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March 25, 2025

Comrades:

On March 18<sup>th</sup> your Council of Administration held a Special meeting to discuss vital business of the Department. As part of that meeting a discussion was held concerning the Service Officer Program.

The Service officer program for the Department of Virginia has taken a hit over the last few years. Having two Department Officers covering the entire state is not giving our veterans and their families the attention that they deserve to fully complete their claims. Therefore, the Council felt a need for a change. As of 1 April, our staff have been instructed not to take on any new clients or power of attorney's and begin the process of deferring all new claims to the Virginia Department of Veteran Services.

We have established a strong network and working relationship with DVS, which will give our members a larger pool to assist the veterans in every district. Our tax dollars are now funding 78 fully accredited full-time service officers and 21 administrative positions across the commonwealth now devoted to serving our veteran community. In addition, DVS also has a fully funded and staffed appeals team to represent Virginia veterans before the Board of Veterans Appeals and the U.S. Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims.

Due to fiscal realities the Council felt this was in the best interest of our veteran community. There is going to be a period of transition over the next few months, and we urge our members to be patient during this time. Our program will officially end on September 1, 2025, but the DVS will be there for our members starting April 1<sup>st</sup>, 2025.

This was a very difficult decision to make but one your Council felt was in the best interest of Virginia's veterans and their families.

My personal thanks go out to our dedicated VFW VSOs, Laurie Clay and Raymond Bailey, for their hard work over their time with the VFW. We look forward to their continued pursuits in serving our veterans.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Mitch Rubenstein". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a prominent flourish at the end.

Mitch Rubenstein  
State Commander  
Veterans of Foreign Wars