer force, protect our nation’s citizens and defend American interests around the world, Congress and DOD must:

- Ensure DPAA is fully funded to perform its personnel recovery mission.
- Deter threats to our national security by supporting our allies in Ukraine, Israel, Korea and Taiwan.
- Ensure all service members who served in harm’s way—to include foreign nationals, translators and allies—receive the recognition, care and benefits they may have earned.

Health Care

To ensure service members and veterans receive timely access to high-quality health care without increasing cost shares, Congress, VA and DOD must:

- Eliminate service member and veteran suicide.
- Improve the coordination of community care at VA, including CHAMPVA and the Foreign Medical Program.
- Strengthen care and research for mental health, blast overpressure and traumatic brain injuries.
- Research the efficacy of alternative therapies for PTSD.
- Improve oversight of Vet Centers to ensure adequate staffing, resources and funding.
- Enhance programs and services for women and underserved veterans.
- Preserve the integrity of TRICARE.
- Properly implement VA and DOD health IT systems.
- Expand nursing home eligibility and long-term care options.

Military Readiness

To maintain a strong and ready all-volunteer force capable of protecting American interests, Congress and DOD must:

- Enhance quality of life and health care programs that allow service members to focus on the mission.
- Ensure equity of benefits for reserve component service members.
- End the military retirement pay and VA disability compensation offset.
- Provide benefits enrollment for all transitioning service members.
- Eliminate sexual assault and harassment from the military.
- Increase military base pay so that it is competitive with relevant civilian pay.
- Ensure that military housing and work spaces are safe and modern.
- Eliminate food insecurity in the military.



Know Your CHAIN OF COMMAND

AUXILIARY, DISTRICT, DEPARTMENT, NATIONAL

*Ten active members standing in a line,
One disliked another, and then there were nine.
Nine ambitious members offered to work late,
One felt unheard, and then there were eight...*

This poem, slightly modified from one called What's the Value of One Member (author unknown) is based on an old nursery rhyme nursery rhyme perhaps best remembered as the inspiration of the Agatha Christie novel and play "And Then There Were None." It counts down from 10 Auxiliary members as one-by-one, each becomes burned out, discouraged or mired in disagreements with the others, until there are only two left – but "One joined a bridge club and then there was one."

Most of the time, when members contact VFW Auxiliary National Headquarters with issues negatively impacting their Auxiliary, the reason is related to interpersonal conflicts either between members or growing animosity between the VFW Auxiliary and their VFW Post. Other times Headquarters hears from members, it's with questions or clarification relating to the *Bylaws, National Program Book* or eligibility and sometimes, these are time-sensitive. There are a number of reasons not to take these issues to a National level (which go beyond the simple belief that one "shouldn't put their business in the streets") and these include quicker response times, consideration for local customs, and, hopefully, for deescalation of potential interpersonal conflicts that can be resolved without necessitating formal disciplinary action or National involvement.

WHY KEEP IT LOCAL?

On an Auxiliary level, there are anywhere from 20 to 2,000 members, give or take, with good odds that an Officer or Past Auxiliary President will know the answer to one's question or have the skills to problem-solve otherwise, but on a National level, we have 475,000 members and a small staff, most of whom would not work directly with members on the sorts of issues or questions that typically arise. Simply put, we only have about one

staff member per hundred thousand members who could help you with these issues, which means your inquiries would potentially take a longer amount of time to reach the top of our "to do" piles.

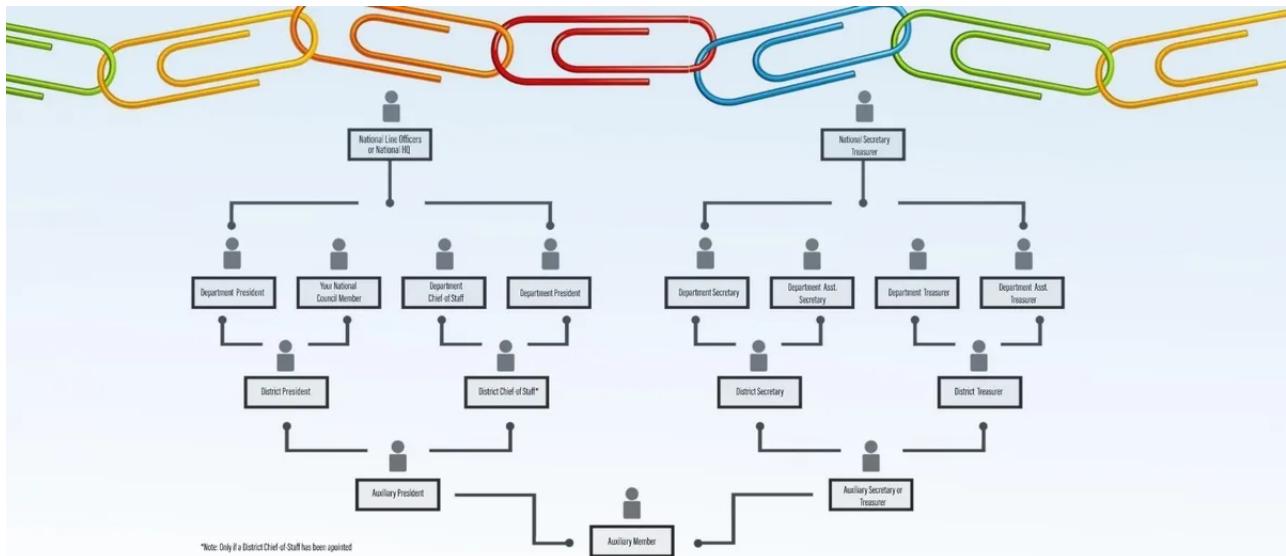
Additionally, we at National do not know the ins and outs of every Auxiliary. Some Auxiliaries prefer casual attire and round table meetings. Others prefer to dress in uniform and focus on floor work. At some, members may consider themselves family, while at others, they may be more like professional acquaintances than close friends. Your Auxiliary or District Officers are more likely to be familiar with the dynamics of your Auxiliary and be able to guide you in a more personalized way.

Lastly, many of the issues that reach National Headquarters concern interpersonal conflicts, but we find many of these could be handled at the ground level before escalation has occurred. As a diverse group with members from all different generations, cultures, political affiliations, religions, mindsets and regions, we know that we will not all agree on all things all the time - who does? But we are united in our mission to help veterans, service members, their families and our communities, even if we aren't always on the same page in regards to how. At a local level, Officers and mentors can spend the time needed to truly listen to each side of an issue and help those in disagreement come to a consensus that serves both parties and the organization as a whole. Unfortunately, once such an issue has made it all the way to the National level, it has typically become much harder to do so.

SO WHAT IS THE CHAIN OF COMMAND?

The chain of command starts with your own Auxiliary. Depending upon your question or issue, the best person to whom to address it may be the President, Secretary, Treasurer, Chief of Staff, a Program Chairman or even a member you personally consider a mentor, perhaps a Past President who has been around for a long time.

If your Auxiliary President, Secretary, Treasurer, Chief of Staff, etc. is unable to help, seek out the person in the



relevant position on a District level (if your Department has Districts). If they are unable to help or cannot be reached, the next level is Department, again starting with those in the aforementioned positions.

Only after the Department Officers have done their due diligence and concluded that an issue cannot be solved or a question cannot be answered should it be sent along to the National level. For many issues or questions there are potential other people to contact before reaching out to National Headquarters directly, such as your National District Council Member and/or National Ambassadors (Program questions only).

If you have exhausted all of these options or if the question is not appropriate to ask of those in the aforementioned positions, sending an email to National Headquarters is the next step. If you contact us at info@vfwauxiliary.org and describe the question or issue, we will be able to forward it to the person best suited to help you, while sending a direct message to us on social media will only be read by our social media team, who may be able to assist if the issue is social media-related or if the answer is a simple one (for example, a link to the Patriotism Through Literacy list of recommended reads, or the date the next HQ Roundtable is scheduled), but in most cases, the social media team member will ask you to send us the inquiry as an email. Just remember, the chain of command is much like the chain of judging for National contests: local Auxiliary, District, Department, National.

HOW DO I REACH MY OFFICERS?

For members familiar with [MALTA](#), our online system (also available as a mobile app), it is easier than ever to find

contact information for those aforementioned. When looking at your Member Profile, scroll down below Dashboard and Membership/Auxiliary Information to the Officers section. Officers for your Auxiliary, District and Department will be in blue, as each is a clickable link. Once selected, a pop-up will show their position, full name, email address and phone number.

Many Auxiliaries have texting systems and frequently monitored social media pages - check with your President and Secretary at your next meeting to find out whether yours does! For those who have opted out of text message alerts and lack access to MALTA, they can also reach someone quickly by sending a message through the Post and Auxiliary's joint Facebook page. Additionally, some Auxiliaries and most Departments have their own web pages with Officer contacts, lists of upcoming events and Program information, much like the VFW Auxiliary's National website.

And then, of course, there are directories. Most Departments publish and distribute directories each Program Year just as the National organization does. These typically list the names and contact information for Auxiliary Presidents, District Presidents (if applicable), Conference Presidents, Program Chairmen, the National District Council Members, Officers and more.

National Headquarters thanks you for following this chain of command and we look forward to helping you in any way we can should your inquiry reach us in the future!  NP