

Legislative Promotion #1 | July 2024
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Greetings Auxiliary Advocates!

I am extremely excited to introduce myself, DeeDee Guyette, as the 2024-2025 National Legislative Ambassador. I just know it's going to be a great year as we become 'advocates' together in support of the VFW Legislative Priority Goals and efforts to secure the rights of our veterans!



But I want to make sure that we start off on the right foot. So many times, I have heard comments about this Program and how insignificant it is. In fact, someone even said to me once, "So, how did you get stuck with Legislative?" Well, let me tell you, this Program is about as far from insignificant as you can get. As Legislative advocates, we are on the front lines fighting to pass laws and bills that are life changing for our veterans. The Legislative Program is of the utmost importance and I am extremely proud and honored to be given this opportunity to serve our veterans in this capacity, and I hope you are too!

So, let's get a little better acquainted. My husband Randy and I live in northern New York, just a mere 30 miles from the Canadian border. It was 24 years ago when I became a member of VFW Auxiliary to Post 7227 in Carthage, N.Y., under the eligibility of my father, a World War II veteran. However, in my early years I was not able to contribute much. Then a few years prior to my retirement as an IT Network Administrator for 30+ years, I became fully active in the VFW Auxiliary and have held many elected offices, appointments and chairmanships at all levels, to include Auxiliary, District, Department and now National. I have met so many dedicated members throughout my travels thus far, and now I have the privilege of getting to know all of you!



Now on with the Program. The Legislative Program is an extension of the work done by the VFW on Capitol Hill in Washington, D.C. and if we follow their lead, our advocacy work will result in positive changes for our veterans. The VFW website has an entire area dedicated to Legislative resources and tools; to include, VFW Priority Goals, VFW Action Corps Weekly, action alerts, pending legislation, directory of legislators and so very much more. The link is as follows: VFW Legislative Resources: [https://www.vfw.org/advocacy/national-](https://www.vfw.org/advocacy/national-legislative-service)

[legislative-service](https://www.vfw.org/advocacy/national-legislative-service)

We can promote Legislative issues just by referring others to visit the VFW website or signing them up for the Action Corps Weekly. Currently, the website has information regarding how to identify and avoid predatory 'claim sharks' who charge a fee to file a VA disability claim. Also, a recent action alert was released to garner support to pass H.R. 8371, Senator Elizabeth Dole 21st



Century Veterans Healthcare and Benefits Improvement Act, to improve benefits and care for veterans, survivors and caregivers.

But our work does not stop with the VFW website, Action Corps, or action alerts. This year, I would like to focus our advocacy efforts at the local government level and on working with our own VFW Posts to have our voices heard. I will be on the lookout for the best advocacy work in these two focus areas, which will qualify Auxiliaries and Department Chairmen for awards.

First, all the Legislative bills that make it to Capitol Hill have to start somewhere, and that somewhere is local. We need to ensure that our elected officials understand how important it is to protect our veterans. We need to make sure they understand what our veterans have done for us and the sacrifices they made to secure our freedom. One way to do this is by inviting them to special patriotic events and dinners. There's nothing more impactful than being witness to veterans being honored, recognized or remembered. These events would also provide opportunities for direct communication with local government officials.

The second main focus for this year's Legislative Program is working with our VFW Posts. By joining forces, our voices will be twice as loud. The importance of collaborating on projects together shows we are united and strong and will send a powerful message to our community and local government. One suggestion for a joint project would be to organize a Town Hall meeting; whereby engaging with elected officials to educate them on the VFW Priority Goals.



Of particular interest related to the Legislative Program is that 2024 is a presidential election year, along with many other Senate and House races around the country. Knowing where the candidates stand on veterans' issues is a key aspect of the election process for our veteran voters. We also need to ensure that our veterans have all the resources they need to exercise their right to vote. The upcoming elections in November 2024 will provide many opportunities to increase our advocacy efforts.

I'm looking forward to seeing and hearing all about the wonderful advocacy work that will be accomplished during the coming year! Together, we will be Advocates in Action...

From Our Roots to Our Branches, Extending Service to Our Veterans!