



Virginia VETERAN

Official Publication of Virginia Veterans of Foreign Wars

Official Publication of the Department of Virginia ★ Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States
March-May 2025 June 2025

Commander's Message



State Commander
Mitchell "Mitch" Rubenstein
US Army, Post 2447

Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to serve alongside you as the Department of Virginia's State Commander for 2024-2025. As I think about this past year, I can honestly say, we have accomplished a lot together. We have certainly proven what can be done when we all work as a TEAM. Your dedication, camaraderie, and continued support have made this year not just productive but memorable. From our shared victories to overcoming challenges together, every moment has been a testament to our collective strength and resilience.

It has been my pleasure and a privilege to work with every one of the Line Officers and Headquarters, **this band of brothers we call the A-Team**. We never let any differences come between us; we picked and poked at each other equally, as all service branches do. Some of us were picked on more than others. (Oh, by the way, that will cost you this year.) The enjoyable stress-free working environment we created is a true testament to what can be done when you enjoy your job, and when you surround yourself with great people, especially when you can laugh while doing it.

To my counterpart State Auxiliary President Dawn Kuhn, the ride is almost over. I am so grateful for your friendship, and the many and sometimes long conversations we had throughout this year. When we needed to vent, laugh, or share ideas I knew you would be there to listen, and give me some sound advice. This year's Auxiliary line officers, and the members of the Auxiliary throughout the State have exemplified the spirit of collaboration and commitment. Each member has shown a remarkable willingness to invest their time and energy into fostering an environment where teamwork thrives. I've said it before and I will continue saying it; if it wasn't for the Auxiliary's unwavering support, many Posts would not survive. Again, my heart is filled with gratitude for every Auxiliary member I've had the privilege to meet. Your generosity, kindness, and continued commitment to the vision that Dawn and I had set forth truly transformed this year into an extraordinary experience. Each interaction has been a reminder of the profound impact we can have when we come together as one. I hope I have fulfilled my promise by bringing us all together as one. I look forward to seeing you at this year's National Convention in Ohio. We will be the ones standing in the Circle of Excellence, as an All-American Department, a testament to all of you because of your hard work and dedication.

Lastly, I (Army) want to wish the new State Commander Doug Hoffman nothing but smooth sailing as he sets out for his year's journey. I hope you don't encounter any rough seas and as a true (Navy-Squid) Submariner you know when to dive, dive, dive, when necessary. Best of luck to all.

In Comradeship and Service,

Mitch Rubenstein
State Commander





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Please visit our website at

www.vfwva.org

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From the Editor's desk

I am excited to continue as your Newspaper editor for another great year. Please keep the Department of Virginia VFW informed of all your accomplishments by submitting your articles and pictures to me, for the Virginia Veterans Newspaper.



Randy Coker

Virginia Veteran is published tri-annually by the Department of Virginia, Veterans of Foreign Wars of the US and is available in electronic format on the Department website:

www.vfwva.org.

Articles may be submitted by email to:
news@vfwva.org or rwcocker1@gmail.com

We reserve the right to edit all submitted articles for timeliness, clarity and syntax.

Note: Deadline for the next newspaper is:

Sept 1, 2025



The State Commander's visit to Post 9660



State Commander and District 1 Commander John Collins at Guantanamo Bay



State Commander and Virginia Lt. Governor Winsom Earle-Sears, along with a few of the Department Line officers visit the Department of Veterans Affairs.



VFW Auxiliary President and the Department Auxiliary Line officers visit the Department of Veterans Affairs



A good VFW presence at Veteran's Appreciation Night at the Virginia War Memorial



State Commander and State Auxiliary President visit the VFW Commander in Chief in his office



State Commander actively recruiting in Guantanamo Bay Cuba



LOOK!! It's Doug Hoffman's Halloween Costume for next year

Mitch and Dawn's Homecoming March 22 — Post 2447 — Edinburg





State Commander, Auxiliary President and the State VFW and Auxiliary Line Officers for 2024-2025

Manassas Post 7589 completes annual Day of Service at Habitat for Humanity



Courtesy of Habitat for Humanity

Jerry Martin, Wayne Moore and Rick Raskin at Habitat for Humanity on June 3, VFW Day of Service. Over 60 deliveries were processed and made ready for sale while we were there

District 10, Northern Virginia



State Surgeon Randy Coker installs the new D10 Officers



D10 Commander awards the District 10 Scout of the Year



D10 Commander Ray Delpesche, Auxiliary Senior Vice President Ellen Carlton and the Youth Scholarship Winners.

VFW National Youth Scholarship Awards presentation 2024-2025



National Auxiliary President Brenda Bryant, Department Auxiliary President Dawn Kuhn, Department Commander Mitch Rubenstein and VFW Commander in Chief Al Lipphardt with the VOD winner



Department Commander and Auxiliary President with the Department Voice of Democracy Winner.



Department Commander Mitch Rubenstein and Department Auxiliary President Dawn Kuhn at the National Scholarship Awards Presentations in Washington DC

VFW & NASCAR Truck Racing



Department Commander and Auxiliary President, along with several other Department of Virginia Comrades enjoyed the VFW Truck series Pits. Driver of the "13" Truck Ryan Roulette



Fairfax Post 8469 presented their Law Enforcement of the Year Award at their Post meeting. State Surgeon Randy Coker presenting the award. Post Commander Mac McCarl pictured with Awardee and State Surgeon Randy Coker



VFW Post 9808 Completes their Day of Service with “Troopster”



"This partnership with VFW Post 9808 exemplifies the powerful impact our community can have when we come together for our troops," said Chelsea Mandello, Founder and CEO of Troopster. "Having deployed across 13 countries and served on 9 ships during my 7 years in the U.S. Navy, I've experienced firsthand how meaningful these care packages are to service members far from home. Today, we're not just sending items—we're sending a piece of home and a reminder that their service and sacrifice are recognized and appreciated by their community back home."

Each package, shipped directly to units overseas, contained selected items, including premium snacks, hygiene essentials and comfort items. Packs included Dude Wipes, Duke Cannon Shampoo, Righteous Felon Jerky and other assorted candy and snacks.

The VFW Day of Service is annually led by veterans in May and is part of the VFW's #StillServing campaign. May 1 was the national start of these services to assist those with VFW posts, according to a Saturday release from Troopster.

"As veterans of foreign wars it is our honor to support our brothers and sisters serving in harms way," said Paul Smith, Commander of VFW Post 9808. "We get it."

Since 2021, the Troopster and VFW Post 9808 partnership has "successfully sent more than 1,000 care packages to deployed troops around the world," they said in a release. VFW posts are exclusive military veterans who have served in overseas conflict, and this particular post currently has 852 members.

"I couldn't be more proud to work along side the men and women of the VFW to help support our deployed military members," said Mandello. "It truly shows our dedication to service even after the military, and that we are all one community here to help each other."

Troopster has delivered more than 68,000 care packages since U.S. Navy Veteran Chelsea Mandello founded the organization in 2016. They said the organization currently maintains a list of more than 20,000 troops who are waiting for their respective care packages.



Dale City Post 1503 - busy in and around the community with Day of Service, Memorial Day Service @ Quantico Cemetery and Installation of its new officers and POW/MIA Ceremony



Pictured above, Day of service activities at Quantico National Cemetery cleaning grave stones



Pictured above, Post Commander Ben Guinan with ROTC Winner and the POW/MIA ceremony at the Post , featuring the Air Force ROTC Cadets from Hylton High School



Post 1503 Installed their new Post Officers for 2025-2026. State Surgeon Randy Coker was the Installing officer. The Post Auxiliary was installed by the State Senior Vice President Kelli Levitt





MANASSAS PARK VIRGINIA

MEMORIAL DAY FLAG CEREMONY

Friday, May 23, 2025
1:00pm
100 Park Central Plaza

- **Welcome**- Sarah Barnett
- **Presentation of Colors**-Manassas Park Honor Guard
- **Bag Pipes**- Kevin Byrne
- **National Anthem**- MPHS Chamber Choir
- **Mayor** Alanna Mensing
- **Councilmember** Stacy Sieberling
- **Constantine Ferssizidis**- NOVA Veterans Association
- **Rick Raskin**- VFW Post 7589
- **Lowering of the American Flag**
- **Taps**- Performed by Commander David Quimby and Sergeant-at-Arms Carl Carey
- **Light Refreshments**



Past State Commander Rick Raskin was a featured speaker



Rick Raskin with State Delegate Michelle Maldonado



[PHOTOS FROM FACEBOOK](#)

Post 1503 hosts their annual Memorial Day Open House picnic



From left to right; Virginia Congressman & Life member of Post 1503, Eugene Vindman, Life member of Post 1503 and Supervisor of Neabsco District Victor Angry, Post Commander Ben Guinan and Potomac Supervisor Andrea Bailey



Prince William County Sheriff's Office was on hand to make free ID cards for the children. They each also received a badge to wear



Members of Post 1503 Honor Guard prepare to present the Colors at the Quantico National Memorial Day Ceremony



On Memorial Day families and friends from the community came out to the open house picnic to enjoy free food, music and some great entertainment



VETERANS: PROTECT YOUR BENEFITS FROM CLAIMS PREDATORS

December 17, 2024



The process of applying for VA benefits can be complex, and we understand that Veterans often rely on assistance to navigate the process. Unfortunately, among some of the resources, there are claims predators who take advantage of Veterans and their vulnerabilities by offering help with their benefits claims while exploiting their trust and financial resources. These claims predators are a serious concern, but with proper knowledge and vigilance, Veterans can defend themselves against such aggressive exploitative tactics.

To avoid falling victim to claims predators' scams, VA advises Veterans to take the following precautions when applying for VA benefits:

- Don't pay unlawful fees: You should never pay a fee to file an initial claim for benefits. It is unlawful for anyone to charge a claimant a fee for preparing an initial claim.

Empower yourself: Knowledge is your best defense against claims predators. Take the time to understand the benefits you are entitled to, the [VA claims process](#) and the resources available. Be aware of any policy changes affecting your benefits and stay informed of [scams targeting them](#). By keeping yourself informed, you can make educated decisions and avoid scams.

Seek reputable assistance: Working with [VA accredited attorneys, claims agents and VSO representatives](#) is crucial when seeking help with the VA benefits process. Only VA accredited representatives can help you with your benefits claim. By working with VA accredited individuals, you can ensure that you receive the best possible assistance with your claim.

Be cautious of unsolicited offers: Claims predators may contact you via mail, email or phone, claiming to provide you with an expedited claims process or guarantee a 100% disability rating. Remember, only VA can determine disability ratings. If you receive an offer that seems too good to be true, research and [verify the individual's accreditation](#).

Review documents thoroughly: Before signing any documents related to your benefits, carefully review forms, ensure you understand the terms and conditions, and always keep copies for yourself. Watch out for vague language, hidden fees or clauses that could jeopardize your benefits. Do not sign a fee agreement with someone who will not sign a VA representation form ([VA Form 21-22 or 21-22a](#)) and never sign a blank form for someone else to complete later.

Protect your personal identifiable information (PII): Be cautious of sharing sensitive information with unknown or unaccredited individuals and be wary of requests for payment or personal data. Remember, you never have to make fee payments yourself for any supplemental claim, higher-level review or appeal to the Board. You can use a [direct-payment fee agreement](#) where VA will send a portion of past-due benefits awarded to the claimant to pay the representative for you. If someone is unwilling to be paid that way, you should question why.

- Report suspicious activity: If you suspect a representative acted unlawfully or unethically while assisting you in filing a VA benefits claim, file a report and learn more at www.vsafe.gov or by calling 833-38V-SAFE.

Safeguarding your benefits from claims predators requires vigilance, knowledge and proactive measures. By staying informed, seeking [reputable assistance](#) and recognizing the warning signs, you can defend yourself against claims predators and ensure you receive the benefits you have rightfully earned. Check out VA's [fraud prevention page](#) to learn more.

Article Source: <https://news.va.gov/135597/veterans-protect-your-benefits-from-claims-predators/>





COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA
 JOINT LEADERSHIP COUNCIL OF
 VETERANS SERVICE ORGANIZATIONS

101 N. 14TH ST., 17TH FLOOR
 RICHMOND VA 23219

Air Force Association
Air Force Sergeants Association
American Legion
AMVETS
Association of the United States Army
Disabled American Veterans
Fifth Baptist Church Veterans Ministry
Fleet Reserve Association
Legion of Valor of the U.S., Inc.
Marine Corps League
Military Officers Association of America
Military Order of the Purple Heart
Military Order of the World Wars
Navy Mutual Aid Association
Paralyzed Veterans of America
Reserve Organization of America
Roanoke Valley Veterans Council
Veterans of Foreign Wars
Vietnam Veterans of America
Virginia Army/Air National Guard Enlisted Association
Virginia National Guard Association
Women Marines Association
Wounded Warrior Project

Position Paper

Prohibit companies from preying on veterans seeking to obtain or modify their VA entitlements.

Objective: Stop unscrupulous firms from exploiting veterans trying to obtain VA benefits.

Background: The COVID-19 pandemic allowed non-accredited consulting groups, that the VFW calls “Claim Sharks,” to proliferate. Passage of The Sergeant First Class Heath Robinson Promise to Address Comprehensive Toxics (PACT) Act of 2022 – bipartisan legislation championed by Congressionally-chartered Veterans Service Organizations – provided further opportunity for for-profit fraudsters to work on attaching veterans’ stipends. Their television advertisements are ubiquitous, and their spam emails appear daily in inboxes. These fraudsters often use names that sound like legitimate VSOs and when their true colors are revealed, often change names, chameleon-like to elude Inspectors General, Department of Justice, and other investigative agencies.

Discussion: For more than one-hundred years, the VFW and other VSOs have championed veterans and the families of veterans in identifying need, compiling documentation, filing necessary forms, and serving as fiduciary power of attorney wherever needed, always free of charge. As an example, through accreditation with VA, the VFW’s global network of more than two thousand Service Officers represents more than 550,000 veterans who received more than 11.2 billion dollars in earned entitlements in 2022, alone.

The VFW has long expressed concerned over bad actors (e.g., unscrupulous law firms, hyperbole-spewing self-appointed “VA claims “experts,” and other predatory charlatans) who promise large disability ratings – whether legitimate or not – in exchange for large fees or a lifetime stream of revenue siphoned from the deserving veteran’s VA disability compensation or pension.

These firms are not certified and trained by the Veterans Administration. They cannot file for the veteran or see the computer system that tracks the veteran's claim. The veteran files their own claim with "assistance" from the firm and if anything goes wrong, the veteran is solely responsible for the error and could owe the Veterans Administration money. If this action were to be taken by any other actor affecting a consumer it would be considered fraud and be protected by Virginia's consumer protection laws.

Recommendation: We ask that the Legislature propose legislation that prohibits these Claim Shark companies from operating in Virginia.

Winners of VFW Publications Contest Announced

This years' winners represent the best of the best

KANSAS CITY, Mo. — The Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) has announced the winners of the 2024 National Publications Contest. More than seven years ago, the contest changed significantly to encourage more participation. This created two new categories: Best Magazine and Best Feature Article. This year's competition retained those changes.

Two non-VFW-affiliated journalism professionals served as judges for the competition. This is designed to ensure impartiality and objectivity in the judging process. To reiterate, VFW staffers play no part in judging the entries.

The winning publications in each category are:

Best Magazine

Grand Award:

California Veteran
Rodger Meier, Editor

Silver Award:

Department of South Carolina Sentinel
Bill LaMonte, Editor

Best Feature Article

Grand Award:

“Vietnam vet plays ‘TAPS’ every day with Boy Scout Bugle”
Jarrod Schoenecker, *Montgomery Messenger*
Department of Minnesota

Silver Award:

“Alachua VFW Post 2811 Auxiliary President honors son with service”
Michael P. Mauer, *Alachua County Today*
Department of Florida

Bronze Award:

“WWII POW’s Remains Return to Illinois Following Identification”
Barbara Wilson, *Illinois VFW News*
Department of Illinois

Department Publications

Large Frequency (printed 5+ times per year)

Grand Award:

Wisconsin VFW News
Marla J. Morgan, Editor

Small Frequency (printed 1-4 times per year)

Grand Award:

Illinois VFW News
Barb Wilson, Editor

Silver Award:

Michigan Overseas Veteran
Alyssa McElfresh, Editor

District/Post Publications

Large Frequency (printed 5+ times per year)

Grand Award:

Ssg Dozier VFW Post 2894 Newsletter
Dan Eaker, Editor
Department of Virginia

Silver Award:

Cannon News (VFW Post 7589)
Rick Raskin, Editor
Department of Virginia

Bronze Award:

The Chatter (VFW Post 7591)
Cole Slominski, Editor
Department of Wisconsin

Small Frequency (printed 1-4 times per year)

Grand Award:

VFW News (Post 1318)
Gundel Metz, Editor
Department of Wisconsin

Silver Award:

VFW Post 2113 & Auxiliary Joint Newsletter
Randy Hansen, Editor
Department of Wisconsin

Bronze Award:

Waverley VFW Post 1272 Newsletter
D. Bruce Pahlm, Editor
Department of Massachusetts

VFW Department of Virginia Congratulates
Posts 2894 (Lynchburg) and 7589 (Manassas)

Memorial Day Parade in Warrenton, Virginia A Celebration of Honor and Remembrance

The Memorial Day Parade / Wreath Ceremony in Warrenton, Virginia, stands as a cherished tradition, honoring the sacrifices of service members who have given their lives in defense of the United States. This stirring event brings together the local community in a vibrant display of patriotism, history, and heartfelt gratitude. Year after year, Warrenton transforms into a hub of remembrance, where streets resonate with the rhythms of marching bands, the cheers of attendees, and the solemn pride shared by all present.

Veterans groups consisting of American Legion Posts 72 and 360 along with VFW Posts 7728 and 9835 participated in the parade. State Commander Mitch Rubenstein was the Grand Marshal and also the Guest Speaker. Their presence serves as a poignant reminder of the sacrifices made by countless individuals. The sight of veterans marching in their uniforms, accompanied by military vehicles and personnel, often stirs deep emotions among spectators.

Local and state law enforcement, fire department, classic car owners, Legion Riders and local schools contributed to the parade, each uniquely decorated to honor the day. A float offered a reflective theme of peace, perseverance, and gratitude, showcasing the creativity and commitment of VFW Post 7728.

The parade proceeded to the Warrenton Cemetery with a memorial wreath being placed as well as speeches by VFW Post Commanders Wayne Robinson, Robert "Tony" Lunn and State Commander Mitch Rubenstein. They emphasized the importance of remembering those who laid down their lives for freedom and inspired attendees to carry forward the values they defended. The wreath placement was done by Commanders from all the Veterans Organizations in Fauquier County. Honors and Taps were provided by the Fauquier County JROTC.



State Commander Mitch Rubenstein and Post 9835 member Elden Ray



Post 9835 members, Elden Ray, Bruce Campbell, Walt Lenky, Tom Bigler and Rusty Ringling standing by for Memorial Day Parade



Post 9835 member Gary Sappington driving Commander Mitch Rubenstein in the Memorial Day Parade in Warrenton



State Commander and the Fauquier County JROTC Members preparing for parade



Post 9835 Commander Tony Lunn saluting the crowd & Post Commander 7728 Wayne Robinson at podium





Post 9835 Post Commander Robert "Tony" Lunn, State Commander Rubenstein, Post 7728 Post Commander Wayne Robinson, American Legion Post 360 Commander Larry Washington and American Legion Post 72 Commander Mike Ezzo placed the wreath



Fauquier County JROTC members

State Commander participates in a Vietnam Veterans of America Pinning Ceremony in Waynesboro, District 11



State Commander Mitch Rubenstein and District 11 Commander Melissa Patrick



The **Gold Standard** of Service
for Veterans and their Families

Connect to
hundreds of local
services and resources.



For more information about
the Virginia Veterans Network,
visit **dvs.virginia.gov**.

Veterans of Foreign Wars Department Commander Shirt



Pre- order forms must be sent to **Department Headquarters**
no later than March 21, 2025 for VFW members

*Additional Shirts for the VFW members will be available
to order at the 2025 June Convention.*

Cost: Small – Extra Large: \$35.00 2XL: \$36.00 3XL: \$37.00

Name: _____ Size: ____ Number of Shirts: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____ Post # _____ District # _____