

LEGISLATIVE AMBASSADOR



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As members of the VFW Auxiliary, we can celebrate and appreciate the legislative victories that we, as an organization, helped bring about to better serve all veterans. Much has been accomplished, yet there is so much more to do.

I have attended Auxiliary meetings where legislative matters were brought up for discussion only to find that the understanding and knowledge of legislation benefiting veterans and service members was very little to nil. Many of our members lack an understanding of benefits recently gained through passage of legislation and the legislative goals being pursued by the Auxiliary and VFW and may not know what our organizations consider Legislative Priorities. For more information on Legislative Priorities, visit vfw.org/advocacy/national-legislative-service. The more our members know and understand legislative matters, the better they can support the veterans, service members and their families.

Priority Goals

It is important to not only set our goals and display a united front, but also to make sure our members understand what the impact will be for the men and women and their families that we support. Collaborate to increase your own knowledge and understanding. Being visible in our legislative communities, both state and federal, is important and is a responsibility each of us should share and undertake. It should be a part of the mission of our Legislative Chairmen to ensure our members fully understand.

Working together. What can we do?

- Create good relationships with our elected officials and their staff to understand their positions for specific legislation and their reasons for taking that position.
- When communicating with elected officials and candidates for election, deliver a brief, concise message, but make your questions or statements clearly understood. Identify yourself, who you represent and why you are calling.
- If you communicate by email or by telephone the same holds true; brief, to-the-point, clearly understood messaging. Identify who and why.
- If asked by a candidate or elected official to either endorse either them or their bill, politely explain that the Auxiliary does not permit such endorsements.
- Ensure that members realize that state legislation passed often impacts the veterans and service members of their home state and should be understood as well.
- Encourage members to attend town hall meetings held by legislators.
- Host a town hall meeting at which all candidates are invited to attend and comment on veterans' issues.
- Develop questions for candidates and elected officials to ensure they provide answers to the questions most important to our members. It will add to our knowledge of how each bill under consideration will impact our veterans, service members and their families.
- Do not allow your Auxiliary to appear to endorse or support an individual candidate in local, state or federal elections.
- When conducting Auxiliary business, you must avoid displaying any partisan politics.
- Develop a chain of information within your Auxiliaries, Departments and with the National Ambassador.
- Ensure that our members know about the resources available to them in MALTA Member Resources.

Examples:

- o VFW Action Corps Weekly
- o VFW Auxiliary Guide to Contacting Your Legislators
- o VFW Auxiliary Guide to the Legislative Process

Guidelines for Auxiliary involvement in the election process

- It is important to remember that in all Auxiliary political activities, we must remain neutral.
- Use legislative websites for U.S. Congress and Senate to track pieces of legislation.
- The White House and nearly every one of our elected officials have websites that provide information and options for contacting their offices.
- In addition, state legislators often introduce legislation that impacts the veterans and service members in our states. They introduce laws and resolutions that impact the veteran community. Learning about and using your state resources is important as well.

MALTA Member Resources provides a means of assuring our organization is on the same page as the VFW in our support or opposition to pending legislative matters.

Among those are:

- VFW Legislative Priorities
- VFW Priority Goals
- VFW Fact Sheet

Auxiliary Presidents should require their Auxiliary Legislative Chairman to present a report at each meeting regarding current priority legislation, how it affects our veterans, service members and their families and the status of the bills. It's recommended that the Auxiliary Legislative Chairmen reach out to their Department Chairman and/or National Ambassador should they have questions, and by all means file the necessary reports as required by Auxiliary policy.

LEGISLATIVE PROGRAM

Be An Advocate • Be Informed • Be Engaged

One of the main objectives of the Legislative Program is to improve the lives of our veterans, service members and their families through advocacy. Your efforts, combined with nearly 1.5 million other VFW and Auxiliary members, can influence lawmakers whose decisions affect veterans and their families every day. Join the chorus of voices that will ring out in legislators' offices this year.

Study the issues laid out clearly in the VFW Priority Goals. A copy can be found in MALTA Member Resources.

The Priority Goals reflect the resolutions passed by the VFW to strengthen and ensure an adequate VA system for millions of current and future veterans.

They call for much-needed attention to crises such as veteran homelessness and suicide. They request fully funding research on traumatic brain injuries, reducing the claims backlog, fighting veteran unemployment and improving timely transition assistance for veterans after leaving military service. The goals are grouped under six areas of concern:

- Budget
- Health Care
- Disability Assistance and Memorial Affairs
- Education, Employment and Transition Assistance
- Military Quality of Life
- National Security, Foreign Affairs and POW/MIA

These goals are released in January of each year by the VFW. Be sure you check the VFW website or MALTA Member Resources for the current Priority Goals.

VFW Action Corps Weekly

It's free and it's full of news about what's happening on Capitol Hill, with veteran and service member issues and with our national security. Subscribe at the National website at vfwauxiliary.org by selecting "What We Do" then clicking on "Legislative."

Contact your legislators: find out who's who. To identify your congressional representatives, visit the VFW website at votervoice.net/VFW/register.

Step by Step—A Bill

To follow the progress of a bill through the stages of the legislative process, visit congress.gov, where you may find a specific bill by its number or by a key word or phrase.

VFW in D.C.

One of the most crucial responsibilities of the VFW Washington, D.C. office is to actively lobby Congress and the administration on behalf of veterans. The office monitors all legislation affecting veterans and alerts VFW and Auxiliary members about key legislation under consideration.

By testifying at committee hearings and interacting with congressional members, the VFW played an instrumental role in nearly every piece of veterans' legislation passed in the 20th Century, as well as bills developed in the 21st Century.

To contact the D.C. office:
Website: vfw.org/advocacy
Phone: 202-543-2239
Mail: 200 Maryland Ave., N.E.
Washington, D.C. 20002

LEGISLATIVE PROGRAM AWARDS

Awards for Auxiliaries

1. Most outstanding activity and/or event educating their community on veteran Legislative issues.
 - Citation to every Auxiliary that hosts an activity and/or event that educates their community on veteran Legislative issues. Entry form required and available in MALTA Member Resources. Auxiliaries must send the entry form to their Department Legislative Chairman by March 31, 2024 for judging.

The Department Legislative Chairman must email National Headquarters by April 30, 2024 at info@vfwauxiliary.org a total combined list of every Auxiliary in their Department that completed and submitted an entry form.

Citations will be mailed directly to participating Auxiliaries from National Headquarters.

- Citation and \$25 to one Auxiliary in each of the four Conferences that hosts the most outstanding activity and/or event educating their community on Legislative issues.

The Department Legislative Chairman must sign and send a copy of the completed Department-winning entry form to the National Legislative Ambassador by April 30, 2024 for judging.

Citations will be mailed directly to winning Auxiliaries from National Headquarters and money will be deposited into Auxiliary account after National Convention.

Awards for Departments and Department Chairmen

1. \$25 VFW Store gift certificate to one Department Legislative Chairman in each of the 10 Program Divisions for the best promotion of education of veteran Legislative issues. Winners will be announced and awards presented at the 2024 National Convention in Louisville, Kentucky.
2. Outstanding Performance Award in each of the 10 Program Divisions based on the criteria listed on Page 5 and for the promotion of the Program Goals listed at the top of Page 38. Winners will be announced and awards presented at the 2024 National Convention in Louisville, Kentucky.