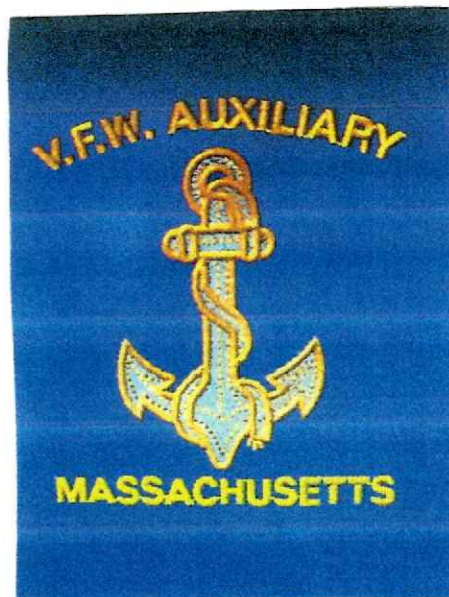


**VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS OF THE UNITED STATES
AUXILIARY
DEPARTMENT OF MASSACHUSETTS**



2026-2027 PROGRAM KICKOFF



STABILITY, STRENGTH and HOPE

Saturday, August 8, 2026

Patricia M. Wilbur, Department President

**Melissa Pratt, PDP
Chairman**

**Susan Cacciagrani
Co-Chairman**

HISTORIAN / MEDIA RELATIONS
Mariruth Castle, Chairman
25 Sycamore Drive
Halifax, MA 02338
857-266-7967
mariruthc@yahoo.com

Who is the VFW Auxiliary? Well, ladies and gentlemen, this is our responsibility to let both our members and citizens see and understand our organization.

The most viewed media today appears to be the internet. Upload your pictures to your favorite site with a short note telling us what is being viewed. While strolling through their media platform, that photo may just catch his or her eye. This shows interest. Interest can lead to new members and ideas.

Remember, when placing information on the internet and even in newsletters to members, to include WHAT / WHEN / WHERE / WHO / WHY. Describe what is being shown or advertised. When did or when is this happening. Where did or where is this happening. Who is doing this and who is the contact person. If holding a fundraiser, let people know why and for whom you are raising funds.

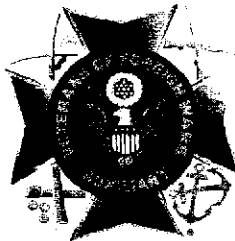
IMPORTANT – REPORT! REPORT! REPORT!

Please send me photos and/or newspaper articles so I can prepare a history of her year for Pat to enjoy in years to come. You have my appreciation for your assistance.

Auxiliary Historians should research MALTA resources for tips on preparing a local history of your Auxiliary's activities throughout the year. MALTA has a Publicity Guide, talking points, adult & youth photo release forms, speeches, press releases, etc., to guide you throughout the year.

VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS AUXILIARY

UNWAVERING SUPPORT



FOR UNCOMMON HEROES®

We are the nation's oldest veterans' service organization auxiliary. For more than 100 years, we have been serving veterans, service members and their families in countless ways. Millions of hours, millions of dollars and millions of tributes.

THIS IS WHO WE ARE.

"I am an Auxiliary member because our Programs help veterans in need, preserve our nation's patriotic traditions and educate youth."

—Jeanene B.

"I love supporting and honoring those who have, and are, serving to protect our freedoms."

—Nancy C.

"This gives me a chance to thank our veterans for everything they do."

—Sherry P.

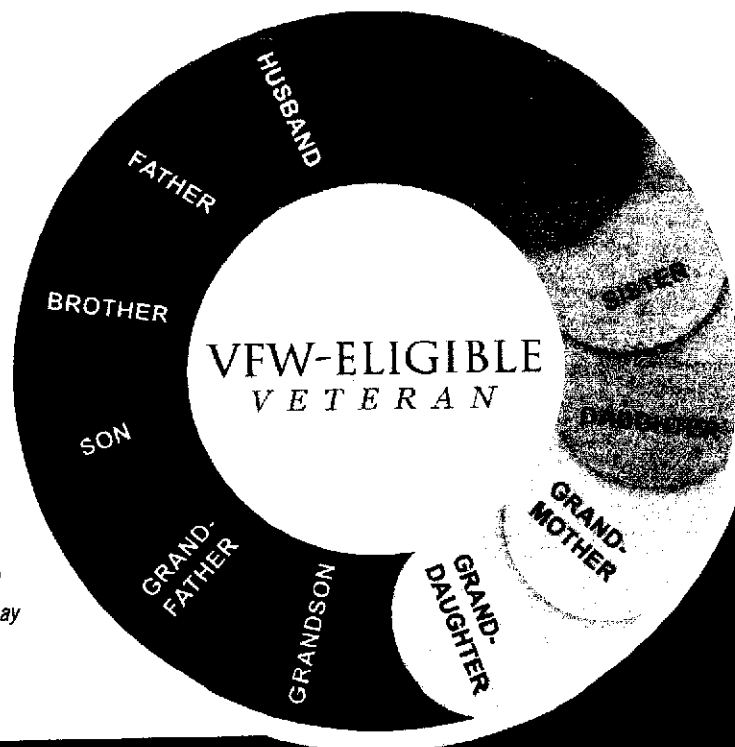
- www.vfwauxiliary.org
- ✉ info@vfwauxiliary.org
- f facebook.com/VFWAuxiliary

JOIN US

Our organization comprises nearly a half million members from diverse backgrounds who have a common connection: all are relatives of a VFW-eligible veteran.*

Step- and adopted parents, children, siblings (and half siblings), grandparents and grandchildren are considered the same as biological parents, children, siblings, grandparents and grandchildren and may join the VFW Auxiliary under their VFW-eligible veteran.

*Eligible veteran does not have to be a member of the VFW.



Veterans & Family Support

734,146 Approximate number of veterans, service members and/or their families assisted

\$7M Total monetary donations and/or value of donations and goods/services provided to veterans, service members and/or their families

2,532 Number of Auxiliaries that provided direct aid to veterans, service members and/or their families

Scholarships

\$1M Total amount of awards presented by Auxiliaries, Districts and Departments

Available Scholarships Continuing Education
AGES 21+

Young American Creative Patriotic Art Contest & 3-Dimensional Patriotic Art Contest
GRADES 9-12

VFW Voice of Democracy Audio Essay Contest
GRADES 9-12

VFW Patriot's Pen Essay Contest
GRADES 6-8

\$47,500 National VFW Auxiliary scholarships awarded

Americanism

4.31M Number of American Flags and POW/MIA flags distributed and/or presented by Auxiliaries

14,831 Certificates given to businesses and citizens for flying the American Flag

2,417 Number of Auxiliaries that promoted, participated in or recognized any patriotic day and/or branch of service birthdays

Hospital

\$2.18M Total spent on all Hospital Program-related items and projects

245,189 Hours volunteered in VA and non-VA medical facilities

45,829 Auxiliary members who volunteered within the Hospital Program

Youth Activities

177,067 Youth Auxiliaries worked with

5,143 Youth groups Auxiliaries worked with

8,226 Youth recognized for their patriotism

Legislative

20,608 Contacts made by members to legislators regarding veterans' issues

www.vfwauxiliary.org
info@vfwauxiliary.org

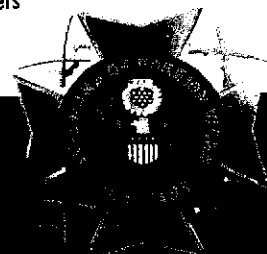


Photo Release Form

*Veterans of Foreign Wars Auxiliary National Organization
&/or Veterans of Foreign Wars Auxiliary #_____ (fill in number)*



Release for Youth:

I, _____, hereby authorize the use of my child's photograph for publication by VFW Auxiliary #_____ and/or VFW Auxiliary National Organization, including, but not limited to, social media sites, website, brochures, newsletters, e-newsletters, *VFW Auxiliary Magazine* and videos. Release must be signed by parent and VFW Auxiliary representative.

Please Note: National Auxiliary policy dictates that we do not share last names for students under school-aged or in grades K-8; the full names of students who are under 18 but in high school or college will be posted (if provided) unless otherwise specified.

Name of Child

Signature of Parent or Guardian

Date

Release for Adult:

I, _____, hereby authorize the use of my photograph for publication by VFW Auxiliary #_____ and/or VFW Auxiliary National Organization, including, but not limited to, social media sites, website, brochures, newsletters, e-newsletters, *VFW Auxiliary Magazine* and videos. Release must be signed by subject and VFW Auxiliary representative.

Signature

Date

VFW Auxiliary Representative

Date

Carlyjane Dunn Watson
Hospital Program Chairman '26-'27
KICKOFF BOOKLET August 8, 2026

32 Hickory Lane
Amherst, MA 01002
cdwatsonvfwauxiliary@gmail.com

Madam President and Officers, Auxiliary Presidents, VA Representatives, all Hospital Chairmen of Districts and Auxiliaries and every Member at the Kickoff today... WELCOME This program was the first VFW Auxiliary Program, which speaks to its importance. I ask you to please participate as much as you can. Thank you!

I am delighted that its with this Chairmanship that I am reentering active participation in Department Activities. I had to withdrawal from department level activities the past few years because of my cancer and cancer treatments. During that time though, I did stay active as Deputy and then Representative to the Massachusetts Veterans Home in Holyoke. You may recall my presentation last year at the Hospital Workshop. VOLUNTEER! VOLUNTEER!

So, I thank you Madam President for this appointment so very much, you know this is in my heart! Having said that, I think everyone should know that I am now my husband's primary caregiver. He was diagnosed with terminal cancer 10 days after Convention and registered for Home Hospice that following day. This will at times impact my schedule. I have a lot of support but I am going to need your support in completing your reports on time and completely, so one I don't have to chase after you but also so our Department and President Wilbur will receive the recognition we deserve. We are an Outstanding Department, lets report it! Thank you.

Down to the nitty gritty of the Hospital Program for '26-'27; important changes!

1. The Council authorized an addition item to the Hospital Program...

Note Item #7: Promote/recruit volunteers for VA(CDCE) or non-VA facility

I will personally be giving prizes to Auxiliaries whose new recruits register hours at sites!

2. As Chairperson, I need to report the number of volunteers, # of new volunteers and total of value '\$' of donations made, in the report I make to National; therefore reporting details have been included in the new Mid-Year and Year's End Final Reports, you will be sending to me. Please report each half term with details from the designated time periods. Thank you.

3. The weekend of the Hospital Workshop has been changed.

The Hospital Workshop is scheduled for October 10th at Post 697 in Whitman. Everyone attending should register, funds go to pay for the Coffee and Breakfast Buffet!

Cheers, Carlyjane..... and remember to ***** VOLUNTEER ****

Donations for VA Hospitals and Veterans Homes

All Items Donated to VA Hospitals and the Veterans Homes Must be New!

Please leave items in their packaging with tags. Thank you!

Please complete a donation form at the workshop.

Donations will be accepted at the Hospital Workshop, with the following stipulation, all donations collected at the Department workshop will be shared among all 5 VA Facilities and the 2 Veterans Homes, 7 sites in total. Please note: If you prefer your donation to go to a specific location please make arrangements with the representative (see Department Roster) of that location or with your District Hospital Chairman. Thank you! CDW

Most sought after Donations (remember items must be new)

Mens and Womens Clothing:

Sweatpants (open bottom), Sweatshirts, Short and Long sleeve T-Shirts, Winter Jackets, Winter Gloves, Underwear: T-shirts and pants, Women's Sports Bras, Suspenders, Women's long/short sleeve cotton shirts.

Men's most sought after sizes 3x, 4x, plus, but all sizes welcome.

Women's most sought after sizes Medium and Large, but all welcome.

Hygiene Items:

Deodorant, Denture cleaner and adhesive, Alcohol free mouthwash.

Creave, Aveeno, Eucerin, Aquaphor or Andolou soaps and lotions.

Miscellaneous Items

LARGE print puzzle books, cover the ear headphones, over the glasses sunglasses, wheelchair and walker bags, Sugar-free cough drops/candies, adult coloring books, color pencils.

PLEASE PLAN TO DISTRIBUTE YOUR ITEMS INTO SITE BOXES AT WORKSHOP

Thank you! See you October 10th in Whitman. Cheers!

LEGISLATIVE PROGRAM
Elissa Gould, Chairman
11 Hawthorne Street
Somerville, MA 02144
elissagould@rcn.com
617-755-4553

Welcome to the 2026-2027 new year!

I am looking forward as Legislative Chairman to working with and assisting members to be advocates for our veterans and families, as well as for our service members. In order to be a strong advocate as members we need to be informed on issues and engaged with our legislators at all levels. This includes local, state, and national legislators and do not forget about candidates.

1. This year's Legislative Goals:
 - a. Focus on the VFW's Priority Goals with the six areas of concern:
 - Budget
 - Healthcare
 - Disability Assistance and Memorial Affairs
 - Education, Employment and Transition Assistance
 - National Security, Foreign Affairs, and POW/MIA
 - Military Readiness
 - b. Contact your legislators about veterans' issues frequently and by any means!
 - Phone calls, letters, events, and don't forget about **Action Corps Alerts**. Sign up for **Action Corps** through this: vfw.org/JoinActionCorps or use the QR.
 - Action Corps is the easiest way to stay informed and to quickly respond in a timely fashion.
 - c. **Attend Events** where you can interact with legislators and be a spokesperson for Veterans. Get to know your local and state officials. Be Active.
 - d. **Use MALTA** and the VFW website resources. In MALTA there is a wealth of information! Login, click on Member Resources, go to the 2026-2027 National Program Book. Then click on Legislative. There are items such as "A guide for contacting your Legislator" and printables to hand out at various events. There are also links to the VFW website, go to the VFW Action Center for information and look up & print information such as The VFW Priority Goals.

Be an Advocate!

Report!

Be Informed!

Report!

Be Engaged!

Report!

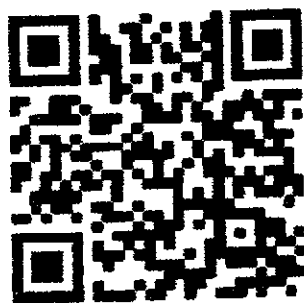
And

Please contact me for any assistance you might need throughout the year! I am looking forward to meeting and working with members as we Advocate for our Veterans as a stronger force together.

SIGN UP TO JOIN VFW ACTION CORPS

**RECEIVE OUR WEEKLY E-NEWSLETTER
AND ACTION ALERTS**

Use camera mode to scan code



or

Text "VFW" to 50457

or

Visit vfw.org/JoinActionCorps

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.



**NO ONE DOES MORE
FOR VETERANS.**

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

VFW

VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS.

VFW National Headquarters

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

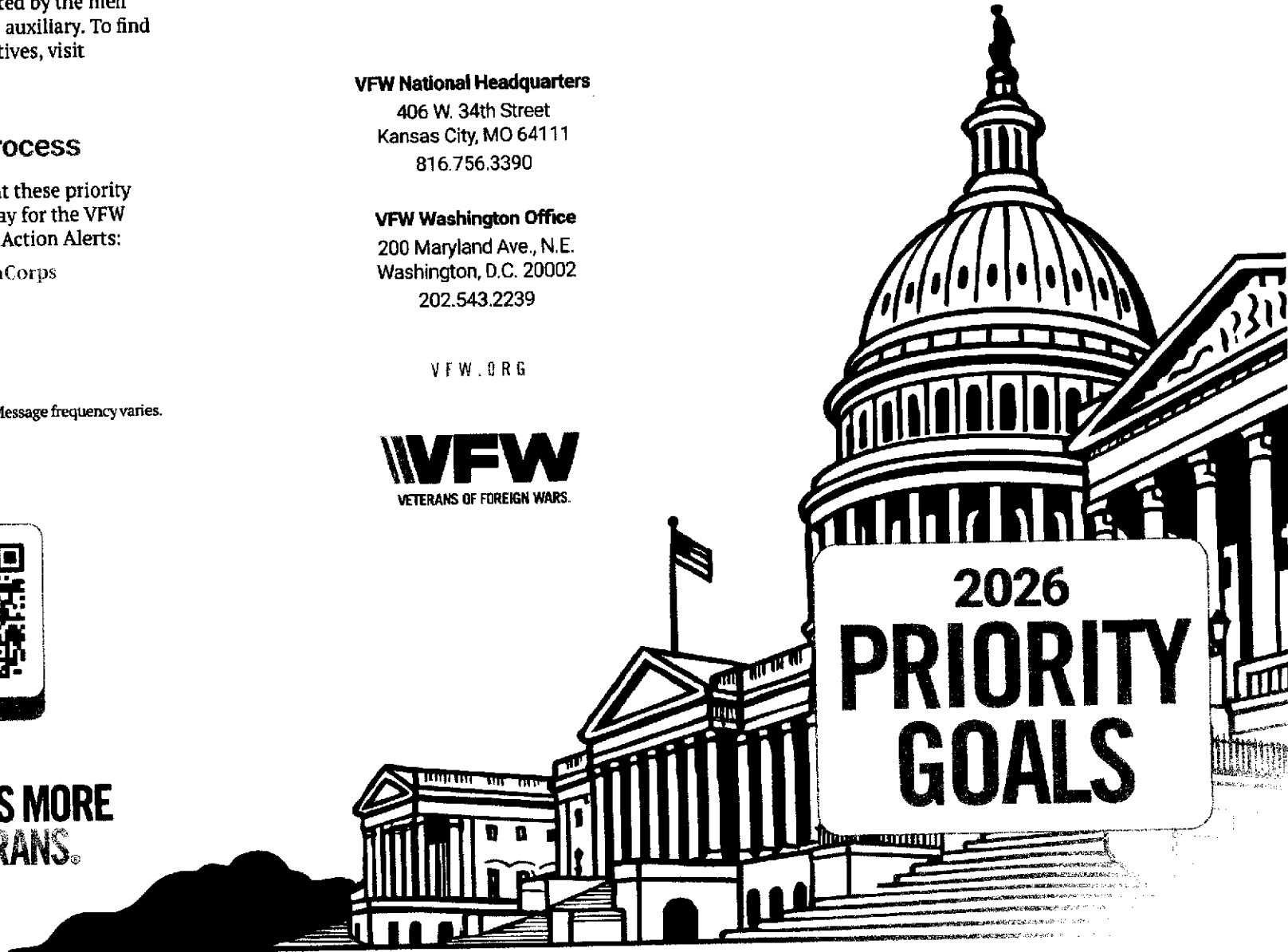
VFW Washington Office

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

VFW.ORG

VFW
VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS.

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.

**MASSACHUSETTS NATIONAL CEMETERY
Joint Veterans Committee
Mariruth Castle, Representative
25 Sycamore Drive
Halifax, MA 02338
857-266-7967
mariruthc@yahoo.com**

The Massachusetts National Cemetery in Bourne will be holding its Veterans Day ceremony and parade on Sunday, November 8, 2026, at 1:00 p.m. The Wreath ceremony follows the parade. I hope to see many of you there.

POW/MIA Ceremony is scheduled for Friday, September 18th at 6:00 PM at the Memorial across from the Administration building.

Watch the Department Newsletter for further information on the Memorial Day ceremony to be held in May, 2027.

CHECK
OUT
OTHER
RESOURCES



Membership

Daniel Nagy
mail@danielnagy.com
716-218-8650 (call/text)
auxmembership.org

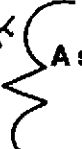
Members make our organization. Members are the most important part of our organization. Without our members, we cannot fulfill our mission to serve Veterans and their Families.

The Veterans we serve depend on every Auxiliary implementing a successful membership program, which comes in two parts, Recruitment and Retention.

Retention

The most apparent part of retention is dues collection. Auxiliaries need to notify members to pay dues, how to pay, how much to pay, and send multiple timely reminders.

SUPER
IMPORTANT



First dues notices should be sent to members between July 6-15th.

A second notice to unpaid members between August 20th and August 31st.

A third notice needs to be sent October 5-15th.

Follow-ups should continue after that for members still unpaid.

You may use the national template for dues letters, available to Presidents, Secretaries and Treasurers to print at malta.vfwauxiliary.org, under Duties>Reports>Dues Renewal Letter. The letter comes complete with all the information a member needs to pay their dues, including the amount, address of the Treasurer, Malta instructions and their member number. This can be mailed, hand delivered, emailed or texted. If you have not gotten a response the first time, for the next letter, try another delivery method!

The less apparent part of retention is communicating with your members and giving them lots of opportunities for service! You need to be sending emails, texts, phone calls, or mailed newsletters to your members regularly to let them know what activities you have coming up – if they miss a meeting, they don't know how to stay active, and they won't renew their membership. *YES!!!*

Recruitment

We need new members to sustain and grow our organization. To entice members to join, our Auxiliaries have to be full of service projects, whether Buddy Poppy Drives, visiting the VA Hospital, Youth contests, breakfasts for Veterans, helping at a 5K/Marathon that benefits Veterans, supporting the Department President's Special Project – any of our other programs – we need to be busy doing them all so prospective members see a reason to join!

Then to recruit, start with the family of your members to see who else in their family is eligible. Then visit the VFW to find family members of VFW members. We have 14,000 VFW Members in Massachusetts – that alone gives us nearly 100,000 prospective Auxiliary members! There are so many prospective Auxiliary members out there, many are looking for ways to help Veterans, we just have to make the offer of membership to them!

*** REMEMBER: RECRUIT, RECRUIT, RECRUIT, AND DON'T GET IT OUT OF ORDER !!!**

VFW Auxiliary Membership Moment

Attracting Younger Members

UNWAVERING SUPPORT

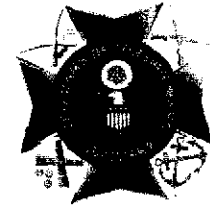


FOR UNCOMMON HEROES

Adding younger members is essential to the future of the VFW Auxiliary. However, younger people often have hectic schedules, family obligations, and financial constraints that make it difficult to commit to local Auxiliaries. We need to make VFW Auxiliary membership more attractive and more feasible for younger members.

Here are several ideas that Auxiliaries can consider to attract younger members to the organization:

- Reach out to current or past Scholarship winners/applicants to join.
- Create social and networking activities that are interesting and convenient for younger people. Encourage younger members to be involved in the planning of these events.
- Invite groups of younger people to join at the same time to make them feel more comfortable. Help them encourage their peers to get involved as well.
- Foster an Auxiliary environment that is accepting of occasional absences. This includes monthly communications with members (email/phone/mail/Facebook) to keep everyone apprised of what they missed at the meeting. Perfect attendance is typically not attainable for today's younger members.
- Highlight monthly opportunities to get involved in local service projects.
- Assign a current Auxiliary member to serve as a mentor for the first six months to make a new younger member feel welcome.
- Get younger members involved from the start. Younger members are creative and eager to generate new ideas for solving persistent Auxiliary problems. Ensure that the fresh ideas and knowledge of younger members have a voice and a space to grow.
- Offer variety. Be open to the various ways that younger members can participate in your Auxiliary. Find out about their abilities and interests, and find ways to put them to good use in your Auxiliary's work.
- Incorporate youth-welcoming messages in all Auxiliary communications that begin with the assumption that younger members are important to the organization because they make valuable contributions, and they are needed at all levels of Auxiliary leadership.



VFW Auxiliary Membership Moment

How to Ensure a Membership Application is Complete

One of the most critical steps in considering a new member for the VFW Auxiliary is the careful review of the prospective member's application details by a three-member Investigating Committee appointed by the Auxiliary President (as outlined in Section 102 of the VFW Auxiliary Bylaws and Ritual).

As an exclusive veterans' service organization, the VFW Auxiliary must ensure that every prospective member's eligibility has been thoroughly vetted by an Investigating Committee before any action can be taken on the application. According to Page 2 of the VFW Auxiliary Booklet of Instructions, "it is the duty of the Investigating Committee to see that the applications are filled out completely before they are presented to the body for consideration." The following fields are to be completed on each application:

- Recruited by
- Auxiliary Name and Number
- Kind of Membership (annual, life, etc.)
- State
- Name (spelled correctly)
- Date of Birth
- Address
- Gender
- City, State, Zip
- Phone
- E-mail
- Post Affiliated or Non Affiliated
- Relationship
- Veteran (name)
- Post Number (if applicable)
- Name of campaign ribbons or medals
- Foreign Service dates
- Location
- Applicant's signature and date
- Signatures of the Investigating Committee (at least 2)
- Signature line following the Obligation

In addition to the prospective member's application, it is the responsibility of the Investigating Committee to review proof of honorable service of the eligible veteran, unless he/she is a member of the VFW Post to which the applicant is applying for membership.

Proof of the veteran's honorable service in any foreign war, insurrection or expedition (as a member of the U.S. Armed Forces) may be determined through careful examination of a Separation Document (DD214) with a VFW-authorized campaign or service medal of the United States; receipt of Hostile Fire or Imminent Danger Pay, as verified by a copy of a Leave and Earning Statement (LES) issued by the U.S. Armed Forces; or service in Korea for 30 consecutive/60 non-consecutive days after June 30, 1949.

Performance reports, travel orders, medical orders, medals reports, morning reports, assignment listings, buddy affidavits, and letters from a foreign war zone may also be reviewed if a DD214 is not available. For veterans pre-1946, a report of their discharge listing the medals and decorations that were earned is acceptable proof.

For soldiers currently on active duty, they will not have a DD214. In those cases, the appropriate orders showing overseas deployment to a qualifying area, or awarding of an authorized campaign medal, or a LES showing Hostile Fire/Imminent Danger pay will suffice to prove eligibility.



WHO ELSE CAN JOIN THE VFW AUXILIARY IN YOUR FAMILY

———— ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ————
Strengthen our legacy by including more of your family!

★ **START WITH THE VFW ELIGIBLE MEMBER IN YOUR FAMILY** ★

Name of Veteran: _____



SPOUSE



PARENTS



SIBLINGS



CHILDREN



GRANDPARENTS



GRANDCHILDREN

*One eligible member can sponsor multiple family members!
Repeat for each VFW Eligible Veteran in your Family!*



2026-2027 Membership Divisions

Division 1 10-28 Members	Division 2 29-45 Members	Division 3 46-74 Members	Division 4 75+ Members
2125 (24)	486 (29)	662 (63)	523 (85)
2626 (17)	611 (30)	872 (51)	529 (130)
3169 (16)	697 (44)	1385 (47)	996 (149)
5188 (25)	1012 (33)	1788 (68)	1018 (79)
5489 (10)	1046 (44)	2331 (54)	1822 (101)
5594 (13)	1274 (39)	2359 (46)	2346 (134)
6712 (25)	5737 (42)	2452 (62)	2394 (75)
8049 (20)	5988 (40)	2892 (59)	2846 (77)
8164 (28)	8892 (45)	3291 (74)	3236 (95)
8345 (13)	9059 (43)	3439 (49)	6538 (102)
8772 (23)	9261 (34)	6643 (52)	8006 (115)
8819 (25)	9397 (34)	7272 (66)	8349 (89)
		8607 (47)	10334 (82)

SCHOLARSHIPS

Betty Mae Tenney, PDP, Chairman
PO Box 328; Townsend MA 01469
978-597-6495 or 978-665-4026(w)

The Young American Creative Patriotic Art, 3-Dimensional Patriotic Art, Patriot's Pen Written Essay, and Voice of Democracy Audio Essay Contests, which each give young people the opportunity to receive recognition and earn awards at various levels of competition by demonstrating their patriotism through their artistic or writing talents, are all part of our Scholarships Program. The National VFW Auxiliary also provides scholarships for Auxiliary members and adult members of their immediate family through its Continuing Education Scholarship Program. It is the goal of the VFW Auxiliary Scholarships Program to assist students in attaining an education, reaching their full potential, and making their dreams come true.

Let's promote participation in these programs by strongly publicizing them within our communities and, in doing so, educating the public about the values of the VFW and its Auxiliary and the scholarship opportunities our organization provides. Announce your Scholarships Programs through social media, in area newspapers, on local cable channels, in area libraries, in the newsletters of area churches and civic groups, on bulletin boards and electric sign boards in public buildings and local businesses, and especially at locations frequented by young people.

The VFW Auxiliary awards one National **Continuing Education Scholarship** each year to a selected candidate in each of the four VFW Auxiliary Conferences to assist those who wish to further their education by pursuing a college degree or career direction at a vocational/technical school. Only current VFW Auxiliary members, their spouse, and adult children with financial need are eligible to apply. The applicant must be twenty-one years of age or older and the qualifying member must have been a member of the VFW Auxiliary for at least one full year by the application submission deadline.

This Scholarship must be used within the academic year following completion of the contest. The Scholarship will be paid directly to the American college/university or vocational/technical school of the awardee's choice upon completion of the scholarship activation requirements.

To apply for this \$2,250 scholarship, a completed VFW Auxiliary National Continuing Education Scholarship Application form, typed answers on a separate piece of paper to all questions listed on that application, and an essay of 300 words or less describing their commitment to their goals and how this scholarship will help them attain these goals must all be emailed to info@vfwauxiliary.org or mailed directly to the Program Awards Administrator, VFW Auxiliary National Headquarters, 406 W. 34th Street 10th Floor, Kansas City MO 64111 in time for them to be received no later than 15 February

2027. The essay must be in the applicant's own words, using any generative AI content is prohibited.

Students who are enrolled in a public, private, or parochial school or a home study program in the United States, its territories and possessions, or are dependents of U.S. military or civilian personnel in overseas schools **may enter our youth Scholarships Contests**. Although U.S. Citizenship is not required, students must be lawful U.S. permanent residents or have applied for permanent residence (the application for which has not been denied) and intend to become a U.S. citizen at the earliest opportunity allowed by law. Foreign exchange students, students aged 20 or over, GED or Adult Education students, or previous Department winners of one these contests who received a national award in that contest are ineligible to enter that same contest.

Students in grades nine through twelve by the 31 March 2027 deadline **who meet the criteria listed above** should be encouraged to enter a two-dimensional, flat art entry done on canvas or paper into our **Young American Creative Patriotic Art Contest**. The entry must be original and created by the student, copying and tracing existing works is prohibited. Acrylic, watercolor, oil, chalk, charcoal, ink, marker, pencil, mixed or other media may be used. Canvas entries should be submitted on a stretcher frame or canvas board. The piece should not be framed. Mats, including mounted and floating mats, may be used. Paper entries must be reinforced with heavy paper, cardboard, or foamboard. The art should be no smaller than 8 inches by 10 inches nor larger than 18 inches by 24 inches, including the mat.

Our first-place Department winning Young American Creative Patriotic Art piece will be entered into the National VFW Auxiliary competition where scholarships of \$15,000 for first place, \$7,500 for second place, \$4,500 for third place, \$4,000 fourth place, \$1,500 each for fifth and six places, \$1,000 each for seventh through tenth place, \$750 for eleventh place, and \$500 each for twelfth through twenty-third places will be awarded to the winners.

Eligible students in grades nine through twelve should also be encouraged to enter an original and created by the artist, three-dimensional art piece into the separate patriotic art contest called the **3-Dimensional Patriotic Art Contest**. The three-dimensional art must be made from only raw materials such as stone, clay, metal, wood, fabric, papier-mâché, pottery, mixed and other media, etc. Entries should not be larger than 18 inches in any direction nor weigh more than 5 pounds.

The 3-Dimensional Patriotic Art Contest has its own scholarship amounts. The National Awards are \$2,500 for first place, \$1,500 for second place, \$1,000 each for third and fourth places, and \$500 for fifth place.

The VFW Auxiliary National Scholarships in both Patriotic Art Contests will be paid directly to the American university, college, vocational, technical, or trade school of the winner's choice.

Digital art, AI, photography, weapons, art generated by 3-D printers, and jewelry are not acceptable in either patriotic art contest.

If the American Flag is used in the entry in either contest, it must conform to the Federal Flag Code as far as colors, number of stars and stripes, and other pertinent rules of the code. Federal Flag Code information is available at <https://www.military.com/flag-day/us-flag-code.html> .

Each art entry should have been done during the current (2026-2027) school year. Both the proper, completed, typed or printed legible Official Patriotic Art Contest Scholarship Entry Form bearing information about the artist, the signature of the student and his parent/guardian, the title of the entry, the source of the idea for his artwork, and the media used in the entry and a typed or printed legible artist statement (250 words or less) explaining the work and its thematic relevance must be submitted with each entry. The student's name should be on the back of the Young American Creative Patriotic Art entry and one photo of the completed work of art should be submitted with it. Three images of the completed 3-Dimensional Patriotic Art Contest entry, capturing various angles, and a typed or printed legible explanation of the steps taken to create it should be submitted with that entry. The student's name should be at the bottom of the entry for identification purposes.

Those selected to be judges of the Young American Creative Patriotic Art Contest or the 3-Dimensional Patriotic Art Contest entries on all levels of competition should be teachers, professionals, and people knowledgeable about art. Comments of the judges should be attached and forwarded with the art. Each entry will be judged on the originality of concept, presentation, and patriotism expressed; content of how it relates to patriotism and clarity of ideas; design technique; and total impact of work.

Students entering one or both Patriotic Art Contests must submit their entry to a local Auxiliary Scholarships Chairman by Wednesday, 31 March 2027.

There is no District level of judging for either art scholarship contest. I must receive the winning Auxiliary first place entries no later than 15 April 2027 for them to be included in the Department level of competition. I shall submit our Department first place winning entry in each contest into the National level of competition.

National winning entries in each Patriotic Art Contest may be announced on VFW Auxiliary social media pages, and an image may be shown at the VFW Auxiliary National Convention.

"What A Veteran Taught Me About America" is the 2026-2027 theme of our VFW and VFW Auxiliary Patriot's Pen Written Essay Competition which is open to students in grades six through eight who meet the eligibility requirements for all our youth Scholarships contests.

Essay contest entries should be typed in English with no color or graphics and cannot be less than 300 words nor more than 400 words in length (+ or - 5 words max). Every word is counted regardless of length. The essay title (theme) or added footnotes do not contribute to the word count. The essay must be the contestant's original work and a product of the contestant's own thinking. The approach to the Patriot's Pen theme should be positive and clearly focused. Poetry is not acceptable. Quotations may be used sparingly if plainly identified wherever used. Contestants should not include their name, address, school name, or other personal identifiers within their essay. References to the student's race, sex, religion, national origin or other specific personal characteristics that would reveal their identity should be avoided. General references to nationality or patriotic identity (Such as being an American or referencing American values) are permitted if they are relevant to the essay theme. Personal identifiers tied to one's individual background or experience should be avoided.

Contestants should not put their name on their essay. A completed 2026-2027 Official Patriot's Pen Entry Form should be stapled to the top of the essay. Patriot's Pen Essay Competition entries should be submitted to the Patriot's Pen Chairman of a VFW Post no later than midnight on 31 October 2026. Contestants will be judged on the basis of their essay alone and are not required to present the essay orally. Patriot's Pen judging will be based on knowledge of the theme (30%), theme development (35%), and clarity of ideas (35%).

"What A Veteran Taught Me About America" is also the 2026-2027 theme of the Veterans of Foreign Wars and its Auxiliary Voice of Democracy Scholarship Program. Students in grades nine through twelve who meet the eligibility requirements for our youth Scholarships contests should be encouraged to enter this wonderful patriotic audio essay competition.

To enter the competition students should write and then record their original three-to-five minute (+ or - 5 second max) audio essay in MP3 format (no videos) on a flash drive or other electronic device and submit it along with a typed copy of their essay with a completed 2026-2027 Official Voice of Democracy Competition Entry Form attached to a VFW Post by midnight on Saturday, 31 October 2026. An emailed entry form, essay, and attached audio file may be submitted to a VFW Post with prior approval from that Post. The flash drive/USB and typed essay should be labeled with the entrant's name, but the entrant cannot be identified in any way within the recording including his name, address, school, or other personal identifiers. To ensure fairness and impartiality in judging, essays must be anonymous. References to race, sex, religion, national origin, or other specific personal characteristics or individual background or experience that could reveal the entrant's identity should be avoided. General references to nationality or patriotic identity (such as being an American or referencing American values) are permitted if they are relevant to the essay theme. No music, singing, poetry, or sound effects are permitted on the recording. Judging of Voice of Democracy entries will be based on originality (35%), delivery (35%), and content (30%).

Inappropriate use of ChatGPT or other AI tools is not allowed in either contest.

Rules of both the Patriot's Pen and Voice of Democracy Competitions allow a Post with its Auxiliary to advance one (1) winning entry to District for every fifteen (15) entries or fraction thereof received in their local competition. Only one (1) winning District entry with a head and shoulders photo of the District winner is to be submitted to the Department VFW.

The first-place Department winning entry in each competition will be submitted into the National VFW Competition. There are fifty-four National Patriot's Pen Awards totaling \$56,000. Those range from \$5,000 for first place down to \$500 for fifty-fourth place. There is a total of \$176,500 in National Voice of Democracy Scholarships ranging from \$35,000 for first place down to \$1,000 for fifty-fourth place. The Voice of Democracy scholarships are paid directly to the recipient's American university, college, or vocational/technical/trade school. Therefore, each Department winner in these two contests will receive a national award.

Young American Creative Patriotic Art, 3-Dimensional Patriotic Art, Patriot's Pen, and Voice of Democracy Competition rules state that a student may submit only one entry into each competition. **Be sure to thoroughly read all Scholarships Program materials in this book for additional details and requirements of each contest.**

The Department of Massachusetts VFW Auxiliary presents monetary awards to the state winners in each of these contests. The awards come from the **Bessie Hanken Youth Awards Fund**, so all Auxiliaries are asked to **donate as generously as you possibly can to this fund**. Individual contributions would also be greatly appreciated. In memoriam donations and donations in lieu of birthday, holiday, and congratulatory gifts traditionally given to family, friends, or co-workers contributed to the Bessie Hanken Youth Awards Fund will not only serve to reward young people for their accomplishments but also honor those in whose name the donation is made.

A \$200 first place award and a \$100 second place award will be given to the state winners in each of our Auxiliary sponsored Young American Creative Patriotic Art and 3-Dimensional Patriotic Art Contests.

In addition to the prizes awarded by the Department of Massachusetts VFW to the state winners in the Patriot's Pen Competition, the Department Auxiliary presents \$200 for first place, \$150 for second place, \$100 for third place, \$75 for fourth place, and \$50 for fifth place. Our awards to the state winners in the Voice of Democracy Competition are \$500 for first place, \$300 for second place, \$200 for third place, \$150 for fourth place, and \$100 for fifth place.

Donations through National to the Patriotic Art and the Continuing Education Scholarship Escrow Funds are needed. The goals of these funds are to increase the number and amounts of the Young American Creative Patriotic Art and 3-Dimensional Patriotic Art Scholarships awarded at the national level and to increase the award amount of the Continuing Education Scholarship, respectively. Auxiliaries and individual members are asked to **make donations to these two scholarship escrow**

funds to make these goals realities. To donate by mail, send a check earmarked either **"Patriotic Art" or "Continuing Education"** to: VFW Auxiliary National Headquarters, Attn.: Scholarship Fund, 406 W. 34th Street 10th Floor, Kansas City MO 64111. Donations may also be made online in MALTA by selecting "Make a Gift" and then entering the amount you choose to donate in the field next to the fund to which you choose to donate, followed by your payment information.

The National VFW Auxiliary will present Scholarships Program Awards to Auxiliaries that host the most outstanding "Red Carpet" event/celebration honoring VFW and VFW Auxiliary Scholarship participants. To be considered for this award, an Auxiliary should send a completed Scholarships National Program Awards 2026-2027 Entry Form to me by 31 March 2027 for judging. I shall sign and send a copy of the completed Department-winning entry form to the National Scholarships Ambassador. The one VFW Auxiliary in each of the 10 Program Divisions that hosts the most outstanding "Red Carpet" event/celebration honoring VFW and VFW Auxiliary Scholarship participants will receive a citation and \$25.

Scholarships Program Points to be earned in the Auxiliary of the Year Awards Program

- | | |
|---|------------------|
| 1. Promote the National Continuing Education Scholarship Contest | 1 Point |
| 2. Promote / Participate in the Young American Creative Patriotic Art Contest | 2 Points |
| 3. Promote / Participate in the 3-Dimensional Patriotic Art Contest | 2 Points |
| 4. Assist Post by Promoting or Conducting the Patriot's Pen Essay Contest | 2 Points |
| 5. Assist Post by Promoting or Conducting the Voice of Democracy Audio Essay Contest | 2 Points |
| 6. Recognize contest winners by hosting an Awards Ceremony and/or presenting Awards | 1 Point |
| 7. Donate to the Continuing Education Scholarship Fund through National | 1 Point |
| 8. Donate to the Patriotic Art Scholarship Fund (for both art contests) through National | 2 Points |
| 9. Donate to the Bessie Hanken Youth Awards Fund (through Department office) <i>(Note: This fund covers the prize money for <u>all youth contests.</u>)</i> | 2 Points |
| 10. Donation of \$50.00 or more to Bessie Hanken Youth Awards Fund | 5 Points |
| 11a. Submit required ½ year report by 12/31/26 | 1 Point |
| b. Submit required year-end report by 4/15/27 | <u>1 Point</u> |
| | 22 Points |



VFW Auxiliary National Scholarship Continuing Education 2026-2027

Official Rules and Eligibility entry form

The VFW Auxiliary is pleased to present this National Scholarship to assist VFW Auxiliary members and their families who wish to further their education by pursuing a college degree or a career direction at a vocational/technical school.

Each year, one (1) recipient will be selected from each of the four (4) VFW Auxiliary Conferences and will be awarded a **\$2,250** scholarship to be used within the academic year following completion of the contest. The scholarship will be paid directly to the American college/university or vocational/technical school of the awardee's choice upon the completion of the scholarship activation requirements.

Rules and Eligibility:

- VFW Auxiliary member for at least one full year by the application submission deadline of February 15.
- The spouse and the adult children of a VFW Auxiliary member that has been a member at least one full year by the application submission deadline of February 15.
- Applicants must be 21 years of age or older by the application submission deadline of February 15.
- Previous National Continuing Education Scholarship winners are not eligible.
- Essay must be in applicants' own words, using any generative AI content is prohibited.

Applicant Name: _____ Date of Birth: _____

Applicant Address: _____
City State Zip

Applicant Email: _____

Relationship to VFW Auxiliary Member: (please ☒ one) ☐ Self ☐ Spouse ☐ Adult Child

VFW Auxiliary Member Name: _____

VFW Auxiliary Membership No.: _____ VFW Auxiliary No.: _____

*Applicant Signature: _____ Age: _____ Date: _____

*I hereby grant permission to publish my name and photo in VFW Auxiliary website, social media and to be used for any and all promotional purposes by the VFW Auxiliary and/or the VFW if named a winner of a national award. I hereby verify that the entry/essay was done by the applicant listed above.

On a separate piece of paper, provide typed answers to each question listed below.

1. What is the name of the college/university or vocational /technical school you plan to attend?
2. Have you been accepted?
3. What is your intended major or course of study?
4. What is the adjusted gross income from the family's Federal Income Tax return for the prior year?
5. How many dependents are in the household?
6. What are your financial reasons for applying for the VFW Auxiliary National Continuing Education Scholarship?
7. Have you been awarded financial aid from any other sources? Please list/specify.
8. Write a brief essay (**300-word limit**) describing your commitment to your goals and how this scholarship will help you attain these goals. Essays longer than 300 words will be disqualified.

All questions must be answered for the application to be considered.

This completed form, answers and essay may be emailed to info@vfwauxiliary.org or mailed to VFW Auxiliary National Headquarters 406 W. 34th Street 10th Floor Kansas City MO 64111
Attn: Program Awards Administrator

Application deadline: February 15, 2027.



VFW Auxiliary National Scholarship Young American Creative Patriotic Art Contest Official Rules and Eligibility 2026-2027

VFW Auxiliary National is pleased to present this National Scholarship to assist students who wish to further their education. This scholarship contest recognizes young artists and encourages patriotism in youth. Entries will be judged on the originality of concept, presentation and patriotism expressed, content of how it relates to patriotism and clarity of ideas, design technique and total impact of work.

VFW Auxiliary National Scholarships

- First place - \$15,000
- Second place - \$7,500
- Third place - \$4,500
- Fourth place - \$4,000
- Fifth place and Sixth place - \$1,500
- Seventh place through Tenth place - \$1,000
- Eleventh place - \$750
- Twelfth place through Twenty-third place - \$500

Contest Eligibility

- Students do not have to be related to a VFW or VFW Auxiliary member to participate.
- Students in grades 9-12 by March 31 deadline who are enrolled in a public, private, parochial or home school program in the United States, its territories and possessions, or dependents of U.S. military or civilian personnel in overseas schools.
- Although U.S. citizenship is not required, students must be lawful U.S. permanent residents or have applied for permanent resident (the application for which has not been denied) and intends to become a U.S. citizen.
- Foreign exchange students, students aged 20 or older GED and adult education students are not eligible.
- Previous winners of VFW Auxiliary Young American Creative Patriotic Art Contests on the national level are not eligible.

Contest Rules

- Entry must be original and created by the student, copying and tracing existing works is prohibited.
- Entry must be completed during the current school year.
- Entry must be two-dimensional art that has length, width and is flat.
- Entry must be on canvas or paper.
- Canvas entries must be submitted on a stretcher frame or canvas board.
- Paper entries must be reinforced with heavy paper, cardboard or foamboard.
- Do **not** frame art with wood, metal, plastic or glass.
- Mats may be used, including mounted and floating mats.
- Entries may **not** be smaller than 8"x10" and **not** larger than 18"x24" **including** mat.
- Acrylic, watercolor, oil, chalk, charcoal, ink, marker, pencil, mixed or other media may be used.
- If the American Flag is used, it must conform to the Federal Flag Code in relation to colors, numbers of stars and stripes and other pertinent rules of the code.
- Digital art, AI and photography are **not** accepted.
- Completed typed or printed legible entry form including student and parent and/or guardian signatures.
- Typed or printed legible artist statement explaining the work and thematic relevance. 250 words or less.
- Include one photo of completed work of art.
- Student name on back of art entry.

VFW Auxiliary National reserves the right to modify these rules and eligibility without notice.



VFW Auxiliary National Scholarship Young American Creative Patriotic Art Contest Entry Form 2026-2027

Please print or type, incomplete and/or illegible entry forms will disqualify the entrant.

Student Name: _____ Age: _____
Address: _____ City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____
Email: _____ Phone: _____
School Name: _____ Grade: _____
Title of entry: _____ Date completed: _____
Media used: _____

Source:

To comply with copyright laws, all artworks must be original to the entrant. Artwork may be inspired by another artist's/photographer's work, but not to the degree that the new piece of artwork is easily recognized as being derivative of another artist's work. If another artist's/photographer's work is used as a source of inspiration or reference, a copy of the artist's/photographer's work must be provided along with the name and date of publication in which it was found. State the source of your idea for entry: person, website, magazine, newspaper, TV, etc. Any artwork that is recognized as being in violation of these rules will be disqualified.

*Student Signature: _____ Date: _____

*Parent/Guardian Signature: _____ Date: _____

*I certify that I have read the foregoing Official Rules and Eligibility (page 1) and fully understand and agree to the contents.

*I hereby grant permission for my artwork to be published on the VFW Auxiliary National website and social media and to be used for all promotional purposes by the VFW Auxiliary National organization.

*VFW Auxiliary is not responsible for entries which are lost, late, illegible, damaged, incomplete, misdirected, stolen, or reproduced. All scores are final as received from the judges. All contestants must agree to abide by the contest rules. Falsifying information on the entry form or any violation of these rules shall cause immediate disqualification and forfeiture of scholarship.

Participating Sponsoring VFW Auxiliary contact information

Contact Email: _____ Auxiliary No. _____

Contact Phone: _____ Contact Name: _____

To avoid entrant disqualification, this section is to be filled out completely by VFW Auxiliary at each judging level.
VFW Auxiliary National Headquarters only accepts Department level first-place winning entries from the Department President.

Participating Sponsoring VFW Aux. Name & No.: _____ Dept. of: _____

March 31: Student entries due to participating/sponsoring VFW Auxiliary for judging.

Authorized VFW Aux. verification signature: _____ Date: _____
Artwork is the property of the student and must be returned immediately to the address listed above if not advancing to the next level.

April: (Optional) First place winner from each participating sponsoring VFW Aux. VFW Aux. due to VFW Aux. District judging.

Authorized VFW Aux. District verification signature: _____ Date: _____
Artwork is the property of the student and must be returned immediately to the address listed above if not advancing to the next level.

April 15: First place winner from each participating sponsoring VFW Aux. or optional VFW Aux. District judging due to the VFW Aux. Department judging.

VFW Aux. Department President signature: _____ Date: _____
Artwork is the property of the student and must be returned immediately to the address listed above if not advancing to the next level.

May 5: First place winner from each VFW Aux. Department must be received at VFW Aux. National Headquarters for judging.

July/August: All students will be notified of entry status via email provided on entry form. Selected winning entries may be announced on VFW Aux. National social media pages and an image may be shown at the VFW Aux. National Convention.

August/September: Returning process begins. All art entries received at VFW Aux. National will be returned to students to the address provided on the entry form.

VFW Auxiliary National reserves the right to modify these rules and eligibility without notice.



VFW Auxiliary National 3-Dimensional Patriotic Art Contest Official Rules and Eligibility 2026-2027

VFW Auxiliary National is pleased to present this National Scholarship to assist students who wish to further their education. This scholarship contest recognizes young artists and encourages patriotism in youth. Entries will be judged on the originality of concept, presentation and patriotism expressed, content of how it relates to patriotism and clarity of ideas, design technique and total impact of work.

VFW Auxiliary National Scholarships

First Place - \$2,500
Second Place - \$1,500
Third Place and Fourth Place - \$1,000
Fifth Place - \$500

Contest Eligibility

- Students do not have to be related to a VFW or a VFW Auxiliary member to enter.
- Students in grades 9-12 by March 31 deadline who are enrolled in a public, private, parochial or home school program in the United States, its territories and possessions, or dependents of U.S. military or civilian personnel in overseas schools.
- Although U.S. citizenship is not required, students must be lawful U.S. permanent residents or have applied for permanent resident (the application for which has not been denied) and intends to become a U.S. citizen.
- Foreign exchange students, students aged 20 or older, GED and adult education students are **not** eligible.
- Previous winners of VFW Auxiliary National 3-Dimensional Patriotic Art Contests on the national level are **not** eligible.

Contest Rules

- Entry must be original and created by the student.
- Entry must be completed during the current school year.
- Entry must be three-dimensional art with all the dimensions of height, width and depth.
- Entry may **not** be larger than 18" in any direction.
- Entry may **not** weigh more than 5 pounds.
- Raw materials only. Stone, clay, metal, wood, fabric, papier mâché, pottery, mixed and other media may be used.
- Digital art, photography, weapons, art generated by a 3-D printer and jewelry are **not** accepted.
- If the American Flag is used, it must conform to the Federal Flag Code in relation to colors, numbers of stars and stripes and other pertinent rules of the code.
- Completed typed or printed legible entry form including student and parent and/or guardian signatures.
- Typed or printed legible explanation of the steps taken to create the 3-Dimensional art entry and artist statement (250 words or less).
- Submit at least three images of the finished piece, capturing various angles.

VFW Auxiliary National reserves the right to modify these rules and eligibility without notice.



VFW Auxiliary National 3-Dimensional Patriotic Art Contest Entry Form 2026-2027

Please print or type, incomplete and/or illegible entry forms will disqualify the entrant.

Student Name: _____ Age: _____
Address: _____ City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____
Email: _____ Phone: _____
School Name: _____ Grade: _____
Title of entry: _____ Date completed: _____
Media used: _____

Source: _____

To comply with copyright laws, all artworks must be original to the entrant. Artwork may be inspired by another artist's/photographer's work, but not to the degree that the new piece of artwork is easily recognized as being derivative of another artist's work. If another artist's/photographer's work is used as a source of inspiration or reference, a copy of the artist's/photographer's work must be provided along with the name and date of publication in which it was found. State the source of your idea for entry: person, website, magazine, newspaper, TV, etc. Any artwork that is recognized as being in violation of these rules will be disqualified.

*Student Signature: _____ Date: _____

*Parent/Guardian Signature: _____ Date: _____

*I certify that I have read the foregoing Official Rules and Eligibility (page 1) and fully understand and agree to the contents.

*I hereby grant permission for my artwork to be published on the VFW Auxiliary National website and social media and to be used for all promotional purposes by the VFW Auxiliary National organization.

*VFW Auxiliary is not responsible for entries which are lost, late, illegible, damaged, incomplete, misdirected, stolen, or reproduced. All scores are final as received from the judges. All contestants must agree to abide by the contest rules. Falsifying information on the entry form or any violation of these rules shall cause immediate disqualification and forfeiture of scholarship.

Participating Sponsoring VFW Auxiliary contact information

Contact Email: _____ Auxiliary No. _____
Contact Phone: _____ Contact Name: _____

To avoid entrant disqualification, this section is to be filled out completely by **VFW Auxiliary** at each judging level. VFW Auxiliary National Headquarters only accepts Department level first-place winning entries from the **Department President**.

Participating Sponsoring VFW Aux. Name & No.: _____ **Dept.:** _____

March 31: Student entries due to participating/sponsoring VFW Auxiliary for judging.

Authorized VFW Aux. verification signature: _____ **Date:** _____
Artwork is the property of the student and must be returned immediately to the address listed above if not advancing to the next level.

April: (Optional) First place winner from each participating sponsoring VFW Aux. due to VFW Aux. District judging.

Authorized VFW Aux. District verification signature: _____ **Date:** _____
Artwork is the property of the student and must be returned immediately to the address listed above if not advancing to the next level.

April 15: First place winner from each participating sponsoring VFW Aux. or optional VFW Aux. District judging due to the VFW Aux. Department judging.

VFW Aux. Department President signature: _____ **Date:** _____
Artwork is the property of the student and must be returned immediately to the address listed above if not advancing to the next level.

May 5: First place winner from each VFW Aux. Department must be received at VFW Aux. National Headquarters for judging.

July/August: All students will be notified of entry status via email provided on entry form. Selected winning entries may be announced on VFW Aux. National social media pages and an image may be shown at the VFW Aux. National Convention.

August/September Returning process begins. All art entries received at VFW Aux. National will be returned to students to the address provided on the entry form.

VFW Auxiliary National reserves the right to modify these rules and eligibility without notice.

Young American Creative Patriotic Art Contest &

3-Dimensional Patriotic Art Contest

COMMON MISTAKES & HELPFUL HINTS

The VFW Auxiliary's Young American Creative Patriotic Art Contest & 3-Dimensional Patriotic Art Contest provide an incredible scholarship opportunity for young artists while promoting patriotism throughout schools and home school associations. Follow the advice below to ensure that every student who enters the contest has the best possible chance of realizing his or her dreams.



USING THE U.S. FLAG

As a powerful symbol of our country, the U.S. Flag is often used in art entries. It can also be a source of problems for judges and Auxiliary Chairmen. When notifying schools, homeschool associations and students about the contest, give them a copy of the Federal Flag Code and encourage participants to closely examine the U.S. Flag before using it in their art.

COMMON MISTAKES:

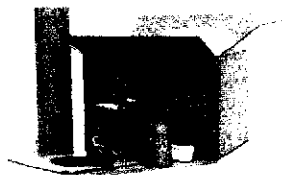
- Not enough stars or stripes.
- Stripes in the wrong order or place.
- The Flag appearing to have someone standing on it, or something written or lying on it.

HINT: It is always best to portray the Flag as waving freely.

APPLICATION (One application for each contest)

When a student submits an art entry and contest application, check for the following:

- Print or legible writing. If you can't decipher the writing, chances are we can't either.
- Address with city, state and ZIP code (and country if foreign-based).
- Phone number with area code.
- Email address. This is used for all notifications.
- Signature of both student and parent or guardian.
- Source- this must be complete even if it states "original idea."
- Media used.
- Title of art entry.
- An artist statement, essay and detailed description of the art entry and how it was made.
- Signatures of participating/sponsoring VFW Auxiliary Scholarships Chairman and Department Scholarships Chairman.
- If entry is 3-Dimensional, include multiple photos of art entry in package.
- Art entries not sponsored by a VFW Auxiliary will not be judged and will be returned to the student.



PACKING THE ART

VFW Auxiliary National Headquarters is not responsible for art lost or damaged during shipment. Please take in consideration that the art entry may be very fragile and will be shipped over many miles and encounter weather conditions.

- Use the correct size packaging.
- Use paper, bubble wrap, air pillows, cushioning and/or foam shippers.
- Label the package clearly to insure deadline arrival.
- Include a photo if art is 3-D.

VFW Auxiliary Judge's Score Sheet

may be used for all art contest on all levels of judging

Art Contest:

Entrant Name:

Grade:

Criteria

Patriotic Expression

Total of 30 points possible

Points

1. Concept

2. Presentation

3. Patriotism Expressed

Patriotic Expression Total

Content

Total of 30 points possible

Points

1. Clarity of idea

2. Elicitation of emotion

3. Does it stand on its own

Content Total

Design

Total of 40 points possible

Points

1. Technique

2. Creativity

3. Contrast

4. Total impact of work

Design Total

Total all points

Judge's Comments:

Judge's Signature:

Date:

PATRIOT'S PEN



2026-2027 Theme

"What A Veteran Taught Me About America"

Student Entry Deadline: October 31, 2026

Patriotic Written Essay Competition Grand Prize: \$5,000 Award

What is the Patriot's Pen Program?

Conducted nationwide, this VFW-sponsored youth essay competition gives students an opportunity to write essays expressing their views on an annual patriotic theme. We invite you to join the more than 60,000 students who participated last year in this contest.

Why Should I Enter?

Prizes and scholarships can be awarded at the Post, District, State and national level. Department (State) winners receive a portion of \$55,000 in national awards. National Winners will receive at least \$500. **The first-place national award is currently \$5,000.**

The Internal Revenue Service requires a recipient awarded more than \$599 be given Form 1099 identifying the proceeds as taxable income. This may require the winner to provide their social security number.

How Does the Contest Work?

All entries begin at the VFW Post level. The only exception is where schools/classes/youth groups have large numbers of students and wish to conduct their own competition, submitting one winner for each 15 students to the VFW Post. Individual students may submit their entry directly to the Post.

The contest consists of four levels. The first level (entry) is sponsored by VFW Posts. Post winners advance, one for every 15 entries, to the VFW District (regional) level where one first-place winner is advanced to the VFW Department (state) level. The first-place winner at the Department level is then advanced into the VFW national competition. Decisions of Judges at all levels are final. Contact the post where you entered to check on your advancement. Decisions of Judges at all levels are final. Contact the post where you entered to check on your advancement.

Who Can Enter?

Patriot's Pen is open to 6th, 7th and 8th-grade students enrolled by the Oct. 31 deadline in public, private or parochial schools in the U.S., its territories or its possessions; or dependents of U.S. military or civilian personnel in overseas schools. Home-schooled students also are eligible. Although U.S. citizenship is not required, students must be lawful U.S. permanent residents or have applied for permanent residence (the application which has not been denied) and intend to become a U.S. citizen at the earliest opportunity allowed by law. (Foreign exchange students are ineligible.)

How Do I Get Started?

- Ask a teacher or youth group/club adult leader to supervise the Patriot's Pen writing contest.
- Contact a participating VFW Post and indicate your interest in participating.
- Establish a contact person who is a member of that VFW Post or its VFW Auxiliary.
- Make sure that your essay is submitted to the VFW Post before the contest deadline of Oct. 31.

Your local Post will give instructions on how to turn in your entry to them. It may be delivered in person, emailed to the Post (with permission) or submitted through our online platform using Scholars App. **To submit through Scholars App you must first receive a QR code or link from your local post.**

Entries sent to VFW National Headquarters directly will not be considered.

How Am I Judged?

- **Knowledge of the theme is worth 30 points:**
You must show a thorough knowledge of the theme in your work. Demonstrate you have researched the issue extensively.
- **Theme development is worth 35 points:**
Answer all relevant facts about the theme such as the who, what, where, when and why. Relate the theme to your own experiences.
- **Clarity of ideas is worth 35 points:**
Write your essay in an easy-to-understand format. Leave your reader with a clear understanding of your explanation of the theme.

What Is the Theme?

VFW's Commander-in-Chief annually chooses the year's theme. The 2026-2027 theme is:

"What A Veteran Taught Me About America"

Deadline Information.

To qualify, all entries must be submitted to a sponsoring VFW Post by midnight Oct. 31.

Note:

If you need help finding a participating VFW Post, follow these instructions:

First, visit [vfw.org/FindaPost](https://www.vfw.org/FindaPost) to "Find a VFW Post."

If you don't have success in finding a Post, or if you have trouble contacting them, you can contact your VFW Department (state) headquarters office to see if they can offer any information or assistance.

You can visit [vfw.org/contactus](https://www.vfw.org/contactus) to look for "Find a State Contact" to get your VFW state office's phone number and email.

**For assistance contact
the VFW National Headquarters at 816.968.2787
Email: youthscholarships@vfw.org**

2026-2027 Official Entry Form Patriot's Pen Competition

Must Be Completed by All Contestants

Name: First, M.I., Last

Address

City, State, Zip

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Phone Email

Date of Birth (mm/dd/yy)

Grade in School

Essay Word Count

School Name, City, State

Teacher's name and Email (If applicable)

To Be Completed by Student's Parent/Guardian
(Required even if student is 18 or over)

Parent/Guardian Name (Printed)

Parent/Guardian Signature

Date

()
Parent/Guardian's Daytime Phone

Parent/Guardian's Email

What Are the Rules?

• You must write your own essay.

• All essays should be typed in English with no color or graphics. 300 - 400 words in length (+ or - 5 word max). Every word is counted regardless of length. The essay title (theme) or added footnotes do not contribute to the word count.

• To ensure fairness and impartiality in judging, essays must be anonymous. Please do not include your name, address, school name, or any other personal identifiers in the body of your essay. Additionally, avoid references to your race, sex, religion, national origin, or other specific personal characteristics that could reveal your identity. General references to nationality or patriotic identity (such as being an American or referencing American values) are permitted if they are relevant to the essay theme. However, personal identifiers tied to your individual background or experience should be avoided.

• Do not put your name on the essay. The entry form is your essays cover sheet. Secure the Official Student Entry Form with a staple or other fastener on top of your essay. Contestants are allowed to enter only once each year if otherwise eligible (one Post competition).

• The essay must be contestant's original work and a product of the contestant's own thinking. Inappropriate use of ChatGPT or other AI tools is not allowed. The approach to the Patriot's Pen theme should be positive and clearly focused. Poetry is not acceptable. Quotations may be used sparingly if plainly identified wherever used. A contestant's teacher, counselor or parent may check the essay for punctuation, grammar and/or spelling, but the content must remain the contestant's. Contestants will be judged on the basis of their essay alone and are not required to present the essay orally. All essays become the property of the Veteran's of Foreign Wars. The VFW retains non-exclusive rights to the use of your essay and likeness in the promotion and execution of the organization's programs and activities.

• At any time during the contest additional participant personal information (i.e. SSN, photo, etc.) could be requested by the VFW.

I Have Read and Understand the Contest Rules

Signature of Student Participant

Date

To Be Completed by the VFW Post

I certify that this student has an authorized entry in our VFW Post level Patriot's Pen Competition.

Post Commander/Chairperson Signature

Post#

VFW Auxiliary President/Chairperson Signature (If applicable)

Post Address

City, State, Zip

VFW Post Email

No. of participants

No. of winners

Amt. of Post/Aux. scholarships awards \$

Amt. of Post/Aux. additional expenses (Banquet, Pins, etc.) \$

To Be Completed by the VFW District

I certify that the student named in the previous section is the duly selected winner of the Patriot's Pen Contest District Competition and is our sole entry into the Department.

District Chairperson Signature

Dist. #

Address

City, State, Zip

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Phone Email

To Be Completed by the VFW Department Chairperson

I certify that the student named in the previous section is the duly selected first-place winner of the Patriot's Pen Department Competition and is our sole entry into the National Judging.

Department Chairperson Signature

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Daytime Phone Email

The winner ☒ has been ☐ will be (check one) notified that they are the first-place Department winner on _____.

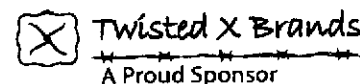
Local VFW Post Information:

Contact: _____

Phone: _____ Best Time To Call: _____

Alternate Contact: _____

Phone: _____ Best Time To Call: _____





Patriot's Pen Score Sheet

Theme Knowledge: Shows knowledge of the theme and use of research

Theme Development: Answers relevant facts - who, what, where, when and why.
Relates to writer's own experiences.

Clarity of Ideas: Provides a clear explanation of the writer's interpretation of the theme.

Contestant Code No.

Theme Knowledge (0-30 pts.)

Theme Development (0-35 pts.)

Clarity of Ideas (0-35 pts.)

TOTAL (0-100)

Contestant Code No.

Theme Knowledge (0-30 pts.)

Theme Development (0-35 pts.)

Clarity of Ideas (0-35 pts.)

TOTAL (0-100)

Contestant Code No.

Theme Knowledge (0-30 pts.)

Theme Development (0-35 pts.)

Clarity of Ideas (0-35 pts.)

TOTAL (0-100)

Judge's Signature

Date and Location of Judging

2026-2027 Theme "What a Veteran Taught Me About America"

Student Entry Deadline: Oct. 31, 2026
Patriotic Audio Essay Competition Grand Prize: \$35,000 Award

What is the Voice of Democracy Program?

Since 1947, the Voice of Democracy has been the Veterans of Foreign Wars' (VFW's) premier scholarship program. Each year, nearly 26,000 high school students compete for more than \$2 million in scholarships and incentives. Prizes and scholarships can be awarded at the Post, District, state and national level. National winners will be notified of their scholarship & placement. Students compete by writing and recording an audio essay on an annual patriotic theme. This year's theme is,

"What a Veteran Taught Me About America"

The Rules

The Voice of Democracy is open to students in grades 9-12 by the Oct. 31 deadline who are enrolled in a public, private or parochial high school or home study program in the United States, its territories and possessions; or dependents of U.S. military or civilian personnel in overseas schools. Although U.S. citizenship is not required, students must be lawful U.S. permanent residents or have applied for permanent residence (the application for which has not been denied) and intend to become a U.S. citizen at the earliest opportunity allowed by law. Foreign exchange students, students age 20 or over, GED or Adult Education Students are ineligible.

You must be the sole author of your essay. Inappropriate use of ChatGPT or other AI tools is not allowed. The recording must be in your own voice and in English. Hearing/speech impaired students should email the Voice of Democracy National Office at youthscholarships@vfw.org for special instructions. No music, singing, poetry or sound effects are allowed. To ensure fairness and impartiality in judging, essays **must be anonymous**. **Please do not include your name, address, school name, or any other personal identifiers in the body of your essay.** Additionally, avoid references to your race, sex, religion, national origin, or other specific personal characteristics that could reveal your identity. General references to nationality or patriotic identity (such as being an American or referencing American values) are permitted if they are relevant to the essay theme. However, personal identifiers tied to your individual background or experience should be avoided.

You may enter only one competition at one Post (if otherwise eligible) per year. At any time during the contest, additional participant personal information could be requested by the VFW, including but not limited to a photograph, SSN, or biographical information.

Advancement

Decisions of Judges at all levels are final. One winner for every 15 entries from each Post advances to District and one District winner advances to the state (Department) competition. Contact the post where you entered at to check on your advancement

What Is the Deadline for My Entry?

All entries competing at the Post level must be in the hands of that VFW Post by midnight, Oct. 31, 2026. It is the responsibility of the student to meet this deadline by submitting their entry to the proper location - ensuring it is a participating Post.

How do I enter?

Record your original 3-5 minute (+ or - 5 second max.) audio in MP3 format (no videos) on a flash drive, or other electronic device. You will submit the recording, a typed essay and this completed entry form. Provide these items to your school/group competition or VFW Post for judging.

All entries begin at the VFW Post level. The only exception is where schools/classes/youth groups have large numbers of students and wish to conduct their own competition. Submitting one winner for each 15 students to the VFW Post. Individual students may submit their entry directly to a Post. Your local post will give instructions on how to turn in your entry to them. Audio may be submitted physically on a Flash Drive, emailed to the Post (with permission) or submitted through our online platform using Scholars App. **To submit through Scholars App you must first receive a QR code or link from your local post.** Entries sent to VFW National Headquarters directly will not be considered.

If you need help finding a participating VFW Post, follow these instructions: Visit this website [vfw.org/FindaPost](https://www.vfw.org/FindaPost) to "Find A VFW Post." If you do not have success in finding a Post, or if you have trouble getting in touch with them, you can contact your VFW Department (state) office to see if they can offer any information or assistance. You can visit this link <https://www.vfw.org/ContactUs/> and look for "Find a State Contact" to get your VFW state office's phone number and email. If you still need assistance, please email us at VFW National Headquarters at youthscholarships@vfw.org.

What Are the Judging Criteria?

Originality is worth 35 points:

Treatment of the theme should show imagination and human interest.

Delivery is worth 35 points:

Speak in a clear and credible manner.

Content is worth 30 points:

Clearly express your ideas in an organized manner. Fully develop your theme and use transitions to move smoothly from one idea to another.

2026-2027 Official Entry Form

Voice of Democracy Competition

Must Be Completed by All Contestants

Name: First, M.I., Last

Address

City, State, Zip

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Phone

Email

Date of Birth (mm/dd/yy)

Grade in School

Age

Jacket Size

School Name, City, State

Teacher's Name and Email (if applicable)

To Be Completed by Student's Parent/Guardian

(Required even if student is 18 or over)

Parent/Guardian Name (Printed)

Parent/Guardian Signature

Date

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Parent/Guardian Daytime Phone

Parent/Guardian Email

Participant Agreement for Students Advancing to National Level

If selected as a first-place state winner, I have the consent of my parent/guardian and school to attend the Founding Forward Spirit of America Leadership trip to Valley Forge, Pennsylvania as a guest of the VFW National Organization. In consideration for permission to participate in the National Voice of Democracy Competition ("Competition") I do hereby, for myself, for my heirs, executors, administrators and assignees, waive, release and discharge all rights and claims which I have or which may hereafter accrue against the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States (VFW) and/or the Departments (state organizations) of the Veterans of Foreign Wars and their respective officers, agents, successors and assigns from any damages which may be sustained by me in connection with my participation in or association with the Competition and/or arising out of any travel related to the Competition. In the event of sickness, accident or injury in connection with the Competition, I consent to and accept the services of a duly licensed medical, surgical or dental specialist selected on my behalf and for such treatments, as they may deem necessary. I understand that VFW will not be liable for such treatment. I further understand that the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States retains non-exclusive rights to use my audio file, essay, name and likeness in the promotion and execution of the organization's programs and activities.

I Have Read and Understand the Rules and Participant Agreement

I certify that I am the sole author of the enclosed audio/essay entry and that I have not inappropriately used any AI tools or Chat GPT. I have only entered the competition once yearly if otherwise eligible. I understand that if it is found that I have entered any other Post's competition or used this essay for another VFW competition, I face elimination from the competition and will return any and all prizes or incentives awarded.

Signature of Student Participant

Date

To Be Completed by the VFW Post

I certify that this student has an authorized entry in our VFW Post level Voice of Democracy Competition.

Post Commander/Chairperson Signature

Post #

VFW Auxiliary President/Chairperson Signature (if applicable)

Post Address

City, State, Zip

VFW Post Email

No. of students participating

No. of winners advanced to District

Amt. of Post/Aux. scholarship awards \$

Amt. of Post/Aux. additional expenses (banquet, pins, etc.) \$

To Be Completed by the VFW District

I certify that the student named in the previous section is the duly selected winner of the Voice of Democracy Contest District Competition and is our sole entry into the Departments.

District Chairperson Signature

Dist. #

Address

City, State, Zip

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Phone

Email

To Be Completed by the VFW Department Chairperson

I certify that the student named in the previous section is the duly selected first place winner of the Voice of Democracy Department Competition and is our sole entry into the National Judging.

Department Chairperson Signature

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Daytime Phone

Email

The winner ☒ has been ☐ will be (check one) notified that they are the first place Department winner on

For assistance contact:

816.968.2787

Email: youthscholarships@vfw.org

Local VFW Post Information:

Contact:

Phone:

Best Time To Call:

Alternate Contact:

Phone:

Best Time To Call:



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**Voice of Democracy
Scoresheet**

Program Year

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Originality: Treatment of the theme should show imagination and human interest.

Content: Ideas are expressed clearly and in an organized manner.

Delivery: Speaking voice is clear and credible.

Contestant Code Number:

Originality (0 to 35 points):

Content (0 to 30 points):

Delivery (0 to 35 points):

Total (0 to 100 points):

Contestant Code Number:

Originality (0 to 35 points):

Content (0 to 30 points):

Delivery (0 to 35 points):

Total (0 to 100 points):

Contestant Code Number:

Originality (0 to 35 points):

Content (0 to 30 points):

Delivery (0 to 35 points):

Total (0 to 100 points):

Judge's Signature

Date and location of judging