



*Department of Oklahoma  
Veterans of Foreign Wars*



P.O Box 1126 OKC. OK 73101-1126

580 515-0567/ [www.vfwoklahoma.org](http://www.vfwoklahoma.org)

January 2026

2025-2026 Series

*"Alone we can do so little; together we can do so much." —Helen Keller*

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

**General Orders No. 07**

**2025-2026 Series**

1. Commanders on all levels are reminded that according to Section 105 of the National Bylaws, a member whose dues are unpaid after their anniversary date ceases to be a member in good standing and loses all rights of membership in the Veterans of Foreign Wars. They shall not attend meetings or conventions and shall not participate in Post, County Council, District, Department, or National functions.
2. Notice to Commanders and Adjutants: All Voice of Democracy, Patriot Pen, and Teacher of the Year Reports MUST be submitted via the All-American Dashboard. Post Adjutants must enter their Posts' report. District Adjutants must approve Post Reports and enter the District Report. Contact Department Adjutant Heidi Teeter for information and/or questions.
3. District Meetings Dates & Changes: District Commanders are reminded to notify the State Adjutant at [okadj@vfw-oklahoma.org](mailto:okadj@vfw-oklahoma.org) of any changes to district meetings including new dates for District meetings.

/os/  
Jeff Harris  
STATE COMMANDER

OFFICIAL:

/ os /  
Heidi Teeter  
Adjutant

*Commander*

*Jeff Harris*

Happy New Year TEAM OKLAHOMA,

Well, the New Year is here, and I hope you all had a nice one wherever you were. Last year we got a lot of stuff done. The Department has bought a new headquarters building. If you have not been there, well by golly what are you waiting for. There is nothing there yet but look at what we have now. I want to thank the building committee for the hard work that they put into finding one. Deric Duncan has gone to some furniture stores to see what they can do for us. I want to thank Deric for what he has done for the VFW.

We have a redistricting committee that has plans to move some posts around to help the Department maintain a more suitable membership structure. I know some posts are not going to be happy with this, but something needs to be done to help the Department strengthen. So please don't be mad. There may be a district that has to be shut down. The committee is working hard to do this, and it is taking time.

I need to thank TEAM OKLAHOMA for what has been done on membership. I asked for help on getting 90% by the first of 2026, and it has been. It was a goal that I put in there to see how it would go and let me tell you what, WOW, you guys did not let me down. Now we will see if we can get 95% by the Mid-Winter meeting coming up in Feb. I know this is possible because TEAM OKLAHOMA works together to get stuff done. So please work on your unpaid members so we can do this. As I was talking about working together, let me tell you what I saw happen. There was a post that did not have a VOD entry, so a post in the district had one to give the post. Comrades that is working together. I called the district and thanked them for helping the other post. That is what TEAM OKLAHOMA is all about!!!

Let's all remember that the Mid-Winter meeting is coming up next month and the National rep will be Commander in Chief Carol Whitmore. She is the first female to ever be a Commander in Chief. So please show up to welcome her to Oklahoma. The dates for the Mid-Winter is Feb. 20 - 22. It will be at the Embassy Suites in Norman. This is a great hotel that I hope everyone likes so Comrades I pray that you all show up.

In closing comrades, if any post needs help with whatever, please let someone know so we can help in whatever way we can. Thank you so much.

T.E.A.M. Oklahoma,

*Jeff Harris*

State Commander  
Veterans of Foreign Wars  
Department of Oklahoma

*Senior Vice Commander*

## *Tony McGrew*

### **Happy New Year Comrades**

As we start a New Year as members “Comrades” of the Veterans of Foreign Wars I would like to remind everyone that this is can be and should be a time of new beginnings and we can choose between Grace and Bitterness.

It has been said that bitterness is a wound, a frustration, or a disappointment in someone, that if allowed to stay in a heart and mind until it builds up to the point of anger. Ultimately altering a person’s behavior. The danger of bitterness is that “hurting people” “hurt people.” When this happens, the very people who are hurt can now become a tool that is used to hurt others.

I challenge each and every one of us to pursue peace to protect us individually and the VFW from trouble. While we are pursuing peace, we should not forget about grace. If we have ever received grace from someone and failed to apply it to others, then we are probably not living a grace filled life. Grace should produce grace, mercy should produce mercy and compassion should produce compassion.

May this year be filled with Grace, Compassion and Mercy for all of us.

Sincerely,

*Tony McGrew*

State Senior Vice Commander  
Department of Oklahoma  
Candidate for State Commander

## *Junior Vice Commander Larry Hurd*

Hello from the paw-paw patch. Well, the temperatures are getting colder and I hope everyone is well. December has not been a very good month as I have lost two good friends. One I flew with in the Air Force and the other is Darryl Mabry, Past State Commander, current District 15 Commander, and Post 1193 Quartermaster. They did not know each other, but both were a very good people, and I will miss both of them every day.

Christmas and New Years have come and gone, and I hope everyone enjoyed Christmas and is looking forward to the challenges of 2026. The department’s new headquarters building is now ours and I am looking forward to helping to move in.

The Department Surgeon has worked with two furniture stores, and they are donating furniture for our headquarters’ so we will be starting the new year with a new building and new furniture.

With the new year starting, let's go meet new veterans, keep up with the older veterans, make new friends, and revive old friendships and talk about past experiences and the VFW.

Let's grow our posts and department membership this year so the Department of Oklahoma will be a large part of the Veterans of Foreign Wars.

So as January starts and the winter weather begins take precautions when driving and for the flu. Stay healthy and drive carefully.

Respectfully,

*Larry Hurd*

State Junior Vice Commander  
Department of Oklahoma

*State Surgeon  
Deric Duncan*

Dear Comrades and Members,

As we step into a new year, I want to take a moment to share my excitement for what lies ahead. A new year represents a fresh start, an opportunity to reset, refocus, and recommit ourselves to the mission that brought us together in the first place. As Team Oklahoma, we have much to be proud of, and even more to look forward to as we begin the path toward 2026.

One of the most important things we can do for one another is to ensure buddy checks are happening. These do not need to be formal or complicated. Sometimes it is as simple as a phone call, a text message, or inviting someone to grab a cup of coffee. I encourage each of you to reach out to veterans you have not seen in a while, especially those who may not have family or loved ones close by. That simple connection can make a meaningful difference.

It is also important to recognize the many programs that are actively working across our organization. From the Relief Committee and relief funds, to the E-Sports Committee, Veterans & Military Support (VMC), post-level Buddy Poppy programs and funds, and membership retention efforts these programs are the backbone of what we do. Membership retention, in particular, is more critical than many realize. Keeping our members engaged, supported, and valued ensures our organization remains strong for years to come.

As we move forward into 2026, let us rediscover the excitement in our programs, our posts, and our organization as a whole. This is an organization where the "I" is far less important than the "we." I encourage everyone to jump in, get involved, and participate in one or two programs. Let us give our members a reason to stay, a reason to engage, and a reason to believe in what we are building together.

We are here to build each other up and to celebrate success at every level. Through that unity, we can achieve greatness not only for our members, but for all veterans and for those who are still serving today. If we ever take our eyes off what is most fundamentally important, those who have served and those who continue to serve we risk drifting off course.

I encourage each of you to set your course straight, recommit to our mission, and once again show why Team Oklahoma stands apart. Together, let us prove that no one does more for veterans.

Respectfully,

*Deric Duncan*

State Surgeon

Veterans of Foreign Wars

Bring the Spark, Ignite the Flame

*Adjutant/Quartermaster*  
*Heidi Teeter*

Comrades,

Welcome to 2026, I hope this year brings peace and harmony to all comrades and within the VFW.

I want to remind all posts and districts the VOD and Patriot Pen reporting **MUST** be reported to the National All-American Dashboard by January 30<sup>th</sup>. The reporting for these 2 items **WILL BE CLOSED January 31<sup>st</sup>**. I **WILL NOT** be contacting National Programs to ask them to give you credit. There have been multiple training opportunities for this.

Mid-Winter is February 20-22 at the Norman Embassy Suites Hotel and Conference Center. Rooms can be booked by clicking the link [here](#). If you are going to book online use only that link. You can also call 1-800-EMBASSY and reference group code **90C (Nine Zero C)**. I will have the banquet ticket order form out by the end of next week. The agenda will be out shortly.

As Commander Harris stated above, Commander-in-Chief Carol Whitmore will be our National representative. I hope we can have a good turnout and give CIC Whitmore a warm Oklahoma welcome.

I will be working on getting my portion of the Department dashboard reporting done in the coming weeks. Again, if you need anything please reach out.

Charlie Mike,

*Heidi Teeter*

State Adjutant/Quartermaster

Veterans of Foreign Wars

Department of Oklahoma

*Judge Advocate*  
*Randy Traxler*

Ever get that feeling that the holiday season just hits different now? With my own kids grown and starting their own lives, I've been thinking a lot about traditions and how they change.

I remember when I was a kid, our family had a massive reunion on the first Sunday of December. It was pure magic. I can still taste my Uncle Jack's famous ham and feel the cold sting of snowballs from epic fights with my cousins. My aunt even gave us horse and buggy rides.

But as the years went by, the older generation that started it all passed on or moved away. The tradition we all loved started to become a strain on the family. So, we had to adapt. We changed the date and location to make it easier for everyone. We all missed the old way, but we knew that for the tradition to continue, it had to evolve.

This made me think about our VFW posts. How many times have we heard, "Because that's the way we've always done it"?

Traditions are the bedrock of our organization, and they all started for a good reason. But when we forget the "why" behind the "what," they can become rigid and unwelcoming. For new members trying to find their place, a tradition without a purpose can feel like a wall they can't climb.

Let's make sure our traditions are a bridge to our future, not a monument to the past.

(This is not my original article; I will post the original labeled "Meet the Status Quo with Contempt" on 3 January 2025 to our Department Facebook)

v/r,

*Randy Traxler*

Judge Advocate  
Veterans of Foreign Wars  
Department of Oklahoma

## *Chaplain Marcus King*

As we begin a new year, I want to thank every Post, Auxiliary, and member who stepped up during the holiday season. From Thanksgiving through Christmas, many of you checked on veterans, supported families, delivered meals, and made sure no one was forgotten. Those efforts matter more than most people realize, and I'm grateful for the way you continue to serve your communities.

Our Midwinter Conference is coming up in February, and I want to encourage you to be there if you can. These gatherings give us a chance to sit down with one another, catch up face-to-face, and strengthen the personal connections that keep this Department moving in the right

direction. We get a lot done when we're in the same room, but just as important is the time spent talking, listening, and supporting each other as comrades and friends.

I also want to make everyone aware that The Wall That Heals will be coming to Edmond from May 14–17, and it will be set up at Mitch Park. This is an important opportunity for veterans, families, and the public to come together, reflect, and honor those whose names are carried on that wall. As the date gets closer, I encourage Posts to help spread the word and support attendance however they can.

As we move forward, I want to offer a reminder that sits at the center of everything we do: our first responsibility is to our families. The work we do in our Posts and communities is important, but it cannot replace the people who rely on us at home. Take care of them. Make time for them. When our families are steady, we're steady—and the rest of our work follows from that.

It is with sadness that we acknowledge the passing of Past State Commander Darryl Mabry, who passed away over Christmas. The funeral will be held on January 9<sup>th</sup> at the Whinery-Huddleston Funeral Service, 6210 NW Cache Rd, Lawton, OK 73505 at 11am. Burial service will be at Fort Sill National Cemetery, 2648 NE Jake Dunn Rd., Elgin, OK 73538 at 1pm. Keep his family and all who served alongside him in your thoughts.

As we enter this new year, I encourage every Post and every member to continue being a steady, positive presence in your community. Carry yourselves in a way that reflects the values we stand for and look for the quiet opportunities to make a difference.

In service and support,


*Marcus King*

State Chaplain

Veterans of Foreign Wars

Department of Oklahoma

 [vfwokchaplain@outlook.com](mailto:vfwokchaplain@outlook.com)

 405.651.5509

## ***Training and Development***

### ***Randy Traxler and Jim Bassett***

#### **From Frustration to Function Using Committees to Turn Discomfort into Progress**

Change within an organization rarely starts with comfort. It starts with friction and awareness that something is not working as intended that gaps exist between policy and practice or that the way we have always done it no longer serves our members or our mission. As the Judge Advocate has highlighted contempt for the status quo can be a powerful catalyst for growth but only when it is channeled appropriately.

This is where committee work becomes not only relevant but essential.

Committees are not obstacles to progress they are the mechanism by which progress becomes durable defensible and aligned with our bylaws charter and values. When leveraged correctly committees allow members to move from frustration to function turning observations into recommendations and recommendations into institutional improvement.

### **Committees as Gap Fillers Not Gatekeepers**

Every Post District and Department has blind spots. No commander quartermaster or chair sees every operational friction point. Committees exist precisely to identify and address those gaps.

A well functioning committee

- Observes trends across multiple Posts or events
- Aggregates individual concerns into systemic issues
- Develops recommendations that are vetted documented and aligned with governing documents
- Provides leadership with options not ultimatums

This structure protects both the organization and the individual member. It ensures that change is not personality driven reactionary or legally vulnerable.

### **A Practical Example from Post Finance and Inspections**

Consider a common frustration expressed across many Posts issues identified during trustee audits or post inspections that seem to repeat year after year. Missing receipts, inconsistent financial reports, unclear separation of duties or misunderstandings about required documentation often get labeled as individual failures.

In reality these patterns usually signal a training and process gap not a people problem.

When this feedback is routed through committee work rather than informal complaint it allows the organization to respond constructively. Trustees can document recurring audit findings. The Finance Committee can identify where processes are unclear or unrealistic. Training and Development can then build targeted training tools checklists or walkthroughs that explain not just what is required but how to do it correctly and consistently.

The result is fewer repeat findings, stronger financial controls and less tension between trustees, quartermasters and commanders. Most importantly the organization improves without assigning blame and without compromising fiduciary responsibility.



This same approach applies to post inspections where trends across multiple Posts often reveal the need for clearer guidance standardized tools or better onboarding rather than stricter enforcement alone.

### **How Members Can Leverage Committee Work Effectively**

Change does not require an elected title, but it does require engagement with process.

Members who want to effect change should consider the following approach.

1. Identify the gap clearly.

What specifically is not working Is it a training shortfall an unclear process inconsistent enforcement or a lack of awareness Precision matters.

2. Match the gap to the right committee.

Training issues belong with Training and Development. Financial process concerns belong with Finance or Trustees. Governance issues belong with Bylaws or Judge Advocate review. Misalignment wastes energy.

3. Provide observations not accusations.

Committees work best with facts patterns and documented examples not assumptions of intent. Here is what we are seeing carries more weight than Here is who is wrong.

4. Recommend options not outcomes.

Effective committees present leadership with courses of action including risks and benefits not predetermined conclusions. This preserves command authority while enabling informed decisions.

5. Respect the timeline of process.

Committees are deliberative by design. While this can feel slow it ensures that outcomes withstand scrutiny appeals and future leadership transitions.

### **Training and Development's Role in Sustaining Change**

The Training and Development Committee exists to close the gap between policy and practice. Our role is not to critique for critique's sake but to ensure members have the tools knowledge and confidence to operate within the system while improving it.

This includes:

- Developing training that explains not just what the rules are but why they exist
- Creating resources that empower new leaders to succeed faster
- Identifying recurring points of friction
- Supporting other committees by translating governance into practical application

In this way Training and Development becomes the connective tissue between intent and execution.

### **Contempt for the Status Quo with Discipline**

Healthy dissatisfaction is not disloyalty. It is often the first sign of care. But without discipline, structure and respect for process, that dissatisfaction can fracture trust rather than strengthen it.

Committees allow us to challenge the status quo without undermining the organization. They give members a voice, leaders a framework and the VFW a way to evolve while remaining anchored to its charter.

If you see a gap, bring it forward.

If you feel friction, document it.

If you want change, engage the process.

Progress is not the absence of structure.

Progress is structure used well.

Respectfully,

*Randy Traxler*

State Education Co-Chair  
Veterans of Foreign Wars  
Department of Oklahoma

*Jim Bassett*

State Education Co-Chair  
Veterans of Foreign Wars  
Department of Oklahoma

***Voice of Democracy/Patriot's Pen/Teacher of the Year***  
***Jim Bassett***

**Deadline for Department judging is 10 January 2026**

**Deadline for districts reports is 15 January 2026**

**Deadline for Department to report winners to National is 15 January 2026**

The Department judging is occurring now. We have until January 10th to complete the judging. January 15th is the district deadline to submit their reports.

If next year is the same as this year, your QR codes will remain valid, but you will have to download the updated theme posters from the Scholars App.

Teacher of the Year deadline has also passed. You have until January 15th to get them to the department.

The other members of the VoD/PP and ToY committee are Frank Whitlock, fwusmc@yahoo.com, and Mike Devenitch, sentrymike@yahoo.com, who you can also reach out to for assistance.

*Jim Bassett*

State VoD/PP/ToY Chair  
Veterans of Foreign Wars  
Department of Oklahoma

## *Redistricting* *Deric Duncan*

Comrades,

I hope this report finds everyone well and that you were able to enjoy the holiday season. As with many committees, we took a brief pause during the holidays, but I am pleased to report that we are now back in full swing and moving forward with renewed focus.

The Redistricting Committee will be returning to our standard schedule of two meetings per month. In addition, we will begin a monthly alternating format, switching between meetings dedicated to District Commanders and meetings open to the general membership. This structure is intended to improve communication, encourage participation, and reinforce our commitment to total transparency with the membership.

Over the past several months, there have been a number of changes at the Department level. These include posts changing meeting locations, post closures, mergers, and discussions that may lead to the opening of a new post in the coming months. Each of these changes requires careful evaluation and collaboration to ensure decisions are made with the best interests of our members in mind.

We recognize that redistricting and structural changes will not always satisfy everyone. However, our goal remains consistent: to do what is right for the membership at both the post and district levels, while ensuring the Department can function effectively with strong, healthy districts.

Thank you for your patience, engagement, and continued support as we move forward with this important work.

Yours in service,

*Deric Duncan*

MIA/POW Chair

Veterans of Foreign Wars

Department of Oklahoma

"Bring the Spark, Ignite the Flame"

## *Veterans and Military Support*

### *Jim Bassett*

Thanksgiving and Christmas are behind us for another year. Please reach out to do buddy checks with your members! The holidays are hard on some.

So far this year, we sponsored the 45th Fallen Heroes Memorial Run, Tinker AFB 9/11-POW-MIA Memorial Run, food baskets for Guard member families in need, and at least seven unit Christmas Parties. We also are briefing at the separation/retirement events for the Guard. And we still have more to go.

SportClips has completed their fundraising for the year. Still think about visiting and helping them out. As a reminder, this is a major talking point with potential members in uniform. This program has awarded \$195,900 to 47 military recipients in Oklahoma. They have awarded more than \$15 million since 2010. Support this worthy program.

When you tell them that this can be used in conjunction with other scholarships, it piques their interest. They do not need to be VFW members, reminding them that we work for them, whether or not they join us. This means a lot to them, usually ending up with them joining our organization. Education is something important to most military, Active, Reserves, or Guard. Talk to them about Help-A-Hero scholarships, or the VFW-SVA Legislative Fellowship program, Voice of Democracy, or Patriot's Pen. The VFW Auxiliary even offers a continuing education scholarship as well as Young American Creative Patriotic Art Contest and 3-Dimensional Patriotic Art Contest. Inform everyone you can about the opportunities.

It is our best interest to work with the local units to help them with their events. If you are unsure how to contact a local unit, let me know and I can make the introductions.

*Jim Bassett*

State VMS Chair

Veterans of Foreign Wars

Department of Oklahoma

## *Veterans Affairs Volunteer Services*

### *Tony McGrew and Jim Bassett*

The VA as well as ODVA have been asking for help. The list below is from the VA Center in Oklahoma City. I'd imagine that the list would be almost identical for the Tulsa area VA as well as the ODVA homes throughout the state.

**Personal Care Items:**

- Deodorant (men & women)
- Body Wash 3 in 1 (men)
- Body Wash (women)
- Shampoo/Condition or 2 in 1
- Shaving Cream & multi-blade razors
- Hairbrushes and combs
- Denture grip
- Toothpaste, toothbrushes
- Lip Balm
- Lotion
- Beard trimmers/electric razors

**Men's Clothing: (NEW ONLY)**

- Men's sweatpants (S-4XL)
- Men's T-shirts (S-4XL)
- Men's underwear (M-3XL)
- Men's pajama pants (M-4XL)
- Men's slippers (S-XXL)
- Men's shoes (8-14)
- Belts (all sizes)

**Women's Clothing: (NEW ONLY)**

- Women's sweatpants (S-XXL)
- Women's underwear (S-XXL)
- Women's sports bra (no wire or clasps) (M-XXXL)
- Women's shirts (preferably loose fitting) (S-XXL)
- Women's slippers (M-XXL)
- Women's shoes (7-10)

**Other Miscellaneous items (NEW ONLY)**

- Coffee (large cans for coffee program)
- Puzzle Books, Craft Kits, Models
- Adult Coloring Books, Colored pencils
- Adult backpacks
- Packaged snacks/bottles of individual water
- Quilts (used for pinning ceremonies)
- Afghans (given to cancer patients)

**SEASONAL ITEMS (NEW ONLY):**

- Coats (Men & Women – sizes M-3XL)
- Gloves (preferably warm heavy-duty)
- Stocking cap/beanie

- Face masks/gators
- Hand and Feet warmers
- Tent (1-2 person)
- Thermal underwear (Long-johns)
- Blankets
- Off or bug repellent (summer)

Please ship or drop off items to:

Oklahoma City VA Health Care System  
CDCE (Voluntary Service) Room GB121

921 NE 13th Street

Oklahoma City, OK 73104

Questions? 405-456-5162

Thank you for all you do for our Veterans!

We encourage you to volunteer at homes or hospitals. If you are interested in the VA hospital, let us know. Contact Tony McGrew, [tony.vfw8706@gmail.com](mailto:tony.vfw8706@gmail.com). Or Jim Bassett, [bassettj15@yahoo.com](mailto:bassettj15@yahoo.com).

*Tony McGrew*

*Jim Bassett*

State VAVS Chair  
Veterans of Foreign Wars  
Department of Oklahoma

## *Grant Committee*

### *Deric Duncan*

I hope everyone had a chance to enjoy the holiday season and spend time with family and loved ones. As we move into the new year, the Grant Committee is back to work and moving forward with momentum.

At this time, we have several outstanding grants currently in progress. These include applications aimed at supporting and expanding Department operations, as well as a grant focused specifically on securing furniture for the new Department Headquarters. These efforts are intended to strengthen our infrastructure and improve functionality without placing additional financial burden on the Department.

Many grant opportunities are beginning to open back up, and we are hitting the ground running to identify and pursue those that align with our mission and long-term goals. Our focus remains on securing successful grants that allow us to expand programs, enhance resources, and better serve our membership while keeping Department costs to a minimum.

As we continue to move forward, we are committed to keeping the Department fully informed throughout the grant process. Transparency and communication will remain a priority as we navigate applications, awards, and implementation.

Thank you for your continued support and trust as we work to bring additional resources into the Department.

Yours in service,

*Deric Duncan*

Grant Committee

Veterans of Foreign Wars

Department of Oklahoma

"Bring the Spark, Ignite the Flame"

## *Veterans Affairs Council*

### *Deric Duncan & Larry Hurd*

This information is from the veteran's affairs council meeting on September 8<sup>th</sup> and other emails from the council secretary. Some information might be a little late do to the national convention.

December 1, 2025

Meeting Minutes are not available. There is a new president, secretary and vice chairman. Will let you know next month.

## VA Center for Faith (VA CF) Information Sharing

### VA houses largest number of homeless Veterans in seven years

**WASHINGTON** — The Department of Veterans Affairs today announced that it permanently housed 51,936 homeless Veterans across the country in fiscal year 2025.

That number is 4,011 more Veterans than VA housed [last year under the prior administration](#).

It's also VA's best performance since it began tracking the number of individual Veterans permanently housed instead of the total number of permanent housing placements, ensuring a more accurate count of the number of Veterans helped.

The Biden Administration began using this new methodology in 2022, and when applied retroactively to 2019, the numbers look like this:

FY	Permanent Housing Placements	Unique Veterans Housed
FY 2025	53,839	51,936
FY 2024	51,124	47,925

FY 2023	48,059	46,051
FY 2022	41,208	39,868
FY 2021	39,637	38,401
FY 2020	45,397	44,048
FY 2019	49,462	48,133

“This is life-changing and in many cases life-saving work,” said **VA Secretary Doug Collins**. “We are proud of the progress VA is making to get Veterans off the streets and are redoubling our efforts to continue this momentum moving forward.”

In May 2025, VA took bold action to reduce Veteran homelessness by launching its [Getting Veterans Off the Street](#) initiative, in which every VA health care system across the country hosted dedicated outreach surge events to locate unsheltered Veterans and offer them immediate access to housing programs, health care, behavioral health services, and VA benefits.

Getting Veterans Off the Street helped move 25,065 unsheltered Veterans to interim (emergency and transition) or permanent housing.

These efforts complement President Trump’s May executive order to establish a [National Center for Warrior Independence for Homeless Veterans](#) on the West Los Angeles VA Medical Center campus. The [National Center for Warrior Independence for Homeless Veterans](#) aims to provide housing and support for up to 6,000 homeless Veterans from across the nation by 2028.

Every day, VA staff and community partners across the country help Veterans find [permanent housing](#) — such as apartments or houses to rent or own — often with subsidies to help make the housing more affordable. In some cases, VA teams and partners help Veterans end their homelessness by reuniting them with family and friends.

Visit [VA.gov/homeless](#) to learn about housing initiatives and other programs supporting homeless Veterans.

*If you are a Veteran who is experiencing homelessness or at risk of homelessness, call the National Call Center for Homeless Veterans at 877-4AID-VET (877-424-3838) or visit [VA.gov/homeless](#).*

## Lawmakers Ask AG to Investigate Oklahoma’s Response to COVID-19 Pandemic

**OKLAHOMA CITY** – A group of 21 Republican state lawmakers sent a letter to Oklahoma’s Attorney General requesting an investigation of the state’s COVID-19 response and hospital protocols during the pandemic.

Sen. Randy Grellner, R-Cushing, a primary care doctor who previously served on the State Board of Health, led the effort on behalf of Oklahomans who lost loved ones during the pandemic.

“Over the past four years, I’ve heard from residents across my district and across Oklahoma about the deep pain, confusion and loss they experienced during the pandemic,” Grellner said. “Oklahomans saw untold death and despair, and people are still trying to make sense of how the state and local hospitals handled the unprecedented crisis. We’re simply asking for answers and accountability to correct the historical record and ensure the state does not repeat the same mistakes in future pandemics.”

Rep. Molly Jenkins, R-Coyle, and Rep. Jim Shaw, R-Chandler, joined Grellner in assembling a coalition of lawmakers calling for a review of COVID-era policies and protocols.



“The stories I hear from constituents make it clear that too many Oklahomans were left without basic dignity during the pandemic,” Jenkins said. “People were cut off from their loved ones, denied choices and left with no explanation for decisions that shaped their final days. We need a straightforward, independent review to determine what went wrong and to make sure no family ever faces that kind of isolation again.”

The lawmakers are asking the attorney general to determine whether actions taken during the pandemic violated state laws or crossed the line of proper authority. In the letter, the lawmakers note that many Oklahoma families are seeking answers because they believe that government decisions and hospital protocols contributed to unnecessary suffering and loss during the pandemic.

“The inconsistencies in how decisions were made during the pandemic raise serious concerns that can’t be ignored,” Shaw said. “When authority isn’t clearly defined and families are shut out of critical moments, we have a responsibility to get answers. A review by the attorney general will clarify where the system failed and what must be corrected to protect Oklahomans in the future.”

## **Review of Veterans Health Administration’s National Teleradiology Program**

12/4/2025

1:30 PM EDT

The VA Office of Inspector General (OIG) conducted a healthcare inspection of the Veterans Health Administration (VHA) National Teleradiology Program (NTP) to assess allegations that an NTP radiologist (radiologist) misread a patient’s imaging study and NTP delays reporting interpretation results at multiple facilities. The OIG evaluated NTP’s oversight of radiologists, timeliness in returning interpretation results, performance monitoring, and quality assurance.

NTP radiologists interpret radiologic imaging studies submitted by radiology technologists from VA facilities and electronically transmit the interpretation reports to the originating facility. The OIG determined NTP has processes to ensure radiology provider competency through credentialing and privileging, provider professional practice reviews, and peer reviews for quality management (peer review). The radiologist involved in the misread had no deficiencies noted in reviews, and documentation supported renewal of privileges.

While NTP has processes for completion of peer reviews, the OIG identified conflicting guidance about who is responsible for conducting peer reviews, NTP or the facilities. This lack of clarity led to delays, including a peer review completed over nine months after the misread.

The OIG substantiated delays in the return of stat imaging interpretation reports at two facilities. NTP policy requires a one-hour turnaround for stat studies, but the OIG found delays in nine of thirteen reviewed cases. The OIG determined NTP did not meet performance goals for turnaround and average times for imaging studies in fiscal year 2024. Although NTP leaders took corrective actions, including reducing routine study volume, increased collaboration with staff at facilities using NTP, and planning a system upgrade, challenges persisted.

The OIG made five recommendations. As a result, the Acting Under Secretary for Health agreed to address NTP’s staffing shortage and ensure facilities have a contingency plan. The NTP Director committed to addressing completion of peer reviews, delayed turnaround times, and staffing shortages.

### **VETERAN SERVICE OFFICER TRAINING SYMPOSIUM (VSOTS)**

**JANUARY 21<sup>ST</sup> – 22<sup>ND</sup>, 2026**

**NORMAN ARMED FORCES RESERVE CENTER**

**NORMAN, OKLAHOMA**

Dear Commander/Service Officer/Volunteer:

The Oklahoma Department of Veterans Affairs is happy to announce the Veterans Service Officer Training Seminar (VSOTS), scheduled January 21<sup>st</sup> -22<sup>nd</sup>, 2026 in Norman, OK. The seminar will provide an opportunity for all those who attend to receive the latest information on a variety of subjects related to veterans' benefits, at both the state and national level. ***The seminar will not, however, provide accreditation certification.***

VSOTS will be held at the **Norman Armed Forces Reserve Center, 4000 Thunderbird St., Norman, OK 73069.**

Registration will begin at 7:30 a.m. on Wednesday, January 21<sup>st</sup>. The first training session will begin at 8:15 a.m. and training will adjourn at 4:00 p.m. Professionals from the Oklahoma Department of Veterans Affairs, U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, and NVLSP will provide all who attend the latest information on the benefits and services available.

Mail the registration form no later than January 9<sup>th</sup>, 2026, to the address below. You may also register for the event by following the link below. **There will be no registration fee for this year's event.**

[Register Here](#)

The Oklahoma Department of Veterans Affairs

125 South Main Street, Room 104

Muskogee, OK 74401

**VFW Supports VHA Restructuring Efforts:** VA plans to reorganize the Veterans Health Administration (VHA) to improve care for veterans by reducing bureaucracy, clarifying roles and empowering local medical center leaders. Guided by recommendations from the VA Inspector General and Government Accountability Office, the reorganization will streamline management while keeping staffing levels and services unchanged. VHA Central Office will focus on policy and oversight, regional networks will support implementation, and local facilities will have greater decision-making authority. These changes will roll out over the next 18–24 months to help VA focus more on better care delivery and less on bureaucracy. [Read more.](#)

**New VFW Story Banking Initiative:** The VFW has launched VFW Voices of Service – Stories in Action, a new national initiative to collect veteran and family experiences that inform and strengthen our legislative advocacy. We will be gathering stories on a wide range of issues, including VA health care access; toxic exposures; concurrent receipt and the Major Richard Star Act; VA benefits and disability claims; education, employment and transition; mental health and suicide prevention; food insecurity; caregiver and survivor benefits; and other challenges facing the veteran and military community. Submissions will help us to identify patterns, gaps and real-world impacts that shape legislative priorities, congressional engagement, testimony, education and grassroots advocacy throughout the year. Every experience adds to

the overall picture. [Share your story](#) and help turn your personal experience into advocacy action.

**VFW Urges Awarding of Purple Hearts:** VFW National Commander Carol Whitmore sent a letter to the White House urging President Trump to award Purple Hearts to the West Virginia National Guard troops involved in the recent Washington D.C., shooting, which left one dead and one critically wounded. “Spc. Beckstrom and Staff Sgt. Wolfe answered their nation’s call and wore the same uniform as every American who has been called away from their families to stand a post, whether at home or abroad,” said Whitmore. “If this investigation confirms terroristic intent, recognizing them under the Purple Heart is not just a matter of law, it is a matter of honor.” [Read the letter.](#)

**VFW Podcast Guests Talk Veteran Data, Legislation and Military Transition:** On the latest episode of #StillServing: The VFW Podcast, co-hosts Rob Couture and Brittany Dymond Murray welcomed VFW National Veterans Service and National Legislative Service Deputy Directors to discuss the nuances of recent Hill activities, VA claims for transitioning service members, and even a recap of the VFW’s attendance at the Army Navy Game 2025 tailgates. Listen to episode 56, “And of Course, World Peace,” on your favorite podcast platform or watch it on the VFW’s [YouTube](#) channel.

### **VFW Leaders and Members Engage Crowds at Army Navy Game**

**Tailgates:** Together with VFW National Commander Carol Whitmore and Junior Vice Commander Glenn Umberger, VFW Washington Office staff and members from the Departments of Rhode Island and Maryland shared in camaraderie building and community outreach across two tailgate events. As a fixture at the Travis Manion Foundation’s tailgate, VFW leadership and staff engaged key leaders and supporters in the military and veteran spaces while members from VFW Rhode Island Post 152 organized and held their Mother of All Tailgates event to raise funds for Homes For Our Troops. VFW members from the Department of Maryland assisted heavily with outreach at both tailgates, enabling VFW’s messages of service, advocacy and camaraderie to reach new audiences.

Dear VFW Members and Supporters:

Veterans are being prescribed powerful psychiatric medications, often several at once, without clear written information about the risks. Many were never warned about severe side effects or dangerous drug interactions. Others are left with few PTSD treatment options beyond medication, even when innovative therapies could offer real relief.

This is unacceptable. On December 3, the Senate is holding a hearing to examine medication management in VA care. The VFW is submitting a Statement for the Record because veterans’ stories cannot be ignored any longer. Congress must act.

Two House bills would bring real protection and real options:

- **H.R.4837**, *Written Informed Consent Act*, would require clear written information before VA prescribes certain psychiatric medications.
- **H.R.2623**, *Innovative Therapies Centers of Excellence Act of 2025*, would create five VA centers to expand access to cutting-edge PTSD treatments.

Veterans deserve transparency, safety, and real choices. They do not deserve a maze of prescriptions and side effects.

I hope that all readers find this information useful.

Respectfully,

*Larry Hurd*

Veterans Affairs Council Member

*Deric Duncan*

Veterans Affairs Council Member

## *Historian Richard Elsheimer*

Donald R. Fenter served as State of Oklahoma VFW Commander for the year 2000-2001. Don also served many other positions within the VFW and was a life member of Post 5263 in Lawton.

Commander Fenter was born January 8, 1944, in Indianapolis, Indiana and passed away on October 28 at the age of 71. He is buried beside his wife Euline (Mickey) Fenter, who preceded him in death in 2010, at Suset Memorial Garden in Lawton, Ok.

*Richard Elsheimer*

State Historian

Veterans of Foreign Wars

Department of Oklahoma

## *MIA/POW Deric Duncan*

Comrades,

I hope this report finds everyone well and that you and your families were able to enjoy a safe, peaceful, and meaningful holiday season. As we begin a new year, it is important to pause and reflect on why our MIA/POW mission matters so deeply, and to recognize that even after decades, our nation continues to bring its heroes home.

We have strong reason to celebrate and take pride in the ongoing work to account for our missing service members. I am honored to share that Sgt. Ray Johnson will be returning home to Oklahoma in 2026. This long-awaited homecoming is a powerful reminder that our commitment

to those who never returned does not fade with time. Every identification and every return is a victory for the families, for Oklahoma, and for the promise our nation makes to those who serve.

Additionally, on March 19, 2025, the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency (DPAA) identified the remains of Cpl. James M. Walker, a World War II soldier from Oklahoma who had been missing for more than eight decades.

Cpl. Walker entered the U.S. Army from Oklahoma and served with Company E, 2nd Battalion, 31st Infantry Regiment in the Philippines during World War II. He was captured following the surrender of the Bataan Peninsula on April 9, 1942, and was forced to endure the brutal Bataan Death March. He was later interned at the Cabanatuan Prison Camp in Nueva Ecija Province, a site infamous for its horrific conditions. With severely limited food and water, rampant disease, and widespread malnutrition, thousands of American and Filipino prisoners suffered and died. Cpl. Walker succumbed to dysentery on January 1, 1943.

At its peak, Cabanatuan held approximately 8,000 prisoners of war. By the time it was liberated in early 1945, roughly 2,800 Americans had died there. Cpl. Walker was buried in Common Grave 822 at the camp cemetery. After the war, the American Graves Registration Service exhumed the remains and relocated them to a temporary U.S. military mausoleum near Manila. In 1947, attempts were made to identify those remains, but most from Common Grave 822 were declared unidentifiable and interred as Unknowns at the Manila American Cemetery and Memorial.

In 2020, as part of the Cabanatuan Project, the remains associated with Common Grave 822 were disinterred and sent to the DPAA laboratory for advanced analysis. Through laboratory work and careful review of circumstantial evidence, DPAA was able to establish the identity of Cpl. James M. Walker. He is memorialized on the Walls of the Missing at the Manila American Cemetery in the Philippines.

These successes remind us that the work is far from over. Several additional Oklahoma service members are currently under active investigation, and we remain committed to supporting every effort to bring answers to families still waiting.

Thank you for your continued dedication to the MIA/POW mission and for honoring those who have not yet come home.

Yours in service,

*Deric Duncan*

MIA/POW Chair

Veterans of Foreign Wars

Department of Oklahoma

"Bring the Spark, Ignite the Flame"

# From the Desks of the Department Adjutant Teeter and Public Relations Chair R. Traxler:

## Stay Connected – Update Your Email and Check Your Inbox!

We want every member to receive the Department's *General Orders* and important updates without interruption. Please take a moment today to ensure we can reach you:

1. **Verify your email address** with your Post and on your VFW member record.
2. **Check your spam and junk folders** – if you find any Department emails there, mark them as “Not Spam” so future messages go directly to your inbox.

Your involvement starts with staying informed. Help us strengthen communication across the Department by making sure you and your fellow members are connected and receiving the information you need.

## We Want to Feature YOU for Warrior Wednesday!

Every week, we're spotlighting the dedicated veterans and leaders who make our organization stronger — and we want your story to be next. “Warrior Wednesday” is our way of celebrating the service, sacrifice, and continued commitment of VFW members across the Department.

### Here's how you can be featured:

- Send us your **name, current position, Post number, and location**
- Share your **branch of service, years served, MOS, and eligibility details**
- Tell us **why you're active in the VFW** and what keeps you engaged
- Add a few **hobbies or interests** that show who you are beyond the uniform
- Include **1–2 high-quality photos** — one from your time in service and one current

Submit your information to [okadj@vfw-oklahoma.org](mailto:okadj@vfw-oklahoma.org) or [oktraining@vfw-oklahoma.org](mailto:oktraining@vfw-oklahoma.org) and join us in highlighting the stories that inspire, connect, and strengthen our VFW family. Let's make every Wednesday a celebration of the warriors among us!

## **DISTRICT MEETING INFORMATION**

- D-1** > February 7<sup>th</sup>, Tahlequah, 1100, State Commander Jeff Harris
- D-3** > February 7<sup>th</sup>, Wilburton, 1100, State Judge Advocate Randy Traxler
- D-4** > February 7<sup>th</sup>, Boswell, 1100, State Surgeon Deric Duncan
- D-5** > February 1<sup>st</sup>, Broken Arrow, 1400, State AQ Heidi Teeter
- D-7** > February 7<sup>th</sup>, Okmulgee, 1100, State Senior Vice Commander Tony McGrew
- D-8** > February 14<sup>th</sup>, Ponca City, 1100, State Senior Vice Commander Tony McGrew
- D-9** > TBD
- D-10** > January 24<sup>th</sup>, Midwest City, 1000, Junior Vice Commander Larry Hurd
- D-13** > January 17<sup>th</sup>, TBD, 1100, State Senior Vice Commander Tony McGrew
- D-14** > February 7<sup>th</sup>, TBD, 1000, State Junior Vice Commander Larry Hurd
- D-15** > January 17<sup>th</sup>, Elk City, 1100, Junior Vice Commander Larry Hurd

## **DATES TO REMEMBER:**

**New Years Day** >> January 1<sup>st</sup> HQ (National\* and Dept) Closed

**Martin Luther King Jr. Day** >> January 19<sup>th</sup>

**Presidents' Day** >> February 16<sup>th</sup>

**Mid-Winter Conference** >> February 20<sup>th</sup> – 22<sup>nd</sup> >> Embassy Suites, Norman

**Washington Conference** >> February 28<sup>th</sup> – March 5<sup>th</sup> >> Washington DC

\*National HQ will be closed December 24<sup>th</sup> through January 4<sup>th</sup>, 2026.