



**Department of Oklahoma
Veterans of Foreign Wars**
P.O. Box 1106 OKC, OK 73101-1126
(405) 850-0815 / www.vfwoklahoma.org

November 2023-2024 Series

"Do not follow where the path may lead. Go instead where there is no path and leave a trail."

-Ralph Waldo Emerson

**DEPARTMENT OF OKLAHOMA HEADQUARTERS
VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS OF THE UNITED STATES**

General Orders No. 5

2023-2024 Series

1. A thorough program of Post inspection is necessary to ensure compliance with National and Department Bylaws and directives. District and Department Inspectors, to include Assistant Inspectors, shall make every effort to inspect every Post under their cognizance on an annual basis and correct such discrepancies as may be disclosed.
2. The VFW National Bylaws, Manual of Procedure and Ritual establish that Robert's Rules of Order, Newly Revised shall be the parliamentary authority on procedural matters not governed by VFW Bylaws and Manual of Procedure. The newly revised Robert's Rules of Order is readily available at local bookstores and online retailers such as Barnes & Noble and Amazon.

BY ORDER:

ATTEST:

o/s

o/s

Erica L. Traxler
State Commander
Department of Oklahoma
Veterans of Foreign Wars

Michael L. Merit
State Adjutant
Department of Oklahoma
Veterans of Foreign Wars



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State Commander

Erica Traxler

**Department Convention Co-Chairman
Student Veterans of America Liaison
Citizenship Education Chair**

Comrades,

Hello Comrades. I hope this month's general orders finds you well. We completed the OKC State and Tulsa State Fairs, and we had a very successful Southern Conference at the River Spirit Casino and Hotel in Tulsa. We have had a very busy couple of months. These events could not have been accomplished without the support of the committee members, appointees, and volunteers. Oklahoma was represented well at the Southern Conference and the Cooties did a great job in the hospitality room. I cannot express enough my gratitude towards the effort that was put into making sure this event went off without a hitch, or as little as possible. Thank you again to all the committee members and volunteers.

Most of the post inspections should be completed or pretty close to being completed. Remember to make All-State they need to be completed by November 30th. All District inspections need to be completed by December 31st or All-state. Please get with your district inspectors and Bradly Blume to get these finished up. Getting these completed gives you the knowledge of what you have and what you need to fix. Many posts are finding themselves deficient of one thing or another and this can be used as a tool to show you what those deficiencies are and allow you the time to get them fixed. We are still working on redistricting, so please be patient as this is not a quick and easy process. VOD, PP, ToY entries should have been accepted. They are due to the district by 11/15/2023 and due to the department on 12/15/2023. The ToY should go directly to the department unless you are going to give a prize or certificate of appreciation and you need to grade them at the district level.

There are three topics we need to consider moving forward. We have a wonderful Auxiliary, but we are down on our numbers of active posts and members. What can we do to help them build their members up as well as build up the people that want to volunteer and be active? Our Auxiliary does so much for us, and we would not be the organization we are today without them. Next, I want to talk about the Cooties. They



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have a very specific mission within our organization. Do you know what it is? Are you already doing the work of a Cootie? How many Veteran Homes do we have in the state? Are you visiting any of the veterans in these homes? How about in your community? Do you know any veterans that are homebound and cannot leave? Have you visited them or sent them a package or letter to let them know you are thinking of them? Have you visited one of the VA Hospitals and the veterans there? All of these things are what the Cooties do for veterans. They go out, have fun, and spend time with veterans to show them love, appreciation, and that they are not forgotten. If you are already doing this in your community, you could always join a Cootie Pup Tent or start a new one in your area. If you have any questions, please reach out to Ron Albert who is the MOC Grand Commander at: (580) 512-0510. Lastly, I would like to talk about our VFW Riders group. Comrade Billy Stone was the President for years and it has now switched over to Comrade Kevin Simmons. Both are also very active in Operation Daily Battle which will be hosted next year in September at VFW Post 5263 in Lawton. We do not have a very large presence of riders in Oklahoma, but Kevin, myself, and the other members of the Riders would like to change that. If you are a motorcycle rider or someone who would like to support by using your vehicle in the rear to pick people up if their bike breaks down, please reach out to Kevin at (580) 304-3884.

I want to thank everyone for their hard work so far this year. You are working your programs, membership, getting out into your communities, and supporting veterans and their families in the best way possible. You are doing amazing things. Please be safe over the holidays that are upcoming. I look forward to attending more district meetings and I hope to see people at the upcoming Mid-Winter in February.

Erica Traxler

State Commander

Department of Oklahoma

Veterans of Foreign Wars

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*State Senior Vice Commander
Dan Fuller*

*State Junior Vice Commander
Jeff Harris*

*State Adjutant
Mike Merit*

Comrades, Brothers and Sisters,

I know that a lot of people are frustrated concerning the Department Dashboard. Comrade Randy Traxler is working diligently to fix all of the issues that are going on. Last month, I worked on everyone's login, but there are still some with issues. Until we figure out what the issue is, please try this process to login in for reporting.

1. www.vfwoklahoma.org
2. Login drop-down, select Members Only, NOT Report Entry.
3. Member ID#: Your VFW member number.
4. Password: Your last name. (It is not case sensitive.)
5. Once you are logged in, select Program Reporting to continue to enter your reports.
6. If you are still having issues, please let me know at:
vfwokadj@outlook.com



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State Surgeon Tony McGrew

Comrades, Last month I encouraged you to take charge and know where you are as far as your health is concerned. I stated no one knows your body better than you, not even your doctor. Taking charge of your health now will set you up for success in the coming months.

Eating healthy not only sustains you through the day physically, we can also add mentally. A balanced diet can and will work wonders with your body and mind.

Brain health is especially important for seniors, who become prone to many serious cognitive diseases as they age. That's why it's important to be proactive about eating the right foods to support cognitive function.

Here are a few recommended by nutritionists:

Salmon. is rich in two different types of omega-3 fatty acids, which are great for brain health. Eating salmon and other kinds of fatty fish at least twice a week is the best way to get the benefits of these acids.

Leafy greens. Leafy greens contain high amounts of B vitamins, beta carotene, folate, vitamin E, and vitamin K. In addition to boosting energy, B vitamins help to protect the brain from stress- and aging-related damage. Beta carotene, folate, and vitamin E help to prevent cognitive decline associated with Alzheimer's disease and dementia, while vitamin K helps to sharpen memory. To get these benefits, seniors should eat plenty of spinach, lettuce, kale, and arugula.

Coffee. Coffee helps to improve concentration and focus, and in moderate amounts, it can even lift your mood. It's also good for your liver and heart and for preventing chronic physical and mental diseases.

Dark berries and cherries. Dark berries like blackberries, blueberries, and blackcurrants as well as cherries have plenty of antioxidants, which help to protect against cognitive diseases.



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Eggs. Eggs contain nutrient-rich, low-fat protein. They're also high in choline, which boosts brain function, and tryptophan, which helps to form the feel-good hormone serotonin.

Nuts. Various kinds of nuts offer different brain health benefits. Walnuts are the best, as they contain more antioxidants than other nuts, along with omega-3 fatty acids. Other great options are almonds (which help to improve memory), pistachios (which help to preserve fatty acids), and macadamia nuts (which boost normal brain function).

Dark chocolate. Besides being decadently delicious, dark chocolate is another food rich in brain-protecting antioxidants as well as flavonoids and caffeine. Flavonoids support blood circulation to the brain, which helps with memory, and caffeine improves short-term brain function.

Other foods. There are many other foods that are excellent for promoting cognitive function. Examples include avocados, Greek yogurt, cruciferous vegetables, and colorful fruits and vegetables in general.

As always I want to encourage you to **KEEP MOVING.**

We were not made to sit still.

Respectfully,

Tony

State Chaplain
Jason Burns

Comrades,

I wanted to introduce to the membership the 1st "Chaplain Of The Year Award". I presented this to Commander Traxler and she has decided to make this part of her program this year. I will give you all the Criteria's and how to nominate them.



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Chaplain of the Year Criteria

1. Performance of Duties:

A. Exemplary conduct of normal duties: e.g., attendance, dependability, punctuality, timely submission of Chaplain's Reports, etc.

B. Exemplary performance above and beyond the normal expectations of the position and duties.

2. Personal attitude which is positive and professional in all contacts with others and which represents the VFW and Post in the best possible way.

3. Commitment to the ministry and duties of the Chaplain, as reflected by service to comrades and their families and responsiveness to needs.

4. A member of the VFW in good standing with the Post, District, and Department.

Procedure

The following procedure is recommended for receiving and reviewing nominations:

I, the State Chaplain, shall solicit nominations from all District and Post Commanders beginning at the Mid-Winter Conference in February. I will personally hand out at Mid-Winter and send out nomination forms to all District and post addresses on file.

All nominations from District and Post should be submitted to the State Chaplain by April 1st. Return Address will be on the Form.

A nomination shall address the above criteria and shall not exceed one type written page.

The Appointed committee shall review each nomination according to the selected criteria and recommend a recipient by April 15th.



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I, The State Chaplain, will review the Committee's recommendation for Chaplain of the Year with the Department Commander by April 30th.

Then I, the State Chaplain, will notify the recipient, Post and District Commander of the nomination and request attendance at the Annual State Convention in June to receive the award.

The Chaplain of the Year Award will be presented at the Annual State Convention Banquet.

Comrades, I encourage each one of you to look at your Chaplain and if they are meeting what it takes, please submit their names. We as Chaplains do not do this for awards or Glory but because it is our calling. But we do deserve to be recognized from time to time.

Also, Comrades continue watching the General Orders for more things that are coming out of the Chaplains Council. Chaplain's keep up the good work and keep the reports coming. Feel free to reach out any time.

God Bless,
Chaplain Jason Burns
Dept Of Ok Chaplain
(580)439-4627
vfwokchaplain@outlook.com
Matt 11:28-30

Youth Essay Programs *Mike Devenitch*

Voice of Democracy, Patriot Pen & Teacher of the Year

VFW YOUTH SCHOLARSHIPS: The deadline is here, and the hard work begins of judging! The deadline was to the VFW Post by midnight, Oct. 31. For judging VOD: Originality, Content and Delivery. PP Judging: Theme Knowledge, Theme



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Development and Clarity of Ideas. Make sure you take a picture of the winners and send the awards presentation to your local newspaper.

Judges should be from outside your Posts/Auxiliaries and should represent your community. Leaders from education, broadcasting, corporations, small business, and other fraternal and civic groups are ideal. Judges must not be connected in any way with the students in the competition. For reference I have attached the VOD/PP Guide. If you have any questions or need help, please contact me! Don't forget to get your auxiliary/post involved. See <https://www.vfw.org/community/youth-and-education/youth-scholarships> for more info.

TEACHER OF THE YEAR (ToY): 2023-2024 Smart/Maher VFW National Citizenship Education Teacher Award: Be sure to build a team (school/town/post) to work on the package! VFW has 3 different categories annually: Elementary, Junior High and High School teachers who teach citizenship education topics and promote America's history and traditions. Teachers who promote civic responsibility, flag etiquette and patriotism are great candidates for this award. Remember, nominations can be submitted by fellow teachers, supervisors, you, or other interested individuals. The deadline at the local VFW Post was Oct. 31. Submit all nominations to me, not district competitions. Remember: Help make your teacher, your post, district, and the state shine with a win! National has requested supporting documents be limited to 5 pages. SEND ALL ENTRIES TO ME AT STATE LEVEL!
<https://www.vfw.org/community/youth-and-education/teacher-of-the-year>

VOD/PP/ToY CONTACT: Michael H. Devenitch, (405) 819-9914. 4224 Manhattan Dr. Moore, OK, 73160 sentrymike@yahoo.com

Training and Development *Jim Bassett & Randy Traxler*

What is motivation (the boring explanation)

To be motivated means to be moved to do something. Yet, even brief reflection suggests that motivation is hardly a unitary phenomenon. People have not only different amounts, but also different kinds of motivation. That is, they vary not only in

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level of motivation (i.e., how much motivation), but also in the orientation of that motivation (i.e., what type of motivation). The most basic distinction is between intrinsic motivation, which refers to doing something because it is inherently interesting or enjoyable, and extrinsic motivation, which refers to doing something because it leads to a separable outcome.

Motivation made simple (I hope)

As a much more complex concept that many give credit for, I will use the picture below to walk through the motivational spectrum. Understanding this concept can help facilitate enhancement of your leadership style, help with conflict, and even recruitment.



Task that needs motivation: Moving a member from inactive to active within Post events

Bucket 1 contains motivation provided by rewards and punishments. Most of us are familiar with this style. Motivation here can sound like: “If you come to this event, we will provide your lunch for free” or “If you don’t become active we should evaluate your membership”. The challenge with this style is it requires an “instrument” to apply motivation (this is person offering reward or punishment) and it is often short-lived as offering a reward or punishment large enough for long term change is unlikely.

Bucket 2 contains motivation provided by feelings of shame/guilt or pride. This style might sound like “You are letting the post down and creating more work for those who are actually active” or “People really look up to you and you being active will inspire others”. Much like bucket 1 this style requires an instrument to continue to leverage this source and it often can feel manipulative.

Bucket 3 contains motivation derived from the individual identifying value in completing the task. This source does not require an instrument as it moves into the



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internal side of the extrinsic spectrum. Motivation here often relies on the individual building competence, exercising autonomy, or experiencing a relationship building event. Any one of these 3 areas can be of value and experiencing more than 1 is likely to increase the level of motivation and overall performance. We can facilitate this by asking them questions or providing information on how completing this task can build competence, allow autonomy, or build connection. A method is to share how you built competence, or how you made decisions on your own, or about the relationships you built and let the individual connect the dots for themselves i.e., reinforce autonomy.

Bucket 4 is the closest we can get to intrinsic motivation. This is the bucket of Self Identity. Individuals do tasks because it aligns or affirms who they see themselves as. If you asked a person motivated from this bucket, why they are active they might reply "I served my country and as a veteran that service does not stop". These individuals and those intrinsically motivated are already active, likely even board members. This bucket is the goal when motivating individuals. Both internal means of extrinsic motivation are long lasting.

So What Randy?

We often are charged with motivating others to serve in our great organization. Our members have a whole life to balance with the continued service requirements of being an active member. Understanding how we communicate with others and how to leverage motivation to overcome challenges is vital to ensuring we stay 1 million strong for us to both have a legislative voice but more importantly we will have a million people around the globe who can provide support, knowledge, and comradery to our Veterans and Families.

Southern Conference
Mike Merit

All,

I want to thank everyone that made the 2023 Southern Conference such a resounding success. I have no words to express how thankful I am to all our volunteers and especially our chairs. Without all of you, none of it would have



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been possible. To our dear Auxiliary, thank you for all you did, being a huge part of the effort to make everything happen.

It's been a long four years of planning and bringing everything together. But I'm glad it's done. My hat's off to the next Chair in thirteen years.

Thank you all!
Mike

District Meetings

- District 1: October 28th @ 1100 Stillwell Post 10829 SV Fuller, JV Harris
- District 3: October 28th @ 1000 Muldrow Post 8384 CDR Traxler, COS Bates, SG McGrew
- District 4: November 18th @ 1100 Antlers Post 3658 SG McGrew, JV Harris
- District 5: November 12th @ 1400 Claremore Post 2976 ADJ Merit
- District 7: October 7th @ 1100 Eufaula Post 8798 CDR Traxler, COS Bates
- District 8: October 29th @ 1100 Sapulpa Post 1320 SV Fuller
- District 9: November 18th @ 1000 Edmond Post 4938 SV Fuller, SG McGrew
- District 10: January 20th @ 1000 Moore CDR Traxler, SG McGrew
- District 13: November 18th @ 1030 Fairview Post 6141 CH Burns, COS Bates
- District 14: October 7th @ 1100 Lawton Post 5263 JV Harris, SG McGrew
- District 15: January 13th @ 1100 Lawton Post 1193 CDR Traxler, CH Burns