



*Department of Oklahoma
Veterans of Foreign Wars*



P.O Box 1126 OKC. OK 73101-1126

580 515-0567/ www.vfwoklahoma.org

November 2025

2025-2026 Series

"The most important single ingredient in the formula of success is knowing how to get along with people." —Theodore Roosevelt

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

General Orders No. 05

2025-2026 Series

- 1. *Attention of Post & District Commanders & Quartermasters:*** Commanders & Quartermasters are reminded at all levels of the annual requirement to complete an IRS 990, IRS 990N, for tax exemption requirements. Failure to complete the required IRS 990 may result in loss of tax-exemption status.
- 2. *Department Directory/Roster:*** Commanders & Adjutants are asked to send all corrections, changes etc. of the Department Roster to okadj@vfw-oklahoma.org for changes.
- 3. *District Meetings Dates & Changes:*** District Commanders are reminded to notify the State Adjutant at 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

Well Hello, TEAM OKLAHOMA

How is everyone doing? I am praying you are not doing as bad as I have been. I tell you what!! That Saturday evening after the costume contest, I was not doing good at all. I was thinking it could have been the punch that the Aux. made, but I am sure it was something else like Edmonds food or it was a bug that got ahold of me. I just have to give them a hard time. I am mad at the Aux for not picking me as the best costume. Instead, they picked Chief of Staff Owen. I hope you all had as much fun as I did, I may have even shook a leg or two.

I want to thank Sr. Vice Commander Tony and the building committee for the work you guys put into finding a building for us. I know this has been going on for a few years now, but hopefully we have a HQ now. We will know more later as the committee continues to work on this.

District meeting will be starting the first of Nov. Please get out and go to the meeting and see what is going on in the posts and the district. A post can be suspended for missing too many meetings. So, if the Post Commander cannot make it, I am sure someone from the post can, so please get out a see what's all going on.

The Southern Conference is coming up Nov. 7-9 in Montgomery, Tx. We will talk about what the Southern Conference is doing and what needs to be done. The Southern is always the best conference in membership, so I am asking TEAM OKLAHOMA to not stop going out and talking to people and tell them what the VFW is and what we can do for them.

Our membership is over 86 %. I would like the District Commanders to talk to their post and remind them that I will help them with 3 members per post. And plan a recruiting event with their post. If help is needed, please call me. We will be anywhere help is needed. State Surgeon Derick Duncan has a couple of events coming up at the Oklahoma City fairgrounds that could help the state membership. So please help out where you are needed.

Well Mid-winter is our next meeting. It will be Feb .20-22; it is not too early to start planning for this. Hope to see you there.

T.E.A.M. Oklahoma,

Jeff Harris

State Commander
Department of Oklahoma

Senior Vice Commander

Tony McGrew

Hi Comrades,

You know it, November is here! This year will soon end, and a new one is fast approaching. As I think about it, I can't help but wonder, is the VFW better because we are members? After much thought I came to the conclusion that, whether it is "better or not" will depend on our personal and department goals.

Without a doubt your presence can improve the organization through contributions like positive collaboration, innovation, and a welcoming atmosphere. We can be an ideal Department if we provide the professional growth needed to align with our core values. Your individual contributions can and will have a significant impact, especially in our Posts, by improving the culture.

Taking the initiative to boost team morale with activities like organizing lunches and fund raising/patriotic projects making a direct impact by contributing your specific skills to a project. It seems to me that a collaborative spirit is crucial and that "egos are in check" and that the goal is to serve the mission, not ourselves. Is what you are doing helping us succeed in accomplishing our goals?

Working on an important project that moves the mission forward is a way to make a positive impact. Here's a great way to know if you are succeeding in the mission: adopt a "people first" mindset and do everything possible to help team members succeed in their endeavors. I'm sure there are many other ways we can move forward and improve our department, but it will take a lot of effort and a collaborative effort from all of us to succeed.

Looking forward to seeing you all soon.

Sincerely,

Tony McGrew

State Senior Vice Commander
Department of Oklahoma
Candidate for State Commander

Junior Vice Commander

Larry Hurd

Comrades,

Hello from the paw-paw patch. Well, the temperatures are getting cooler and makes for good night time sleeping. Fall Fest is over and the Halloween party was fun. I hope the members that attended Fall Fest gained some useful information.

State Surgeon Duncan's idea of advertising for the VFW can be productive for the Department. National's stats on membership show the most members are in the 70 to 80 years old range and half will be gone in 10 years. The VFW, not just our Department needs to recruit younger members so we can

keep our numbers up. Currently, the VFW has approximately 950,000 members and 1.4 million with the Auxiliary. We need to raise these numbers so we can keep our position when talking with Congress. So, when we have the opportunity to recruit younger members, recruit them and welcome them into your Posts. Don't treat them like the Vietnam members were treated when they returned and tried to join and ignore them or talk to them like they don't belong.

Another thing that will keep younger veterans from joining the best veterans service organization is the constant drama, in-fighting, and the spreading of rumors. The younger members see this and they either don't join or back away from the VFW. Right now, in my opinion it looks like we have two VFW Departments, one that is elected to the positions and supporting the Department and one that wasn't and that one is creating the drama, in-fighting, and spreading rumors. The drama, in-fighting, and rumor spreading has to stop. It does not help anyone or the Department of Oklahoma VFW. This includes the Auxiliary. If members are not happy with the decisions, then stand up and run for an elected position. Remember the three command positions do not have the final decision, the Council of Administration does and ultimately the membership. Who has the power in the Department VFW? The membership does. They talk through the District Commanders, District Commanders to the Council and the Department Commander. Follow the National, Department and Post By-laws and the Manual

of Procedures. If your answer is not there look for the third book. That's the book you will find at VFW.org.

So, if we do not recruit and welcome new members or if we continue with the drama, in-fighting, and spreading rumors then we will not have a Department. When the Departments go away then National goes away and then what will we have, nothing. And having nothing means the veterans, active, separated, and retired will have to take whatever Congress decides to give us and for some of us we know what it was like to only get bare minimum pay and benefits.

So, with that said RECRUIT younger members and welcome them to our Posts and grow OUR Department.

Respectfully,

Larry Hurd

State Junior Vice Commander
Department of Oklahoma

Adjutant/Quartermaster
Heidi Teeter

Comrades,

Halloween has passed and now we move on to Thanksgiving and Christmas, which are my favorite holidays. This is the time to celebrate and give thanks. I for one am grateful for the relationships and friends I have gained through this great organization.

In my opinion Fall Fest went well, I welcome feedback from those that attended. If you would like to submit feedback it can be emailed to me at okadj@vfw-oklahoma.org.

The building committee presented a couple of buildings at Fall Fest and the council gave SVC McGrew and I approval to move on one of those. SVC McGrew and I met with the realtors and made an offer, the seller countered and eventually accepted an offer from us. I am happy to announce we are now in contract on a building for state headquarters. As long as it passes inspection, we should be able to close the week of Thanksgiving.

The updated Department bylaws have been uploaded to the Members Only section of the Department website. Every Post Commander, Quartermaster, and Adjutant that has an email address in OMS has been emailed a link to the Post Resources folder. I will get the Department Bylaws uploaded to this folder.

Commander Harris, SVC McGrew, JVC Hurd, Surgeon Duncan and I will all be at Southern Conference November 6th – 9th. We will all be available via email and text at all times; we will have limited availability for phone calls but can make ourselves available if needed.

Over the last few weeks, I have had an uptick in early morning or late-night business calls. Regular business hours are Monday through Friday 8 am to 5 pm. Starting November 1st all phone calls after 6 pm will be returned the next business day and any phone calls before 8 am will be returned after 8 am. I apologize if this causes any inconvenience, but my children need some of my time as well. Email is the best and quickest way to get through to me.

I sincerely hope everyone has a Happy Thanksgiving. Again, if you need anything please reach out.

Charlie Mike,
Heidi Teeter

State Adjutant/Quartermaster
Department of Oklahoma

Judge Advocate
Randy Traxler

“Honesty tells the truth. Transparency tells the whole truth, without leaving space for confusion, doubt, or assumptions.”

As Judge Advocates and organizational leaders, we have a responsibility to ensure that our communications and actions reflect not only honesty but also full transparency. Honesty builds trust; transparency protects it.

Transparency means providing clear, accurate, and complete information—eliminating the gray areas that create confusion, uncertainty, or mistrust. This applies to how we interpret and share bylaws, how we communicate decisions to members, and how we document and maintain the integrity of our processes.

When members are fully informed, they can engage confidently in the business of the organization. When leadership is transparent, it strengthens both trust and accountability.

This General Order is a reminder:

- Do not rely on partial truths or assumptions.
- Communicate decisions and processes clearly.
- Ensure records, reports, and procedures leave no room for doubt.
- Protect the organization through proactive clarity and documentation.

Transparency isn't just good practice—it's a leadership standard that keeps the organization strong and members informed.

v/r,

Randy Traxler

Judge Advocate
Department of Oklahoma

Foundation
Jim Bassett

Comrades,

We talked at Fall Fest about pass through donations. Please, contact the Foundation Treasurer if you are going to have funds routed through the foundation. Payroll deduction or donations from a business. If we know in advance of funds coming our way we can get them out quicker. If there are documents that they want, contact us and we will get them for you.

The foundation wants to be transparent to the members of the VFW and Auxiliary. We plan on holding either a meeting or at least a question and answer session at each of the three events, Fall-Fest, Mid-Winter, and convention. If you have concerns, comments or suggestions, we are more than interested in hearing them. You can contact the foundation at okvfwfoundation@outlook.com or bassettj15@yahoo.com. I'm currently working on the process on how to apply to the foundation as a board member. If interested, please contact me.

Your Foundation,
<https://okvfwfoundation.org>

Chaplain
Marcus King

Comrades,

Chaplain's Corner. November 2025

Winter is closing in quickly, and with it comes a season that's tough for a lot of our folks. Holidays can stir up grief, isolation, and pressure—especially for veterans carrying invisible weight. Some of our brothers and sisters are fighting battles no one sees, and this time of year can push them to the edge.

Let's stay sharp:

- If someone's gone quiet, reach out. Silence doesn't mean they're okay.
- If your Post has the ability, check on your homebound members, your Gold Star families, and anyone who's been drifting.
- Don't wait for a program—sometimes a phone call or a sit-down over coffee is the mission.

Now, without diving into politics, we need to be aware that the shutdown is hitting hard. SNAP benefits are stalled, and base child care centers are set to close in November. That means our communities, as well as our active duty and Guard families—especially lower enlisted—might be stretched thin. If your Post can help, I urge you all to find a way to assist. Food drives, emergency support, even just watching someone's kids for a few hours—it matters.

And as the world slows down, perhaps we should too. Spend time with your people. Be present. Don't overthink it, just show up where it matters, and be present.


In service,

Marcus King

State Chaplain

Department of Oklahoma

 vfwokchaplain@outlook.com

 405.651.5509

Voice of Democracy/Patriot's Pen/Teacher of the Year

Jim Bassett

Deadline to accept essays is 31 October

Deadline for posts to complete judging is 15 November

Deadline for districts to complete judging is 15 December

As of today, 25 October, we have had 2,790 views of our program. 117 have applied with documents with 61 students have applications in progress. By now, you should have your judges selected at post and district.

Teacher of the Year deadline has also passed. If you are unsure of a teacher to nominate, watch the news. A lot of times they run an article on a local teacher who is making a difference. And you just found your candidate.

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
Department of Oklahoma

Veterans and Military Support

Jim Bassett

This is the SportClips Help-A-Hero fundraising time. This also happens to be a major talking point with potential members in uniform. This program has awarded \$195,900 to 47 military recipients in Oklahoma. Support this worthy program. Set up at a local SportClips and tell people that we are supporting SportClips in the fundraising. They have awarded more than \$15 million since 2010.

When you tell them that this can be used in conjunction with other scholarships 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 join 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 on how to contact a local unit, let me know and I can make the introductions.

Jim Bassett

State VMS Chair
Department of Oklahoma

Veterans Affairs Volunteer Services

Tony McGrew and Jim Bassett

The VA tracks your volunteer hours. Please sign in with them when you visit or do volunteer work. Is your post or district interested in doing a visit to one of the VA hospitals. Please coordinate with the VAVS representatives to set it up.

The VFW is willing to recognize individuals that have reached the historic 100-year-old level. You can request the certificate through the VFW. Another organization that recognizes that individuals living that long through history is called "Centenarians of Oklahoma". The Centenarians started in 1991 and have inducted over 3,000 statewide. Currently they have over 300 still with us. If you know anyone that should be recognized by this organization, please contact them or me so that I can pass on the information.

If you visit the hospitals and homes throughout the state, you may run into someone that should be inducted. Reach out to them at centenariansofoklahoma@gmail.com and let them know.

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. Or Jim Bassett, bassettj15@yahoo.com.

Tony McGrew

Jim Bassett

State VAVS Chair
Department of Oklahoma

Historian Richard Elsheimer

William “Bill” Clay Bender was born on September 16, 1939 in Hoyt, Oklahoma to John and Letha (Green). He passed away in Hoyt, Oklahoma on April 19, 2025 at the age of 85. He is survived by:

His wife, Debra Bender, of the home

His children:

Anita Rock and husband, Robbie, of Porum, OK

Gary Morris and wife, Karri, of Stigler, OK

Spencer Clark and wife, Christine, of Greenwood, AR

Sarah Garrett and husband, Neal, of Stillwell, OK

Patrick Clark and wife, Alisa, of Bixby, OK

Rachel Green and husband, Wayne, of Claremore, OK

Twenty-five grandchildren

Fifty-one great grandchildren

Eleven great-great grandchildren

Bill was preceded in death by his wife, Ruth Bender; his parents, John and Letha Bender; one brother, Jim Bender; one sister, Jean Ismail; his daughter, Dani Grey Nunly; and his son, Billy Morris.

Bill served in the U.S. Army for 20 years during the Vietnam Conflict, earning the Rank of SFC. He was a member of Stigler VFW Post #4446 and served as Post Commander for 15 years. He was the VFW State Commander in 2010 and 2011.

Bill worked for the United States Postal Service, where he retired as Postmaster. He loved to fish and was meticulous about mowing his lawn and caring for his yard.

Richard Elsheimer

State Historian

District 5 Commander ***Frank Whitlock***

Comrades,

As the Co-Chairman for the Fair Committee, The Tulsa State fair was a success, we talked to 310 Veterans, 11 auxiliary, and talk with 45 students for the VOD and Patriot Pin, and we signed up 11 new members. I want to thank every volunteer that came out to help.

District 5 is doing well, with Veterans Day coming up, the city of Tulsa will be having their annual Veterans Day parade on November 11, if you would like to ride in the parade, get a hold of past State Commander Dan Fuller or Josh Starks at post 577, Broken Arrow will have their parade November 1, for details call BA Commander Eddie Crisp, the city of Collinsville will be hosting their Veterans Day parade November 11, if you are interested in this one please Collinsville Commander Sal Martinez and Skiatook will have their Veterans Day parade on the 8th, if anyone is interested, get with Skiatook Commander Brian Stumpf.

The District is having our annual gun raffle, we are selling only 600 tickets at \$10, there will be two guns, one rifle and pistol, if you are the first person drawn, you will have first pick, then your name goes back in for a chance to win the other. You can pick up tickets from myself or ANY COMMANDER IN THE DISTRICT. Our next District meeting is November 3, at 2pm in Collinsville.

Be safe and have a wonderful Thanksgiving.

Respectfully,

Frank Whitlock

Sgt. USMC (Ret)
Purple Heart Recipient
Oklahoma VFW District 5 Commander
All-American

District 14 Commander
Erica Traxler
State Legislative Chair
Credentials Chair
Building Committee
Redistricting Committee
Student Veterans of America Liaison

Comrades,

I hope this month's General Orders finds you well. I have had a volunteer come forward to assist on the Legislative Committee. If there are any others, please reach out to let me know.

District 14 is holding a Special meeting on Monday, November 3rd at 7pm via zoom. This meeting is to elect and install new trustees. The link is:

Topic: District 14 Special Meeting

Time: Nov 3, 2025 07:00 PM Central Time (US and Canada)

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81231027947?pwd=r8u4iwgeVpnmFXQOXC6OazQP1FoFZv.1>

View meeting insights with Zoom AI Companion

<https://us02web.zoom.us/launch/edl?muid=069777e5-9e93-43b5-9258-eda0965e555f>

Meeting ID: 812 3102 7947

Passcode: 426010

The service officer Jason Burns has been very busy in our district, D13 & D15 taking care of veterans. He comes to Lawton weekly, so if you have veterans in need please let us know so we can ensure they are taken care of. You can come with them or send them our way, whatever works best for you and that veteran.

As the weather starts to change please be careful while out and about. Take precautions for your home and vehicles for when the temperatures drop below freezing. Remember that even though you may have family, not everyone does. Some of our comrades and auxiliary members have lost loved ones this year. Please keep them in your thoughts this holiday season. Invite them to events, have them over for dinner, call and check on them, and anything else you can think of.

I appreciate all of your hard work and dedication to your communities, the VFW and its programs. You are doing great things. Keep up the good work.

Thank you for everything you do for your veterans, their families, and your communities. I look forward to continuing to serve the department. Please reach out if you need anything, now and in the future.

v/r

Erica L. Traxler

Past State Commander

District 14 Commander

Post 5263 Service officer

Department of Oklahoma

Veterans of Foreign Wars

989-239-5999

ericatraxlervfw@gmail.com

<https://vfwoklahoma.org/>



Oklahoma

VFW Riders

Ron Ollis

Trunk or Treat – October 31st, 1700

American Iron Riders – November 8th

Ardmore Veterans Day Parade – November 11th (following parade set-up at Atwood's to sell raffle tickets)

Holiday Dinner – December 4th, 1800

Dirty Santa & Potluck Dinner – December 20th, 1800

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 or 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! State Adjutant/Quartermaster Heidi's favorite color is olive drab.

DISTRICT MEETING INFORMATION

D-1 > November 1st, Stilwell, 1100, Immediate Past Department Commander Dan Fuller
D-3 > November 1st, Muldrow, 1100, State Inspector Jason Burns
D-4 > November 1st, Antlers, 1100, State Commander Jeff Harris
D-5 > November 2nd, Collinsville, 1400, State Chaplain Marcus King
D-7 > November 1st, Eufaula, 1100, State Junior Vice Commander Larry Hurd
D-8 > November 8th, Bristow, 1100, State Inspector Jason
D-9 > November 29th, Chandler, 1000, Rep TBD
D-10 > January 24th, Midwest City, 1000, Rep TBD
D-13 > November 15th, Fairview, 1100, State Commander Jeff Harris
D-14 > February 7th
D-15 > January

DATES TO REMEMBER:

Southern Conference >> November 6th – 9th Montgomery, TX
Marine Corps Birthday >> November 10th >> 250 years young
Veterans Day >> November 11th
Thanksgiving >> November 27th >> HQ (National) Closed 26th through 28th, HQ (Dept)
Closed 27th & 28th
Native American Heritage Day >> November 29th
Pearl Harbor Day >> December 7th
National Guard Birthday >> December 13th >> 389 years young
Space Force Birthday >> December 20th >> 6 years young
Christmas Eve >> December 24th HQ (National* and Dept) Closed
Christmas Day >> December 25th HQ (National* and Dept) Closed
New Years Eve >> December 31st HQ (National* and Dept)
New Years Day >> January 1st HQ (National* and Dept) Closed

*National HQ will be closed December 24th through January 2nd, 2026.