

Commander's Message



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

A lot of things have happened since the last Newsletter was published. This year is flying by and we have been very busy. The Department is certainly moving in the right direction and staying on course to meet our objective of being All-American. This is a TEAM effort, and I cannot be prouder of the line officers, and everyone involved from the Posts, Districts, and State. Your unwavering support has enabled us to reach higher and accomplish whatever we put our minds to. I sincerely appreciate every one of you.

The Mid-Winter Conference went as expected. We acknowledged our students and teachers for the essays and Patriotism. A big thank you to Ben Guinan and his team; Mike Diaz, Ashley Gurley, Glenda Indyck, and Chris Birch for all their hard work and countless hours they put in to make these programs a huge success. As we bid Fort Magruder goodbye, we are looking forward to welcoming the Hotel Madison in Harrisonburg for the

June Convention and next year's Mid-Winter Conference. I think this is going to be a great start and a fresh look at things to come.

March 2-6 was the newly renamed DC Conference. I know that the National C-I-C Al Lipphardt appreciated everyone's presence as he took on the challenges during his testimony. We showed him our support as we flooded the building with VFW members donning our VFW caps.

Homecoming with me and Auxiliary President Dawn Kuhn will be March 22nd at my Post 2447, in Edinburg. I hope that you will honor us with your presence as we celebrate this year. All the information is in the General Orders along with the Flyer. Please contact Liz Wilson at the email listed to inform her that you are planning to attend.

Up next we have the Public Service Awards, JROTC, Civil Air Patrol, Sea Cadets, and Scout of the Year. Let's continue to achieve excellence in everything we do, and finish this year strong. The Membership Team is doing a great job, but this is no time to take your foot off the gas. While the weather is cold, we need to take full advantage of the phone lines and contact our members and find the ones that may have slipped through the cracks. We need to bring them back while we also recruit new members.

Speaking of the weather, check with the members in your Post(s) and make sure they are well and have what they need to sustain themselves if they are forced to be unable to leave their homes due to the severe weather conditions.

Be safe out there,

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 rwccoker1@gmail.com

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

Note: Deadline for the next newspaper is:

June 1st, 2025



Chris Mulholland

January 24 at 11:50am, Chris passed away peacefully at home after fighting a nearly 5-year battle with ALS. He was loved by many and touched countless lives through Family, Faith, and his leadership in Soccer, Marine Corps, Scouts, Knights of Columbus, Veterans of Foreign Wars, the ALS Community and many more.

Many of us knew Chris. He attended many VFW functions and even in the face of all the adversity maintained a positive attitude. Chris was an inspiration to us all and will be missed. RIP Chris. You are free now.

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/>



Santa stops by Post 3160 to donate some of his blood to the American Red Cross



Crewe Post 7918 and Blackstone Post 7897 2024 Patriots Pen winners



VFW PATRIOTS PEN WINNERS – Crewe’s Gold Star Memorial VFW Post 7819 and Blackstone VFW Post 7897 presented checks to the Kenston Forest winners of 2024 Patriot’s Pen annual essay contest. From left to right, Courtney Astle (2nd Place, Blackstone Post), Madison Nash (2nd Place-tie, Crewe Post), Autumn Atkins (1st Place, Crewe Post), Bradley Trinkle (1st Place, Blackstone Post), Ava Hudgins (2nd Place-tie, Crewe Post), and Juliana Redford (3rd Place, Crewe Post). On the Back row are Blackstone Post members John Hill and James Watkins, and Crewe Post Scholarship Coordinator Greg Eanes.

VFW Post 9835 Presents their 2024 Law Enforcement & Public Servant Awards

The Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 9835 presents its 2024 Law Enforcement Public Servant Award to Detective Corporal Richard J. Kniatt of the Warrenton Police Department. A member of the Department since September 2018, CPL Kniatt possesses a bachelor's degree in criminal justice and forensic computing and a master's in cybersecurity. In the year just passed CPL Kniatt closed multiple high-profile investigative cases including ones involving murder, child sexual abuse and a missing and endangered juvenile. In this latter cases, the female juvenile was suffering from mental health issues and was not taking her medications when she left Warrenton. As lead investigator, CPL Kniatt collaborated with local and state officials as well as law enforcement and governmental authorities in Washington, D.C. and from four different New York State agencies. He coordinated the attempt to forensically analyze the juvenile's cellular phone which she left behind when she fled Warrenton in an effort to garner clues as to her destination. He spoke with the girl's family and friends along with anyone else who might provide insight into her actions and destination. As a result of his diligent work and partnerships, he was able to track the juvenile from Warrenton to Washington D.C. to New York City where she was located five days after her disappearance. CPL Kniatt's tenacious work ethic, constant communication, and follow-up with New York authorities were the key reasons that this female juvenile was located and returned safe and sound to her family and to the help she needed. CPL Kniatt's dedication to our community and his profession set a standard of excellence and reflects great credit upon himself, the Warrenton Police Department and Law Enforcement Professionals everywhere.



From Left to Right, Fauquier County Sheriff's Office Public Safety Telecommunicator (Dispatcher) Krista Bouie, Firefighter Walter Faryniarz, Master Deputy Sheriff Christopher Meyer & All American Post Commander from 9835, Jeff Dombroff



At its January 16, 2025 meeting, Post 9835 recognized five outstanding public servants with its annual Law Enforcement/First Responder Awards. From the Warrenton Volunteer Fire Company, EMT Sergeant Thomas Litchford & Firefighter Walter Faryniarz. From the Fauquier County Sheriff's Office Public Safety Telecommunicator (Dispatcher) Krista Bouie & Master Deputy Sheriff Christopher Meyer. And from the Warrenton Police Department Detective CPL Richard Kniatt. Detective Kniatt's achievements were deemed so noteworthy as to justify submission to the Department for consideration for State-level recognition. His citation appears on the previous page.

VFW Post 5313 Patriots Pen Winners



POST 5313 PATRIOT'S PEN WINNERS – Post 5313 Commander Haywood Anderson (back right) and Senior Vice Commander Mearl Smith (back center) presented Certificates to the 2024 VFW Post 5313 Patriots Pen participants at Nottoway Middle School recently. Essay participants include, front row, from left to right, Ireth Lopez, Victoria Jones, Wyatt Harris and Walker Miles and middle row, from left to right, Hailey Jones, Saniyah Forney, and Addison Cliborne. (Post 5313 Photo)

Post 7589 Educational Awards Ceremony on December 1

PHOTOS BY RICK RASKIN



Master of Ceremonies Lou Filippone



Guest Speaker Ty Eanes, Executive Director,
Border Security Intelligence Center



Lou Filippone presented Ty Eanes a gift for being



Patriots Pen 1st Place winner Guransh Sabharwal



(L-R) Wayne Moore, Guransh Sabharwal, Ellie
Smith, Mary Corkhill and Lou Filippone



Patriots Pen Winners Gianna Henry and Guransh
Sabharwal



VOD 1st Place winner Mary Schroer



VOD Winners Kennedy A. Ricks and Mary Schroer



Teacher of the Year Marjorie Heather Grant

2024-2025 VFW Post 7589 Educational Award Recipients

Patriot's Pen, 6th to 8th Grade: " My Voice in America's Democracy"

- First Place: Guransh Sabharwal, 7th Grade Marsteller Middle School, Bristow, Va.
- Second Place: Anisha Marrapu, 7th Rocky Run Middle School, Chanilly, Va.
- Third Place: Gianna Henry, 7th Grade Seton School, Manassas, Va.

Voice of Democracy, 9th to 12th Grade: "Is America Today Our Forefather's Vision?"

- First Place: Mary Schroer, 11th Grade Seton School, Manassas, Va.



2 Virginia Universities offer free legal services to veterans.

George Mason University and William & Mary Law School provide free legal consultation for veterans with VA claims

Celebrating 20 years of providing FREE legal assistance to our active duty military, their families and veterans.

<https://mvets.law.gmu.edu/>

Situated less than 4 miles from the Pentagon, on the doorstep of the nation's capital, and neighbor to several major military installations, George Mason prides itself on its commitment and support of those who wear or have worn a uniform in service to our nation.

Direct evidence of that commitment and support can be found in the law school's Mason Veterans and Servicemembers Legal Clinic (M-VETS). Founded in 2004 as the Clinic for Legal Assistance to Servicemembers and Veterans, its establishment was unique in legal education and has subsequently served as a model for the founding of other servicemembers and veterans clinics at law schools across the nation.

M-VETS enables Mason law students to assist servicemembers, veterans, and dependent family members in a wide variety of litigation and non-litigation matters. Since its inception, clinic students have assisted hundreds of clients from all five branches of the armed services. M-VETS provides services for administrative and military law and entitlements matters, medical and physical evaluation boards, discharge upgrade and military records correction applications before Discharge Review Boards, and Boards for Corrections of Military Records. M-VETS also provides assistance related to the appeal of initial (partial or total) denials of Department of Veterans Affairs disability compensation claims, the filing of requests for increases in ratings, and appeals to the Board of Veterans Appeals and the Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims. These M-VETS services are not restricted by the State of residence.

M-VETS relies on private donations and is grateful to the individuals, corporations, and foundations who have generously provided support to the clinic:

Lewis B. Puller, Jr. Veterans Benefits Clinic

https://law.wm.edu/academics/programs/jd/electives/clinics/clinics_list/veterans/

William & Mary's connections to the military date back to its earliest days as a College, when 17-year-old George Washington received his first surveyor's license through the College and returned after the Revolutionary War to become its first American chancellor. As the oldest law school in the nation, William & Mary Law School prides itself on its long service to the nation, and the Veterans Benefits Clinic is another demonstration of William & Mary's commitment to its community.

The Lewis B. Puller, Jr. Veterans Benefits Clinic offers students the opportunity to assist veterans with filing claims for disability compensation with the Department of Veterans Affairs. Under attorney supervision, clinic students have the opportunity to interview clients, analyze medical records, communicate with health care providers, and craft strategies to help clients receive disability compensation. These services can have life-changing effects on the veterans we serve.

In recognition that veterans disability issues go beyond their legal claims for benefits, William & Mary Law School has partnered with Virginia Commonwealth University's Center for Psychological Services and Development to help veterans address all of the health and disability concerns that may arise from their service to our nation.

Our contact information is:

The Lewis B. Puller, Jr. Veterans Benefits Clinic
William & Mary Law School
P.O. Box 8795
Williamsburg, Virginia 23187-8795
(757) 221-7443
veterans@wm.edu

The Puller Clinic relies on private donations and is grateful to the individuals, corporations and foundations who have provided generous support, including William & Mary Law School Classes of 1974 (Lewis B. Puller, Jr.'s class) and 1984.

*If you wish to make a gift to help this vital work continue, please click [here](#). We encourage you to honor a fellow Veteran, or support one of the law students doing this important work, today.

Department of Virginia ascends into Williamsburg for Winter Council Meeting

Photos by C. D. (Doc) Crouch



Past CIC Hal Roesch and State Commander Mitch Rubenstein



Mitch Rubenstein with Auxiliary President Dawn Kuhn



The Auxiliary delegation persuaded PSC Butch Schupski to donate part of his 50:50 winnings



Resolutions Chair Conrad Agresti gives his report



Several gaming vendors had displays of their latest offerings.



The annual youth and teacher awards banquet — January 11, 2025

Photos by C. D. (Doc) Crouch



Opening ceremonies at the well attended annual awards banquet



The VFW and Auxiliary team with Patriots Pen winner Jordan Yapunchich



(L-R) Mary Corkhill, Dawn Kuhn, Mitch Rubenstein, the Teacher of the Year, Ray Delpesche, Chris Birch and Steve Hunt



Patriots Pen winner Jordan Yapunchich



(L-R) Mary Corkhill, Dawn Kuhn, Mitch Rubenstein, Patriots Pen winner Cole Nicholson, Todd Taylor, Sherri Moore and Ben Guinan



Voice of Democracy winner Chris Qian



Teacher Tejas Petal



Teacher of the Year



Master of Ceremonies State JVC Mark Maggio

VFW Day on the Hill—January 23, 2025



Part of the VFW team that descended on the Capitol for the Day on the Hill



Monti Zimmerman and Rick Raskin with Delegate Michelle Maldonado



Meeting with Delegate Brianna Sewell



State JVC Mark Maggio, PSC Rick Raskin and Legislative Committee member Monti Zimmerman with Congresswoman Lashrecse Aird



VFW members made a strong showing at a hearing at the House of Delegates

2025 JLC Initiatives

- **JLC 2025-01:** Verification of Veteran Status, Arrest, Jails and Prisons
- **JLC 2025-02:** Stop Unscrupulous Firms from Exploiting Veterans
- **JLC 2025-03:** Virginia National Guard Tuition
- **JLC 2025-04:** Suffolk State Veterans Cemetery Expansion
- **JLC 2025-05:** Women Veterans Day

Post 1177, Leesburg receives Presidential Volunteer Service Awards



VFW Post 1177 is proud to award several of its members the Presidential Volunteer Service Award for their volunteer contributions in 2024. This prestigious recognition celebrates their unwavering dedication and profound impact to our community. Join us in applauding their commitment to volunteering and inspiring others to make a difference. Bronze Award - Lee Gortman & Francis Hinnegan Silver Award - Ray Delpesche, Les Flores & Max Gutierrez Gold Award

VFW Commander & Chief Al Lipphardt visits Dale City Post 1503 during his trip to testify in Congress



Pictured on the right is VFW Post 1503 Commander Ben Guinan, VFW CiC Al Lipphardt and VFW National Sr.Vice Commander Carol Whitmore





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VIRGINIA VETERANS
NETWORK



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 # _____